

The Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School
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Radical movements appear in the United States periodically but seem to have been unable to establish any real influence or stabilize their own existence, primarily due to governmental practices, (as the Palmer raids in 1919 or the communist scare in the 1950's aptly demonstrate). The state, aside from deportation and/or imprisonment of radicals, conveniently manages to discredit, take credit from or cover up completely radical history in America. Radicals become commie sympathizers and spies, socialist programs become government policy (in a bastardized form), and important radical history is lost in political games, (thus the anniversary of the Haymarket martyrs becomes Veteran's Day, location of the death of four students who opposed a repressive war and state becomes an athletic paradise.

Despite subverted radical heritage movements continue to take form and push for social change. In the quiet years of the 1950's one voice stood out in condemnation of the destructive power of the state. C. Wright Mills worked in opposition of the traditional theories in an attempt to merge theory (critique and exposure of the power elite) and practice (moral commitment).

Mills died before the upsurge and direction of the New Left had become visible. The student movement of the 1960's in Germany, France and the United States was primarily opposed to a war of genocide waged against the people of Viet Nam. The New Left-wing intellectuals questioned the assumptions underlying the repressive

welfare/warfare state and turned in multiple directions to find the answers, one direction was Mills. Also emerging as a hero to the New Left was Herbert Marcuse.

His depiction of one-dimensional society and the conception of repressive tolerance became ideological food for the growing number of dissenters. Critical theory, which Marcuse elucidated, was a radical and new critique of contemporary society. Student intellectuals felt a need for a radical theory, especially a new radical theory; the old rhetoric had to be discarded, replaced by theory and action that would suit contemporary needs and capabilities. These critiques of contemporary society were found in the words of critical theory, as illustrated by this passage (Horkheimer 1972a: 213):

Production is not geared to the life of the whole community while heeding also the claims of individuals; it is geared to the power backed claims of individuals while being concerned hardly at all with the life of the community. This is the inevitable result, in the present property system, of the principle that it is enough for individuals to look out for themselves.

This passage represents thinking the radicals of the 1960's could take to heart.

Because of the unavailability of the works of the Frankfurt School until relatively recently and the availability of the contributions of C.W. Mills the major focus of this paper, in time and space will be with the Frankfurt School. This is not to be interpreted as dismissing Mills theory as unimportant for in many respects that Mills has to say is still valid (for example see Domhoff 1968:251-278).

As the nineteen-sixties moved into the seventies, more information became available concerning critical theory. Emergence of the works of critical theorists appear somewhat peculiar at this late date considering the Institute of Social Research, the originators of "Critical Theory", spent most of its years of exile in America, (the institute

was in exile from 1934-1950) (Coleman, 1974:64). This period of exile also saw the creation of a number of their important theoretical works, none-the-less, it is forty years after critical theory's inception (1929 is the year Horkheimer becomes director of the institute thus beginning critical theory) that attention is drawn to, and it becomes, a viable theory of society.

Marx, during the course of his monumental contribution to revolutionary thought (both in quality and quantity), disclosed stages necessary for a proletariat revolution. Briefly, the major thrust of the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation reads; (Marx, 1972:763), the process of eliminating competition among capitalists creates a centralization of wealth, at the same time labor becomes socialistic, technological advances increase productivity and/or replaces human labor and there is an increase in class consciousness amongst the workers. As wealth accumulates at one pole misery accumulates at the other creating two great classes. At this advanced state in the process of accumulation the proletariat will rise up to discard the chains of slavery, "The expropriators are expropriated".

In October 1917 the repressive state of Russia was overthrown by social revolution, well in advance of the final stage of accumulation. The October revolution had two major effects on radicals throughout the world; first, the revolution initiated renewed intellectual and practical Marxist activity, particularly in Germany, (Kellner, 1975:133). As part of this renewed interest Felix Weil sponsored the "First Marxist work-week" in 1922, which centered on Karl Korsch's "Marxism and Philosophy," (Jay, 1973:5). Although other accounts suggest that the meeting was initiated by Korsch and called "Summer Academy", see Breines, 1972:70). This was to be the first in a series of

Marxist oriented workweeks. This leads to the second major effect, that many radicals felt it was time for reinterpretation and re-evaluation of Marxist thought. This change in attitude toward Marxist thought is depicted in the work of Korsch and to a lesser extent Lukacs.

It is from the two major effects of the October Revolution in general and from these particular writings of Korsch and Lukacs and the organizing, economic aid of Weil that the Frankfurt Institute was started. On February 3, 1923 the Institute for Social Research opened in Frankfurt, Germany (Jay, 1973:10). Carl Grunberg directed the Institute from 1923 to 1929, when he left the directorship due to continued illness. These sixteen years should not be viewed as the nucleus of Critical Theory, instead they should be thought of as years spent sustaining and reinforcing the first academically affiliated Marxist Institute.

The institute under Grunberg was not productive in reference to expanding Marxist theory, (Jay 1973:12), however, it was not completely void of theoretical concerns either (Kellner, 1975:133). Grunberg wanted to uncover the laws of economic development and verify the Marxist critique of political economy. Grunberg's methodology was not dialectical in nature, but rather, inductionists; progress proceeded from the worst conditions to the best (Kellner, 1975:133; Jay, 1973:11). Grunberg hoped empirical and historical validation would expose developmental patterns of economic change.

Germany in the 1920's and 30's is characterized by capricious economic and political conditions. The Weimer Republic was confronted with numerous difficulties, which convinced the radical segment of German society that revolution was at hand. The

members of the Frankfurt Institute were not exceptions to this predominant thought, (Horkheimer, 1972a:V):

In the first half of the century, proletarian revolts could plausibly be expected in the European countries, passing as they were through crisis and inflation. The idea that in the early thirties the united workers, along with the intelligentsia, could bar the way to National Socialism was not mere wishful thinking.

The war debt put tremendous strain on the Germany economy; monopolies were on the ascendant while simultaneously capital needed for investment was failing (Slater, 1977:18). Inflation reached its peak in 1923, (Brecht, 1944:18) and private banks were on the brink of collapsing in 1931 (Brecht, 1944:33). The “German October” revolution of 1924 was unsuccessful but this did not mean the country was beginning to stabilize. The importance of American production techniques, coupled with a push for an eight-hour workday, created widespread unemployment and fostered dissatisfaction among the working class.

In the midst of this unstable atmosphere, Max Horkheimer assumed control of the Institute after Grunberg stepped down from the directorship. Horkheimer was to change much of the theoretical and practical practices initiated by Grunberg. Under Grunberg’s control, people from diverse fields of study were gathered in an attempt to make a complete Marxist analysis of contemporary societies. Although their interests were diversified such as music, law, art, philosophy, economics, psychoanalysis, they converged at one important point, the necessity and inevitability of a better society – socialism. One other practice Grunberg started, the dictatorship of the director, was kept and used by Horkheimer to collect around him a core of intellectuals who agreed with and followed his theoretical orientation, (Jay, 1973:25). The inner circle consisted of

Horkheimer, at the center, with Pollock Lowenthal, Adorno, Marcuse, and Fromm, completing the circle (Jay, 1973:31).

In the first few years of Horkheimer's control it still appeared as if proletariat revolution was possible, and it was not apparent that Fascism would be in power four years later in 1933. Prior to the take over of Hitler, the people of Germany remained anti-totalitarian, as Arnold Brecht points out (1944:15):

The overwhelming majority of the people at the end of the imperial period and during the democratic regime was distinctly anti-totalitarian and anti-fascist in both their ideas and their principles. This remained so at least throughout the 1920's.

This was not to remain the case however. In hopes to quiet the dissention due to internal conflicts, Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933; by 1934 he assumed full power. The Behemoth had arrived. With the rise of Nazism the institute was forced to leave Germany, resettling in the bourgeois atmosphere of Columbia University in the United States.

The financial support of Felix Weil kept the theorists protected against economic hardships and also served to hold the group together and maintain their solidarity. Consequently, through this economic independence, they became isolated from the reality others had to face. They further isolated themselves intellectually by refusing to publish in English insisting on maintaining the purity of their thought until the people who could appreciate it; the German people were once again in a position to receive it. The outcome of this strategy was that it isolated the group from valuable input and criticism and kept their possibly important work in the closed until some thirty to forty years after it had been written.

Critical theorists of Frankfurt are continuously referred to by a number of different names such as Neo-Marxist, Marxist Humanism, Hegelian Marxists, in an attempt to pigeonhole critical theory into an ideal-type. This process allows scholars to analyze, support, or criticize critical theory in accord to their own theoretical stance. It becomes apparent in searching through the wealth of works, produced by the Frankfurt Institute and the material about critical theory and theorists, that it is impossible to place critical theorists, on a whole, into one variant of Marxism. It may be true that critical theory is grounded in a decidedly Marxist base but it is just as true that his base is as multifaceted as the interests that comprise critical theory. As Jay points out, in “The Frankfurt School’s Critiques of Marxist Humanism”, within the institute were traditional Marxism – as represented by Henry Grossmann, the Marxist Humanism of Erich Fromm, the Austro-Marxism of Carl Grunberg, and those members who were not in agreement with traditional Marxism or Marxist Humanism such as Marcuse, Horkheimer, and Adorno (1972:289-291).

According to Slater (1977: 4) the first major work to appear was Grossmann’s, “The Law of Accumulation and the Collapse in the Capitalist System” in 1929, as pointed out earlier, Grossmann was an orthodox Marxist. That being the case, it is widely known that at the core of the Marxism found in Critical theory of society stems from the work of Korsch and the earlier work of Lukacs, which tends to be more Marxist Humanism. This controversy can be overlooked by either not considering the diversity within the institute important or by focusing only on the inner circle of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse and labeling all other members as marginal. In the end it is an important issue for even Marcuse and Horkheimer are often at odds helping to explain the

drift between their writings in latter years and why one remained radical while the other became reactionary. The distinction between Horkheimer and Marcuse's thinking arose primarily due to the degree to which they are concerned with identity theory. This point will be addressed further on in the paper.

It is not the object or scope of this paper to analyze each theorist within the Frankfurt School but instead to lend to a general understanding of critical theory of society. To undertake that task it is first necessary to understand the theoretical lineage of the Frankfurt School to Korsch and Lukacs.

The debate within Marxist circles in the 1920s converged around the disparities between Soviet Marxism which spoke as the voice of official Marxism, and the Marxism of Korsch and Lukacs which represented Hegelian Marxism that saw Soviet Marxism as mechanistic, not dialectical and therefore bourgeois history. (Lukacs was not active in these arguments; in fact he was to denounce his earlier stance as rearguard action.) The Soviet Marxists in turn claimed that Korsch and the earlier Lukacs were idealistic (Breines 1972; Jacoby 1971).

These accusations centered on the application of the Marxian dialectic. The Orthodox Marxism of the 1920s applied the dialectic to both society and nature, claiming two separate laws, one for society and one for nature, would necessarily change the Marxist law into subjective interest, consequently overlooking the major role of economics in shaping human relationships. This application of the Marxian dialectic to society and nature undermines the subject-object relationship. Korsch argued that (Jacoby 1971: 133):

The form of the dialectic encompasses the whole of reality; since dialectics sets forth the general teaching of the laws of movement and the forms of movement of

all being, so must also the natural sciences be penetrated by it... The dialectic of nature is the algebra of natural science.

If the laws of movement and the forms of movement are not applicable to all history, as Korsch and Lukacs would have it, the law becomes only a creation of human beings and therefore would not be a law at all and there would be no base for “scientific” Marxism.

The important distinction between orthodox Marxism and Marxist Humanism is that in the first view revolution comes about out of historical necessity and in the latter view the role of consciousness is the most important point in the process leading to revolution, in other words, revolution will not occur without the proletariat reaching revolutionary consciousness. In both the Soviet Marxism and Marxist Humanism the subject-object relationship in the dialectic is destroyed; one group stressing the objective factors, primarily economics, the other group the subjective factors, consciousness. The dilemma presented in the Orthodox-Humanist controversy over correct usage of the Marxian dialectic underlies a majority of the Frankfurt School’s theoretical works including such concerns as instrumental reason, domination of nature as well as humans, manipulation, praxis, and perhaps their most unique feature psychoanalysis.

It should be pointed out that this did not create a problem for all members. Grossman maintained the more orthodox position with a stress on the objective elements of the dialectic and Fromm embraced the subjective elements. For the members who are credited with developing critical theory, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse, the issue becomes a little more complex.

Horkheimer and Adorno were very much opposed to positing universals such as oneness of subject and object, society and nature, in other words identity theory. This leads to the dismissal of the idea of labor as the historical subject of change, brought on

partially by the move of the working class to barbarism instead of revolution in Germany. This meant in their thinking that superstructure was as much a legitimate area of investigation as the economic substructure; in fact they were to expend all their energies analyzing concepts more relevant with the superstructure. Horkheimer in discussing the individual's relationship to society states (1974b: 15):

In its inmost meaning it (individual makeup) is relative to the social forms of the life and culture to which it belongs, even if it is by no means simply reducible to these.

Horkheimer and Adorno realize that at the present time society applies more pressure upon the individual than the individual applies on society (Horkheimer 1974b: 7). This is accomplished through the use of instrumental reasoning stemming from Enlightenment thought. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they point out how in the search for knowledge and the attempt to destroy myths, Enlightenment thought becomes a myth in itself.

This search for knowledge was essentially an attempt at self-preservation, trying to dominate and manipulate nature to the best advantage of humans. "What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972:4). Domination becomes widespread infiltrating every aspect of life; language, culture, even science. In order for a thing (human or non-human) to be purged effectively of myth it needs to be useful, have temporal and special order, and it should be capable of reduction to abstract quantities so that the incomparable can be compared.

As long as preservation is cloaked in technical reasoning practical-rational reasoning will not exist. In other words as long as the domination of individuals and

nature are views as instrumental to the well being of the collectivity, individual worth, can only be interpreted in terms of utility. At this point Soviet Marxists and bourgeois science have fallen prey to similar interpretations of historical processes. The use of the Marxist law if applied to both society and nature is not dialectical but mechanical, technical, and deterministic. The appearance that natural law operated in society was actually only second nature, that is, the same historical circumstances that lead to the domination of science by a positivistic outlook also dominates all of society creating a false image of technical control over all of the natural and social world. This instrumentality found in positivistic theory is concerned primarily with means and hardly at all with ends, if indeed it ever considers ends (Horkheimer 1974:304):

If it (instrumental reason) concerns itself at all with ends, it takes for granted that they too are reasonable in the subjective sense, i.e. that they serve the subjects interest in relation to self-preservation.

The process of manipulation and domination is so well entrenched in contemporary society that individuals do not recognize they are being dominated, the transformation of enlightenment into myth has been extremely effective.

... the whole as whole, the manifestation of its immanent reason, necessarily leads to the execution of the particular. To the individual, domination appears to be the universal: reasoning actuality... What is done to all by the few, always occurs as the subjection of individuals by the many; social repression always exhibits the masks of repression by a collective. (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972: 22)

The reality that Horkheimer and Adorno support is of constantly changing nature, that is, any particular period in history will necessarily be different than another.

... something is itself and at one and the same time something other than itself, identical and not identical...everything is always that which it is , only because it becomes that which it is not. (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972: 15)

A unique feature of the Frankfurt School was their attempt to integrate the theories of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. This interest in combining a theory that focuses on the economic substructure with a theory that concerns itself with psychological instincts and drives, might at first strike one as unnatural, especially when Marx's theory is considered radical confronting class antagonism and the inevitable collapse of the capitalist system and Freud's theory which lends itself to a conservative or status quo maintaining interpretation. If this is indeed the case, that one theory maintains a radical stance while the other has a conservative one, it becomes necessary to understand why this blend had been attempted. It also becomes important to look at what aspects of psychoanalysis the Frankfurt theorists considered would contribute to a critical theory of society.

There are many contributing factors that fostered an interest in psychoanalysis. First, as pointed out earlier in this paper, the critical theory of society was not a single discipline approach to understanding contemporary society and the process of social change, instead, it encompassed many disciplines covering a number of diverse but related dimensions, i.e. economic, cultural, philosophical, historical. It should not appear so unlikely that a psychological understanding of society and change would be integrated into critical theory. But why specifically Freudian psychoanalysis as opposed to other theories of psychology? This leads to the second factor. The choices available at the time were essentially two, psychoanalysis or Pavlovian behaviorism (Coleman 1974:70). Since behaviorism was contradictory to the beliefs the critical theorists held in subjective consciousness, this obviously was not a logical or acceptable alternative. Coupled with

this basic disagreement was the fact that within the theory of Freud's psychoanalysis were implications that would lend themselves to radical interpretation.

Third, Lewenthal had introduced Horkheimer to the wonders of psychoanalytic theory and therapy a number of years prior to its attempted integration into critical theory. This peripheral interest can be located as early as 1922 when Horkheimer undertook psychoanalytic treatment apparently primarily to understand psychoanalysis but also partially to correct an aversion to lecturing without a prepared text (Jay 1973:9). The fourth reason for turning to psychoanalysis came about as a reaction to the successful transition of the German political machinery from Republic to Nazism. The early position of Critical Theory relied heavily on Marx's critique of political economy with all of its implications for proletariat revolution. The apparent pervasiveness with which Hitlerism had gripped the German working class led the Frankfurt theorists to the conclusion that the dialectical process which accurately forecast the demise of capitalism did not necessarily hold out a socialist program for the future but an equally viable alternative was the transformation of capitalism into barbarism destroying what freedom did exist under capitalism. If this was indeed a correct perception, the line of inquiry that needed to be pursued was; why did Germany turn to barbarism instead of socialism? How did the working class consciousness become manipulated? What makes it possible for the political superstructure to dominate and manipulate consciousness to maintain existing social relations or even create a sense of responsibility for even more barbaric conditions?

The focus of inquiry switched planes from the substructure to the superstructure and the link between the two was sought in psychoanalysis. In understanding the

unconscious, critical theorists were trying to expose the processes of social change and its apparent opposites, domination, manipulation, and instrumentality.

The major thrust of critical theories work incorporating psychoanalysis began with Erick Fromm's attempt to join the theories of Marx and Freud (Jay 1973:88). Psychoanalytic concepts were used by Fromm as mediating links between the individual and society (1973:91). Fromm also tried to point out that psychology was not just psychology of the individual but also of the "group or man's soul" (Jay 1973:92):

Psychoanalysis could provide the missing link between ideological superstructure and socio-economic base. In short, it could flesh out materialism's notion of man's essential nature.

In order to explain and understand manipulation and domination of human beings – the link between superstructure and substructure – without positing a psychologically radically different individual, it is necessary to make explicit and analyze the psychological mechanisms common to all humans. The economic substructures effects on psychological drives could be understood from a neo-Marxian approach. According to Fromm, psychoanalysis (Slater 1977:98):

Locates man's instinctual apparatus among the natural factors that modify the social process, although there are limits to this modifiability... The human psyche always remains a psyche that has been modified by the social process.

When Fromm left the institute in 1939 most of the serious attempts at combining Marx and Freud ceased (with some exceptions e.g. *Eros and Civilization*).

As is the case in any dynamic theory of society change becomes a crucial element not only of human history but the history of social theory itself. Transition can be seen in many of the concerns of critical theory; for instance, emphasis was to shift from political economy to ideology, from historical processes to psychological ones, praxis to reason

and form future oriented concerns to present oriented concerns. Perhaps it is not accurate to say there was a transition from one concern to another but more precisely that critical theory incorporate a wider diversity of concerns in their attempt to analyze contemporary society and usher in change. No matter how it is stated, the point remains the same; certain concerns become de-emphasized while others become more predominate.

Horkheimer tells us that critical theory's critique of political economy came about as a consequence with the concern for a rational society (Horkheimer 1972:246). This statement tells us two things, first, the critique of political economy is not the objective or goal of critical theory, instead the goal is a rational society, presumably a socialist one. Second, that a rational society does not exist now but that hope for one is in the future. Given the present form of human relationships it is practically mandatory that people utilize imagination or fantasy in order to visualize and comprehend a rational society. The future goal, the concepts of imagination and fantasy served critical theory a specific function (as they do in many radical theories of society). By keeping an eye on the future the necessity of social change remains central to the syntax of the theory and through the use of imagination future possibilities remain open and divert the onset of cynicism, which possesses many social critics. Critical theory should not be belittled by attaching the stigma of utopia to it, for there is nothing impractical incorporated in the meaning of imagination. Marcuse addressed himself to the problem and attempts to clarify the meaning of fantasy by stating (1968a: 154); "true, in phantasy one can imagine anything. But critical theory does not envision an endless horizon of possibilities." In present society the level of technology alone holds the possibility of fulfilling needs (1968a: 154-

155). But it is not only in external conditions, such as technology that the key to the future though imagination is found, but also within the creative individual, “For the thrust towards a rational society, which admittedly seems to exist today only in the realms of fantasy, is really innate in every man” (Horkheimer, 1972:251). This statement by Horkheimer should not be misinterpreted to read people are creators of their life, present and future, Horkheimer no more believes in total primacy of the subjective than he does natural law. The dialectical process between subject and object simply means that subjective interest contains as much validity as objective necessity. Therefore in order to establish a rational society both objective conditions and subjective consciousness must be present.

Another concern closely linked to the future goal of a rational society was the Frankfurt schools persistence in the necessity of praxis. As Jay points out the term praxis is “used to designate a kind of self-creating action, which differed from the externally motivated behavior produced by forces outside man’s control” (1973: 4). In contemporary society praxis remains an ideal, for humans are primarily determined and consequently have very little control over the thoughts and actions that make up their everyday existence. As Marcuse points out in his discussion of the Marxian dialectic (1968b: 319):

Marxian theory is, then incompatible with fatalistic determinism. True, historical materialism involves the determinist principle that consciousness is conditioned by social existence. We have attempted to show, however, that the necessary dependence enunciated by this principle applies to the ‘pre-historical’ life, namely to the life of class society.

It is precisely because humans now function in a state of pre-history that praxis does not exist; humans are not active creators at this point in time. Those theorists or

social movements who claim a unity of theory and practice in the present exemplify false consciousness, have fallen prey to ideology (Jay 1971: 247), action for action's sake is undesirable since it is not directed by correct theory (Horkheimer 1974:vi; Jay 1971: 247). In *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse makes this point very clear (1968b: 322):

Theory accompanies the practice at every moment, analyzing the changing situation and formulating its concepts accordingly. The concrete conditions for realizing the truth may vary, but the truth remains the same and theory remains its ultimate guardian. Theory will preserve the truth even if revolutionary practice deviates from its proper path. Practice follows the truth, not vice versa.

However as Horkheimer points out, truth is not immutable, it is as much affected by historical and dialectical processes as is everything else (Jay 1973: 63). "Truth is a moment in correct praxis; he who identifies it with success leaps over history and becomes an apologist for the dominant reality" (Jay 1973: 83).

The Frankfurt schools' emphasis switched in the 1940s away from a concern with imagination, the future, praxis, and class struggle to a concern with conflict between humans and nature, reason, and the present. It is at this point that Marcuse began to drift away from the pervasive control of Horkheimer as indicated in their differing stress on identity theory. Concern with identity arises from the Hegelian heritage of dialectical reasoning. Identity theory would involve the unity of opposites, oneness of subject and object, a true synthesis, a possible end to the unconscious historical processes (Jay 1971: 247). Horkheimer and Adorno perhaps being more pessimistic than Marcuse, consistently refused to posit universals stressing non-identity and negation. It became virtually impossible for Horkheimer and Adorno to determine and distinguish between what would lead toward a rational society and negative social change, change that would cause society to regress to a more barbaric condition.

The members of the Frankfurt School have contributed many important works to an understanding of contemporary society. Rusche and Kirchheimer's *Punishment and Social Structure* has become a key work in the area of criminal justice, *Behemoth* by Franz Neumann a classical study of National Socialism, and Pollacks study of automation holds as much truth today as when it was written, but the essence of critical theory is best explained by Horkheimer and Marcuse in their depictions of traditional and critical theory in 1937 (see Horkheimer 1972; Marcuse 1968a). The essential component of traditional theory, according to Horkheimer, is part and parcel of the object of its study. Facts determine and direct the theory no matter if it is inductive, deductive, or phenomenological theory. Horkheimer states that traditional theory is (1972: 188):

Theory for most researchers is the sum total of propositions about a subject, the propositions being so linked with each other that a few are basic and the rest derived from those. The smaller the number of primary principles in comparison with the derivations, the more perfect the theory. The real validity of the theory depends on the derived propositions being consonant with the actual facts... In relation to facts, therefore, a theory always remains a hypothesis.

But as pointed out earlier in this paper, to a critical thinker theory is of the utmost importance for primarily two reasons: first, correct theory has future forms of human relationships as its goal which might necessarily mean that facts, which are colored by the dominant reality principle, will reflect the economic and political values correctly in operation and will serve to maintain and support those values. (See Habermus, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, 1971.) Second, as Marcuse pointed out in *Reason and Revolution*, when revolutionary practice goes astray of its original intention, correct theory will preserve those ideals and guide action in times of doubt.

Traditional theory and positivistic science are intricately linked to the mode of production in society. The division of labor functions in the economic sphere to isolate

the individual and subvert collective consciousness in order to maintain a labor market and reserve army. In order to accomplish this manipulation, concern with human needs had to be diverted. Concern and focus is transferred to a technical mastery over nature with an eye on the immediate survival of the species. In the process of technically dominating nature humans become dominated by the same techniques. The “natural sciences” become not so much a science of knowledge as such but a science of a particular type of knowledge, that is, industrial knowledge. The human sciences, being not directly associated with industrial production techniques, recognize the glory that is bestowed upon the natural sciences and opt to mirror their basic assumptions resulting in human sciences which operate on models borrowed from mathematics, biology, or botany. The problem arises when it is forgotten that science is only a moment in human history. Horkheimer addresses this problem in his analysis of traditional theory (1972: 194):

What scientists in various fields regard as the essence of theory thus corresponds, in fact, to the immediate tasks they set for themselves. The manipulation of physical nature and of specific economic and social mechanisms demand alike the amassing of a body of knowledge such as is supplied in an ordered set of hypothesis. The technological advances of the bourgeois period are inseparably linked to this function of the pursuit of science... Beyond doubt, such work is a moment in the continuous transformation and development of the natural foundations of that society. But the conception of theory was absolute, as though it were grounded in the inner nature of knowledge as such or justified in some other ahistorical way, and thus it becomes a reified, ideological category.

What tends to be forgotten is that scientific knowledge, as we know it now, is really economic-technological knowledge geared toward maintaining the status quo and producing improved industrial techniques (Horkheimer 1972: 196). The individuality found in capitalist society is believed to be working out of self interest when in fact those acts of individuality from the work process to scientific undertakings, are part of the

historical and dialectical working out of social forces (1972: 197). The truth of the matter is our knowledge is not what the guardians of the status quo would have us believe; knowledge is not a “mathematical knowledge of nature” but instead a critical theory of society. Traditional theory looks at facts in an ahistorical manner; the reality of the situation is that facts and the producer of facts are historically shaped and transformed. The givens, the assumptions of traditional theory come under analysis in critical theory in much the same way as one discipline’s assumptions are workable problems for another discipline. Critical Theory (Horkheimer 1972: 207):

... is suspicious of the very categories of better, useful, appropriate, productive, and valuable, as these are understood in the present order, and refuses to take them as nonscientific presuppositions about which one can do nothing.

As opposed to theories which either posit creative individuals or completely determined individuals, critical theory sees society as a complex of interactions involving the creative individual, social totality, the individual in relation to class structure, and nature.

Traditional theory divides scientist from citizen, theory from practice; the role a person assumes as scientist is radically different from the role that person assumes as citizen, therefore knowledge which is subsumed in the scientific world will not in any significant way change the social order. In fact, knowledge serves to maintain the present social order as a consequence of the process in which facts are collected; what is considered fact and what is not is predetermined by the accepted scientific procedure. Critical theory recognizes the distinctions between subject and object, theory and practice but also recognizes that these dualities need not be there and in fact will not be there in

the future. It is here in the early manifesto of critical theory that a belief in identity can be found, but this identity lays in the future not in the present.

A strong influence from Marx's critique of political economy can be felt in these essays by Horkheimer and Marcuse. A belief in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat had not completely dissipated and yet a blind faith in the working class did not persist (Horkheimer 1972: 213-14). The conscious subject is the key to social change not uncontrolled social forces (1972: 217), nor blind political action. The role of a critical theoretician is (1972: 216):

... critique not only against the conscious defenders of the status quo but also against distracting, conformist, or utopian tendencies within his own household.

In this early period of critical theory history, the critique of political economy comes about as a necessary response to the conditions of life which are created by capitalist society (Horkheimer 1972: 217; Marcuse 1968a 134). This does not mean that the political economy is the object of critical theory. It only appears so when one understands that a rational-practical society, which is the real goal and object of critical theory, can only be realized by a conscious effort to expose the contradictions of capitalist society and illuminate the conditions which exist in the present that will move humankind toward that rational society. Within a critical theory cause and effect does not hold the same imminent position as it does in traditional theory. The positivistic mode of thought maintains that given certain factors and contributing circumstances it is possible to predict the outcome or effect just as in the natural sciences. However much this appears to be true "it need not be so; man can change reality, and the necessary conditions for such change already exist" (Horkheimer 1972: fn 227). Thus critical

theory can take into account the fact that something changes and yet is identical with itself (1972: 225).

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