MAX HORKHEIMER AND CRITICAL THEORY

by

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INTRODUCTION

Critical Theory has never acquired much of an audience in philosophical circles. This is understandable insofar as social philosophy has increasingly become splintered into the disciplines of sociology, political science, psychology, economics, and history. The division of intellectual labor in the twentieth century has become so acute that it is oftentimes impossible for a specialist in one field of endeavor to communicate with those in other fields. Max Horkheimer and his colleagues at the Institut für Sozialforschung became aware of this fragmentation in the early 1930's and interpreted it as partly a symptom and partly a cause of the escalating societal confusion which resulted in the two World Wars and the everpresent domination of totalitarian governments.

In this thesis an attempt will be made to critically examine some of the historical conditions and elements from the intellectual heritage which exerted their influence upon the efforts of the men who developed Critical Theory to grasp the "social totality", especially those of the Director of the Institute, Max Horkheimer. We are indeed fortunate in having at our disposal the recent publication
of the first detailed history of what has become known to some as the "Frankfurt School". The wealth and depth of the information presented in Martin Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination*, is made even more interesting by his accounts of the discussions he entertained with several members of the Institute, as well as the publication of personal letters found in the Institute's private archives, to which he was allowed access. Though we will often avail ourselves of the diversity of material accumulated by Jay, our treatment of Critical Theory will be within a more narrow scope and, hopefully, critically more incisive.
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CHAPTER I

When discussing the origins of Critical Theory there seem to be three spheres of influence which must be elucidated in order fully to understand the contradictions and reversals apparent in its development. Independent of their order of importance, these are: 1) the dialectical humanism inherited from Socrates, Plato, Hegel, and Marx; 2) the historical conditions at the time the theory was developed, and; 3) the fact that most of the members of the "Frankfurt School" came from assimilated bourgeois Jewish families. Treating these influences in reverse order, I will attempt to provide a framework of assumptions which are operative in the origin and development of Critical Theory, especially as espoused by Max Horkheimer.

SECTION I

It can hardly be overlooked that Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Franz Neumann, Friedrich Pollock, Felix Weil, Leo Lowenthal, Walter Benjamin, and Otto Kirschheimer, were all of Jewish descent, while only one of Theodor Adorno's parents were of Jewish heritage. This was never

1 Our second chapter will be entirely devoted to a presentation and consideration of Max Horkheimer's essay, "Traditional and Critical Theory".
publicized and when Martin Jay spoke with several members of the Frankfurt School, inquiring about the extent to which their heritage might have influenced their ideas, his query was suspiciously dismissed: "the members of the Institut were anxious to deny any significance at all to their ethnic roots, a position that has not been eroded with time in most of their cases". Still, I cannot but agree with Jay when he argues that "for all their claims to total assimilation and assertions about the lack of discrimination in Weimar, one cannot avoid a sense of their protesting too much". There are in fact, indications that elements of the Jewish religious, social, and economic history cannot be divorced from the Jewish "problem" as it relates to the Institute's radical critique of society,

\footnote{Martin Jay, \textit{The Dialectical Imagination}, (Boston 1973), p.32.}

\footnote{Ibid, p.34.}
a problem that was treated as the "Jewish Question". A little less than one hundred years earlier by another radical Jew, Karl Marx.

4 Marx's discussion of the "Jewish Question" is in the form of an analysis of Bruno Bauer's "Die Judenfrage". Bauer maintained that the appeal made by the German Jews for their civic and political emancipation could not possibly be granted by a Christian state. If the Jew acknowledges the Christian state as a legal establishment then he must realize that as a subject of this state he is obliged to accept restrictions on his rights insofar as he remains a Jew. A Christian state could not give the Jews what they ask without ceasing to be a Christian state, that is, without abandoning its religious prejudice. Marx's fundamental objection to Bauer is that "he subjects only the 'Christian state', and not the 'state as such' to criticism, that he does not examine the relation between political emancipation and human emancipation..." (Karl Marx, "Bruno Bauer, Die Judenfrage", in Karl Marx: Early Writings, trans. and ed. by T.B. Bottomore (New York, 1964), p.8).

For Marx, the state can only be properly so called when it is emancipated from all religion. This does not mean for Marx, as it did for Bauer, that all religion must be abolished if all citizens are to enjoy equal rights, for political emancipation is "not the final and absolute form of human emancipation". (Ibid., p. 10.) Political emancipation from religion is attained when religion is expelled "from the sphere of public law to that of private interest" (p. 15), but this emancipation "does not abolish, and does not even strive to abolish man's real religiosity" (p. 16).

5 This statement needs to be qualified. David McLellan claims that "it would be difficult to find anyone who had a more Jewish ancestry than Karl Marx" (David McLellan, Karl Marx: His Life and Thought (New York, 1973), p. 2). Though Marx came from a long line of rabbis, his father Heinrich Marx was given the option of changing his religion or losing his job. The elder Marx chose to convert to Protestantism and, as a result, Karl was baptised in 1824.
In Horkheimer's earliest book, _Dämmerung_, he attacked Jewish capitalists who were opposed to anti-Semitism solely on the grounds of the economic threat it posed:

The readiness to sacrifice life and property for belief is left behind with the material basis of the ghetto. With the bourgeois Jew, the hierarchy of goods is neither Jewish nor Christian, but bourgeois... The Jewish revolutionary, like the 'aryan', risks his own life for the freedom of mankind.  

Placing humanistic solidarity above traditional group interests did not prevent Horkheimer from realizing that the Jews were the pioneers of capitalism. This raises such difficult questions as: how did young radical Jews like Horkheimer react to the values of the tradition in which they grew up, how were the representatives of this tradition viewed by non-Jews; and how did these radicals locate their own position between what may have been antagonistic groups and ideologies?

The economic expedient behind this conversion indicates that the family's cultural heritage was not necessarily eradicated with this conversion. McLellan believes that "It is therefore quite possible that Henrietta Marx (Karl's mother) kept alive in the household certain Jewish customs and attitudes" (p.5.). Since Karl Marx was not an avowed Jew, my designation of him as a Jew should be restricted to his heritage and to whatever influence this heritage exerted on him.

6Horkheimer published this book under the pseudonym, Heinrich Regius.

7Max Horkheimer (Heinrich Regius), _Dämmerung_, p. 80, cited in Jay, p. 32.
When Jay complains that the members of the Frankfurt School "protested too much" against the suggestion that their activity could be accounted for by examining the Jewish question, the following questions come to mind: What were they protesting against; were they consciously trying to hide something or unconsciously repressing what they did not or could not acknowledge? Sometimes, attempts to hide something result in its being more conspicuous than if no camouflage were sought at all. It is perhaps not so far-fetched to suggest that the Jews who most avidly proclaimed their assimilation into German society only accentuated the belief that they were "outsiders", both for themselves and their non-Jewish countrymen.  

One of the most outstanding examples of a Jew alienating himself from his own heritage, even vilifying that heritage while asserting his identity with the best of Austro-German culture, is to be found in the person of Karl Kraus. As a resident of Vienna from the age of two until his death in 1936, Kraus was an outspoken critic of

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8 In connection with this, Jay has pointed out that when the Institute's members emigrated to New York they became more sensitive to the Jewish question. Pollock asked Adorno to drop the "Weisengrund" from his name (which he did) because there were too many Jewish-sounding names among the Institute's members. Years later, Adorno indirectly defended his action when writing:
German, and, particularly, Viennese society. The primary target of his invective was the Jewish press, usually those writers from the newspaper the *Neue Freie Presse*. In the thirty-seven years of his publication *Die Fackel*, Kraus never tired of exposing instances of what he called "linguistic indecency" on the part of these journalists: "in the Jewish press... which on principle bends and distorts every word that comes into its hands until it is deformed... ."

His obsessive attachment to the purity of the German language would not tolerate its being twisted and maimed for the purpose of salesmanship. Kraus went so far as to declare that the perversion of the German language was responsible for the commercialization of all values,

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The idea that the Jews should show more pride by sticking to their names is but a thin rationalization of the desire that they should come into the open so that one might recognize and persecute them more easily. [This is part of a memorandum written for the Institute's project on anti-Semitism in labor and to which Jay was given access. Cited in Jay, *op. cit.*, p. 308]

and that its abuse inevitably led to World War I and then to National Socialism. As early as 1900, Kraus wrote: "The press is the great factory which produces public opinion and is at the same time the Nuremberg funnel through which popular opinion is poured into each individual skull."

The ambivalent attitude of the non-Jew towards the Jew which Horkheimer perceived was given an ironic twist in the case of Kraus. Iggers suggests that "Kraus", a Jew, "considered the antisemitic press 'better' than the Jewish, believing it less intelligent and therefore less dangerous." The association of the Jew with the Enlightenment and with its opposite, barbarism and the deterioration of society, may account for both the envy and disdain which Horkheimer

10See chapter II, "The Absolute Value of Language" in Wilma Iggers' book on Kraus, especially p. 32. In Light of Iggers' masterful treatment of Kraus' life and work the following contention made by Ivo Frenzel is certainly nonsense: "The manipulation of language, the corruption of thought through the use of stereo-typed slogans -- which in Hitler's Germany eventually gained power over the whole life of the population -- had certainly not been anticipated by Kraus". - Ivo Frenzel, "Utopia and Apocalypse", in Social Research, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Summer, 1972), p. 318. Frenzel must have disregarded Kraus' claim that I know that this civilization has its terrors even without the possibility that a blood-drunken rabble will administer its wares; and sensitive as I am to symptoms, I can infer war and hunger from the use to which the press puts language, from the reversal of sense and value, from the emptying and degradation of every concept and every content... For National Socialism has not annihilated the press; the press created National Socialism. Apparently
saw directed against the Jews. The Jew who straddled two traditions, denying his own while eager to proclaim his assimilation into the other, was often the butt of criticism from both traditions. A profile of the criticism levelled at Kraus from both sides reveals the precarious position of the would-be reformer:

hated, feared, called names, but secretly envied, detested by Jews as 'one who soils his own nest,' rejected by the antisemites since, as they claim, nobody can shed his race ... Kraus fulfilled his mission; to clean out the stables of Augeas (the stables which according to Greek legend Hercules cleaned). 13


12Iggers, ibid., p. 109.

Kraus' abhorrence of the Jews was not due to any racial or religious hatred, but stemmed from a disdain for their alleged commercial mentality. He argued that the consumer engineers writing for the Jewish newspapers raised petty affairs to the level of \textit{Kultur} while genuine intellectuals and their works were banalized for philistine consumption, e.g., an advertisement displaying a picture of Nietzsche under which was inscribed: "\textit{Das Leben es ist kurz und mies, mit 'Berson' wird's zum Paradies!}"

In a letter to Leo Lowenthal written in July, 1946, Horkheimer echoes Kraus' observance of the crude and dangerous mixture arising from the combination of language subordinated to commerce, and also links it to the possibility that the Jews actually provoked the fascist hatred of them:

The root of fascist agitation is the fact that there is something rotten in language itself... We must beware of the idea that the fascist use of language is something radically new in our society... The distrust of the peasant against the city-dweller with his mastery of language was partly justified. This distrust is an element of the anti-semitism itself, and the Jew who manipulates language so easily is not free from guilt in the prehistory of what you explain as the fascist handling of language. Here, too, the Jew is the pioneer of capitalism. 15

\footnote{14}{"Life is short and ugly/ With 'Berson' it becomes paradise!" Berson was a brand of shoe soles. Karl Kraus, \textit{Die Fackel}, 391-392, Jan. 1914, p. 6, cited in Igers, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 208.}

\footnote{15}{Cited in Martin Jay, \textit{The Dialectical Imagination}, \textit{op. cit.},}
Inasmuch as the self-image of the Jews was often shrouded in secrecy, evidence providing features of this image can only be pieced together by collecting isolated episodes in their personal histories and judgments they made on their perception of the Jews' objective status in the social totality into relations which can be found as themes in the Institute's work. One example of a personal experience in Horkheimer's life revealing his attitude to the Jewish tradition is to be seen on the occasion of his marriage.\textsuperscript{16} When Horkheimer's father, a manufacturer, was told of his son's intention to marry the father's non-Jewish secretary, there ensued a period of estrangement between Horkheimer's parents and the new couple which lasted several years. Jay has rightly concluded that it was apparently more difficult for the parents to accommodate themselves to the idea that their son was marrying a non-Jew than it was for them to accept that he was becoming a revolutionary. If the Jews were the pioneers of capitalism and the price one had to pay in order to flourish under capitalism was integration, Horkheimer's marriage to a non-Jew indicates a double refusal: a refusal to submit himself to the strictures of the Jewish tradition (which his parents obviously embraced) and a refusal to subordinate himself to capitalist cooptation.

\textsuperscript{16}For Jay's comments on this issue see p. 35 in his work.
Horkheimer's personal struggle against being assimilated into the tradition which he was born found a sympathetic audience in the young men who organized the Institut für Sozialforschung. Unwilling to become part of the social, political, and economic structures sustaining the status quo, the necessity for an organization of men who would be dedicated to research rather than training teachers to serve the purposes of the state (these were called "mandarins" by the first director of the Institute, Carl Grünberg) became the subject of discussion between Felix Weil and Freidrich Pollock after they had attended a very fruitful First Marxist Work Week in 1922. With the encouragement of several members attached to Frankfurt University, Weil persuaded his father, a Jewish merchant who had made a sizeable fortune exporting grains from Argentina to Germany, to endow a number of research projects within an institutional framework. One of the arguments used to convince the elder Weil of the urgency of this venture was that there was a need to study anti-Semitism in Germany. The substantial yearly endowment provided by Weil allowed the Institute's members to be economically independent of the state. After

17 See Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination, ibid., p.11.
18 Ibid., p.5.
19 Hence, this must have been a sensitive issue as early as that date.
20 Pollock estimated that it was the equivalent of $120,000 according to its value in 1970. See Jay, ibid., p.8.
its official creation in February, 1923, the Institute would not have to rely on other means of support until 1942. With only its loose connection with Frankfurt University and the economic autonomy of its members, the Institute began cultivating its "outsider" status.

Indications that elements of the Jewish religion also found their way into Critical Theory cannot be overlooked. The two members of the Institute who openly spoke of the influence the Judaic scriptures had on their thought were Erich Fromm and Walter Benjamin. In his book Beyond The Chains of Illusion, Fromm recalled the powerful attraction the messianic strains in Jewish thought exerted on him during his youth:

More than anything else I was moved by the prophetic writings, by Isaiah, Amos, Hosea; not so much by their warnings and their announcement of disaster, but by their promise of the 'end of days'... The vision of universal peace and harmony between nations touched me deeply when I was twelve and thirteen years old. 21

With regard to Benjamin, the fascination with allegorical forms which was to preoccupy him in most of his works stems directly from his Talmudic education:

I have never been able to inquire and think otherwise than, if I may so put it, in a theological sense—namely in conformity with the Talmudic prescription regarding the forty-nine levels of meaning in every passage of the Torah. 22

However, the strong convictions apparently maintained by these two men were not typical of the other members of the Institute. In fact, Horkheimer tried to still Benjamin's exuberance23 while Fromm left the Institute in the same year that Adorno became a full-time member.

The most important idea contributed by Judaism and ending in a secular version in Critical Theory was the taboo against uttering the sacred. The Jews do not call God by his right name because to do so would be premature; the messianic age has not yet arrived. In an interview in Der Spiegel in 1970, Horkheimer acknowledged for the first time that this taboo might have influenced his reluctance to name or describe the "other", a negative concept essential to Critical Theory. The stress on non-identity which is to be found throughout Horkheimer and Adorno's writings is a refusal to reconcile subject and object, word and thing, or concept and reality as did Hegel. In the same way that Marx criticized Feuerbach's attempt to paint a picture of human nature,24 arguing that this is to make man supra-temporal, Horkheimer insisted upon refraining from describing

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23See Jay, ibid., p.203, for an account of Horkheimer's
a Utopia. Although Critical Theorists can experience "something of the freedom and spontaneity which will mark the future", Horkheimer believed that it is impossible for them to "determine what a free society will do or permit". Motivated by the desire to help bring about a free society, while leaving the structure of this society indeterminate Critical Theory distanced itself from any sort of utopian icon.

strong disapproval of Benjamin's contention that traditional philosophical jargon was useless.

See Karl Marx, The German Ideology: Part I, trans. and ed. by S. Ryazanskaya (Moscow 1964), where Marx claims that 'Feuerbach's 'conception' of the sensuous world is confined on the one hand to mere contemplation of it, and on the other to mere feeling; he says 'Man' instead of 'real historical man'." Cited in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. by Robert C. Tucker (New York 1972), p.133.


In 1937, Marcuse reiterated Horkheimer's insistence concerning the impossibility of determining what a society would be like after a revolution, while Adorno continually attacked the premature reconciliation of concept and reality into spurious harmonies. Adorno's efforts to unmask false absolutes were entirely in accord with Horkheimer's claim that "the identity of the ideal and reality is universal exploitation"; that the façades erected by bourgeois society to demonstrate the material existence of its ideal, equality, were designed to distract men from attempting to remedy their spiritual and material impoverishment.

The correspondence of these two formal elements contained in Critical Theory along with the Jewish religion's prohibition against speaking the name of God, seems to suggest that an important element of this religious belief was incorporated into Critical Theory. However, if we take Marx's advice and inquire about the "everyday Jew", and not merely the "sabbath Jew", we will come to see that the political, social, and economic circumstances in Germany after World War I heightened the disillusionment of many members of that society, and not only the Jews, such that

27Marcuse argues that "the subsequent construction of the new society cannot be the object of theory, for it is to occur as the free creation of the liberated individuals". - "Philosophy and Critical Theory", in Negations, trans. by Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston, 1968), p.135.


29See Karl Marx, Early Writings. Trans. and ed. by T.B. Bottomore (New York, 1964), p.34.
a critique of society like the one developed by the Frankfurt School cannot be reduced to a "Jewish theory", but can only be seen as a human response to social injustice and an attempt to abolish this injustice.

SECTION II

When Horkheimer assumed the directorship of the Institut für Sozialforschung in January, 1931, the dawn of National Socialism was already rising above the horizon and the golden age of Weimar was rapidly withering away. The outbreak of the first World War brought a sense of relief to the German people. With the mobilization of troops the economy was stimulated and so too was the German spirit. The stagnant, lethargic years of the Empire were over, "the war seemed a release from boredom, an invitation to heroism, a remedy for decadence." 30 In the ecstasy of release,

the old, the young, the unfit, volunteered with pure joy, and went to death with their mission. The war offered 'purification, liberation, and enormous hope'; it 'set the hearts of poets aflame with a sense of relief that 'a peaceful world had collapsed,' a world of which 'one was so tired, so dreadfully tired.' 31

31 Ibid., p.22.
The exuberance which occasioned the release of pent-up frustrations was not long lived, however. The establishment of the Weimar Republic after the war ushered in an era of deflated hopes and sabotaged dreams. The birth of the Republic was seen as a miscarriage. The socialist heirs to the Republic, the Spartacist and the Social Democrats, could not make peace with each other. Violence between the two groups went virtually uncurbed, and assassinations were frequent occurrences. In January, 1919, Rosa Luxemburg was killed and in the following month so was the Bavarian Prime Minister. While the Spartacists, who wanted to make Germany a Soviet republic, fought with the Social Democrats, who were seeking to create a parliamentary democracy, the old civil service, courts, and, most importantly, the military, were left intact. With the old social apparatus left untouched it was just a matter of time until the divided Socialists dissipated each other's energies and a military dictatorship again assumed power.

Despite the conflict between the different parties struggling for control of the government, there were still several issues upon which most people, regardless of their

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32 Ibid., p.23.
political sympathies, could agree. First, there was the indignation aroused in most Germans on account of the impositions stemming from the Versailles Treaty. Being forced to pay reparations when their economy was already depleted and accepting the occupation of their territory by foreign troops did not sit very well with the great majority of people and greatly contributed to a general feeling of impotence. The widespread disenchainment resulting from these restrictions eventually helped to foster public consent to the corporate imperialism which was to be the basis of National Socialism.33

A second issue which gained the assent of virtually everyone in Germany following the First World War was that the fragmentation or disintegration of German society had to be stopped, and a sense of unity had either to be restored or created anew. Although the desirability for unity was acknowledged by all, those to whom restoration appealed were stricken by a sense of loss and claimed to be searching for their roots (real or imaginary), whereas the progressives, among whom can be considered the members of the Frankfurt School, felt alienated from something they

33See Franz Neumann, Behemoth (New York 1944) for an in-depth discussion of the Social Democrat's failure to recognize that "the central problem was the imperialism of German monopoly capital, becoming ever more urgent with the continued growth of the process of monopolization" p.14.
had never had before: a rational society embodying freedom. For Horkheimer and his colleagues, those who demanded a return to a glorious past were substituting mythic repetition for historical development, confusing reformation with nostalgia, while those who sought a return to the security of a glorified and isolated past accused the young radicals who were producing expressionism in painting, theater, and literature, as well as atonal music and functional architecture; in short, these were they who were striving for modernity, for destroying the bonds of the German Völk. The rural conservatives who delighted in the pomp and splendor of the "gaudy parades, glittering medals, [and] sentimental heroic portraits", 34 which the Emperor and Empress of Imperial Germany found to their tastes, located the source of the new degenerate art in the big cities, Munich, Frankfurt, and Berlin. Moreover, they came to identify, as Franz Neumann has pointed out, "the city and its culture, its economics, and its politics with the Jew." 35 This association was not entirely unfounded since


Jews occupying intermediary positions were, so to speak, the concrete manifestation of capitalism for the old and middle classes. The small farmer went to the Jewish banker, to the Jewish grain or cattle dealer, or to a Jewish mortgage agent. The retailer who resented the existence of Jewish department store owners still had to obtain loans from a Jewish pawn shop or a Jewish banker. His creditors were Jews. 36

Although the Jew appeared to be the embodiment of capitalism, in reality he was only a mediator, an instrument for dispensing the produce of the giant industrial complexes where the accumulation of capital was really located. And these combines were by no means a Jewish monopoly. When Jews were elected to supervisory boards of trade or appointed as managers of factories it was because of their competence and had nothing to do with a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the economy, such as Hitler maintained when imposing regulations prohibiting Jews from participating in specific areas of the economy. 37 These restrictions were some of the first measures

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36 Ibid., p.123.

37 Hitler's infamous anti-Jewish economic legislation was carried out in an escalating fashion. The first measure taken occurred on April 7, 1933. Under the pretext of "'restoring the civil services'", only "those Jews who were war veterans, or whose parents or sons had been killed in the First World War, or who had already been employed in the service in August, 1914 could remain at their posts." (Ibid., p.116) The expulsion of non-Aryans from the civil services was only the beginning of a program which finally deprived the Jews of all rights of trade. The consummation of this legislation came on April 26, 1938, when the Jews were compelled to "'register and evaluate their total domestic and foreign properties and (by executive decree of the same day) forbade them to acquire by purchase or lease any industrial, agrarian, or forestry enterprise...." (Ibid., p.118).
instituted by Hitler to cleanse the "German blood" of "Jewish impurities". Even though German Anti-Semitism can be traced back as far as Martin Luther\textsuperscript{38} it was not until the inflation in the early 1920's that Anti-Semitism became so widespread, such that it would gain favor as the basis of a political platform.

\textsuperscript{38} The opening works of Luther's book, \textit{On The Jews And Their Lies}, written in 1543, are:

\begin{quote}
I had made up my mind to write no more either about the Jews or against them. But since I learned that these miserable and accursed people do not cease to lure to themselves even us, that is, the Christians, I have published this little book, so that I might found among those who opposed such poisonous activities of the Jews and who warned the Christians to be on their guard against them." (Martin Luther, \textit{On The Jews and Their Lies}, in Luther's Works, ed. by Franklin Sherman, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1971, volume 47, p.137).
\end{quote}

Page 267 shows that Luther's vehemence towards the Jews will not stop short of destroying them: "We are at fault in not slaying them." On Page 292 Luther's paranoia of being contaminated by the Jewish plague is presented in a style which might seem to the modern reader like a parody of Swift's satire, \textit{A Modest Proposal}:

\begin{quote}
I wish and I ask that our rulers who have Jewish subjects exercise a sharp mercy toward these wretched people, as suggested above, to see whether this might help (though it is doubtful), They must act like a good physician who, when gangrene has set in, proceeds without mercy to cut, saw, and burn flesh, veins, bones, and marrow. Such a procedure must also be followed in this instance. Burn down their synagogues, forbid all that I enumerated earlier, force them to work, and deal harshly with them... They surely do not know what they are doing; moreover, as people possessed, they do not wish to know it, hear it, or learn it. Therefore it would be wrong to be merciful and confirm them in their conduct. If
It is well known that the German defeat in World War I was claimed to be the result of having been stabbed in the back by the Jews at home (and also by the Communists abroad). The force of this indictment was mitigated during the period from 1924 to 1930 because of the flourishing economy stimulated by foreign loans and investments; but at the same time this prosperity created a demand for corporate expansion. Understanding that people will not willingly engage themselves in the service of foreign exploitation unless they believe that their own interests are threatened by an insidious alien power, the National Socialist theoreticians began to publish treatises outlining their theory of a German biological supremacy. In 1931 Friedrich List published his Memorandum On The Value And The Conditions Of An Alliance Between Great Britain And Germany in which the justifications for a German and British (it was argued that the British were Germans, i.e., Aryans) alliance, which would dominate the world, were given. It was argued that

this does not help we must drive them OUT like mad dogs, so that we do not become partakers of their abominable blasphemy and all their other vices and thus merit God's wrath and be damned with them. I have done my duty. Now let everyone see to his. I am exonerated.
The ruling section of the peoples of this earth has for some time been segregating itself according to descent... One speaks of a German, a Romanic, a Slavonic race in a political aspect. This distinction alone seems destined to exercise great influence upon the practical politics of the future... There is hardly any doubt that the Germanic race has, by virtue of its nature and character, been preferentially selected by Providence for the solution of the great task -- to lead the affairs of the world, to civilize the wild barbaric countries, to populate those still uninhabited, for none of the others has the capacity to emigrate en masse and to found more perfect communities in foreign lands... and to keep free of the influences of barbaric and semi-barbaric aborigines. 39

Formally, these arguments are no different than those rationalizing The White Man's Burden, Divine Right, or Manifest Destiny. What made them different, however, was their application not only to peoples abroad, but also at home in Germany. The first steps taken by the National Socialists towards the Aryanization of the world were the measures taken to rally Anti-Semitic hostilities among the German workers. Paradoxically, the anti-capitalist sentiment of these workers was encouraged by the National Socialist leaders who were themselves capitalists. Since the Jews were identified as the capitalists, once their property began to be expropriated by the government many of the workers believed that complete socialization would soon be forthcoming. In this way, racial proletarianism acted as the ideology of National Socialism, serving to consolidate the workers

so that they would be an effective instrument for capitalist imperialism.

The outcome of Hitler's crusade is too well known to require comment here. The point of presenting this short summary of a few of the elements constituting the forces in pre-World War II Germany is to give the reader an appreciation of the milieu from which Critical Theory appeared and was to analyse. If Horkheimer is right when he says that "part of the meaning of theory is the time when it was developed"\textsuperscript{40} (and I think he is), then we must not lose sight of the historical conditions in which Critical Theory originated and developed.

Inasmuch as historical conditions are only part of the meaning of theory, we will now turn to another part, the ideas of some men which Horkheimer recognized to be still applicable to the circumstances encountered in twentieth century bourgeois Western society.

SECTION THREE

The Intellectual Influences on Max Horkheimer and Critical Theory

The thinkers to whom Max Horkheimer and Critical Theory are most indebted I would designate as "dialectical humanists".

\textsuperscript{40}Max Horkheimer, "Authoritarian State", in \textit{Telos}, No. 15 (Spring 1973), p.11.
Among these I include Plato, Hegel, and Marx. What these philosophers had in common was a concern for the realization of human potentialities. In his own way, each of these men stressed the unique importance of man's foremost potential, reason. However, this should not be understood to mean that they espoused some sort of unqualified Rationalism. Horkheimer learned from these philosophers that "Rationalism in details can readily go with a general irrationalism. Actions of individuals, correctly regarded as reasonable and useful in daily life, may spell waste and even destruction for a society."  

This insight, which was originally grasped by Socrates and Plato, and subsequently by Hegel and Marx, already bears the requirement for any genuine humanism, i.e., that it be dialectical.

Horkheimer believed that the role of philosophy emerges as early as the trial of Socrates: "Socrates refused to submit to the prevailing customs and gods, maintaining that man should and can shape his own destiny with the use of his most precious possession, reason."  

In Socrates' concern for any question pertaining to the context of actual life, whether it be a matter of public policy or personal conduct, Horkheimer discerned the practical function of

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42 Ibid., p.260.
philosophy: to criticize what is prevalent, the aim of which is to "prevent mankind from losing itself in those ideas and activities which the existing organization of society instills into its members."\(^{43}\) The destruction of superstitions and ideologies promulgated by the state and uncritically accepted by its constituents, is not, however, the only function of criticism. As Horkheimer puts it, "the rational organization of human society is the aim and justification for dialectical refinement."\(^{44}\)

Stated simply, the Platonic notion of "dialectic" can be formulated as follows: seeing particulars in their particularity, but remembering always that this particularity is grounded in a total context, and thus is to be understood in terms of this total context. In its application, dialectic helps to "cancel and negate onesidedness in a more comprehensive system of thought, in a system more flexible and better adapted to reality."\(^{45}\) In examining Plato's \textit{Laches}, Horkheimer finds an example to demonstrate his point. When the interlocutor maintains that courage consists in not deserting on the battlefield, Socrates points out that

\(^{43}\)Ibid., p.265.
\(^{44}\)The \textit{Social Function Of Philosophy"}, ibid., p.267.
\(^{45}\)Ibid., p.265.
sometimes it would be foolish rather than courageous to remain and fight, as when a soldier is overwhelmingly outnumbered by the enemy. Therefore, it is seen that the isolation of particular actions from the context in which they were undertaken, and the "essentialization" of these into definitions of qualities such as "courage", can only lead to onesidedness and, often, to error.

Another example cited by Horkheimer to illustrate the necessity for dialectical refinement is taken from Plato's *Gorgias*. Here it is seen that

The trades of the baker, the cook, and the tailor are in themselves very useful. But they lead to injury unless hygienic considerations determine their place in the lives of the individual and mankind...if the happiness of the community is forgotten, these factors of security and prosperity become instruments of destruction. 46

Horkheimer appreciated the comprehensive scope of Plato's investigations and stressed the dialectical rationalism with which he confronted human problems. The following passage expresses in summary form Horkheimer's understanding of Plato's philosophy:

For Plato, philosophy meant the tendency to bring and maintain the various energies and branches of knowledge in a unity which would transform these partially destructive elements into productive ones...

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46Ibid., p.266.
This is the meaning of the demand that philosophers should rule. It means lack of faith in the prevailing popular thought. Unlike the latter, reason never loses itself in a single idea though that idea might be the correct one at any given moment. Reason exists in the whole system of ideas, in the progression from one idea to another, so that every idea is understood and applied in its true meaning, that is to say, in its meaning within the whole of knowledge. Only such thought is rational thought. 47

Examination of the particular in terms of the social "totality" is one of the few principles Critical Theory insisted upon. Without the mediation of particular actions through this totality, even those actions undertaken with good intentions based on limited insight can produce an effect, the opposite of which was desired and expected. Such may be the case with the growth of science and technology:

Science and technology are only elements in an existing social totality, and it is quite possible that, despite all their achievements, other factors, even the totality itself, could be moving backwards, that man could become increasingly stunted and unhappy, that the individual could be ruined and nations headed towards disaster. 48

The transformation of particular things, ideas, concepts, institutions, and conditions into their opposites has also come to be understood as a series of moments in an historical process. Such a view has been explicated by Hegel, and it is to his ideas that we now must turn.

47"The Social Function Of Philosophy", *ibid.*, p.266.

When we observe that Horkheimer defined philosophy as "the methodical and steadfast attempt to bring reason into the world", it becomes clear why he claimed that Hegel was "the philosopher to whom we are most indebted in many respects...". True, there was Kant and those of the whole Enlightenment tradition who emphasized Vernunft in their discussions, yet it was only Hegel who conceived of the 'becoming' of reason, not only as the development of a so-called 'faculty' located in the head of an isolated individual, but as the very substance of the world we perceive.

Despite (or perhaps, in spite of) the elegance of Hegel's treatment of private right, morality, family, civil society, state, and world history, Horkheimer viewed the outcome of Hegel's Phenomenology, the overcoming of alienation in self-consciousness, as a purely internal resolution, "a personal peace treaty between the philosopher and an inhuman world." The persistent escalation of injustice which Horkheimer witnessed in daily life convinced him of the truth of Marx's criticism of Hegel, that Hegel's proclamation establishing the existence of human freedom was only

49 "The Social Function of Philosophy", ibid., p.263.

50 Ibid., p.270.


52 Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory", op. cit., p.204.
a cognitive resolution divorced from conditions in the real world. 53

Horkheimer's judgment on this aspect of Hegel's philosophy can be interpreted as a decisive force in the construction of theoretical guidelines adopted by Critical Theory. We should take notice, however, that when Horkheimer rejects Hegel's unification of individual and state interest, this denial is qualified with an acknowledgement of Hegel's positive achievement. Following Marx's criticism of Hegel on this same issue, Horkheimer explains that "Hegel is an idealist in that he presents his system as absolute, yet he created the conceptual tool for overcoming such a distorted idea." 54

The 'tool' which Horkheimer is referring to is of course the dialectic.

Hegel's greatest contribution to Critical Theory

53 See Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic", in Early Writings, ed. and trans. by T.B. Bottomore (New York, 1964). Marx criticizes Hegel's Phenomenology as follows:

When Hegel conceives wealth, the power of the state, etc. as entities alienated from the human being, he conceives them only in their thought form. They are entities of thought and thus simply an alienation of pure (i.e. abstract) philosophical thought. The whole movement, therefore, ends in absolute knowledge. p.200.

54 Max Horkheimer, "Materialism And Metaphysics", in Critical Theory, op. cit., p.32. In his "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic" Marx writes that

The Phenomenology is a concealed, unclear and mystifying criticism but in so far as it grasps the alienation of man (even though man appears only as mind) all the elements of criticism are contained in it, and are often presented and worked out in a manner which goes far beyond Hegel's own point of view. (p.202.)
lies in the ammunition he provided for the Frankfurt School's critique of positivism. Dialectic corrects the positivist fixation of specific elements extracted from their positions among other elements comprising a totality. It reproduces the very movement of both mental and physical entities as they are transformed into their opposites. Under the influence of Marx, Horkheimer appropriated Hegel's notion of dialectic when specifying the object of Critical Theory as

the transformation of the concepts which dominate the economy into their opposites: fair exchange into a deepening of social injustice, a free economy into a monopolistic control, productive work into rigid relationships which hinder production, the maintenance of society's life into the pauperization of the people. 55

In his preface to Capital Engels succinctly formulated the inherent deficiency in any sort of positivism:

It is a matter of course that when things and their mutual interrelations are conceived, not as fixed, but as changing, that their mental images, the ideas concerning them, are likewise subject to change and transformation; that they cannot be sealed up in rigid definitions, but must be developed in the historical or logical process of their formation. 56

The notion of dynamism expressed in this passage was to become the basis for Horkheimer's critique of conceptual 'reification', as well as for the application of dialectic to remedy the distortions of real life processes created by reification. If truth is really immanent in the object of philosophy and not in a philosopher's head, then it follows that conceptual inflexibility not only proves to be a 'mental' deficiency, but it can also retard the very coming to be of truth. Hegel's abandonment of the formal 'truth' in traditional logic was, according to Marcuse, "a protest against divorcing truth and its forms from concrete processes; a protest against severing truth from any direct guiding influence on reality." 57

Positivists, or those who have been called the espousers of "categorial sclerosis", in the persons of Turgot and d'Alembert, proclaimed "the dogma of the invariability of natural laws." 58 It was argued by Comte that man's actions

57Herbert Marcuse, Reason And Revolution, op. cit., p.102.
58"Materialism And Metaphysics", op. cit., p.36.
must be adapted to these laws. According to Horkheimer, the positivists claimed that man's actions are dependent on "his present knowledge of the natural order but not the dependence of both the order itself and the knowledge of it on man's activity." Critical Theory shares with positivism the belief that only what is given in sense experience is real, but whereas positivism absolutizes the sensory given, Critical Theory recognizes that the senses also change in the process of history and that "theory is always more than sensibility alone", and therefore cannot


"Theological and metaphysical philosophy do not hold sway today except in the system of social study. They must be excluded from this final refuge. Mainly, this will be done through the basic interpretation that social movement is necessarily subject to invariant physical laws, instead of being governed by some kind of will. --cited in Marcuse, op. cit., p. 344.

60Horkheimer, "Materialism And Metaphysics", op. cit., p. 36.

61Ibid., p. 42.
be totally reduced to sensations. 52

This apparently Kantian conviction really has its roots in what Herbert Marcuse deems to be Hegel's recognition that "The realization of reason is not a fact but a task." 63 According to Marcuse, Hegel held that

The form in which the objects immediately appear is not yet their true form. What is simply given is at first negative, other than its real potentialities. It becomes true only in the process of overcoming this negativity, so that the birth of the truth requires the death of the given state of being. 64

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62 It can be said that Critical Theory showed a greater affinity for metaphysics than it did for positivism in that, as Stanley Aronowitz has suggested in his Introduction to the volume of Horkheimer essays, Critical Theory:

Metaphysics at least acknowledges a discrepancy between appearance and essence, universal and particular, whereas positivism does not. Hence metaphysics contains the polarity which makes dialectical thought possible. (p. xvi)


64 Ibid., p. 26.
In its opposition to the positivist's given 'facts' and Hume's 'custom', Hegel's dynamic conception of truth provided a philosophical justification for Critical Theory's appeal to an "other" than the present conditions in which human existence was seen as stunted. In Horkheimer's criticism of Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, we can detect this Hegelian influence. Mannheim believed that all philosophy serves one function, ideology. He argued that ideas, as ideologies, could all be traced to specific social groups, and, thus, disputes between conflicting philosophical claims could ultimately be reduced to these strata of mankind. If Mannheim is correct, then the application of the concept of ideology to every pattern of thought denies that there is any philosophical truth over and above those attributed to isolated societies. Although Horkheimer acknowledged that there may be some benefit in Mannheim's approach he also saw that it was too narrow and superficial insofar as it could not explain the historical processes determining the formation of particular social groups. But his most serious objection to Mannheim's approach, which reflects the Hegelian influence we have been writing of, is that Mannheim's view

is not calculated to explain the social function of philosophy, but rather to perform one itself, namely, to discourage thought from its practical tendency of pointing to the future. 65

The question, wherein lies the 'truth'? was one which Critical Theory never resolved, or could not resolve in other than a pluralistic fashion. As we have seen, Horkheimer's epistemology contains an inherent contradiction: it reflects both a description of the world he lived in and a vision of the future. On the one hand it was maintained that no truth was outside of time, that truth could be discovered in the historical process itself. Yet we have also seen that truth bears an essential relation to the "other", i.e., the future. Jay may be right when he claims that for Critical Theory "What is true is whatever fosters social change in the direction of a rational society", but in his dogmatic, undialectical assertion of this, it would appear as if Critical Theory embraced some kind of Pragmatism when in fact Horkheimer spent a good deal of his energy in denouncing Pragmatism. To clarify Jay's statement would require a dialectical account of the process whereby truth comes-to-be, and this account would have to incorporate the 'negative' element or state of privation which is the driving force behind the realization of truth.

67 Horkheimer's criticisms of Positivism can be found especially in the essays "The Latest Attack On Metaphysics" and "Traditional And Critical Theory". Both of these essays can be found in Critical Theory, (New York, 1972). For further elaboration see Max Horkheimer, The Eclipse Of Reason, (New York, 1947), esp. ch. I.
In the work of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse we can find instances when the 'negative', as the 'false', is seen as the pre-condition for truth; and in accordance with the Hegelian notion that when specific quantities reach a saturation point they become transformed into something qualitatively different, falsehood is encouraged so that its limit may be reached, whereupon it will be superseded, thereby approximating the truth more closely. Thus, Horkheimer argues that "the way toward overcoming positivistic thinking does not lie in a regressive revision of science, but in driving this will to truth further until it conflicts with present reality."^68 Similarly, in his essay entitled, "The Affirmative Character Of Culture", Marcuse asserts that "In suffering the most extreme reification man triumphs over reification."^69 An application of Marcuse's thesis was provided by Horkheimer and Adorno in their book The Dialectic of Enlightenment. Here they explained how the circus performer, whose reified body was a paradigm of the commodity character of mass art, could overcome his objectifi-


cation by carrying it to an extreme.\textsuperscript{70} We can see then, that the 'truth' which fosters social change in the direction of a rational society may actually be falsehood, if understood dialectically.

The Hegelian notion of the negation of the negation, seen as an incremental process by which the absolute truth would be reached by stages wherein relative truths were embodied and superseded, greatly affected Marx as well. In considering Marx's influence in the formation of Critical Theory we cannot create the impression that there is a radical rupture between his thought and Hegel's, but, rather, we must discern the ways in which Marx inverted Hegel's idealism and how this inversion was appropriated by Critical Theory.

In his "Critique Of Hegel's Dialectic" Marx expresses his debt to Hegel:

\begin{quote}
The outstanding achievement of Hegel's \textit{Phenomenology}--the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle--is, first, that Hegel grasps the self-creation of man as a process, objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and transcendence of this alienation, and that he, therefore, grasps the nature of \textit{labour}, and conceives objective man (true, because real man) as the result of his own \textit{labour}. \textsuperscript{71}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{71}Karl Marx, \textit{Early Writings}, \textit{op. cit.}, p.202.
In considering Hegel's achievement, Marx did not fail to see that in recognizing the centrality of labor, Hegel was speaking of only an abstract mental labor, the effort of pure reflection, self-consciousness, to overcome its alienated object, consciousness. The resolution of this purely internal antagonism did not, however, have any effect whatsoever upon the objects of sensibility, i.e., objects in the material world. Thus, the truly human becomes the philosopher whose self-consciousness recognizes itself in the absolute spirit. This of course leads to stoical resignation in the face of worldly turmoil: what is human and what is natural are severed.

This idealistic bifurcation had dire consequences for those who suffered under the oppressive conditions of inhuman labor relationships. Their humanity was to be sought, not in changing those conditions which perpetuated their enslavement, but in resigning themselves to this fact and trying to cultivate their consciousness as best they could. Marx realized the inadequacy of Hegel's flight from the base world to the sublime mind and set out to anchor Hegel's "outstanding achievement" to the material conditions responsible for the phenomenon of alienation.

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72Ibid., see pp. 214-215.

Many people are guilty of appropriating Marx's writings solely for the economic insights contained therein, and others pay exclusive attention to the revolutionary mandate they believe is addressed to them and which they are to act upon immediately. Both of these fixations fail to comprehend the historical component in Marx's analyses and lead, therefore, to a kind of dialectical myopia. On the one hand, it would be erroneous to attribute an eternal primacy to the economic substructure of society. Both the economic substructure and the political, social, and cultural superstructure interact at all times, although it cannot be denied that under capitalism the economic base is the primary impetus in the formation of societal relations. To make a fetish out of economics, however, is to lose sight of the dialectical unity comprising "political economy"; it is to divorce economics from political determinations. Marx himself is very explicit on this matter. In section four of Capital, entitled, "The Fetishism Of Commodities And The Secret Thereof" Marx insists that his view that each special mode of production and the social relations corresponding to it, in short, that the economic structure of society, is the real basis on which the juridical and political superstructure is raised, and to which definite
social forms of thought correspond; that the mode of production determines the character of the social, political, and intellectual life generally, all this is very true for our own times, in which material interest preponderate, but not for the middle ages, in which Catholicism, nor for Athens and Rome, where politics reigned supreme. 74

To reduce Marx's analysis of bourgeois economy to a set of eternal verities would clearly undermine the necessity to examine the historically changing interrelations of substructure and superstructure, a necessity of which Marx was acutely aware. It is also apparent from the above citation that Marx did not believe that the superstructure was merely an epiphenomenon of the substructure. As we shall see in a later section, Horkheimer accounted for the failure of Marx's prophecy (concerning the proletarian revolution) to be realized, in terms of the enormous technological developments making possible the more subtle and effective means of acculturating workers into bourgeois society.

When Jay claims that "the central position of labor in Marx's work and his concomitant stress on the problem of alienated labor in capitalist society played a relatively minor role in Horkheimer's writings", 75 he demonstrates a failure to understand how Critical Theory reflected the


75 Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination, op. cit., p.57.
inter-relation of the economic substructure and the political, legal, and cultural superstructure of their day, mediated through the very source of alienated labour in capitalist society, the origin and exchange of commodities. Although Horkheimer did not produce an exhaustive inventory of the economic variables determining the scope of alienated labour or extoll the virtues of use-value, almost all of his discussions can be traced to the very locus of alienated labour, i.e., the "mysterious objectivity" of the commodity. Perhaps the question relating this aspect of Marx's thought with the concerns of Critical Theory was raised by Georg Lukács; "how far is commodity exchange together with its structural consequences able to influence the total outer and inner life of society?" In a certain sense all of Horkheimer's analyses of modern bourgeois society are tentative answers to this question, for it is when labor-power becomes a commodity that the phenomenon of alienation, and accompanying it,

reification, originates.\textsuperscript{77}

Just one example typifying Horkheimer's response to Lukács' question is the following: "In the system of the free market economy which pushed men to labor-saving discoveries and finally subsumed them in a global mathematical formula, its specific offspring, machines, have become means of destruction not merely in the literal sense: they have made not work but the workers superfluous."\textsuperscript{78} Observations of this sort, following upon the principle accepted by Critical Theory and articulated by Marcuse, that "in a rational reality, the labor process should not determine the general existence of men; to the contrary, their needs should determine the labor process,"\textsuperscript{79} led Horkheimer to

\textsuperscript{77}See Karl Marx, \textit{Capital}, trans. by Samuel Moore and Edward Abeleng, ed. by Frederick Engels, (Moscow, n.d.), vol. I, pp. 72-85. About the articles of exchange Marx writes:

\begin{quote}
A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour, (p.72).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{78}Max Horkheimer. "Authoritarian State", in \textit{Telos}, XIV (Spring, 1973), p.3.

\textsuperscript{79}Herbert Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory", in \textit{Negations, op. cit.}, p.144.
question Marx's assessment that the proletariat would unite and overthrow their capitalist oppressors. For Horkheimer, the problem of fusing theory and revolutionary praxis centered around a third factor, class-consciousness (or what, for Critical Theory, might be more aptly termed, "class unconsciousness").

As a pre-condition to revolutionary praxis, Critical Theory maintained that those who will be part of the struggle must know just what it is that they are fighting against, and what for. If potential revolutionaries (the proletariat) are duped by the calculated distractions fabricated by their oppressors, then it will be impossible for them to be sufficiently motivated to fight or even collectively identify who or what they are supposed to be fighting against.80

80See Karl Marx, "The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", in Karl Marx, Early Writings, ed. and trans. by T.B. Bottomore (New York, 1964), pp. 55-56. No class in civil society can play this part [revolutionary vanguard] unless it can arouse, in itself and in the masses, a moment of enthusiasm in which it associates and mingles with society at large, identifies itself with it, and is felt and recognized as the general representative of this society... In order to attain this liberating position, and the political direction of all spheres of society, revolutionary energy and consciousness of its own power do not suffice.
When Horkheimer claimed that "thought itself is already a sign of resistance, the effort to keep oneself from being deceived any longer", he was not advocating a retreat into the seclusion of an atomic self-consciousness, but was suggesting that the eradication of thoughtless conformity to the then prevalent ideologies which assisted in the dehumanization of man, must be the first priority if there was to be a reversal of the trend towards barbarism.

Our next section will be entirely devoted to a presentation and consideration of Max Horkheimer's essay, "Traditional And Critical Theory", which, as the "Constitution" of Critical Theory, delegates the boundaries separating theory from praxis.

Before concluding this chapter we would like to cite a passage from one of Marx's letters which reflects some of the many elements discussed in this section:

The reform of consciousness consists exclusively in the fact that one lets the world become aware of its consciousness, that one awakens the world from the dream it is dreaming about itself, that one interprets its own actions to the world... our motto must be: reform of consciousness, not through dogmas but by analyzing the mystical self-confused consciousness, whether it has a political or religious content. One will see, then, that

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that the world has possessed already for a long time a dream of something, of which it must only have consciousness in order to possess it in reality. One will see that we are not dealing with a big hiatus between past and present but with the realization of the thought of the past. Eventually one will see that mankind does not begin any new task but accomplishes its old task with consciousness... this is a confession, nothing else. In order to have its sins forgiven, mankind has only to explain them for what they are. 82

Throughout the convulsions experienced as a result of World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, accompanied by the bitter after-taste of the fruits of the Russian Revolution turned sour, Horkheimer clung to Marx's hope and confidence as a drowning man does to a buoy keeping him afloat amidst raging torrents. The revolutionary reorganization of a society into one which would be geared towards fulfilling human needs and not emasculating them clearly depends upon an adequate comprehension on the part of each member expected to contribute his effort to the establishment of the new order, not only of the human destruction wrought under existing conditions, but of the reasons underlying this destruction. Marx was not the first who attempted to unshackle men from the chains of illusion.

In Plato's cave allegory the prisoners need only take the initiative to revolve 180° to be in a position to begin to understand the poverty of their subterranean existence; the same holds true for the members of modern society. Social amnesia must be replaced with a conscious awareness of social processes, which, if not controlled by man, will control him. The preservation and growth of humanity depends upon this effort.
CHAPTER II

When Max Horkheimer's essay, "Traditionelle und Kritische Theorie", appeared in the Institute's publication in 1937 it had already been four years since the members of the Institute had left Germany. They had not come to the United States immediately but had temporarily relocated in Geneva. In the short time they remained in Switzerland, the name of the Institute was changed to La Société Internationale de Recherche Sociale with Max Horkheimer and Friedrich Pollock as its two 'presidents'. With the threat of a Nazi invasion of Switzerland looming large, Horkheimer and his colleagues sought out the possibilities of reestablishing the Institute in England or France. With the aid of Celestin Bouglé and Henri Bergson in Paris, and Alexander Farquharson, the editor of the Sociological Review, in London, small branches of La Société were opened in London and Paris.¹

In May 1934 Horkheimer first visited the United States and met the president of Columbia University, Nicholas Murray Butler. Horkheimer returned to Switzerland with an offer to become affiliated with Columbia University and for the

¹See Jay, Ibid., pp. 30-39.
Institute to install itself in one of the university's buildings on the upper west side of New York City. Within months the move was made. All the members who formed the core of the Institute emigrated at this time, except for Erich Fromm who had been in the U.S. since 1932, and Theodor Adorno who did not arrive in New York until 1933.

Reflecting upon the period of the Institute's exile in the United States, Jay has written: "In one sense the Institut's period of exile can be said to have begun before its actual expulsion by the Nazis. After the failure of the German revolution, its members, at least those around Horkheimer, were alienated from all political factions on the left" (p. 36). Once established in America, the "outsider" status maintained in Germany was fortified. The decision to continue publishing in the German language precluded any widespread dissemination of the Institute's ideas in the American academic community. This decision was made, based on the belief that the German humanistic tradition was threatened with extinction, and, as such, could be preserved only by those in exile.

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2In this chapter the pagination referring to all citations from the essay, "Traditional and Critical Theory", will appear in brackets following each citation.
It was not until 1940, when the Librairie Félix Alcan could no longer risk publishing the Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung in Paris that the Institute's journal was renamed "Studies in Philosophy and Social Science" and its contents published exclusively in the English language. By that time, however, much of the seminal work had already been published in German and was not translated into English until many years thereafter.

Although it is understandable why the Frankfurt School chose to retain its mother tongue it is somewhat distasteful to find that Horkheimer criticized other German refugees for rapidly adopting the English language: "That the German intellectuals don't need long to change to a foreign language as soon as their own bars them from a sizeable readership, comes from the fact that language already serves them more in the struggle for existence than as an expression of truth." Later in this chapter we will explicitly deal with some of the contributing factors which might have provoked Horkheimer to make such a statement, but I must agree with Jay that "Because of the Institute's financial independence, Horkheimer and his colleagues could remain

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3Max Horkheimer, "Autoritarer Staat", cited in Jay, op. cit., p.114. The English translation of this essay is at variance with Jay's citation of the original, concerning this passage. In the English version this passage reads: "Whenever a new jargon stands between themselves and the paying readers it does not take the German intellectuals long to learn to use it. Language has always been of more use to them in the struggle for existence than in the expression of truth." in Telos, op. cit., p.16. There is a considerable difference between adopting a new 'jargon' and adopting a 'foreign language'. Without the original, I cannot clarify this discrepancy.
above 'the struggle for existence' forced on many of the other emigres.'

We are not trying to suggest that the Institute refused to extend its aid to refugees, for that would be untrue. What should be considered, however, is that despite their alleged fidelity to the proletariat, the workers, the Frankfurt School insisted upon its isolation from these workers. Precisely because of this stance, Bertolt Brecht derisively interpreted their activity, calling them "Tsis", "intellectual, or more precisely small commodity producers, who specialize in the manufacture of arguments, excuses, rationalizations, in exchange for a suitable remuneration." 

Brecht, of course, had his own ideas about what constituted praxis. In the course of our discussion of "Traditional and Critical Theory" we shall see how Horkheimer interpreted praxis in the context of historically changing conditions. However, change can only be understood with reference to a stationary background. Such was the concept of truth for Critical Theory and so too was Horkheimer's belief that "the thrust towards a rational society... is really innate in every man," Horkheimer would certainly

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agree with Marcuse when the latter said that "Theory will preserve the truth even if revolutionary practice deviates from its proper path. Practice follows the truth, not vice versa." But if human will plays a part in the coming-to-be of truth, as Horkheimer believed it did, then at what point does the articulation of truth by way of exposition or argument, in short, when does theoretical elaboration defeat the aims of human will, which it was intended to bring to fruition? This can be stated bluntly: when is it time to shut up and begin doing what you have been speaking of doing? As we shall see, Horkheimer did not think that the issue of praxis was so simple or straightforward.

"Traditional and Critical Theory" begins with the most obvious question, "What is 'theory'?" A contemporary scientist might specify 'theory' as the totality of propositions relating to a specific subject and might further clarify his conception by pointing out that there would be a very small amount of these propositions which would be considered principles, and, from these, all the rest could be deduced. The general goal of all theory, he might say, is a universal systematic science whose principles apply to all possible objects. Such a view could be traced back to Descartes.

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In his *Discourse on Method* Descartes claimed that if we adhere to deductive reasoning "there can be nothing so remote that we cannot reach to it, nor so recondite that we cannot discover it."\(^8\) John Stuart Mill believed that this goal could be attained inductively, while Husserl tried to formulate internally consistent principles which would be capable of generating experience, phenomenologically. What is characteristic of traditional theories is that for all of them "the basic requirement... is that all the parts should intermesh thoroughly and without friction" (190).

Since the natural sciences had succeeded in abbreviating even the form of propositions, substituting a mathematical system of symbols for the rather cumbersome word and sentence, the human sciences have tried to follow their lead. After all, the technological innovations which natural science made possible surely proved their superiority over the speculatively oriented human sciences, and therefore deserved to be emulated by the latter. Sociological research has taken this course. The collection of statistical data and the description of these based upon comparative similarities and differences is understood as being the prerequisite to the formation of general concepts. Durkheim

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opted for an abridgment of the empirical emphasis in sociology. He realized that induction does not suffice: "We must, then, choose the most essential characteristics for our classification." But how, then, will the initial 'choice' of principles which will subsequently guide the selection of data be made? Horkheimer claims that regardless of how they are chosen their function in the ideal theoretical system remains the same.

Once a law or principle has been ascertained, there will undoubtedly be an abundant amount of phenomena which will exemplify the law or principle. For the phenomenologically oriented sociologist, "the really hypothetical character of the essential law is manifested as soon as the question arises whether in a particular case we are dealing with an instance of the essence in question or of a related essence, whether we are faced with a poor example of one type or a good example of another type." (192-3). Both the judgment which initiates the selection of principles and the judgment which identifies the correspondence of specific phenomena to one or more of these principles surely arise from antecedent conditions. The question is, what are these conditions and how do they effect the development of theory?

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Horkheimer recognizes that the genesis of theory does not occur in a social vacuum but that there are economic, political, and religious interests which determine the direction and procedures of theory:

The manipulation of physical nature and of specific economic and social mechanism demand alike the amassing of a body of knowledge such as is supplied in an ordered set of hypotheses. The technological advances of the bourgeois period are inseparably linked to this function of the pursuit of science. (194)

The acceptance of new discoveries and the realignment of current ideas does not depend exclusively upon logical considerations. The unwillingness to accept the Copernican theory in the sixteenth century had nothing to do with the internal consistency of the theory's principles but with a theological model of the universe upon which the existing social relations were justified. The preservation and strengthening of existent societal structures and relations does not exert its influence only upon such comprehensive theories such as Copernicus!, but also affects minor scientific discoveries:

Sheer logic alone will not tell us whether the discovery of new varieties in particular areas of inorganic or organic nature, whether in the chemical laboratory or in paleontological research, will be the occasion for modifying old classifications or for elaborating new ones (195).
As Horkheimer sees it, "Bringing hypotheses to bear on facts is an activity that goes on, ultimately, not in the savant's head but in industry" (196). The role of the scientist or scholar in the social life-processes is to integrate "facts into conceptual frameworks and to keep the latter up-to-date so that he and all who use them may be master of the widest possible range of facts. Experiment has the scientific role of establishing facts in such a way that they fit into theory as currently accepted" (196). When the theoretical activity characteristic of specialized science is elevated to a theory of knowledge, insuperable difficulties arise as to where the source of knowing activity is located. To a member of bourgeois society the world is perceived as a sum-total of facts: it is there and must be accepted. But the world which is perceived passively is really the product of the activity of society as a whole. The objects we perceive evidence their having been worked on by other men and our very perception is in some measure the result of interpretations and expectations projected by society. Thus, both object and perceiving organ have an historical character, "and yet the individual perceives himself as receptive and passive in the act of perception" (200). This signifies to Horkheimer that the process of perception, while mediated through the activity of society,
is "just as much a result of the modern mode of production, as the perception of a man in a tribe of primitive hunters and fishers is the result of the conditions of his existence (as well, of course, as of the object of perception)" (201).

Thirty years before Marshall McLuhan had observed that "all media are extensions of some human faculty -- psychic or physical",¹⁰ Horkheimer realized that man was becoming enslaved by his technology. His insight was expressed in the following way: "In this context the proposition that tools are prolongations of human organs can be inverted to state that the organs are also prolongations of the tools" (201). The advanced technology and industry which marks the 'progress' of civilization shapes our perception to the degree where, not only are the objects encountered in urban areas seen as having been worked upon by men, but even virgin nature is seen as an underdeveloped resource to be exploited by men. Thus, "even where there is question of experiencing natural objects as such, their very naturalness is determined by contrast with the social world and, to that extent, depends upon the latter" (202.)

Horkheimer shows that the very real antagonism between 'manipulator' and 'manipulated', which finds its epistemological expression in the 'active-passive' dualism, is preserved in Kant's idealist philosophy. Passive sensation receives its determination from the active understanding, yet why is the understanding assured that the manifold given in sensation will obey its rules? Kant could only answer this by postulating a transcendental subject which enforces the subordination of the manifold given in sensation to the laws of the understanding, but which is obscure and unavailable for scrutiny. For Kant there is "an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze."\(^{11}\) Horkheimer translates Kant's idealistic antagonism into the real situation faced by an individual in bourgeois society. The elusive transcendental subject upon which individual knowledge and perception depends is the activity of society. In reflecting the antagonism between the individual and society in his idealism, Kant was not wrong in claiming that the transcendental subject is irrational despite its rationality, for

The bourgeois type of economy, despite all the ingenuity of the competing individuals in it, is not governed by any plan; it is not consciously directed to a general goal; the life of society as a whole proceeds from this economy only at the cost of excessive friction, in a stunted form, and almost, as it were, accidentally. (203)

Horkheimer praises the thorough-going two-sidedness in Kant's philosophy because it exposes the contradictions of human activity in the modern period without resolving these prematurely, as Hegel did. These contradictions result from the fact that

The collaboration of men in society is the mode of existence which reason urges upon them, and so they do apply their powers and thus confirm their own rationality. But at the same time their work and its results are alienated from them, and the whole process with all its waste of work-power and human life, and with its wars and all its senseless wretchedness, seems to be an unchangeable force of nature, a fate beyond man's control. (204)

While the activity which Horkheimer calls 'traditional theory' receives its embodiment and justification from the technological accomplishments it made possible, it becomes questionable as to whether it should be considered 'progressive' or 'regressive' insofar as these accomplishments confront men as alien powers which threaten their freedom. In presupposing the present economy and serving to perpetuate the inequalities stemming from this economy, traditional theory is blind to the fluctuating ratio between the cumulative activity of society and the freedom and happiness of the human individual.
As opposed to the specialized efforts of traditional theory, Critical Theory is an activity having "society itself for its object. The aim of this activity is not simply to eliminate one or other abuse, for it regards such abuses as necessarily connected with the way in which the social structure is organized" (206-7). Critical Theory is suspicious of concepts such as better, useful, productive, etc., because when these are isolated from the social totality the activities they are intended to denote are often the opposite of such concepts, when considered in reference to the sphere of individual freedom. Critical Theory considers the overall framework which is conditioned by the blind interaction of individual activities (that is, the existent division of labor and the class distinctions) to be a function which originates in human action and therefore is a possible object of planful decision and rational determination of goals. (207)

While Critical Theorists identify themselves with this totality they also recognize that society stands in opposition to human will and reason insofar as it is the result of capital. The tension which characterizes the concepts of Critical Theory reflects the antagonisms between individual and society under present conditions. Though Critical Theory accepts the economic categories of work, value, and productivity as presented in the existing order,
"the critical acceptance of the categories which rule social life contains simultaneously their condemnation" (208). Here we can see Horkheimer extending Marx's conception of criticism: "Criticism is no longer an end in itself, but simply a means; indignation is its essential mode of feeling, and denunciation its principal task."\(^{12}\) Several lines later we can see Horkheimer radicalizing Marx's belief that "it is not enough that thought should seek to realize itself; reality must also strive towards thought"\(^{13}\) when claiming that "Reason cannot become transparent to itself as long as men act as members of an organism which lacks reason" (208).

The difference between Critical Theory and the specialized efforts of sociological research does not refer so much to their subject as to their object. While sociology examines ideologies in order to reduce them to their social location, Critical Theory performs the same activity but does not view this activity as an end in itself, "its intentions go beyond prevailing ways of acting..." (209). Critical Theorists are said to "look towards a new kind of organization of work" (209). In contradistinction to the sociology of knowledge, the activity designated

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\(^{12}\)Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", op. cit., p.46.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., p.54.
as Critical Theory lacks the assurance of pragmatic utility in that "the objective realities given in perception are conceived as products which in principle should be under human control and, in the future at least, will in fact come under it, these realities lose the character of pure factuality" (209). Until the antagonism between individual rationality and the activity of an irrational society is transcended, Critical Theory will have a "concept of man as in conflict with himself until this opposition is removed" (210).

Critical Thought is opposed to both 'psychologism', which finds the solution to the world's problems in individual therapy, and to 'sociologism', which reduces the individual to a cog in an objective social mechanism. Psychologism, which is characteristic of bourgeois thought, views the ego as a tyrant to which nature is subject, while sociologism's last word is the rhetorical "we". For Critical Theory "the thinking subject is not the place where knowledge and object coincide, nor consequently the starting-point for attaining absolute knowledge" (211). Subject and object are not immutable polar opposites. Indeed, one can speak of a subject-less subjectivity, that is, a subject which is determined by his objects, which in turn takes on an autonomy supposedly characteristic of the
subject such that one could also speak of an objective subjectivity. Though we have already spoken of the subject-object inversion with regard to the activity of society and the passive perception of the bourgeois individual, in our next chapter we shall be discussing the way in which certain psychic dispositions become objectified into types of 'social character' via the mediation of the family, such that, for the individual subject his own character becomes an objective 'second nature'.

In the bourgeois period the emphasis on individuality found its concrete expression in the structure of the property system and the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a class of certain privileged individuals. The community-at-large is forgotten and the predominant ideology is "rugged individualism"; "it is enough for individuals to look out for themselves" (213). One who envisages the proletariat as a force which has the potential to transcend bourgeois individualism must not be satisfied merely to "proclaim with reverent admiration the creative strength of the proletariat" (214), but must engage himself in an active theoretical effort, which, although undertaken in the service of the proletariat, will place him temporarily in opposition to its members. This, it is said, cannot be avoided. If theory only explains the concepts of the bourgeoisie
in terms of its self-image, then it is nothing more than sociology. But if theory makes explicit the contradictions existing between these concepts and the actual state of affairs, then the image shatters. Similarly, "a systematic presentation of the contents of proletarian consciousness cannot provide a true picture of proletarian existence and interests" (215).

We have arrived at the point in our presentation of the essay "Traditional and Critical Theory" where we can begin to discern Horkheimer's conception of the relation of theory to praxis. Critical Theory is praxis:

Theory as praxis is a catalytic force which sharpens an awareness of contradictions. Jay shies away from this conclusion when he says of theory and praxis, "the two could not be entirely reconciled, although they were not fully independent." Claiming that the two are not

entirely identical yet not fully independent produces a slippery ambiguity; theory is praxis, but only sometimes. Actually, though, this ambiguity may truly represent Critical Theory's stance on this issue. Let us consider whether or not Critical Theory should be considered to be an embodiment of praxis.

Since Critical Theory did not inspire a socialist revolution even though that was its acclaimed aim, perhaps the title of praxis should not be accorded it. However, if we wish to take the low road we might agree with the following: although Critical Theory did not result in being a moment in a social movement which would revolutionize the structure of societal relations, at least it cannot be considered to have been an accomplice to the barbarism of totalitarianism. Perhaps protest itself should be considered praxis at a time when the acceptance of existing authority relations signifies that one is flowing with the current. The dignity our aesthetic sense associates with a protest undertaken against overwhelming opposition may perhaps lead us to consider protest as a form of praxis. However, if we conceive of a person who denounces some person, circumstance, or force, but only in the privacy of his bedroom, we would most likely interpret this as a parody of the former. These two caricatures are the grounds
upon which we must make our decision. Was Critical Theory's isolated protest an act of heroism or was it a meek disapproval used to rationalize its practitioners' security? Should we apply Horkheimer's condemnation of Hegel, whose solution was said to be "a purely private assertion, a personal peace treaty between the philosopher and an inhuman world" (204) to Horkheimer himself? We will examine this issue more closely in the subsequent pages.

Horkheimer's notion of praxis is different from Hegel's insofar as contradictions still remain and in a strange way are even provoked, yet he has not departed from Hegel when he claims that "this truth ('the unity of the social forces which promise liberation is at the same time their distinction') becomes clearly evident in the person of the theoretician..." (216). To be sure, Horkheimer would claim that this is not merely a cognitive resolution à la Hegel, that it is in fact no resolution at all, but contributes to a future resolution. The conflict which is reflected in the critical theorist's conceptual apparatus, and between the theoretician himself and other members of society, is said to be inflamed by the theory itself:

\[15\text{Supra, p.37.}\]
"But the first consequence of the theory which urges a transformation of society as a whole is only an intensification of the struggle with which the theory is connected" (219). However, the importance of specific activities contributing to the 'transformation of society as a whole' cannot be determined until "the idea is brought to realization" (220). But even though the idea has not been realized as yet, Critical Theory upholds its vitality in spite of its present mortification:

One thing which this way of thinking has in common with fantasy is that an image of the future which springs indeed from a deep understanding of the present determines men's thoughts and actions even in periods when the course of events seems to be leading far away from such a future and seems to justify every reaction except belief in fulfillment. It is not the arbitrariness and supposed independence of fantasy that is the common bond here, but its obstinacy. (220)

In his refusal to collapse theory into a tool which would serve the existing social structures by organizing present reality into manipulable quantities, Horkheimer shared Marcuse's belief that "without phantasy, all philosophical knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future, which is the only link between philosophy and the real history of mankind."16

Horkheimer and Marcuse were not alone in condemning the atrophy of phantasy. Karl Kraus, the conscience of the German-speaking world, also expressed his alarm. For Kraus, the policemen of the imagination were again the press. When people read daily of horrors they could not themselves imagine, why should they be upset if by chance they witnessed people dying? The dulling of sensitivity and phantasy which resulted in the impotence of indignation paved the way for National Socialism. The ring-leaders of National Socialism were said to be "editorial writers who write with blood... Troglo dytes to be sure, but they have only moved into the caves which the printed word had made of human phantasy."17

One condition and result of resisting the gravitational pull of the present is that for Critical Theory "constructive thinking plays a more important role than empirical verification" (221). This independence from the empirical 'given' does not give the Critical Theorist a sense of detachment, however, especially social detachment. Karl Mannheim's vision of an 'intelligentsia' which would be detached from all classes is an illusion: "a conception of the intelligentsia which claims to transcend party lines

and is therefore abstract represents a view of problems that only hides the decisive questions" (223). The concept of an intelligentsia which is to be delegated with missionary functions is, according to Horkheimer, "an hypostatization of specialized science" (223). It is the conviction of those men who would compose the intelligentsia that their theoretical activity is not determined by the mode of production in their society and has no effect upon the direction in which that society is heading; therefore, they are absolved of any responsibility for social injustice. They continue to perform their activity, assured by their salary that their work is beneficial and, of course, detached.

But Horkheimer and his colleagues did in fact appear to be an intelligentsia. They reflected the very image they ardently denounced. Horkheimer was never committed to a specific political faction and even spoke of his hesitancy to endorse political praxis:

Is activism, then, especially political activism, the sole means of fulfillment, as just defined? I hesitate to say so. This age needs no added stimulus to action. Philosophy must not be turned into propaganda, even to the best possible purpose. The world has more than enough propaganda. Language is assumed to suggest and intend nothing beyond propaganda. 18

Perhaps we are speaking euphemistically when we say that Horkheimer was "hesitant" to commit himself to a partisan faction. It would be more accurate to say that he manifested a phobia towards such commitment. Although he claimed that "Critical Theory is neither 'deeply rooted' like totalitarian propaganda nor 'detached' like the liberalist intelligentsia" (224), that Critical Theory steers a middle course by fostering a critique of both, its ability to prescribe action of any sort to combat the injustice it described gradually disappeared.\textsuperscript{19} One critic has gone so far as to suggest that the Frankfurt School did not provide Marxism with any instruments to assist in the construction of a class strategy which would predicate a revolution because "they denounce all such instruments simply because they are instruments."\textsuperscript{20} There is some truth in this criticism, but also very good reasons to explain why the Frankfurt School adopted such an attitude.

\textsuperscript{19}See MaxHorkheimer, "Authoritarian State", in Telos, No. 15., "Despite all the urgency with which theory attempts to illuminate the movement of the social totality even in its smallest detail, it is unable to prescribe to individuals an effective form of resistance to injustice." p.19.

In upholding and defending an absolute ideal of a certain state of affairs to be, Critical Theory sought to examine and expose the contradictions emerging from every departure from it. As it was for Karl Kraus, the deviation from this ideal was evident in the corruption of language. The instrumentalization of language in the service of politically backed commercial propaganda convinced these men that all language was suspect. In an essay on T.W. Adorno, Fredric Jameson captures the skepticism which earnest scholarly effort fell prey to as a result of the intersection of propaganda and commercial imperialism:

How to analyze the part as a part when the whole is not only no longer visible but even inconceivable? How to continue to use the terms subject and object as opposite which presuppose, in order to be meaningful, some possible synthesis, when there is no synthesis even imaginable, let alone present anywhere in concrete experience? What language to use to describe an alienated language, to what systems of reference to appeal when all systems of reference have been assimilated into the dominant system itself? 21

Kraus had his own way of protesting the forces of conformism. In his satire he mirrored all the apparently innocent violations of a language employed as a means to procure profit while abandoning truth. His efforts to be a beacon,

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reflecting the chaos of a society which had no time for reflection, can only be seen as a desperate attempt to let those people whom he ridiculed see their folly. In the end, Critical Theory could hope or do no more. In a comment on Freud by T.W. Adorno we can see the concrete realization of the positive disguised as the negative, and also, perhaps, why Adorno entitled one of his latter works *Negative Dialectic* and his philosophy described by one writer as "atonal": 22 "I suspect that Freud's contempt for men is nothing but an expression of such hopeless love which may be the only expression of hope still permitted." 23

The negativity in which Critical Theory sought refuge in an age of positivism opposed itself to all claims for 'immediacy', including political immediacy. The use of slogans, whether by revolutionary groups or advertising agencies, is simply ideology, the aim of which is to use words that impose upon consciousness (critical awareness) an automatic (uncritical) response. The loss of imagina: powers which would enable men to transcend the present along with the depreciation of language to a mere tool certainly did deflate Horkheimer's confidence in the transformative powers of the proletariat:

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The fact that even the enemies of the authoritarian state can no longer conceive of freedom destroys communication. A language in which one does not recognize his own desires or become impassioned is alien... The conditions for the realization of utopia are so urgently ripe that they can no longer be honestly articulated. 24

The cumulative effect of the developments we have been discussing, according to Horkheimer, is that

the individual no longer has any ideas of his own. The content of mass belief, in which no one really believes, is an immediate product of the ruling economic and political bureaucracies, and its disciples secretly follow their own atomistic and therefore untrue interest; they act as mere functions of the economic machine. (237)

Horkheimer claimed that Critical Theory was to be a force helping to reverse this condition.

Thus far we have seen that the two major differences between traditional theory and Critical Theory were said to be: 1) that Critical Theory sought to subvert the established order while traditional theory perpetuated it, and; 2) that traditional theorists did not realize or believe that the activity of society affected the direction and goals of their activity while Critical theorists, being aware of the movement of the social totality and its domination over the individual, somehow contributed to a reversal of this movement "via [its] concern for social transformation" (241). Before discussing the third and final important difference between traditional and Critical

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Theory I would like to evaluate the two already presented.

In Horkheimer's preface to the English edition of the collection of his essays, *Critical Theory*, we can discern that Horkheimer himself came to see that the first major difference between traditional and Critical Theory was no longer valid. This can be inferred from his claim that "the revolutionary thrust of the proletariat has long since become realistic action within the framework of society" (vi). Horkheimer's belief that conscientious action should no longer have as its goal the 'transformation of the whole' may seem very hypocritical to one who realizes that the same man once said that "present talk of inadequate conditions is a cover for the tolerance of oppression. For the revolutionary, conditions have always been ripe."25 In the next chapter we will see the results of Horkheimer's inquiries as to why the proletariat failed to "explode the continuum of history", to borrow a phrase from Walter Benjamin.

The second major difference between traditional and Critical Theory is not unrelated to the first. Without doubt the activity of society affects the formation of theory.

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But does it affect traditional theory any more than it
does Critical Theory? This can be answered on two levels,
the first yes, the second, no. Traditional theorists are
more susceptible to the predominating interests of the
society in whose service they perform their activity,
simply because they are salaried employees of the state.
However detached they may claim their work to be it must
serve some interest, be it present needs or future expansion,
otherwise they would not derive the benefits which accrue
to them. On the other hand, since the Frankfurt School
was privately endowed and did not have a bureaucratic
administration to which its productions were subject to
censure, its theoretical activity could be much less
fettered than traditional theory. But on a second level,
of course, Critical Theory was affected by the activity
of society just as much as traditional theory. Horkheimer
would not deny this. His reproach of Mannheim's conception
of a "freely floating intelligentsia" would seem to confirm
this. But here again we would be led to examine the
differences in the way in which the theoretician appropriates
societal pressures and constraints, and this would ultimately
leave us in the sphere of personal 'interest' or 'concern'.
Horkheimer admits as much when alleging that 'the concerns of critical thought, too, are those of most men, but they are not recognized to be such" (218). The only way that Horkheimer escapes Plato's idealistic conception of amnesia or Heidegger's "forgetfulness of Being" is by locating the source of 'forgetfulness' in the induced reifications of the commodity system. This is why he calls Critical Theory "the materialist content of the idealist concept of reason" (242). Still, the tendency to fly away in an intoxicated metaphysics (Nietzsche's "evaporating reality") is not entirely overcome in that the formal concepts which are supposed to distinguish Critical Theory from traditional theory depend upon the theoretician's 'will' or 'concern' in the last analysis. Horkheimer's 'concern' is unverifiable: it is a matter of faith.

The third major difference said to exist between traditional theory and Critical Theory concerns the way each deals with temporality. While traditional theory is said to be a set of hypotheses which, if changed, becomes another theory, Critical Theory is said to evolve with its historically changing object "which, however, remains identical amid all changes" (239). With reference to Critical Theory, "if we take individual concepts and
judgements out of their context in the theory and compare them with concepts and judgements from an earlier version of the theory, contradictions arise" (238). The distinction which Horkheimer claims to exist between traditional and Critical Theory really is no distinction at all. It has been said that an author writes only one book in his lifetime, despite the quantity of books he really does write. Obviously one can argue that this author has written many books, and this person would have the evidence of convention and empirical 'things' to justify his claim. Yet another person may be able to persuade us that there is a continuity in each of the author's "book chapters" related sequentially and that the themes to be found in each of these are analogous to the spokes of a wheel, one wheel. Traditional theory need not be interpreted as any more discontinuous than Critical Theory. To argue that it is, is not to quibble with the theory itself, but with people who interpret traditional theory as discontinuous. Once again we are delivered back to personal concern, belief, or interest.

Although Horkheimer claimed that Critical Theory "preaches no psychic condition, as does the Stoa or Christianity",26

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26 Max Horkheimer, "Postscript", in Critical Theory, op. cit, p.252.
the objectivity of his arguments offered to distinguish Critical Theory from traditional theory ultimately dissolves into subjectivism, e.g., "Those who have the theory in their heads have it there in its totality and act according to that totality" (240) and, "the essential relatedness of theory to time...consists in the continuous alteration of the theoretician's existential judgment of society" (234). By the time one reaches the conclusion of Horkheimer's "Traditional and Critical Theory" a kind of psychosocial claustrophobia can be sensed, viz; "Today, when the whole weight of the existing affairs is pushing mankind towards the surrender of all culture and relapse into darkest barbarism, the circle of solidarity is narrow enough" (241).

As we know, the paranoia accompanying Horkheimer's sense of isolation was not the result of a sham battle fought with phantoms. In 1937, when this essay was written, Hitler and National Socialism were very real. The irony and tragedy which Horkheimer associated with the plight of the individual under Nazi domination is most apparent when he said that "everyone dreams of assassinating the Führer, and marches in rank and file. They follow out of sober calculation: the Führer would be succeeded only by his deputy."27

The paralytic effect of this kind of 'logic' was what motivated Horkheimer to seek an antidote to the unrestrained logic in traditional theory. Before concluding this chapter I would like to cite a somewhat lengthy passage from Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason* which consolidates many of the issues discussed in this chapter, right up to the impotence of will pointed out on this page:

As soon as a thought or a word becomes a tool, one can dispense with actually 'thinking' it, that is, with going through the logical acts involved in the verbal formulation of it. As has been pointed out, often and correctly, the advantage of mathematics—the mode of all neo-positivistic thinking—lies in just this 'intellectual economy'. Complicated logical operations are carried out without actual performance of all the intellectual acts upon which the mathematical and logical symbols are based. Such mechanization is indeed essential to the expansion of industry; but if it becomes the characteristic feature of minds, if reason itself is instrumentalized, it takes on a kind of materiality and blindness, becomes a fetish, a magic entity that is accepted rather than intellectually experienced. 28

When abbreviation pervades the entire fabric of society, brevity of thought becomes its consequence. Long ago Plato warned of the dangers inherent in the written word; 29

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today technology fulfills his prophecy. Men are reduced to punchcards in computer 'banks'; technology succeeded in bringing together the masses and at the same time isolating individuals from contact with one another. Today the individual psyche is incarcerated by the very gadgets supposedly intended to liberate it. As a consumer, man is conditioned to value disposability; as a human being he comes to realize the superfluity of his existence; he can be replaced by countless others who are numerically identical to him. Replaceability, disposability, and extermination become interchangeable variables in a universal formula. Individuality is crushed beneath the wheels of bourgeois industrial progress.

The essay we have been examining provides an outline for a program whose intentions were said to be the "rational organization of society". This outline is not the program itself. The program was to consist of an extensive series of analyses whose aim it was to expose the ever widening gap between what is said to be, what is, and what can be. It was hoped that this gap would become apparent to the man on the street, inciting him to transmit the contradictions
he became aware of to others whose critical awareness was still dormant. By this sort of domino effect, Horkheimer believed that a unified proletariat would emerge with an awareness of its own will and responsibility.

Ten years after the publication of "Traditional and Critical Theory" this hope was abandoned. In their joint effort, The Dialectic of Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno completely discarded any hope for the appearance of a revolutionary subject:

It is idle to hope that this self-contradictory, disintegrating 'person' will not last for generations, that the system must collapse because of such a psychological split or that the deceitful substitution of the stereotype for the individual will of itself become unbearable for mankind. 30

While the program progressed, its goal ceased to be that of revolutionary praxis. Critical Theory turned archeological, examining the remnants of a disaster still in progress. In our last chapter we shall briefly discuss two aspects in the development of Critical Theory; both are concerned with the imminent destruction of individual sovereignty. Taken together we could call these aspects psychotechnology; individually, we shall first speak of Critical Theory's encounter with psychoanalysis and, second, its critique of mass culture.

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30 Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, op. cit., p.156.
CHAPTER III

Throughout the 1930's, even before the publication of Horkheimer's "Traditional and Critical Theory", the foremost concern of the Frankfurt School's program was to analyse the rise of totalitarianism and to account for the failure of a revolutionary subject to appear. Although economic factors were of primary importance in any explanation of these two phenomena, when taken in isolation, it was argued that they could not account for occurrences such as the hostility of many property-less workers to socialism and their eagerness to obey fascist authorities. While the existing economic substructure may be the most apparent influence upon the development of social relations in a given society, a mechanical explanation of it does not suffice to explain why certain behavioral responses on the part of the individual become rigidified and are repeated even when they are no longer appropriate to the economic situation in which they arose. An awareness of the persistence of certain vestigial myths, ideologies, personal beliefs, and patterns of reaction led the Frankfurt School to adopt the conceptual apparatus of Freudian psychoanalysis in order to augment their basic Marxist orientation.
The attempt to wed a Marxist with a Freudian perspective was not looked upon favorably by orthodox Marxists. They argued that psychoanalysis reduced social problems to personal ones and replaced objective solutions with subjective therapy. This reductionist tendency certainly could be found in Freud's work but Horkheimer was to argue that there was another, dialectical side in Freud's work. Horkheimer believed that the importance which Marx had attached to the dialectic of negativity in Hegel's work could be supplemented by the principle of negativity in Freud's work, namely, the unconscious. Working with the conscious-unconscious dialectic, mediated by the concepts of repression, sublimation, reaction formation, and fixation, Horkheimer and Erich Fromm were able to offer explanations of the relationships between private property and narcissism, the family and the formation of 'social character', and ideology and the obedient submission of individual sovereignty.

One affinity between Critical Theory and psychoanalysis which should not be overlooked is that both developed at about the same time and both were looked upon with suspicion by the established order. Freud never did become a full professor at the University of Vienna and psychoanalysis was pretty much relegated to a clandestine
back-room affair by a hostile psychiatric profession.

It was not until World War I that psychoanalysis was allowed
to show its face in broad daylight. The underlying reason
for the favorable attention accorded it at that time was
so that German analysts could, as Peter Gay has pointed
out, "administer rapid cures to shell-shocked soldiers
that they might be fitted for combat once again."1 The
reaction of one psychoanalyst to this development is revealing.

Karl Abraham, in a letter to Freud, confessed that he
did not like the idea that psychoanalysis
should suddenly become fashionable because of
purely practical considerations. We would
rapidly have acquired a number of colleagues
who would merely have paid lip service and would
afterwards have called themselves psychoanalysts.
Our position as outsiders will continue for the
time being. 2

Besides the solidarity likely to arise among a fraternity
of outsiders, Freud's belief that "psychoanalytic treatment
is founded on truthfulness...It is dangerous to depart
from this sure foundation", 3 was seized upon warmly by
Horkheimer. Freud's aversion to Marx's ideas was for the
most part influenced by self-proclaimed Marxists. We can
see that he overcame this aversion when in a letter he

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1 Karl Abraham to Freud, Oct. 27, 1918, in A Psycho-
Analytic Dialogue: The Letters Of Sigmund Freud and Karl
Abraham (eds. Hilda C. Abraham and Ernst L. Freud, trans. by

2 Sigmund Freud, "Observations on Transference-Love",
Jacoby, "Negative Psychoanalysis", in Telos, No. 14 (Winter,
admits

I know that my comments on Marxism are no evidence either of a thorough knowledge or a correct understanding of the writings of Marx and Engels. I have since learned—rather to my satisfaction—that neither of them had denied the influence of ideas and super-ego factors. That invalidates the main contrast between Marxism and psycho-analysis which I had believed to exist. 4

Although Marx and Engels did not develop a dialectic between a psychological and an historical consciousness such as Critical Theory attempted with the aid of Freud's insights, there are nonetheless indications in their work which would suggest that certain relations they pointed to were subsequently developed by Freud. To take one example, in his Critique of Political Economy Marx wrote:

> Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary this consciousness must rather be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production. 5

While Marx emphasizes the "existing" forces and relations as the grounds upon which consciousness must be understood and does not consider the inertia of psychic dispositions as appearing as existing remnants from an obsolete stage of

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4Ibid., p.8.

production, nevertheless we can see the conscious-unconscious dialectic being applied to both the individual and society.

Further, Engels' explanation of ideology is almost identical to the account given by Fromm of Freud's concept of repression. Engels was convinced that

Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence he imagines false or apparent motives. 6

Fromm suggests that Freud's concept of repression does not signify that the impulse itself has been repressed, but that the awareness of the impulse has. Thus, the sadist does inflict pain on others but he is not aware that he is doing so, often substituting imaginary reasons for his real motives when forced to account for his activity. The fact that certain impulses which are deemed incompatible with the real or imagined aims of an existing society are prevented from becoming conscious raised some important issues concerning the question of class-consciousness. Among these were: Why do workers repress an awareness of their impoverished condition?, Are certain reaction formations which a majority of children develop in a given society not the result of the unmediated demands of an economic system, but transmitted via the medium of the family?, and, How is

docility inculcated into children? These questions were explored by Horkheimer, and in his essay, "Authority and Family", we can find some of the conclusions he reached. Before examining Horkheimer's work, however, we will briefly discuss an early essay written by Fromm, "Psychoanalytic Characterology", insofar as the ideas expressed therein exerted a strong influence on Horkheimer and will provide a very good background to Horkheimer's own ideas.

In this essay Fromm suggested that recurring character traits could be classified into types, and that these types could be understood as the product of a process of filtration or channeling of libidinal energies through the distinctive nature of a particular society. The psychic formation of the individual mind is conditioned by those traits which are deemed most useful or productive to that society. In the early years of childhood these traits are transmitted through the medium of the family, then through the educational structures (where these are developed in particular societies), and, lastly, through the ideological superstructure which includes the production of culture. The distinctive character traits typical of a given society are for the most part generated by the evolving necessities of economic systems. Thus, Fromm characterizes the predominant traits engendered by the bourgeois-capitalist type of economy as:
1) restriction of the role of pleasure as an end in itself (particularly sexual pleasure);
2) retreat from love, with the emphasis instead on collecting, possessing, and saving as ends in themselves;
3) fulfillment of one's duty as the highest value;
4) emphasis on 'orderliness' and exclusion of compassion for one's fellow man. 7

From a list of virtues drawn up by Benjamin Franklin, Fromm emphasizes the characteristic lack of traits such as charity, love, and kindness, and suggests that the development of bourgeois character, based upon "the principle of free competition, and the concomitant notion of the survival of the fittest, called for individuals who were not inhibited by compassion in their business dealings." 8 Behavior which manifests the subordination of personal fulfillment to the call of duty is sanctioned by this kind of society, obedience is rewarded with the promise of economic security. The fetish for privacy, based on the principle of private property, views all trespass into the private sphere, whether this be considered material or psychic, as a major offense.

According to Fromm, the 'hoarding orientation' or anal retentive character engendered by nineteenth-century capitalism is discouraged by twentieth-century capitalism.

Whereas in the nineteenth-century the accumulation of capital was of paramount importance, in the twentieth-century uninhibited consumption has become a necessity for the expansive growth of industry. Weber's "inner-worldly asceticism" is displaced by Keynes' "propensity to consume". The difference in character can be seen in the fact that while "the modern consumer--the man who buys on installments--would have appeared an irresponsible and immoral waster to his grandfather, ... the latter would appear an ugly miser to his grandson." 9 Because the libidinal structure has a certain inertia of its own, Fromm argued that specific character traits change more slowly than the economic substructure. Horkheimer picked up this idea from Fromm's essay when claiming in his essay on "Authority and Family", that

the way in which men act at a given point in time cannot be explained solely by economic events which have transpired in the immediate past. It is rather the case that particular groups react according to the special character of their members and that this character has been formed in the course of earlier no less than of present social development. Such a character arises under the influence of all social institutions taken together, and these function in typical ways for each social stratum. 10

10Max Horkheimer, "Authority and Family", in Critical Theory, op. cit., pp.53-54.
The stability of social forms depends primarily upon the regeneration of fixed patterns of reaction and their inculcation into the members of that society. The most important idea to be accepted by individuals is that of the necessary domination of some men over others. The establishment and preservation of authority relations is the primary function of social institutions.

Horkheimer acknowledges the beginning of bourgeois thought as "a struggle against the authority of tradition", which then replaces this authority "with reason as the legitimate source of right and truth". Bourgeois thought ends with "the deification of naked authority as such, since justice, happiness, and freedom for mankind has been eliminated as historically possible solutions."\(^{11}\) The liberation of Protestantism from papal authority resulted in the hypostatization of authority as such. J.S. Mill recognized that according to Calvinism the one great offense is self-will. All good of which humanity is capable is comprised in obedience. You have no choice; thus you must do, and no otherwise: 'Whatever is not duty is a sin'...To one holding this theory of life, crushing out any of the human faculties, capacities, and susceptibilities is no evil. \(^{12}\)

\(^{11}\)Ibid., p.72

If the old, divinely sanctioned property system demanded the extermination of individual differences, achieving this by instilling a fear of sin and damnation into individuals, the powerful authority which replaces the old leads those who suffer a miserable existence to believe that their condition is the result of deficient natural endowment. This new authority which replaced the old was blind economic necessity, "an anonymous god who enslaves men and is invoked by those who have no power over him but have received privileges from him." Just as the bourgeois individual views the value of material or spiritual goods, not as social relations, but as the natural property of things, so too in both of the above ordinances, authority is not conceived as a relationship but as a stable quality.

To question or doubt the authority of the supreme being, whether it is conceived as a God or a political leader, is blasphemy. The source of this conception is located by Horkheimer in a common social experience, the limited family of the patriarchal type. Throughout history, in antiquity no less than in recent centuries, the father has commanded absolute obedience from wife and children due to his economic hegemony. Because of the separation between

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13 Ibid., p.82.
professional and familial life, every bourgeois father may in social life have a very modest position and have to bend the knee to others, yet at home will be the master and exercise the highly important function of accustoming children to discretion and obedience. This is why not only upper middle classes but many groups of workers and employees yield ever new generations of people who do not question the structure of the economic and social system but accept it as natural and permanent and allow even their dissatisfaction and rebellion to be turned into effective forces for the prevailing order. 14

The submissive and self-sacrificing character which is fostered by this family type is, however, to some extent offset by the fact that the family also provides a cushion for the growing child to the extent that the competition of the market place is excluded from familial activity. Insofar as the individual retains the possibility of being treated as a human being rather than as a mere function, "the family not only educates for authority in bourgeois society, it also cultivates the dream of a better condition for mankind." 15 Though Horkheimer acknowledged the family to be the preserve of a better condition, he recognized that for as long as the antagonism between social and familial life intensified, the suppression and inhibition of rebellious impulses would continue. Husband and father must endure

14Ibid., p.103.

15Max Horkheimer, "Authority and Family", ibid., p.114.
agonizing psychic eruptions when even entertaining thoughts of struggling against the status quo. It is not only the fear of self-sacrifice which torments this man, but of sacrificing those dear to him, his family. When the danger of such rebellious impulses becomes apparent to him, father is likely to compensate for these by attempting to repress ever more forcefully and urgently similar impulses manifested by his children. Not only are the socially harmful impulses of these children stifled, but "because this education takes the problematic form of camouflage reality, the individual also loses for good the disposition of part of his psychic energies."\textsuperscript{16}

The loss of these energies is only the beginning of a process which divests the individual of his self-creative resources. This process, often called "socialization", is no longer the result of outright oppression, as it was until the twentieth-century. In this century the family has become the mass family, and has witnessed the development of a much more subtle and effective means of coercion, notably, the Culture Industry. Karl Abraham's apprehension concerning the sudden popularity of psychoanalysis with the ministers of war was to become for Critical Theory a derisive attack on the means of mass manipulation, psychology capitalism.

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, p.121.
Critical Theory's blistering attack on what it called "The Culture Industry" does not leave the arena of psychological determinations; rather, its concepts are extended to encompass the means of production of the culture industry, psychotechnology or the mass media. Before turning our gaze to the Dialectic of Enlightenment, which in many respects is the magnum opus of Critical Theory, a few preliminary remarks should be made which touch upon the distinctive style in which Horkheimer and Adorno's ideas are presented.

Whereas Horkheimer's earlier essays were written in an argumentative style, his collaboration with Adorno manifests a much more frequent use of the aphorism. Though the Dialectic of Enlightenment does produce arguments and is for the most part written in an expository form the whole impresses with a shotgun effect. With the accent frequently concentrated on the sentence, the reader may get the impression that at times the sequence of page and of paragraph is secondary; one sentence may appear to follow upon another, thirty pages behind. Consequently, the rhythm of the book staggers, yet its movement retains a stubborn intensity somewhat analogous to a piece played in staccato on a piano keyboard. This effect is undoubtedly due to the influence of Adorno, whose dialectical agility often makes the
Dialectic of Enlightenment appear to be a juggling act.

The notion expressed in the concluding sentence of Horkheimer's "Postscript" to "Traditional and Critical Theory" very aptly summarizes the rationale behind this stylistic technique:

"A philosophy that thinks to find peace within itself, in any kind of truth whatsoever, has therefore nothing to do with critical theory."\(^{17}\)

In the case of this book, stylistic technique and personal experience merge: Critical Theory and its professors are fugitives. Both attempt to elude hypostatization, conceptual reification, or, more generally, immobility, while its professors were, in addition, refugees in the more conventional sense. In many respects, the thought, style, and tone of the Dialectic of Enlightenment bears a remarkable resemblance to Nietzsche's work. For Nietzsche as well as for Critical Theory the flight of the fugitive is contradictory and dynamic. In the Twilight of The Idols Nietzsche claimed that "one is fruitful only at the cost of being rich in contradictions; one remains young only on condition the soul does not relax, does not long for peace..."\(^{18}\)

Moreover, the tone of the work we are about to discuss

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\(^{17}\)Max Horkheimer, "Postscript", in *Critical Theory*, op. cit. p.252.

\(^{18}\)Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of The Idols*, (Baltimore,1968), p.44.
mediates the indignation and denunciation which Marx attributed to criticism and the disdain and 'barbed malice' conveyed in Nietzsche's critical expressions. In their critique of the culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno appear to combine Nietzsche's examination of how misery became a social norm which permeated Western society as a "slave morality", and his brilliant treatment of ascetic denial:

In every product of the culture industry, the permanent denial imposed by civilization is once again unmistakably demonstrated and inflicted on its victims. To offer and to deprive them of something is one and the same. 19

It should be pointed out that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was written in Los Angeles, two years after Horkheimer suffered a mild heart attack in New York and was advised to move to the West Coast by his doctor. With Adorno as a companion, the two men wrote their book in the midst of what has been called "the entertainment capital of the world", Hollywood. Their proximity to the very factories of cultural production no doubt accentuated their critical acuity. The enormous malevolent influence which Karl Kraus had attributed to the newspaper, Horkheimer and Adorno believed was

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19 Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (New York, 1972), p.141. (Hereafter, pagination referring to all citations from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* will appear in brackets after these citations.)
intensified by radio, film, and television: "The whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry" (126).

The dire effects of mass manipulation were not seen as the results "of a law of movement in technology as such but of its function in today's economy." (121). All the products of the culture industry are stamped as commodities, all have a price tag attached to them. Culture, however, is a paradoxical commodity:

So completely is it subject to the law of exchange that it is no longer exchanged; it is so blindly consumed in use that it can no longer be used. Therefore it amalgamates with advertising. The more meaningless the latter seems to be under a monopoly, the more omnipotent it becomes. (161)

Although the proliferation of the cultural commodity was nowhere more successful than in the United States, Horkheimer and Adorno did not believe that the initial impetus behind the diffusion of the cultural commodity was to be located there. It is wrong, they believed, to assume that the barbarism of the culture industry was due to a "cultural lag" between the growth of technology and the American consciousness which failed to keep pace with it; rather, "it was pre-Fascist Europe which did not keep up with the trend toward the culture monopoly" (132). The cult of the glorified individual, whether he be a film celebrity or
the Fuhrer, is nothing but the magnified personification of the monopoly: "The modern Fascist bosses are not so much supermen as functions of their own propaganda machine, the focal points at which identical reactions of countless citizens intersect" (236). The charismatic leader functions vicariously for his inarticulate listeners, he does and says things which his audience would like to do or say, but either cannot or dare not. The leader or celebrity is a kind of wish-fulfillment, his followers do not feel alienated from him, they collaborate with him. Horkheimer and Adorno claimed, therefore, that "the attitude of the public, which ostensibly and actually favors the system of the culture industry, is a part of the system and not an excuse for it" (122).

As an agent of capitalist socialization the culture industry seeks to elicit identification on the part of the individual with what is offered him. The principle of the culture industry "dictates that he should be shown all his needs as capable of fulfillment, but that those needs should be so predetermined that he feels himself to be the eternal consumer, the object of the culture industry" (142). Mimeticis plays a double role here. The individual appears
as a reflection of the culture industry while the culture industry, no matter how varied its stock of goods may appear, only duplicates productions which have previously proven their monetary success. The formulas upon which the products of the culture industry are modelled are provided by science; repetition and predictability.

The democratic façade projected by the culture industry makes it seem that individual tastes are catered to, while they are actually molded to a prefabricated cast:

Something is provided for all so that none may escape...Consumers appear as statistics on research organizations charts, and are divided by income groups into red, green, and blue areas; the technique is that used for any type of propaganda. (123)

Individuality is not tolerated by the culture industry though it displays reasonable facsimiles of it in many of its products, "from the standardized jazz improvisation to the exceptional film star whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality" (154). What is accidental and what is novel are stereotyped. When the culture industry portrays deviances it does so to ornament its repetoire; they are like designated holidays:

Whenever Orson Welles offends against the tricks of the trade, he is forgiven because his departures from the norm are regarded as calculated mutations which serve all the more strongly to confirm the validity of the system. (129)
While the rhythm of the system is pounded into the individual by way of redundancy, duplicity, or repetition, "the most mortal of sins is to be an outsider" (150). In the late capitalist era life "is a constant initiation rite. Everyone must show that he wholly identifies himself with the power which is belaboring him" (153). Ironically, since true individuality is prohibited, "man as a member of a species has been made a reality by the culture industry" (145). "No independent thinking must be expected from the audience; the product prescribes every reaction: not by its natural structure (which collapses under reflection), but by signals" (137). The method of stimulating subliminal assent in an audience has been employed by democratic as well as fascist countries with great success:

The ears of corn blowing in the wind at the end of Chaplin's The Great Dictator give the lie to the anti-Fascist plea for freedom. They are like the blond hair of the German girl whose camp life is photographed by the Nazi film company in the summer breeze. Nature is viewed by the mechanism of social domination as a healthy contrast to society, and is therefore denatured. (149)

Public taste is whetted by the idyllic scenes portrayed in the film, yet the public's appetite receives only enough nourishment to sustain it through the drudgery of its labor:
"Not Italy is offered, but evidence that it exists" (148). As members of an industrial complex, individuals are treated as customers and employees. As employees men are urged to fit in with the rational organization of the industrial process like sensible people, and as customers they are reminded of their freedom of choice. Yet the difference between vocation and vacation ceases to be a qualitative difference in the commodity system:

Amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work. It is sought after as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again. But at the same time mechanization has such power over man's leisure and happiness, and so profoundly determines the manufacture of amusement goods, that his experiences are inevitably after-images of the work process itself. (137)

The amalgamation of industry and culture has been aptly summarized by one recent social commentator: "You pave paradise, put up a parking lot."20 The progress of civilization will tolerate no obstacles, and if industrial expansion requires the depletion of natural and human resources, so be it. The distribution of raw materials and of human energies is one and the same. For Horkheimer and Adorno the abolition of the individual was confirmed by the liquidation of tragedy.

While tragedy once signified a hopeless resistance to mythic destiny, the culture industry reduces it "to the threat to destroy anyone who does not co-operate... Tragic fate becomes just punishment, which is what bourgeois aesthetics always tried to turn it into" (152). From the tragic film, which becomes an institution of moral improvement, to the cartoons, where "Donald Duck and the unfortunate in real life get their thrashing so that the audience can learn to take their own punishment" (138), the culture industry stifles all thought of resistance. The apex of both Socrates' and Aristotle's notions of aesthetics are integral to the culture industry's modus operandi and function. The Socratic saying that the beautiful is the useful has been fulfilled by the administrative branch of the culture industry, advertising: "the beauty in consumption" (156). From Aristotle the culture industry derives its social function, the dividends its managers receive are directly proportional to the industry's ability to attract and dissipate its audience's psychic energies; catharsis serves as a psychic enema. While the mind is inundated and numbed, an invisible god numbers his profits.
Moreover, the beautiful and sublime are made indistinguishable by the culture industry. The beauty in consumption and the virtue in denial are made to foster one another in the all-encompassing promise. The price consumers pay, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, is to be perpetually cheated of what is perpetually promised:

The promissory note which, with its plots and staging, draws on pleasure, is endlessly prolonged; the promise, which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory; all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached, that the dinner must be satisfied with the menu. (139)

The promise offered by formal logic, if P then Q, is portrayed as a forbidden fruit by the culture industry; eros is omnipresent yet fulfillment is castrated. The promise is continually broken. It is interesting to note, however, that in their idea of tragedy Horkheimer and Adorno also committed themselves to the importance of a lack of fulfillment:

That factor in a work of art which enables it to transcend reality certainly cannot be detached from style; but it does not consist of the harmony actually realized, of any doubtful unity of form and content, within and without, of individual and society; it is to be found in those features in which discrepancy appears: in the necessary failure of the passionate striving for identity. (131)
We are told by Horkheimer and Adorno that the similarity between the sham tragedy offered by the culture industry and the genuine tragedy of a work of art is only apparent: "The inferior work has always relied on its similarity with others--on a surrogate identity" (131). Since fate is liable to stir up the individual's rebellious impulses, calculation replaces and attempts to reproduce it in a way which will excite but not incite. When everything is served ready-made with the proper sentiments added, the individual is led to derive satisfaction from his rational prowess, his power to predict, and, hence, to vicariously participate in bringing about the conclusion. The bastardization of art was seen, therefore, to strengthen bourgeois society's stranglehold on the individual. Once again Horkheimer and Adorno were very much in agreement with Karl Kraus when the latter claimed that

Art can only come from rejection. Only from the outcry, not from quiet satisfaction. Art called in for consolation, leaves mankind's place of death with a curse. Its fulfillment comes through hopelessness... 21

We have noted previously that for Adorno, hopelessness

was conceived as the only genuine expression of hope in a society where daily tragedies become the familiar niceties of gossip, and where all language is reduced to the status of the salutation.

In focusing on the cultural superstructure, Critical Theory was not abandoning its concern for the economic dynamics of capitalism, but attempted to show how these dynamics were the causes and expressions of the culture industry. In so doing, Critical Theory hoped to show that political determinations no longer depended on outright oppression but, instead, were transformed into "public images" which were impressed on the individual's mind by the culture industry, functioning to repress rebellious impulses in a much more antiseptic and profitable fashion.

Today, Horkheimer's contention that "The category of the individual has not been able to withstand giant industry"\(^22\) is fortified with vitamins, proteins, shampoos, beer, movies, music, and just about everything else money can buy. The irony of Horkheimer and Adorno's indictment of the American film industry in the 1930's and 1940's is that the films produced at that time are now considered

to be representatives of the Golden Age of film. The stark reality people discern in old Edward G. Robinson movies or the primitive lust associated with Mae West productions indicates more than a sentimental attachment to these relics of the past. The profusion of television film festivals featuring particular stars and the amazing proliferation of low-price record "Hits" albums, whether the content be Mozart, million-seller rock and roll tunes, or country and western "favorites" makes no difference to the consumer engineers.

Today, only satire can make a dent in the jungle of reification. Recently one satirist announced: Get every hit that was ever made for the low everyday price of $6.95. Thirty years of record treasures are here for your discovery. All you have to do is....

Too often, though, this kind of satire does not burst the 'promise' for its audience; they interpret it as simply good-natured fun. As long as chaos isn't painful, it is funny. The situations depicted in the stereotyped scenes where wealthy people shower psychoanalysts with money so that they will have someone to listen to their problems, and
the night-club goers and corporations which pay a comedian like Don Rickles to have themselves and their products insulted, are the culture industry's rendition of dialectic. When "Charlie" the tuna says, "Starkist doesn't want tunas with good taste, Starkist wants tunas that taste good", everyone laughs, not realizing that they are to be devoured by the very industry offering such tasty tidbits of humor.

If we were to take an inventory of the ways in which the culture industry is able to domesticate revolutionary impulses and mute dissent our list would extend from the commercialization of rock and roll to the theological aura permeating the recent legal proceedings resulting in the resignation of the President of the United States. Such a critical inventory would be beyond the scope of this thesis. A critical inventory of this sort would, however, be the only legitimate heir to Critical Theory as it was espoused by Horkheimer and Adorno. For in the final analysis, Critical Theory was much less a revolutionary force than it was a brake intended to retard the velocity of the individual's unreflective submergence into immediacy.
CONCLUSION

There are two considerations which should guide our evaluation of Critical Theory: its postulating of the "other" (das Andere) and the central importance attached to the relation between theory and praxis. We might say that the first aspect mediates the second in the conviction in an "other", a future state of affairs which in an unspecified way would be 'better' than the present ones, negates immediacy, it denies that the future is now. Praxis, therefore, becomes the instrument for the realization of social progress. As was noted earlier, however, when praxis is construed as one's duty to posterity it can be seen as the secular corollary to a belief in salvation. While Horkheimer's belief in social progress can be translated into its religious counterpart it is more important that we recognize our current point in time as being the future in which Critical Theory was intended to be a formative factor. From our point in time then, we should be able to judge the efficacy of Critical Theory, whether it helped to solve the problems prevalent at the time of its formulation and whether it anticipated any problems, practical or theoretical, which are with us today.

With regard to Critical Theory's contribution to social and political change it must be admitted that Horkheimer's work had no apparent affects upon the events occurring subsequent to its formulation. However, if it is recalled that Herbert Marcuse's diagnosis of our contemporary monolithic 'One-Dimensional Society' provided a strong impetus to student activism and to the formation of the New Left, it can be maintained that Horkheimer's own work had some bearing in the developments in the 1960's insofar as Marcuse's diagnosis, though more eloquently expressed than Horkheimer's, derives from a number of suppositions which were held by both men and expressed in their writings during the 1930's. At best then, Horkheimer's work can only be claimed to have had an indirect influence upon precipitating the student activism in the 1960's.

The fact that Horkheimer constantly argued that the organization of the social, political, and economic dimensions of life was not
external to the development of theory and the organization of theoretical models, both in the natural and the social sciences, is to be counted as one of his positive achievements. Here we will cite two contemporary examples illustrating the same point Horkheimer was raising thirty years ago.

Nobody would deny that the food we eat is essential to our physical and mental health. No doubt we should become quite indignant if we found that the food industry which serves us, deliberately deprives us of the nutrients we need by discarding the valuable vitamins and proteins in its processing of raw food stuffs. One nutritionist, Adelle Davis, tells us that this is exactly what the food industry is doing, since its goal "is always to make millions, not to produce health".¹ After giving some startling examples of the food industry's abuse of its customers she goes on to say that

Much of the propaganda of the food processors is released through newspaper columns written by physicians and/or college professors. These readily believed voices of respect and authority have been cleverly wooed by vast sums given to numerous universities for nutritional research. Such a procedure has paid rich dividends. There are, of course, tax benefits. The image of the refined-food industry becomes one of public-spirited generosity. Though the research itself is excellent, the industrialists dictate the choice of research projects, set policies, help evaluate the findings, and make sure that no problem is investigated or findings published which could possibly decrease sales or detract from the propaganda that refined foods are capable of building health.²

Recently a social researcher, Dr. Ida Hoos, has addressed herself to the "mythology of methodology" in her article, "Criteria For 'Good' Future's Research". She finds that governmental decision-making processes can be illuminated by seeking to provide an answer to the question, How is the given gotten? She finds that the numerous National Departments and Bureaus (Economic Research, Agriculture, Human Resources, Labor Statistics, etc.) constitute

²- Ibid., p. 256.
special interest groups that are more intent upon securing their tenure than they are of serving the people:

In the game of musical chairs in Washington, it is likely that persons called on to assess and revise are the very ones who had a hand in the establishment of the enterprise. Any intelligence post-mortem is likely to be conducted by persons closely related to the ongoing endeavor. Such intelligence coronors tend to accept old assumptions and otherwise avoid boat-rocking. If truth hangs in the balance, no one recognizes it, for the show must go on.¹

Though we might presume that the above claims may only interest social theorists it should be noted that as of late some academic philosophers have acknowledged the epistemological problems issuing from such evidence. The areas which seem to be most taken with these problems are the philosophy of science (physical and social) and the philosophy of history. One question central to all of these fields of enquiry is that concerning objectivity: Is there only one kind of "objective knowledge" for the physical sciences, the social sciences, and history, or does each employ its own criteria, differing from those adopted by the others, as a standard to judge the objectivity of its results? The discussions concerning 'points of view', 'irreducible subjective factors', socially influential 'paradigms', and societal 'laws', many of which have been responses to Karl Mannheim's "relationalism", bear directly upon Horkheimer's conception and Justifications of Critical Theory. However, it would require another thesis to be able to adequately explore the work of such philosophers as Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper, Paul Feyerabend, W.H. Walsh, Ernest Nagel, and Maurice Mandelbaum (to name a few) and to consider how their arguments bear upon the claims made by Critical Theory. Let us merely conclude that Critical Theory should not be taken as an archeological curiosity, but as a set of theses very much alive in current philosophical disputes.

¹- Ida Hoos, "Criteria For 'Good' Future's Research", in Technological Forecasting and Social Change, Vol. 6, no. 2, 1974, p. 121.
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