CRITICAL THEORY AND POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES

Conceptions of Emancipatory Politics
in the Works of Horkheimer, Adorno,
Marcuse, and Habermas

Joan Alway

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The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.

Karl Marx
Theses on Feuerbach

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Introduction

Despite the criticisms and modifications of Marx by critical theorists, the promise of critical theory as originally formulated was that it had a practical intent, that it could and would lead to political revolutionary action.

Richard J. Bernstein
The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory, 206

In recent years issues of political revolutionary action and theory with practical intent have been seemingly pushed aside and replaced by interest in discourses, texts, and difference. In light of profound economic, social, political, and cultural transformations, visions or strategies of change that transcend the local and the particular are regarded with some suspicion. Marxism, in its various forms and trajectories, is regarded as infected by the tendency toward totalization and is treated as a relic of a bygone era. A radical political perspective, once the mainstay of social and cultural critique, echoes weakly today: as Max Weber once wrote about the Protestant's desire to work in a calling, the promise of and commitment to revolutionary change only "prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs." But emancipatory visions and interest in emancipatory politics have not faded entirely from contemporary social and cultural critique. Within the varieties of feminism and postmodernism in particular, efforts to reconceptualize emancipatory theory and practice are apparent. And both feminism and postmodernism offer new insights into social and political processes and new visions of liberation. These efforts to re-envision radical political theory and practice—and the discomfort with the Marxist model they represent—were, in many senses, anticipated in the work of the Frankfurt School critical theorists. In the following chapters I will outline and analyze the critical theorists' efforts to reconceptualize radical politics. In the end I believe their work promises more than it could deliver.

Nevertheless, an understanding and appreciation of their efforts can inform contemporary approaches to developing new conceptions of emancipatory politics.

It should be stated from the outset that Critical Theory is neither a unified nor an unambiguous body of thought. The term "Critical Theory" itself lacks precise referents, and its meaning in relation to the work of the Institute for Social Research, to the expression "Frankfurt School," and to the two "generations" of critical theorists is not always clear. Nevertheless, Frankfurt School Critical Theory is generally understood as a body of social thought both emerging from and responding to Marxism, and the work of critical theorists is recognized as having made significant contributions to the study of cultural (and superstructural) phenomena, areas not usually attended to by more orthodox Marxist approaches. Indeed, one of Critical Theory's defining characteristics has been its rejection of those aspects and interpretations of Marxism that encourage reliance on the "natural" tendencies of social structures to solve historical problems. Emphasizing issues of consciousness and culture, the critical theorists have instead stressed the role of human agency in affecting revolutionary social change. There exists throughout the work of the critical theorists a common concern with the possibilities for radical social change, and each of the major critical theorists whose work I will be examining—Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Jürgen Habermas—has been engaged in trying to elaborate a theory with practical intent.

Theory with practical intent seeks not only to understand the world but also to transform it. The practical intent of such theory—its orientation to changing the world—is the expression of an emancipatory vision. Such a vision contains two elements. First, it entails a conception of a better world, an image of what the world could (or should) be. The realization of this better world is the *aim* of theory with practical intent. And second, it involves a claim concerning how such a world can be realized, one predicated on a belief that the intentional actions of social actors can play a role in determining the dynamics and direction of change. This second element of the emancipatory vision concerns *agents* and *actions*; this element identifies the agents of change and the practical actions necessary to bringing about such change. In examining the work of the critical theorists, the emancipatory visions that inform their efforts will be identified. Of particular concern, however, will be the issues of the agents and actions of radical social change because it is precisely these issues that have raised questions about Critical Theory's status as a theory with practical intent.

The exemplar of theory with practical intent is Marxism. Ever since Marx undertook the task of standing Hegel's dialectic on its feet again and transformed *Geist* into the proletariat, three assumptions have grounded the understanding of theory with practical intent: first, that a theory with practical

intent must identify and address a revolutionary subject; second, that this subject is the proletariat; and third, that it will be the proletariat's revolutionary activities that will bring about the radical transformation of society. The refusal of the critical theorists to accord the proletariat such a role, as well as a more fundamental ambivalence about—if not outright rejection of—the notion of a revolutionary subject, cast doubt on Critical Theory's claim to be a theory with practical intent. In *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory*, Richard J. Bernstein comments on the effect the absence of a revolutionary subject has on Critical Theory's political and theoretical credibility. Bernstein writes:

> [T]he very self-understanding of the nature of a theory with a practical intent by critical theorists requires the existence of a group or class of individuals to whom it is primarily addressed, and who will be the agents of revolution. But as critical theory became more sophisticated, this central practical demand played less and less of a role. . . . To whom is critical theory addressed—fellow intellectuals? Who are the agents of revolution—students who read these esoteric books? If critical theorists blur these hard issues, then what is the difference between a critical theory of society and a liberal bourgeois ideology? Despite the lip service paid to Marx, are not the critical theorists betraying what even they take to be the vital core of Marxism—the development of a theory with genuine practical intent? What difference is there between a rarefied conception of critical theory, and the errors of the young Hegelians that Marx so ruthlessly attacked and exposed?[1]

Bernstein's reservations about Critical Theory are shared by others, especially those concerned with radical social change. Observations concerning the absence of a revolutionary subject are sometimes understood specifically in terms of the proletariat: Leszek Kolakowski's reference to Critical Theory as "Marxism . . . without the proletariat"[2] is frequently cited. But this absence is also spoken of in less class-specific terms; for example, Paul Connerton argues that Critical Theory appeals "to a public *which is never firmly localised.*"[3]* This lack of a clearly identified or "firmly localised" agent is regarded as evidence of Critical Theory's distance from, and indeed lack of relevance to, the practical political struggles of oppressed social groups. As one New Left critic has argued: "In the absence of social agents whose praxis reveals the horizons of late capitalism and the historical alternatives, critical theory is relegated to a paralyzed abstraction."[4] Others have deemed Critical Theory "ultimately academic"[5] and dismissed it as "purely ideological radicalism."[6] Habermas is viewed as particularly problematic in this regard. Dick Howard describes his work as being "formulated on the basis of an *undifferentiated universal*"[7] and asks: "What is the *political* activity for this type of *social* theory?"[8] One of my objectives in this study is to make explicit precisely what political activity is

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* All emphases in quoted material are in the original.

implied by the theories elaborated by Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas.

Commentators have tended to attribute the critical theorists' treatment of the proletariat and the notion of a revolutionary subject to some combination of biography, intellectual heritage, and historical conditions. The Jewish, bourgeois background of the first-generation critical theorists is believed to have distanced them from, and engendered a certain disdain toward, the masses and mass politics.[9] The mood of tragic pessimism that characterizes the German sociological tradition, as well as its grave suspicion of science and technology, is seen as informing the nonempirical and ahistorical character of Critical Theory, a character regarded as responsible for the critical theorists' inability to grasp actual struggles and conflicts. This character and these tendencies are believed to have been reinforced by a philosophical tradition that views history as an all-embracing process. This view of history is seen as leading to the oversimplified understanding of society that inhibited the critical theorists' capacity to recognize internal agents of change.[10] Finally, the critical theorists' treatment of the proletariat, and of politics in general, is understood as having been significantly shaped by the historical context within which Critical Theory developed. Helmut Dubiel writes that Critical Theory's development is "a reflective expression of historical experience."[11] This historical experience included the defeat of working-class movements, the Stalinization of the Communist Party, and the rise of fascism, and it is this historical experience that commentators believe led the critical theorists to the idea of a totally dominated society—an idea that denies the possibility of struggle and conflict and thus also denies the possibility of an effective revolutionary agent.[12]

It goes without saying that history, biography, and intellectual heritage have a great deal to do with how problems are identified and solutions conceptualized. Such factors are therefore certainly relevant to an understanding of why the critical theorists rejected the proletariat. But the question to which history, biography, and intellectual heritage are offered as answers—"Why did the critical theorist reject the proletariat as the revolutionary subject?"—ignores part of the problem the critical theorists themselves identified. What is interesting about the explanations that relate the absence of a revolutionary subject in Critical Theory to historical conditions and circumstances is that while these commentators recognize (at least implicitly) that historical changes raise certain questions about the *identity* of the revolutionary subject, this recognition does not, in general, lead them to question the *idea* of the revolutionary subject: most of the commentators do not examine the assumptions about a revolutionary subject that underlie their own evaluations. A similar blind spot is found in explanations that stress the influence of the German sociological and philosophical traditions on Critical Theory. These explanations do not fully take into account the fact that, despite

antiscientific and historicist tendencies (or maybe because of these tendencies), the critical theorists were pointing out emergent trends and developments which called for serious consideration. While it can certainly be argued that the critical theorists, individually or collectively, may overstate the case concerning the oppressiveness and cohesion of modern society and the ill effects of scientific and technological developments, these are phenomena that seriously affect the possibilities for and implications of revolutionary agency and radical social change.

The question "Why did the critical theorists reject the proletariat as revolutionary subject?" assumes that such a subject is in fact a necessary component of an emancipatory vision. The question thus predetermines a negative evaluation of Critical Theory's status as a theory with practical intent. If it is assumed that such theory requires a revolutionary subject, and it is acknowledged that Critical Theory lacks such a subject, then the only possible conclusion is that it has little or no value as a theory with practical intent. Those who claim that a theory with practical intent must identify and address a revolutionary subject, however, make a claim that needs to be examined: namely, that such a subject actually or potentially exists.

Marx, of course, believed that a revolutionary subject actually did exist. But confidence in the status of the proletariat as revolutionary subject has since been undermined by the defeat of working-class movements, the increasing integration of the working class into bourgeois society, and its evident lack of revolutionary consciousness. Anyone who has continued to maintain the "faith" has done so in the face of significant international political and economic changes (unanticipated by Marx), as well as the apparent supercession of class issues and identity by national, racial, religious, ethnic, and gender issues and identities. The identity of the revolutionary subject whom theory must address is no longer self-evident.

Not only is the identity of the revolutionary subject in doubt, but the reasoning behind the idea itself is open to criticism. Seyla Benhabib claims that Marx committed a "distributive fallacy." This fallacy is found in the assumption "that since humanity as an empirical subject was *one*, humanity qua normative subject could be represented by *one* particular group."[13] Benhabib goes on to argue that this distributive fallacy leads to a "politics of collective singularity" which "always searches for a particular group—be it the proletariat, women, the avant-garde, Third World revolutionaries or the Party—whose particularity represents universality as such."[14]

The belief that there is, or could be, one group "whose particularity represents universality as such"—in itself problematic—also has very different implications today than it did when Marx formulated his materialist conception of history. The "politics of collective singularity" lends itself to the legitimation of violence and force as means for achieving revolutionary social change. When one group is understood as representing the interests of humanity as such, then,

by definition, those who stand against that group operate against the interests of humanity and can be dealt with accordingly. What has changed in the last half century—and what makes the revolution of October 1917 a dated and intrinsically dangerous model for revolution—are the available tools of violence and force. Technological developments have altered the conditions of conflict. The availability of new tools of violence makes it possible to usher in "the end of history" in a final and hitherto unimaginable sense.

Despite the questions that historical changes raise about both the identity and the idea of the revolutionary subject, many of the evaluations of Critical Theory as a theory with practical intent are made from a standpoint that assumes its necessity. Insofar as the standards for evaluation emerge from Critical Theory's own self-understanding, the conclusions about its theoretical and political significance are not unwarranted. If, however, these standards are themselves problematic—a possibility the preceding discussion raises and efforts to develop new conceptions of emancipatory politics presume—then an examination of Critical Theory from a different perspective is called for. Such an examination begins by rephrasing the question. The question "Why did the critical theorists reject the proletariat as revolutionary subject?" is replaced by the questions "What emancipatory visions inform the work of the critical theorists, and what are the implications of these visions for a politics oriented to radical change?"

In posing these questions, I take seriously Critical Theory's claim to be a theory with practical intent. I am assuming that in its various manifestations it continues to contain, in some form or another, the elements of the emancipatory vision (a conception of what the world could be and an idea of how such a world could be brought about), and continues to presume that the intentional activities of social actors can affect the course of social change. In suspending the requirement that such agency take the form of a revolutionary subject, the *aim* of theory with a practical intent is not being altered. The possibility that is being entertained is that theory with practical intent might, in response to changed historical conditions, take on a new *form* and *content*. It is not my position that the critical theorists have purposefully set about developing an alternative conception of theory with practical intent, nor that, either collectively or individually, they succeed in articulating a new model of emancipatory politics. I will argue, however, that there are aspects of their work that point to a new, as yet undefined, and very much contested model of emancipatory politics, and that therefore an understanding of these varieties of Critical Theory can contribute to the effort to define and defend such a model.

I have stated that I intend to examine the emancipatory visions that inform the efforts of the critical theorists and that I am particularly interested in their treatment of the issues of agents and actions of radical social change. Ideas about agency and social change pertain most immediately to analyses of contemporary social, economic, and political conditions. It is on the basis of

assessments of significant trends and important social actors that ideas about possibilities and strategies for change and the identities of potentially effective agents in this process are developed. It is, however, precisely at this level that the work of the critical theorists tends to frustrate efforts to explicate their views on agency and social change. Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of the degeneration of the Enlightenment's project seems to leave little room for the development of effective agents and even less hope for progressive change; Marcuse offers up a bewildering array of potential agents as he vacillates between hope and despair over the possibilities for radical social change; and at first glance, Habermas appears to offer only a few reflections on new social movements. It is, no doubt, these mixtures of optimism and pessimism; of defeatist, revolutionary and reformist politics; and of direct concern alternating with distanced contemplation that have contributed to the tendency to dismiss Critical Theory's relevance to efforts to bring about social change. What is needed, then, is a way to cut through the surface confusion, so that the critical theorists' views on agency and social change, as well as their conceptions of what the world could be, can be clarified and evaluated. This can be accomplished by uncovering the basic assumptions that shape their analyses of contemporary conditions.

Analyses of social conditions are shaped by guiding beliefs and assumptions about human actors and human history, assumptions I will refer to as *the model of the subject* and *the conception of history*.[15] The claim that a model of the subject—by which I mean a conception of what it means to be human, a sense of what human beings are and can do—grounds analyses of the social world can be problematic for social scientists in general and sociologists in particular, who, taking the group as the object of inquiry, shy away from statements concerning human nature. But even research efforts that suppose the sui generis quality of human groups rely upon some (often unexamined and unarticulated) ideas about the human actors. This was certainly Dennis Wrong's contention when he argued, in his article "The Oversocialized Concept of Man," that he could not see how, "at the level of theory, sociologists can fail to make assumptions about human nature."[16] One need only refer to the "classical" sociologists—to Marx's identification of labor as the quintessential human activity, to Durkheim's understanding of the "insatiable and bottomless" human capacity for feeling, or to Weber's stress on the human tendency to seek out and act according to meanings—to recognize the significance of a model of the subject, however minimal, to social theorizing.

The claim that such theorizing also relies on a conception of history is more familiar and palatable to sociologists and can also easily be supported and illustrated through reference to the classical social theorists. Marx's belief in the inherent tendency of human productive powers to expand and improve, thereby setting up the contradictions between the forces and relations of production and the dynamic of class struggle; Durkheim's treatment of the

transition from mechanical to organic solidarity in terms of the increasing division of labor brought about by changes in physical and moral density; Weber's concept of rationalization and the disenchantment of the world: all these concern a basic conception of the dynamics and direction of historical change.

Because history and social change are not perceived solely as a function of self-conscious human agency, the model of the subject and the conception of history that underlie social theorizing, while clearly related, are not reducible to one another. Nevertheless, the one informs the other, particularly insofar as it is the model of the subject that delineates the processes or aspects of historical development thematized in assessments of contemporary social conditions (e.g., alienated labor, anomie, and the iron cage) and in views on how such conditions might be improved (e.g., the revolutionary agency of the proletariat, occupational associations, and the charismatic leader or the principled politician). If we shift our attention from social theory in general to theory with practical intent in particular, we can also see that the model of the subject and the conception of history provide the foundations of the emancipatory vision. Marx's conception of a cooperative society of free producers achieved through the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat is grounded in an understanding of human beings as creating and transforming themselves through their productive activity and of history as the expansion and growth of human productive forces.

My purpose in these rather cursory references to Marx, Weber, and Durkheim has been to present the logic behind the approach I will be employing in my examination of the work of Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas. In order to clarify the emancipatory visions that inform the critical theorists' work and assess the practical implications of these visions, I will identify the models of the subject and the conceptions of history that underlie their analyses of contemporary conditions and then relate those analyses to their views on agency and social change. Two other, interrelated issues will also be addressed in these discussions: the first concerns the critical theorists' relationship to (and utilization of) Marxism, and the second, their views on the notion of a revolutionary subject. In a sense these serve as indices of their positions in regard to the "traditional" conception of theory with practical intent, and it goes without saying that the farther away they move from more conventional positions, the more one might expect their work to point to, if not fully articulate, a new conception of emancipatory politics.

It was of course out of and in response to Marxism that Critical Theory developed, and it is here that the discussion will begin. In Chapter 1 an account of the Marxian emancipatory vision and its equivocal elements—as expressed in Marx's own work, in the debates of the Second International, and in Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*—is offered. The need to reassess Marxism was the impetus behind the founding of the Institute for Social

Research, and Chapter 2 opens with a brief account of the Institute's founding, activities and characteristics, followed by a more extended discussion of the early stages of Critical Theory's development. Through reference to Horkheimer's inaugural address as director of the Institute and his 1937 essay "Traditional and Critical Theory," I want not only to identify the positions and orientations that provided the framework for Critical Theory's development, but also to address two of the key issues that marked its departure from the Marxist emancipatory vision: the rejection of the proletariat as revolutionary subject and the insistence on a necessary gap between theory and practice.

Chapter 3 examines Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. I begin my analysis of the critical theorists' work with this collaborative effort not only because of its status as a classic within Critical Theory, but also because it expresses the almost complete rejection of any emancipatory vision and thus the negation of theory with practical intent. Glimmers of hope and possibility can nevertheless be found in the *Dialectic*, and, as I will argue in Chapter 4, these are to be associated more with Adorno than with Horkheimer. The premise of Chapter 4 is that despite Horkheimer and Adorno's close collaboration and identification, very different interests informed their work and mediated their relationships to and appropriation of Marxism. Horkheimer's "theoretical collapse" will be related to his loss of faith in the Marxist project, while the indications of an alternative vision and politics that can be found in Adorno's work are associated with the critical distance he maintained from Marxism.

While Horkheimer embraced the Marxian vision, found it wanting, and lost faith, Marcuse embraced the vision, found it wanting, and set about reconstructing it. Chapter 5 explores Marcuse's efforts to adapt and enrich the Marxian vision. Although Marcuse's writings do offer a new conception of radical politics, an enduring allegiance to the notion of a revolutionary subject inhibits his ability to develop fully the implications of his work. No such allegiance is to be found in Habermas's work. If Marcuse was engaged in an effort to reconstruct Marxism, Habermas's project is the reconstruction of Critical Theory itself. In setting about correcting the deficiencies in the work of his predecessors, Habermas transposes Critical Theory onto a new theoretical framework. The basis, dimensions, and political implications of this new framework are the subject of Chapter 6.

The identification of continuities and discontinuities in the critical theorists' efforts to articulate new visions of emancipatory politics provides a new perspective on the points at which Critical Theory, feminism, and postmodernism intersect and diverge. After reviewing and assessing the development and implications of Critical Theory's reconceptualization of radical politics, the concluding chapter will offer a necessarily abbreviated discussion of all three of these attempts to re-envision the form and content of radical politics. All suggest a politics of autonomous heterogeneity; but

questions remain about the relationship of theory and practice, the meaning of theory with practical intent, and the grounds upon which such a politics could be justified.

In insisting on Critical Theory's place among these contemporary efforts to articulate a new vision of emancipatory politics, I am not unaware of the extent to which Critical Theory itself is a product and expression of a different historical time and context. Although I make some effort to locate the critical theorists' work in reference to their historical context, my purpose here is not to provide a historical or a sociology of knowledge account of their work; this has been done, and done exceptionally well, by Martin Jay in *The Dialectical Imagination* and by Helmut Dubiel in *Theory and Politics*. In an article that also addresses the work of the critical theorists, Russell Jacoby argues that relating texts to the times and to sociopolitical disputes is "both relevant and irrelevant: relevant in that it indicates a political-social 'background' that enters the concepts themselves . . . and irrelevant in that the concepts and questions are not exhausted by this particular reality, but retain a meaning that transcends it."[17] My assumption is that the work of the critical theorists contains a meaning and a challenge that transcend the specific context in which the texts were written—a meaning and a challenge that those interested in emancipatory politics and the issues of agency and social change (whether only theoretically or also practically) can benefit from exploring.

Chapter 1

The Marxian Emancipatory Vision and the Problem of Revolutionary Agency

As the bourgeoisie has the intellectual, organisational and every other advantage, the superiority of the proletariat must lie exclusively in its ability to see society from the centre, as a coherent whole. This means that it is able to act in such a way as to change reality; in the class consciousness of the proletariat theory and practice coincide and so it can consciously throw the weight of its action onto the scales of history—and this is the deciding factor.

Georg Lukács
History and Class Consciousness, 69

The revolutionary agency of the proletariat has been an article of faith among Marxists and is the cornerstone of the Marxian emancipatory vision. Through reference to Marx's own work, the debates within the Second International, and Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness,* I will identify and discuss the contours and ambiguities of this vision. We will find that as Marx's theoretical formulations became matters of practical political concern, the proletariat's role became increasingly problematic and subject to debate. In contrast to those who downplayed the significance of the proletariat in these debates, Lukács will insist on the proletariat's role as the "identical subject-object" of history. At the same time his analysis almost completely precludes the proletariat's ability to become conscious of its role. In effect, Lukács both deifies and debilitates the proletariat as revolutionary subject. It is this problematic that will carry us forward into the work of the critical theorists.

MARX AND THE PROLETARIAT

Marx's project is just one of many attempts to make sense of history. The

desire to know the purpose or final aim of history seems to be a part of the human condition. We seek a meaning before which the apparent contingency of existence vanishes, a meaning by which the miseries humankind has experienced can be interpreted as inevitable stages on the road to a morally satisfactory goal. It is this goal—the world as it should or could or will be—that gives history its meaning.

Throughout most of human existence, history's meaning has derived from belief in a divine plan. History was understood as the redemptive activity of a divine being, but the plan itself, the order and sense of the world, remained concealed from human understanding. That there was such a plan was an article of faith, and without such faith the world had no meaning. With the Enlightenment the form and content of this belief were altered. Most significantly, history's plan became accessible to human understanding. As reason replaced faith, history became meaningful in two senses: it had a meaning *and* it was intelligible. The world was understood as rational, and human beings, whose rationality partook of the rationality of the whole, could discover the patterns of the world.

As reason replaced faith, so too was the creative power in history transmuted from a transcendent divine being into an immanent historical force. This force, however, remained something distinct from conscious human activity. As Hegel's concept of the "cunning of reason" reflects, this immanent historical force used human beings as its unwitting agents; it operated behind their backs. Human beings might understand or identify the principle or power at work in history, but such knowledge would not affect history's course or its consequences. Human beings remained merely actors or objects in the drama of history.

It is with Marx that human activity is placed at the center of an understanding of history and its meaning. The human species becomes the creative force, the subject of history, the author and actor in a drama of its own making. History, once the redemptive activity of a transcendent being, now becomes the redemptive activity of human beings. Marx's perspective preserves the ideas of history having a meaning and being intelligible but, importantly, introduces the additional and crucial tenet of conscious human activity as a decisive moment in the actualization of history's meaning. Human action and understanding become the key to the full realization of the final aim of history: the premise of theory with practical intent—that self-conscious human activity can affect the course of social change—is in place.

For Marx, however, the self-knowledge necessary to bring about consciously the actualization of history's meaning is itself a historical accomplishment realized only in the self-conscious activity of a particular social group under particular historical circumstances. The agent whose historical mission is the actualization of history's meaning is the proletariat. It is the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat that will bring about the realization of better world,

a "cooperative society based on the common ownership of the means of production,"[1] a society in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."[2]

The unique status and historical role of the proletariat was first mentioned by Marx in the introduction to his "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*." Here he adopts (and adapts) Hegel's notion of a universal class and identifies the proletariat as the class whose interests are those of society as a whole and whose actions can achieve the *"total redemption of humanity."*[3] The proletariat emerges under the conditions of capitalism as the embodied negation of that system. Its uniqueness as a class lies in the fact that it is essential to modern production, but being deprived of property and personhood, it has no interest in maintaining that society: as a class with "radical chains" the proletariat is *in* but not *of* civil society. Under the material conditions of capitalism—conditions that make possible for the first time the full humanization of the species—the dehumanization of the proletariat becomes, for Marx, paradigmatic of all forms of human unfreedom.

Marx's initial identification of the proletariat as revolutionary subject was more a matter of philosophical speculation than empirical observation; at this point in the development of his work, his identification of the proletariat as revolutionary subject represented more an indictment of capitalist dehumanization than a theory of revolution. Nevertheless, his discovery of the proletariat led him to study the economic structure and developmental processes of capitalist society. Marx began to develop the theoretical and economic underpinnings of his theory of proletarian revolution in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, where the analysis of labor as wage-labor and the recognition of the active antithesis of labor and capital transform his earlier notion of a class with radical chains into an understanding of the proletariat as the class that "has to struggle."[4] Marx's work thereafter, in which he explicated the functioning and prospects of the capitalist economy, can be regarded as an extended exposé of the nature of capitalist exploitation and of the structural dynamics that will set the stage for its transcendence.

The actual transcendence of capitalism, however, involves more than simply exposing its structural dynamics and identifying the proletariat as the class that has to struggle. There is also the matter of just how the proletariat will come to recognize and act out its historical mission. Marx distinguishes between class as an objective situation and the subjective awareness of this situation. Class membership is determined by common economic conditions. Members of the same class share a common relationship to the means of production and thereby comprise a class-in-itself. But class membership does not necessarily entail consciousness of the shared conditions and common interests: a class-in-itself is not necessarily a class-for-itself. The activity that transforms a class-in-itself into a class-for-itself—the activity through which class consciousness develops—is struggle against a common enemy.[5]

The development of the proletariat as a class-in-and-for-itself is laid out in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Capitalism creates not only the material conditions for its own transcendence but also the agent whose actions will achieve that transcendence. Capitalism collectivizes the working class, rescuing it from the "idiocy" of rural life, and engenders in this class a cohesion based on common conditions and a common enemy. It calls into existence the agents of its own demise by creating a class of workers who must sell their own labor power in order to live. These workers are concentrated in large factories and in cities. Their work and their life conditions are homogenized, thus removing distinctions that would inhibit common identification. Concentration and common conditions facilitate the identification of a common enemy and the organization of struggle. Initially carried on by individuals, the struggle becomes organized and eventually expands into the organization of workers as a class and into a political party: the struggle of individual workers becomes an economic struggle of combinations and finally (and necessarily) a political struggle. The development of class (revolutionary) consciousness coincides with, and is developed and maintained through, struggle and organization. The organized struggle of the revolutionary proletariat culminates in the seizure of political power and the transformation of society. Whether or not the seizure of political power and the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat will necessarily involve force depends, according to Marx, on the institutions and mores of the countries in which the struggle takes place.[6]

Although the proletariat's role in the radical transformation of society seems clear, there is in fact a good deal of ambiguity in Marx's formulations. What is the relationship of the class organization (the Party) to the mass of the proletariat? Is the key actor in the revolutionary process the proletariat or the Party, with its advantage of theoretical insight? And what is the necessary relation between the objective and subjective preconditions of revolution? While Marx posits a definite relationship among class consciousness, political struggle, and organization, the relationship among class consciousness, objective conditions, and revolution is less clear. In other words, while we are told how action, consciousness, and organization develop simultaneously through working-class struggles, the relationship between these struggles and objective economic developments is not clear, nor is the relationship of objective and subjective conditions to the actuality of revolution. Is the revolution an unavoidable result of capitalism or only a possibility deriving from the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat? Is it a matter of economic laws or of human will and action? Does capitalism "automatically" give rise to socialism, or in Russell Jacoby's words, does there exist between capitalism and socialism "an empty space beyond determinism"?[7]

Marx's own efforts to spur the development of a revolutionary proletariat, as well as his famous observations that "men make their own history"[8] and that class struggle can end either the revolutionary transcendence of capitalist

society or "in the common ruin of the contending classes,"[9] indicate a degree of contingency in his theory of revolution. On the other hand, a deterministic undertone, which displaces problems of agency and consciousness by positing the "inevitability" of social processes, is also apparent. In the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels speak of the fall of the bourgeoisie and the triumph of the proletariat as "equally inevitable."[10] And in the postface (1873) to the second edition of *Capital*, Marx approvingly cites a reviewer who lauded his work for proving "both the necessity of the present order of things, and the necessity of another order into which the first must inevitably pass over." The reviewer went on to note (and Marx goes on to quote) that "it is a matter of indifference whether men believe it or do not believe it, whether they are conscious of it or not."[11]

Marx's emancipatory vision is thus an equivocal one. While holding on to an image of a better world, his views on the agents and actions that will bring about this world are not as clear as might be supposed. Questions about agents and appropriate actions were the subject of considerable debate among Marx's followers in the Second International, who were confronted with the practical challenge of revolutionary politics.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The Second International (1889–1914) is commonly associated with a scientistic, deterministic interpretation of Marx. This interpretation was expounded by the International's leading theorist, Karl Kautsky, whose definition and defense of Marxist orthodoxy stressed the "objective necessity" of the socialist revolution. While the proletariat was regarded as the standard-bearer of the fight for socialism, the importance of the proletariat's self-conscious struggles diminished in the face of objective historical processes. Kautsky contended that the revolution would be the inevitable consequence of capitalist development. Furthermore, he believed that the revolution could neither be prepared for nor stimulated by the working class, nor could it be prevented by the ruling class. In *The Road to Power*, Kautsky writes: "We know that our goal can be attained only through a revolution. We also know that it is just as little in our power to create this revolution as it is in the power of our opponents to prevent it. It is no part of our work to instigate a revolution or to prepare the way for it."[12] The working class remained, for Kautsky, a necessary element in the revolutionary process: its hostility to the ruling class was crucial to the process.[13] But the issues of its consciousness and revolutionary actions became moot, since they were guaranteed by the "natural necessity" of the social process. Kolakowski describes Kautsky's position as that of "revolution prepared by capitalism and not by the proletariat."[14] In a similar vein Carl Schorske remarks that Kautsky's analysis of the revolutionary

process "was remarkable for the passive role which he assigned to the working class and its party."[15]

While Kautsky's orthodoxy was the dominant trend within the Marxism of the Second International—and the trend to which Lukács would take particular exception—it was certainly not the only position articulated during this period. If Kautsky's views on the proletariat followed from his conviction concerning the objective *necessity* of the socialist revolution, Rosa Luxemburg's and Lenin's, with important differences, followed from their conviction that the socialist revolution was an objective *possibility*, one that required the active participation of the proletariat. By contrast, Eduard Bernstein, the leading proponent of revisionism, saw the revolution as neither necessary, possible, nor particularly desirable.

The differences in Luxemburg's and Lenin's positions, on this point at least, pertain to their views on the development of class consciousness. In the relationship of political struggle and organization to class consciousness, Luxemburg stressed struggle over organization. While she by no means denied the need for organization and leadership, she was unique in her steadfast faith in the revolutionary will of the people. Revolutionary consciousness would develop out of the spontaneous, self-emancipatory actions of the proletariat.[16] Lenin felt otherwise and insisted upon the importance of organization. He believed that, left to itself, the working class could develop only trade union consciousness and that revolutionary consciousness could be brought to the proletariat only from without.[17] Both Luxemburg and Lenin affirmed the identity of the proletariat as the revolutionary subject and stressed the central significance of consciousness to the revolution. The question for them was the means by which revolutionary consciousness was to be developed. For Bernstein, on the other hand, assumptions concerning the proletariat's revolutionary agency and consciousness were debatable in light of historical developments. Bernstein's revisionism was based on the conviction that the "facts" of actual capitalist development refuted Marx's predictions concerning economic crises, class polarization, and the socialist revolution. Capitalism's developed ability to forestall, if not to rule out altogether, its breakdown transformed socialism from an objective necessity into a morally desirable goal, one that could be achieved through peaceful and gradual democratic reform. With the rejection of the socialist revolution went the rejection of the proletariat's historical mission. For Bernstein the issue of revolutionary agency was transformed into a matter of democratic politics.[18]

This variety of views concerning the revolutionary agents and actions was developed not in response to abstract theoretical questions, but rather in response to political struggles occurring in varying, concrete historical situations. With the exception of Bernstein, there was a shared belief that the proletariat was the agent of revolution. But as this theoretical presupposition was translated into practice, the ambiguity in Marx's emancipatory vision

became evident. On the one hand the proletariat is cast as the passive carrier of objective necessity. On the other hand its active intervention in the historical process—an intervention by no means guaranteed by history—is regarded as essential to the success of the revolution. In the latter case the issue of consciousness becomes paramount, since revolutionary action requires that the proletariat become conscious of its historical mission as the revolutionary class. It is this question of consciousness—or the subjective dimension of revolution—that Lukács sought to resolve.

LUKÁCS AND THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Georg Lukács stands as a dominant figure in twentieth-century Marxism. The publication of his *History and Class Consciousness* and Karl Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy* in 1923 marked the first serious efforts to rethink Marxism in light of changing conditions and to challenge the dominant Marxist orthodoxy. Both Lukács and Korsch were responding to the inability of the orthodox viewpoint to account for either the unexpected survival of the Russian Revolution or the progressive dissolution of revolutionary working-class movements in Europe. Their efforts led them to examine the origins of Marx's thought and to revitalize and reemphasize aspects of his work which had previously been underplayed or ignored. Their work gave rise to what later would be labeled "Western Marxism." This variant of Marxist thought is characterized by its interest in the early Marx and in the philosophical (especially Hegelian) roots of Marxism; by its focus on Marx as opposed to Engels; and by its stress on consciousness, culture, and subjectivity over science, economics, and nature. It is within Western Marxism, of course, that Critical Theory is situated. And Lukács's work would particularly influence the critical theorists.

Lukács is also a controversial figure in twentieth-century Marxism. The contributions and contradictions of his work, as well as his reassessments and repudiations of it, have been the subject of a great deal of debate and discussion.[19] My interest here, however, is not in his work as a whole, but rather in his treatment of the proletariat as the revolutionary subject. His effort to address the issue of the proletariat's self-conscious agency effectively created more problems than it solved. At the same time that he insisted upon the identification of the proletariat as the revolutionary subject, he detailed the socioeconomic conditions that precluded its ability to fulfill its world-historical mission. It is the development of this dilemma in Lukács's work that interests us here.

In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács speaks of the proletariat as the "identical subject-object," "the subject of action," "the 'we' of the genesis." Although he would later label his treatment of the proletariat as an "attempt to

out-Hegel Hegel,"[20] he held firm to his conviction that the proletariat was the historical subject whose actions would bring about the revolution. Lukács followed Marx in believing that it was the position of the proletariat in the capitalist mode of production that conferred upon it its unique status. Within a system based on the production and exchange of commodities, workers were both commodities and the producers of commodities. The fact that they, and they alone, were in a position to recognize themselves as both the subject and the object of the production process, and thus of the historical process, meant that the proletariat was capable of gaining unique insight into historical truth. For Lukács the proletariat is the first truly universal class: for the first time in history, there existed a class whose self-understanding was the understanding of society as a whole, whose fate was the fate of society as a whole. In the proletariat subjective awareness and objective knowledge coincided.

Lukács insists that subjective awareness is not an automatic consequence of objective position. He argues that while objective position and conditions "give the proletariat the opportunity and the necessity to change society," social transformation will result only from their "free" action.[21] And this free action will be a function of the proletariat's developing class consciousness. He states, in no uncertain terms, that the crucial element in the radical transformation of society is the proletariat's subjective awareness: "when the final economic crisis of capitalism develops, *the fate of the revolution (and with it the fate of mankind) will depend on the ideological maturity of the proletariat, i.e. on its class consciousness.*"[22] Class consciousness thus becomes for Lukács the crucial element in the radical transformation of society: the development of the proletariat's self-knowledge is *the* step upon which everything depends. Furthermore, he did not believe that class consciousness is a natural or inevitable consequence of historical development. For Marx the development of the proletariat's self-consciousness was an axiomatic element in the dialectic of history. When history itself cast doubt on this assumption, the theoreticians of the Second International either held fast to a doctrine of inevitability or downgraded the significance of class consciousness in the revolutionary process. For Lukács class consciousness was of utmost significance precisely because neither its development nor, as a consequence, that of the revolution was inevitable.

The centrality attributed to class consciousness, and the fact that it had not developed under seemingly ripe historical conditions, led Lukács (as it also would the critical theorists) to consider the forces that inhibited its growth. In his treatment of the phenomenon of reification, Lukács explicitly starts from Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism in *Capital*. Naming commodity fetishism the "*specific* problem of our age,"[23] Lukács argues that the perception and treatment of relations between people as relations between things perme-ates every aspect of life under capitalism, including the self-consciousness of individuals. He writes:

> The transformation of the commodity into a thing of "ghostly objectivity" . . . stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things which he can "own" or "dispose of" like the various objects of the external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychical "qualities" into play without their being subjected to this reifying process.[24]

One can see here the problem Lukács is creating for himself. On the one hand he casts a class-conscious proletariat as central to hopes for the revolution; on the other he sees the structural consequences of the commodity form as becoming increasingly all-encompassing. When he declares that as capitalism develops, reification increasingly and fatefully sinks into and deforms human consciousness,[25] he is in effect saying that as the revolution becomes more and more an objective possibility, it becomes less and less a subjective possibility.

In his effort to solve this dilemma, Lukács was forced to differentiate between the proletariat's actual consciousness and its "true" interests. The actual, empirical consciousness of the proletariat was described as "a class-conditioned *unconsciousness*"[26] which leads workers to identify their own interests with those of the bourgeoisie. He contrasts this reified consciousness with the proletariat's true class consciousness, which is identified as that consciousness logically appropriate to the proletariat's position in the production process—the consciousness workers *would* have if they were able to assess and recognize their position and interests fully.[27] Class consciousness thus becomes for Lukács something quite different from the actual thoughts, feelings, desires, and knowledge of the proletariat. Class consciousness is the consciousness of "the identical subject-object" of history and as such finds its theoretical expression in Marxism. But the gap between the empirical consciousness of the proletariat and class consciousness leaves the latter without any concrete embodiment. Lukács solves this problem by recognizing the Communist Party as the practical representation of the proletariat's true interests.[28] Whether or not Lukács's conception of the party and its role was a form of proto-Stalinism is debatable.[29] What is clear is that an analysis which at once affirms the proletariat's revolutionary role and denies its capacity to fulfill this role forced Lukács to devise some means of overcoming this contradiction. This he did by casting the Party as the vehicle for the development of revolutionary consciousness.

Marx's revolutionary proletariat failed to materialize. In order to preserve the Marxian emancipatory vision, his followers were forced to modify it. In the Second International a number of variations were developed: the envisioned better world was cast as an inevitable development, thereby de-emphasizing the significance of agents (Kautsky); the better world was cast as a morally desirable, but not inevitable, goal which might be attained through

nonrevolutionary actions (Bernstein); the agency of the proletariat was reaffirmed and the importance of its actions to the development of agency stressed (Luxemburg); and the proletariat's agency was reaffirmed, but its ability to fulfill its role was made dependent on the actions of the Party (Lenin). With Lukács's analysis of reification and its effects on the development of a revolutionary consciousness, the Party's place in the emancipatory vision becomes even more significant: *it* is the agent whose insights and actions are essential to the process of radical social change.[30]

While the critical theorists will share and develop upon Lukács's analysis of conditions that inhibit the development of revolutionary consciousness, they will reject his solution. The attitudes of the early critical theorists to the Party are but one specific expression of a fundamental emphasis on independence and autonomy that characterizes both Critical Theory's origins and its development.

Chapter 2

Departures from Traditional Marxism: Origins and Early Development of Critical Theory

[I]t must be added that even the situation of the proletariat is, in this society, no guarantee of correct knowledge.

Max Horkheimer
"Traditional and Critical Theory," in *Critical Theory*, 213

In its origins as well as in its development, Critical Theory represented a departure from Marxist canons, and in this chapter I will be concerned with identifying and discussing the early indications of this departure. Because certain institutional and historical factors had a significant bearing on the substantive development of Critical Theory, the discussion begins with the institutional basis out of which it developed, the Institute for Social Research. Critical Theory itself is generally understood as taking form during Max Horkheimer's tenure as director of the Institute. Therefore, after the preliminary discussion of the founding and unique features of the Institute, attention will shift to an examination of characteristics and orientations of Critical Theory as they were articulated or anticipated in Horkheimer's inaugural address and in his 1937 essay "Traditional and Critical Theory." Finally, I turn to the question of Critical Theory's movement away from Marxism. While this movement is evident in Horkheimer's changing views on the proletariat, his insistence on a necessary degree of separation between theory and practice and between theorists and the revolutionary class—an insistence that precedes any overt rejection of the proletariat as revolutionary subject—already indicates a departure from the Marxist emancipatory vision. The critical theorists' separation of theory and practice reflects an emphasis on independence and autonomy, an emphasis that characterizes Critical Theory as a whole and was itself made possible and reinforced by its institutional origins.

THE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

In 1923, the same year that Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* and Karl Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy* were published, the Institute for Social Research was founded in Frankfurt, Germany.[1] It was established as the first Marxist-oriented research institute in Germany through the efforts of Felix J. Weil, an activist and supporter of radical causes. And like Lukács's and Korsch's works, it represented an effort to reappraise and reconstruct Marxist theory in light of changed historical conditions.

The first active director of the Institute was the historian Carl Grünberg, a self-avowed Marxist with roots in Austro-Marxism.[2] Under Grünberg's directorship the Institute's inspirational and theoretical basis was a relatively orthodox version of Marxism, which held that social life could be understood by uncovering the laws operative in a given economy. Close ties to the Marx/Engels Institute in Moscow and work devoted primarily to historical and empirical studies of the labor movement characterized the Institute's work during Grünberg's directorship.[3] Notwithstanding the Institute's fairly orthodox orientation under Grünberg, important features which contributed to the character of Critical Theory were already in place. Paramount among these were the Institute's financial independence and the interdisciplinary nature of its work.

A large endowment contributed by Weil's father ensured that the Institute could enjoy considerable independence, which in turn allowed its members to carry out their theoretical and empirical work free from the constraints of university or party politics. Indeed, Jay has argued that this financial independence was one of the primary reasons for the theoretical achievements realized by Critical Theory.[4] Furthermore, this private endowment made it possible for the Institute and its members to continue their work under the disruptive conditions of exile.[5]

If financial independence removed practical and political constraints, the Institute's interdisciplinary orientation challenged limitations imposed by academic disciplines. Traversing the boundaries of competing disciplines, philosophers, economists, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, historians, anthropologists, and literary and cultural critics worked together to develop theories of contemporary social phenomena. Douglas Kellner argues that the Institute's work was in fact more than interdisciplinary. He observes that the Institute brought individuals together not to pursue particular areas but to engage in the collective effort of transcending the limits of separate disciplines in order to create "a new kind of supradisciplinary social theory."[6]

Several other biographical and historical factors also characterized and shaped the Institute's work. First, among Institute members one finds not only a variety of perspectives deriving from differing academic backgrounds but also significant differences in political affiliations and degrees of activism.

Although all certainly had leftist leanings, no one party, faction, or form of political involvement predominated. Second, the diversity represented in a plurality of intellectual and political perspectives was further enhanced by the variety and fluidity of individual affiliations with the Institute. Among those whose names have been prominently associated with the Institute, Adorno had no formal affiliation until 1938, although his contact and influence is noticeable much earlier; Erich Fromm's connection was severed in 1939; Walter Benjamin was never formally affiliated; and Marcuse, who became a member in 1932, remained in the United States after the Institute's return to Germany. Finally, the physical and psychic dislocations experienced by the Institute and its members can be added to the list of factors that acted against any tendency within the Institute to establish a clear-cut and all-encompassing "party line." The Institute's peripatetic existence—its moves from Frankfurt to Geneva in 1933, to New York and affiliation with Columbia University in 1935, and back to Frankfurt in 1950—and experiences that spanned the early days of the Weimar Republic, the rise of fascism, world economic crises, the New Deal, the Holocaust, World War II and Hiroshima, the Cold War, and the New Left required and reinforced institutional and intellectual adaptability.

Financial independence, interdisciplinary work, the variety of intellectual and political orientations and of institutional affiliations, physical and psychic dislocations—all are factors that contributed to the complexity and ambiguity of what would become known as Critical Theory. But as complex and ambiguous as Critical Theory might be, one does find within it a consistent emphasis, both institutionally and theoretically, on autonomy and independence. And although there are no procedures by which one might measure the precise effect of institutional factors on the substantive development of a body of thought, a connection between the Institute's independence and interdisciplinary orientation and the character of Critical Theory is difficult to deny. Relative autonomy at the institutional level—freedom from definitions and limitations imposed by university, party, and the methods, presuppositions, and boundaries of competing disciplines—allowed and reinforced the emphasis on autonomy found in the critical theorists' work. This emphasis and concern was further enhanced and supported by the particular circumstances of Critical Theory's development. The nature of individual relationships to the Institute and the dislocations precipitated by historical events necessitated institutional and intellectual flexibility and responsiveness, qualities that themselves require independence. The particularities of Critical Theory's institutional origins—the fact that for a variety of reasons work within this Marxist-oriented research institute was free from intellectual constraints of all sorts—facilitated and perhaps even encouraged its movement away from Marxism. And evidence of this movement is already apparent in Max Horkheimer's early formulations of Critical Theory.

HORKHEIMER AND CRITICAL THEORY

Grünberg stepped down as director of the Institute for Social Research in 1929. He was succeeded on an interim basis by Friedrich Pollock until Horkheimer was officially installed in January 1931. Horkheimer has been referred to as a "highly effective academic entrepreneur,"[7] and indeed as director he was unquestionably successful in gathering together an extraordinary group of individuals; steering the Institute through the vicissitudes of exile, emigration, and return; and setting the agenda for the Institute's work. Although the quality of his work has been questioned (see Chapter 4) and the degree of his dominance and influence as director disputed,[8] the fact remains that it was under Horkheimer's leadership that the theoretical views which would become known as Critical Theory were developed. The outlines of Critical Theory, its themes and its priorities, were already evident in Horkheimer's inaugural lecture, "The State of Contemporary Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research." In this address Horkheimer accords philosophy a central position within the Institute's project, reaffirms the necessity and value of interdisciplinary work, and identifies the central problematic around which theoretical and empirical work would be organized.

According to Horkheimer, social philosophy has traditionally concerned itself with the great fundamental questions about human social life, questions concerning the individual's relationship to society, the constitution of communities, the role and meaning of culture, and the quality and status of social existence. These concerns of socio-philosophical thought, as well as its orientation toward the totality of social life, were to inform and guide the Institute's work. The deficiencies and limitations of social philosophy— specifically those resulting from its lack of attention to concrete human existence—were to be overcome through a new synthesis of philosophy and science. This new synthesis would involve the "ongoing dialectical permeation and evolution of philosophical theory and empirical-scientific practice."[9] Scientific research would serve and be guided by the concerns and orientation of social philosophy, which in turn would be influenced and transformed by the results of such research. This approach to the study of society, Horkheimer insists, must be interdisciplinary. It requires the cooperative efforts of philosophers, psychologists, political scientists, sociologists, economists, and historians, whose work would focus on tracing the linkages among the various realms that comprise the social world.

Horkheimer identifies the particular question to which the Institute's efforts would be addressed as that "of the connection between the economic life of society, the psychological development of its individuals and the changes within specific areas of culture to which belong not only the intellectual legacy of the sciences, art, and religion, but also law, customs, fashion, public opinion, sports, entertainment, lifestyles, and so on."[10] Out of this problematic would

emerge two of Critical Theory's distinctive features: the development of a critical social psychology and a theory of culture. Work in these areas would reveal more directly the concern underlying this problematic, namely a concern with the forces that inhibit, if not prohibit altogether, the development of a critical, oppositional consciousness on the part of the oppressed masses.

This is, of course, the Lukácsian problem of the possibilities for revolutionary consciousness in a reified world. It is this problem that will inform the critical theorists' interest in how and why an irrational order persists and where hope for transcendence might still reside. Their studies on authority, the authoritarian state, mass society, the culture industry, and the family will reflect their general concern with the decline of critical, independent thinking; so too, will their interest in how the attitudes and impulses of individuals are controlled and manipulated by the social order. The critical theorists' interest in aesthetics—particularly in the social insights expressed in art and in art's transcendence of and protest against prevailing conditions—will be motivated by the desire to identify possible chinks in the armor of the reified world. Similarly, their treatment of memory, fantasy, and the body should be understood as elements in the search for possible forms of resistance to total domination.

But while the critical theorists' work and interests may be located within the problematic identified by Lukács, they do not accept his solution to the problem. Throughout their work one finds expressed the deep-seated conviction that a critical theory of society (and indeed critical thinking itself) must establish and maintain a distance from existing forms of social consciousness, whether these forms be more generally expressed in dominant systems of thought or institutionalized in and safeguarded by the Party. This insistence on a necessary distance from any one system of thought will allow the critical theorists freely to adopt and to incorporate ideas from a variety of sources into their analyses of contemporary society. Their critical engagements with Hegel, Kant, Weber, Freud, as well as myriad other thinkers would become a distinctive feature of Critical Theory, and they reflect not only the commitment to an interdisciplinary approach but also the emphasis placed on independent thinking. In fact, this insistence on the independence of critical thought is evident not only in *what* the critical theorists have to say, but also in *how* they say it.

It is the style of the critical theorists to establish their own theoretical self-understanding through the critique and rejection of alternative or opposing points of view. This technique is so typical that David Held chooses to begin his *Introduction to Critical Theory* by offering a negative definition of Critical Theory, listing the many positions and approaches the critical theorists rejected.[11] Horkheimer demonstrates this method in his inaugural lecture as he sets about clarifying the approach to be employed in the Institute's work by critically assessing and pointing out the limitations of Kant, Hegel, current

forms of idealism, positivism, as well as of what he refers to as "an abstract and therefore badly understood Marx."[12] A more extensive and definitive example of this approach is found in his essay "Traditional and Critical Theory," where a critique of Western thought in general and positivism in particular provides the basis for the first programmatic presentation of the Frankfurt School's plan to synthesize philosophy and science with a radical political perspective.

"Traditional and Critical Theory" has been referred to as the "founding document" of the Frankfurt School.[13] In this essay Horkheimer outlines Critical Theory's approach and aim through a critique of what he identifies as the traditional conception of theory. According to Horkheimer, traditional theory (by which he understood all modern theory that takes the model of the natural sciences as its regulative ideal) seeks to develop hypotheses about and descriptions of reality that are verified or falsified by existing facts. The activity of science is understood as something separate from the world it studies and from the use to which its accomplishments are put. Facts, as well as the methods and interpretive schema by means of which they are gathered and interpreted, are treated as something separate from, and indeed external to, theorizing. The alienation of knowledge from action that Horkheimer believes characterizes traditional theory is expressed as well in the sharp distinctions it maintains between fact and value and between the subject and the object of theoretical activity.

Horkheimer argues that traditional theory fails to recognize its own social determinants and functions. Its notion of the objective scientist is the intellectual counterpart of the free economic subject: both reflect and perpetuate the fiction of the autonomous bourgeois ego. Furthermore, the illusion of disinterested science—an aspect of the "false consciousness of the bourgeois savant"[14]—obscures the fact that science is a product of and an element in the social process of labor that grounds bourgeois society. Its activities and achievements serve to conserve and reproduce the status quo, and the strict separations it maintains between knowledge and action, fact and value, and subject and object reinforce and legitimize that state of affairs. In Horkheimer's estimation traditional theory uncritically reproduces bourgeois society.

Critical Theory, by contrast, is "interested" science. It understands that both the subject and object of theoretical activity are socially conditioned and furthermore that the social world it takes as its object (and of which it is a part) is marked by tensions and oppositions that make disinterested science impossible. Critical Theory is not motivated by an interest in improving the logical consistency of conceptual systems or in developing a more comprehensive framework under which facts may be subsumed. Rather, it is motivated by the effort "to transcend the tension and abolish the opposition between the individual's purposefulness, spontaneity, and rationality, and those work-process relationships upon which society is built."[15] It is, Horkheimer declares, "dominated at every turn by a concern for reasonable conditions of

life."[16] Critical Theory is interested in the radical transformation of society and human emancipation, and it conceives of itself as an active element in a process leading to new social forms, forms that will result from and be based in the creativity, spontaneity, and consciousness of free individuals.

Horkheimer presents Critical Theory as a philosophically guided and scientifically grounded effort directed toward establishing a rational society. He clearly associates his project with Marxism. The emancipatory concern of Critical Theory, according to Horkheimer, has its basis in the situation of the proletariat in modern society. The proletariat's situation necessarily generates a concern that allows the tendencies and tensions within bourgeois society to be perceived and expressed. But while Horkheimer identifies Critical Theory's project with Marxism, by 1937 it had in fact moved significantly away from the Marxian vision. And this movement is nowhere more evident than in the critical theorists' treatment of the proletariat.

CRITICAL THEORY AND THE MARXIAN EMANCIPATORY VISION

In "Traditional and Critical Theory" Horkheimer maintains that the situation of the proletariat allows the truth of capitalist society to be perceived. But he also insists that the truth of theory can no longer be grounded in the consciousness and activities of the proletariat. Like Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness*, Horkheimer believes that the actual consciousness of the proletariat is not necessarily theoretically correct or revolutionary. "Even to the proletariat," he writes, "the world superficially seems quite different than it really is."[17] Social structural forces distort the proletariat's ability to perceive the world as it really is and thus also its capacity to act as the revolutionary subject. And these same forces also affect the perceptions of other members of bourgeois society. Concluding that it "is possible for the consciousness of every social stratum today to be limited and corrupted by ideology, however much . . . it may be bent on truth,"[18] Horkheimer effectively precludes not only the proletariat's but also the Party's claims to revolutionary truth.

The views Horkheimer expresses on the proletariat in "Traditional and Critical Theory" reflect neither his nor the Frankfurt School's initial or final position. As Helmut Dubiel has shown in his study of the development of Critical Theory, the early critical theorists' rejection of the proletariat as the subject and addressee of theory evolved gradually over a period of years.[19] In tracing their changing views from 1930 to 1945, Dubiel shows the transformation of what were initial reservations about the a priori assumption that theory has its true origins in the class consciousness of the proletariat into the conviction that continued belief in the possibility of the proletariat developing a politically significant self-consciousness was an exercise in collective denial.

This gradual change in attitudes toward the proletariat is reflected in Horkheimer's own work. In 1929 he expressed the relatively orthodox Marxist association between economic position and revolutionary consciousness, stating that it is "those groups that themselves experience need as a consequence of their social status . . . [that] are naturally invested with knowledge of the root of the problem."[20] By 1933, however, this position had been modified, and the proletariat's status was justified in social-psychological terms. In speaking of efforts to attain a better society, Horkheimer writes: "The part of humanity which necessarily counts on this change . . . already contains (and attracts even more) forces for whom realizing a better society is a matter of great importance. It is also psychologically prepared for it, since its role in the production process forces it to rely less on the unlikely increase of property than on the employment of its labor power."[21] As has already been noted, by the time "Traditional and Critical Theory" was published in 1937, Horkheimer no longer regarded the proletariat as having unique access to historical truth, and by the early 1940s, when Horkheimer and Adorno wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the proletariat was understood as having been fully integrated into the administered society. In *Eclipse of Reason*, which was published in 1947, Horkheimer would write that while workers are quick to join the attack on any politician or capitalist who has broken the rules of the game, "they do not question the rules in themselves. They have learned to take social injustice . . . as a powerful fact, and to take powerful facts as the only things to be respected. Their minds are closed to dreams of a basically different world and to concepts that . . . are oriented toward real fulfillment of those dreams."[22] Similar assessments of the proletariat's disappearance, of its inability to fulfill its revolutionary role, would be made by the other critical theorists. Adorno would write: "Sociologists ponder the grimly comic riddle: 'Where is the proletariat?'";[23] Marcuse would conclude: "The identity between the proletariat and the universal interest has been superseded—if indeed it ever existed at all";[24] and Habermas would declare that "the proletariat *as* proletariat has been dissolved."[25]

While Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas all, to one degree or another, dismissed the revolutionary agency of the proletariat and thus a key component of the Marxian emancipatory vision, we will see in the following chapters that their reasons for, and thus the consequences of, doing so vary considerably. As important, however, as the dismissal of the proletariat is to the character of Critical Theory, the alteration in the relationship of theory and practice is an equally, if not in the end more, significant departure from Marxism.

Marxism has traditionally aspired to a unity of theory and practice based in the interests, consciousness, and actions of the proletariat. In effect, this has been an aspiration to establish congruity between thought and reality through action. Although the precise nature of the desired relationship of theory and

practice has been open to debate, there has existed a general consensus among those who consider themselves Marxists that the unity of theory and practice is both desirable and necessary and that theory which is not addressed to and informed by the concrete reality and practical struggles of the oppressed class is merely another form of idealism.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the relationship of theory to the actual consciousness and activities of the revolutionary class became increasingly mediated as the revolutionary agency of the proletariat proved problematic. In light of the proletariat's failure to fulfill its historical role, the basis for the unity of theory and practice shifted from the revolutionary class itself to its representative, the Party. Although the critical theorists did not follow this particular path, the failures of the proletariat certainly had an effect on their views of the theory-practice relationship. But as Dubiel points out,[26] reservations about Marxian claims concerning the origins and legitimacy of theory were apparent well before the critical theorists abandoned faith in the proletariat. The autonomy accorded theory by the critical theorists in relation to practice is not solely a function of the proletariat's activities (or lack thereof); it reflects as well a fundamental reservation about the desirability of theory-practice unity in the historical circumstances of the proletariat and the Stalinization of the Communist Party.

In his inaugural proposal for the "dialectical permeation and evolution" of philosophy and science and his call in "Traditional and Critical Theory" for a "dynamic unity" between the critical intelligentsia and the proletariat, Horkheimer stresses the necessary interdependence of theory and practice. But while he agrees that theory must be informed by and relate to practice, he rejects any limiting relationship between theory and political practice (or empirical research). The truth and efficacy of theory is regarded as something independent of particular social interests. It emerges out of a dynamic unity—a unity of theorists, their object, and the oppressed class—which has no specific social location nor assumes any particular institutional form. The dynamic unity of theorists, their object, and the oppressed class necessarily involves tension and distance: tension and distance between theoreticians and the class their thinking serves, between theoreticians and the "advanced sectors" of the class, and between those advanced sectors and the rest of the class.

Horkheimer writes that the "unity of the social forces which promise liberation is at the same time their distinction . . . it exists only as a conflict which continually threatens the subject caught up in it."[27] Therefore, critical thinkers must be prepared to sustain aggressive critique not only against the status quo but also against those in whose interests theoretical work is carried out. For theory to be a critical, promotive factor in social transformation, critical thinkers must remain at some remove even from those who profess the same interests and goals. Horkheimer chastises those thinkers who make identification with the oppressed masses their priority and comfort. He writes of

such intellectuals: "They cannot bear the thought that the kind of thinking which is most topical, which has the deepest grasp of the historical situation, and is most pregnant with the future, must at certain times isolate itself from its subject and throw him back upon himself."[28] For Horkheimer the kind of thinking that is most topical is thinking that remains true, not to the masses, but to the goal of social transformation.

Within the Marxian emancipatory vision theory is most directly tied to agents and actions; in Horkheimer's formulations theory becomes oriented to the aim, rather than to the agents and actions, of radical change. This is apparent in both the inaugural address, where philosophy poses the questions and keeps sight of the whole, and in "Traditional and Critical Theory," where theory shapes and guides the concern for transforming society. This shift in theory's referent from a particular agent to the goal of social transformation will allow the critical theorists to continue the project of theory with practical intent while rejecting the proletariat as revolutionary subject. And insofar as it opens the way to considering the possibility of a diversity of agents and actions, this shift points to a reconceptualization of radical politics.

Critical Theory developed out of the need of those interested in radical politics and radical social change to reappraise Marxism. Historical and institutional conditions provided the early critical theorists a degree of independence that not only allowed them selectively and critically to appropriate ideas from a variety of non-Marxist sources, but also to question central tenets of Marxism itself. The rejection of the revolutionary agency of the proletariat and the stress on the independence of theory represent two of the most fundamental departures from Marxism and reflect changes in the emancipatory vision. As we will see in the following chapters, there is no one emancipatory vision that informs Critical Theory. In fact, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas have very different visions of a better world and of how that world might be realized; some are closer to the classical Marxian vision than others. My examination of the critical theorists' work begins with a book in which an emancipatory vision seems almost entirely absent: Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Chapter 3

Dialectic of Enlightenment:
The Eclipse of the Emancipatory Vision

Explanations of the world as all or nothing are mythologies, and guaranteed roads to redemption are sublimated magic practices. The self-satisfaction of knowing in advance and the transfiguration of negativity into redemption are untrue forms of resistance against deception.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno
Dialectic of Enlightenment, 24

Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* has been referred to as "the quintessential distillation" of a new stage of Critical Theory,[1] a stage Helmut Dubiel labeled the "Critique of Instrumental Reason." According to Dubiel, it was during this third stage of its development that Critical Theory was "re-philosophized" and the Marxian theoretical tradition abandoned. Because the development of a politically significant class consciousness on the part of the proletariat was regarded as impossible, the connection between the political orientation of action and the hope for a better world was severed, and consequently, the political role of theory was given only negative formulation.[2] In Horkheimer and Adorno's reading of history and analysis of contemporary conditions, the dilemma created by Lukács, when he at once affirmed the proletariat's revolutionary role and denied its capacity to fulfill this role, ceased to be an issue. The debilitation of the proletariat was rendered complete and the issue of revolutionary agency made moot by Horkheimer and Adorno's resolute dismantling of the vision of history as the road to redemption. Not only are there no "guaranteed roads to redemption" to be found in the *Dialectic,* there are barely any faint footpaths. An image of a better world, and claims concerning agents and action which might realize such a world, are almost entirely absent. Amid the wreckage of the Marxian emancipatory vision, one finds little but despair, and what traces of optimism can be found bear little

relationship to the traditional Marxian view on agents and actions. The roots of Horkheimer and Adorno's pessimism will be found in their conception of history and model of the subject, and the remote possibilities for altering history's regressive course will be located in new ways of thinking about the world.

THE PROJECT OF THE *DIALECTIC*

Written between 1941 and 1944, the *Dialectic* was first published in Amsterdam in 1947 and was reissued in Germany in 1969 after it had become an underground classic. It was the product of an intensely collaborative period for Horkheimer and Adorno, a period that also produced Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason* (1947) and Adorno's *Minima Moralia* (1951). Taken together, these three texts present a sweeping and radical critique of Western society and thought. Of their collaboration in the *Dialectic*, Horkheimer and Adorno write: "No outsider will find it easy to discern how far we are both responsible for every sentence . . . the vital principle of the *Dialectic* is the tension between the two intellectual temperaments conjoined in it."[3] There are important differences between their intellectual temperaments, and these will be considered in the next chapter. Here, however, the focus will be on the common position they developed in the *Dialectic*, a position they subsequently recognized as having largely determined their later theory.[4]

Horkheimer and Adorno's concern in the *Dialectic* is with the "self-destruction of the Enlightenment."[5] They set out to investigate why the ways of thinking and the forms of social organization emerging out of the Enlightenment program of "liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty" resulted in a world that "radiates disaster triumphant."[6] Why, they asked, had enlightened thought led not to social freedom but to new forms of social unfreedom? The assumption of an essential connection between reason and freedom, which the critical theorists had carried forward from Hegel and Marx, had proved to be problematic in actual historical practice.

As they state in the *Dialectic*, Horkheimer and Adorno remained convinced "that social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought."[7] However, they also recognized a "recidivist element" within enlightened thought that had succeeded in undermining the critical capacity and promise of reason by reducing it to a mere instrument that served to perpetuate and strengthen social domination. It was the triumph of instrumental reason—as the privileged mode of cognition that had been integrated into and now determined nearly all socioeconomic, cultural and psychic processes—that Horkheimer and Adorno regarded as responsible for humanity's descent into "a new kind of barbarism."[8] As Habermas has observed, Horkheimer and Adorno expanded instrumental reason into "a category of the world-historical process of civilization as a

whole."[9] With this expansion the descent into barbarism is presented as a seemingly inevitable, rather than contingent, historical development.

Such a conception of history as the story of humankind's "inevitable" self-destruction is at odds with the project of Critical Theory: if the species's self-destruction is inevitable, what is the point of developing a critical theory of society that aims to further humankind's emancipatory hopes and potential? The tension between, on the one hand, the *Dialectic*'s tone and conclusions and, on the other, the effort and interests it represents is never satisfactorily resolved. Nevertheless, it is within this tension that intimations of news ways of thinking about agency and social change are to be found.

HISTORY AS REGRESSION

David Held suggests that the *Dialectic* may be read on two levels.[10] On one level it is a critique of Enlightenment thought, which enthroned instrumental reason as the dominant form of understanding the world and ourselves within it. On a more fundamental level, however, the *Dialectic* is about the structure of enlightenment, of liberating reason, and the contradictions contained within it. Read at this level, the *Dialectic* is not simply an analysis of bourgeois society and its prehistory, as Kellner has argued,[11] but of human history in its entirety. Although the focus is exclusively on Western civilization, it is clear that Horkheimer and Adorno regard the trends they identify as world-historical. In fact, they believed that it was only from the historical vantage point of the present state of Western civilization—the fascist era—that human history becomes theoretically accessible.[12] In the *Dialectic* the active confrontation between humankind and nature replaces class struggle as the motor force of history. The domination of nature, considered throughout the Western rationalist tradition as the vehicle of progress, is regarded by Horkheimer and Adorno as the vehicle of world-historical regression: "A philosophical conception of history," they write, "would have to show how the rational domination of nature comes increasingly to win the day, in spite of all deviations and resistance, and integrates all human characteristics."[13] Their account of history—of the constitution of the species and the development of the self-conscious human subject, of forms of social organization, and most importantly, of the development and deformation of reason—is an account of how humankind, in its efforts to free itself from subjugation to nature, has created new and more all-encompassing forms of domination and repression.

For Horkheimer and Adorno the species constitutes itself in its self-assertion over nature. In differentiating itself from nature, humankind transforms nature into an object to be manipulated and controlled in the interests of the species's needs and desires. But in turning nature into mere objectivity, in opposing itself to nature in order to gain control over it,

humankind also alienates itself from its own nature. The struggle to dominate external nature necessarily turns inward. Natural drives, instincts, and passions are repressed, domesticated, and distorted; sensuous experience is renounced, flesh becomes the source of all evil, and the body becomes simply an object of possession, to be used and manipulated.[14] Like Freud, Horkheimer and Adorno see the renunciation of natural desires as the key element in civilization: the history of civilization is for them "the history of renunciation."[15]

Self-denial is the condition for the species's assertion of itself over nature and is, as well, the foundation for the creation of the self: subjectivity, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, develops out of sacrifice.[16] In their remarkable treatment of Homer's *Odyssey*, which they regarded as "the basic text of European civilization,"[17] Odysseus is presented as the prototype of the bourgeois subject. It is through his struggles against temptation and fate that Odysseus constitutes himself: he confirms his own identity and integrity through confronting and enduring challenges and dangers. He succeeds through cunning, rational calculation, deceit, and above all, self-restraint and renunciation. He neutralizes the song of the Sirens by having himself tied to the mast of his ship. And as his struggles to give in to the Sirens' seductive, superior force intensify, he has his bonds tightened. As Odysseus denied himself pleasure in order to preserve and enhance his own self, so too will good bourgeois subjects deny themselves the pleasures their own efforts have made available and accessible to them. The self, Horkheimer and Adorno observe, is "only gained at the price of abasement and mortification of the instinct for complete, universal, undivided happiness."[18] The self-control that made civilization possible and that is the hallmark of bourgeois subjectivity is achieved only at the expense of the free play of spontaneity, sensuality, and imagination.

This separation of humankind from nature and the species's denial of its own nature is reflected as well in relations between human beings. Control over nature and self-control find political expression in forms of social domination: domination over "primary nature" is reproduced in domination over "second nature." In his struggles to render nature impotent and protect himself, Odysseus plugs his oarsmen's ears with wax. They are denied the opportunity of hearing the Sirens' song so they will not be distracted from the labor of rowing and serving their master. For Horkheimer and Adorno the treatment of others as objects to be administered, manipulated, deceived, and exploited— whether the others be oarsmen, slaves, serfs, wage-laborers, consumers, or women[19]—is the result not of any specific social formation but rather arises from the basic relationship between humankind and nature. The position of workers within the capitalist productive system is thus regarded as the culmination of a long historical process rather than as a function of a particular social formation. They observe that the "impotence of the worker is not merely the stratagem of the rulers, but a logical consequence of the industrial society

into which the ancient Fate—in the very course of the effort to escape it—has finally changed."[20] The effort to escape the ancient fate of subjugation to nature is thus detected in all forms of domination, in all the manners in which manifestations of nature have been subjected to self. Capitalist domination is only the most highly developed expression of this effort.

For Horkheimer and Adorno the effort to escape the ancient fate, which is represented in the fundamental intention to dominate nature, is also apparent in the ways the species has apprehended and appropriated the world. In myth and magic, power over nature was gained through naming and ritual; in religion (particularly in the Judeo-Christian tradition), through positing a god that ruled the universe and appointed humankind its representative on earth; and in science, through systematic study, experimentation, and manipulation of objects in the world. Reason itself originated in the struggle to dominate nature. The development of the capacity for rational thought made possible the differentiation of the species from nature and the treatment of nature as an object to be controlled in the interest of humankind. In liberating humankind from the vagaries of natural existence, from ignorance and superstition, reason held out the promise of a free human social life. This promise achieved its fullest expression and realization in Enlightenment thought and its extension into practice through modern science and technology.

Science succeeded in disenchanting the world, in dissolving myth, ignorance, and superstition, and in bringing to humankind a hitherto unimaginable level of well-being and freedom: science represents the quintessence of liberating reason through which "myth turns into enlightenment."[21] Its very success, however, resulted in a privileging of science as the only road to truth. All valid knowledge and thought had to conform to scientific principles of calculation, equivalence, and systematization. In Enlightenment thought, Horkheimer and Adorno write, "[t]he multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter . . . . It makes the dissimilar comparable by reducing it to abstract quantities. To the Enlightenment, that which does not reduce to numbers, and ultimately to the one, becomes illusion; modern positivism writes it off as literature."[22] Value, quality, subjectivity, feelings, and aesthetics are banished from the realm of true knowledge; so too are questions of the good life, of ends. The "classic requirement of thinking about thought" is put aside and thought is turned "into a thing, an instrument."[23] The movement that aimed to conquer nature and emancipate reason from the shackles of mythology turns into its opposite: "enlightenment returns to mythology."[24] Unable to question or determine the ends its serves, reason loses its critical dimension and becomes a tool for affirming and reproducing existing reality. The fundamental intention to dominate nature, which the Enlightenment so fully realized, leads to the present situation of a totally administered system of domination within which the individual is negated and the masses thoroughly manipulated. The promise

of reason has been dissolved into a system of total domination; civilization in the contemporary world is a system of "rationalized irrationality."[25]

In the *Dialectic* history is no longer the story of the species's self-actualization; instead, self-actualization has become self-destruction. It is this understanding of history that leads Horkheimer and Adorno to insist that "the curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression."[26] What is not clear in this reading of history, however, is whence the fundamental intention to dominate nature—the compulsion that sets and guides history on its tragic course—derives. What is it about the human species that leads to its self-destruction? It is not simply a matter of self-preservation, for Horkheimer and Adorno imply throughout their work, as does the project of Critical Theory itself, that the requirements of self-preservation may be met within the context of a different relationship to nature. If Horkheimer and Adorno no longer regard history as the story of the species's self-actualization, as did Hegel, Marx, and Lukács, then surely a different model of the subject informs their conception of history.

HUMAN NEED, REASON, AND FEAR

In his 1931 inaugural lecture at the University of Frankfurt, "The Actuality of Philosophy," Adorno states that the question of the subject "can only be answered historico-philosophically, because the subject of the given is not ahistorically identical and transcendental, but rather assumes changing and historically comprehensible forms."[27] Like Marx, Horkheimer and Adorno believed that what people are and how their needs and desires are organized changes throughout history and thus can be determined only through reference to their social context. Materialism, Horkheimer writes, "tries to comprehend the historical transformation of human nature in terms of the ever-varying shape of the material life-process in each society."[28] In contrast to more orthodox Marxists, though, Horkheimer and Adorno viewed the relationship between human subjectivity and the social context as more complexly mediated and thus less straightforward and self-evident than had generally been thought. Consequently, the development of a materialist social psychology, capable of describing just how human beings are constituted by socio-historical forces, would be a major focus of the Frankfurt School's work.

An even more significant element in the critical theorists' departure from orthodox Marxism was their displacement of labor as the central category of human being. Marx adopted from Hegel the image of human beings as *Homo faber*, as beings who create and actualize themselves through labor. Although Horkheimer and Adorno remained firmly within what Benhabib calls the "work model of activity"[29] insofar as they understood the self-constitution of the species as occurring through the struggle to dominate nature, the meaning they

attached to labor changed. As Benhabib observes, in the *Dialectic* the activity of labor is transformed "from one of self-actualization to one of sublimation and repression."[30] Labor becomes implicated in and identified with the domination of external, internal, and social nature. As an integral moment in the process of "progress as regression," labor loses the emancipatory potential accorded it by Marx.

With the negation of labor's emancipatory dimension, the capacity for rational thought moves to a more central position in Horkheimer and Adorno's model of the subject. The replacement of Marx's "laboring" subject with a materialist version of the "thinking subject" is evident throughout their work: in their overriding concern with how human thinking and knowing are shaped and distorted by objective conditions; in their conception of history with its central focus on the origins and development of reason; and in the (albeit slight) possibilities for resistance and emancipation they will identify with a concept of reason made conscious of itself. And yet the model of a rational, thinking subject does not fully illuminate the conception of history put forward by Horkheimer and Adorno.

The *Dialectic* has been interpreted as attributing humankind's descent into barbarism to the nature of reason itself. George Friedman, for example, claims that the theme of the *Dialectic* is that *"all reason* must in the end become instrumental."[31] Horkheimer and Adorno's presentation of the triumph of instrumental reason as the seemingly inevitable consequence of the struggle to dominate nature certainly lends credence to Friedman's interpretation. So, too, does Horkheimer's statement in *Eclipse of Reason*: "If one were to speak of a disease of reason, this disease should be understood not as having stricken reason at some historical moment, but as being inseparable from the nature of reason in civilization as we have known it so far."[32] One notes here, however, that Horkheimer stops short of attributing the disease of reason to the nature of reason itself when he adds the qualification, "in civilization as we have known it so far." Furthermore, as will be elaborated more fully in the final section of this chapter, in the *Dialectic* Horkheimer and Adorno do in fact hold out some hope for a better world through a notion of self-conscious reason. To the extent that they hold out this hope, history as the story of the species's self-destruction cannot be tied entirely to the nature of reason. But if progress as regression cannot be explained fully by the nature of reason or by the requirements of self-preservation, the question remains: what is it about human beings that sets history on a course that creates and destroys the species?

In the *Dialectic* the human characteristic that propels history on its particular course is fear. The "inescapable compulsion" to dominate nature[33] arises out a desperate human fear of the unknown. The capacity for rational thought develops in response to this fear, and the evolution of thought and knowledge represents the ongoing, unrelenting effort to make the world comprehensible. As Horkheimer and Adorno write: "The dualization of nature

as appearance and sequence, effort and power, which first makes possible both
myth and enlightenment, originates in human fear, the expression of which
becomes explanation."[34] They further observe: "Man imagines himself free of
fear where there is no longer anything unknown. That determines the course of
demythologization, of enlightenment."[35] The Enlightenment, with its unprece-
dented expansion of knowledge and control, represents "mythic fear turned
radical . . . [n]othing at all may remain outside because the mere idea of
outsideness is the very source of fear."[36] And it is the fear of "outsideness," the
"fear of social deviation," that in modern society has turned individuals into
conforming automatons.[37] At the root of an all-encompassing world of
conformity in thought, feeling, and action lies the human fear of the unknown.

In the *Dialectic* fear is the most elemental aspect of Horkheimer and
Adorno's conception of what it means to be human. Fear initiates the struggle
to dominate nature, activates the capacity for rational thought, and fuels the
growth of knowledge and the expansion of control over inner and outer nature.
Fear also undermines the promise of a free human social life that these
developments held out. Fear cripples the mind and distorts the process of the
species's self-actualization. And it is the inability of humankind to face the
truth of its fear that has brought it to the point where disaster is triumphant.

THE ADMINISTERED WORLD

Contemporary society is portrayed in the *Dialectic* as the expression of
humankind struck dumb by the consequences of its primordial fear. This state
of affairs, this "disaster triumphant," is presented as the outcome of a historical
dialectic wherein fear of the unknown continuously deforms and erodes
reason's promise. The result of this process is the modern "world of
administered life."[38]

The notion of the totally administered society recurs throughout the
Dialectic and is especially prominent in the concluding section, "Notes and
Drafts." Here one finds modern society described as a "world-embracing
garment," and it is in this section that contemporary social conditions are
likened to the punishment and isolation of imprisonment. The experience of
fascism colored this dark and hopeless view, but Horkheimer and Adorno did
not believe the defeat of fascism would in itself halt the slide into barbarism.
While insisting that fascism must be fought and defeated, they warned: "The
downfall of Fascism will not necessarily lead to a movement of the
avalanche."[39] This is a view they reconfirmed in their 1969 preface to the
Dialectic, where they observe that history had verified much of what they had
written and that the tendency toward total integration and administration they
identified had not been abrogated.[40]

Horkheimer and Adorno's views concerning fascism and the fate of the

world after its defeat were not shared by all their colleagues at the Institute. There was considerable difference of opinion concerning just what fascism represented, and the two positions which came to predominate informed very different views on the prospects for progressive social change. One camp identified with the position articulated by Franz Neumann in his classic analysis of Nazism, *Behemoth*, while the other, which included Horkheimer and Adorno, was influenced by Friedrich Pollock's theory of state capitalism.[41] The two camps agreed that fascism was best understood and explained as a product of monopoly capitalism in crisis, but there was disagreement on whether it should be interpreted from a classical Marxist viewpoint as simply another stage of capitalism or as a qualitatively new type of post-capitalist order. Neumann took the first position, arguing that fascism was the form of political organization most appropriate to highly monopolized capitalism. His concept of "totalitarian monopoly capitalism" emphasized the centrality of monopoly capitalism and presented fascism as a continuation of it. Neumann also stressed that the contradictions and antagonisms of capitalism continued to operate, albeit at a higher and therefore more dangerous level, and thus provided reason to believe that revolutionary social change was still possible.[42]

Pollock, on the other hand, argued that massive state intervention in the economy had created a new social order in which the political had established primacy over the economic.[43] The "interference of the state with the structure of the old economic order," he writes, "has by its sheer totality and intensity 'turned quantity into quality,' transformed monopoly capitalism into state capitalism."[44] Furthermore, he saw nothing in this new order that would prevent its ability to continue functioning.[45]

As Kellner points out, Pollock's theory of state capitalism "provided a foundation for the pessimism that would characterize Critical Theory from the 1940's through the next decades."[46] It fit well with the views that Horkheimer had already developed concerning the state's increasing role in domination[47] and the growing conviction within the Institute that domination had ceased to be simply economic and/or political and was becoming increasingly a more generalized psychosocial phenomenon. Moreover, Pollock's thesis was consistent with the conception of history articulated in the *Dialectic*, as well as with its pessimistic prognosis regarding the possibilities for social change. Understanding fascism as an expression of a more general world-historical trend toward irrationality, Horkheimer and Adorno could identify phenomena that would survive its defeat. Paramount among these were the interrelated developments of a growing culture industry and the transformation of individuals into objects of administration.

A hallmark of the Frankfurt School was its overriding concern with cultural and aesthetic phenomena.[48] Frankfurt School theorists regarded culture as neither an independent realm apart from society nor simply the expression of individual creativity or class interests. Art and culture were seen as at once both

affirming and negating society. On the one hand they reflect and legitimate the existing state of affairs, and on the other, as the preserve of beauty, truth, creativity, and spontaneity, "genuine" or "authentic" art protests against and points beyond this state of affairs. Adorno writes: "[A]rt, and so-called classical art no less than its more anarchical expressions, always was, and is, a force of protest of the humane against the pressure of domineering institutions, religious and others, no less than it reflects their objective substance."[49] Culture has both a cognitive and subversive character, and given its affirmative and negative character, the cultural sphere has been always also political. But as Horkheimer and Adorno argue in their analysis of the culture industry, the transcendent and subversive character of culture has been attenuated, if not yet fully eradicated, as a result of the triumph of instrumental rationality. Culture in contemporary society has become an industry, fully integrated into the capitalist system and serving its needs.

In "Culture Industry Reconsidered," an article in which he clarified their earlier use of the expression "culture industry," Adorno cautioned that the term "industry" was not to be taken literally. Nevertheless, they did maintain that cultural entities had become increasingly standardized and that distribution techniques, if not yet fully production techniques as well, had been rationalized.[50] Furthermore, the profit motive had been transferred onto cultural forms: as they observe in the *Dialectic*, cultural products had become "a species of commodity . . . marketable and interchangeable like an industrial product."[51] Geared toward profitability and consumption, the interests of the culture industry had become those of capital. To ensure its own reproduction, the culture industry produces forms that are compatible with the capitalist system, thereby transforming culture into a powerful tool of ideological mystification and social control; hence the title of their discussion in the *Dialectic*, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception."

For Horkheimer and Adorno this was no less apparent in the mass media and entertainment industry of democratic forms of state capitalism than in the blatant manipulation of culture by the Nazis. Culture in either case is something administered from above in the interests of the powers that be. It was to counter any idea that popular culture was something that today "arises spontaneously from the masses themselves" that they replaced "mass culture" with "culture industry" in the final draft of the *Dialectic*.[52] "The culture industry," Adorno explains, "intentionally integrates consumers from above."[53] It produces for mass consumption and largely determines how and what the masses will think and consume. It reinforces and strengthens dominant interpretations of reality. It informs, entertains, amuses, distracts, and distorts. It is the means by which the consciousness of individuals is encroached upon, shaped, and pacified. Adorno observes that the categorical imperative of the culture industry is "you shall conform" and that the power of this ideology is such that "conformity has replaced consciousness."[54] In the *Dialectic*

Horkheimer and Adorno speak of how the culture industry teaches us how and what to think, of how it stunts the ability of individuals to be imaginative and spontaneous, of how the "flood of detailed information and candy-floss entertainment simultaneously instructs and stultifies mankind."[55] And they saw little standing in the way of the culture industry's growing influence and effectiveness: "The stronger the positions of the culture industry become, the more summarily it can deal with consumers' needs, producing them, controlling them, disciplining them, and even withdrawing amusement: no limits are set to cultural progress of this kind."[56] The culture industry sets into motion a circle of manipulation and need which, feeding on itself, grows stronger and stronger. Within this circle of cultural progress, the individual, as an autonomous thinking agent, is destroyed.

In the administered world the modern subject—prefigured in Odysseus and embodied in the daring and self-reliant bourgeois entrepreneur—has become a pseudo-individual, an automaton, an object to be manipulated and administered. Throughout the *Dialectic*, as throughout all their works, Horkheimer and Adorno décry the demise of the individual, the devaluation and breakdown of individuality, and "the fallen nature of modern man."[57] The "fall" of the individual coincides with the rise of the collective. In a later discussion Horkheimer refers to what he regards as the decisive "shift of subjectivity from the individual to the collectivity."[58] In the *Dialectic* this shift marks the negation of individuality: "The unity of the manipulated collective consists in the negation of each individual: for individuality makes a mockery of the kind of society which would turn all individuals to the one collectivity."[59] Propelled by the growing culture industry, the individual has been reduced to a composite of conventionalized ways of being and reacting; the individual becomes just a member of the deceived masses who think and act as they are told to think and act.

Within the totally administered society a seamless web of domination, effectively secured by the culture industry, has transformed the very roots of subjectivity. The capacity to think and act as autonomous, independent individuals was created and destroyed by history, and with its destruction went the possibilities for a better world. The effect of the developments noted in the *Dialectic* were later summarized by Adorno:

> The total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment, in which, as Horkheimer and I have noted, enlightenment . . . becomes mass deception and is turned into a means of fettering consciousness. It impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and consciously decide for themselves. These, however, would be the precondition for a democratic society which needs adults who have come of age in order to sustain itself and develop.[60]

For Horkheimer and Adorno the administered world of contemporary society keeps individuals from becoming adults: childlike, they seek diversion and amusement, the security of identification with authority, and the comfort of conformity. The "world of administered life" creates such individuals and efficiently meets their needs. Within such a world the capacity to think that things might be otherwise, or even to feel such a need, has been repressed. Given this analysis of the contemporary social world, it is hardly surprising that Horkheimer and Adorno entertained little hope for progressive social change.

THE CRITICAL THINKER AND THE IMAGINARY WITNESS: AGENCY IN AN ADMINISTERED WORLD

The tone of the *Dialectic* is pessimistic, the prognosis bleak. As Dubiel has pointed out, by this stage in the development of Critical Theory "all belief in the possibility of revolutionary social change has been abandoned."[61] Ideology so permeates all aspects of the administered society that resistance of any type has been virtually eliminated. No fissures in the social fabric are apparent, no program for action is offered. Some commentators do, nevertheless, find traces of hope within the *Dialectic*. Kellner, for example, detects "a residue of social optimism" within its generally pessimistic reading of history.[62] And insisting that to read the *Dialectic* as a "gloomy statement of the essence of history is to miss the point," Buck-Morss argues that Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the Enlightenment was made in the interest of enlightenment, and as such "should be interpreted less as proof of the authors' growing pessimism . . . than as documentation of the shift in *objective* conditions."[63] Her argument is supported by statements Horkheimer and Adorno make in the Introduction to the *Dialectic*. There they describe their project in terms of "the redemption of the hopes of the past"[64] and write that their critique is "intended to prepare the way for a positive notion of enlightenment which will release it from entanglement with blind domination."[65] The very act of writing this text speaks of some hope that the world might yet be made a better place, even as it acknowledges that objective conditions force us to reconsider how this might be achieved. Despite its more hopeful elements, however, the *Dialectic* offers few indications of who might "prepare the way" or how. In fact, Horkheimer and Adorno summarily dismiss all traditional categories of political actors and action.

The already tenuous connection between Critical Theory and the proletariat is completely severed in the *Dialectic*. It will be recalled that, while in Horkheimer's "Traditional and Critical Theory" the relationship between the proletariat and its theoreticians was regarded as necessarily distant and conflictual, the proletariat nevertheless remained a central term in the "dynamic unity" he proposed. In the *Dialectic*, however, the modern equivalent

of Odysseus' oarsmen is dissolved into the masses who are unquestionably viewed with disdain. The masses, who "insist on the very ideology which enslaves them,"[66] are almost by definition deceived and incapable of independent thought. They have an "enigmatic readiness . . . to fall under the sway of any despotism" and a "self-destructive affinity to popular paranoia."[67] For Horkheimer and Adorno the masses of the administered society are not only immature but regressing into still greater pliability and impotence.

The individual fares little better than the masses: as a member of the manipulated collective, the individual has been negated.[68] Above all, individuals, no matter what their station, lack the autonomy that would allow them to resist. "It is a signature of our age," Adorno writes, "that no-one, without exception, can now determine his own life within a comprehensible framework. . . . In principle everyone, however powerful, is an object."[69] And as an object, Adorno goes on to observe, "the individual as individual, in representing the species of man, has lost the autonomy through which he might realize the species."[70] The *Dialectic* presents individuals in contemporary society as controlled and determined by heteronomous forces—most significantly the culture industry—which succeed in eradicating all oppositional tendencies. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the "need that might resist central control has already been suppressed by the control of individual consciousness."[71] Furthermore, they believe that even those who have somehow managed to avoid succumbing to political delusion are subject to external and internal forces that "deprive them of the means of resistance."[72]

Notwithstanding the apparently unequivocal tone of these statements, the rejection of individuals as potential sources of resistance and opposition is not absolute, and it is this unresolved contradiction in their work that gives rise to the conflicting assessments of the *Dialectic*'s optimism and despair. While the dominant motif of the *Dialectic* is the demise of critical thought and the individual, it is nevertheless at least implied that all is not lost, that some individuals might withstand the forces of integration. This view is also evident in *Minima Moralia*, where Adorno speaks of "the social force of liberation" withdrawing "to the individual sphere,"[73] and receives its clearest statement in *Eclipse of Reason*, where Horkheimer declares: "There are still some forces of resistance left within men. It is evidence against social pessimism that despite the continuous assault of collective patterns, the spirit of humanity is still alive, if not in the individual as a member of a social group, at least in the individual as far as he is let alone."[74]

For Horkheimer and Adorno the forces of resistance that are still left—the last surviving sparks of the spirit of humanity—reside in the mind. Adorno writes that the mind

> is impelled even against its will beyond apologetics. The fact that theory becomes real force when it moves men is found in the objectivity of the mind itself which, through the fulfilment of its ideological function must

lose faith in ideology. Prompted by the incompatibility of ideology and existence, the mind, in displaying its blindness also displays its effort to free itself of ideology. Disenchanted, the mind perceives naked existence in its nakedness and delivers it up to criticism.[75]

In a similar vein Horkheimer, in "Traditional and Critical Theory," describes the mind as both liberal and not liberal, as tolerating no external coercion while at the same time being shaped by society.[76] It is in the liberal dimension of mind that the possibilities for resistance still exist. But this is true only to the extent that individuals hold themselves apart from society. Hope exists only insofar as the individual "is let alone." Hope is no longer located in the "small groups of admirable men" Horkheimer identified in "Traditional and Critical Theory" but rather in the isolated individual. As Adorno writes: "[I]nviolable loneliness is now the only way of showing some measure of solidarity. All collaboration, all the human worth of social mixing and participation, merely masks a tacit acceptance of inhumanity."[77] Furthermore, it is not the "average" individual to whom Horkheimer and Adorno look. The extraordinary individual in whom the forces of resistance might still reside is one who lives the life of the mind, the critical thinker.

Horkheimer and Adorno recognize that intellectuals are as fully enmeshed in the administered society as any other group. In his critique of Mannheim's glorification of a free-floating intelligentsia, Adorno asserts that "the very intelligentsia that pretends to float freely is fundamentally rooted in the very being that must be changed."[78] However, despite his recognition that "the detached observer is as much entangled as the active participant," Adorno believes that the "advantage of the former is insight into his entanglement, and the infinitesimal freedom that lies in knowledge as such."[79] Those who have insight into their own entanglement might also develop insight into the entanglement of reason in the social reality of unfreedom, and this, for Horkheimer and Adorno, is necessary to any possibilities for overcoming this state of affairs.

Horkheimer and Adorno argue in the *Dialectic* that enlightened thought "already contains the seeds of the reversal universally apparent today" and warn that if "enlightenment does not accommodate reflection on this recidivist element, then it seals its own fate."[80] In the same vein Horkheimer states in *Eclipse of Reason*: "Reason can realize its own reasonableness only through reflecting on the disease of the world as produced and reproduced by man; in such self-critique, reason will at the same time remain faithful to itself, by preserving and applying for no ulterior motive the principle of truth we owe to reason alone."[81]

The possibility of reason becoming conscious of itself (and thus also of the resurrection of its own promise) is, like that of Marx's socialist revolution, a function of both objective and subjective conditions. Horkheimer observes that the "possibility of a self-critique of reason presupposes, first, that the

antagonism of reason and nature is in an acute and catastrophic phase, and, second, that at this stage of complete alienation the idea of truth is still accessible."[82] Horkheimer and Adorno certainly believed that conditions had reached their catastrophic stage and were worried that accessibility to truth was being rapidly closed off. The issue for them, then, was subjective conditions, the ability of isolated individuals to develop and maintain their insights in the face of powerful forces of integration.

This ability comes down to a matter of will. Horkheimer, in particular, speaks of a "will toward freedom"[83] and of "the uncompromising application of the insight recognized as true."[84] This reliance on will indicates the historical possibility of a shift in the relationship between fear and reason which has been identified as central to the model of the subject that informs the *Dialectic*. Horkheimer and Adorno are apparently arguing that, although fear first gave rise to reason and historically has continued to affect and infect reason, self-conscious reason can transcend fear. Rather than the denial of fear through domination, fear and its crippling consequences might be overcome through the acceptance and respect of the unknown, the other. With fear transcended in this manner, reason might regain its liberating power and promise.

The possibility of transcending fear through self-conscious reason is located in critical thinkers. They alone might possess the insight, the ability, and the will to overcome the urge to dominate the unknown, to deny the truth, or to be secure in conformity to the status quo. In their ability to suffer marginalization and isolation and to confront the truth of their age, critical thinkers are the heroic individuals in the age of total domination. The fact remains, however, that Horkheimer and Adorno never explain how, under the given conditions, these extraordinary individuals are able to escape the fate of lesser mortals. As Claus Offe has observed, the Critical Theory of Horkheimer and Adorno "must either limit the argument concerning all encompassing manipulation and must admit the presence of structural leaks within the system of repressive rationality, or it must renounce the claim to be able to explain the conditions of its own possibility."[85] Since they do not limit their argument concerning all-encompassing manipulation, the residues of social optimism that can be found in their work remain groundless.

Indeed, Horkheimer and Adorno seem to have recognized that their own analysis undermines the very possibility of critical thinkers. Although they clearly counted themselves among such a group, they felt they were the last of a dying breed. Thus we find near the end of the *Dialectic* the following passage: "If there is anyone today to whom we can pass on the responsibilities of the message, we bequeath it not to the 'masses,' and not to the individual (who is powerless), but to the imaginary witness—lest it perish with us."[86] For those who require a concrete historical actor as the subject and addressee of a theory with practical intent, an imaginary witness can speak only to the bankruptcy of Horkheimer and Adorno's Critical Theory. At the same time, however, it is in

the notion of the imaginary witness that one finds indications of a new conception of agency and social change.

The imaginary witness is first of all only a witness. This is a notion of the agent as one who is present, one who can see and testify to the truth but does not actively participate in or determine the state of affairs it observes. Under the conditions of the administered society, Horkheimer and Adorno are suspicious of those who prescribe action. "It is not the portrayal of reality as hell on earth," they write, "but the slick challenge to break out of it that is suspect."[87] Those who issue such challenges are already compromised by the society they seek to change. As Adorno observes in *Minima Moralia*, the administered society "also embraces those at war with it by co-ordinating their consciousness with its own . . . what subjectively they fancy as radical, belongs objectively to the compartment reserved for their like."[88] Horkheimer and Adorno are not only suspicious of those who exhort others to action, but under existing conditions, they doubt the efficacy of action itself. In responding to criticism of his own refusal to develop or support programs of action, Adorno describes action in the administered world as "pseudo-activity" through which actors avoid recognizing their own impotence.[89] And Horkheimer is similarly reluctant to treat political activism as a privileged means of fulfillment, warning "The age needs no added stimulus to action."[90]

Their suspicion of action is at the same time a defense of thought and a struggle against the political instrumentalization of theory. In the introduction to *Eclipse of Reason*, Horkheimer declares that "action for action's sake is in no way superior to thought for thought's sake, and is perhaps even inferior to it."[91] Thought for thought's sake, not for action's sake, is expressed in the *Dialectic* as "true revolutionary practice," a practice that "depends on the intransigence of theory in the face of the insensibility with which society allows thought to ossify."[92] The outlines of this position were already discernible in "Traditional and Critical Theory," where Horkheimer warned against the "evasion of theoretical effort" by those who would represent the interests of social change.[93] When the connection between the theoretician and oppressed class is broken in the *Dialectic*, thought in and of itself becomes the only form of resistance. As Adorno would later write, it is only in those who do not permit themselves "to be terrorized into action" that the possibility for resistance remains.[94]

The possibilities for a better world, then, lie in the ability to stand apart, to eschew easy answers and specified programs of action:

> Hope for better circumstances—if it is not mere illusion—is not so much based on the assurance that these circumstances would be guaranteed, durable, and final, but on the lack of respect for all that is so firmly rooted in the general suffering. The infinite patience, the permanent and tender urge of the being for expression and light which seems to calm and satisfy the violence of creative development, does not

> define, as the rational philosophies of history do, a specific practice as beneficial—not even that of non-resistance.[95]

Horkheimer and Adorno's imaginary witness stands outside of action, and with disrespect for what is and infinite patience and tenderness, preserves the emancipatory hopes and possibilities that history threatens to extinguish.

This witness is also, significantly, imaginary; it is not real. In relegating its existence to the realm of fantasy, Horkheimer and Adorno underscore the value the critical theorists, especially Adorno and Marcuse, placed on the capacity to conceive of things as other than they are: imagination, fantasy, and other spontaneous, "irrational" ways of knowing are for them an essential dimension of critical thought. In "Philosophy and Critical Theory," an essay published the same year as Horkheimer's "Traditional and Critical Theory," Marcuse writes that "[i]n order to retain what is not yet present, phantasy is required," and declares, "Without phantasy, all philosophical knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future."[96] Similarly, in *Minima Moralia* Adorno argues, "Fantasy alone . . . can establish that relation between objects which is the irrevocable source of all judgement: should fantasy be driven out, judgement too, the real act of knowledge, is exorcised."[97] Adorno was even more direct in drawing the association between fantasy and the prospects for a better world when, in an interview near the end of his life, he stated that "whoever lacks this manner of irrational reaction is also bereft of progressive consciousness."[98] The importance Horkheimer and Adorno accord to imagination is evident in the *Dialectic* when they speak of the regression of the masses in terms of their "inability to hear the unheard of with their own ears, to touch the unapprehended with their own hands."[99] The idea of an imaginary witness, then, captures the necessity of retrieving and reviving ways of more critically and fully knowing the world. Progressive social change, for Horkheimer and Adorno, requires the development of new ways of thinking about and understanding the world. The faint footpaths to possible redemption are evident only to those with imagination.

Without question, the *Dialectic* is the expression, as Buck-Morss states, of a "shift in objective conditions." In Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of contemporary conditions, in their interpretation of history, and in the place fear occupies in their understanding of humankind, the experience of fascism figures prominently. The only image of a better world one can find in the *Dialectic* is the world of the mind, a world of only inner freedom which only a few can occupy. Because they perceived that all possible sources of opposition and resistance had been eliminated by brutal or more subtle forms of coercion, Horkheimer and Adorno placed their faint hopes for emancipation in the heroic individual who (inexplicably) might buck the tide of history by retreating into a life of the mind and fearlessly resisting the gravitational pull of the prevailing reality. Aware, perhaps, that by the logic of their own argument even such individuals risked being swept into the vortex, they bequeathed their message to

that which we cannot be but might imagine. In imagination lay the last hope.

Theirs is a "politics of despair." Whatever residues of social optimism one can find in the text itself or in the effort it represents, the *Dialectic* nevertheless offers no grounds for hope. The lonely and fantastic activities of isolated critical thinkers appear only as an expression of hope, not a reason for it. This does not mean, however, that the *Dialectic* offers nothing more than a testament of the authors' psychological state. There is a relentless and compelling honesty in their assessment of the administered society and the prospects for social change. If they overstate the cohesion of contemporary society, they nonetheless force a reconsideration of the sources of conflict, the possibilities for resistance, and the forms opposition might take. The reconceptualization of politics that is hinted at in the *Dialectic* follows from the conviction that a new relationship with, a new attitude toward, nature is necessary. A reconciliation with nature—a new nondominating relationship with nature, self, and others—would require new ways of apprehending and appropriating the world. The outlines of the type of practice this would require are present in the image of the imaginary witness: spontaneous, tender, patient, and disrespectful of all that grounds and requires suffering.

A politics of despair can lead to resignation and acquiescence or to an effort to reconceptualize emancipatory politics in light of the shift in objective conditions. What we will find in the next chapter is that the new conceptualization of emancipatory politics, hinted at in the *Dialectic*, is developed further only in Adorno's work. Horkheimer and Adorno, collaborators *and* independent thinkers, responded very differently to conditions identified and explored in the *Dialectic*: Horkheimer moves increasingly toward a position where privatized acts of longing and faith become the only possible forms of resistance, while Adorno develops the outlines of a conceptualization of radical politics that values difference and distinction and is oriented to change in the "smallest things."

Chapter 4

Horkheimer and Adorno: Despair and Possibility in a Time of Eclipse

> When optimism is shattered in periods of crushing defeat, many intellectuals
> risk falling into a pessimism about society and a nihilism which are just as
> ungrounded as their exaggerated optimism had been. They cannot bear the
> thought that the kind of thinking which is most topical, which has the deepest
> grasp of the historical situation, and is most pregnant with the future, must at
> certain times isolate its subject and throw him back upon himself.
>
> Max Horkheimer
> "Traditional and Critical Theory," 214

Dialectic of Enlightenment is an expression of shattered optimism in a period
of crushing defeat. It offers, as we have seen, only the faintest hope for social
change. In examining Horkheimer's and Adorno's later work, we will find that
while Adorno maintained this faint hope, persisting in a belief that a better
world was at least a possibility, Horkheimer lapsed into pessimism. An
important factor in their divergent paths was their response to and
appropriation of Marxism. For Horkheimer Marxism was not so much a science
or political theory as it was a moral program tied to the realization of a just
society. When its historical moment passed, his primary interest in a just
society was maintained through a return to religion, a return in which practice
would be reduced to faith. Adorno, on the other hand, approached Marxism as
a method of analysis, as a way of uncovering the "truth" of social reality. Never
having associated such "truth" with a particular group or political program, he
had less difficulty continuing his project of radical critique once the moment of
Marxism's practical promise appeared to have passed. As a consequence, it is
in Adorno's work that indications of a new conception of practice can be found.

REMARKABLE SIMILARITIES AND DIVERGENT PATHS

Dialectic of Enlightenment was the product of a partnership that began in 1922 and spanned nearly a half century. This partnership began when, as students at the University of Frankfurt, Horkheimer and Adorno both participated in a seminar on Husserl led by the neo-Kantian philosopher Hans Cornelius. Adorno later remembered that he was immediately drawn to Horkheimer, who was eight years his senior. After hearing him read a "truly brilliant paper" on Husserl, Adorno approached Horkheimer: "Spontaneously I went to you and introduced myself. From that time on we were together."[1] They would come to be viewed as "together" by others as well. Although both are recognized for their individual accomplishments, they are perhaps best known in terms of their intellectual and personal partnership, a partnership that has been described as one of the most "fertile and productive in this century."[2]

Mutual interests in philosophy and art and similar backgrounds as sons of successful businessmen provided the common ground from which this partnership grew. Although their careers would take somewhat different routes,[3] they maintained close contact, and when Adorno moved to New York and became formally affiliated with the Institute in 1938, their close collaboration began. It would intensify when Adorno joined Horkheimer in California in 1941 (where the latter had gone for reasons of health), and it was there that the *Dialectic* was written and the ideas for *Eclipse of Reason* and *Minima Moralia* incubated. Both returned to West Germany to resettle in the early 1950s, and when the Institute was reopened in Frankfurt, Adorno was Horkheimer's assistant director. He became codirector in 1955 and was named director upon Horkheimer's retirement in 1959.

Their collective identification as "Horkheimer-and-Adorno" was one they themselves perpetuated as time and again they emphasized the unity of their thought. In referring to Adorno's influence on the lectures he presented in *Eclipse of Reason*, Horkheimer noted that since their "philosophy is one," it was difficult to say which of the ideas in the volume were his own and which were Adorno's.[4] Similarly, Adorno commented that the themes developed in *Minima Moralia* belonged as much to Horkheimer as to him.[5] There was, as Jay has pointed out, "a remarkable similarity in their views from the first."[6]

This remarkable similarity, however, existed in conjunction with significant, if in many cases complementary, differences. Horkheimer certainly seems to have presented an easier face to the world than did Adorno. While Horkheimer is described as "overflowing with warmth,"[7] Adorno was perceived by those who met him in Vienna in the mid-1920s as a "shy, distraught and esoteric young man"[8] and as a "somewhat overly articulate youth."[9] Connerton observes that "Adorno was fortunate that he found in Horkheimer a friend of sounder diplomacy who stood by him for many years; by complementing him, Horkheimer helped to give him a passport to existence."[10] Adorno's entrance

into, and relative secure tenancy in, the intellectual world was no doubt facilitated by Horkheimer's political, administrative, and financial talents.

Temperamental differences were accompanied by differences in skills and orientation. The richness of the collaborative work was enhanced by the combination of Horkheimer's socio-scientific and Adorno's artistic sensibilities. In addition, although both started from a concern with philosophy and its limits, Horkheimer tended to look outward toward society to resolve the contradictions of thought while Adorno stayed within philosophy, developing an immanent critique through which the social contradictions of thought would be made apparent. As Held describes it, while Horkheimer's "effort was spent examining the social functions of systems of thought—exposing the way in which these systems, perhaps valid at a certain level, serve to conceal or legitimate particular interests—Adorno concentrated his effort on an examination of the way philosophy expresses the structure of society."[11] Horkheimer moved between theory and society; Adorno stayed within theory itself. And these differences in orientation reflected differences in the basic interests that guided their work.

Buck-Morss describes Horkheimer as a "moralist without belief in a divine providence" and Adorno as a "metaphysician with no faith in metaphysics."[12] Although she warns that this distinction should not be overemphasized, its significance can also be underestimated. Horkheimer looked outward to society because his primary concern was with justice, with a just society; Adorno stayed within philosophy because he was interested in issues of truth. Like the difference in sensibilities, this difference in the interests that guided their work may well have had a stimulating effect on their collaborative and individual efforts. However, this difference in primary concerns also has a great deal to do with how they appropriated Marxism and with the development of their theoretical work once they no longer regarded Marxism as an appropriate way for understanding and changing the world.

HORKHEIMER AND THE LONGING FOR SOMETHING OTHER

Horkheimer's status among the critical theorists is ambiguous. On the one hand he is widely recognized for his seminal role in establishing the Frankfurt School and in outlining the theoretical and methodological approaches that would characterize Critical Theory. On the other, although not all would agree with Perry Anderson's assessment of Horkheimer as a second-rank thinker within the Frankfurt School,[13] there is a general sense that he ceased to be a critical theorist in his later work. His "theoretical collapse" is commonly associated with his abandonment of Marxism,[14] although none of his colleagues, who also could be accused of abandoning Marxism, are regarded as having suffered from similar collapses. Even more than his rejection of

Marxism, however, it is Horkheimer's turn to religion that prompted the judgments of collapse.

Horkheimer's theoretical and political decline—his retreat into what has been called a "form of mystical irrationalism"[15]—has been referred to as "one of the enigmas of the history of Critical Theory."[16] It appears as such, however, only if one takes his materialist, Marxist phase as the starting point of analysis. If, on the other hand, it is recognized that Horkheimer's work was characterized throughout his life by a yearning for a better world, then his turn to religion and even his defense of the status quo no longer appear quite so enigmatic. He wrote that "[t]he longing for something other than this world" and "the standing-apart from existing conditions" are concepts whose meanings are infinitely varied and affected by history: they have no necessary political form or content.[17] The meanings of these concepts in his own life indeed varied and were affected by history, but the concepts themselves and their centrality to his work remained constant.

Marxism and Morality

"Longing for something other," and "standing-apart from" are expressions of a desire for a better world and of a protest against existing conditions. In Horkheimer's work these are moral concepts: they embody a sense of right and wrong, of good and bad, a sense that the world could and should be otherwise. It should be noted that Horkheimer uses the term "morality" in a number of different ways. In "Materialism and Morality" morality is identified as a bourgeois phenomenon: it is understood as an effort to reconcile the conflict between individual interest and the public good and thus as something that will disappear when the social conditions of its existence are overcome. But Horkheimer also uses "morality" to refer to a more fundamental, essential aspect of human existence. This sense of the term is evident in his essay "Materialism and Metaphysics," where he presents morality as being about the human quest for happiness. Precisely how happiness is pursued and experienced can be explained only in light of specific, concrete historical situations, but the desire itself is a "natural fact."[18]

Since morality is based on this natural fact, it requires no other grounds or justification. Horkheimer rejects any notion of a metaphysically grounded morality and argues in his 1961 essay on Schopenhauer that "the positively infinite" or "the unconditional" or "the authority of being" provide no guides to moral action. No reference to a metaphysical being, to a transcendent authority, or to a realm of eternal values is necessary because the essence of existence and thus the basis of morality lies within human beings: this essence is "the insatiable desire for well-being and enjoyment, a desire that wells up every time it has been satisfied."[19]

While morality, for Horkheimer, "does not admit of any grounding," it does "involve a psychic constitution."[20] This psychic constitution is identified as moral sentiment, which, in turn, is described as having "something to do with love." Horkheimer explains that what he means by love is expressed in Kant's doctrine that a person must always be an end and never simply a means.[21] This sentiment reveals the necessary social dimension of the striving for happiness: to love another always as an end is, for Horkheimer, to love the other as a member of a potential "happy humanity." He writes: "Love wishes the free development of the creative powers of all human beings as such. To love it appears as if all living beings have a claim to happiness, for it would not in the least ask any justification or grounds."[22] To wish and act for the free development of all human beings as such—to wish and act for human happiness—is to be moral.

But the desire for happiness is also "insatiable." It is insatiable not because Horkheimer understands human beings as beings of limitless desire, but rather because human beings are recognized as natural beings and thus never fully exempt, even under the best social conditions, from suffering and death. Even the realization of a better society, according to Horkheimer, cannot compensate for past suffering or bring an end to natural distress.[23] Given the horrors of history and the limits of natural beings, the species's striving for happiness will always ultimately be frustrated. And it is out of this frustration that the "longing for something other" and the "standing-apart from" existing conditions arise.

Historically, these concepts have found their most common expression in religion. The truth of religion, according to Horkheimer, lies in the individual and social needs it expresses: the need for a better, more just world. Horkheimer speaks of religion as "the record of the wishes, desires, and accusations of countless generations"[24] and believes it contains an "indwelling protest against things as they are."[25] Acceptance of a transcendental being is motivated by dissatisfaction with existing conditions, and it is precisely belief in such a being that sustains hope for a better world. He writes: "The concept of God was for a long time the place where the idea was kept alive that there are other norms besides those which nature and society give expression in their operations."[26] Religious longing, however, was transformed into conscious social practice when the Enlightenment freed the drives and desires that religion kept alive from its inhibiting form. With this transformation the "productive kind of criticism of the status quo which found expression in earlier times as a belief in a heavenly judge takes the form of a struggle for more rational forms of society."[27] The striving for happiness and morality itself now would be expressed in the effort to establish a more rational society. It is precisely this understanding that mediates Horkheimer's relationship to Marxism.

Buck-Morss states that Horkheimer seems "to have had the conscience of a socialist since puberty."[28] His early diaries and letters present ample evidence of

his revulsion with the capitalist system, his outrage at the human suffering it creates and sustains, and his commitment to social justice. "By my craving for truth," he declares, "will I live, and search into what I desire to know; the affected will I aid, satisfy my hatred against injustice, and vanquish the Pharisees, but above all search for love, love and understanding."[29] About World War I, he writes: "I hate the armies that are on the march to protect property,"[30] and shocked at the working conditions in his father's factory, he asks a friend: "Who can complain of suffering, you and me? We, who are complaining that the flesh of the slaughtered gives us belly aches, are cannibals. . . . You enjoy your peace and property for whose sake others have to suffocate, to bleed to death . . . and to endure the most inhuman conditions."[31] Horkheimer's moral outrage and his concern with justice and human suffering were also evident both in the tone and the content of the pseudonymously published *Dämmerung*, a collection of short essays and aphorisms written between 1926 and 1931. There he speaks of the "shamefulness" of the capitalist order,[32] of the "darkness of this world, its viciousness and filth,"[33] of "the lies, the senseless degradation . . . the unnecessary material and spiritual suffering."[34] And he labels the existence of such a world "evil."[35]

This same concern with the shamefulness and evil of the world will be evident in his later formulations of Critical Theory as well. In declaring that Critical Theory "never aims at the increase of knowledge as such,"[36] in describing it as "the unfolding of a single existential judgment,"[37] and in claiming that it "has no specific influence on its side, except for the abolition of social injustice,"[38] Horkheimer gives questions of morality precedence over those of truth and practice. His embrace of Marxism, which serves as the bridge between his early outrage and Critical Theory, shows these same characteristics.

Late in his life Horkheimer would describe Marxism as "essentially a protest" against these evil, inhuman conditions.[39] What made the Marxist protest different from his own early outrage was that it provided a theoretical framework and political program that identified the causes of the conditions he abhorred and offered reasons to believe that these conditions could be overcome. Marxism revealed for Horkheimer the dynamics of the dominant, inhumane order and identified the steps necessary for creating a more humane one.

Horkheimer was familiar with Marxism long before he embraced it. He had had some early involvement in radical politics and identified with aspects of Luxemburg's analyses. His familiarity with Marx no doubt was also influenced by his long-term friendship with Friedrich Pollock, who had received his doctorate in 1923 with a thesis on Marx's monetary policy and had introduced Horkheimer into the orbit of the new Institute for Social Research. It was not, however, until the late 1920s that Horkheimer began a more concentrated study of Marx and Hegel and began to incorporate them into his lectures on political

and social philosophy. The apparent stimulus for this new interest was his frequent visits to Berlin, where Adorno had developed a circle of friends whose interest in Marxism and art was strongly influenced by the Hegelianized Marxism formulated by Korsch and Lukács in the early 1920s.

In addition to providing a theoretical framework and political program, Marxism served as a kind of moral litmus test for Horkheimer. He would argue that the position an individual takes regarding class society and the realization of socialism "not only determines the relationship of his life to that of mankind but also the degree of his morality."[40] Horkheimer thus embraced Marxism as essentially a moral program which incorporated a protest against existing conditions and a promise that "something other" might be realized.

His early attitudes toward those whose actions were to bring about a better world were decidedly mixed. *Dämmerung* opens with praise for the growing intelligence of the European masses and contains statements identifying the proletariat with human liberation. But these early notes also include a sober analysis of the cleavages within the German working class, as well as rather scathing assessments of the oppressed classes. At one point Horkheimer declares that, with the exception of some progressive elements, the oppressed classes are inclined to idolize and imitate their oppressors and are more apt to defend and protect them than struggle against them. Notwithstanding this decided ambivalence, there is in Horkheimer's early work a tendency to treat the proletariat and its party as the sole moral actors in bourgeois society. The capitalist order is, for Horkheimer, an immoral order in which the possibility of moral action in any sector other than the most oppressed is remote. While he allows that some decency might exist in non-proletarian spheres, he believes that success in capitalist society is incompatible with morality. In "Materialism and Morality" he asserts that it is only within the proletariat that one finds the "elements of morality" that are striving to achieve a better society and he waxes eloquent about the solidarity, humanity, and selflessness of these elements.[41] Similar paeans to the superhuman qualities and the moral integrity of the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat are also found throughout *Dämmerung*.

Horkheimer's tendency to associate morality (and revolutionary potential) with suffering and marginalization is reminiscent of the early Marx, who based his initial identification of the unique status and historical role of the proletariat on the universal character of its suffering. The difference between them is the fact that Horkheimer's identification with the proletariat (and with Marxism as a whole) never really moves beyond this level. Thus, when the moral integrity of the proletariat becomes suspect, its status as the agent who will bring about "something other" is undermined. Similarly, when Marxism's status as a moral program is undermined by history, it loses its relevance to Horkheimer's project. Before this would occur, however, Horkheimer was faced with the task of resolving the tensions inherent in his appropriation of Marxism as a moral

program.

Marxism has steadfastly rejected morality as a form of bourgeois ideology. Questions of happiness, of the good and the just have been deferred to the future state that will be ushered in by the socialist revolution.[42] Horkheimer's effort to reconcile his interests and concerns with a Marxist analysis took two interrelated forms, both of which are evident in "Materialism and Morality."[43] First, he develops a materialist account of morality, an account that recognizes it as a bourgeois phenomenon but critically appropriates its utopian potential. And second, he presents Marxism as itself motivated by moral concerns and as the form moral sentiment takes under conditions of capitalism.

Horkheimer argues that the fundamental problem morality seeks to resolve—the conflict between individual happiness and the public good—is rooted in the bourgeois order, an anarchically constituted order in which there is no rational connection between the activities of isolated individuals, motivated by self-interest and the pursuit of profits, and the social whole. This problem cannot be resolved until the conditions of its existence are overcome. Nevertheless, morality as the attempt to reconcile interest and duty—which Horkheimer believes finds its purest expression in Kant's categorical imperative—should not be dismissed as simply ideology or false consciousness: it has, as well, "a very active relation to reality."[44] This active relation to reality is determined by the fact that the categorical imperative cannot be realized in bourgeois society. Bourgeois morality points to the transcendence of the social conditions that made it possible and necessary. The utopian dimension of bourgeois moral philosophy posits an ideal whose realization leads us "from philosophy to the critique of political economy."[45] The basis of this utopian dimension is the moral sentiment that desires the free development of all, and it is this moral sentiment that finds practical expression in Marxism.

In *Dämmerung* Horkheimer argues that although Marxists are wont to look down upon moral motives, these motives—and in particular, compassion—are "the secret mainspring of their thought and action."[46] In "Materialism and Morality" he speaks of the moral sentiment taking two forms in the bourgeois epoch, compassion and politics.[47] Horkheimer's vision of Marxism clearly encompasses both of these forms. In its concern for those who are not the subjects of their own lives, and in its efforts to transform the conditions that perpetuate human suffering and misery, Marxism is the embodiment and expression of the moral sentiment. But since nothing can ever fully do away with human suffering and misery, even Marxism cannot claim a unique monopoly on the moral sentiment. It is precisely this aspect of Horkheimer's understanding of morality that allows him to move so easily from the revolutionary politics of Marxism to his later defense of bourgeois freedoms and concern with faith and the belief in something other.

Disillusion and Horkheimer's Religious Turn

Marxism gave Horkheimer reason to believe that "something other" might be realized. In his early writings he spoke optimistically of the bourgeois era that was about to come to an end, and he confidently insisted on the priority of politics over compassion in the world-historical struggles that would bring about this end.[48] As the objective possibility of revolution faded, however, so too did Horkheimer's faith in the Marxist project. He came to believe that history had moved beyond the period where Marxist doctrines had any positive practical significance. Indeed, he felt that these doctrines had become ideological and that the actual practical significance of various forms of Marxist political action was negative: they promoted the interests of various potentates in the East and tended to facilitate rise of fascism in Western countries.[49] Although Horkheimer would continue to insist that Marxism was an invaluable tool for understanding the dynamics of society,[50] he would no longer find it relevant to the longing for something other.

With the loss of his basis for hope, a pessimism that was never wholly absent from Horkheimer's works becomes more prominent. Horkheimer cites Schopenhauer, whom he refers to a "clairvoyant pessimist" and the "philosopher of compassion,"[51] as his introduction to philosophy and writes: "Metaphysical pessimism, always an implied element in every genuine materialist philosophy, has always been congenial to me. . . . The better, the right kind of society is a goal which has a sense of guilt entwined about it."[52] As a result of the historical events he witnessed, Horkheimer came to believe that not only was there no way to redeem the suffering and misery of past generations, but that there also was little possibility of avoiding such suffering and misery in the future. Despite his praise of Schopenhauer for seeing "things too clearly to exclude the possibility of historical improvement,"[53] and notwithstanding his insistence that he and Adorno subscribed to the principle of being "pessimist in theory and optimist in practice,"[54] there is little in Horkheimer's later work that might be interpreted as optimistic.

Horkheimer's assessment of the world in his later notes is relentlessly negative and despairing. Suffering, evil, and hopelessness are the dominant themes. He writes of "the horrible arrangement of the world" and "the hopeless chain of history and death in pain, fear and misery."[55] "Radical evil," he declares, "asserts its dominion over all created being everywhere and reaches as far as the sun."[56] In these notes, too, we read that civilization is doomed, European history is over, and that the time when transition to a better society was possible is past.

Horkheimer's "political regression" follows from his conclusion that "something other" can no longer be concretely realized. If the time for the transition to a better society is over, if the conditions that presume and perpetuate injustice and unhappiness can no longer be overcome, then the

moral actor is left with the task of defending those areas of freedom, justice, and happiness that still exist. For Horkheimer this entailed defending the achievements of bourgeois society against external and internal threats. Paramount among the external threats was that posed by the East: Horkheimer spoke of the "technicized barbarians of the East"[57] and warned that "the menace of the yellow race" must be taken seriously.[58] For Horkheimer the East represented the condition to which the entire world might succumb, and he regarded the West, which he believed distinguished by its love of justice, as the only force capable of opposing such an eventuality.

If the East, with its collectivism, represented the greatest external threat to bourgeois society, there were also forces—arising from the very nature of democracy—that threatened to erode it from within. Horkheimer contends, "The more democratic a democracy, the more certainly it negates itself." He saw little correspondence between reason and the will of the people (which he felt was characterized more by obedience than autonomy) and thus concluded that those who "support democracy should mistrust it."[59] Moreover, he was concerned that since democracy exists for the majority, and not the individual, it will become tyranny.[60] He was also troubled by the leveling tendencies of democracy, believing that as society arranges itself in such a way that all have equal chances, and the distinctions between "the scum and decent people" are eradicated, it is the masses who are favored and will prevail.[61] And, finally, he worried lest freedom, once won, be "forgotten, like breathing."[62]

Horkheimer's concerns about democracy are strikingly similar to those of such writers as Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill. Horkheimer carries forward their concerns about the tyranny of the majority and the leveling pressures in democracy, revealing, as do they, a cautious distrust of equality.[63] And his fear that taken-for-granted freedom is vulnerable recalls Tocqueville's belief that in democratic nations people tend to love equality more than liberty and thus stand in danger of losing their freedom. Horkheimer shares with Tocqueville and Mill not only a kind of "enlightened" elitism, but, most significantly, a fundamental concern with preserving individual liberty. It is thus in his "political regression" that his essential liberalism is revealed. The happiness of individuals, which he associates with liberty, has always been a primary concern, and now it is this he seeks to protect against the collectivism of the East and the negative consequences of democracy in the West.

Practically, this means that political activity must be directed not toward overthrowing the bourgeois order but to protecting it. And, for Horkheimer, protecting, preserving, and where possible, extending the freedom of the individual is not only a practical matter, but a moral one as well: "Serious resistance against social injustice," he writes, "nowadays necessarily includes the preservation of liberal traits of the bourgeois order."[64] But if Horkheimer sounds here as if he is issuing a call to arms, albeit in defense of bourgeois order, serious resistance for him was in fact increasingly becoming a matter of

private preservation of the longing for something other. "Standing-apart from" was no longer a basis from which to transform conditions but rather a position within which one might preserve the very possibility of longing for something other.

Faith as Practice

For the younger Horkheimer the moral actor participated in practical struggles to transform social conditions; for the older Horkheimer this actor defended bourgeois society and the dignity and autonomy of the individual. Under conditions where preservation rather than transformation is the order of the day, longing for something other reverts once again into a religious form, and faith in a transcendent being becomes the means for keeping alive a necessary but more or less impotent impulse for social change. Horkheimer always recognized that religion was a double-edged social force, but he would in later years insist that protest and resistance must take a religious form. He argues in his 1963 essay "Theism and Atheism" that whereas atheism was once a sign of independence and courage, today, with totalitarian rule posing a universal threat, theism has taken its place.[65] Belief in something entirely other becomes the means of keeping dissatisfaction alive and maintaining some degree of solidarity in an otherwise atomized world. Within the conditions of a totally administered society and given the horrible injustices of history, Horkheimer is convinced that "expressing the concept of an omnipotent benevolent Being no longer as dogma but as a longing that unites all men . . . seems to come close to the solution to the problem," and, he adds, "the role of faith becomes central."[66] The solution to the problem thus no longer comes from political practice but from religious faith.

Although Horkheimer will continue to speak of struggle, the character of practice in his writings becomes increasingly privatized, personal, and remote from concrete struggles. He speaks of individuals contributing to the creation of "collectives that are out-of-season, which can preserve the individual in genuine solidarity,"[67] and offering intellectuals "provincial, romantic" sectarianism as an alternative to communism or social democracy, he declares, "The realm of freedom is the backwoods."[68] What has occurred here is that as the "longing for something other" becomes depoliticized, "standing-apart from" becomes the last remaining act of resistance. Retreat from the world becomes the moral act, as does the privatized act of faith.

The outlines of the "later" Horkheimer's conception of practice are evident in a note written in the early 1960s:

> To devote oneself to another as once one meant to in prayer, though the impotence of prayer and the nullity of man have become trivial knowledge; to become wholly absorbed in love when its social and

psychological conditions have been uncovered and understood and while remaining fully conscious of them; to set aside skepticism . . . without yet forgetting what gave rise to those doubts, is the only resistance against false progress the subject can still offer. It will not delay the decline, but it testifies to what is right in a time of eclipse.[69]

Here we find the end point of a progression that moved from moral outrage to a Marxist-informed vision of political action to a conception of practice consisting of resistance through individual acts of faith, retreat, and love. The desire for a better world and the protest against existing conditions evident in his earliest writings found in Marxism a political form and content. Marxism provided grounds for hope that a better world was actually possible and thus served to transform longing into action directed toward bringing that better state of affairs about. But history undermined Marxism's claims, and as the world became an increasingly "evil" place, Horkheimer became convinced that a better world could not in fact be realized. Although he never felt that the suffering of past generations could be redeemed, he now believed that that of future generations could not be avoided. With this, the longing for something other lost its this-worldly practical significance, and self-conscious political action became a matter of standing apart, of acting "as if," as one retreats from an unchangeable world. The moral sentiment that informs his work, and which was expressed in his outrage and in his embrace of Marxism, retreats into itself and is expressed only as sentiment. The moralist without belief in divine providence or in the revolutionary agency of the proletariat is left with only longing as a form of resistance.

ADORNO AND THE FASHIONING OF NEW PERSPECTIVES

If Horkheimer's work was guided by the longing for something other, Adorno's was motivated by the desire to fashion new perspectives, perspectives distorted by neither desire nor violence, which would provide new ways for knowing and understanding the world. And while Adorno would maintain that this was in fact an impossible task—that the truth of the world could never be known, that philosophy can only "proceed interpretively without ever possessing a sure key to interpretation"[70]—he nevertheless maintained that it was a necessary one. The fashioning of new perspectives is "the task of thought," which must be undertaken "for the sake of the possible."[71]

Unlike Horkheimer, Adorno displayed no early interest in politics or Marxism. His earliest interests, music and philosophy, were also his lifelong abiding interests. He grew up in a highly musical environment and studied piano and composition from an early age. He also, as a teenager, spent Saturdays studying Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* with a tutor. Although he pursued philosophical interests in his university studies and in his subsequent

career, music continued to be a primary interest, and he would write and publish extensively on music throughout his life.[72] Also unlike Horkheimer, Adorno's views and his project remained remarkably consistent throughout his life: while there are shifts in nuance and emphasis, there remains a unity in his basic philosophical outlook and project. There is no "early" or "late" Adorno; there is no theoretical collapse or political regression.[73]

Marxism as a Mode of Cognition

The first evidence of any Marxist influence in Adorno's work is found in the closing pages of his first, unsuccessful *Habilitationsschrift*, "The Concept of the Unconscious in the Transcendental Theory of the Mind." Adorno concluded this neo-Kantian justification of Freud's work with a rather orthodox Marxist critique.[74] After he withdrew this study, Adorno began to spend more time in Berlin, and it was there that his knowledge of and engagement with Marxism took form.

Berlin in the late 1920s has been described as an "experimental workshop for a new aesthetics politically committed to the goals of Marxist revolution."[75] Adorno's circle of friends consisted of intellectuals and artists engaged in the project of combining avant-garde art with leftist political theory. The Berlin circle of which he was a member included Walter Benjamin (whom he had met in 1923 and who would profoundly influence his work), Siegfried Kracauer (his old Kant tutor), Ernst Bloch (whose *Geist der Utopie* and radical break from traditional academic philosophy had impressed Adorno), the conductor Otto Klemperer, dramatist and poet Bertolt Brecht, composers Hanns Eisler and Kurt Weill, actress Lotte Lenya, and painter, designer, and Bauhaus professor László Moholy-Nagy. While communist sympathizers, they were not Party members. In opposition to the Party, they considered art more than an economically determined epiphenomenon. They were interested in the role of art in transforming consciousness, and the role of consciousness in affecting social change. Not surprisingly, they were particularly attracted to Lukács's work.

In *History and Class Consciousness* Lukács defined Marxism as a method that entailed the necessarily interconnected elements of a mode of cognition and a program of action. As a mode of cognition, Marxism recognized the social universe as a totality defined by the domination of exchange. The structure of the totality was revealed in the structure of the commodity, and every aspect of the totality, including its cultural artifacts and ideas, incorporated and reflected these economic conditions. As a way of perceiving the world, Marxism was thus also, necessarily, *Ideologiekritik*: in its very orientation to the world it perceived and exposed the limits and lies of bourgeois consciousness. This way of perceiving the world was also aware of its

own role in changing the world; as a mode of cognition, it was inextricably linked to a program of action. This program was predicated on an understanding of history as moving toward a specified end and on a conception of an identical subject-object of history, understood as the privileged carrier of cognition and identified as the proletariat. Adorno accepted none of these latter assumptions. While the various aspects of Marxism as a mode of cognition are evident throughout Adorno's work, his appropriation of Marxism did not include its political program.

Concerned primarily with problems of philosophy and art, Adorno initially appropriated Marxism as a method of aesthetic, as opposed to social, analysis. However, as Rose observes, for Adorno (and, as she points out, for Lukács and Benjamin as well) "the discovery of Marx encompassed the discovery of society."[76] The society Adorno discovered was capitalist, and although its significance to his work and interests would vary, he would continue to adhere to this view throughout his life. Against those who argued that industrialization had made the concept of capitalism obsolete, Adorno insisted that, while technical developments had changed the nature of the forces of production, the relations of production remained capitalistic.[77] The disappearance of classes is an illusion; Western industrialized societies, he insists, remain class societies.[78]

Even more significant than his understanding of society as class society was his view of the social universe as a totality defined and determined by exchange. Adorno refers to the system of commodity exchange as "that objective abstraction to which society pays obedience. Its power over human beings is more real than the power exerted by particular institutions."[79] Totality was for Adorno a critical category understood in its Marxian meaning. And central to his understanding of totality was Lukács's theory of reification: "totality," Adorno declares, "is society as the thing-in-itself, with all the guilt of reification."[80] It was thus Marx's concept of commodity fetishism (as developed by Lukács)—more than his class theory or views of the labor process—that shaped Adorno's social analysis.

Following Lukács's lead of unraveling the whole by analyzing the part, Adorno's social critique was effected through analysis of intellectual and artistic products. His affinity for this approach is apparent in both his early and late writings. In "The Actuality of Philosophy" Adorno states that while mind (*Geist*) cannot grasp the totality of the real, "it may be possible to penetrate the detail, to explode in the miniature the mass of the merely existing reality."[81] And in an article published in 1969 he speaks of interpreting technical findings concerning the internal structure of music as "hieroglyphs of social significance."[82] His keen appreciation for the details and the hieroglyphs of social significance provided his immanent critique of ideology with its power.

Fredric Jameson declares that it is precisely these aspects of Adorno's work that make him "one of the greatest twentieth–century Marxist philosophers."[83] Adorno's originality, according to Jameson, "lies in his unique emphasis on the

presence of late capitalism as a totality within the very forms of our concepts or of the works of art themselves. No other Marxist theoretician has ever staged this relationship between the universal and the particular, the system and the detail, with this kind of single-minded yet wide-ranging attention."[84] Jameson argues that Adorno's Marxist credentials rest in his way of perceiving the world and, in particular, his use of the concept of totality. Buck-Morss, on the other hand, contends that given his fundamental departures from Marxism, one can hardly cast Adorno as "the true inheritor of Marx's theoretical legacy."[85] She is by no means alone in insisting that the absence of any link to a program of action undermines any effort to include Adorno within the Marxist fold. As she points out: "Adorno accepted a Marxist social analysis and used Marxist categories in criticizing the *geistige* products of bourgeois society. But the whole point of his theoretical effort was to continue to interpret the world, whereas the point had been to change it."[86] It is clear that Marxism as a mode of cognition significantly shaped Adorno's analyses of the social world. The question becomes then: why did he refuse to align himself with the program of action that was such an essential element of Marxism?

Nonidentity and the Revolutionary Subject

Certainly historical conditions affected Adorno's views on the proletariat and on the revolutionary program of action associated with its name and interests. However, his rejection of the proletariat and of Marxism as a political program seems to have less to do with historical failures and circumstances than with basic philosophical views formed very early in his intellectual development. Central among these was an emphatic rejection of the idea—both as possibility and *desideratum*—of subject/object identity.

For Adorno the possibility and desirability of such an identity is expressed in the concept of "constitutive subjectivity," and as he remarks in *Negative Dialectics*, his lifelong task was "to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity."[87] Constitutive subjectivity is, according to Adorno, a concept central to both idealism (for which the premise of such an identity was considered the prerequisite for knowledge of truth) and its Marxist offspring. This is a concept of a subject that creates the world through externalizing and objectifying its essence, and it is informed by an understanding of history as a coherent and meaningful process, as a totality with an objective course. The antimonies of subject and object, thinking and being, mind and matter, reason and reality become reconciled in history through the subject's (be that subject *Geist*, humankind, or the proletariat) growing consciousness of itself as both the subject and object of history.

In the vision of subject/object identity which informs idealism, the subject creates the object, and in recognizing the object as its own creation, overcomes

the antimonies it has created. This privileging of the subject is not, however, unique to idealism. In his essay "Subject and Object" Adorno points out that in positivism the seemingly passive subject, which stands coolly apart from its object in order to manipulate it, is also privileged in relation to the object.[88] In both positivism and idealism the subject dominates the object; the subject is glorified as either capable of mastery over the object or as the object's creator. Adorno rejects both positions and argues instead for the primacy of the object. He contends that "we must concede the object's dialectical primacy,"[89] and in a similar manner, he will claim the primacy of society in relation to the individual.[90]

The primacy of the object (and of society) is, however, dialectical, not absolute. Adorno is by no means replacing the subject's domination of the object with the object's domination of the subject. The subject, understood not as a macro- or collective subject but as the concrete human actor, remains an element of irreducible significance in Adorno's work. This is because for him the subject and the cognitive function are synonymous.[91] Categories of thought and understanding are recognized as socially derived and created, but the process and the point of view of cognition are always individual and particular. It is the subject who is the carrier of cognition. Thus, while Adorno's negative dialectics acknowledges what he calls the primacy of the object, it recognizes, at the same time, that the object is not entirely unmediated by an active subjectivity. Buck-Morss explains that Adorno saw subject and object "as necessary co-determinates; neither mind nor matter could dominate each other as a philosophical first principle. Truth resided in the object, but it did not lie ready at hand; the material object needed a rational subject in order to release the truth which it contained."[92] Indeed, the importance of this rational subject to Adorno's project is evident when he acknowledges in the preface to *Negative Dialectics* that he relies on "the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity."[93]

In Adorno's conception of the relation of subject and object, of individual and society, there is always tension, there is always nonidentity. Indeed, the possibility, the reality, and the potentiality of subject and object and of history itself exists, for Adorno, only within a field of tension. It is only within this tension that the history of mind is realized and "the self-assertion of the species" is made possible.[94] Consciousness, reflection, and critical thought grow out of nonidentity. It is within this tension, too, that society exists and develops: "Society stays alive, not despite its antagonism, but by means of it."[95] Thus, it is also within this tension that history occurs: "History," Adorno claims, "is the demarcation line of identity. It is not that man is the subjectifying subject-object of history, but instead the dialectic of the diverging moments between subject and object is again and again drawn out by history."[96] In drawing out these diverging moments, history is an open-ended and discontinuous process, not a totality with an objective course. Furthermore, his understanding of the relation

of subject and object does not allow any longing for a lost harmony, unity, or undifferentiated whole. Adorno rejects both regressive yearnings for a lost Eden and projective hopes for a perfect oneness of humankind and the world, dismissing both visions as romantic.[97]

Adorno's understanding of history (as well as of thought and society) as grounded in nonidentity is a far cry from a sense of history as a meaningful process bringing about the reconciliation of subject and object. Not only does nonidentity deny such a vision of history, but it negates the possibility of a privileged carrier of cognition and thus also of a revolutionary subject. The priority of the objective—the dialectical primacy of the object over and against the self-determining subject—means that the object, like Kant's thing-in-itself, never can be fully known: it lies always beyond the grasp of the subject. It is for this reason that Adorno declares, "Whoever chooses philosophy as a profession today must first reject the illusion . . . that the power of thought is sufficient to grasp the totality of the real."[98] If the power of thought is not sufficient to grasp the totality of the real, then no claim to absolute or "correct" knowledge is possible. No individual or collective subject can claim truth as its own; no individual or collective subject can claim that its particular interests are those of humankind in general; and no political program or party can claim to represent those interests.

Nonidentity, Theory, and Practice

Adorno contends that theory and practice—like subject and object, mind and matter—are nonidentical, and the relationship between them is necessarily mediated and variable. Insofar as theory and practice have been made identical under the rubric of Marxism-as-method, the effect has been to restrict the capacity of critical thinking and to relegate it to a secondary status. He observes that once criticism "crosses class boundaries, the negative element of thought is frowned upon,"[99] and he notes that the "call for the unity of theory and practice has irresistibly degraded theory to the servant's role, removing the very traits that it should have brought to that unity. The visa stamp which we demand of all theory became the censor's placet."[100] Adorno understands the relationship of theory and practice as varying historically and insists that, under the conditions of late capitalism, theory—and critical thinking in general—must be accorded priority and autonomy.

In "Resignation" Adorno defends his renunciation of practical politics and argues that only critical thought can apprehend the obstacles to change and thus make possible the social transformation activists desire. The critical thinker, he writes,

> who neither superscribes his conscience nor permits himself to be
> terrorized into action, is in truth the one who does not give up. . . . As

> long as thinking is not interrupted, it has a firm grasp upon possibility.
> Its insatiable quality, the resistance against petty satiety, rejects the
> foolish wisdom of resignation. . . . Open thinking points beyond itself.
> For its part, such thinking takes a position as a figuration of praxis
> which is more closely related to a praxis truly involved in change than is
> a position of mere obedience for the sake of praxis.[101]

Evident in this statement is not only Adorno's defense of the autonomy of
theory and of critical thinking as a legitimate form of praxis, but also his
conviction that the subject (thought, cognition, reason) has inherent
critical-emancipatory capacities. Because mind "is impelled against its own will
beyond apologetics,"[102] it is possible for us "to think against our own
thought."[103]

That "open thinking points beyond itself" is the basic premise of Adorno's
work and his hopes. But his hopes were in fact most tenaciously grounded in
the realm of aesthetics. Art, he believed, is where genuinely subversive
tendencies are to be found. He contends that "even in the most sublimated work
of art there is a hidden 'it should be otherwise.' . . . As eminently constructed
and produced objects, works of art . . . point to a practice from which they
abstain: the creation of a just life."[104] Although his extensive work on aesthetics
cannot be addressed here, it is appropriate to this discussion to note that, for
Adorno, art and critical thinking involve similar activities and orientations.
Both require imagination and fantasy; both involve thinking of and seeing
things differently. In "The Actuality of Philosophy" Adorno defends a
conception of philosophy as *ars inveniendi* (the art of invention, of discovery, of
coming upon): philosophy for him entails new groupings and trial
arrangements, constellations and constructions. The "*organon* of this *ars
inveniendi*," he writes, "is fantasy."[105] Both autonomous art and critical thought
require that the mind "shoot subjectively into an open and unsecured realm
beyond objectivity."[106]

As central as fantasy, art, and open thinking are to Adorno's hopes, he by
no means equates artistic or theoretical practice with revolutionary political
practice. Their contribution to any possibility of a better world is as a form of
intervention, as an effort to combat identity thinking and to cut through the fog
of reification that prevents knowledge of social reality. However, for Adorno,
both art and critical thinking also involve an attitude or orientation to the world
that has implications for reformulating ideas about political practice.

In a passage in "Subject and Object" Adorno describes this orientation. He
defines approaching knowledge of the object as an "act in which the subject
rends the veil it is weaving around the object" and states that this is possible
only when the subject, "fearlessly passive . . . entrusts itself to its own
experience."[107] In the act of approaching knowledge of the object, the crucial
element is that of thinking against thought: "the subject rends the veil it is
weaving around the object." And this crucial element requires fearless

passivity. Here we find repeated the *Dialectic*'s theme of transcending fear. What is added is the requirement of passivity, of overcoming fear-driven activity and submitting to one's own experience and awareness of the object's dialectical primacy. Adorno presents a similar image in *Minima Moralia*, where he states, "Contemplation without violence, the source of all the joy of truth, presupposes that he who contemplates does not absorb the object into himself: distanced nearness."[108] The orientation implied in these passages is one of the subject standing in a non-repressive relationship to both the external world and its own internal nature. The act of knowing the object does not involve conquering, controlling, or cataloguing it; rather, it involves recognition of and respect for otherness.

Adorno describes the subject as the agent, not the constituent, of the object and observes that this has implications for the relation of theory and practice.[109] Although, as Jay points out,[110] Adorno never really spells out precisely what these implications are, several are immediately apparent. Insofar as the object is understood as other (as prior, as there), as something that cannot be fully understood, dominated, or controlled by the subject, theory becomes more modest, and practice becomes less ambitious. Since the subject can never fully understand the object, the subject as an agent of change must direct its attention and effort toward small aspects of the whole, toward the detail and the particular. In a 1928 essay on Schubert's music Adorno declares that "change succeeds only in the smallest things. Where the scale is large, death dominates."[111] Expressing similar sentiments in an interview broadcast shortly after his death in 1969, he closed by saying that "attempts really to change our world drastically in any particular field . . . seem condemned to impotence. Whoever wants to change things can apparently do so only by making this impotence itself and his own impotence as well into a factor of what he does."[112] For Adorno practice that overreaches understanding is dangerous. And since understanding is itself always partial and incomplete, our efforts to change the world must be informed by an appreciation of our own impotence. Adorno does, nevertheless, at least hold out the possibility that subjects aware of their own impotence, and practice aware of its limitations, can effect real (albeit small) changes.

DESPAIR, POSSIBILITY, AND EMANCIPATORY VISIONS

In a conversation that took place early in their first year together in California, Horkheimer asked Adorno: "Can one really do anything with these sorts of ideas? My difficulty is that I always get as far as we have gotten today, that is, as far as objective despair." Adorno responded, "What gives knowledge the stamp of authenticity is the reflection of possibility."[113] Horkheimer was never able to get beyond objective despair; Adorno's work, on the other hand,

always reflected possibility.

I have argued that this difference between Horkheimer's and Adorno's work may be related to the guiding interests that shaped their relationships to and appropriation of Marxism. Horkheimer's overriding concern with justice led him to embrace Marxism as a moral program that identified and directed the agent whose actions would bring about the realization of a just society. As his faith in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat waned, however, so did his faith in Marxism. Indeed, as Held points out, it was this process of disillusionment that drew Horkheimer closer to Adorno's position and thus made possible the *Dialectic*.[114]

After considering Horkheimer's later work, it is evident that whatever traces of social optimism can be found in the *Dialectic*, as well as any hints of new ways of conceptualizing agency and social change, are more consistent with Adorno's views than Horkheimer's.[115] Horkheimer's later work is characterized by an overriding sense of pessimism. An image of a better world is still present in his work, but both the image of and hope for a better world are relegated to religious faith. That such an image is still present does not mean, however, that his work continues to be informed by an emancipatory vision. Once he abandons Marxism, Horkheimer also abandons the possibility that a better world might be realized. So although he points to practices (faith, love, retreat) that express and sustain the "longing for something other" (and thus the image of the better world), these practices are not connected to any possibility of actually realizing such a world. They are acts of defiance and solace, not acts oriented to practice and social transformation. Horkheimer's theoretical and political "regression," then, includes a fundamental rejection of the project of theory with practical intent.

Adorno did not share Horkheimer's disillusionment, perhaps because he never shared his initial faith in Marx's revolutionary program. His concern with truth—with uncovering and developing ways of understanding the world, with fashioning new perspectives—led him to the negative dialectics of nonidentity thinking. It was precisely the basic postulate of nonidentity that both kept him from fully embracing Marxism and guaranteed the persistence of possibility within his work. Although one is hard-pressed to cast Adorno as an optimist, one can nevertheless agree with Rose's claim that Adorno's "melancholy science is not resigned, quiescent or pessimistic."[116] His negative dialectics preserves the moment of possible transcendence.

Not only does Adorno's work preserve the possibility of radical social change, it also contains all the elements of an emancipatory vision. Critical thinkers, artistic workers, as well as youth[117] are identified as contributing to the process of social transformation. Open thinking and fantasy, "contemplation without violence," fearless passivity, attention to the particular, and efforts directed toward changing the "smallest things" are offered as actions conducive to this process. These actions also reflect a change in

orientation to the world that is most fully expressed in Adorno's conception of a better world.

Adorno's image of what the world should be follows from his insistence on the nonidentity of subject and object. He writes: "In its proper place . . . the relationship of subject and object would lie in the realization of peace among men as well as between men and their Other. Peace is a state of distinctness without domination, with the distinct participating in each other."[118] This image of a state of distinctness without domination represents a significant departure from the harmonious totality implied in the Marxian vision. As we have already seen, Adorno rejects the aspirations toward identity contained in such a vision and distrusts any tendency or urge to overlook or overcome difference. He argues that a truly emancipated society would be "the realization of universality in the reconciliation of differences"; such a society would be one in which "people can be different without fear."[119] Adorno's better world, then, is one in which differences, distinctions, distances, and tensions—between people and between humankind and its environment—are regarded as normal and necessary, are defended and even celebrated.

While we can speak of Adorno's work as being informed by an emancipatory vision, it nevertheless must be conceded that his belief that change is possible—and to an important degree, the elements of his emancipatory vision—are more a function of the basic premise of nonidentity than of any concrete analysis of social conditions. The analysis of the totally administered society presented in the *Dialectic* did not undergo any significant alterations in Adorno's later work. Although he was aware of and responded to changes in late capitalist societies, he continued to associate the possibility of change more with activities of the mind than with the tendencies of social structures or the actions of social groups. In the face of conformism and total administration, Adorno relies on his own version of the cunning of reason: change remains a possibility because the mind is "impelled against its will beyond apologetics."

Notwithstanding the lack of a clear link between understanding society and transforming it, and the absence of any program of action that goes much beyond open thinking, Adorno's work does suggest new ways of thinking about agency and social change. The primacy of the object leads to a different orientation to the world and to a more modest politics, one oriented to the "smallest things." And the nonidentity of subject and object places a value on difference and distinction that opposes the politics of collective singularity and points to a greater diversity of agents and actions than is allowed for in the notion of a revolutionary subject. This emphasis on difference and distinction represents Adorno's most significant departure from the Marxian emancipatory vision and mandates a reconceptualization of radical politics.

Efforts to reconceptualize radical politics and allow for a greater diversity of agents and actions can also be found in Marcuse's work. Marcuse was far more

directly concerned and involved, practically and theoretically, with the issues of agency and social change than was Horkheimer or Adorno. Also, in contrast both to Horkheimer, who embraced and then rejected Marxism, and Adorno, who only selectively incorporated aspects of Marxism into his work, Marcuse maintained a firm allegiance to the Marxian vision. This allegiance makes his work more familiar and accessible than that of his colleagues, but his fidelity to certain aspects of this vision also ultimately undermines his efforts.

Marxism Revisited: Marcuse's Search for a Subject

> Thus the question once again must be faced: how can the administered individuals—who have made their mutilation into their own liberties and satisfactions, and thus reproduce it on an enlarged scale—liberate themselves from themselves as well as from their masters? How is it even thinkable that the vicious circle be broken?
>
> Herbert Marcuse
> *One-Dimensional Man*, 250–51

Marcuse's efforts to understand how administered individuals could "liberate themselves from themselves as well as from their masters"—his efforts to conceive of how the vicious circle might be broken—made him one of the best known of the critical theorists. He wrote and spoke extensively on the possibilities and problems of radical politics in advanced industrial countries, and in addressing the concerns and interests of the burgeoning political movements of the 1960s, became known as the "father" of the New Left.[1]

In contrast to Horkheimer and Adorno, Marcuse not only remained doggedly hopeful about the possibilities for radical social change, he also remained clearly and deeply committed to the Marxist project. As opposed to renouncing it for having failed to deliver on its promise, or rejecting its essential political elements altogether, Marcuse engaged in reconstructing Marxism. His effort to develop a dialectical phenomenology, his exploration of Marxism's philosophical roots and defense of Hegel, and his incorporation of Freud were all elements of this undertaking. The results of his efforts are evident in the significantly modified model of the subject and conception of history that underlie his analyses of contemporary conditions and his views on agency and radical social change. As with Adorno, albeit for different reasons, Marcuse's emancipatory vision allows for a diversity of agents and actions. A

persistent attachment to the notion of a revolutionary subject, however, contradicts this more expanded vision and keeps Marcuse engaged in a search for one such subject.

A MARXIST'S JOURNEY FROM PHENOMENOLOGY TO FREUD

Marcuse was introduced to Marxism and radical politics during the First World War and the subsequent revolution in Germany. Prior to being conscripted into the Imperial German Reichswehr in 1916, he had led a life of privilege and bourgeois security. The son of a successful businessman, he grew up in an upper class suburb of Berlin and received an elite education at preparatory school and the Gymnasium. The war brought all this to an end. Although he was stationed in Berlin and thus spent the war in comparative safety, the war's senselessness led Marcuse to question not only the conflict itself but also the society that waged it. In 1917 he joined the Social Democratic Party; during this period he also began to study Marx. His political education would intensify and move to a new level during the revolution of 1918, when he was elected a delegate of a soldier's council in Berlin. However, shortly after his discharge from the army in December of that year, he resigned from the SDP in protest against its policies and actions. His resignation marked the end not only of his first and last formal party affiliation but also of this early, brief and intense period of political activity.

In 1919 Marcuse took up his university studies, concentrating in German literature, first in Berlin and later in Freiburg, where he completed his doctoral dissertation on the German artist novel in 1922. During the next six years he worked in publishing and bookselling, all the while also engaging in a systematic study of Marx. The publication of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* in 1927 prompted his return to Freiburg as a postdoctoral student to study with Heidegger. He remained in Freiburg until 1932, when, shortly before Hitler was named chancellor, he moved to Geneva to accept an assignment with the Institute for Social Research.

Marcuse recalls that he found in Heidegger's work "the first radical attempt to put philosophy on really concrete foundations—philosophy concerned with human existence, the human condition, and not with merely abstract ideas and principles."[2] The tendency within bourgeois philosophy to ignore the existential realities of concrete human existence in favor of abstract ideas and principles had its parallel in the dominant strains of Marxism, which ignored issues such as the conscious political practice of concrete actors in favor of historical laws. For Marcuse Marxism was not a scientific theory or body of "correct" knowledge, but a theory of revolutionary practice and a radical critique of bourgeois society.[3] His synthesis of phenomenology and historical materialism, which he presented in his 1928 article "Contributions to a Phenomenology of

Historical Materialism," was a response to the theoretical legacy of the Second International, the failure of official Marxism (made evident by the failure of the revolution of 1918), and the dogmatism of Soviet Marxism.

Marcuse regarded phenomenology and historical materialism as correctives for each other. Phenomenology had to become historically concrete and historical materialism more phenomenological in order that the "authentic meaning" of the given might be grasped.[4] Marcuse's notion of a dialectical phenomenology involved an integration of Heidegger's examination of the meaning and essence of humankind into Marxist historical analysis and revolutionary theory. Such a synthesis would point to "historical human existence both in its essential structure and in its concrete forms and configurations,"[5] thereby revitalizing Marxism as a theory of radical action.

Although there is considerable debate over the influence of Heidegger on his later work,[6] Marcuse's specific interest in formulating a dialectical phenomenology ended with the publication of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. With "The Foundations of Historical Materialism," which first appeared in 1932 as a review of the newly published manuscripts, Marcuse began an exploration of the philosophical roots of Marxism. In this article he argues against the dominant economistic interpretations of Marx, insisting that these early writings "show the inadequacy of the familiar thesis that Marx developed from providing a philosophical to providing an economic basis for this theory."[7] "The Foundations of Historical Materialism" and "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics," which was published the following year, represent a deepening of Marcuse's understanding of Marxism, a development that would be furthered in *Reason and Revolution*, where he sought to establish the revolutionary character of Hegel's thought. He would conclude, however, that even a philosophically informed Marxism could not fully account for the vagaries of human history.

Marcuse was troubled by Marxism's inability to account fully for the fact that, throughout history, the struggles of the oppressed had always resulted in new and better systems of domination. Contending that the ease and regularity with which this has occurred "demands explanation," he argues that interpretations that attribute the defeats of emancipatory struggles to the balance of class power or the level of development of the productive forces or the immaturity of the revolutionary class are inadequate. Every revolution has had a moment when victory might have been won, but that moment has always passed, and Marcuse wonders if there has not always been an "element of self-defeat" involved in the dynamic of revolutionary struggle.[8]

It was the need to understand and explain this element of self-defeat that prompted Marcuse's turn to Freud.[9] In Freud he found not only an account of the origins and perpetuation of the guilt feelings that, he believes, sustain the element of self-defeat, but also a means for addressing the subjective dimension—a dimension he finds notably absent in Marx and that he will

increasingly stress. "The political economy of advanced capitalism," he will argue, "is also a 'psychological economy': it produces and administers the needs demanded by the system—even the instinctive needs."[10] This recognition that domination and oppression reach well beyond the material objective dimension of human existence has far reaching effects on Marcuse's efforts to reconstruct Marxism. The integration of Freud into his conceptual framework, and particularly the addition of Eros as an independent dimension of human being, fundamentally alters the Marxian model of the subject and conception of history. The integration of Freud also sets up a tension in Marcuse's work which he never fully resolves and which underlies his contradictory views on agents and actions of radical change.

THE SENSUOUS SUBJECT: AUTHENTICITY, LABOR, AND LIBIDO

Given Marcuse's reaction to the objectivism of the Second International and Soviet Marxism, Barry Katz raises the interesting question of why he turned to Heidegger rather than Lukács.[11] Marcuse read *History and Class Consciousness* when it was first published and claims to have been impressed and influenced by it.[12] Nevertheless, one finds few references to Lukács in his work at the time or in subsequent recollections. On the basis of Marcuse's later attacks on Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, Katz speculates that he may have found Lukács's compromise with official communism intolerable.[13] But it also seems clear that Marcuse found in Heidegger something he did not at that point find in Lukács. Marcuse insists that a conception of what it means to be human is essential to revolutionary theory: "The question of radical action," he argues, "is meaningful only if this action is apprehended as the determinate realization of human essence."[14] He also states that it "is precisely the unerring contemplation of the essence of man that becomes the inexorable impulse for the initiation of radical revolution."[15] What he found in Heidegger was a radical ontology that could ground his understanding of Marxism as a theory of revolutionary action.[16]

Heidegger's phenomenology was important for Marcuse not only because it raised fundamental philosophical questions about the meaning and possibility of "authentic being," but also because it insisted that such questions could be answered only through reference to concrete existence. Although the "concreteness" of Heidegger's philosophy would prove to be illusory—hence the necessary synthesis with historical materialism—Marcuse nonetheless found its insights into the essential structure of human being important.

The phenomenological approach reveals that to be human is to exist in time, "thrown" into a world populated by objects and others. For the average existential subject ("impersonal man," *das "Man"*), existential choices and possibilities are pre-given: human being involves an "existential forfeiture" to

the world, it is "handed over to existence, unaware of its origins and direction."[17] But behind this "dejectedness" lies an "existentially conceived 'concern' (*Sorge*)," a concern that contains within it the potential for being to "realize its essence" and "reach its own authentic existence."[18] Authentic existence involves being fully conscious of the significance of what it means to be—to be in the present, to be aware of the past, and to be conscious of one's potentialities. Inauthentic existence is the condition of "dejectedness," of being lost in the factual limitations of present circumstances. For Heidegger the dualism of authenticity and inauthenticity is ontologically given. There is no value laden claim that one is superior to the other. Although seemingly aware of this, Marcuse nevertheless treats authenticity as a normative concept of non-alienated being: inauthentic being is alienated, reified being which can be overcome through action that alters the basic conditions of human existence.

Such radical action, however, does not figure into Heidegger's outlook. The realization of authentic being is a matter of individual self-awareness and self-transformation: "Heidegger's solution," Marcuse notes, "[is] based on solitary existence rather than on action."[19] In posing such a solution, Heidegger ignored the existential constants he posited as structures of being: being-in-the-world and being-with-others. Without connecting the realization of authentic being to the concrete conditions of the material and social world, authenticity itself remains an abstract and meaningless concept. Insofar as it refers to a notion of human beings as self-determining and self-conscious subjects—beings with full awareness of the significance of what it means to be—the concept of authenticity will continue to inform Marcuse's work. But as the basis of a radical ontology that will ground revolutionary theory, it will be replaced by Marx's concept of labor.

Marx's early manuscripts liberated Marcuse from Heidegger. Marcuse speaks of their publication as a turning point: "Here was, in a certain sense, a new Marx, who was truly concrete and at the same time went beyond the rigid practical and theoretical Marxism of the parties. And from this time on the problem of Heidegger versus Marx was no longer really a problem for me."[20] Marcuse found that Marx's treatment of the concept of labor incorporated all the dimensions of being and provided the link between the essential structures of being and history he had tried to forge in his synthesis of phenomenology and historical materialism; Marx's concept of labor expressed, for Marcuse, humankind's fundamentally historical essence. In good Marxian-Hegelian style, Marcuse understood labor as "the specifically human 'affirmation of being' in which human existence is realized and confirmed."[21] Labor is the activity through which human beings become historical beings: "Only in labor, and not before, man becomes historical. . . . Only as a laborer . . . can the human being become an historical actor."[22]

Marcuse's understanding of labor emphasizes two particular aspects of Marx's treatment of this concept. First is the identification of objective being

with sensuous being. Marcuse explains his extensive treatment of the concept of sensuousness in terms of its importance to Marx's turn from classical German philosophy to a theory of revolution.[23] But what is striking is how Marcuse's attention to sensuousness and his insistence on treating the human subject as a "natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being"[24] anticipate his later views in which sensuousness is transformed into sensual pleasure. His understanding of labor as the life activity of sensuous, corporeal beings also informs and is related to the second point of emphasis in his treatment of labor: the stress on labor as more than simply economic activity. It is precisely this point that is the focus of "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics."[25] In this article Marcuse argues against prevailing bourgeois and Marxist standpoints, declaring that labor is "the active process of human existence as a whole: appropriation, overcoming, transforming and further developing all of human existence in all its vital spheres."[26] Labor, he writes, is "related to the becoming of the totality of human existence"; its final intention is that of "giving, securing and developing human beings in the permanence, duration and fullness of existence."[27]

Marcuse's understanding of the concept of labor also entails an expanded notion of what drives human activity. Labor is not simply about the satisfaction of basic human needs; it is, as Marx pointed out, about the self-creation of human beings through the creation of new needs. Labor, Marcuse argues, is grounded "in an essential excess of human existence beyond every possible situation in which it finds itself and the world."[28] These points of emphasis in Marcuse's interpretation of the concept of labor—labor as the life activity of sensuous beings and as the active process of human existence *as a whole*—are precursors of the model of the subject that will emerge out of Marcuse's adoption of Freud, and in fact this reading of labor may be seen as preparing the way for his turn to Freud.

As has already been discussed, Marcuse's turn to Freud was prompted by the need to explain the regularity with which struggles for liberation defeat themselves. This element of self-defeat, as well as the tendency of individuals to identify with and conform to various systems of domination, required an understanding of the psychological dimension of human existence, and this Marcuse found in Freud. With the incorporation of Freud, however, the Marxian model of the subject is altered. While Marcuse will continue to insist on the historical character of human nature—"history rules even the instinctual structure"[29]—and treat labor as the medium of human self-creation, he will add to this understanding of the subject a constant, fundamental, and independent source of psychic energy. No longer is human activity understood as driven by the fact that the satisfaction of needs always creates new needs; now libido provides the motor of human thought and activity.

In *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse declares, "Being is essentially striving for pleasure."[30] Pleasure is the aim of human existence, and culture is simply the

collective implementation of this aim; Eros now forms the core of Marcuse's model of the subject. For Freud, Eros was both an asocial, amoral force that aims at the satisfaction of purely individual desires and a force containing and expressing the life-affirming and social aspects of human nature, aspects that seek to establish ever greater unities. Marcuse recognizes the contradictory tendencies in Freud's theory of sexuality but chooses to stress its social, as opposed to the individualistic, elements. Understanding Eros as an essentially socially binding energy allows him to speak of "an instinctual foundation for solidarity among human beings"[31] and thus to use Eros as the foundation for a new concept of non-alienated being upon which he can base revolutionary hopes. This is a foundation for revolutionary theory that Marcuse sees as even more basic than the economic; it is a foundation that provides the "depth dimension of human existence, this side of and underneath the traditional material base . . . a dimension even more material than the material base, a dimension underneath the material base."[32] With Eros thus regarded as the dimension underneath the material base, libidinal energy replaces labor in Marcuse's model of the subject. Labor remains significant—both as sensuous activity and as the means by which scarcity is overcome and the life instincts satisfied—but no longer is it the linchpin for understanding essence and existence, human being and human history. As human being comes to be understood as essentially the quest for pleasure, human history comes to be read as the story of pleasure denied.

HISTORY: THE DIALECTIC OF DOMINATION

Marcuse's conception of history is, as Alfred Schmidt has observed, largely unexplored.[33] Schmidt offers an examination of Marcuse's early work in this area and concludes by describing it as "incoherent, complex and contradictory in character."[34] I will pass rather quickly over the early phases of Marcuse's work and devote more attention to examining how his turn to Freud affected his understanding of history. What we will find is that the displacement of labor by libido in the model of the subject leads to the replacement of the dialectic of production by a dialectic of domination in the conception of history.

For Marcuse the decisive point in Heidegger's phenomenology was the demonstration of historicity as the fundamental determinant of human being.[35] Not only do human beings exist within the stream of history, but existence within the stream of history is part of their very being: historicity is "the existential mode of being in which its full determination is founded."[36] However, in ignoring the concrete conditions of actually existing human beings—in overlooking the material constituents of history—Heidegger loses sight of real history and falls back into abstractness. To correct this problem, to provide the concreteness Heidegger's work promised but did not deliver,

Marcuse turned to historical materialism.

Marx's concept of labor situates human existence firmly within the dynamic of concrete history. In "The Foundations of Historical Materialism" Marcuse approvingly quotes Marx's depiction of history as "'the creation of man through human labour,'"[37] and in "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," with frequent references to the *German Ideology*, he presents history as a dialectical unfolding driven by needs, by the mode of production, and by class struggle. The pivotal role of the labor process in determining the basic patterns and structures of human existence—and of its dialectical dynamic of negativity, contradiction, and change—will continue to define Marcuse's conception of history until the 1950s. Then, with the introduction of libido, the historical dialectic of production is altered.

Once being is conceived of as essentially the striving for pleasure, sustained labor appears as instinctual sublimation and repression. Freud held that the motive behind this repression was economic: the struggle for survival necessitated the replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle. Marcuse, however, does not believe that the economic motive fully explains the repression of the instincts. He was suspicious of this argument, observing that it "is as old as civilization and has always provided the most effective rationalization for repression."[38] Furthermore, he contends that the argument is fallacious "insofar as it applies to the brute *fact* of scarcity what actually is a consequence of a specific *organization* of scarcity, and of a specific existential attitude enforced by this organization."[39] In other words while scarcity, or the struggle for existence, may indeed necessitate a degree of instinctual repression, it does not require a "hierarchical division of pleasure"[40] wherein the degree of repression is distributed unevenly. The hierarchical division of pleasure is a human creation: "Repression is a historical phenomenon," it is imposed by human beings, not by nature.[41] The transformation of the human individual from a being of pleasure to a being of work—the triumph of the reality principle over the pleasure principle—is thus a function of domination.

Despite the lack of any supporting anthropological evidence, Marcuse finds Freud's hypothesis about the origin of human civilization in the primal horde compelling because it "compresses the *dialectic of domination*, its origins, transformation and development in the progress of civilization."[42] History as the dialectic of domination begins with the primal father constraining the instinctual gratification of the sons, thereby "freeing" their energies for other necessary, and unpleasurable, activities. The primal father "prepared the ground for progress through enforced constraint on pleasure and enforced abstinence; he thus created the first preconditions for the disciplined 'labor force' of the future."[43] But if it is the primal father who prepares the ground and creates the preconditions, the first "historical act" was not, as Marx would have it, the production of new needs, but the rebellion of the sons. Patricide and the guilt it engendered set history as the dialectic of domination in motion.

Marcuse writes that the "decisive psychological event which separates the brother clan from the primal horde is the development of *guilt feeling*. Progress beyond the primal horde . . . presupposes guilt feeling: it introjects into individuals, and thus sustains, the principal prohibitions, constraints, and delays in gratification upon which civilization depends."[44] Guilt not only sustains the constraints necessary for civilization building, it also sustains the self-repression that buttresses and reproduces domination. The brothers' rebellion results in the internalization and generalization of the father as guilt and morality. They freely impose upon themselves the renunciations and denials that had once been imposed upon them. Guilt sets up the voluntary suppression of instincts upon which civilization depends, and it provides the psychodynamic force that fuels "the recurrent cycle of 'domination-rebellion-domination.'"[45]

Is the repressive modification of instincts and the recurrent cycle of failed emancipatory efforts inevitable, necessary, "natural"? According to Freud, yes. He believed civilization requires that the reality principle remain dominant over the pleasure principle, that progress necessarily entails unhappiness and lack of gratification. Marcuse agrees with Freud, but only to a certain point. He concedes that at a more primitive level of civilization, instinctual repression was possibly both a biological and social necessity.[46] He also recognizes that "civilization has progressed as organized *domination*"[47] and that this has involved technical, material, and intellectual progress as well as more rational, effective, and productive systems of institutional authority. But he rejects Freud's contention of inevitability, and finds within Freud's own hypothesis a way out of the dialectic of domination.

According to Marcuse's reading of Freud's hypothesis about the origin of human civilization, the repression of the instincts has its roots not only in natural necessity, but also—perhaps even primarily—in the interest of domination. The primal father's denial of the sons' instinctual gratification was motivated at least as much by a desire to secure and maintain his own pleasure as by the need for instinctual energies to be redirected to building civilization. The repressive reality principle, then, is the result not only of necessity but of a particular form of domination. If this is the case, Marcuse argues, then "we must . . . undertake a decisive correction of Freudian theory."[48] This decisive correction involves distinguishing between the biological and the historical, between what it a natural necessity and what serves the interests of domination. Marcuse believes that it was Freud's failure to make this distinction that defused his potentially explosive theory, and he takes it upon himself to introduce concepts such as the "performance principle" and "surplus repression" to illuminate this distinction.[49]

By differentiating between the biological and the historical, Marcuse can argue that the progress fueled by the repressive reality principle undermines its own foundations. The development of civilization, which has been based on the

repressive modification of the instincts, has progressed to a point where scarcity and human helplessness in the face of overwhelming natural forces have been overcome. The point has been reached where a "free society" is a real possibility. It is at this point where the repressive reality principle becomes redundant. Marcuse writes: "The repressive reality principle becomes superfluous in the same measure that civilization approaches a level at which the elimination of a mode of life that previously necessitated instinctual repression has become a realizable historical possibility. The achievements of repressive progress herald the abolition of the repressive principle of progress itself."[50]

It is interesting to note that in finding a solution to Freud's fateful dialectic of civilization, Marcuse introduces a strong redemptive tone into his conception of history. Although he by no means implies that history guarantees the redemption of past suffering, his remarks about the achievements of repressive progress, and especially his use of terms such as "progressive repression,"[51] imply that past suffering makes possible its own redemption, that organized domination has served a purpose by creating the conditions that make a "non-repressive" society—a society in which libidinal satisfaction can be experienced by all—possible.[52]

When Marcuse considers the possibilities for realizing such a society, and the forces that inhibit its realization, his focus remains defined by the Freudian modifications to his initial analysis. The Marxian model of the subject and conception of history are not so much discarded as given a new foundation. Labor, in its expanded sense, remains the central activity through which human beings express and create themselves, become historical actors, and build civilization. But labor is understood as aim-inhibited libido: it develops as an organized and sustained activity only through the repressive modification of the instincts. History remains the story of humankind's development, of material, technical, and intellectual progress propelled and marked by class conflict. But the story behind the story consists of the domination of human actors by human actors, of the unequal distribution of pleasure, and of erotically generated efforts to gain integral gratification that are defeated by libidinal attachments of the oppressed to their oppressors.

Fueled by the surplus repression, organized aim-inhibited libido has brought humankind to a point where the repressive reality principle is superfluous. Given these objective conditions, the question becomes what impedes the revolutionary force of Eros. In his analyses of advanced industrial society and of the possibilities for social change, Marcuse focuses on how the organization of domination has defused the explosive potential of Eros, and where emancipatory sparks can still be found or might develop.

ONE-DIMENSIONAL SOCIETY

In "The Reification of the Proletariat," an article published in the last year of his life, Marcuse wrote:

> Late capitalism invokes the images of an easier, less repressive, less inhuman life, while perpetuating the alienated labour which denies this satisfaction. In short, late capitalism daily demonstrates the fact that the wherewithal for a better society is available, but that the very society which has created these resources of freedom must preclude their use for the enhancement (and today even for the protection) of life.[53]

Twenty five years earlier the question of how such a society reproduces itself while denying the satisfactions its own accomplishments promise was the topic of one of Marcuse's best known books, *One-Dimensional Man*. In his introduction to this book he warns that the analysis he offers contains contradictory hypotheses: he argues that advanced industrial societies are fully capable of containing qualitative change; at the same he identifies tendencies and forces within these societies that might break through this containment.[54] His vacillation between these two positions is evident in his subsequent work as well. But while *An Essay on Liberation* and *Counterrevolution and Revolt* present more hopeful analyses that support the latter hypothesis, the despairing account of capitalist stabilization and working-class integration offered in *One-Dimensional Man* clearly comes down on the side of the former.

While Marcuse identifies the topic of *One-Dimensional Man* as "advanced industrial society," it should be noted that both here and in later works not only is the term used interchangeably with "advanced" or "late capitalism," but most of his examples are drawn from the United States.[55] And while the topic of the book is one-dimensional *society*, the title indicates Marcuse's continuing concern with the fate of the individual and the possibilities for authentic existence. In an article that provides a sketch of *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse observes that the tendencies of advanced industrial society "appear to engender a system of thought and behavior which represses any values, aspirations, or ideas not in conformity with the dominant rationality. An entire dimension of human reality is therefore repressed."[56] Human life in such a society becomes "one-dimensional," and for Marcuse one-dimensionality is inauthenticity. In his use of the term, one hears echoes of "forfeiture" and "dejectedness," of giving into and being lost in the factual limitations of circumstances, of yielding to facticity. The "two-dimensionality" of human existence—the tensions between subject and object; between the past, the present, and the future; between what is and what could be—has disappeared in advanced industrial society, and with it have gone the possibilities for authenticity.

The one-dimensionality of human existence is a function of all aspects of

life in advanced industrial society being organized to conform to the repressive rationality of material productivity; it is a consequence of the rise, spread, and triumph of technological rationality. This is the rationality of modern machine production, a rationality that demands and produces "attitudes of standardized conformity and precise submission to the machine which require[s] adjustment and reaction rather than autonomy and spontaneity."[57] Driven by the imperatives of capitalist profitability and by technological developments that have increased the productivity of labor, the productive apparatus of advanced industrial society has created such tremendous wealth that protest against the unfreedom it creates and perpetuates is rendered irrational.

Advanced industrial society provides a good life, a life far better than has been enjoyed in the past. It is materially rich and libidinally satisfying. A vast array of consumer goods is available to larger numbers of individuals in all social classes, and a previously unimaginable degree of sexual expression is allowed. Yet, according to Marcuse, advanced industrial society is totalitarian. The term "totalitarian," he tells us, pertains not only to the "terroristic political coordination of society" but also to the "non-terroristic economic-technical coordination" of individual needs and aspirations (and the creation of "false needs") by vested interests.[58] In advanced industrial society economic-technical coordination both produces new consumer goods and creates the "need" for those products; it also allows greater freedoms—in consumption, in access to cultural forms, and importantly, in sexual behavior—while defining and limiting the ways in which these freedoms can be experienced and enjoyed. Marcuse observes: "The range of socially permissible and desirable satisfaction is greatly enlarged, but through this satisfaction, the Pleasure Principle is reduced—deprived of the claims which are irreconcilable with the established society. Pleasure, thus adjusted, generates submission."[59] Domination is intensified through the expansion of "liberties"; repressive desublimation increases and expands the control of libidinal energy.

Marx distinguished between the realm of material production and reproduction and the realm in which human being might be freely expressed and developed. He believed that, even with the liberation of productive activity from the fetters of capitalist accumulation, the realm of necessity would never disappear altogether because labor would still be required to produce needed goods: the workday could be reduced but never fully eliminated. In *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse reiterates Marx's distinction, describing the realm of necessity as a realm of unfreedom in which "human existence . . . is determined by objectives and functions that are not its own and that do not allow the free play of faculties and desires."[60] In advanced industrial society, however, the realm of necessity has invaded the realm of freedom: the imperatives of technological rationality have seeped into the most intimate and private dimensions of personal life. Technological developments may have reduced the workday, and there may be more time for leisure activities, but the tentacles of

administration reach into every corner of life. The performance principle—the reality principle of advanced industrial society, which demands "efficiency and prowess in the fulfillment of competitive and acquisitive functions"[61]— regulates not only economic activities but also sexual, intellectual, and leisure pursuits. All areas of life are affected, and there is no space into which one might escape: solitude has become "technically impossible," free time is invaded, and the subjective sphere is "whittled down." Lacking any space for physical or psychic escape, the capacity to see and grasp contradictions and alternatives atrophies, and as a result, "the *Happy Consciousness* comes to prevail."[62]

The society Marcuse describes in *One-Dimensional Man* is one in which contradictions and antagonisms apparently can be indefinitely managed and contained. The tremendous wealth and productivity of this "system of repressive affluence" keeps the population comfortable, satisfied, and quiescent. Tensions and contradictions—between business and labor, between the public and private spheres, between blue collar and white collar workers, and between the life-styles and aspirations of different classes—have seemingly disappeared. Science, art, philosophy—all elements of human life in which the critical, negative principal is preserved and expressed—have been brought into the service of the status quo: culture has become affirmative.[63] Genuine and effective opposition has disappeared.

The analysis presented in *One-Dimensional Man* is of capitalist stabilization and the containment of change. Although Marcuse recognizes countertrends and maintains that this stabilization is illusory, it is only in his writings after *One-Dimensional Man* that the countertrends that provide support for the second hypothesis are examined and explored more fully. In *Counterrevolution and Revolt* the thesis of total integration put forward in *One-Dimensional Man* is significantly modified. Here Marcuse acknowledges that the working class enjoys considerable benefits and has been integrated into capitalist society to the extent that it has a great deal to lose should this system be overthrown. But he also argues that this integration is in fact a "surface phenomenon" that "hides *dis*integrating, centrifugal tendencies of which it is itself an expression."[64] Marcuse contends that capitalism's enormous wealth and productivity—which in *One-Dimensional Man* was credited with "buying off" opposition and discontent—have become the source of disintegrating tendencies. The rising standard of living creates new needs and aspirations that cannot be met. It creates consumer needs by presenting images of the good life as within the reach of the masses. But the great majority are unable to attain such a life, and dissatisfactions arise. Moreover, the ideology of advanced capitalism promotes personal gratification and fulfillment, thereby creating "transcendent" needs for freedom, individuality, and self-determination that are subversive to the system. The technical achievements of capitalism, Marcuse writes, "break into the world of frustration, unhappiness, repression. Capitalism

has opened a new dimension, which is at one and the same time the living space of capitalism and its negation."[65] The needs capitalism itself generates become those that may bring about its collapse. Furthermore, objective tendencies within the capitalist system also threaten its foundations. The expansion of exploitation extends the mass base for revolution, and permanent inflation, high unemployment, declines in real wages, an unstable world monetary system, neo-colonial wars, energy and ecology crises, and tensions with the (now former) Soviet Union all indicate inherent crisis tendencies. But perhaps the most fundamental and significant of these destabilizing tendencies is the trend toward automation.

Marcuse's views on science and technology changed over time and in any case are not always clear or consistent.[66] His early, rather simplistic Marxian faith in the liberating potential of science and technology was tempered by the critiques developed by Institute colleagues during the 1940s. Thus, while in "On Hedonism" he suggests that technological development itself can produce an environment that could provide sensual and aesthetic pleasure,[67] he later asserts that science and technology, as "formally neutral" systems (i.e., with no substantive bias), are either totalitarian or emancipatory depending on the context within which they are developed and used. This is the position he takes against Weber's portrayal of scientific and technological development as an autonomous process leading inevitably to the "iron cage."[68] In *One-Dimensional Man* this point of view allows him to envisage and call for a "new" science and technology that would serve the interests of human freedom and happiness.[69]

Marcuse recognizes automation's contradictory nature. On the one hand it sustains and intensifies exploitation, all the while modifying the attitude and status of the exploited; he refers to it as a kind of "masterly enslavement."[70] In addition, increasing automation leads to increasing technological unemployment, which "can be arrested only by producing more and more unnecessary goods and parasitarian services."[71] The production of more unnecessary goods and the creation of nonproductive service jobs require an intensified generation and manipulation of needs, which further extends the scope of masterly enslavement. On the other hand the progressive reduction of labor is not only economically incompatible in the long run with the preservation of the capitalist system, but it also requires the creation of needs and attitudes that conflict with the morale and discipline necessary to capitalism: "'inner worldly asceticism' goes badly with the consumer society."[72] Automation thus increases exploitation while threatening to undermine the basis of exploitation.

Even more significant is the change in relationship of the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom engendered by automation. In *One-Dimensional Man* Marcuse notes, "Complete automation in the realm of necessity would open the dimension of free time as the one in which man's private *and* societal existence would constitute itself."[73] But since he also sees this free time increasingly

managed and manipulated, free time in and of itself would not seem to be as "explosive" a possibility as Marcuse would like to think. It is only later that he recognizes that two contradictory trends are in fact apparent. Not only is the realm of necessity being extended into the realm of freedom, but the opposite process is also taking place: the realm of freedom is being extended into the realm of necessity. The automated machine system frees workers from the physical drudgery of manual labor; it makes them into supervisors and regulators and allows them to use their imagination and judgment. The work process itself becomes "subject to the free play of the mind, of imagination, the free play with the pleasurable possibilities of things and nature."[74] Marcuse believes that this extension of the realm of (possible) freedom into the realm of necessity represents one of the most potentially destabilizing tendencies in capitalist society. Structural changes in the work process not only provide workers the opportunity to express and experience playful and pleasurable— erotic—capacities in conjunction with work, but they also give realistic content to the "form" of a free society.

Just as the commodity is the "form" of the affluent society, so Marcuse sees the aesthetic—a form in which "the sensuous, the playful, the calm and the beautiful become forms of existence"—as the form that will structure the free society.[75] His image of a better society is one in which the full range of human faculties and needs can find expression and gratification. And he sees the material foundations of that society being prepared by the technological advances of capitalism. But according to his own analysis of science and technology, automation cannot in itself bring about such a qualitative change. The truly liberating effects of technology presuppose radical social change. So, although in his later analyses of contemporary society Marcuse does identify structural tendencies that make radical change an objective possibility, he is still faced with the question of how this will be accomplished. Furthermore, he does not believe that this task can any longer be understood in terms of traditional Marxian categories.

Whether he views advanced capitalism as a totally integrated society or as containing explosive tendencies, Marcuse maintains that this is a society quite different from that analyzed by Marx. Changes have occurred in the very basis of the system, and thus the conditions and possibilities for agency and radical social change have also been altered. Not only has the affluent society created a broad material base for the integration of the vast majority of the population; it has also created conditions that make revolution—insofar as it is envisioned as a violent process of dramatic social upheaval—a dubious venture. Marcuse believes that the Marxian conception of revolution pertains to a period of capitalist development that has passed. Late capitalism, with its enormous wealth and frightening destructive capacities, has surpassed the conditions of capitalism on which the Marxian conception of revolution was based.[76] Furthermore, Marcuse holds that both ideologically and practically "the

internal historical link between capitalism and socialism . . . seems to be severed."[77] In his later works he engages in a relentless effort to reestablish this link by significantly expanding and modifying the Marxian notions of agents and actions.

SUBJECTS, SENSIBILITIES, AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Marcuse's work in the 1960s and 1970s is marked by an ongoing evaluation of the revolutionary potential of a wide variety of groups. Blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, intellectuals, engineers, Blacks, Third World revolutionaries, hippies, students, and women—all are considered as potential agents of radical change. In part this constantly shifting cast of characters may be attributed to the fact that Marcuse was very much aware of and responsive to (as well as engaged in) the political struggles of the times in the United States and Western Europe. But his changing views and enthusiasms need also to be understood as resulting from the fact that while he was searching for a subject that would be the modern-day equivalent of Marx's proletariat, he also believed that the key to revolutionary change was the development of a new sensibility, a sensibility that was understood as transcending economic determinations.

In his earliest work Marcuse embraced the notion of the proletariat as revolutionary subject, albeit with a distinct, Heideggerian tone. In "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism" he speaks of the proletariat as "an existence whose dejection consists precisely in overcoming its own dejection."[78] His treatment of the proletariat took on a more orthodox Marxist tone in *Reason and Revolution*, where he writes of "a self-conscious and organized working class on an international scale" being a part of the totality of objective conditions on which the revolution depends.[79] By the late 1960s, however, he would label as "inexcusable" the failure to recognize that in advanced industrial countries the working class is "not only a class in the capitalist system, but also of the capitalist system."[80] Yet, as much as Marcuse objects to a dogmatic and fetishistic identification of the working class with the revolutionary subject, he himself never fully severs this connection. As is evident in his discussions of the "collective worker," the "new working class," and even his treatment of the immediate producers of Third World countries, Marx's identification of the proletariat as the revolutionary subject continues to influence Marcuse's ideas about revolutionary agency.

For Marcuse it is significant that Marx's identification of the proletariat as the revolutionary subject includes three qualities: its key position within the process of production, the fact that it constitutes the majority of the population, and the fact that its existence within this mode of production is "the negation of being human."[81] It is the unity of these three factors, and not simply the fact of its economic exploitation, that forms the foundation for the proletariat's

revolutionary consciousness and agency. The working class of advanced capitalist society, however, fulfills only one of these conditions: while it continues to occupy a key position in the production process, it no longer constitutes the majority of the population, nor, more significantly, do its needs and aspirations any longer entail the abolition of the system. Therefore Marcuse argues that, while the proletariat might still objectively represent the potentially revolutionary class, "subjectively, 'for-itself,' it is not."[82]

Not only do the three factors that Marcuse identifies as constitutive of a revolutionary subject no longer coalesce in the traditional working class, but changes in the system of production demand that the very concept of the working class be revised. In addition to the fact that those directly engaged in the process of material production no longer constitute the majority of the population and do not experience the misery and deprivation that make them the negation of the bourgeois system, Marcuse cites other "well-known facts" to support his call for revision. First, he claims that, insofar as the creation and the realization of surplus value are recognized as stages, rather than separate processes, in the accumulation of capital, the restriction of the working class to "productive" workers is untenable. And second, he maintains that, with the "intellectualization" of the labor process, the divisions between manual and mental labor have diminished. Furthermore, it is also the case that both blue-collar and white-collar workers are separated from the means of production and thus must sell their labor power.[83] Marcuse acknowledges that revising the concept of the working class to include white-collar and service workers results in "a vastly expanded working class, which no longer corresponds directly to the Marxian proletariat"; nevertheless, it is on the basis of these revisions that he feels he can continue to identify the working class as "the 'ontological' antagonist of capital, and the potentially revolutionary Subject."[84]

The notion of a vastly expanded working class is found in *Counter-revolution and Revolt*, where Marcuse observes that the "base of exploitation is . . . enlarged beyond the factories and shops, and far beyond the blue collar working class" and approvingly cites the French Communist Party's references to Marx's concept of the *"travailleur collectif."*[85] He goes on to argue that it is no longer a matter of "'wage labor' versus capital, but rather all dependent classes against capital."[86] This point is reiterated in a later article, where, while continuing to insist on the fundamental contradiction between labor and capital, he assigns the vast majority of the population to the category of "collective worker."[87]

What is significant in this expansion of the working class is that, by positing the dependent population as "labor" in opposition to "capital" (and notwithstanding his continued use of these terms), Marcuse is in fact relocating the basis of revolutionary agency from the economic to the political sphere. He states that the "criterion is oppression" while at the same time recognizing that the oppression of the collective worker today cannot necessarily be associated

with earlier understandings of the proletariat's oppression.[88] The difficulty with making oppression the criterion for revolutionary agency is that in a society where Marcuse estimates that 90 percent of the population is "dependent," the potential unity of interests and experiences that once at least theoretically resulted from sharing the same position within the production process disappears. Although he insists that such a unity still potentially exists among the dependent population, Marcuse also admits that the unity of the collective worker is rife with contradictions, and he concedes, "There is no people's consciousness which would correspond to a class consciousness."[89] What Marcuse's reconceptualization of the working class as collective worker gives us, then, is an oppressed majority with poor prospects for developing anything resembling a shared revolutionary consciousness. He does, however, identify a specific segment of the collective worker—a segment he refers to as the "new working class"—that has a unique potential for the development of a revolutionary consciousness.

Marcuse's "new working class" is composed of specialists, technicians, engineers, and other white-collar workers. By virtue of its position within the production process, this "instrumentalist intelligentsia" is capable of disrupting, reorganizing, and redirecting productive processes and relations.[90] This "new working class" also occupies the "realm of freedom" that is emerging from within the "realm of necessity." Members of this group are among the first to be able to incorporate imagination and pleasure into their labor. It is thus within this group that "surplus consciousness" first takes form.

The term "surplus consciousness" was coined by the East German dissident and author Rudolf Bahro, whose book, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*, Marcuse regarded as one of the most important recent contributions to Marxist theory and practice.[91] Bahro defines surplus consciousness as "that free human capacity which is no longer absorbed by the struggle for existence."[92] This is a consciousness that demands happiness and gratification, and it is this consciousness that Marcuse believes will incite emancipatory struggle in advanced capitalist countries. The material base of this consciousness is the industrial, scientific-technological mode of production which has made intellectual labor an essential factor in production. As production becomes "intellectualized," workers develop capacities, qualities, and skills which, stifled and perverted under existing relations of production, "press beyond their inhuman realization toward a truly human one."[93] For the vast majority of workers (the collective worker) surplus consciousness is an as yet vague and diffuse awareness that things need not necessarily be as they are; it is an uneasy and indeterminate consciousness of frustration, of humiliation, of waste. Surplus consciousness takes a more definite form among members of the new working class because of their position within the production process. However, while the new working class is in a privileged position in terms of developing a revolutionary consciousness, it is also privileged, materially and psychically, by

the very system such a revolution would overthrow. Thus, because they are so well integrated and so well rewarded, Marcuse concludes that members of the new working class lack the interest and the "vital need" that are prerequisites for revolutionary agency.[94]

The idea of the "vital need" for social transformation is critical to Marcuse's understanding of revolutionary action. It is evident in his early efforts to synthesize phenomenology and historical materialism, when it appears as an "internal necessity" for the revolutionary agent,[95] as well as in his later efforts to revise Marxism, where he argues that "social change presupposes the vital *need* for it, the experience of intolerable conditions and of their alternatives."[96] For Marcuse, however, the only group that both experiences such a need and bears any resemblance to Marx's concept of the proletariat are the immediate producers of Third World nations.[97] Yet despite his recognition of the importance of Third World labor and resources to the global framework of capitalist accumulation, and in keeping with his apparent acceptance of the theory of combined and uneven development,[98] Marcuse argues that, while Third World struggles may serve to spark action in developed countries, conditions in underdeveloped countries are such that their full liberation and development are dependent on the advanced industrial countries.[99] Third World liberation struggles may weaken the global framework of capital, but they cannot destroy it.

Although Marcuse will continue to relate his efforts to reconceptualize revolutionary agency to the production process, his own analysis leads him to conclude that there is no class—defined in terms of its relationship to the means of production—in which the objective and subjective conditions for revolutionary agency coincide. The traditional working class does not constitute a majority of the population and has neither the consciousness nor the vital need for revolution. The collective worker does constitute the majority of the population but lacks cohesiveness and consciousness. The new working class's position within the production process lends it both objective and subjective potential, but a comfortable existence serves to attenuate any vital need for revolution. And the immediate producers of developing countries, by virtue of conditions unique to these countries, do not represent a serious threat to the advanced capitalist system.

If Marcuse is not fully prepared to dismiss the traditional manner of determining revolutionary agency, he nevertheless is willing—as his interest in surplus consciousness and vital needs attests—to shift the focus of concern from the objective to the subjective preconditions of revolution. In fact, arguing that the objective preconditions for a free society already exist in advanced capitalist society, he insists that such a shift in focus is necessary.[100] This task is of particular importance because in integrated, affluent societies, the subjective dimension becomes a crucial, "material" component of the revolution. In one-dimensional society—in societies where critical consciousness has been

absorbed and contained—Marcuse declares that the basic condition of radical transformation becomes not the development "of class consciousness but of consciousness as such . . . all these 'ideological' factors become very material factors of radical transformation."[101] In declaring radical change to be no longer a matter "of class consciousness but of consciousness as such," Marcuse relaxes the connection between economic class and revolutionary agency. Although he never will sever this connection completely, the emphasis on "consciousness as such" allows him to look beyond classes to groups who are the least integrated into the affluent society or whose integration is most contradictory. He will continue to insist on the significance of the working class and speak of the collective worker as labor as against capital, but "outsiders" and "catalyst groups" increasingly command his attention. And while he will steadfastly maintain that none of these groups can be considered a revolutionary subject (much less, *the* revolutionary subject), it is among them that he finds indications of the critical consciousness and new sensibility he regards as decisive to radical social transformation.

In the closing pages of *One-Dimensional Man* Marcuse identifies "outsiders and outcasts, the exploited and persecuted of other races and colors, the unemployed and the unemployable" as oppositional forces in the totally integrated society.[102] In his later work he expands the category of outsiders and differentiates between "underprivileged" outsiders (national and ethnic minorities and the "masses" of Third World countries) and "privileged" outsiders (the new working class, including intellectuals and students).[103] The category of "privileged outsiders" will eventually also include women, and this variety of groups will often be referred to as catalyst or "anticipatory" groups. Although the categories often overlap in his discussions, the primary difference between (underprivileged) outsiders and catalyst groups appears to be that while the former have the greatest objective need for radical change, the latter possess (actually or potentially) the type of consciousness that is a precondition for radical change.

National liberation struggles and ghetto rebellions represent for Marcuse "the living, human negation of the system."[104] But while the "outsiders" who carry out these struggles fulfill the requirement of being the determinate negation of the system, they do not constitute a revolutionary force. Marcuse was impressed by the morality, humanity, and will demonstrated by Third World revolutionaries and believed that their struggles might serve as ideological and material catalysts for change,[105] but as has been previously noted, he did not believe that Third World liberation struggles could bring down the advanced countries. In fact, he declared such an idea "utterly unrealistic."[106] Similarly, he did not see the Black ghetto population in the United States as posing a direct threat to the system. This population certainly had the vital need for revolution; also, confined to small areas within economically and politically strategic cities, it would be easy to organize and

direct. But Marcuse believed that this population was largely unpolitical and thus easily suppressed and diverted. Furthermore, class divisions and the marginal status of this group within the capitalist system of production undermined its revolutionary potential.[107] He regards the ghetto populations as a potential mass basis for revolt but not for revolution.[108]

Marcuse's increasing interest in "catalyst groups," such as intellectuals, students, and women, as opposed to underprivileged outsiders, is another reflection of his shift in focus from economic exploitation to oppression as the key factor in delineating a revolutionary subject. The development of the needs and consciousness that create the subjective conditions for radical social change is no longer primarily related to economic conditions or exploitation. Now, being in a position that affords awareness of oppression in any of its many forms becomes key. This shift in emphasis is evident in his treatment of a notably privileged group: intellectuals.

At times Marcuse uses the term "intellectual" to refer specifically to those cultural workers who can turn ideological factors into material factors of radical transformation. These are the teachers, writers, and artists who carry out the task of education and discussion, whose task is that of "tearing, not only the ideological veil, but also the other veils behind which domination and repression operate."[109] At other times "intellectuals" comprises a broader, more inclusive category, one that incorporates not only cultural workers but the new working class as a whole. In this sense "intellectuals" refers to the carriers of surplus consciousness, to those workers in whom awareness of the irrationality of the system first takes hold. By virtue of privileges of education, time, and space, these intellectuals are able to develop interests that go beyond those of consumption, careers, profit, and status; they are able to develop a critical, oppositional consciousness that resists and rebels against subjugation.[110]

While Marcuse clearly regards intellectuals as important actors in stimulating and developing revolutionary consciousness,[111] the student movement (broadly understood to include not only student activists and the New Left leadership but also hippies, the counterculture, and youth in general) commands his greatest interest. Although the precise role he accords it is not always clear,[112] the student movement's significance to revolutionary thought and the development of revolutionary consciousness is without question. Marcuse sees it as challenging traditional notions concerning the transition from capitalism to socialism and indeed the traditional concept of socialism itself.[113] He finds within it a new dimension of protest that "consists in the unity of moral-sexual and political rebellion,"[114] a dimension that exposes the degree to which the traditional concept of socialism continues to assume the repression and mutilation of the life instincts. The student movement expands both rebellion against the system and visions of better society beyond the economic and the political. It "is sexual, moral, intellectual and political rebellion all in one . . . it is total, directed against the system as a whole."[115] As

such, it is the necessary response to a system that is approximating, if not having yet fully achieved, total domination.

It is this total break with the dominant needs of a repressive system which Marcuse also finds in feminism. In a 1974 essay he identifies the women's movement as one of the most important and potentially radical social movements.[116] He links its radical potential to the fact that women, by virtue of their historical exclusion from economic and political institutions, have developed qualities such as receptivity, nonviolence, tenderness, and sensitivity, which pertain to the domain of Eros and express the life instincts over and against the death instinct.[117] The women's movement contains for Marcuse "the image, not only of new social institutions, but also of a change in consciousness, of a change in the instinctual needs of men and women, freed from the requirements of domination and exploration [sic]."[118] It is this image and promise not only of a new consciousness but more importantly of a change in instinctual needs that Marcuse develops in his discussion of a "new sensibility."

The construction of a truly free society, Marcuse argues, "presupposes a type of man with a different sensitivity as well as consciousness: men who would speak a different language, have different gestures, follow different impulses."[119] The new sensibility that will pave the way for a revolutionary transformation of society expresses the radical rejection of dominant values; it represents the "negation of the needs that sustain the present system and the negation of the values on which they are based."[120] This new sensibility is "guided by the imagination mediating between the rational faculties and the sensuous needs."[121] Aesthetic qualities are especially emphasized in this concept. For Marcuse "the aesthetic" has a double connotation: it pertains both to art and to the senses, and it encompasses both the need for beauty and the need for pleasure and gratification.[122] Thus he speaks of "the erotic quality of the Beautiful" and states, "As pertaining to the domain of Eros, the Beautiful represents the pleasure principle."[123] Imagination and memory are similarly linked to the aesthetic-erotic: imagination (fantasy) speaks "the language of the pleasure principle, of freedom from repression, of uninhibited desire and gratification,"[124] and memory (of integral gratification) "spurs the drive for the conquest of suffering and the permanence of joy."[125]

The emancipatory potential of art and the aesthetic has been an abiding interest of Marcuse's,[126] and the new sensibility incorporates art's subversive qualities—the claims it puts forward for sensual gratification—into the new needs and consciousness that pave the way for radical transformation. The new sensibility is a politicized aesthetic sensibility (or an aestheticized political sensibility). It generates a need for "silence, solitude, peace; a need for the beautiful and the pleasant . . . as qualities of life, to be incorporated into the mental and physical space of society."[127] This sensibility gives rise to protests against pollution and overcrowding, actions Marcuse recognizes as being

potentially subversive of capitalism.[128] And this sensibility could create the new technology and new society he envisioned in *One-Dimensional Man*.

Although it is certainly to this sensibility that Marcuse responds in the women's movement, he first recognizes it in the New Left. He praises the New Left for drawing the physiological—the ecological and the aesthetic-erotic—into the struggle for self-determination and non-alienated being[129] and for combining the political and the aesthetic, reason and sensibility, "the gesture of the barricade and the gesture of love."[130] In this last statement we see how Marcuse's embrace of the new sensibility also points to new forms of revolutionary practice. He by no means abandons concern with more traditional models of political activity. The United Front strategy of political education and organization and the "long march through institutions" advocated in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, and his provocative defense of confrontational politics and revolutionary violence in "Repressive Tolerance," present familiar forms of radical practice.[131] Nevertheless, he also believes that the time for such traditional forms may well have passed. In *One-Dimensional Man* he observes that "the struggle for the solution has outgrown traditional forms. The totalitarian tendencies of one-dimensional society render the traditional ways and means of protest ineffective—perhaps even dangerous."[132] The conditions of one-dimensional society led Marcuse to regard the "Great Refusal" as the only effective form of protest and opposition.[133] But although he would come to recognize that advanced capitalist societies were not so totally integrated, Great Refusal strategies of declining to accept or play by the rules of a rigged game[134] and methodically disengaging from the Establishment[135] continued to inform his ideas about political practice.

Evident in the strategies of the Great Refusal, as well as in the idea of a new sensibility, is an emphasis on individual resistance and revolt. The stoical and defiant refusal of the values and comforts of the capitalist system is an individual act, and the needs generated by the new sensibility—for silence and solitude, for beauty and gratification—are uniquely personal experiences. This emphasis on the individual is, as Kellner has noted, a "deeply rooted aspect" of Marcuse's thought.[136] Marcuse's attraction to the Heideggerian concepts of authenticity and the radical act, as well as his integration of Freud, reflect a fundamental concern with the individual and individual self-transformation. It is thus not surprising that in one of Marcuse's last published articles, he presents the "journey inwards" as a necessary form of radical practice.

The "journey inwards" is, like more traditional forms of radical action, about overcoming alienation. However, as opposed to collective action directed against the institutions of class society, this radical act is an essentially private exploration of self. And it is an act that Marcuse defends as an indispensable component of the process of liberation. The "journey inwards" is not, Marcuse writes, "a means of escape and privatization of the political, of pottering about with and mollycoddling the ego." It is, rather, a necessary process that "serves

to politicize surplus consciousness and imagination."[137] For Marcuse the transformation of surplus consciousness into the "new sensibility" will not be an inevitable consequence of the capitalist system creating transcendent needs it cannot meet. Rather, this transformation requires that individual attention and effort be directed inward. But although Marcuse speaks of the "journey inwards" in connection with the praxis of catalyst groups,[138] thus attempting to maintain a connection between individual and social transformation, it is not at all clear how the "journey inwards" originates in or returns to the praxis of such groups.

Marcuse's efforts to modify and expand Marxian notions of agents and actions have resulted in formulations that seem to bear little resemblance to more orthodox thinking about revolutionary change: the "journey inwards" is only the most obvious example. But as much as his efforts point to (and indeed insist upon) a new conception of radical politics, what we are left with is a rather confusing array of actors and strategies. This confusion is a result of the fact that while Marcuse is intent on reformulating Marxian concepts of agency and social change, he never fully relinquishes a key element of the more orthodox approach, the notion of a revolutionary subject.

TENSIONS WITHIN MARCUSE'S EMANCIPATORY VISION:
THE REVOLUTIONARY SUBJECT VERSUS REVOLUTIONARY
SUBJECTIVITY

When radical social transformation becomes contingent on a "journey inwards," when the realization of a better society depends on the liberation of subjectivity which is itself regarded as "identical to the emancipation of sensuality,"[139] one has moved a long way from the Marxian conception of a better society and how such a society might be realized. The Marxian image of a better society is significantly reshaped and enhanced when the model of the sensuous subject becomes its foundation: not only non-alienated labor, but the free play and development of erotic-aesthetic needs and sensibilities become necessary aspects of an emancipated society. To realize such a society, the erotic-aesthetic dimension of human being must also be developed and expressed: hence, the interest in surplus consciousness, a new sensibility, and the "journey inwards," and in groups such as intellectuals, students, women, and the new working class. But in moving through a discussion of Marcuse's views on subjects, sensibilities, and strategies, one becomes aware of a certain unresolved tension in his work, one most apparent in the uncertainty and vacillations that mark his treatment of agents and actions: he wants to identify a central agent but instead recognizes many potential collective and individual agents; he wants to determine the most appropriate strategy for change but instead recognizes a variety of seemingly contradictory forms of individual and

institutional, intimate and large-scale practice.

This unresolved tension in Marcuse's work results from the interplay of its Freudian and Marxian elements. On the one hand he is concerned with identifying the nature and conditions of what Kellner appropriately calls "revolutionary subjectivity."[140] As the term suggests, Marcuse's approach to the issue of consciousness takes on a decidedly individualistic and psychological slant. On the other hand, while trying to identify the conditions of *revolutionary subjectivity*, he persists in trying to locate a *revolutionary subject*. The tension between his interest in revolutionary subjectivity and his search for a revolutionary subject is never fully resolved, and it is Marcuse's fidelity to the Marxian element—to the notion of the revolutionary subject— that keeps him from fully developing a new conception of radical politics, a conception suggested in his discussions of revolutionary subjectivity.

Marcuse, the phenomenological Marxist, turned to Freud in order to understand why struggles for liberation end up in new forms of domination. The Freudian turn not only led to a new model of the subject (and a new understanding of history) but also to a new emphasis on revolutionary subjectivity. The subjectivity of individuals—their passions and thoughts, their drives and dreams—became as, if not more, significant to revolutionary change than the shared objective conditions and characteristics of groups. This point is unambiguously expressed in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, where Marcuse writes that "[l]iberating subjectivity constitutes itself in the inner history of the individuals," a history of "love and hate, joy and sorrow, hope and despair" which is neither necessarily grounded in nor comprehensible in terms of their class situation.[141] If revolutionary consciousness can no longer be understood as developing out of the class situation, then notions of radical praxis that have been based on shared material conditions must be rethought. Furthermore, if love and hate, joy and sorrow, hope and despair are integral to human beings, then radical praxis can no longer be thought of simply in terms of the actions of collective actors in the public sphere. The stress on subjectivity requires that the sphere of politics be broadened. The struggle must be extended into all dimensions of human life: at work, at play, at home, in sexual relations. Moreover, constitutive of reality as they might be, love and hate, joy and sorrow, hope and despair, while universal emotions, are also experienced and understood in intensely personal and idiosyncratic ways. The focus on subjectivity, therefore, also requires more diversified categories of agents and actions. Given the connection between revolutionary subjectivity and experiences of pleasure and gratification, how is it possible to think of one particular group as expressing the experiences of all? And given the many forms of oppression and the variety of ways in which they intersect and interpenetrate one another, how could one particular group be regarded as representing the interests of humankind as such?

Marcuse's recognition of the need to reconceptualize radical politics is both

explicitly stated and implicit in his interests in a wide variety of groups and strategies. His work suggests a politics of many groups sparking revolutionary interests and consciousness and stimulating a multiplicity of subversive actions. His emphasis on revolutionary subjectivity would seem to mandate a radical politics wherein solidarity would be an ongoing and ever-changing process, grounded in the particular present and in the valuation of individuality rather than collectivity. And yet he continues to search for a revolutionary subject.

Kellner remarks that "the concept of the revolutionary subject is a specter that has haunted Marcuse's project from the beginning."[142] Marcuse's allegiance to this concept is apparent not only in his continued use of the term (including in his last published articles), but also in the care he takes to point out that each of the groups he considers is *not* a revolutionary subject. The idea of the revolutionary subject is also implied in the notion of catalyst groups. Although he is careful to remind us that a catalyst group does not constitute a revolutionary subject, his use of the concept is reminiscent of the role that often has been attributed to the Party. Catalyst groups are regarded as agents that can (might) stimulate action on the part of an as yet unidentified revolutionary subject (perhaps the collective worker). For Marcuse the revolution continues to require a revolutionary subject. His problem is in determining just who that subject is.

Although he is never able to identify *who* the subject is, he does offer a "very tentative" definition of *what* this subject is. In his 1969 article "Revolutionary Subject and Self-Government," Marcuse describes the revolutionary subject as "that class or group which, by virtue of its function and position in society, is in vital need and is capable of risking what they have and what they can get within the established system in order to replace this system." He goes on to emphasize that "such a class or group must have the vital *need* for revolution, and it must be capable of at least initiating, if not carrying through such a revolution."[143] Without question, this definition represents a significant departure from Marx's understanding of the revolutionary subject. It contains no specific mention of the revolutionary subject's position within the productive system (although this is implied in "its function and position in society" and in Marcuse's subsequent discussion of the working class as the revolutionary subject "in itself" as long as it retains its central position within the productive process). Nor, apparently, is a majoritarian status any longer required. The stipulation that this group or class be capable of risking what it has or might receive also opens the door to more privileged groups serving in this capacity. Furthermore, the provision that this group be capable of "initiating, if not carrying through" a revolution would seem—despite his protests to the contrary—to qualify catalyst groups for the role.

Despite the questions raised by this "tentative" definition, the very effort to define the revolutionary subject indicates its continued importance to Marcuse's conception of radical politics. But in the definition itself we also find an

element that argues against both the possibility and desirability of the revolutionary subject. The most fundamental characteristic of this subject for Marcuse, the characteristic he reiterates, is the vital need for revolution. His understanding of this vital need (as developed through the integration of Eros into the model of the subject and elaborated in discussions of the new sensibility), in conjunction with his analysis of contemporary social conditions, indicates that it is unlikely to develop in all (or many, or any of) the members of a particular group. Furthermore, his basic assumptions about human beings and his examination of the organization of domination in the contemporary world (and of where the explosive potential of the life instincts can be found or might develop) argue against the politics of collective singularity that the concept of a revolutionary subject implies. For Marcuse the vital need for revolution incorporates aesthetic-erotic needs and sensibilities, which would lead to very different forms of radical politics. That he does not recognize and develop more fully his understanding of these forms is an effect of his ongoing search for the revolutionary subject.

Marcuse referred to himself as a "cheerful pessimist." His cheerfulness can be related to his analyses of the structural changes and tendencies in advanced industrial societies that would make possible and contribute to the change in sensibility he regarded as a precondition for radical social change. His pessimism results from recognition of the forces (economic, political, and psychological) arrayed against such change and from his failure to find a revolutionary subject.

Although Adorno was certainly more melancholy than cheerful, like Marcuse, he entertained some hope about the possibilities for change. Unlike Marcuse, his hope was not a function of an analysis of structural tendencies but stemmed, rather, from a particular conception of mind. Nevertheless, the hopes that both entertained involved, or at least implied, a new conception of radical politics. The more positive and hopeful aspects of both of their works suggest a politics of individuals and groups engaged in private and public struggles, which, by changing attitudes and sensibilities, would (or could) begin to undermine the oppressive social structures of advanced capitalist societies. Although neither saw radical social transformation as achievable through a violent seizure of power or a dramatic overturning of existing social institutions, both still held on to at least the possibility (and the desirability) of a radical social transformation.

There are similarities between the conceptions of radical politics suggested in the works of Adorno and Marcuse and those that we will find in Habermas's work. But while Habermas continues the critical theorists' project of developing a theory with practical intent—while his work is still oriented to both understanding and transforming society—the process and aspirations, and thus the politics, of transformation are understood in entirely different terms.

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Chapter 6

Habermas: Reconstructing Critical Theory

I want to maintain that the program of early critical theory foundered not on this or that contingent circumstance, but from the exhaustion of the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness. I shall argue that a change in paradigm to the theory of communication makes it possible to return to the undertaking that was interrupted with the critique of instrumental reason; and this will permit us to take up once again the since-neglected tasks of a critical theory of society.

Jürgen Habermas
The Theory of Communicative Action, 1: 386

Jürgen Habermas is regarded as the leading "second-generation" critical theorist. He identifies his work with that of the Frankfurt School and more generally with the Marxian project; at the same time, however, he has also changed the terms of analysis and discussion. The paradigm of communication has replaced the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness, and this transposition of the radical project onto a new theoretical framework has involved reformulations of basic conceptions of the subject and history. It has also necessarily involved significant changes in the analysis both of contemporary society and of the issues of agency and social change. These changes—and their causes, their effects on Habermas's emancipatory vision, and their implications for theory with practical intent—are the subject of this chapter.

Habermas's work is encyclopedic, abstract, and controversial; it is also work-in-progress. The complexity of his work and the fact that he not only continues to write and publish at an impressive pace, but also to generate an extensive secondary literature,[1] renders any attempt to summarize his work difficult. Nevertheless, in order to provide a background sufficient for discussion of the changes that inform and result from Habermas's theoretical

efforts, I will begin this chapter by locating his work in relation to the Critical Theory of his predecessors and tracing the development of his thought from *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968) to *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981).

HABERMAS AND THE CRITICAL THEORISTS

Born in 1929, Habermas was a teenager when the Third Reich fell and the Allied occupation began. He dates his political awakening to the eve of the Nuremberg tribunal, when he recalls listening to the radio and being offended at how "others, instead of being struck silent by the ghastliness, began to dispute the justice of the trial, procedural questions, and questions of jurisdiction"; he writes that it was then that "there was that first rupture, which still gapes."[2] His early experience of rupture was compounded by the failures of postwar de-Nazification, by disappointment in the formation of the new government in 1949, and by the refusal of university professors to acknowledge the past and recognize the political implications of their own work. Despite his fear "that a real break with the past had not been made"[3] and his increasingly leftist leanings, he acknowledges that his "political and philosophical 'confessions'" remained entirely separate until the mid-1950s.[4]

Habermas pursued a traditional course of university study and completed his doctoral dissertation in 1954 on Schelling's transcendental reconciliation of nature and spirit. During his doctoral studies he discovered the writings of the young Marx and the young Lukács, and at this point his two "confessions" began to converge. The most decisive stimulus for this merger was reading Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. He remembers that while he found *History and Class Consciousness* a "marvelous book," the *Dialectic* was a "revelation."[5] In the *Dialectic* Horkheimer and Adorno were not merely engaged in a reception of Marx, they were using his ideas; they were proceeding from the tradition of Marxist thought to work out a theory of contemporary society. Habermas, too, would use Marxian ideas in developing a theory of contemporary society. He would, however, develop this project along a very different path.

Two years after completing his doctorate, Habermas became Adorno's assistant at Frankfurt. With Horkheimer keeping copies of the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* hidden away in the Institute's cellar, the Institute's radical past was not generally accessible to its students in the 1950s. It was not until Marcuse visited Frankfurt in 1956 that the young research assistants at the Institute got a sense of this past. Habermas writes that Marcuse's visit was "the moment when we first faced an embodiment and vivid expression of the political spirit of the old Frankfurt School."[6] Although at this time Habermas found Marcuse's existentialist variant of Critical Theory most compatible with

his own interests,[7] Adorno clearly would have the most profound influence on Habermas's work. His references to Adorno are frequent, and it seems reasonable to conclude that Adorno figures as prominently as he does in Habermas's work because it is against Adorno's negative dialectics that his own project takes shape.[8]

Habermas describes Adorno as "one of the most systematic and effective thinkers" he knew, and contends that Adorno's greatness lies "in the fact that he was the only one to develop remorselessly and spell out the paradoxes of . . . the dialectic of enlightenment that unfolds the whole as the untrue."[9] But in revealing the whole as untrue, Adorno's negative dialectics could only point out the unreason that passes for reason; it was unable to identify or "appeal to a structure heterogeneous to instrumental reason, against which the totalized purposive rationality must collide."[10] Axel Honneth, in an essay on Habermas's critique of Adorno, describes Adorno's efforts as having degenerated into an exercise of "pessimistic self-clarification . . . confined to aesthetics and to a philosophical critique of the false totality."[11] Negative dialectics had stripped Critical Theory of any explanatory-diagnostic power and therefore of its practical relevance as well. Ironically, it had become the type of theory that Horkheimer had once described as "an aimless intellectual game, half conceptual poetry, half impotent expressions of states of mind."[12] In its principled impotence, negative dialectics represents for Habermas the dead end Critical Theory had reached.

To get out of this dead end, Habermas is concerned with identifying "a structure heterogeneous to instrumental reason" that can ground the critique of "the totalized purposive rationality." Believing that its "potential for stimulation has still not been exhausted," Habermas undertook the task of reconstructing Critical Theory, the task of taking it "apart and putting it back together again in a new form in order to attain more fully the goal it has set for itself."[13] He wants to reconstruct Critical Theory so that it might successfully pursue its original goal of synthesizing philosophy and science in a manner that would provide a critical understanding of modernity—its achievements, its deformities, *and* its unrealized potentialities. To this end Habermas believes that certain deficiencies in Critical Theory have to be corrected: it must be able to give an unambiguous account of its own normative foundations; it must take seriously the theoretical contributions of analytical philosophy and the social sciences and find a theoretical approach that permits connection to productive scientific approaches; and it must recognize and take into account the positive accomplishments of modernity, particularly the traditions of bourgeois democracy.[14] The first step in addressing these deficiencies was the development of an expanded, more differentiated and comprehensive concept of reason. *Knowledge and Human Interests* was his initial systematic attempt to establish and ground such a concept.

Knowledge and Human Interests, which opens with the question "How is reliable knowledge possible?," represents an effort to rethink the epistemological foundations of Critical Theory. Habermas argues that reliable knowledge is possible only when reason is rescued from the thrall of science. He goes about reclaiming a more comprehensive concept of reason through outlining and justifying an epistemology structured by three "quasi-transcendental" knowledge-constitutive interests. These interests underlie three different types of knowledge, which are systematized and formalized in three different types of discipline. The *technical* interest in controlling the environment animates the empirical-analytical sciences; the *practical* interest in securing mutual understanding is reflected in the historical-hermeneutical sciences; and the *emancipatory* interest in freeing consciousness from hypostatized forces guides the critical sciences.

The ground and possibility of Critical Theory lie in the emancipatory interest. This is an interest in the reflective appropriation of human life; it is an interest in reason and is rooted in the capacity of human beings to be self-reflective and self-determining. In self-reflection, Habermas writes, "knowledge for the sake of knowledge comes to coincide with the interest in autonomy and responsibility. For the pursuit of reflection knows itself as a movement of emancipation. Reason is at the same time subject to the interest of reason. We can say that it obeys an emancipatory cognitive interest, which aims at the pursuit of reflection."[15] The goal of the critical sciences is to facilitate the process of methodical self-reflection through which the barriers to the self-conscious development of the species will be dissolved. Psychoanalysis, which he regards as "the only tangible example of a science incorporating methodical self-reflection,"[16] serves as a model for critical science, which Habermas then transposes into the areas of social analysis and political practice.

Knowledge and Human Interests provoked a great deal of discussion and criticism.[17] The most frequent criticisms concerned the peculiar "quasi-transcendental" status of the cognitive interests and their relationship to one another, the ambiguous use of the concept of reflection, and the application of the model of psychoanalysis to critical social theory and practice. The emancipatory interest's problematic nature, as reflected in both of the first two criticisms, called into question the efficacy of the entire effort. Habermas recognizes and addresses these objections in his 1971 introductory essay to *Theory and Practice* and in his 1973 essay "A Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests.*" Of particular significance to the subsequent development of his project was his recognition that, in the concept of reflection, he had conflated two distinct modes of reflection. "On the one hand," he writes, his use of the term "denotes the reflexion upon the conditions of potential abilities of a knowing, speaking and acting subject as such; on the other hand, it denotes the reflexion upon unconsciously produced constraints to which a determinate subject . . . succumbs in its process of self-formation."[18] In other words

Habermas had combined a sense of transcendental reflection on the general conditions of knowledge for any subject with the self-reflection of a specific subject on (the often hidden) restrictions on its own perceptions and behavior. Habermas acknowledges the differences between these two types of reflection and henceforth refers to them as "rational reconstruction" and "self-reflection." He aligns his own effort with that of rational reconstruction, believing that only a rational reconstruction of universal competencies can provide an adequate basis for the critique of social life and the exploration of alternative possibilities.

It was also in the process of responding to the criticisms of *Knowledge and Human Interests* that the substance of Habermas's project was transformed. His efforts shifted from trying to ground Critical Theory in a theory of knowledge to establishing its foundations in a theory of communicative action. The distinction he had already made between labor and interaction—which is apparent in *Knowledge and Human Interests* at both the cognitive level of interests and the methodological level in the different sciences—prepared the ground for this change of focus.

Habermas first introduced this distinction in his 1967 essay "Labor and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena *Philosophy of Mind*." In this essay Habermas contends that, in Hegel's early lectures, the self-formative process of Spirit is presented as occurring through three related yet irreducible patterns of language, labor, and moral relations (with the latter two presupposing the first). In his later work, however, Hegel abandoned this schema of Spirit's self-formation in favor of a model of self-reflection. The unfortunate effects of this shift would later surface in Marx's writings. Although Marx, according to Habermas, rediscovered the connection between labor and interaction and expressed it in his dialectic of the forces and relations of production, he also exhibited a tendency to reduce human praxis to labor. This is a tendency that subsequently has been reproduced in the work of his followers. Habermas writes:

> Just as in the Jena *Philosophy of Spirit* the use of tools mediates between the laboring subject and the natural objects, so for Marx instrumental action, the productive activity which regulates the material interchange of the human species with its natural environment, becomes the paradigm for the generation of all categories; everything is resolved into the self-movement of production. Because of this, Marx's brilliant insight into the dialectical relationship between the forces of production and the relations of production could very quickly be misinterpreted in a mechanistic manner.[19]

Habermas goes on to declare that this tendency to resolve everything "into the self-movement of production" leads to the belief that changes in the sphere of production will result in comparable changes in other areas of human social

life. He rejects such a distorted vision of emancipation, declaring, *"Liberation from hunger and misery* does not necessarily converge with *liberation from servitude and degradation,* for there is no automatic developmental relation between labor and interaction."[20]

The distinction between labor and interaction is developed further in "Technology and Science as 'Ideology.'" Here Habermas defines work, or purposive-rational action, as "either instrumental action or rational choice or their conjunction."[21] Instrumental action and rational choice (strategic action) operate on the basis of technical rules and empirical knowledge and are guided by the technical interest. Interaction (or communicative action), on the other hand, is "governed by binding *consensual norms,* which define reciprocal expectations about behavior and which must be understood and recognized by at least two acting subjects."[22] Interaction is oriented to mutual understanding and is based on intersubjectively recognized norms. Work and interaction are further differentiated in terms of the motivations that lead people to engage in such activities; the rules by which action is regulated; the language and conditions that define action; the mechanisms by which the rules and definitions are acquired; and the sanctions applied in response to violations of the rules.[23] In this essay Habermas also develops the distinction between work and interaction at the societal level by differentiating between the "institutional framework of society" or "sociocultural life-world" and "subsystems of purposive rational action" (thus marking the beginning of his bi-level analysis of society as system and lifeworld) and in terms of distinct processes of rationalization (which will be developed into his theory of social evolution). He also reasserts the contention expressed in his 1967 Hegel essay, namely that improving subsystems of purposive-rational action will not in itself lead to "liberation from servitude and degradation." He claims, in fact, that only rationalization within the sphere of interaction can "furnish the members of society with the opportunity for further emancipation and progressive individuation"; rationalization of subsystems of purposive-rational action can "at best serve it."[24]

While Habermas insists that labor and interaction are interrelated yet irreducible media of species development, he nevertheless accords interaction an increasingly fundamental position. This is evident when he speaks of subsystems of purposive-rational action as "embedded" in the institutional framework, as well as when he argues that rationalization within such subsystems can "at best" only serve rationalization in the sphere of interaction. This emphasis on interaction is anticipated in his 1965 inaugural address at Frankfurt, which was published as an appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests* and summarizes its central themes. In this address he locates the emancipatory interest within the primary medium of interaction, language. He writes: "What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: *language.* Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited

for us. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus."[25] Thus, when he determined that the approach employed in *Knowledge and Human Interests* was not adequate to the task, the basis for a new communicative framework for analysis lay already at hand.

The journey from *Knowledge and Human Interests* to *The Theory of Communicative Action* is described in terms of a "paradigm shift"—a shift from Marx's paradigm of production to a paradigm of communication, from the philosophy of consciousness to a theory of language. Habermas recognizes that his linguistic turn within Critical Theory corresponds to a more general movement occurring within modern philosophy as a whole: "Today," he writes, "the problem of language has taken the place of the traditional place of consciousness."[26] He notes parallel shifts within analytical philosophy, the Heideggerian tradition, and even (possibly) structuralism. All are moving away from a framework defined by "a subjectivity which is centred in the self-relation of the knowing subject."[27]

In reflecting on the development of his own thought, Habermas sees his initial epistemological approach as still caught within the limitations of the philosophy of consciousness. Although he feels that the outlines of the argument presented in *Knowledge and Human Interests* are correct, he states, "I no longer believe in epistemology as the *via regia*." For him the issue had become that of establishing a substantive foundation that would allow Critical Theory to overcome the limits of the philosophy of consciousness and the paradigm of production, "without abandoning the intentions of Western Marxism in the process."[28] To establish such a substantive foundation, Habermas first turned his attention to justifying the claim he had made in his inaugural address, namely that language use itself expresses the intention of the good life.

Language is the primary medium of human interaction. The use of language in its "original mode" is oriented toward reaching understanding.[29] Communicative action, which presupposes language as a medium, is a type of social interaction distinguished by its orientation to shared understanding. In contrast to strategic and instrumental action, communicative action is "co-ordinated not through the egocentric calculations of success of every individual but through co-operative achievements of understanding among participants."[30] Through an analysis of universal pragmatics—the rules for using sentences in utterances—Habermas undertakes the task of rationally reconstructing the general and unavoidable presuppositions of communicative action. His analysis leads him to argue that every speech act raises, implicitly or explicitly, four validity claims that speakers must be prepared to justify. The claim to comprehensibility—that what is spoken is intelligible—is assumed to be unproblematic for any competent speaker. The claim to sincerity—that the speaker is being truthful—can ultimately be redeemed only in terms of the speaker's future action. But the claims to truth and normative rightness are

discursively redeemable: a problematic truth claim may become the subject of theoretical discourse, while the "rightness" or "appropriateness" of a speech act may become the subject of a practical discourse that addresses the validity of the underlying norm. The discursive redeemability of these validity claims forms, according to Habermas, the rational foundation of communication. He asserts:

> The idea of rational speech . . . is first found not in the general structures of discourse, but in the fundamental structures of linguistic action. . . . Anyone who acts with an orientation toward reaching an understanding, since he unavoidably raises truth and rightness claims, must have implicitly recognized that this action points to argumentation as the only way of *continuing* consensual action in case naively raised and factually recognized validity claims become problematic. As soon as we make explicit the meaning of discursively redeemable validity claims, we become aware that we must presuppose the possibility of argumentation already in consensual *action*.[31]

In already presupposing the possibility of argumentation in consensual action, the individual in every speech act is anticipating what Habermas calls the "ideal speech situation." In the ideal speech situation participants have an equal opportunity to employ speech acts and assume dialogic roles; interaction is free from internal and external constraints and oriented to mutual understanding. Argumentation is motivated by "the co-operative search for truth" and compelled only by "the 'force' of the better argument."[32] This is the intention and image of the good life that communicative action both assumes and points to. And it is this image that provides Habermas with a new foundation for the critique of ideology as systematically distorted communication.

As Habermas develops his theory of communicative action, the concept of the ideal speech situation does, however, lose much of its initial significance. This occurs not only because he finds difficulties in the concept itself[33] but also because, as his understanding of modernity evolves, his concern with ideology diminishes. Nevertheless, the concept of rationality embodied in the ideal speech situation—a procedural concept derived from the discursive redeemability of validity claims and denoting a specific way of coming to grips with the world through argumentation and consensus formation—remains central to his project and provides the conception of a better world which anchors his emancipatory vision.[34]

The notion of communicative rationality that emerges out of Habermas's treatment of communicative competence, universal pragmatics, and the ideal speech situation directs and grounds both his reconstruction of historical materialism and his analyses and critique of contemporary conditions. (Bernstein refers to these as the "synchronic" and "diachronic" dimensions of the theory of communicative action, with the former specifying what is

presupposed and anticipated in communicative action and the latter concerning itself with how communicative rationality is embedded in social institutions and practices and with how these change and develop over time.)[35]

The question that now confronts us is how Habermas's reformulation of Critical Theory within a communicative framework affects the form and content of theory with practical intent. Habermas speaks of not wanting to abandon the intentions of Western Marxism in the course of effecting a paradigm shift. But, as will be shown, his paradigm shift involves substantially different conceptions of the subject and of history and thus necessarily leads to different analyses of contemporary conditions and views on agency and social change. In the remainder of this chapter I will examine more closely just what these conceptions of the subject and history are, how they affect the analysis of contemporary conditions, and what the implications of his paradigm shift are for the issues of agency and radical social change.

THE INTERSUBJECTIVE SUBJECT

In *The Theory of Communicative Action* Habermas remarks that what is paradigmatic for communicative action "is not the relation of a solitary subject to something in the objective world that can be represented or manipulated, but the intersubjective relation that speaking and acting subjects take up when they come to an understanding with one another about something."[36] The subject of the communicative model is not an actor objectifying and realizing him- or herself through labor in the world, but rather an actor in relationship with other human actors. In fact, in an argument that develops out of his early distinction between labor and interaction, Habermas contends that the subject's ability to represent and manipulate objects in the world presupposes a linguistically mediated intersubjective relation: it is only through such a relationship that the objective world becomes knowable. He believes that Marx's identification of social labor as the distinguishing human activity "cuts too deeply in the evolutionary scale."[37] While the category of social labor differentiates between primates and hominids, it does not capture what is distinctive about human life. Habermas claims it is language use, not labor, that is the quintessential human activity: distinctively *human* life occurs only with the development of a familial social structure, a structure involving a system of social norms that presumes the development of language.[38]

With Habermas's replacement of labor with language, the (solitary) subject practically disappears into the intersubjective relationship. In terms of his communicative model, it may in fact be more accurate to speak of dialogical partners than of subjects. Nevertheless, a model of the subject does inform and shape his work. And the distinctive characteristics of this model are evident in

his discussion of four dominant conceptions of social action in *The Theory of Communicative Action*.[39]

Although Habermas's purpose in his discussion of the dominant conceptions of social action is to draw out their rationality implications, one can also discern from this discussion the models of the subject that correspond to each conception. In the teleological conception of action (which is associated with decision- and game-theoretic approaches in economics, sociology and social psychology), the subject appears as a solitary actor pursuing strategies to attain certain ends. The subject's orientation is to success, and in the pursuit of this end other subjects are treated as objects that serve as either means or obstacles. Calculation characterizes both the subject and the self/other relationship. In the norm-regulated conception of action (associated with role theory and the work of Durkheim and Parsons), the model of the subject is one in which the actor is seen primarily as a role-playing member of a social group whose actions are understood in terms of compliance with norms. The orientation of the actor is to group expectations, and the other is related to as a member (or not a member) of the social group. Conformity replaces calculation as characterizing both the subject and the self/other relationship. In the dramaturgical conception of action (associated with Goffman and phenom-enologically oriented descriptions of interaction), the subject's orientation is to self-presentation as opposed to personal success or group expectations. The focus within this conception of action is on actors revealing aspects of their own subjectivity through performances. The subject appears primarily as an expressive and self-disclosing being. Self and other are cast as actor and audience, and insofar as the audience accepts the actor's self-disclosure, the self/other relationship is consensual.

Habermas regards each of these influential conceptions of action—in which the subject appears as a solitary individual manipulating objects in the world, as a member of a social group, or as an actor expressing her or his inner life—as "one-sided." Each thematizes only one dimension of human life: the subject is understood in relation to the objective world, the social world, or the internal, subjective world, but not all three. Correspondingly, none of these conceptions of action can fully incorporate language as a medium for reaching mutual understanding. Instead, each stresses only a particular function of language: that of producing an effect on the other, establishing a personal relationship, or expressing a subjective experience. Only the communicative conception of action, according to Habermas, can accommodate the multidimensionality of human existence and all the functions of language.

The communicative conception of action (associated with Mead and Garfinkel) refers to "the interaction of at least two subjects . . . who establish interpersonal relations."[40] Within this conception of action the focus is on the process of coming to an agreement (about the objective, social, or subjective world) in order to coordinate action. Language, as the medium for reaching

understanding, therefore assumes a position of central significance. The model of the subject that emerges is of an actor oriented to mutual understanding and engaged in a cooperative process. Cooperation replaces calculation, conformity, or self-presentation as the defining characteristic of both the subject and the self/other relationship. Self and other are joined in a cooperative relationship; the other is viewed not as an object to be manipulated or as a member of a social group or audience, but as a partner or potential partner in the process of reaching understanding.

In addition to the essential cooperative orientation, the subject in the communicative conception of action appears as competent and self-reflective. It will be recalled that language use assumes certain competencies on the part of the subject as speaker and actor. The competent language user must be prepared to redeem problematic validity claims. And the criticizability of validity claims implies an ongoing learning process in which subjects become increasingly competent in their ability to come to an understanding about theoretical and practical issues as well as in matters of self-understanding. The criticizability of validity claims means that speaking and acting subjects can identify and learn from mistakes about the objective world, social world, and themselves. Furthermore, language use not only necessarily entails the development of competencies; it also implies the subject's capacity to be self-reflective. Individuals learn to orient their actions to validity claims by taking on the attitude of the other. As exemplified in Mead's concept of the "Me," the self-reflective subject develops through the internalization of discursive relations.

If Mead's "Me" figures in the model of the subject that corresponds to the communicative conception of action, the "I" is noticeably absent. The model of the subject that informs Habermas's work emerges out of a focus on intersubjectivity, which is defined by the cooperative process of reaching understanding. The subject appears as a social, reflective, competent, cooperative being. The impulsive, nonrational, and sensuous aspects of being—aspects accorded considerable significance in the earlier critical theorists' work—have disappeared. Agnes Heller remarks that, in Habermas's work, "the sensuous experience of hope and despair . . . the creature-like aspects of human beings are missing."[41] Going on to observe that the romantic and sensuous features of the Marxian subject, which can still be found in Adorno and Marcuse, are absent in Habermas, Heller writes: "Habermasian man has . . . no body, no feelings; the 'structure of personality' is identified with cognition, language and interaction. Although Habermas accepts the Aristotelian differentiation between 'life' and 'the good life,' one gets the impression that the good life consists solely of rational communications and that needs can be argued for without being felt."[42] Habermas's focus on the communicative relationship and his disinterest in, and disregard for, the embodied, erotic aspects of being are exemplified in his approval of the fact that Mead identifies

as a principle of individuation "not the body but a structure of perspectives that is set within the communicative roles of the first, second, and third persons."[43]

Along with the absence of sensuous and nonrational elements in Habermas's model of the subject goes an absence of conflict. In stressing reciprocity and the cooperative endeavor of reaching mutual understanding, intersubjective and intrapsychic conflicts and tensions seem to become secondary or derivative characteristics.[44] He has not, it should be noted, ignored or dismissed the contradictory aspects of human being altogether. In two 1970 articles, in which he outlined his theory of communicative competence, he speaks of the "paradoxical achievement" of a relation between ego and alter ego and recognizes the "inviolable distance between partners" in communication.[45] In a more recent interview he notes that even if one must necessarily first deal in ideal or standard cases, "the broken nature of all intersubjective relationships" must also be recognized; these relationships must be conceptualized in such a way that both their inter- and intrasubjective tensions "remain irreducible."[46] Habermas has not yet, however, found a way to incorporate recognition of these inevitable tensions into his conception of the subject.

The focus on language use in its original mode—on interaction oriented to reaching understanding—filters out intersubjective and intrapsychic conflicts, as well as the sensuous and nonrational aspects of being. Habermas's subject is a rational and social being whose humanity and individuality are the consequences of linguistically mediated interaction. Fundamental to his understanding of language use, and thus also to his understanding of the species's humanity, is the development of competencies. Humankind's capacity to learn—its capacity to become more competent—is central to his understanding of history.

HISTORY AS LEARNING, HISTORY AS RATIONALIZATION

In his early work Habermas's understanding of history was still very much located within a Hegelian-Marxian paradigm. In particular, the notion of a collective subject continued to inform his work. Although in an essay composed in 1960 he speaks of this concept as only a useful "fiction,"[47] he later recognizes that he had uncritically used "the idea of a human species which constitutes itself as the subject of world history."[48] This usage is evident in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. However as Habermas began work on his theory of communicative action in the early 1970s, the idea of a collective subject dropped out of his understanding of history. He came to believe that an adequate conceptualization of history does not need a "species-subject" that evolves. Societies, he states, are the bearers of social evolution, and even "if social evolution should point in the direction of unified individuals consciously influencing the course of their own evolution, there would not arise any

large-scale subjects, but at most self-established, higher-level, intersubjective commonalities."[49] What we find in Habermas's understanding of history, then, is not the story of a collective subject's self-constitution but a reconstruction of the evolution of universal competencies as they are expressed in higher-level, intersubjective commonalities embodied in social institutions and transmitted in cultural traditions.

Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism as a theory of social evolution is predicated on his insistence that work and interaction are irreducible presuppositions of any society.[50] And following from his understanding of language, he identifies the human capacity for learning as the central dynamic in the process of social evolution. "The endogenous growth of knowledge is," he writes, ". . . a necessary condition of social evolution";[51] or even more simply put, "the fundamental mechanism for social evolution in general is to be found in the automatic inability not to learn."[52] Marx's error (an error Weber and the early critical theorists made as well) lay in failing to recognize fully that learning takes place, according to different logics, in both the sphere of work and the sphere of interaction. It occurs "in the dimension of technically useful knowledge decisive for the development of productive forces" and "in the dimension of moral-practical consciousness decisive for structures of interaction."[53] In the first dimension learning results in technological advances and in new levels of mastery of nature; in the second it results in new levels of social-normative knowledge and in new forms of social interaction. Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism as a theory of social evolution thus represents the effort to reconceptualize human history in terms of two interrelated but logically distinct learning processes that have increasingly freed humankind from both material want and hidden constraints on interaction.

Individuals, not societies, learn. But since societies are the bearers of social evolution, the question becomes how the learning of individuals is translated into collectively accessible knowledge and utilized as such at a societal level. According to Habermas, the results of individual learning may be immediately utilized in work and/or interaction, or these results can be "deposited" and passed down in cultural traditions. That which individuals learn becomes a part a general fund of knowledge—Arnason refers to this as a "cognitive surplus"[54]—which remains latent in cultural traditions and world views until it is translated into institutional form by social movements. Social movements, then, are the means by which societies learn.

Habermas defines social movements as "learning processes through which latently available structures of rationality are transposed into social practice— so that in the end they find institutional embodiment."[55] They arise in response to problems or crises in the reproductive processes of society. Although individual learning is stored in cultural traditions, the fact or process of storage does not in itself alter the normative structures of society. Change in the

normative structure, Habermas writes, "remains dependent on evolutionary challenges posed by unresolved, economically conditioned, system problems and on the learning processes that are a response to them."[56] Habermas insists that his theory remains a materialist one because learning processes are understood as responses to problems in the domains of production and reproduction. But while allowing that system problems are the motor of social evolution, he also insists that culture (the superstructure, the normative sphere, the sphere of interaction) regulates the pace and the possibilities for social evolution. The development of normative structures, Habermas argues, "is the pacemaker of social evolution, for new principles of social organization mean new forms of social integration; and the latter, in turn, first make it possible to implement available productive forces or to generate new ones."[57]

Principles of organization "limit the capacity of a society to learn without losing its identity."[58] Introduced to replace Marx's concept of the mode of production, which Habermas regards as not abstract enough to accommodate the universals of social development,[59] principles of social organization are characterized by an institutional core that determines the dominant form of social integration—for example, the kinship system in primitive society, class domination in the political form of the state in traditional society, and the relationship of wage labor and capital in liberal capitalist society.[60] The principle of social organization "circumscribes ranges of possibility" and thus determines the extent to which institutional changes, the development and utilization of new productive capacities, and heightened system complexity can be accommodated within an existing forms of social integration.[61] A society's ability to address and solve system problems—its "learning level," its capacity to learn and to apply knowledge—is thus defined and limited by the development of its normative structures.

This sets up a two-step process of evolutionary change. As Habermas describes it, "Social evolution . . . takes place both in the learning and adaptation processes on the *respectively given* learning level (until its structural possibilities are exhausted) *and* in those improbable evolutionary leaps to *new* learning levels."[62] These "improbable leaps" are themselves subject to two conditions. First, unresolved system problems must challenge the status quo, and second, new levels of learning already have to be achieved in world views.[63] Neither system problems nor available knowledge are in themselves sufficient to move a society to a new learning level. (And, as will be evident in his analysis of contemporary conditions, it is advanced capitalist society's seemingly inexhaustible capacity to resolve or displace systems problems that prompts Habermas's doubts about the possibilities for "revolutionary" change.)

Despite the centrality of the notion of a developmental logic to Habermas's theory of social evolution (as is clear in the distinction between learning levels and the learning processes possible at each level), he regards the actual form social evolution has taken as a contingent, not a necessary, event. The

evolutionary perspective, he writes, assumes "neither univocity, nor *continuity*, nor *necessity*, nor *irreversibility* of the course of history . . . *whether* or *when* the new structural formations develop depends on *contingent* circumstances."[64] This claim of contingency is fundamental to Habermas's understanding and analysis of modernity. His critique of contemporary conditions is based on the belief that these conditions are not the *necessary* consequence of modernization. While the reconstruction of Marx's historical materialism provides Habermas with a general framework for understanding human history in terms of learning, it is his reconstruction of Weber's theory of rationalization that informs his understanding of the transition to—and the paradoxes, pathologies, and possibilities of—modernity. As was the case in his treatment of historical materialism, Habermas's reconstruction of rationalization develops out of the distinction he makes between work and interaction.

Work and interaction become, at the level of society, system and lifeworld. Just as work and interaction are regarded as interrelated but mutually irreducible, so too are system and lifeworld. Habermas is critical of the tendency within social theory to privilege one at the expense of the other—to adopt either an action- or a systems-theoretic perspective—and *The Theory of Communicative Action* represents a sustained effort to integrate these perspectives into a bi-level concept of society. In attempting to develop and integrate a system-lifeworld perspective, he is recasting and endeavoring to formulate more adequately Marx's conception of base/superstructure within the paradigm of communication. Societies, he contends, must reproduce themselves both materially and symbolically, and unless these processes are grasped as distinct but complexly interrelated, the distinctive characteristics and tendencies of modernity cannot be fully understood. Habermas maintains that only an integrated system-lifeworld perspective will allow the analysis of modernity to be extricated from the Iron Cage.

Habermas first presented this perspective in *Legitimation Crisis*.[65] In this preliminary and rudimentary discussion, lifeworld and system are understood respectively as normative structures and limiting material conditions. Since his attention in this volume was focused more on system problems (particularly those arising from the political system's efforts to manage contradictory imperatives), the treatment of the lifeworld is relatively undeveloped. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* the system-lifeworld model has been extensively reconceptualized, and here the lifeworld takes on a more central role, providing the all-important link between Habermas's theory of communicative action and his social theory. The concept of lifeworld is introduced, he writes, "as a correlate of processes of reaching understanding."[66] The lifeworld is the context and background within which communicative action takes place. It is formed by always unproblematic, taken-for-granted convictions; it is the source of definitions of the situation; and it is the repository of the interpretive work of past generations. The concept of lifeworld

takes the place of the normative structures that had served to demarcate the symbolically structured world in both his theory of social evolution and *Legitimation Crisis*, and it becomes the central concept in Habermas's understanding of the transition to, and the conditions of, modernity.

The development of modern society, according to Habermas, involved two interrelated processes: differentiation—of system from lifeworld and within both system and lifeworld—and rationalization. In keeping with his argument concerning the development of normative structures as the pacemaker of social evolution, the rationalization (and differentiation) of the lifeworld is the primary element in his understanding of modernization. Following Weber, Habermas finds the first indications of lifeworld rationalization in the differentiation of the autonomous value spheres of science, morality, and art out of what previously had been an all-encompassing world view. In archaic and, to a lesser degree, traditional societies, material and symbolic reproduction rested on the uncritical acceptance of tradition. As traditional society became more complex, the uncritical acceptance of meaning taken over from the lifeworld began to break down; the disenchantment of the world, to use Weber's term, grew.

The differentiation of value spheres that marks the process of disenchantment is a reflection of the restructuring of the lifeworld. The lifeworld is differentiated into culture, society, and personality, and each of these now distinct components has its own process of reproduction. Culture is reproduced through processes and practices that ensure the continuation of valid knowledge; society through the processes and practices of social integration and stabilization of group identity; and personality through socialization.

This structural differentiation of lifeworld into its component parts (and the concomitant differentiation of reproductive processes) also entails the growing reflexivity of symbolic reproduction. Institutional systems become uncoupled from world views; the possibilities for establishing interpersonal relationships are expanded; and the continued vitality of traditions comes to depend increasingly on the willingness of individuals to criticize and innovate. The proliferation of areas and aspects of culture, society, and personality that are open to cooperative, interpretative processes signals "a release of the rationality potential inherent in communicative action."[67] This release of the rationality potential inherent in communicative action is, for Habermas, a positive development. The rationalization of the lifeworld means that more and more areas of social life are released from the constraints of tradition and thus can become subject to rationally motivated mutual understanding. But the rationalization of the lifeworld also means that tradition no longer safeguards mutual understanding, and that therefore the possibilities for misunderstanding and dissensus also increase.

As a result of the increasing scope of communicative action, the medium of everyday language gets "overloaded." This leads to certain spheres of action—

specifically subsystems of purposive-rational economic and administrative action—becoming "uncoupled" from the lifeworld. Within these spheres the coordination of action is transferred from language to the "delinguistified media of communication," money and power. The uncoupling of the economy and the state from the lifeworld means that these domains of action are "no longer integrated through the mechanism of mutual understanding"; they are sheered off from lifeworld contexts and "congeal into a kind of norm-free sociality."[68] Although uncoupled, they are not independent. The economic and administrative subsystems remain anchored in the lifeworld. They depend on it for both the reproduction of socialized individuals and the continuation of coherent cultural traditions. At the same time the lifeworld depends on systems of purposive-rational action for material reproduction and organization.

In contrast to Marx, Weber and the early critical theorists (particularly Horkheimer and Adorno), all of whom equated rationalization with the expansion of instrumental rationality (albeit with different assessments as to the consequences of this expansion), Habermas contends that this "uncoupling" of system and lifeworld does not in itself lead to any particular outcome. The paradox of rationalization—the seemingly indissoluble internal relation between emancipation and subjugation—that appears as an inevitable consequence of modernization is actually not a paradox at all. It appears as such, Habermas argues, only because in shifting the focus of analysis from disenchantment and the differentiation of value spheres to the processes of capitalist production and rational administration, Weber significantly narrowed the conception of rationality he employed and then proceeded to equate what was in fact a "particular historical form of rationalization with rationalization *as such*."[69] Horkheimer and Adorno adopt this Weberian perspective but not his ambivalence about the costs and benefits of rationalization. In their work the positive accomplishments of modernity disappear before the ever-expanding force of instrumental rationality.

Habermas is adamant in his defense of the positive accomplishments of modernity; he insists that its accomplishments be recognized and valued. His reconstruction of the history of the species in terms of learning that increases the species's capacity for freedom from both material want and distorted communication, and his recast understanding of the transition to modernity in terms of the rationalization and differentiation of lifeworld and system, provide him with a framework within which the costs and achievements of modernity can be distinguished. The rationalization of the lifeworld has increased the scope of communicative action and thus also the objective possibilities for forming a more rational will, a more rational conduct of life, based on free and equal discussion and not on force. In democratic institutions and practices the bright side of modernity is expressed.

But there is also a dark side to modernity. While Habermas maintains that neither system nor lifeworld rationalization has "unavoidable side effects"—

and argues that neither the differentiation of cultural value spheres nor the uncoupling of media-steered subsystems from the lifeworld necessarily leads to a world in which instrumental rationality is hegemonic—he nevertheless recognizes that this is what has in fact occurred. And he attributes this not to rationalization itself, but to a one-sided, or "selective," pattern of rationalization. To account for the occurrence of such a pattern of rationalization, Habermas calls for "an explanation of the Marxian type."[70] The domination of instrumental rationality is not a paradox of rationalization but the result of selective rationalization set into motion by modern capitalism. The pressures and imperatives of *capitalist* development introduce a selectivity favoring the technical and instrumental use of reason: "It is characteristic of the pattern of rationalization in capitalist societies that the complex of cognitive-instrumental rationality establishes itself at the cost of practical rationality."[71] The capitalist economy and modern administrative state privilege the value sphere of science for its functions of power and control, thereby imposing the hegemony of scientific-technical rationality over the other value spheres. Capitalism and rational administration "expand at the expense of other domains of life that are structurally disposed to moral-practical and expressive forms of rationality and squeeze them into forms of economic or administrative rationality."[72] If democracy represents the bright side of modernity, capitalism represents the dark. And as much as Habermas would have us recognize and defend the achievements of modernity, he also believes that, in the competition for primacy, capitalism has had (and continues to have) the upper hand. The domination of system over lifeworld and the expansion of system imperatives into lifeworld domains—which Habermas refers to as the "colonization of the lifeworld"—not only threatens the positive accomplishments of modernity but also creates disturbances in the essential processes of lifeworld reproduction.

THE COLONIZED LIFEWORLD

Legitimation Crisis represents Habermas's first effort to apply his developing theoretical framework to an analysis of contemporary Western society. His focus in this book is on the crisis tendencies in advanced capitalist society that result from its failure to produce the "requisite quantity" of goods, decisions, legitimation, and meaning necessary for its own maintenance and reproduction. Habermas argues that system-threatening economic crises may in fact be permanently averted, but only by displacing these crises onto the political system (where they take the form of rationality or legitimation crises) or onto the sociocultural system (where a motivational crisis ensues).

Although he introduces the system-lifeworld model in *Legitimation Crisis*, it is evident from his reference to political, economic, and sociocultural subsystems that the distinction and relation between system and lifeworld is not

yet clearly developed. In fact, in responding to critical assessments of *Legitimation Crisis*, Habermas acknowledges that there were "obscure points in the conceptual demarcation between a legitimation crisis and a motivation crisis" which resulted from his inability to "clearly connect the paradigms of 'lifeworld' and 'system'"; he also goes on to note his effort to deal with this problem in *The Theory of Communicative Action*.[73]

In *The Theory of Communicative Action* the economic and rationality crises of *Legitimation Crisis* are carried forward and located at the level of system problems. The legitimation and motivational crises, however, are reformulated. They now refer to crises within the societal component of a structurally differentiated lifeworld. These crises are understood as expressions in the lifeworld of deficits in the amount of legitimation and motivation necessary to sustain the administrative and economic systems. Furthermore, and even more significant in terms of Habermas's analysis of contemporary conditions, legitimation and motivation crises within the lifeworld are distinguished from the colonization of the lifeworld.

The colonization of the lifeworld involves the penetration of system imperatives farther and farther into areas in which action is coordinated by communication: "The thesis of internal colonization states that the subsystems of the economy and the state become more and more complex as a consequence of capitalist growth, and penetrate ever deeper into the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld."[74] It will be recalled that as the scope of communicative action expands, the economic and administrative systems are differentiated out from the societal component of the lifeworld via the media of money and power. As these systems are differentiated out, and formally organized through law, the lifeworld organizes itself into public and private spheres.[75] The exchange relations between the formally organized economic and administrative subsystems and the public and private spheres of the lifeworld are regulated and defined through a variety of social roles: employee, consumer, citizen of the state (and participant in the formation of public opinion), and client of public agencies. Building on the analysis first developed in *Legitimation Crisis*, Habermas argues that as the state increasingly intervenes in the economy to rectify and manage the dysfunctional effects of the capitalist accumulation process, it keeps class conflict latent by neutralizing and normalizing the roles of employee and citizen. In exchange for being denied economic equality and political participation, individuals are granted a high degree of material prosperity and security as consumers and clients. State intervention safeguards the capitalist accumulation process, which in turn makes possible "mass compensation," which is "distributed according to implicitly agreed upon criteria, in ritualized confrontations, and channeled into the roles of consumer and client in such a way that the structures of alienated labor and alienated political participation develop no explosive power."[76] The loss of autonomy and voice is compensated for through the provision of system-conforming rewards

that are channeled into the roles of private consumer and public client of the welfare state. The roles of consumer and client thus serve as conduits for the growing penetration of formally organized domains and their imperatives into the lifeworld.

As an empirical example and measure of the colonization process, Habermas looks at the explosion of legal regulations governing social life, a phenomenon he refers to as the "juridification of communicatively structured areas of action."[77] He identifies four waves of juridification (associated with the bourgeois state, the constitutional state, the democratic constitutional state, and the welfare state, respectively),[78] and argues (in his version of the paradox of rationalization) that what began as a means by which the state protected rights and freedoms has become a means by which those freedoms and rights are threatened, if not rendered altogether meaningless.

The model case of juridification as the colonization of the lifeworld is the relationship of clients to the administration of the welfare state. Through social welfare law areas of the lifeworld that were dependent on mutual understanding as the mechanism for action coordination now become the objects of administrative and judicial interference. Today family relations, education, old age, and physical and mental health are all areas subject to law. This process not only affects how people relate to each other within these areas, but it also tends to create new dependencies on "experts." Furthermore, this process generates pressure to redefine everyday life situations: legal and administrative control requires that unique life histories and life contexts be subjected to "violent abstraction." The subjection of communicatively structured spheres of action to administrative requirements not only has a reifying effect on personal relations but also disempowers actors through reinforcing dependence.

Although Habermas does not give as much attention to it, a process parallel to administratively based juridification is the commodification of life experiences and processes. Leisure, family life, sexual relations, self-identity, and individual development all become targets of commodification; increasingly they become subject to the requirements of the commodity economy and defined through patterns of mass consumption.[79] The colonization of the lifeworld consists, then, of both the juridification and the commodification of life contexts and life processes. It is this "systemically induced reification," brought about by the colonization of the lifeworld, that comprises Habermas's reformulation of Weber's thesis concerning the "loss of freedom." Habermas addresses the accompanying "loss of meaning" in his less extensive discussion of "cultural impoverishment."

Against Weber, Habermas maintains that cultural impoverishment in contemporary society is the result not of the differentiation and independent development of cultural value spheres but of "the elitist separation of expert cultures from contexts of communicative action in daily life."[80] Vital cultural traditions are dying out as culture is split off from everyday practice and

becomes the province of encapsulated and insular expert cultures. The effect of this is to deprive individuals of coherent or consistent interpretations of the world. Individuals in advanced capitalist societies are bombarded with enormous amounts of information. But without the ability to synthesize this information, an ability that depends on vital cultural traditions, knowledge remains diffuse and difficult to employ. Habermas observes: "*Everyday consciousness* is robbed of its power to synthesize; it becomes *fragmented. . . .* In place of 'false consciousness' we today have a 'fragmented consciousness' that blocks enlightenment by the mechanism of consciousness."[81]

It is, in fact, precisely this fragmentation of consciousness that makes the colonization of the lifeworld possible. As consciousness becomes fragmented, "the imperatives of autonomous subsystems [can] make their way into the lifeworld from the outside—like colonial masters coming into a tribal society— and force a process of assimilation upon it."[82] Cultural impoverishment and the loss of meaning leave individuals defenseless in the face of the colonizing force. And it is the increasing strength of this colonizing force—the growing domination of the lifeworld by administrative and economic systems—that threatens the very basis of society.

Habermas regards the uncoupling of system and lifeworld and the mediatization of certain areas of the lifeworld as normal developments in the process of social evolution. However, when economic and administrative subsystems are not only uncoupled from, but come to dominate, the lifeworld, serious problems arise. The dependency of the lifeworld on formally organized subsystems becomes pathological, according to Habermas, when crises in these systems "can be avoided only at the cost of disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld."[83] In *The Theory of Communicative Action* he delineates the consequences of the displacement of system crises. He recasts the legitimation and motivational crises of *Legitimation Crisis* into system-specific crises expressed as the withdrawal of the support or motivation necessary to ensure the reproduction of the political and economic orders. If not resolved, these legitimation and motivational crises give rise to anomic conditions that threaten social integration and stability. To avoid anomie and secure the motivation and legitimate necessary for the maintenance of the economic and political orders, culture and personality come under attack. To ward off crises and stabilize society, the continuity and coherence of interpretive frameworks (of tradition and knowledge) necessary to mutual understanding and consensus, and the interactive capabilities—the personal competencies and identities—of individuals are undermined. Psychopathologies and the loss of coherent cultural traditions are the costs of avoiding anomie and perpetuating the economic and political orders of advanced capitalist society: material reproduction is safeguarded at the expense of symbolic reproduction.

The assessment of advanced capitalist society presented in *The Theory of Communicative Action* is in many ways far less optimistic than that offered in

Legitimation Crisis. Legitimation crises imply a degree of critical conscious-ness that no longer seems possible once identity formation and coherent world views have been undermined in the interest of system maintenance. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* the legitimation and motivational crises that, in *Legitimation Crisis*, posed some sort of threat to the system are now capable of being blocked. Grounds for hope are now provided only by the somewhat problematic (or at least unsubstantiated) assumption that the lifeworld will tolerate only so much colonization.

Habermas posits a threshold at which the normal mediatization of the lifeworld becomes pathological colonization.[84] The threshold between normal mediatization and pathological colonization is passed when domains of action that rely on the medium of communicative action—the transmission of culture, social integration, and the socialization of the young—become commercialized and/or bureaucratized. But his argument goes farther than simply claiming that at a certain point mediatization becomes pathological. He also assumes that there is a limit to the lifeworld's ability to tolerate pathologies. When the functions of symbolic reproduction are in question, "the lifeworld . . . offers stubborn and possibly successful resistance."[85] Although any absolute claim is qualified by "possibly," Habermas nevertheless seems to be positing something inherent to the lifeworld that keeps pathologies from becoming fatal.

Fred Dallmayr finds Habermas's treatment of the lifeworld's resistance to colonization problematic. He writes, "Pressed on the immunity of the life-world from (irresistible) strategic imperatives, Habermas occasionally retreats to an 'innatist' position: the thesis that symbolic domains of the life-world are somehow 'by nature' . . . consensually constituted or pregnant with communicative 'order.'"[86] Dallmayr goes on to ask, if one dismisses foundationalist or ontological presuppositions, "what 'natural' barriers could possibly safeguard the integrity of human or social bonds?" Similarly, Stephen White asks, "What sort of argument grounds the rather categorical assertion that the three processes of lifeworld reproduction *cannot* be thoroughly reduced to the media of money and power?"[87]

White interprets the lifeworld's immunity as a function not of the "nature" of the lifeworld itself, but rather of the "nature" of Habermas's model of the subject: "A total, systemic reduction of the lifeworld," he observes, "cannot occur in the sense that it would be incompatible with . . . [Habermas's] conceptualization of the human subject."[88] The model of the subject that grounds Habermas's research program is one in which human beings are defined by language use oriented to mutual understanding. It appears, then, that the limits of colonization are set by Habermas's understanding of what it means to be human: once all social action is coordinated by the delinguistified steering media of money and power, we can no longer, in Habermas's terms, speak of human social life. Not only are the limits to colonization set in terms of the defining characteristics of human subjects, but, as we will see in the following

section, so too is resistance to this colonization. This resistance, however, is not a function of a particular quality of individual actors—as is the case with Adorno's conception of mind—but of the fact that the communicative relationship that grounds human social life is threatened by encroaching system imperatives. It is the centrality of this relationship to his understanding of society, combined with a recognition of the functions and complexity of the economic and administrative subsystems, that shapes Habermas's views on the possibilities for agency and social change.

SEEMLY POLITICS AT THE SEAMS

Despite the success advanced capitalist society has had in institutionalizing and pacifying class conflict, resistance and "protest potentials" remain. Habermas believes that since such resistance is a structurally generated response to the colonization of the lifeworld it cannot be fully "bought off" or eradicated; it simply takes on new forms. In late capitalist societies "boundary conflicts" have replaced class conflict, and structurally generated anger now emerges at the seams between system and lifeworld, where it finds expression in new social movements.

Habermas understands new social movements—the women's movement and the peace movement, the antinuclear and environmental movements, tax revolts and local autonomy initiatives, religious fundamentalism, gay rights and senior citizens' actions—as embracing and representing a new politics. Protest no longer arises out of the realm of material production. The new conflicts "are ignited not by distribution problems but by questions having to do with the grammar of forms of life."[89] They arise out of the lifeworld domain and are concerned with protecting identities and life-styles; they express the lifeworld's resistance to colonization. These conflicts also no longer take form or find voice in the party or the union. Drawing support from the middle class, the educated, and the young, they coalesce as sub-institutional, extra-parliamentary movements. Furthermore, these conflicts can no longer be allayed through system-conforming rewards of money and/or power: "system imperatives and lifeworld imperatives form new frictional surfaces that spark new conflicts which cannot be dealt with in the existing compromise structure."[90]

If new social movements share a good number of characteristics, they also represent a wide variety of political responses to the colonization of the lifeworld, and Habermas's communicative model allows him to differentiate among these responses.[91] Briefly and without much further discussion, he first distinguishes movements with emancipatory potential (the model for which is bourgeois-socialist liberation movements) from those with potentials only for resistance and withdrawal. The women's movement falls into the first category, although in its more particularistic dimensions it shares features with other

contemporary movements, all of which fall into the second, "defensive" category. Among the defensive movements of resistance and withdrawal, however, Habermas separates those, such as religious fundamentalism and tax revolts that seek to defend or reestablish traditional forms of social life and property relations, from the more "progressive" movements that seek to defend or expand the new "post-traditional" forms of social life, cooperation, and community made possible by a rationalized lifeworld. For Habermas these progressive movements embody the increases in freedom and rationality that modernity has brought about. The distinction he makes between progressive and regressive resistance movements thus reflects his defense of the positive accomplishments of modernity and his insistence that the processes of lifeworld rationalization and colonization not be conflated. The combined effects of both these processes; however, are evident in what Jean Cohen has described as the "self-limiting radicalism" that characterizes these resistance movements.[92]

New social movements, including the progressive ones, are not concerned with overthrowing the state or abolishing capitalism. Their primary concern is with limiting or overcoming the effects of lifeworld colonization and cultural impoverishment. These movements put forth no revolutionary goals nor advance any totalistic claims. Instead, they tend to advocate structural reforms which would create, protect, or expand space for a plurality of life forms, all the while acknowledging the need for, and allowing for the continuing functioning of, the economic and administrative systems. The self-limiting radicalism of new social movements is, in fact, a characteristic that Habermas's theory of communicative action leads us not only to expect as a normal consequence of lifeworld rationalization, but also to regard as desirable.

According to Habermas, both the classical bourgeois emancipation movements and the "second-generation" movements (ranging from anarchism and socialism to fascism) share "totalizing conceptions of order."[93] The rationalization of the lifeworld, however, undermines the possibility of forming overarching visions of the world. As all beliefs and all knowledge are increasingly subjected to rational scrutiny, the structural possibilities of ideology formation are lost. Accompanying this process, although according to Habermas not a necessary consequence of it, is the "fragmentation of consciousness" that results from the splitting off and growing insularity of expert cultures. Both processes contribute to the lack of totalistic claims that characterize new social movements. But while Habermas is clearly disturbed by the inability of individuals to form coherent interpretations of the world, he by no means considers the demise of programs for "mastering crises in grand format"[94] a negative development.

Overarching interpretations of the world that provide "models for the diagnosis and mastery of crises"[95] are incompatible not only with a rationalized lifeworld but also with the normative standards of communicative rationality. These standards require that determinations of diagnosis and cure be reached

not by reference to received truths but through processes of ongoing, unconstrained collective discussion. The positive potential Habermas attributes to new social movements lies precisely in their capacity to create autonomous public spheres in which such discussion can take place.

Before discussing the possibilities Habermas ascribes to the creation of such public spheres, the change in the role he attributes to social movements should be noted. In his earlier work social movements were a dynamic element in social learning processes. They were the means by which latently available structures of rationality were transformed into social practice; they were also the practical force that propelled societies from one level of learning to the next. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* social movements are generally seen only as forms of resistance. Although they signify the capacity of the lifeworld to resist colonization, they no longer seem to be regarded as the carriers of progressive evolutionary potentials for modernity. Two interpretations of this change in the role and function of social movements might be offered. The first is that the rationality potential (and structural possibilities) of modernity have not yet been fully realized (or exhausted), and that therefore social movements can serve only as means for transposing still latent rationality into social practice within the current learning level. This interpretation is consistent with Habermas's two-stage theory of social evolution; it is also consistent with his claim that the project of modernity has as yet not been fulfilled. However, there is really very little in Habermas's later work to indicate that he entertains any particular hopes that this project can be fulfilled, much less transcended. In what is admittedly one of his most pessimistic assessments of the possibilities for change, he states that the chances of the lifeworld's becoming "able to develop institutions out of itself which set limits to the internal dynamics and to the imperatives of an almost autonomous economic system and its administrative complements . . . are not very good."[96]

Given this rather bleak outlook, a second interpretation of the change in his treatment of social movements is equally plausible. This interpretation would see the change as reflecting his decreasing faith in the possibility of social actors developing the critical consciousness implied in his analysis of legitimation crises and his increasing reliance on the (problematic) "immunity" of the lifeworld. Immunity is, of course, different from the capacity to reverse or significantly alter pathological processes; it implies only the power to resist. Thus, as Habermas comes increasingly to focus on a lifeworld that is in some way immune to total colonization, the positive role of social movements in achieving new levels of social learning and identity gives way to an understanding of them as primarily defensive reactions. However, the fact that they are regarded as primarily defensive reactions does not mean that Habermas attaches no possibility of positive gains to them. Insofar as these movements succeed in creating space for open discussions about matters of general concern, they represent the possibility of altering the relationship between

lifeworld and system.

The notion of a public sphere in which individuals can gather to participate in open discussions of matters of general concern has interested Habermas throughout his career. In his first published work, *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*, he traces the development and degeneration of the public sphere (which in prefatory remarks he describes as "constituted by private people putting reason to use")[97] under the conditions of modern capitalism. Although not thematized to the same extent in his later work, this concept nevertheless continues to embody for him the principle of democratic self-determination and critical accountability. It stands as a structural correlate of communicative action concerned with matters of general interest.

Habermas by no means envisions a regeneration of the bourgeois public sphere. Rather, he advocates the creation of a multiplicity of public spheres, which reflect the competing centers of communication and identity that characterize modern, rationalized society: "Centers of concentrated communication that arise spontaneously out of the microdomains of everyday practice can develop into autonomous public spheres and consolidate as self-supporting higher-level intersubjectivities only to the degree that the lifeworld potential for self-organization and for the self-organized use of communication are utilized."[98] Social movements are just such instances of the utilization of this lifeworld potential for self-organization.

Habermas insists that autonomous public spheres cannot be the creation of the political system; they must arise out of the lifeworld. At the same time he also contends that such spheres cannot intervene in the political and economic systems. He cautions that social movements and other grassroots organizations "may not cross the threshold to the formal organization of independent systems" lest they be compromised and co-opted.[99] Moreover, he contends that these systems cannot in any case be successfully challenged or affected through direct action. The "self-referential closedness" of the political and economic systems renders them immune to direct intervention. But this same characteristic, Habermas argues, makes formally organized systems of action sensitive to "the reactions of the environment to their own activities."[100] It is the impregnability of systems, combined with their sensitivity to their environments, that leads Habermas to propound what can be termed a "seemly politics" of indirect influence.

Habermas believes that the formation and activities of autonomous public spheres can, if carried out in a judicious way, alter the operation of systems by affecting their environments. He argues:

> Self-organized public spheres must develop the prudent combination of power and intelligent self-restraint that is needed to sensitize the self-steering mechanisms of the state and the economy to the goal-oriented outcomes of radical democratic will formation. [This is a]

> model of boundary conflicts . . . between the lifeworld and two
> subsystems that are superior to it in complexity and can be influenced
> only indirectly, but on whose performance it at the same time
> depends.[101]

Such a strategy of prudent, indirect pressure is a far cry from any familiar
notions of radical politics. Neither "revolution as the violent seizure of power"
nor "revolution as the long march through institutions" any longer applies.
Habermas is aware that his analysis implies an entirely different conception of
radical political practice. In a 1978 interview he stated that he can conceive of
revolution only as a careful and long-term process involving "an experimental
transformation . . . of central decision-making structures" and "'acclimati-
zation' to new democratic forms of life, through a gradual enlargement of
democratic, participatory and discursive action."[102] This seemly, gradualist
vision of politics—this vision of revolution as a long-term experiment in
transforming and enlarging the sphere of discursive action—is the logical
outcome of a theoretical framework grounded in a model of the subject that
posits human actors as fundamentally oriented to achieving mutual
understanding. Habermas's vision of politics is not simply a reflection of or a
response to nonrevolutionary times; it is rather a consequence of his
understanding of what it means to be human.

In the theory of communicative action human actors are first and foremost
partners in dialogue. They are distinguished from animals by their use of
language, and language use in its "original mode" entails a mutual effort to
achieve understanding. By placing language use at the center of his
understanding of social action, Habermas privileges the communicative,
self-reflective, and cooperative competencies of actors. It follows, then, that
discursive practices and democratic will formation are central to his vision of a
politics oriented to change. Habermas's image of a better society is one defined
by the requirements of communicative rationality. There is little sense in his
work that such a society can ever be fully realized, but it may, perhaps, be more
closely approximated by a careful and cautious expansion of the realm of
rational communication on the part of competent, self-reflective actors. This is
a conception of politics entirely consistent with the premises of the theory of
communicative action. But what even his most sympathetic critics question is
whether Habermas's efforts can in any way be thought of as continuing the
tradition of theory with practical intent associated with Marx.

REFORMULATING THEORY WITH PRACTICAL INTENT

Habermas regards himself as a Marxist,[103] although he also concedes that he
is a Marxist who does not regard Marxism as "a sure-fire explanation."[104]
While rejecting such central Marxist tenets as the revolutionary agency of the

proletariat, the political significance of class as a category, the relation of base to superstructure, and the labor theory of value, Habermas continues to regard the market relations between wage-labor and capital as the main source of exploitation and power in capitalist society and to carry on the Marxian emphasis on material conditions, social practice, and the critique of ideology. He credits Marxism with giving him "the impetus" and "the analytical means" to investigate advanced capitalist societies.[105] And above all he claims the intent of Marxism as his own: "Like Marx's, my theoretical approach is guided by the intention of recovering a potential for reason encapsulated in the very forms of social reproduction."[106]

Habermas is committed to continuing the project of developing a critical social theory with the practical intention of establishing a good and just—a rational—society. He believes this project can be continued, however, only on a different basis: he not only rejects key Marxian concepts and arguments, he also rejects Marx's general theoretical framework. Thus, insofar as he retains the critical intentions and insights of Marxism, he does so only to the extent that they can be transposed onto a new theoretical framework grounded in communication rather than production. And in this transposition the notion of theory with practical intent takes on a decidedly Weberian cast. Indeed, Habermas has been described as a "left Weberian,"[107] and he allows that Marxist friends who have called him a "radical liberal" are not unjustified.[108]

There are interesting personal and intellectual similarities between Habermas and Weber. Like Weber, Habermas is seriously concerned and engaged with the issues of his day. He has been described as a "fighter,"[109] and his career has been marked by a willingness to enter into both academic and public disputes.[110] His practical activities are consonant with the theoretical emphasis he places on argument and debate: as one commentator has observed, Habermas "consistently practices the theoretical positions he preaches."[111] But Habermas has also, like Weber, insisted on separating his professional intellectual work from his engagement in issues as a participant. Habermas's discussion of the role of the philosopher brings to mind Weber's views on science as a vocation. Habermas writes that "the philosopher ought to explain the moral point of view, and—as far as possible—justify the claim to universality of this explanation, showing why it does not merely reflect the moral intuitions of the average, male, middle-class member of a modern Western society. Anything further than that is a matter for moral discourse between participants."[112] The philosopher's task, like that of Weber's scientist, is to investigate, interpret, and clarify issues. But neither the philosopher nor the scientist can or should tell us which gods to serve.

For both Weber and Habermas, the tasks of interpreting and clarifying do have political significance. Weber tells us that the positive contributions of science to practical and personal life include not only methods of thinking and clarity of thought, but also the ability to determine the best means for

accomplishing certain ends and the consequences of such determinations. At this point, however, the limits of science are reached. Habermas sees similar contributions to the self-understanding of political actors, noting that a correct interpretation of an ambiguous situation not only advances truth but also may affect "a self-understanding which in the long-run helps determine political orientations."[113] But these efforts at clarification and interpretation remain, for Habermas, necessarily separate from the discursive will formation and self-reflection of participants.

For Habermas the relationship of theory to political practice, then, is one of indirect influence, not unlike the model of indirect influence that informs his views of radical politics in contemporary society.[114] In both cases there is a strong sense of the ethics of responsibility at work, and this responsibility is to a process of unconstrained discursive will formation. This responsibility to process, in fact, can be seen as expressing another shift in theory's reference point within the emancipatory vision. In the Marxian conception of theory with practical intent, theory's primary reference point is the agent of revolutionary change. As we have seen, in Horkheimer's formulation of Critical Theory the primary reference point is shifted from the agent to the aim of the emancipatory vision. It was this shift that opened Critical Theory up to the possibility of a diversity of agents and actions of radical change. Habermas effects another shift. No longer is theory informed by or oriented to agents or aim; now the communicative framework places a conception of action at the center of the emancipatory vision, with both agents and aim deriving from and developing through action oriented to reaching mutual understanding.

The process of unconstrained discursive will formation contains within it a conception of a better world. At the same time the focus on process reflects a change in attitude toward the conception of a better world. While a conception of a better world is implicit in the communicative framework, there is no longer any pretense that such a world is fully realizable. However much Adorno's and Marcuse's analyses lead them to recognize the unlikelihood of a revolutionary transformation of society, there is still a sense in their work that it is something that might be attained, an object to be strived for. This is no longer the case with Habermas. For him, as for Weber, there is a recognition that the processes of differentiation and rationalization have created administrative and economic systems that are impregnable. Not even a socialist revolution will be able to affect qualitatively the logic and dynamics of these systems. This recognition does not lessen Habermas's commitment and orientation to the process (goal) of unconstrained discursive will formation, but it does mean that transforming the world is understood in different terms. The practical intent of the theory of communicative action is not a revolutionary transformation of society, but the creation and protection of spaces within which a radical concept of democracy, as a process of shared learning carried out in and through communicative action, might flourish.

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Conclusion: Reconceptualizing Radical Politics

> Even if the historical addressee were not beyond the reach of the theory, the relation of the theory to a practice that might possibly be guided by it would have to be defined differently than it was in the classical doctrine. Both *revolutionary self-confidence* and *theoretical self-certainty* are gone.
>
> Jürgen Habermas
> "A Reply to My Critics," 222

Critical Theory, which originated as an effort to reappraise and reconstruct Marxist theory in light of changed historical conditions, offers a conception of politics that stands at considerable remove from the one traditionally associated with Marxism. To the degree that one can speak of *a* conception of politics in Critical Theory, it is a politics informed by a vision of "distinctness without domination," a politics of a plurality of agents, a multiplicity of actions, and a vastly expanded arena of political struggle.

It is also true, however, that there is a fundamental discontinuity within Critical Theory, one effected by Habermas's paradigm shift. In extricating Critical Theory from the bounds of the philosophy of consciousness, Habermas has shifted analysis from issues of consciousness to problems of language, from the subject-object relation to the intersubjective relation, and from an instrumental to a communicative conception of action. The effect of these shifts is to change the very terms by which both the possibilities for and the practices of social transformation are understood. In this concluding chapter I first want to summarize the new conception of radical politics found in the early critical theorists' work and then, by identifying how this conception remains defined and limited by the perspective of the philosophy of consciousness, highlight the way Habermas's transposition of Critical Theory onto a new theoretical framework changes the focus of analysis. This change in focus results in a

radically different conception of politics. Indeed, as a result of Habermas's paradigm shift, the *reconceptualization of radical politics* we find in the work of the early critical theorists becomes instead a *radical reconceptualization of politics*: the politics of collective singularity is finally fully transformed into a politics of autonomous heterogeneity.

Of course, Habermas is not alone in endeavoring to reformulate the framework within which we analyze social and political life. Others are similarly engaged in challenging the assumptions and categories that have shaped the ways we understand the world and thus also the way we go about trying to change it. Feminism and postmodernism are the most significant contemporary discourses addressing these issues, and by way of drawing my discussion of Critical Theory to a close, I will briefly indicate a few of the similarities and differences among these efforts to re-envision emancipatory politics. Discussions of postmodernism and feminism abound,[1] and there is also more attention being paid to the points at which Critical Theory, post-modernism, and/or feminism intersect.[2] My intention here is not to break new ground in the analysis of these intersections, but rather, simply, to underline the relevance of Critical Theory to contemporary efforts in rethinking radical politics.

THE EARLY CRITICAL THEORISTS' RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF RADICAL POLITICS

In its origins and development within Marxism, theory with practical intent had as its primary reference point the proletariat. As the active antithesis of capital, the proletariat was the class whose particular interests represented those of humankind in general and the class that "had to struggle." By virtue of its objective position within the capitalist production process, the proletariat was regarded as having unique access to historical truth. The truth of theory was thus grounded in the situation and the struggles of the proletariat, and the role of theory was to reflect, illuminate, and contribute to these struggles. Even when the revolutionary role and capacities of the proletariat began to be questioned, its situation remained the locus of truth for theory with practical intent.

Horkheimer's assertion that the situation of the proletariat was not the guarantee of correct knowledge opened the way for a reconceptualization of radical politics. Responding to the integration of the proletariat into capitalist society and to the Stalinization of the Communist Party, Horkheimer rejected the assumption that theory has its origins and truth in the situation and struggles of the proletariat, and shifted theory's reference point from the interests and activities of a specific class to the goal of social transformation. The effect of this shift was to establish as necessary a tension between theory

and practice, a tension that allowed theory to range beyond the concrete struggles of a privileged agent. This relaxation in the relationship of theory and practice was also both reinforced by and reflected in the extension of critique beyond the bounds of political economy.

In directing his colleagues to investigate the connections between economic life, individual development, and culture, Horkheimer stimulated a considerable expansion in the scope, depth, and comprehensiveness of the critique of capitalism. Exploration of the connections between the imperatives of capitalist accumulation and the psyche, the body, social relationships, the relationship to nature, cultural practices, leisure, and life-styles exposed the multidimensionality of oppression. As a result, liberation could no longer be regarded as simply a matter of changes in the forces and relations of production, and radical politics could no longer be conceived of only in terms of class struggle.

The extension of critique to areas generally overlooked by more orthodox Marxist approaches led the early critical theorists to develop a more inclusive, expansive, and modest conception of radical politics. In rejecting the identification of the proletariat as the revolutionary subject, and in questioning, if not rejecting altogether, the concept itself, they considerably broadened the category of potential agents of change: critical thinkers, artists, students, and other marginalized social groups all became potentially significant political actors. Political struggle was also no longer understood primarily in terms of the workplace or the ballot box: resistance took on erotic, aesthetic, personal, and even (one thinks here of Horkheimer) spiritual dimensions. In addition, social transformation lost its explosive, revolutionary character. Recognition of the complexity and resilience (as well as of the resources) of systems of domination prompted the early critical theorists to look toward alternative, less direct approaches to bringing about change: they developed a conception of radical politics that reflected an awareness of the many obstacles to change and the many difficulties, dangers, and dimensions of social transformation.

This new conception of radical politics—a conception that in many ways anticipates the form and interests of new social movements—is most clearly and fully articulated in Marcuse's work. Believing that oppression, and not economic exploitation, is the criterion of revolutionary agency, he revised the concept of the working class and also turned his attention to outsiders and catalyst groups. In stressing the unity of moral-sexual and political rebellion, he added an aesthetic-erotic component to domination and resistance, thus incorporating cultural, sexual, and ecological politics into the struggle for emancipation. This, in turn, led him to appreciate the need for a diversity of political action—for a combination of old and new strategies, for a combination of gestures of love and gestures of the barricade. The repertoire of potentially radical acts even came to include the seemingly self-indulgent and apolitical "journey inwards."

RADICAL POLITICS AND THE LIMITS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In Marcuse's defense of the "journey inwards" as a radical act, we find a preoccupation that has been characteristic of the tradition of theory with practical intent. Marcuse presents the "journey inwards" as a means by which surplus consciousness and imagination may be politicized. For him, as for others working within this tradition, the development of consciousness is regarded as a necessary element in the process of human emancipation. While the early critical theorists no longer associated this consciousness with the proletariat, the necessity of a "critical," emancipatory consciousness to social transformation continued to be treated as axiomatic in their work. This is evident in the *Dialectic*'s treatment of self-conscious reason, in the centrality of nonidentity thinking to the possibility of radical change in Adorno's work, and in Marcuse's interest in the development of a new sensibility. From Marx through Marcuse an abiding concern is with how a "true," "correct," or "revolutionary" consciousness is variously developed, thwarted, distorted, or realized. An underlying assumption is that there is an essential human consciousness waiting or wanting to be developed. This essential consciousness and its development are tied to the model of the subject that informs the various theorists' work—labor in Marx, the critical capacity of thought in Horkheimer and Adorno, sensuousness in Marcuse. Individuals or groups whose objective positions allow them to experience, develop, and express this consciousness then become identified as the agents of social transformation.

In Habermas's work, however, the issue of consciousness—and with it the need to identify that group in which the correct consciousness can develop—has disappeared. The "fragmented consciousness" is not "false consciousness," for there is no longer any assumption of an essential human consciousness to be realized. There are, rather, only higher-level, intersubjectively achieved commonalities. In Habermas's shift of the focus from consciousness to language, the issue becomes not the development or distortion of correct consciousness (in general or in a particular privileged group), but the development or distortion of the processes of reaching mutual understanding. Since all human actors participate in these processes, all are also, and always, potential agents of transformation.

The shift of focus from consciousness to language has also involved a rejection of the privilege accorded to the subject-object relation by the philosophy of consciousness. The tradition of theory with practical intent— developing out of Marx's reformulation of the Hegelian dialectic and continuing through the work of the early critical theorists—has remained firmly anchored in the subject-object model. The subject (be it *Geist*, the proletariat, or the human species as a whole) is posited as standing over and against the object (nature, society), a world it has created but from which it is

alienated. History is seen as the dynamic process of the subject's externalization and realization of its own potentialities, and emancipation is understood as the subject's reappropriation of its own alienated objectivity.[3]

There is ample evidence of discomfort with the subject-object model in the early critical theorists' work. Their general emphasis on nonidentity, Adorno's resolve to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity, his argument for the "dialectical primacy of the object," and the call for a new relationship to nature all indicate recognition of the limits and consequences of such a model. Nevertheless, the early critical theorists never fully break free of it. The relationship between humankind and nature—whether it be mediated by fear or by the quest for pleasure—remains basic to their work. And their conceptions of history—as regression, as constituted via the nonidentity of subject and object, or as the dialectic of domination—all incorporate a sense of a single dynamic arising out of the subject-object relationship. This dynamic is then identified as either making possible or precluding the emancipation of humankind's potentialities and true consciousness.

In Habermas's theory of communicative action the subject-subject relation is made primary: the intersubjective relation, rather than the relation between the subject and the object, becomes the foundation of social analysis. Insisting that the relation of humankind to the world it inhabits (and human consciousness) is constituted within linguistically mediated intersubjective relations, Habermas both dissolves the issue of consciousness into that of mutually achieved understanding and reconceptualizes history as the development of the species's competencies through distinct and contingent collective learning processes. The species's development is no longer understood only in terms of its increasing control over (or domination by) the object world. Learning occurs not only in the dimension of technically useful knowledge, which increases the species's control over its natural and social environment, but also in the dimension of moral-practical consciousness, which results in new levels of social-normative knowledge and forms of social interaction. Learning in the latter dimension is not only regarded as following its own logic but as regulating the pace of, and the possibilities for, social evolution. Therefore, analysis of what precludes or makes possible the further development of the species's competencies must incorporate, if not begin with, the intersubjective relation.

The shift from a perspective shaped by the subject-object relation to one grounded in the intersubjective relation not only alters the understanding of the subject-object relation and the dynamics of history and social evolution, but it also requires a change in the dominant conception of action. The philosophy of consciousness posits the subject as relating to the object through cognition and manipulation. An instrumental conception of action is dominant: human beings gain knowledge about the world and put it to effective use in adapting to or manipulating that world. Such a conception of action informs an understanding of emancipation as entailing the assertion of the subject's control over the

object world. Models of revolution that have emerged within the tradition of theory with practical intent—ranging from the revolutionary seizure of power to the long march through institutions—all represent some variation on this theme.

Again, one finds many indications of discomfort with such conceptions in the work of the early critical theorists. The call for a new relationship to nature, the critique of instrumental reason, and reservations about traditional ways and means of radical practice all reflect reservations about the instrumental conception of action. Yet, because the subject-object model continues to define their perspectives, an instrumental conception of action continues to haunt their work. In the *Dialectic* humankind is understood in terms of its fundamental intention to dominate nature; the species is constituted through its self-assertion over nature, which it manipulates and controls in the interests of its needs and desires. In Marcuse's work labor continues to be treated as the medium of human self-creation, and even when Eros is incorporated into the model of the subject, the erotic impulse is understood in terms of preserving and enriching life through the mastery of nature.

Their calls for a new nondominating relation to nature, self, and others (and thus a non-instrumental conception of action) notwithstanding, the early critical theorists lack a framework that would allow them fully to envision or articulate different conceptions of action. This is especially apparent in the general suspicion of action that characterizes Adorno's and Horkheimer's work: here, standing apart from and outside of action are the preferred forms of resistance. The image of the "imaginary witness" and the forms of practice they do advocate—longing, faith, imagination, fantasy, as well as action directed toward "the smallest things"—reflect their skepticism about the possibilities for non-instrumental action. Marcuse's "Great Refusal" indicates similar difficulties, and even the "journey inwards" becomes merely a means by which to develop the consciousness necessary to reassert the subject's control over the world.

When the intersubjective relation grounds the framework of analysis, instrumental action is displaced by a communicative conception of action. Action is no longer conceived of primarily in terms of the subject's relation to the object, nor is the goal or intention of action any longer understood in terms of the subject understanding or manipulating the object. Communicative action is the action of subjects in relation to each other; its goal is that of achieving mutual understanding about a practical situation confronting them. This displacement of an instrumental by a communicative conception of action changes the meaning of emancipation and emancipatory politics. Emancipation now becomes not a matter of the species gaining control over the object world but rather a matter of the removal of internal and external constraints on the processes of reaching mutual understanding. And this is achieved not through the struggle to assert control but through a long-term, cooperative process in

which means and ends become one and the same. Unconstrained discursive will formation is both the goal and the process of emancipatory politics.

RADICAL RECONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF POLITICS: HABERMAS, FEMINISM, AND POSTMODERNISM

The tradition of theory with practical intent has been shaped by a conception of a subject that through becoming fully conscious of itself, is able to gain control over or establish a more appropriate relationship to the object. Theory's role is to reflect and contribute to the development of the subject's consciousness, thereby playing its part in bringing about the desired relationship between humankind and the natural and social worlds. The politics of this tradition have been about the struggles to develop that correct consciousness and to establish that appropriate relationship.

This same basic formula—of a subject becoming conscious of itself and establishing a more appropriate relation to the object—remains in effect in the early critical theorists' work. Indeed, it is the persistence of this formula that creates certain tensions in their reconceptualizations of radical politics. In rejecting the proletariat as revolutionary subject and extending their critique beyond political economy, the early critical theorists expanded the categories of agents and actions and pointed to a politics of autonomous heterogeneity. Yet the notion of an essential consciousness continues to affect their views on agents, and an instrumental conception of action (a conception that renders other subjects as objects) remains dominant. Thus, while we find in their work anticipations of an entirely different vision of radical politics, we also find Marcuse continuing to search for a revolutionary subject and Horkheimer and Adorno tending to turn away from politics altogether.

Nevertheless, their efforts, and in particular their expansion of the critique of capitalist society, did pave the way for Habermas's radical reconceptualization of politics. In directing attention to "superstructural" phenomena, to the dynamics and dimensions of life beyond the sphere of production, the early critical theorists made an understanding of intersubjective relations essential to an understanding of the possibilities for social change. Habermas simply recognized that such an understanding could not adequately be developed within a perspective that posits as primary the subject-object relation. In establishing Critical Theory on new theoretical foundations, Habermas has been able to develop more fully the insights and implications of his predecessors' work. And, in the theory of communicative action, the politics of autonomous heterogeneity finally gains a theoretical foundation.

It is also true, however, that with Habermas's paradigm shift, the old formula and conventional standards for theory with practical intent collapse. We can no longer think in terms of the subject (or humankind) developing the

consciousness that allows it to establish a more appropriate relation to the object (or its natural and social environments). There is no longer one privileged agent that theory can identify and address; there is no longer a privileged agent in whose situation theory finds its truth. Nor, consequently, can totalistic claims be advanced by theory on behalf of such an agent. The conception of politics that emerges from the theory of communicative action assumes, and indeed requires, competing claims, interpretations, and centers of communication. Emancipatory politics is no longer about the struggle to gain power in order to impose a particular claim or interpretation; rather, the struggle is about expanding the opportunity for groups to determine, and live according to, their own claims and interpretations.

This new vision of emancipatory politics has a good deal in common with those that are being developed and articulated within feminism and postmodernism. Feminism and postmodernism are of course guided by different interests. Feminism, in working to end women's oppression, remains significantly, if uncomfortably, grounded in the modernist project that the postmodernists criticize and seek to dismantle. Moreover, neither feminism nor postmodernism offers unambiguous or consistent frameworks for understanding the world, much less blueprints for how to go about changing it. Feminism, in all its varieties, is at least consistently oriented to changing the world, although what should be changed and how to go about effecting such changes are subjects of considerable debate.[4] The same cannot be said for postmodernism, which encompasses contradictory radical, apolitical, and conservative (if not reactionary) tendencies.[5] Nevertheless, the models of radical politics that one finds in these contemporary discourses contain striking similarities to that put forth by Habermas.

Feminist and postmodernist emancipatory politics emphasize and champion diversity and difference. They advocate multiple forms and sites of struggle. They distrust totalizing claims, large-scale organization and hierarchy, and strategies or directives developed and handed down from above. They put forth visions of local politics; of small groups developing programs and taking actions that are responsive to the interests and needs of the community; of people defining and empowering themselves through changing their social and personal environments. Feminist and postmodernist politics are being continuously constructed in the ongoing, face-to-face interactions of people engaged in determining the contours and dynamics of their own lives.

While feminist and postmodernist models of emancipatory politics share many features with Habermas's radical reconceptualization of politics, in many senses they are closer in spirit to the early critical theorists than to Habermas. This can be directly attributed to the model of the subject that informs Habermas's work. The Habermasian actor is social, cooperative, competent, decidedly rational, and strangely disembodied. This model of the subject shapes his "seemly" model of politics. The playful, erotic, physical, aesthetic,

irrational, conflicted, and conflictual aspects of human being—aspects of central significance to the analyses and politics of postmodernists, feminists, and early critical theorists—are absent. Also absent from Habermas's conception of politics is a clear sense of the multiple dimensions of oppression and resistance.

In defining the overriding problem of advanced capitalist societies as the colonization of the lifeworld and in casting "radical" political action in terms of resistance to this colonization, Habermas comes close to eliminating differentiated forms of oppression and resistance from the picture altogether. Lifeworld colonization is presented as a relentless, impersonal force affecting the anonymous, homogeneous masses with equal intensity. And resistance to this colonization is conceived of as a function of the very nature of the lifeworld, not of the human beings who inhabit it. The early critical theorists' conceptions of the totally administered society and one-dimensional society also tended to obscure points and sources of resistance and conflict. But because they associated resistance with certain qualities of human being (mind, Eros) and certain types of experience (intellectual work, art, the mental labor of the new working class), different forms of oppression and resistance could more easily be discerned.

Difference and diversity—in general, and in oppression and resistance, in particular—are central to feminist and postmodernist analyses. There is a keen appreciation not only of the multiple axes (class, race, gender, etc.) along which domination and subordination operate, but also of the different levels (the institutional, the communal, the interpersonal, and the intrapsychic) on which oppression and resistance take place.[6] Habermas's focus on lifeworld colonization and resistance obscures these different forms, levels, and sites of oppression and resistance. Thus, while his analysis of lifeworld colonization may provide important insights into characteristic processes of advanced capitalist societies, its ability to reflect or inform radical politics is limited.

If Habermas's theory of communicative action cannot incorporate or account for the unruly, passionate aspects of human being or the many forms, levels, and sites of oppression and resistance, it nevertheless succeeds in articulating and grounding what is a fundamental characteristic of all the new conceptions of emancipatory politics. All these new conceptions emphasize what Habermas calls "discursive will formation." The cooperative, communicative processes of self-definition and self-determination—far more than the status or identity of a privileged collective actor or the goal of revolutionary social transformation—animate these new forms of radical politics. The unconstrained discursive will formation that serves as both means and ends in these new visions, and that provides the politics of autonomous heterogeneity with its logic and locus, finds its theoretical and normative foundation in Habermas's communicative paradigm.

WHITHER THEORY WITH PRACTICAL INTENT?

Dramatic changes in society and culture have led to, and are reflected in, widespread dissatisfaction with how we have traditionally interpreted the world. This dissatisfaction is apparent not only in abstract theoretical discourses but also in our everyday practices. As social theorists and philosophers endeavor to rework "conceptions of human being and human doing, social reproduction and social transformation,"[7] we are all reminded in our daily lives that our commonsense understandings of social life, political life, and human life are no longer adequate. The oppositions and categories that have shaped theoretical and commonsense knowledge—oppositions of subject and object, fact and value, matter and spirit, individual and society, mind and body, female and male, heterosexual and homosexual, East and West, Left and Right, nature and nurture—are being challenged in theory and practice. Richard Bernstein has observed that there are "many signs that the deep assumptions, commitments, and metaphors that have shaped these oppositions, and from which they gain their seductive power, are being called into question. . . . [T]here is a growing sense that something is wrong with the ways in which relevant issues and options are posed—a sense that something is happening that is changing the categorial structure and patterns within which we think and act."[8] Among the many responses to this growing sense that something is wrong are contemporary efforts to reconceptualize radical politics.

What the outcomes of these efforts will be remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that as the categories through (and within) which we understand the world are reformulated, so too will be our understanding of what it means to change the world and our ideas about how to act toward that end. The old model of theory with practical intent—a model within which the unity of theory and practice lies in the activities of a particular group whose interests represent the interests of humankind as such, a model that informs a politics of collective singularity, a model shaped by a vision of emancipation in which the subject asserts its control over the object—is no longer either satisfactory or even really emancipatory. Whether there can or even should be a single model of emancipatory politics, a model that could provide clear-cut standards for theory with practical intent, is an unresolved practical and theoretical issue (and, perhaps, preferably so). Thus the question with which I began—the question of Critical Theory's status as theory with practical intent—leads us to the question of the status and meaning of theory with practical intent itself. And for this question there is no clear answer, other than to say that changing historical conditions and the consequent efforts to develop new models of emancipatory politics require that the standards for theory with practical intent be rethought.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Richard J. Bernstein, *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 206.

2. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P. S. Falla (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 3: 355.

3. Paul Connerton, *The Tragedy of the Enlightenment: An Essay on the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 135.

4. Karl E. Klare, "The Critique of Everyday Life, the New Left, and the Unrecognizable Marxism," in *The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism since Lenin*, ed. Dick Howard and Karl E. Klare (New York: Basic, 1972), 28.

5. Phil Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School: A Marxist Perspective* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 55.

6. Göran Therborn, "The Frankfurt School," in *Foundations of the Frankfurt School of Social Research*, ed. Judith Marcus and Zoltán Tar (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1984), 362.

7. Dick Howard, "A Politics in Search of the Political," *Theory and Society* 1 (1974): 281.

8. Ibid., 285.

9. See, for example, Kolakowski, 3: 342; Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research, 1923–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 291–92; and Zoltán Tar, *The Frankfurt School: The Critical Theories of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Wiley, 1977), 18, 205.

10. See Connerton, 349–52; Therborn, 366; and David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 364–65.

11. Helmut Dubiel, *Theory and Politics: Studies in the Development of Critical Theory*, trans. Benjamin Gregg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 4.

12. See Held, 364–66.

13. Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of*

Critical Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 351.

14. Ibid., 352.

15. Referring to the appropriation by social scientists of Imre Lakatos's notion of core concepts in research programs, Stephen K. White begins his study of Habermas's work with a similar claim concerning the model of the subject; I have adopted this term from him. *The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas: Reason, Justice and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 7.

16. Dennis Wrong, "The Oversocialized Conception of Man," *American Sociological Review* 26, no. 2 (April 1961): 192.

17. Russell Jacoby, "Towards a Critique of Automatic Marxism: The Politics of Philosophy from Lukács to the Frankfurt School," *Telos* 10 (Winter 1971): 119.

CHAPTER 1

1. Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 529.

2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Tucker, 491.

3. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," in Tucker, 64.

4. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, ed. Dirk J. Struik, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 67.

5. These points are summarized in the concluding passages of "The Poverty of Philosophy" (in Tucker, 218).

6. See Marx's speech to the Congress of the First International in Amsterdam, September 8, 1872 (in Tucker, 523).

7. Russell Jacoby, *Dialectic of Defeat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 91.

8. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Tucker, 595.

9. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 474.

10. Ibid., 483.

11. Karl Marx, "Postface to the 2nd Edition," *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1977), 1: 101.

12. Karl Kautsky, *The Road To Power*, trans. A. M. Simons (Chicago: Samuel A. Bloch, 1909), 50.

13. Ibid., 64.

14. Kolakowski, 2: 46.

15. Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 114.

16. See Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions*, trans. Patrick Lavin (Detroit: Marxian Educational Society, 1925).

17. V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), 31.

18. See Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, trans. Edith C. Harvey (New York: Schocken, 1961).

19. For general discussions of Lukács's life and work, see Andrew Arato and Paul

Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism* (New York: Seabury, 1979), and Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács—From Romanticism to Bolshevism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: New Left Books, 1979). Löwy's account in particular stresses the consistencies in Lukács's work and takes issues with his critics. See also Kolakowski, vol. 2.

20. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), xxiii.

21. Ibid., 208–9.

22. Ibid., 70.

23. Ibid., 84.

24. Ibid., 100.

25. Ibid., 93.

26. Ibid., 52.

27. Ibid., 51.

28. Lukács's theory of the party is contained in the chapter "Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization" in *History and Class Consciousness*; see especially 326–30.

29. Discussions of this issue can be found in Löwy, ch. 5; Arato and Breines, 156–60, and ch. 10; Kolakowski, 3: 280–83, 300–307; and Andrew Feenberg, "Lukács and the Critique of 'Orthodox' Marxism," *The Philosophical Forum*, 3, no. 3–4 (1972): 422–67.

30. Lukács's identification of the Party as the vehicle by which consciousness would be developed in the proletariat represents another step in a progression discernible in Marx's treatment of Hegel. For Hegel the human species is the vehicle through which Spirit actualizes itself and becomes fully self-conscious. Marx then replaces Spirit with the human species and identifies the proletariat as the vehicle through which the species becomes fully self-conscious. With Lukács the species remains only a background assumption, and now we find the Party cast as the means by which the proletariat achieves true consciousness. This progression brings to mind Trotsky's prescient observation concerning the Bolshevik Party's desire to substitute itself for the proletariat: he foresaw a process whereby "the party organization substitutes itself for the party, the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organization and, finally, a 'dictator' substitutes himself for the Central Committee." Leon Trotsky, *Nashi Politicheskye Zadachi* (Geneva, 1904), 54, as quoted in Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 199.

CHAPTER 2

1. For a detailed history of the Institute for Social Research and Critical Theory, see Jay's *Dialectical Imagination*.

2. The first director named was the economist Kurt Albert Gerlach, who died unexpectedly before assuming his post.

3. In the "Introduction" to Marcus and Tar, Tar notes that the Grünberg era is a relatively unchronicled period and cites Ulrike Migdal's *Die Frügeschichte des Frankfurter Instituts für Sozialforschung* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1981) as an effort to fill this gap.

4. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 4.

5. Tar states that the abundance of funds was one of the main reasons the affiliation with Columbia University went so smoothly ("Introduction", Marcus and Tar, 8). Jay also mentions that the Institute's financial independence meant its associates were not forced into the struggle for existence that was the lot of other émigrés; he also credits Horkheimer's success in keeping the Institute "self-consciously German" during its period of exile to this independence (*Dialectical Imagination*, 114).

6. Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 7.

7. Stephen E. Bronner and Douglas M. Kellner, "Introduction," *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, ed. Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas MacKay Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1989), 4.

8. See, for example, Marcuse's comments in "Theory and Politics: A Discussion with Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, Heinz Lubasz and Telman Spengler," *Telos* 38 (Winter 1978–1979): 128.

9. Max Horkheimer, "The State of Contemporary Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research," trans. Peter Wagner, in Bronner and Kellner, 31.

10. Ibid., 33

11. Held, 24.

12. Horkheimer, " State of Contemporary Social Philosophy," 34.

13. Tom Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School* (London: Tavistock, 1984), 16.

14. Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. Matthew J. Connell et al. (New York: Continuum, 1972), 198.

15. Ibid., 210.

16. Ibid., 199.

17. Ibid., 214.

18. Ibid., 242.

19. See in particular part 1 of Dubiel's *Theory and Politics*.

20. As quoted in Dubiel, 25.

21. Max Horkheimer, "Materialism and Morality," trans. G. Frederick Hunter and John Torpey, *Telos* 69 (Fall 1986): 113.

22. Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Continuum, 1974), 150.

23. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974), 194.

24. Herbert Marcuse, "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis Based on Bahro's Analysis," in *Rudolf Bahro: Critical Responses*, ed. Ulf Worter (White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1980), 33.

25. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 196.

26. Dubiel, 100–102.

27. Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," 215–16.

28. Ibid., 214.

CHAPTER 3

1. Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*, 87.

2. Dubiel, 100–107.

3. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), ix.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., xiii.

6. Ibid., 3.

7. Ibid., xiii.

8. Ibid., xi.

9. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 1: 366.

10. Held, 150–51.

11. Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*, 87–88.

12. Dubiel points out that this argument is structurally analogous to Marx's claim that only from the vantage point of capitalism do pre-capitalist formations become understandable (89).

13. Horkheimer and Adorno, 223.

14. Ibid., 231–36.

15. Ibid., 55.

16. Ibid., 56.

17. Ibid., 46.

18. Ibid., 57.

19. In the *Dialectic*, "Excursus I: Odysseus or the Myth of Enlightenment" contains many comments on patriarchy, women and marriage, and women as representative of nature; "Excursus II: Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality" offers a critique of sexual objectification. Also see Kellner's discussion of the *Dialectic* in terms of Critical Theory and sexual politics (*Critical Theory, Modernity and Marxism*, 90–93).

20. Horkheimer and Adorno, 37.

21. Ibid., 9.

22. Ibid., 7.

23. Ibid., 25.

24. Ibid., 27.

25. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, 94.

26. Horkheimer and Adorno, 36.

27. Theodor Adorno, "The Actuality of Philosophy," *Telos* 31 (Spring 1977): 125.

28. Max Horkheimer, "Authority and the Family," in *Critical Theory*, 51.

29. Benhabib, 10–11.

30. Ibid., 167.

31. George Friedman, *The Political Philosophy of the Frankfurt School* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 55.

32. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, 176.

33. Horkheimer and Adorno, 34.

34. Ibid., 15.

35. Ibid., 16.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., xiv.

38. Ibid., ix.

39. Ibid., 221.

40. Ibid., x.

41. For discussions of these two "camps," see Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 143–72; Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*, 66–80; Dubiel, 76–81; and Held, 52–65. There is some disagreement as to whether Marcuse was most closely identified with Neumann's position or occupied a more intermediate position between the two camps.

42. Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944).

43. Friedrich Pollock, "State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9, no. 2 (1941).

44. Friedrich Pollock, "Is National Socialism a New Order?" *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9, no. 3 (1941): 445.

45. Ibid., 454.

46. Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*, 79.

47. See Horkheimer's "The Authoritarian State" in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1982).

48. For a discussion of Institute members' concern with culture and aesthetics, see Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, ch. 6.

49. Theodor Adorno, "Theses upon Art and Religion Today," *Kenyon Review* 3, no. 4 (Autumn 1945): 678.

50. Theodor Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," trans. Anson G. Rabinach, *New German Critique* 6 (Fall 1975): 14.

51. Horkheimer and Adorno, 158.

52. Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," 12.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., 17.

55. Horkheimer and Adorno, xv.

56. Ibid., 144.

57. Ibid., xiv.

58. Max Horkheimer, "Threats to Freedom," in *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell et al. (New York: Continuum, 1974), 156.

59. Horkheimer and Adorno, 13.

60. Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," 19.

61. Dubiel, 95.

62. Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*, 88.

63. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: Free Press, 1977), 61.

64. Horkheimer and Adorno, xv.

65. Ibid., xiv.

66. Ibid., 134.

67. Ibid., xiii.

68. Ibid., 13.

69. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 37.

70. Ibid., 38.

71. Horkheimer and Adorno, 121.

72. Ibid., xiii.

73. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 18.

74. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, 41.

75. Theodor Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 28.

76. Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," 223.

77. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 26.

78. Theodor Adorno, "The Sociology of Knowledge and Its Consciousness," in *Prisms*, 48. Adorno also speaks of the dialectic of intellectual freedom in "Cultural Criticism and Society" (also in *Prisms*), and comments on the precarious position of intellectuals can be found throughout *Minima Moralia*.

79. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 26.

80. Horkheimer and Adorno, xiii.

81. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, 177.

82. Ibid.

83. Max Horkheimer, "The Authoritarian State," in Arato and Gebhardt, 117.

84. Max Horkheimer, "On the Problem of Truth," in Arato and Gebhardt, 422.

85. Claus Offe, "Technik und Eindimensionalität: Eine Version der Technokratie-these," in *Antworten auf Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 87, quoted in Benhabib, 179.

86. Horkheimer and Adorno, 256.

87. Ibid.

88. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 206.

89. Theodor Adorno, "Resignation," trans. Wes Blomster, in *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978): 166.

90. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, 184.

91. Ibid., vi.

92. Horkheimer and Adorno, 41.

93. Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," 214.

94. Adorno, "Resignation," 168.

95. Horkheimer and Adorno, 225.

96. Herbert Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon, 1968), 154, 155.

97. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 122–23.

98. Theodor Adorno, "On the Historical Adequacy of Consciousness," interview with Peter von Haselberg, trans. Wes Blomster, *Telos* 56 (Summer 1983): 101.

99. Horkheimer and Adorno, 36.

CHAPTER 4

1. Theodor Adorno, "Offener Brief an Max Horkheimer," *Die Zeit* (February 12, 1965): 32, quoted in Buck-Morss, 10.

2. Martin Jay, *Adorno* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 27.

3. Both would complete their doctorates with theses on philosophers (Horkheimer on Kant in 1922, Adorno on Husserl in 1924) and continue on academic career paths, albeit by slightly different routes. Horkheimer completed his *Habilitationsschrift*, also on Kant, in 1925 and gave his first lecture as a *Privatdozent* that same year. After receiving his doctorate, Adorno went to Vienna to study music composition with Alban

Berg. When he returned to Frankfurt, he completed his *Habilitationsschrift*, a neo-Kantian justification of Freud, but withdrew it before it was examined. Subsequently he wrote a study of Kierkegaard's aesthetics which was accepted for his *Habilitation* and he became a *Privatdozent* in 1931.

4. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, vii.

5. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 18.

6. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 65.

7. Ludwig Marcuse, *Mein zwanzigstes Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1860), 114, quoted in Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 7.

8. Arthur Koestler, *Arrow in the Blue: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 1: 131, quoted in Buck-Morss, 203 n.149.

9. Ernest Krenek, "Preface to Theodor Adorno and Ernest Krenek," *Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt, 1974): 8, quoted in Jay, *Adorno*, 27.

10. Connerton, 11.

11. Held, 201.

12. Buck-Morss, 67.

13. Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: New Left Books, 1976), 93.

14. See Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*, 210, and Slater, 88.

15. Bronner and Kellner, 8.

16. Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*, 113.

17. Max Horkheimer, "Theism and Atheism," in *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, 50.

18. Horkheimer, "Materialism and Metaphysics," in *Critical Theory*, 44.

19. Horkheimer, "Schopenhauer Today," in *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, 73–74. It is this fundamentally eudaemonistic ethic that leads Horkheimer to defend egoism and personal happiness against both bourgeois and Marxist asceticism. See his essay "Egoism and the Freedom Movement: On the Anthropology of the Bourgeois Era," trans. David J. Parent, *Telos* 54 (Winter 1982–83).

20. Horkheimer, "Materialism and Morality," 104.

21. Ibid., 105.

22. Ibid., 105–6.

23. Max Horkheimer, "Thoughts on Religion," in *Critical Theory*, 130.

24. Ibid., 129.

25. Max Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline: Notes 1926–1931 and 1950–1969*, trans. Michael Shaw (New York: Seabury, 1978), 185.

26. Horkheimer, "Thoughts on Religion," 129.

27. Ibid.

28. Buck-Morss, 197 n.82.

29. Max Horkheimer, *Aus der Pubertät: Novellen und Tagebuchblätter*, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Munich: Kosel-Verlag, 1974), 150–51, quoted in Buck-Morss, 9.

30. Horkheimer, *Aus der Pubertät*, quoted in Tar, 20.

31. Ibid., 18.

32. Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline*, 92.

33. Ibid., 101.

34. Ibid., 36.

35. Ibid., 29.

36. Max Horkheimer, "Postscript," in *Critical Theory*, 246.

37. Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," 227.

38. Ibid., 242.

39. Max Horkheimer, *Vervaltete welt? Ein Gesprach* (Zurich, 1970), 9, quoted in Tar, 180.

40. Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline*, 36.

41. Horkheimer, "Materialism and Morality," 113–14.

42. See Steven Lukes, *Marxism and Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), for a discussion of the problem of morality in Marxism.

43. John Torpey suggests that the failure to include "Materialism and Morality" among the essays published in *Critical Theory* may well be a reflection of the popular perception of the incompatibility of Marxism and morality. He proposes that the editors may have found Horkheimer's concern with Kantian ethics "too old-fashioned" and a "digression from the 'real' concerns of left politics." "Ethics and Critical Theory: From Horkheimer to Habermas," *Telos* 69 (Fall 1986): 68.

44. Horkheimer, "Materialism and Morality," 95.

45. Ibid., 100.

46. Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline*, 34.

47. Horkheimer, "Materialism and Morality," 106–8.

48. Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline*, 89, 84.

49. Ibid., 157–58.

50. Horkheimer, "Preface," in *Critical Theory*, vi.

51. Horkheimer, "Schopenhauer Today," 69, 89.

52. Horkheimer, "Preface," ix.

53. Horkheimer, "Schopenhauer Today," 65.

54. Max Horkheimer, "Kritishe Theorie, Gestern und Heute," in *Gesellschaft im Uebergang* (Frankfurt, 1972), 162, quoted in Gérard Raulet, "What Good is Schopenhauer? Remarks on Horkheimer's Pessimism," trans. David J. Parent, *Telos* 42 (Winter 1979–80): 105.

55. Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline*, 220.

56. Ibid., 162.

57. Ibid., 154.

58. Max Horkheimer, "On the Concept of Freedom," trans. Victor A. Velen, *Diogenes* 53 (Spring 1966): 79.

59. Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline*, 234.

60. Ibid., 159.

61. Ibid., 160–61.

62. Ibid., 189.

63. Horkheimer's distrust of equality is also evident in his suspicion that equal rights for men and women in marriage contributes to the isolation of individuals which in turn serves the interests of the powers that be (see *Dawn and Decline*, 135). Concerning equal rights for women, he writes, "As woman becomes a subject, she becomes less of one" (ibid., 176).

64. Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline*, 223.

65. Horkheimer, "Theism and Atheism," 49.

66. Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline*, 239.

67. Ibid., 240.

68. Ibid., 221.

69. Ibid., 206.

70. Adorno, "Actuality of Philosophy," 126.

71. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 247.

72. Gillian Rose points out that every year from 1920 until 1969, the year of his death, Adorno published something on music; indeed, over half of his published work is on music. *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 9–10.

73. Both Jay, in *Adorno* (57), and Buck-Morss (113) comment on this consistency.

74. Buck-Morss surmises that this was probably the result of Adorno's friendship with Horkheimer, who was by this time associated with the Institute for Social Research (19).

75. Ibid., 20.

76. Rose, 35.

77. Theodor Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?" trans. Fred van Gelder, in *Modern German Sociology*, ed. Volker Meja, Dieter Misgeld, and Nico Stehr (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 238.

78. Theodor Adorno, "Society," trans. F. R. Jameson, *Salamagundi* 10–11 (1969–70): 149–50. Note: I have followed Jay's translation of *Klassengesellschaft* as "class society" rather than Jameson's as "class struggle" (see Jay, *Adorno*, 171–72 n.65).

79. Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?," 241.

80. Theodor Adorno, "Introduction," in *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London: Heinemann, 1969), 12.

81. Adorno, "Actuality of Philosophy," 133.

82. Theodor Adorno, "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America," trans. Donald Fleming, in *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960*, ed. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 342.

83. Fredric Jameson, *Late Capitalism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 1990), 4.

84. Ibid.

85. Buck-Morss, 24.

86. Ibid., 42.

87. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), xx.

88. Theodor Adorno, "Subject and Object," in Arato and Gebhardt.

89. Ibid., 505.

90. Ibid., 511. Adorno conceives of the relationship of individual and society not in terms of a duality but in terms of a "constellation," a concept he adopted from Walter Benjamin. In "The Idea of Natural History," trans. Bob Hullot-Kentor, *Telos* 60 (Summer 1984): 120, Adorno refers to "constellation" as an "alternative logical structure." Jay, who identifies "constellation" as one of Adorno's favorite metaphors, describes it as composed of a "juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle" (*Adorno*, 14–15). The constellation that Adorno posits as an alternative to the duality of individual and society is formed and maintained by the tension between three points: the object (society as an objective form or structure, as well as the world in

its materiality); the collective subject (society as subject, as the agent of its own reproduction); and the empirical subject. Society, as objective form and collective subject, is a powerful force within this constellation, but it is not some permanent, Durkheimian entity hovering over and fully determining the individual subject. See "Subject and Object," 510–11.

91. Ibid., 510.

92. Buck-Morss, 81.

93. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, xx.

94. Adorno, *Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, 21.

95. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 320.

96. Theodor Adorno, Husserl ms. "Zur Philosophie Husserls," 1933–37, Frankfurt am Main, Adorno estate, 141, quoted in Buck-Morss, 47.

97. Adorno, "Subject and Object," 499

98. Adorno, "Actuality of Philosophy," 120.

99. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 113.

100. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 143.

101. Adorno, "Resignation," 168.

102. Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," in *Prisms*, 28.

103. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 141. It is in fact this capacity of thought that he identifies with negative dialectics: he writes that "if it were possible to define dialectics, this would be a definition worth suggesting" (ibid.).

104. Theodor Adorno, "Commitment," trans. Francis McDonagh, in Arato and Gebhardt, 317.

105. Adorno, "Actuality of Philosophy," 131.

106. Adorno, "On the Historical Adequacy of Consciousness," 103.

107. Adorno, "Subject and Object," 506.

108. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 89–90.

109. Adorno, "Subject and Object," 506.

110. Jay, *Adorno*, 74.

111. Theodor Adorno, "Schubert" (1928), in *Moments Musicaux: Neugedruckte Aufsätze, 1928 bis 1962* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), 26, quoted in Buck-Morss, 76.

112. Theodor Adorno, "Education for Autonomy," interview with Hellmut Becker, trans. David J. Parent, *Telos* 56 (Summer 1983): 110.

113. Max Horkheimer, letter to F. Pollack, quoted in Robert Hullot-Kentor, "Back to Adorno," *Telos* 81 (Fall 1989): 12.

114. Held, 201.

115. As Hullot-Kentor suggests (6–7), this may also explain why Adorno supported republication of the *Dialectic*, while Horkheimer repeatedly blocked such efforts.

116. Rose, 148.

117. See "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society," 245.

118. Adorno, "Subject and Object," 500.

119. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 103.

CHAPTER 5

1. The many articles written about Marcuse during this period attest to his status: among the titles, one finds "Marcuse, Norman Vincent Peale of the Left," "Improbable Guru of Surrealistic Politics," "Seven Heroes of the New Left," "California Left: Mao, Marx, and Marcuse." A comprehensive list of articles and books on Marcuse can be found in Morton Schoolman's *The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse* (New York: New York University Press, 1984).

2. Herbert Marcuse, "Heidegger's Politics: An Interview with Herbert Marcuse by Frederick Olafson" in Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Webel, et al., *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1988), 96.

3. Herbert Marcuse, "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," trans. Douglas Kellner, *Telos* 4 (Fall 1969): 3.

4. Ibid., 22.

5. Ibid.

6. For example, while Held argues that the extent of Heidegger's influence has been exaggerated (224) and Martin Schoolman (*The Imaginary Witness*, 4), maintains that Marcuse took "no more than an inspiration and a general focus" from Heidegger, Paul Piconne and Alexander Delfini argue in favor of a more significant and decisive influence, claiming that "Marcuse in 1928 . . . is fundamentally the same Marcuse of 1970" ("Herbert Marcuse's Heideggerian Marxism," *Telos* 6 [Fall 1970]: 39). See also Schoolman, "Introduction to Marcuse's 'On the Problem of the Dialectic,'" *Telos* 27 (Spring 1976), and Jay, *Dialectical Imagination, 71–77.*

7. Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism," in *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, trans. Joris de Bres (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 3.

8. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon, 1966), 90–91.

9. Freudian themes can be found in articles Marcuse wrote in the 1930s, for example, "The Affirmative Nature of Culture" and "On Hedonism" in *Negations*. However, *Eros and Civilization* represents his first sustained examination and integration of Freud. In *The Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Geza Roheim, Herbert Marcuse* (New York: Harper, 1969), Paul A. Robinson argues that much of Marcuse's work in the 1930s contains elements that clearly point toward *Eros and Civilization*.

10. Herbert Marcuse, "The Question of Revolution," *New Left Review* 45 (September–October 1967): 6.

11. Barry Katz, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation* (London: Verso, 1982), 62.

12. Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 40, and 387–88 n.15.

13. Katz, 63.

14. Marcuse, "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," 5–6.

15. Marcuse, "Foundations of Historical Materialism," 29.

16. Marcuse admits not only to having read both Lukács and Korsch before Heidegger, but also to having found in both an ontology that "refers to a more or less implicit ontological foundation in Marx" ("Theory and Politics," 126). He does not say why he nevertheless turned to Heidegger, but one might surmise that the radical

implications of a Marxian "ontology" were not evident to him until the publication of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.

17. Marcuse, "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," 14.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 17.

20. Marcuse, "Theory and Politics," 125.

21. Marcuse, "Foundations of Historical Materialism," 14.

22. Herbert Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics," trans. Douglas Kellner, *Telos* 16 (Summer 1973): 27.

23. Marcuse, "Foundations of Historical Materialism," 21.

24. Ibid., 20.

25. The ambiguities and difficulties of this article have been noted by many. Held (451 n.42) comments on the unclear status of labor, on the lack of clarity concerning differences between Hegel's and Marx's concepts of labor, and on the mistaken juxtaposition of labor and play. See also Morton Schoolman's "Introduction to Marcuse's 'On the Problem of the Dialectic'" and Douglas Kellner's "Introduction to 'On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor,'" *Telos* 16 (Summer 1973).

26. Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics," 18.

27. Ibid., 35, 29.

28. Ibid., 22.

29. Herbert Marcuse, "Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts," in *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro and Shierry M. Weber (Boston: Beacon, 1970), 11.

30. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 125.

31. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), 10.

32. Herbert Marcuse, "Liberation from an Affluent Society," in Bronner and Kellner, 281.

33. Alfred Schmidt, "Existential Ontology and Historical Materialism in the Work of Herbert Marcuse," trans. Anne Marie Feenberg and Andrew Feenberg, in Pippin, Feenberg, Webel, et al., 47.

34. Ibid., 62.

35. Schmidt comments on Marcuse's indiscriminate and imprecise use of the term "historicity," noting that at times it seems to mean "real history," at other times "the 'historical character' of being" (51).

36. Marcuse, "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," 17.

37. Marcuse, " Foundations of Historical Materialism," 24.

38. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 17.

39. Ibid., 36.

40. Ibid., 62.

41. Ibid., 16.

42. Marcuse, "Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts," 5.

43. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 62.

44. Ibid., 63.

45. Ibid., 89.

46. Marcuse, "Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts," 18.

47. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 34.

48. Herbert Marcuse, "Progress and Freud's Theory of Instincts" in *Five Lectures*, 39.

49. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 35. The performance principle and surplus repression are Marxian adaptations of Freudian concepts. The performance principle—the reality principle of advanced industrial countries—reflects the Marxian critique of capitalism and alienated labor. Marcuse's understanding of basic and surplus repression represents an extension of Marx's socially necessary and surplus labor. Surplus repression refers to restrictions placed on instinctual gratification in excess of what is objectively required for the perpetuation of civilization; it is that excess of repression that serves only the interests of social domination.

50. Marcuse, "Progress and Freud's Theory of Instincts," 39.

51. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 25.

52. The idea of history as redemption seems in general to correspond with a point of view that holds out the possibility of subject-object identity. Marcuse vacillates on this point. In *Eros and Civilization* the idea of a non-repressive society strongly implies reconciliation, if not redemption. However, in *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon, 1978), Marcuse affirms Adorno's nonidentity thesis, positing the "permanent non-identity between subject and object, between individual and individual" (29) and thus concluding: "What is done cannot be undone; what has been passed cannot be recaptured. History is guilt but not redemption" (68).

53. Herbert Marcuse, "The Reification of the Proletariat," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 3, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 21.

54. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1966), xv.

55. Marcuse does offer a critical examination of communist society in *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958). While he lists the features of late industrial civilization that both systems share, he also, in the preface published in the 1961 edition (Random House; Vintage Books), explicitly repudiates any interpretation of his work as supporting the "convergence" thesis.

56. Herbert Marcuse, "From Ontology to Technology: Fundamental Tendencies of Industrial Society," in Bronner and Kellner, 119.

57. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*, 84.

58. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 3, 4–5.

59. Ibid., 75.

60. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 195.

61. Herbert Marcuse, "Marxism and Feminism," *Women Studies* 2 (1974): 279.

62. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 79.

63. In addition to *One-Dimensional Man*, passim, see also "The Affirmative Character of Culture," in *Negations*, and "Remarks on a Redefinition of Culture," *Daedelus* 94, no. 1 (Winter 1965).

64. Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon, 1972), 6.

65. Ibid., 19.

66. Andrew Feenberg points out some of the contradictions and tensions in Marcuse's treatment of technology. He also finds that while Marcuse's "theory is clouded . . . his rhetorical strategy is clear enough. . . . He wants to both have his conceptual cake and eat it too, making the strongest possible critique of technology

without paying the 'luddite' price" ("The Bias of Technology," in Pippen, Feenberg, Webel, et al., 227).

67. For example, he writes: "Modern technology contains all the means necessary to extract from things and bodies their mobility, beauty, and softness in order to bring them closer and make them available. . . . The development of sensuality is only one part of the development of the productive forces ("On Hedonism," in *Negations*, 184).

68. See Herbert Marcuse, "Industrialism and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber," in *Negations*.

69. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 227ff. Habermas takes exception to this position in "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'," in *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science and Politics*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon, 1970).

70. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 25.

71. Herbert Marcuse, "The Obsolescence of Marxism," in *Marx and the Western World*, ed. Nicholas Lobkowicz (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 416.

72. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 22. In a similar vein he wrote in the 1966 "Political Preface" to *Eros and Civilization* (xxiii): "A progressive reduction of labor seems inevitable, and for this eventuality, the system has to provide for occupation without work; it has to develop needs which transcend the market economy and may even be incompatible with it."

73. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 37.

74. Marcuse, "The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity," *Praxis* 5, no. 1–2 (Zagreb, 1969): 23.

75. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 25.

76. Herbert Marcuse, "Re-examination of the Concept of Revolution," *New Left Review* 56 (1969): 31.

77. Marcuse, "The Obsolescence of Marxism," 411.

78. Marcuse, "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," 33.

79. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Boston: Beacon, 1960), 318.

80. Herbert Marcuse, "Revolutionary Subject and Self-Government," *Praxis* 5, no. 1–2 (Zagreb, 1969): 327.

81. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 38.

82. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 16.

83. Marcuse, "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism," 37–38.

84. Marcuse, "Reification of the Proletariat," 20.

85. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 10.

86. Ibid., 39.

87. Marcuse, "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism," 38.

88. Marcuse, "Theory and Politics," 150.

89. Marcuse, "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism," 38.

90. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 55.

91. Marcuse, "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism," 25.

92. Rudolf Bahro, as quoted in Marcuse, "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism," 27.

93. Ibid.

94. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 55.

95. See "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," where

Marcuse writes that necessity "is the essence of radical action" (7).

    96. Marcuse, "Remarks on a Redefinition of Culture," 198.

    97. Marcuse, "Re-examination of the Concept of Revolution," 31.

    98. See "Obsolescence of Marxism," 415, and *Eros and Civilization,* xvi–xix.

    99. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation,* 80–81.

    100. Herbert Marcuse, "The End of Utopia," in *Five Lectures,* 74.

    101. Marcuse, "Obsolescence of Marxism," 417.

    102. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man,* 256.

    103. Herbert Marcuse, "The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition," in *Five Lectures,* 84–86.

    104. Ibid., 93.

    105. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation,* 80–82.

    106. Marcuse, "Freedom and the Historical Imperative," 221.

    107. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation,* 57–58.

    108. Ibid., viii.

    109. Marcuse, "Obsolescence of Marxism," 417.

    110. Marcuse, "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism," 39.

    111. Kellner draws attention to the elitist tendencies in Marcuse's treatment of intellectuals and notes the idea of an "intellectual dictatorship" is found throughout Marcuse's work (*Marcuse,* 466 n.82).

    112. For example, while he repeatedly insists that the student movement is not in itself a revolutionary force (*Essay on Liberation,* 60; "Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition," 38; and "Realm of Necessity and the Realm of Freedom," 21), he also speaks of it as "the 'determinate negation' of the prevailing system" ("Question of Revolution," 7) and as "*potentially* a revolutionary group" by virtue of its future position in the productive system ("Revolutionary Subject and Self-Government," 328).

    113. Marcuse, "Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity," 21.

    114. Marcuse, "Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition," 92.

    115. Marcuse, "Question of Revolution," 6–7.

    116. Marcuse, "Marxism and Feminism," 279.

    117. Ibid., 283.

    118. Ibid., 281.

    119. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation,* 21.

    120. Marcuse, "End of Utopia," 67.

    121. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation,* 30.

    122. Ibid., 24.

    123. Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension,* 62.

    124. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 142.

    125. Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension,* 73. The liberating function of memory is a theme found throughout Marcuse's work. His theory of remembrance is the focus of Martin Jay's treatment of Marcuse in *Marxism and Totality: Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), ch. 7.

    126. Marcuse's views on art and its function within society underwent a number of changes. In *Eros and Civilization* the utopian and subversive functions of art are emphasized, while in *One-Dimensional Man* its conservative, affirmative role is stressed (although here art's subversive qualities are also appealed to). The subversive qualities of art are again stressed in *An Essay on Liberation,* but here, in celebrating the

politicization of art and stressing the importance of cultural revolution, Marcuse implies that the tensions between art and existing reality, between art and politics, can be abolished. He backs away from this position in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* and in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, where he maintains that art must always stand at some remove from reality, that it must remain alienated if it is to be art. Furthermore, although both art and radical politics are oriented toward changing the world, they have different practices and must remain autonomous.

127. Marcuse, "Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity," 24.

128. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 27.

129. Ibid., 129.

130. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 130.

131. Like much else in his work, Marcuse's views on violence underwent revisions. In "Repressive Tolerance" (in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* with Robert P. Wolff and Barrington Moore Jr. [Boston: Beacon, 1965]), he supported the "natural right" of oppressed minorities to use extralegal means. However, in a later article, he argues that terroristic violence is counterproductive: it provokes violent reaction, does little to gain mass support or change the system, and violates revolutionary morality ("Murder Is No Weapon of Politics," *New German Critique* 12 [Fall 1977]).

132. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 256.

133. Marcuse first introduces this term into his work in *Eros and Civilization* (149).

134. Marcuse, 1969 preface, "A Note on the Dialectic," to *Reason and Revolution*, x.

135. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 6. Similarly, in "Freedom and the Historical Imperative," Marcuse writes, "[T]he revolutionary imperative assumes the form of negation: to reject the needs and values" that reproduce the system (221).

136. Kellner, *Marcuse*, 279.

137. Marcuse, "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism," 34.

138. Ibid.

139. Marcuse, "Theory and Politics," 145.

140. Kellner, *Marcuse*, 317–18.

141. Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, 5–6.

142. Kellner, *Marcuse*, 318.

143. Marcuse, "Revolutionary Subject and Self-Government," 326.

CHAPTER 6

1. See René Gortzen, "Jürgen Habermas: A Bibliography," in David Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

2. Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 41.

3. Jürgen Habermas, "Political Experience and the Renewal of Marxist Theory," *Habermas and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas*, ed. Peter Dews (London: Verso, 1986), 75.

4. Ibid., 76.

5. Jürgen Habermas, "Life-forms, Morality and the Task of the Philosopher," in Dews, 192.

6. Jürgen Habermas, "Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 68.

7. Jürgen Habermas, "A Philosophico-Political Profile," in Dews, 152.

8. By contrast, substantive references to Horkheimer's work are rare. One exception is Habermas's recognition of Horkheimer as the only one among the early critical theorists who really acknowledged the redeeming features of Western constitutional government ("Life-forms, Morality and the Task of the Philosopher," 201). If Habermas recognized positive elements in Horkheimer's work, the reverse was not the case. Kellner (*Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*, 207) relates that Horkheimer found Habermas's work too radical. He refused to publish Habermas's study of the political opinions and potential (*Student und Politik*) in the Institute's monograph series and, despite Adorno's support, rejected *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* as a *Habilitationsschrift*. Adorno prevailed in the long run, however; his strong support was instrumental in Habermas's return to Frankfurt in 1964 to take over Horkheimer's chair in philosophy and sociology.

9. Jürgen Habermas, "The Dialectics of Rationalization," in Dews, 97–98.

10. Habermas, "Philosophico-Political Profile," 155.

11. Axel Honneth, "Communication and Reconciliation: Habermas's Critique of Adorno," *Telos* 39 (Spring 1979): 46–47.

12. Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," 209.

13. Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1979), 95.

14. Brief discussions of the deficiencies Habermas identifies in Critical Theory are presented in "Dialectics of Rationalization," 97–101, and in "Ideologies and Society in the Post-War World," in Dews, 49.

15. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon, 1971), 197–98.

16. Ibid., 214.

17. For a survey of the extensive critical literature generated by *Knowledge and Human Interests*, see two articles by Fred R. Dallmayr, "Reason and Emancipation: Notes on Habermas," in *Man and World* 5, no. 1 (1972): 79–109, and "Critical Theory Criticized: Habermas's *Knowledge and Human Interests* and Its Aftermath," in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 2 (1972): 211–29.

18. Jürgen Habermas, "A Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests*," in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3 (1973): 182.

19. Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, 169.

20. Ibid.

21. Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" in *Toward a Rational Society*, 91.

22. Ibid., 92.

23. Ibid., 93.

24. Ibid., 119.

25. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, 314.

26. Jürgen Habermas, *On The Logic of the Social Sciences*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 117.

27. Habermas, "Life-forms, Morality and the Task of the Philosopher," 199.

28. Habermas, "Philosophico-Political Profile," 152.

29. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 1: 288.

30. Jürgen Habermas, "A Reply to My Critics," in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. John B. Thompson and David Held (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 264.

31. Jürgen Habermas, "Zwei Bemerkungen zum praktischen Diskurs," in *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus* (Frankfurt, 1976), 339–40, quoted in Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), 323–24.

32. Habermas, "Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests*," 168.

33. See *Theory of Communicative Action*, 1: 73, and "A Reply to My Critics," 261–62.

34. In a note to his introduction to *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 1, Thomas McCarthy maintains that the concept of communicative rationality does not serve as "the telos of a philosophy of history, or as the equivalent of progress, or as the standard of the good life" (405 n.12). But as Rick Roderick points out in *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 163–64, the concept does have clear normative implications, and without them Habermas's project would be reduced to pure academic sociology. Although his work certainly does bear a closer resemblance to academic sociology than that of the other critical theorists, a concept of a better world is nevertheless an integral aspect of his project.

35. Bernstein, "Introduction," *Habermas and Modernity*.

36. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 1: 392.

37. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 134.

38. Ibid., 136.

39. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 1: 75–103.

40. Ibid., 86.

41. Agnes Heller, "Habermas and Marxism," in Thompson and Held, 21.

42. Ibid., 22.

43. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1987), 2: 58.

44. The status of conflict in Habermas's model of the subject is not unlike that assigned to the emancipatory interest in "The Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests*." In this article Habermas qualified the autonomous status of the emancipatory interest, assigning it a "derivative status." While the system-constitutive technical and practical interests are always expressed in some form or another, the actual expression of the emancipatory interest develops only under historically variable conditions.

45. Jürgen Habermas, "On Systematically Distorted Communication," *Inquiry* 13, no. 3 (1970): 211; and "Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence," *Inquiry* 13, no. 4 (1970): 372.

46. Habermas, "Life-forms, Morality and the Tasks of the Philosopher," 202.

47. Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, 252.

48. Ibid., 303–4 n.67.

49. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 140.

50. In tracing the development of Habermas's reconstruction of historical material-ism through four stages, Tom Rockmore notes that it is this distinction of labor and interaction that marks the second "transitional" stage during which Habermas began his more critical assessment of Marx's theory (*Habermas on Historical Materialism*

[Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989]). The distinction between labor and interaction also figures prominently in many of the criticisms of Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism. See John Keane, "On Turning Theory against Itself," review of *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus* by Jürgen Habermas, in *Theory and Society* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 561–72; Johann P. Arnason, review of *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus*, in *Telos* 39 (Spring 1979): 201–18; and Anthony Giddens, "Labour and Interaction," in Thompson and Held, 149–61. See also Michael Schmid's "Habermas's Theory of Social Evolution," in Thompson and Held. In contrast to the others noted here, Schmid's objections center on the concepts of developmental logic and organizational principle.

51. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 147.

52. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1975), 15.

53. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 148.

54. Arnason, 202.

55. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 125.

56. Ibid., 98.

57. Ibid., 120.

58. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, 7.

59. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 152.

60. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, 17–24.

61. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 153.

62. Jürgen Habermas, "History and Evolution," trans. David J. Parent, *Telos* 39 (Spring 1979): 32.

63. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 121–22.

64. Habermas, "History and Evolution," 42.

65. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, part I.

66. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 1: 70.

67. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2: 146.

68. Ibid., 307.

69. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 1: 221.

70. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2: 328.

71. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 1: 363.

72. Ibid., 183.

73. Habermas, "Reply to My Critics," 278.

74. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2: 367.

75. See Nancy Fraser's critique of Habermas's uncritical application of the public/private distinction, particularly insofar as it obscures the position of women. "What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender," in *Feminism as Critique*, ed. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 31–56.

76. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2: 350–51.

77. Ibid., 356.

78. Ibid., 356–73.

79. Ibid., 368.

80. Ibid., 330.

81. Ibid., 355.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid., 305.

84. Ibid., 318.

85. Ibid., 351.

86. Fred R. Dallmayr, *Polis and Praxis: Exercises in Contemporary Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 249.

87. White, 110.

88. Ibid.

89. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2: 392.

90. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 357.

91. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2: 393–94.

92. Jean L. Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," *Social Research* 52 (Winter 1985): 664.

93. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2: 354.

94. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 357.

95. Ibid., 348.

96. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," trans. Andreas Huyssen and Jack Zipes, *New German Critique* 22 (Winter 1981): 13.

97. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), xviii.

98. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 364.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid., 365.

101. Ibid.

102. Jürgen Habermas, "Conservatism and Capitalist Crisis," in Dews, 68.

103. See both "Conservatism and Capitalist Crisis," 70, and his interview with Boris Frankel, "Habermas Talking," *Theory and Society* 1 (1974): 57.

104. Habermas, "Political Experience and the Renewal of Marxist Theory," in Dews, 79.

105. Ibid.

106. Habermas, "Reply to My Critics," 221.

107. Michael Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas* (London: Tavistock, 1987), 10.

108. Habermas, "A Philosophico-Political Profile," 174.

109. Heller, 22.

110. Robert C. Holub's recent book, *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1991), traces the development of Habermas's work through an examination of these debates. Holub argues that Habermas's participation in debates—beginning with his 1953 critical review of the republication of Heidegger's *An Introduction to Metaphysics* and on through the "positivist dispute," the debates with Gadamer, the Left, Luhmann, Lyotard, and the historians—has been central to the development of his thought and his own self-understanding.

111. Holub, 19.

112. Habermas, "A Philosophico-Political Profile," 160–61.

113. Habermas, "Political Experience and the Renewal of Marxist Theory," 86.

114. This relationship of theory to practice was clearly prefigured when, in response

to criticisms of *Knowledge and Human Interests*, he distinguished between rational reconstruction and critical self-reflection, and identified his work with rational reconstruction and the task of elaborating the rules and development of human competencies.

CONCLUSION

1. For example, see Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Linda J. Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

2. See Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford, 1991), ch. 6 and 7.

3. Benhabib elaborates the association of this conception of history with the subject-object model in her treatment of "the philosophy of the subject" in *Critique, Norm, and Utopia.*

4. See Alison M. Jaggar's *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanhead, 1983) for a detailed discussion of the assumptions and political implications of liberal, Marxist, socialist, and radical feminism. The development of Black feminist theory and the various syntheses of postmodernism and feminism offer additional perspectives on what needs to be changed and how that can and should be accomplished.

5. Pauline M. Rosenau discusses postmodern political perspectives in *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), ch. 8. In *Postmodern Theory* Best and Kellner provide a systematic and critical assessment of the relevance of postmodern theory to radical politics.

6. Patricia Hill Collins offers a very useful discussion of the "matrix of domination" and the multiple levels of domination in *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 225–30.

7. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xx.

8. Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 2.

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