Critical Theory And Christian Ethics

A New Dialogue

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July, 1993

A Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of Master of Arts

Abstract

This thesis explores the ways that Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's Critical Theory and the ethics of Christian liberation theology mutually inform each other. Horkheimer and Adorno's theories of the "dialectic of enlightenment" and "negative dialectics" provide a self-critical social analysis that interconnects the domination of humanity by humanity and the domination of nature in a way that strengthens the critique of Christian ethics. Further, Horkheimer and Adorno's "longing for the wholly other" resonates profoundly with Christians who believe in a God of Justice. By the same token, Christian reflection on Critical Theory leads to a critique of Horkheimer and Adorno's excessive distance from political practice and their narrow understanding of radical praxis. In this "new dialogue" the project of Christian ethics develops a more substantial critique of domination, while the Critical Theory of Horkheimer and Adorno is critiqued and renewed.

Cette thèse examine les différentes manières avec lesquelles la Théorie Critique et l'éthique de la théologie de la libération chrétienne s'entrecroisent et s'informent mutuellement. Les théories d'Horkheimer et d'Adorno sur la "dialectique de la raison" et "dialectique négative" apportent une analyse autocritique de la société et associent la domination de l'humanité par l'humanité et la domination de la nature de manière à renforcer la critique de l'éthique chrétienne. De plus, le concept du "désir pour le tout Autre" qu'ont Horkeimer et Adorno résonne profondément chez les chrétiens qui fondent leurs foi dans un Dieu de Justice. Dans ce sens, la réflection chrétienne sur la Théorie Critique amène une critique d'Horkheimer et Adorno qui veut noter leur distance excessive envers les pratiques politiques et leurs mécompréhension du praxis radical. Dans ce "nouveau dialogue" le projet chrétien de l'éthique, amène une critique plus substantiel de ce qu'est la domination et de ce fait renouvelle et illumine la Théorie Critique d'Horkheimer et D'Adorno.

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Preface

The Critical Theory of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno has had a great influence on my ethical reflections on society ever since I first encountered the "Frankfurt School" in classes with Professor Marsha Hewitt at the Toronto School of Theology. Her enthusiasm for the integration of Christian liberation theology and Critical Theory resonated with my own struggles to understand the content of "justice" and "liberation."

Horkheimer and Adorno's theories of domination, which link the suffering of humanity and the exploitation of nature, helped make sense of the activist work I was doing with the Student Christian Movement of Canada. Our work required theories of social analysis that made sense not only of our own society but that of our Latin American partners as well. In this way the dialogue between Critical Theory and Christian ethics became very concrete.

I had an opportunity to explore these connections in a deeper way when I began a Master's program in Religious Studies at McGill University. I learned a great deal from my supervisor, Gregory Baum, and from other faculty and students at McGill. Those years of work culminate in this thesis.

While the writings of the Frankfurt School in English are numerous, many of their articles and books most important to the study of religion remain untranslated from German. Thus, while there are numerous primary and secondary sources on Critical Theory, there are relatively few in English that directly refer to religion in general or

Christianity in specific. Rudolf Siebert's work, Horkheimer's Sociology of Religion, is the only book-length analysis of Christian theology and the work of the Frankfurt School in English. Further, many German political theologians engage the insights of Horkheimer and Adorno as undercurrents of their work. Still there are very few direct references. The remainder of my research is drawn from chapters of books, articles and fragmentary references, all of which are noted in the Endnotes and Bibliography. For this reason I have chosen not to include a separate "review of background literature."

The relative paucity of resources on this topic in English leads me to comment on this thesis' "originality." While there is probably nothing original in this work, given the wider array of resources on this topic in German, it is at least unusual as an English study. I hope to contribute to a renewed relationship between Christian ethics and the work of Horkheimer and Adorno. In this sense the contribution of this thesis is to widen the parameters of discourse on this topic in English. For a detailed review of literature in German, I refer the reader to Siebert's above-mentioned book.

In closing, I extend a deep thanks to Marsha Hewitt, Gregory Baum and the members of the Student Christian Movement. I also deeply appreciate the support of my partner, Alison Carpenter, over these months of full-time work in addition to intensive thesis writing. I appreciate not just the support these people have given me in this project, but also our shared commitment to a "faith-seeking-justice."

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July, 1993.

Introduction

The work of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory has enriched academic life and practical political struggles since the School began its work in the 1920's. As a Christian ethicist I approach this diverse body of thought, and especially the writings of Horkheimer and Adorno, with an eye to understanding what the secular Critical Theorists offer to Christian communities committed to the "theology of liberation."

Liberation theology emerged from the practical struggles of the poor in Latin America.[1] Their resistance to oppressive political and economic structures resonated with their Christian faith and the stories of subjugation and liberation present in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Since its inception in the 1960's the Movement has spread, drawing from and expanding upon roots in "political theology" and various forms of "contextual theologies."[2] Liberation theology, which now includes a spectrum of Christian reflection on economic justice, feminism, racial justice, rights for gays and lesbians and ecological issues, understands that human actions which cause unnecessary suffering are contrary to the will of God and are, therefore, sinful. The liberating message of the prophets and of Christ call the Christian to understand his or her own context, analyze it from a "faith-seeking-justice" paradigm and take appropriate action in political praxis.

While the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School was developed by a group of German Jews, all but one of whom was athiest, its profound and critical understanding of western, technological capitalism offers

a great deal to Christians in the first world seeking to understand their own society and their response to it. The members of the Frankfurt School, disappointed by the failure of the left in Europe and the reification of the Soviet revolution, consciously sought to make a theoretical re-evaluation of western society. This led Horkheimer, Adorno and the others to a wide-ranging and fluid critique of domination that resonates deeply with the central insights of liberation theology.

In this paper I seek to draw out several central themes of Critical Theory and comment upon them from the point of view of Christian social ethics. While this method is unusual, I draw upon an old tradition of Christian commentary on secular texts in order to develop a mutually informing dialogue between Critical Theory and the ethics of liberation theology. I call this dialogue a "dialectical appropriation" of the Frankfurt School. While some aspects of Horkheimer and Adorno's thought must be superseded, others can be drawn forward to inform the ministry of Christians or can lead to new insights.

Historically, several links between Critical Theory and liberation theology are found in the work of European "political theology." German theologians like Dorothee Soelle, Jurgen Moltmann and Johannes Baptist Metz brought many Frankfurt School insights to their work, and were widely read by emerging Latin American theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Juan Luis Segundo and Leonardo Boff. The liberation theology that emerges in this history of analysis in some ways traces its roots to the insights of the early Frankfurt School. Thus, this "dialectical appropriation" of the Frankfurt School seeks to

highlight these roots but also to re-awaken an active dialogue between Critical Theory and liberation theologies.

Despite these early influences of Horkheimer and Adorno on political theology their work is now very often passed by. Considerably more attention is paid to Jürgen Habermas, considered to be the primary figure in Critical Theory's "second generation." This thesis, however, argues that a "new dialogue" with Horkheimer and Adorno offers opportunities that enrich Christian ethics. In this "new dialogue" I survey a wide spectrum of Horkheimer and Adorno's themes in order to give a broad impression of their work. By the same token, this research does not attempt a full integrative project between Christian thought and the Frankfurt School as would be the case with Moltmann's integration of Bloch or Peukert's work with Habermas.[3] The Christian reflections on the Frankfurt School are brief and suggestive of further work rather than comprehensive.

In the first chapter I analyze three themes of the early Frankfurt School, all of which are substantial departures from orthodox Marxism. These themes, the rejection of the proletariat as historical subject, the rejection of the concept of historical progress and the problemetization of the relation of theory, praxis and political action, were all carried forward into the more comprehensive post World War Two era of Critical Theory. I dub this diverse analysis the "dialectic of enlightenment" phase of the Frankfurt School, after the book by Horkheimer and Adorno of the same name. Christian reflection on several key themes of "dialectic of enlightenment" comprises the second chapter. The third and final chapter reflects on the theological roots, theories and implications of Critical Theory, drawing forward its

"theological glowing fire", to use Adorno's term, into full dialogue with Christian ethics.

While Horkheimer and Adorno are clearly the central figures of Critical Theory, several other members of the Institute for Social Research or "Frankfurt School" were important contributors to its wider body of work, including Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Leo Lowenthal and others. While this research focuses on Horkheimer and Adorno, I will draw from Benjamin and Marcuse at several points.

Chapter One:

The Search for Radical Praxis

The European left in the 1920's and 30's was terribly divided in the face of rising fascism and orthodox Soviet Marxist-Leninism. The absence of Marx's early dialectical writings allowed Marxism to quickly drift into a scientific orthodoxy. Communist Party members pitted themselves against those they considered very dangerous opponents: the democratic socialists. In Germany, Horkheimer and Adorno observed as young men the dismal failure of the left to stop World War I and the subsequent bitter division between communists and democratic socialists in the crisis of the twenties and thirties. As Adorno would later say, "Philosophy...lives on because the moment to realize it was missed."[4] This "moment" of great economic and political crisis in Germany resulted not in the development of human freedom and autonomy, not in the realization of "philosophy", but in the emergence of perhaps the most barbaric phenomenon in western history: Nazism.

The Institute for Social Research or "Frankfurt School" was formed in 1923 with the purpose of making a theoretical account of this failure to seize the "moment." In the 1920's and 30's Horkheimer and Adorno brought three central aspects of the left under a highly revisionist critique. First, they rejected the Marxist assumption that the workers, and their political representatives, were historical subjects of liberation. Second, they rejected the wider Enlightenment

notion that history itself is inevitably progressive. Third, the orthodox Marxism of the twenties and thirties claimed that because the proletariat inherited the mantle of historical progress, the perceived political interests of workers became the content of praxis by definition. In their more cultural, less economically bound theory, Horkheimer and Adorno sought to broaden the concept of domination, reject the notion of historical progress and employ a highly subtle and critical understanding of praxis. In this chapter I will reflect on each of these themes from the point of view of Christian ethics, and show that after a "dialectical appropriation" each is valuable to Christian communities working for justice.

The Rejection of the Proletariat as Subject of Liberation

The initial Marxist influence on Horkheimer and Adorno was not the orthodoxy of the Communist Party but the remarkable work of Georg Lukacs. In his book, History and Class Consciousness, Lukacs anticipated the rediscovery of Marx's early writings in a dialectical, Hegelianized rejection of mechanical, predetermined Marxism.[5] Lukacs' Marxism was a dialectical method that could critically assess the relationship between bourgeois consciousness and material social conditions. With this emphasis, Lukacs at once re-affirmed the revolutionary potential of proletarian consciousness while giving Marxist theory a more Hegelian and less deterministic feel, especially in contrast to the "vulgar" scientific Marxism of the Second International.

This "dialectical approach" refused to reduce bourgeois thought to

a mere class interest. Lukacs argued instead that the failed efforts of bourgeois philosophers to resolve contradictions in society was not due to a Kantian limitation of reason, but to the irrationality of the bourgeois social order. Lukacs argued in History and Class Consciousness that the commodity structure articulated by Marx infected all aspects of bourgeois thought. The commodity was the "model of all the objective forms of bourgeois society, together with all the subjective forms corresponding to them."[6] For Lukacs, culture became an important focus in itself, although it was still deeply infected with the commodity relations of capitalism.

The correspondence between bourgeois thought and the capitalist economic order becomes clear when Lukacs analyzes Kant's barrier between subject and object. This barrier, identical to the capitalist objectification of the product, which is artifically separated from the workers who made it. Thus the immutable object, the "thing-in-itself", is just as reified--as fetishized--as the creations of workers. Both "the object" and "the product" are artificially divorced from the subjects--the people working and creating--that bring them into their being. If this proletarian subject is named in a context of the development of capitalism then the barriers between subject and object dissolve, the proletariat becomes the "subject/object" of history and the philosophical attempt to understand the human condition overcomes its barriers. History moves towards proletarian liberation and the political praxis that emerges from theory is closely identified with the needs of workers.[7]

While Horkheimer and Adorno adopted and refined Lukacs theory of commodity fetishism throughout their lives they rejected his notion of

the proletariat as subject/object of history right from the onset of their work. They did this for a number of basic reasons, all of which are central to a critical understanding of the left in this period. First, the claim that the proletariat was the inheritor of the historical dialectic was seen as metaphysical, especially since the proletariat didn't see themselves in this way. Second, Lukacs was thus forced to advocate the familiar "vanguard" theory in which the Party embodies the "general will" of the workers. By the 1920's it was already clear that the Party was narrow, capricious, pragmatic and not open to a critical divergence of views. Lukacs himself was later forced to renounce History and Class Consciousness after repeated criticism from the Party. Finally, by the mid to late twenties more European workers, especially in Germany, were turning to fascism rather than socialism. In a letter to Walter Benjamin, Adorno bluntly states his views about "the actual consciousness of the actual proletariat, who have nothing, absolutely nothing, over the bourgeoisie except for an interest in the revolution, but who otherwise bear all the marks of the bourgeoisie's truncated personality."[8] Under these conditions, it was impossible to grant the proletariat many epistemological advantages.

Adorno and Horkheimer recognized the signs of the times. The road to truth could never be obtained through the empirical situation of the proletariat nor through the Party and orthodox Marxism. Industrial and then technological capitalism proved itself eminently flexible when confronted with challenges. Its subtle yet powerful mechanisms of social control guaranteed that the structures of domination would remain veiled to the vast majority of workers.

Therefore, according to the view of members of the Frankfurt School, critical consciousness required independence from particular political agendas. Horkheimer and Adorno never rejected the importance of radical praxis, they simply refused to identify the proletariat, or any other recognizable social group, with a revolutionary destiny. To do so amounted to an idealistic fantasy that grossly underestimated the coercive power of western society and led to a non-reflective and apologetic participation in movements for social change.

The rejection of a revolutionary subject along class lines, made sixty years ago by Horkheimer, Adorno and others has proven to be a vital theoretical insight for the Christian left. Christians working for social change have named God's "preferential option for the poor and oppressed." However, this preferential epistemology is not understood in an uncritical way. In the poverty-stricken barrios and countryside of Latin America the "poor and oppressed" is a category comprised of a wide array of social groups, from small land owning farmers to itinerant agricultural labourers to small groups of urban workers. Liberation theologians speak not just of the workers but of "El pueblo", the "people." Moreover, an early tendency in Latin American liberation theology to emphasize economic domination has been challenged in feminist and black theologies of liberation.[9] Theologians like Boff and Gutierrez have encorporated this critique into their work. Liberation theologies assert a theory that balances the experience of those seeking liberation with a paradigm of critical consciousness that interprets that experience. In this respect, liberation theology traces its historical roots to the insights of the early Frankfurt School.

The Obscured Horizon: The rejection of historical optimism

In Critical Theory, the rejection of the concept of proletariat as subject/object of history was part of a wider critique of enlightenment optimism. If the rejection of the revolutionary subject confronted a pillar of Marxism, Critical Theory's rejection of history as progress confronted an axiom of the whole Enlightenment. The notion of a progressive history is very important to both liberal and radical traditions in the west and emerges from the trust in human rationality that is the benchmark of the Enlightenment. For liberals and Marxists, rationality is understood as an inherently progressive capacity. Marxists argued that materialist rationality revealed an historical cycle of waxing and waning social classes that would culminate in a proletarian revolution. For Lukacs and other Marxists the proletariat as subject/object of history signalled not only the inevitability of revolution but the philosophical closing of the circle in which the lost unity of humanity is discovered. Through the revolutionary destiny of the worker the progressive nature of human history is manifested.

Critical Theory flatly rejected this progressive philosophy of history as metaphysical. Instead, they theorized that human history is discontinuous, multiple and open-ended. Horkheimer argued that, "History has no reason...The pantheistic granting of autonomy to history, of a uniform, substantial essence, is nothing but dogmatic metaphysics."[10] Adorno says, "History is the demarcation line of identity. It is not that man is the subjectifying subject-object of history, but instead the dialectic of diverging moments between subject and object is again and again drawn out by history."[11] Instead of

focusing on the destiny of history, critical theory examines the discontinuities, the gaps and lesions of present reality. In philosophical terms, the early Frankfurt School rejected an "identity theory" of history, in which history progresses to a point where subject and object are united. Identity theories, from classical liberalism to Hegelianism to orthodox Marxism seek to identify those elements in history that lead to human self-actualization as freedom and autonomy. For Horkheimer and Adorno identity theories limit human freedom by creating the conditions of reifiction. Instead, they asserted a continuously critical theory--the theory that resists reification--which always emerges from the space between subject and object.

Essentially, the non-identity theory of the Frankfurt School is an assertion of radical freedom. Humanity cannot trust any inherent capacity, rational or otherwise, to project history into the future. By the same token, human projects, heretofore ordained with the blessing of progress, are revealed as contingent and prone to reification. The ethical task is one that is a permanent part of the human experience, but one that is not guided by any universal markers. Any theory that identifies the process of historical liberation with a certain group, or even with a certain process of development over time, silences marginalized voices and erects domination in the name of the so-called liberated. Thus the glorification of any historical development, whether technological liberalism or the proletariat as subject/object of history, eventually acts to justify the suffering of humanity and nature.

In a famous statement, Walter Benjamin summarizes this vital aspect

of Critical Theory, "There is never a document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free from barbarism, neither is the process of transmitting it from one generation to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain."[12] Critical Theory takes this process even one step further, signalling the end of what has been called "innocent critique." For even the critique itself, liberating in one historical context, contains within itself the seeds of its own reification. Critical Theory radically widens the spectrum of critique of objects of domination to the very critical theory itself.

In order to make their rejection of historical progress into a self-critical methodology Horkheimer and Adorno re-summon "Nature" as "an independent moment of the dialectic" with history.[13] There are four vital points to raise in regard to this dialectic. First, the dialectic of nature and history is seen as the struggle between human reason and the myriad forces of natural, non-rational, psychological and instinctual forces in history. Thus, these aspects of "nature" are repressed or dominated by a society which glorifies its own triumphant historical reason. This repression applies both to external nature and internal "human nature."

Second, the recovery of nature as an independent moment of the dialectic is designed to counter the Enlightenment notion of history as progress, but not to replace it with a view of the inevitable "irrationality" of history. The concept of nature is not static or ontological, but is dialectical and informed in its relation to

history. Adorno wrote, "A nature...which hardens oppressively and gloomily in itself and shuns the light of illuminating and warming consciousness, ought to be mistrusted...What is unchangeable in nature can take care of itself. Our task is to change it."[14]

Third, the dialectical relation of nature and history is a process of mutual demystification. As the history of reason demystifies nature for humanity, the concept of nature exposes the ideology and domination in society. Susan Buck-Morss explains that this idea is central to understanding the dialectical method of Critical Theory, for Adorno adopts a method that pairs seemingly contradictory "cognitive concepts" that function much like Kant's "regulative ideas."[15] Neither nature nor history takes on any ontological meaning and thus both concepts lose their power to sanction social structures as either "history as progress" or "society as natural." In fact, both nature and history have positive and negative poles. The positive pole of nature, or "first nature" is the temporary and fluctuating reality of the body and the fact that nature is affected and recreated by human action. This is nature as a changing, evolving and maleable form. Nature is historical. This contrasts with the mythologized or ontological view of nature whose concepts obscure human freedom and use "biology" to explain away various forms of domination that are actually created by human decisions and actions. The negative aspect of nature, or "second nature", is thus the, "mythical...that which is eternally there...as the fateful construction of pre-given being."[16] Human metaphysical systems project ontologies onto nature which then function to justify suffering. Adorno used concepts like "fetish," "reification," "enchantment," "fate," "myth" and "phantasmagoria" to describe second nature, and thus to expose it as transitory rather than permanent.[17]

Similarly, history also has positive and negative aspects. Negative history is that which is seen as "given" in society. This is the element of human interaction that is said to be essential and thus, like "negative nature", it justifies existing social structures. Positive history is human praxis, or the way that humanity creates substantially new things from the material of the old. As Adorno puts it,

> ...that mode of human behavior, that transmitted social behavior which is characterized above all by the fact that the qualitatively new appears in it...it is a movement which does not run its course in pure identity, the pure reproduction of such as already was there, but in which something new emerges...[18]

Within the struggle of this non-determinative dialectic of history and nature critical consciousness has the potential of emerging. In a system where history has no inherent meaning the importance of critical consciousness and the praxis that emerges from it is greatly expanded. Thus, the paramount importance of ethics is an important implication of Critical Theory. Humanity cannot surrender itself either to a predetermined historical process nor to natural laws. People must be engaged critically with their society and have the full freedom and power to choose their actions.

Fourth, despite the rejection of a historical theory of progress Critical Theory retains its utopian hope. While this aspect of Critical Theory was not fully developed until later, it is important to understand its relation to early critical theory. Horkheimer and Adorno reject the classical, correspondence notions of truth and the Kantian idea of truth as inherent in the scientific method. Truth, for the

Frankfurt School, is that which moves society towards the utopian state, where human relations are mutual, autonomous and free of suffering. While Horkheimer and Adorno did not employ the concept of Utopia with the same vigour as Karl Mannheim and others, it remained for them the always receding horizon, explicitly unachievable, that orients critical theory towards liberation. Progress toward a Utopia is not inevitable, but it is possible.

Critical Theory's unspecified Utopia, and its rejection of ontological notions of any kind and especially those of Kant, Hegel, Marx and Lukacs, has been criticized as relativistic. How can an ethics based on justice exist without a reference point with concrete content? Siegfried Kracauer asserts this criticism about Adorno:

> Adorno's unfettered dialectics...eliminates ontology altogether. His rejection of any ontological stipulation in favour of an infinite dialectics which penetrates all concrete things and entities seems inseparable from a certain arbitrariness, an absence of content and direction...The concept of Utopia is then necessarily used by him in a purely formal way, as a borderline concept which at the end invariably emerges like a deus ex machina. But Utopian thought makes sense only if it assumes the form of a vision or a intuition with a definite content of a sort.[19]

Yet the Frankfurt School felt that "Utopian thought...with a definite content" was the root of uncritical theory, indeed a root of domination. This form of concretized Utopian thought contributed to the undoing of the Soviet system, where the pragmatics of a certain system were identified with truth. The Frankfurt School emphasized the

importance of ethics in a dialectic that recognizes the gap between ideas and reality. Adorno says,

> I have never really understood the so-called problem of relativism. My experience was that whoever gave himself over in earnest to the discipline of a particular subject learned to distinguish very precisely between true and false, and that in contrast to such experience the assertion of general insecurity as to what is known had something abstract and unconvincing about it. Let it be that confronted with the ideal of the absolute, everything human stands under the shadow of the conditional and temporary—what happens when the boundary is reached at which thought must recognize that it is not identical to being, not only allows the most convincing insights, but forces them.[20]

Thus, the rejection of the historical destiny of humanity is a vital part of the dialectical recovery of Critical Theory, and a vital part of Christian ethics as well. The Christian commitment to justice is perpetually self-critical and dialectical. Christians recognize the work of God's love in the world, but do not fully associate that revelation with particular and contingent historical realities. Christians committed to liberation recognize the insights of Critical Theory, that reification of social and religious movements is inevitable.

Moreover, the imperative that emerges from this aspect of Critical Theory emphasizes the degree to which humanity creates its own historical destiny. There is neither a system of philosophical truths nor a natural state of being that can limit or aid the human struggle for self-awareness. While social analysis is inevitably normative,

those norms are of human creation. The rejection of historical progress in the work of the Frankfurt School thus resonates deeply with Christian notion of free will. For the Christian liberation theologian metaphysical systems of thought such as "history as progress" limit the freedom of humanity to create what is new. Theological resonances of Critical Theory's idea of history are found in expressions like Dorothee Soelle's notion of God as the "All-is-possible."[21] This theological notion, which emphasizes the enormous plurality of human freedom, clearly does not say that "all is inevitable." Humanity struggles, conscious of God's grace, oriented not to the present but to the future. The responsibility for suffering caused by economic, political and social structures is clearly on the shoulders of humanity, as is the possibility of creating alternatives.

Clearly the Utopian aspect of Critical Theory resonates with the eschatalogical promise. "Shalom" exists in the hope of Christians committed to justice but does not cling to existing structures. Yet this future oriented, "All-is-possible" resonance of Christian theology also contains the self-critical element emphasized by the Frankfurt School. The end of "innocent" critique," which indicates that the seeds of reification are within liberating theory itself, is found in both Critical Theory and in political and liberation theologies. Metz puts forward the eschatalogical proviso that the struggle of Christians for liberation has its own inherent root of reification.[22] Juan Luis Segundo's "hermeneutical circle" also expresses this self-critical mechanism.[23] The Christian ethicist, drawing on a historial stream of insights from the Frankfurt School through political and liberation theologies, emphasizes the profound freedom of humanity to work

toward justice, but also the very possibility to create suffering within that work. Christian ethics must be rigorous, critical and perpetually self-reflexive.

The Mediations of Theory, Praxis and Political Practice

When Horkheimer and Adorno refused to join ranks with student protesters in the late 1960s a bitter confrontation ensued. This event epitomized a problematic element of Critical Theory that dates back to the Frankfurt School's early years. While Horkheimer and Adorno clearly thought that their theoretical work was vitally important praxis, they maintained a firm distance from the practical political programs of radical organizations and political parties. A careful consideration of this element of Critical Theory is necessary, especially in light of Christian theology. Although Horkheimer and Adorno's rejection of political activism is extreme, their underlying justifications are important to Christian social ethics.

The view of Horkheimer and Adorno was sketched out in opposition to Marxist theories of the 1920's and 30's, all of which stated that the theorist must be deeply involved in practical political struggles. Lukacs summarized his own view and that of orthodox Marxism when he stated, "The specialization of skills leads to the destruction of every image of the whole." He further asserts, "Both hand workers and mind workers, must begin to become "whole men."[24]

Horkheimer and Adorno rejected this view, asserting a clear separation of labour between theorists and activists.
With this rejection came also a critique of the "vanguard" theory of

social change common to Marxist-Leninism in general and to Lukacs in particular. Buck-Morss states that the Frankfurt School considered that the theorist was "avant-guard" rather than vanguard.[25] Bourgeois culture is negated through many media--writing, music, art--but this negation does not take place on behalf of the Communist Party nor the proletariat. In this model the intellectual adopts an antiauthoritarian, experimental, anti-dogmatic and exemplary role. The theorist as "avant-garde" rejects the deterministic and elitist aspect of many vanguard theories. According to Horkheimer and Adorno there was simply no guarantee that the pragmatic goals of the Communist Party or of the proletariat itself could represent a radical negation of bourgeois forms. Praxis in the form of the radical critique of society remains the responsibility of the intellectual, but immersion in political struggles through parties and organizations was seen as compromising a truly critical theory.

Aggravating the sense of elitism that goes with this kind of theory, whether "vanguard" or "avant-garde", is the fact that Horkheimer and Adorno never developed a theory of social change to accompany their notion of theoretical praxis. They assumed that the demystifications and critiques of the intellectual would show that the emperor had no clothes, destablize bourgeois society and thus strengthen the possibility of radical social change. Adorno recognized that the possibilities for change were not imminent, and that changes in social conditions rather than ideas would lead to revolutionary possibilities. The Critical Theory avoided solutions and pragmatic standards. Adorno often explained these problems in terms of art and musical theory, "...the solutions which music finds thereby are like those of theory:

social postulates are contained in them, whose relationship to praxis may indeed be highly mediated and difficult, and which can in no way be easily realized..."[26] The Critical Theory engaged practical realities and potentials dialectically rather than directly. The core of "negative dialectics" that would fully emerge later found its root in Adorno's theories of music/critical social theory, "The extraordinarily violent protest which such music confronts in the present of society...appears nonetheless to suggest that the dialectical function of this music can already be felt in praxis, if only merely negatively, as 'destruction.'"[27]

The emphasis on the relation of theory and political practice must be understood within Horkheimer and Adorno's overall evaluation of society. Even before World War Two the failures of the left described above led them to believe that the material social conditions in western society would not allow radical social change to take place. Praxis became more closely tied to theory, where truth could be maintained, and more distant from political practice, where the enormous coercive affect of western capitalism always threatened to empty Critical Theory into mere pragmatics. In the context of this form of pessimism, political practice becomes something of a contradiction in terms, an activity that may actually strengthen the dominant forms of discourse and social relations. Horkheimer and Adorno even carried this point into their literary style. The language of their texts is deliberately obscure, on the premise that the decoding it requires resists the powerful ability of liberal discourse to coopt its radical intent.

The topic of theory and practical politics requires careful

reflection from the point of view of Christian ethics. While my dialectical recovery of the Frankfurt School enthusiastically recovers their rejection of the revolutionary subject and of history as progress I believe that Horkheimer and Adorno were, in fact, too closely tied to Marxism to sufficiently understand the changing nature of radical politics in western society. In short, their lasting association of radical change with revolution precludes an appreciation for other aspects of radical social change. Not only does this inhibit the practical applications of other more useful aspects of Critical Theory, it also creates an exaggerated pessimism.

Still, the "avant-garde" notion in Critical Theory actually bares similarities to current theological formulations of this problem, such as the role of the theologian expressed by Leonardo Boff. Boff advocates a division of labour between the "professional" (theologians), "pastoral" (priests, religious etc) and "popular" (the people) levels.[28] However, this similarity cannot be drawn too far. Boff suggests that all activists for change must be connected to the base, to the poor. In contrast, Adorno believed that the isolation of the theorist made him/her a better advocate for the dominated because the intellectual thus avoids the enormous forces of cooptation that infuse practical politics.

Many theologians, ethicists and secular theorists working for radical change agree with Boff and see practical political struggle in communities not as the risk of cooptation but as the epistemological starting point for radical social change. One cannot understand the situation of the oppressed unless one personally experiences struggles for social change with the oppressed. Canadian feminist ethicist

Marilyn Legge claims that liberation and contextual theologizing is based on "Peoples' lives and stories, rather than abstract ideas or theory."[29] She builds this statement upon the core of Latin American liberation theology. Gustavo Gutierrez writes, "Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. Theology follows; it is the second step.... Theology does not produce pastoral activity; rather it reflects upon it."[30] When the normative dimension of ethics does not emerge from a community struggling for change, radical social theory becomes a mere thought susceptible to the distorting infections of theory. Dorothee Soelle, among others, has leveled this critique directly at the Frankfurt School. [31] Liberation theologians along with Horkheimer insist that a critical paradigm must accompany reflections on experience, but the pessimism of the Critical Theorists exacts a price: they no longer listen to the voices of the oppressed.

Not only are the voices of the marginalized not heard by the Frankfurt School, but the insights of the Critical Theorists do not reach those who might benefit from them most. Susan Buck-Morss, again connecting musical theory with social theory in general, writes, "...precisely whom was the avant-garde leading? The answer could only be those intellectuals who understood the complexities of musical technique, that is, other intellectuals."[32] This distance from the practical experience of ordinary people is a profound weakness of critical theory. The capacity of people, especially the oppressed, to learn that they are dominated and to understand who benefits from their suffering and to grasp the structures that perpetuate and legitimate suffering is the most important element of social change and the unwavering task of the liberation theologian and ethicist. Theory plays

a pivotal role in this consciousness raising. This is a role that the Frankfurt School, with the possible exception of Marcuse, has tragically abdicated. Buck-Morss summarizes this complaint, "the whole of (Adorno's) theoretical effort was to continue to interpret the world, whereas the point had been to change it."[33]

While Horkheimer and Adorno's rejection of political practice and their reliance on revolution as the only means of radical social change must be superseded, their theory nonetheless carries other important insights in the area of praxis and political struggles--insights that resonate with Christian ethics committed to liberation. First, Horkheimer and Adorno's assertion that liberal discourses have enormous coopting power over radical views is very important, especially for Christians working in the so-called first world. Abortion rights, which many Christians of the left support, is a case in point. The secular abortion rights movement commonly uses the language of individual rights in an attempt to justify its discourse in a society where individual liberty is an assumed axiom. However, the ethical claim that a "woman has the right to control her own body" leaves the feminist movement defenseless when some women choose to abort female fetuses. Thus, immersion in practical political struggles in a historical period when possibilities for radical change at the structural levels of economy and government are severely limited, may lead either to a blindness to radical alternatives or to the problematic attempt to obtain radical ends through liberal means.

The subjective emphasis of the Frankfurt School, by means of the integration of psychoanalysis, casts some light on this problem. While their appropriation of Freud for this task requires critique, their

basic insight remains vital: Domination infects humanity socially but also psychologically. The Frankfurt School asserted that even in the case of revolution, the vestiges of the psyche of domiantion may well subvert the revolutionary process. While I will explore this aspect of Critical Theory in more detail in the next chapter, I emphasize now that there clearly is space for a radical praxis in western societies. Critical Theory also brings insights that sow the seeds of caution and reflexivity into radical praxis.

Christian activists must create the sites of "negativity" upon which Horkheimer and Adorno base their theory. Indeed, this imperative is drawn forth from the implications of Critical Theory. Humanity, the Frankfurt School explains, is the creator of its own destiny. The communities that form "negativities" or contradictions in western society currently exist in myriad forms, protecting their members from many of the abuses of a society predicated on domination. While the pessimism of the Frankfurt School is justified with regards to the outlook for radical change in national and international economic and political structures the task of radical praxis, informed by critical theories, remains vital, alive and engaged in practical struggles. The criteria to determine the definition of "radical" must be shifted from that which promotes conditions leading to revolution to the political actions that lead to the self-conscious moral agency of the marginalized person. Christian ethicists Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen claim that moral agency,

> is a way to name that which is necessary to make sense of ourselves as creatures who act "morally." It is a tag for describing human experience, and especially human action, from a

> moral point of view. It means we are those kinds of creatures who are able to perceive various courses of action, weigh them with a view to various considerations, choose among the actions on the basis of the considerations, and act on the choices. It also means we can be held accountable for our choices and actions. "Agency" encompasses both character and conduct, both our moral "being" and our moral "doing"...[34]

Thus the role of everyday experience, of education, of consciousness raising, of community formation, of practical strategizing and the formation of a "hermeneutics of suspicion" become extremely important; they are the new criteria for radical social change. Thus we see all of these processes emphasized in the Base Communities of Latin America.

In contrast to the pessimism and hopelessness of the Critical Theorists, liberation theologians understand hope to be a vital category in the dialectic of praxis and theory/theology. Marilyn Legge sumarizes this as follows, "Because of their focus on concrete human suffering, liberation theologians discovered that to minister among the battered and forgotten, whose real needs were for a very different future based on tangible prospects for hope, they had to follow a process of analyzing and identifying those forces and dynamics that subverted or sustained human hope. Salvation's most concrete name was liberation, but the specific content had to be discerned within flesh-and-blood, everyday experiences of co-creation in the world."[35] In this epistemology, the liberation of the capacity for hope becomes in and of itself a criterion for radical social change. The Christian struggling for justice remains conscious of the tremendous obstacles to radical social change inherent in western societies, but maintains

faith that God is always at work within history. Christians thus critically engage in practical political struggles but maintain their critical distance through the knowledge that God's justice transcends the always limited and contingent efforts of humanity. Thus for the Christian, a combined faith in God's work in the world creates a calling for practical struggle, but a constant awareness that the eschatalogical proviso calls for continual self-reflection.

* * *

In this chapter I have engaged in a dialectical investigation of three aspects of Critical Theory. I have found that their rejection of a revolutionary subject is vital to a radical critique, as is the rejection of the optimistic enligtenment view of history. Further, the separation of theory and praxis advocated by the Frankfurt School leads to some important insights, but on the whole it obscures an understanding of radical theory, praxis and concrete political activism. As important as these insights are to a dialectical recovery of Critical Theory, the Frankfurt School's heart and soul remain unexplored. The post-war "dialectic of enlightenment" stage of Critical Theory is a highly original and powerful analytic tool for radical Christians that greatly expands the understanding of human suffering by creating an expansive and encompassing theory of domination. "Dialectic of Enlightenment" connects the domination of humanity with the domination of nature in a way that richly informs the analysis of radical Christians. I turn now to an analysis of this aspect of Critical Theory.

Chapter Two:

The New Foundation of Radical Thought

World War Two had a profound impact on the members of the Frankfurt School. Germany became controlled by a violent and anti-semitic fascism. All members of the Frankfurt School were forced into exile. One of their most important colleagues, Walter Benjamin, committed suicide when Spanish border guards threatened to hand him over to the Nazis. In many ways Germany, which had experienced some of the best of the Enlightenment--Kant, Hegel, Marx--was now being identified with its antithesis. During the war Horkheimer and Adorno published the book that would define the mature Frankfurt School, Dialectic of Enlightenment. In this work they attempted to show that German fascism was not the antithesis of Enlightenment but its logical conclusion. Just as the seeds of domination were present in the Soviet Revolution Horkheimer and Adorno detected how the Enlightenment project would turn into its opposite. Liberation becomes domination.

The Frankfurt School uncovered a rich wealth of insights as they explored how the ostensibly freeing human project of Enlightenment leads to control and suffering. In this chapter I will explore several of those insights in their relation to Christian social ethics. While "dialectic of enlightenment" was not a radical departure from pre-war Critical Theory, the foundational insights of Horkheimer and Adorno were developed in a far more comprehensive way.[36] I will summarize

four elements of the post-war Critical Theory. First, Horkheimer and Adorno claim that positivist, instrumental reason supersedes ethical reason in the Enlightenment. This reality leaves western society incapable of reflecting on rational "ends". Second, the loss of ethical reason in Enlightenment has led to widespread instrumentalization and control. Horkheimer and Adorno create a theoretical web that explores the connections between the domination of humanity, the domination of nature and the intensification of social conflict. Third, the Frankfurt School show that injustice and oppression can no longer be understood at an objective or social level. The psychological reproduction of domination in the psyche is a vital ingredient in the Critical Theory of Society. The fourth element is the elaboration of a methodology that bears the name of Adorno's work Negative Dialectics. This methodology seeks to unite a liberating stream of social criticism with the fundamental insight of the Frankfurt School that, "the whole is untruth."[37] Negative dialectics shows how those who seek justice, including Christians, can engage in a meaningful theory and praxis without constructing over-arching metaphysical theories of truth or reducing themselves to positivist science.

Not only does the theoretical effort of the dialectic of enlightenment phase of Critical Theory provide a fruitful foundation for a Christian social ethics committed to liberation, it also renews and recreates the radical critique of society in a profoundly original and insightful way.

The theories of this period of the Frankfurt School are developed in a number of works. I have mentioned Adorno and Horkheimer's collaboration on Dialectic of Enlightenment and Adorno's Negative

Dialectics already. Other books include Horkheimer's Eclipse of Reason, Critique of Instrumental Reason and several essays in Critical Theory. Adorno's contributions also include Minima Moralia, Prisms, The Culture Industry and The Jargon of Authenticity. I will also make less substantial use of Herbert Marcuse's later works as well, namely Eros and Civilization and One Dimensional Man.[38]

When Suffering Makes Sense: Enlightenment and Instrumental Reason

In his introduction to One Dimensional Man, Herbert Marcuse states that one of the foundational values of Critical Theory is,

> the judgement that human life is worth living, or rather can be and ought to be made worth living. This judgement underlies all intellectual effort; it is the a priori of social theory, and its rejection (which is perfectly logical) rejects theory itself.[39](emphasis mine)

The Enlightenment produced a form of reason that made domination "logical." Nowhere in the pantheon of variously named schools of instrumentalism, positivism, empiricism and utilitarianism is there a substantial way to understand values. Thus it becomes impossible to claim that justice is any more rational than domination. This tragedy of the Enlightenment produced a society that is capable only of weakly evaluating ends as either individual or group self-interest for survival.

In chapter one I asserted that the rejection of an evolutionary theory of history impacts greatly on the responsibility of humanity to create its own world: ethics becomes an exercise vital to the human

condition. This assertion is made all the more clear after Dialectic of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment has degenerated into a condition where reason and ethics barely meet. Technological reason is easily wed with irrationalism and social control. Horkheimer and Adorno beseech humanity to liberate reason by recovering ethics.[40]

Horkheimer and Adorno's discussions of reason draw on a long idealist history, most directly linked to Hegel. In this tradition there are two types of reason. The first is subjective reason, which, in the Enlightenment, has drifted into positivism. The second is objective or ethical reason. For Horkheimer and Adorno both forms of reason have a common root in the human project to meet needs and alleviate fears through the domination of nature. However, only objective or ethical reason is capable of transcending this condition of domination and entering into a dialectical relation with nature. To explain in more detail, subjective reason is concerned only

> with the adequacy of procedures for purposes more or less taken for granted...It attaches little importance to the question whether the purposes as such are reasonable... The idea that an aim can be reasonable for its own sake--on the basis of virtues that insight reveals it to have in itself--without reference to some kind of subjective gain or advantage, is utterly alien to subjective reason, even where it rises above the consideration of immediate utilitarian values and devotes itself to reflections about the social order as a whole.[41]

Subjective reason serves the need for self-preservation. While the initial development of subjective reason helped crack the reified dogma of religious orthodoxy and Greek metaphysics, this liberating

aspect of subjective reason has turned into its opposite. Now, in the form of positivism and instrumentality, subjective reason itself had become one of the enslavers of humanity.

Subjective reason has led to the development of technology that knows no end other than the preservation of individuals and groups. It classifies its object as "matter" to be studied, manipulated and valued only in terms of its subjective usefulness. Knowing becomes an act of appropriation rather than a relationship of exploration and mutual influence. Understanding is essentially domination; otherness is presented as territory for expansion, a frontier for consumption. Nature is a bastion of resources to feed industry. The poor, "inferior" races and women are diminished in a world view where it is assumed that "the cream rises to the top". These marginalized peoples are thus ample resources of cheap or free labour. Technology focuses on a military complex of great breadth and terrifying power which preserves and defends a society that only pays lip service to values such as "democracy" and "freedom". Actual ends are rarely evaluated and are, in this context, irrational. The rational facade of technocratic society serves the irrational in an elaborate ideological ruse of progress and freedom.

Horkheimer and Adorno claim that any improvement of the human condition requires a recovery of objective or ethical reason. This form of reason is a force that explores,

> not only in the individual mind but the objective world--in relations among human beings and between social classes, in social institutions, and in nature and its manifestations. The emphasis was on ends rather than means... The theory of objective reason did not

> focus on the co-ordination of behavior and aim, but on concepts...on the idea of greatest good, on the problem of human destiny, and on the way of realization of ultimate goals.[42]

Objective reason is the human task which understands that particular views and conditions are part of a totality, a totality that includes nature, time and the transcendent. Without this form of reason Enlightenment drifts into mythology. The irony is that Enlightenment originally set humanity free by demythologizing the world. The project of liberation in the twentieth century employs ethical reason to demythologize the reified Enlightenment--its instrumental reason, its economic laws that are passed off as natural, its social conditions that are explained as inevitable and its individualist, violent and atomistic concept of the human being which it names as "human nature."

A dialectical appropriation of Critical Theory for Christian ethics discovers deep, mutual resonances on the theme of the recovery of ethical reason. Liberation theology, founded on scripture and Christian ethical tradition, evokes a profound morality of justice that calls upon humanity to remove the objectifying blinders from eyes clouded by objectified relations between human beings. In a loving, mutual form of relation, suffering becomes a cause for grief and a motivator for change. Liberation theology has ethics at its very heart, and thus the Frankfurt School's explanation of the dialectic of enlightenment greatly enriches the insight of Christians working for change.

As important as these insights are to Christian ethics, further reflection reveals several lacunae on this point. Despite the importance of ethical reason in their work, the Frankfurt School never

developed a theory of the development of values and the communities that fostered them. This it seems is particularly important to Christianity, which is a self-consciously moral religion. Gregory Baum points out the strange imbalance between implied importance of ethics in Critical Theory and the resistance to taking up the task. He states,

> Many theologians have reacted favourably to critical theory. Yet with many of my colleagues I felt that the Frankfurt School did not take the retrieval of ethical reason seriously enough. They did not ask the question of how values were generated, sustained and communicated.... They had few words in which to express their ethical concern and no rites and symbols to celebrate it. A certain insensitivity to the ethical remains characteristic of the secular left to this day...[43]

Baum asserts that theological thinkers provide a fuller understanding of the task of liberation. He cites Ernst Troeltsch and Paul Tillich. Tillich, a German theologian sympathetic to Critical Theory, argued that the limitations of reason cannot simply be overcome "by a new application of reason." Traditions, community and religion are vital partners in the creation of a just society.[44] The Christian tradition has a particular expertise and experience in the creation of ethical communities and thus has a vital gift to offer the overall left wing community. In a larger way, the importance of the Christian tradition to the wider progressive community is seen in the central role of base communities and liberation theologians in the struggles for justice in Latin America. While the assertion of ethical reason advocated by the Frankfurt School is absolutely vital to Christians and others committed to justice, the challenge to domination

must derive strength from an extended understanding of ethical reason and from the whole spectrum of human experience.

Christian feminist theologians and ethicists have been particularly adept at complementing the recovery of ethical reason. While Horkheimer and Adorno's concept of ethical reason claims to recognize the wholeness and connectedness of the human experience these feminists illustrate the degree to which Horkheimer, Adorno and the others fell short. Many feminists observe a body/mind duality that has distorted the Christian and Enlightenment traditions. Ethicist Beverly Wildung Harrison states, "If we begin, as feminists must, with 'our bodies, ourselves,' we recognize that all our knowledge, including our moral knowledge, is body-mediated. All knowledge is rooted in sensuality."[45] For this reason Harrison and Carol Robb advocate what they call "embodied reason" as the counter to the empiricist, "disembodied" reason that has been so harmful to women.[46] While there is not scope enough in this research to fully explore the concept of "embodied reason", it stands as an example of a further dialectical appropriation of the Frankfurt School. However, these Christian theologians and ethicists thicken the epistemological base of critical theology/theory in a way that was never attempted by Horkheimer and Adorno. Their work illustrates that the Frankfurt School's notion of ethical reason is itself guilty of a mind/body dualism. The inclusion of symbol, emotion, the body, value and the non-rational into the recovery of ethics strengthens the critical power of reason by rejecting the artificial separation of reason and these other important aspects of the human experience.

Yet at the same time Adorno's subtitle to Minima Moralia sounds a

vital cautionary note. Critical theorists of all kinds are engaged in "Reflections from Damaged Life".[47] Concepts like "embodied reason" cannot simply signify a correspondence between these epistemological explorations and liberation. We live very "damaged" lives, psychically and socially. Any experiential exploration reveals the extent of this damage. Thus the project of engaging in embodied, ethical reason is always a dialectical one: a continual process of negation, recovery and creation.

This introductory exploration into the concepts of reason in Critical Theory begs a fuller context. Horkheimer and Adorno fleshed out the implications of the loss of ethical reason in their post-war thought, and in so doing created a panoramic understanding of domination.

Dialectic of Enlightenment: The world re-mythologized

The opening lines of Dialectic of Enlightenment concisely summarize the paradox of the human condition in the twentieth century as Horkheimer and Adorno see it, "In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant."[48] The Enlightenment demythologizes and disenchants a world where humanity saw itself subject to hidden laws of nature, to Gods, Spirits and demons, to the power of the stars and the whims of hidden forces. Enlightenment granted humanity, at last, its supposedly mature self-consciousness. With Reason, humanity becomes the master of its own destiny, the subject of history, rather than the object.

This Enlightenment, including the ways it challenged the reification of objective reason's incarnations in Christian dogmatism and Aristotelianism, was a sea-change in humanity's self-awareness. The bones of free will were taking on flesh. However, the liberating, demythologizing impulses of Enlightenment refined itself into positivism, turning into myth everything but the thinnest of epistemologies, relegating nature to the prison of observable natural laws, stripping along with metaphysics all notions of transcendent purpose.

Western humanity, ceaselessly attempting self-preservation, initially attempted to survive within nature, gradually learning through the Enlightenment to dominate it. Yet the security born of this domination is unappeasable according to Horkheimer and Adorno. Mastery of nature, described both as external nature and internal human nature, becomes a manic obsession tied to the exponentially increasing technological capabilities of domination. Robbed of the means to reflect critically on itself, Enlightenment as technocratic positivism multiplies the domination of nature and humanity to a degree that explicitly threatens the very existence of humanity and indeed all of creation. Horkheimer writes,

> As the end result of the process, we have on the one hand the self, the abstract ego emptied of all substance except its attempt to transform everything in heaven and earth into means for its preservation, and on the other hand an empty nature degraded to mere material, mere stuff to be dominated, without any other purpose than that of this very domination.[49]

Humanity seeks to control the natural world but also its own "human

nature". Yet the dialectical relation of history and nature discussed above carries forward into Dialectic of Enlightenment. The Frankfurt School does not drift into a fixed concept of human nature. In the dialectic of history and nature, both mutually affect each other. Human nature is itself historical, changing and responsive to historical context. In positivistic society both internal and external nature must be controlled by the over-arching technological reason.

The massive domination of nature across the globe today is obvious. However, the domination of internal nature requires a brief explanation. Horkheimer and Adorno use the Odyssey myth to shed some light on this issue. The realities of repression in western society are made clear by the metaphor of Odysseus and the Sirens. When Odysseus and the men of his ship encounter the Sirens they must restrain themselves or succumb to the temptation of the Sirens, who represent pleasure. The sailors, the metaphorical equivalent of the oppressed, have their ears filled with wax so that they do not hear the Siren's song. Their subjugation means that they are barely conscious of pleasure. Odysseus himself represents the privileged bourgeois of the Enlightenment. He is tied to the mast so that he can hear the songs but cannot respond to them. His sailors are instructed to tighten the bonds when the master struggles to respond to the songs. In this way the bourgeois of the Enlightenment has enough socio-economic privilege to hear the songs, to recognize the existence of pleasure, but it must be rejected, denied and repressed. The human experience of pleasure is dominated in the technocratic western world. In this scenario, all aspects of "human nature" which do not accord with the functioning of technological society must be controlled.

Horkheimer and Adorno wrote the bulk of their theory in the 1940's and 50's. During the 1960's the sexual revolution required a more nuanced understanding of the connection between pleasure and domination. The "post-sexual revolution" society connects pleasure and domination in a new way. The mass media latches on to the human capacity for pleasure and turns it into a commodity. Pleasure becomes a packaged expression of the technological mass media that ensures a self-indulgent, individualist and objectifying expression that mitigates against the development of critical consciousness. As in Foucault's analysis, the nuances of the historical condition have changed; however, the common denominator of domination and power remains.[50] The ideology of individual freedom actually belies a substantial loss of autonomy.

Why does a society with so much wealth and power to insulate itself from the material stresses of existence maintain such a powerful network of domination? Just as the continuous war of Orwell's 1984 ensured servitude, the intensification of social conflict cements the conditions of anxiety that lead to the escalation of domination. Horkheimer illustrates the seeming paradox:

> despite all improvements and despite fantastic riches there rules at the same time the brutal struggle for existence, oppression, and fear. That is the hidden basis of the decay of civilization, namely that men cannot utilize their power over nature for the rational organization of the earth but rather must yield themselves to blind individual and national egoism under the compulsion of circumstances and of inescapable manipulation.[51]

Social conflict is maintained in a way that privileges those with

power. A society based on a far more equitable distribution of resources and a truly democratic structure of political expression for all would recognize that the current generation of humanity is capable of a degree of security vis-a-vis nature that is unprecedented historically. However, the presence of intense social conflict at home and abroad ensures that security remains unnoticed by those who have privilege and unrealized by those who do not.

Historically, the connection between the domination of nature and the domination of humans functions something like a law of exponentially increasing returns. In pre-mechanized society, the scope of domination is severely limited by relatively low capabitilities of production, transportation, and coercion. Moreover, the stakes of this domination are, relative to modern societies, quite limited. Technology, as it expands human control over nature, greatly increases the scope of domination within human communities.

William Leiss, in his summary of Adorno and Horkheimer, lists five specific links between the domination of nature and humanity in technological societies.[52] Since the early 1970's when Leiss wrote his book, The Domination of Nature, the severity of the trends he observes have increased. Technology increases the productivity of labour and thus the gap between those who profit from labour and those who do the work. Social tensions increase over distribution of these resources. This dichotomy is particularly true when it is viewed in light of the current debt crisis in much of the third world. Not only are the numbers of poor growing, but their relative lack of wealth and power also worsens. Moreover, recent events such as the 1970's Oil Crisis, the Gulf War and other realities across the Third World have

proven that the first world cannot insulate itself from the conflict around the world. This conflict intensifies the anxiety of a society that knows solutions to poverty only as Structural Adjustment Policies and the technological miracle--solutions that in many cases actually increase human suffering.

The second element is closely related. The expansion of the industrial, technological state requires greater access to resources from all over the planet. First world nations originally used military means to control their access to resources and markets. While these mechanisms are still frequently used--though most often by client governments who wage war on their own people--much economic and social control is carried out through "softer" means. The U.S. mass media placates more than just North Americans. The movements toward free trade decrease the ability of nations to control multi-national corporations at time when most of those corporations are more powerful than third world states. The effect is that first world privilege becomes all the more obvious to the oppressed at home and abroad, yet all the more immune to confrontation. A further and even more dangerous effect is that the globalization of technocratic structures places control of the system out of the hands of any national state, let alone those who supposedly represent the world's poorest people.

Third, the technological development in armaments allows for highly efficient state terrorism and also places the whole world on the edge of nuclear annihilation. Third World governments attempt to control the internal conflict of their countries by purchasing vast quantities of efficient weaponry, which are used against their own people and increase the crippling debts that these countries carry.

Moreover, the apparent relaxation of the Cold War obscures the fact that expansion of nuclear technology is increasingly in the hands of small, unstable nations, some of whom have not hesitated to use other lethal weapons, such as chemicals. All of these factors greatly increase the real and perceived anxiety of people around the world.

Fourth, as already mentioned, the technological media inculcates the world with extensive propaganda. Developments in the media over the last two decades illustrate a trend toward viewing society as chaotic and full of conflict. Television, radio and print media stress local, national and global events that are conflictual and dramatic. The countless human actions of reconciliation, love, justice-building, and creativity are grossly under-represented. The media presents current events as the products of mysterious causes with unimaginable solutions. The rejection of most truly critical perspectives in the media increases the perception that conflict is a dominant, if not the dominant aspect of "human nature."

Fifth and finally, Leiss claims that the consumerist society increases expectations to insatiable levels. Leiss explains, "...if every level of gratification for material wants merely serves to elicit a more elaborate set of desires, the competitiveness and isolation among individuals that underlies the psychology of consumer behavior will continue to feed the sources of conflict."[53]

Horkheimer, Adorno and Leiss do not mention several other factors that support their thesis. First, the capacity of the natural environment to support human demands for resources and the vast contamination of the environment only increases the struggle to obtain dwindling resources and sanitized environments for the privileged.

Surprisingly, the well developed theories about the domination of nature developed by Horkheimer and Adorno do not lead them into an ecological analysis or ethics. Second, the scope of gender, race and ethnic conflict is deeply interwoven with economic domination. This form of domination creates seething conflicts in the late twentieth century. While the Frankfurt School expands its understanding of domination in a way that rejects the proletariat and the determination of economics they do not develop an analysis of gender, ethnicity and race. Thus we see that a dialectical recovery of the Frankfurt School must note that gender, race, class, ethnicity and ecological concerns are absolutely vital to Christian ethics in its attempt to confront domination. We also see that such a web of analysis also supports the fundamental contention of the dialectic of enlightenment: technocratic society fuels its exponentially increasing capability of domination through the maintenance of social conflict, all the while perpetuating the interests of those who control and benefit most from the society. Furthermore, modern western society and its positivist, instrumental reason, is not capable of the kind of ethical reflection which could be used to demystify the ideology that cloaks the domination, to confront this domination and to create alternatives.

Western society, supposedly constructed on rational precepts and continually improved by rational maintenance, is in reality a bastion of irrationality. The domination of nature, the domination of human beings and the escalation of conflict mutually reinforce one another. Technological society creates and depends upon conflict and thus creates the conditions for its own exponential and irrational expansion. Horkheimer puts it bluntly,

> ...nature is today more than ever conceived as a mere tool of man. It is the object of total exploitation that has no aim set by reason, and therefore no limit. Man's boundless imperialism is never satisfied.[54]

Yet at the same time mechanisms of control, social and psychological, are implemented to achieve the kind of shaky stability that its self-preservation requires.

Yet, the countless forms of repression necessary to maintain this system of domination produce another self-perpetuating reality, the "Revolt of Nature." The Frankfurt School turned to a psychoanalytic analysis in order to fully explicate the human condition in the twentieth century. I turn now to a sampling of that work in my dialectical recovery of the Frankfurt School for Christian social ethics.

The Return of the Repressed: Hope or condemnation?

The domination of nature by technological rationality does not rest victorious. Nature cannot be vanquished but only repressed, and this repression leads to a reaction. Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse adopted theories of the "revolt of nature" to describe the reaction of repressed nature. These theories were built upon the then as now controversial linkage of social theory with psychoanalytic thought. Critical Theory sought to understand the reproduction of domination within the psyche. They sought to understand how the condition of the psyche in western civilization contributed to the predicament of Enlightenment and how to understand the particular psychological realities of the twentieth century technological state.[55]

This revolt of nature has been present since the dawn of human consciousness and is recognized as the "reality principle." Simply put, human beings must postpone numerous pleasures, appetites and desires in order to survive. While a certain amount of "basic repression" is necessary to all civilization, the preponderance of repression in western technological society is what Marcuse called "surplus repression." It is not necessary to the basic functioning and survival of human beings but to the maintenance of a particular system of domination. All repression returns as "revolt of nature".

Marcuse differs from Horkheimer and Adorno in his evaluation of the impact of the "return of the repressed." For Horkheimer and Adorno this return is always in distorted or damaged form. Horkheimer claims,

> Since the subjugation of nature, in and outside of man, goes on without meaningful motive, nature is not really transcended or reconciled but merely repressed. Resistance and revulsion arising from this repression of nature have beset civilization from its beginnings...Typical of our own era is the manipulation of this revolt by the prevailing forces of civilization itself, the use of the revolt as a means of perpetuating the very conditions by which it is stirred up and against which it is directed. Civilization as rationalized irrationality integrates the revolt of nature as another means or instrument.[56]

The revolt of nature does not destabilize domination but acts a powerful pscychological tool of preserving it. Repression produces a return in the idolatry of Nazism, the violence of western societies, in racism and other forms of hatred.

Marcuse adopts a more optimistic stance. He believes that the

return of the repressed--first as "maternal eros" and then as "feminine principle"--happens without distortion. The repression of the unconditional love between humans modelled initially on the mother for the child becomes the revolutionary impulse. This leads Marcuse, as well as Horkheimer and Adorno, to argue that women should stay home in the family, where they will not be masculinized. The love of the mother, and thus for Marcuse the hope of liberation, is preserved.

Patricia Jagentowicz Mills has vigorously critiqued this sexist aspect of Critical Theory and has attempted to recover the Frankfurt School in a renewed and feminist way. She associates Marcuse's "feminine principle" not with the maintenance of women in the home but with the remnant of love in relationship that is the psychological heart of the feminist movement.[57]

There are several other aspects of the Frankfurt School's theory of the revolt of nature that deepen the understanding of domination in western society. The revolt of nature is always proportional in intensity to the degree of domination and repression itself. Clearly in an age of surplus repression and increasingly sophisticated domination the threat of a more virulent response is all the greater.

There is a hopeful note of sorts. William Leiss points out that a social system that depends on successfully manipulating the revolt of nature for its own preservation is ultimately doomed. The technology of modern society now has the capability of destroying the planet in nuclear war, of ruining its environment and of releasing such enormous powers of repression that the social structure becomes self-defeating. Leiss says, "This is the point beyond which the nexus of rational techniques and irrational applications ceases to have any applications

at all; it represents the internal limit in the exercise of domination over internal and external nature, to exceed which entails that the intentions are inevitably frustrated by the chosen means."[58] The question remains, at what point in the escalating suffering of humanity is this nexus passed? How much more unnecessary violence will be done in the meantime? Worst of all, is nuclear war the only clear message that this point has been reached?

These are challenging questions that often lead to pessimistic conclusions. However, the Frankfurt School, like Weber, presents trends in their sociology, not rules. These trends are checked and sometimes even reversed by countervailing tendencies. Marcuse's optimistic theory of the return of the repressed may even be understood as one such countervailing tendency, especially given the fact that humans will never fully understand the multiple chains of cause and effect in our psyches. I will return to the issue of countervailing tendencies, and to the whole theory of "negating the negation" in the next section on negative dialectics.

For Christians and the secular left the psychoanalytic explorations of the Frankfurt School remain very controversial. North American progressive researchers and activists, including Christians, maintain a consistent suspicion of the psychoanalytic task in its totality. They are suspicious of the individualized notions of pscychological theory yet they do not attempt the kind of integration of broader social analysis with theories of the psyche that the Frankfurt School attempts. When North Americans do attempt this task it is often in contradistinction to Freudian paradigms that dominate Critical Theory. Continental theorists sometimes are less reserved.

Foucault, Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous have all appropriated psychoanalytic thought, especially that of Jacques Lacan, to help in their justice-seeking theoretical tasks. North American theorists like Gad Horowitz, who has attempted a re-analysis of Freud from the perspective of a critical theory of society, are the minority.[59]

At the very least a dialectical recovery of the Frankfurt School marks the importance of taking the psychological realities of the subject very seriously. Just as Christian communities are often sites for the development of critical values they are also places for the care of the individual in relation with others. The critique of domination seems to require an understanding of the psyche, but the development of communities to struggle for justice requires people whose health and energy is sustained by love, friendship, support and challenge. This seemingly basic observation about community development for change is frequently overlooked, especially in the secular left. A dialectical recovery of the Frankfurt School seeks out, for Christian Ethics, new understandings of psychological theory and corrects the errors in Critical Theory that reproduce domination--such as the work cited by Mills. However, it also carries forward the mandate, found in the Frankfurt School, to integrate psychological theory with the effort to confront domination. Christians learn from Horkheimer, Adorno and others that the rejection of the psychoanalytic dimension, so common to the Christian tradition and particularly in the liberation theology sectors of the church, is a gap in Christian social criticism. Christians, just as they have overcome Marx's assertions that religion as an "opiate" must do the same for psychoanalytic thought, moving past the religion as "neurosis" perspective and integrating psychoanalysis into a radical critique of society.

The body of Critical Theory discussed so far leads to a troubling recognition of the intractible depth of domination in western societies. Clearly, however, history is not simply about suffering, misery and oppression. The building of countervailing movements of justice and liberation is a constant though frequently downplayed part of western culture. In Canada there is a long tradition of secular and Christian progressives who have confronted capitalism, sexism, racism, homophobia and ethnic distrust.[60] As discussed earlier, orthodox Marxism determined that one social group, the workers, as those who held history's destiny of liberation. Not only were they wrong about this, but the rigidity of vulgar Marxist understanding cannot be absolved for the brutality of the Soviet empire. The Frankfurt School, as we have seen, rejected any single group as the subject of liberation and widened the understanding of domination to include a wide spectrum of economic, cultural, political and psychological factors. Thus the Frankfurt School was presented with a difficult challenge: how could a meaningful understanding of social change be developed that did not privilege a certain group or analysis yet that also presented a substantive confrontation to domination? The panorama of insights that one might include under the umbrella of Adorno's phrase "negative dialectics" were the Frankfurt School's answer to that difficult question.

The Glimmer of Justice: Negative dialectics

Even the use of the term "negative dialectics" is problematic, much less an attempt to give the term some meaning for Christian social ethics. The term itself was used in published form only by Adorno in his work produced after 1966. Yet "negative dialectics" is the most appropriate methodological term for the project of the Frankfurt School. While Horkheimer did not use the word his original intent was to co-write the book which Adorno would later publish alone called Negative Dialectics. The task that both identified, Adorno as sociological philosopher and Horkheimer as philosophical sociologist, was to recreate a new materialist dialectics that could break down the identity theories of bourgeois, technocratic society.

To simplify, most theoretical efforts in sociology and philosophy had attempted to say something positive and substantial about the human condition. They succeeded each other in an evolutionary process moving toward some truth at the end of the rainbow. Adorno and Horkheimer viewed this kind of theorizing, and in particular western positivism, as commoditizing and totalizing by definition. They were even suspicious of Frankfurt School associates Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm for attempting to say something positive about the human condition, for exposing contradictions between bourgeois thought and reality and then replacing them with superior concepts. As discussed above, to Horkheimer and Adorno this is "identity theory," the artificial unity of a concept with its object. The secret of a powerful critical theory of society was not the discovery of better and better

concepts, but of a theory that illustrated the non-identity of ethical or objective reason with the real world. This "non-identity" theory applies to society and nature. In society, the task of negative dialectics was an immanent critique that illustrated the enormous and widening gap between bourgeois ideals like freedom, equality and justice and social realities. With regard to nature, "identity" referred to the attempt to own nature by proclaiming to fully know it. Identity theory is knowledge as imperialism.

The idea of negative dialectics is the most controversial aspect of Critical Theory. Often critics who reject the Horkheimer and Adorno do so on this point. Jürgen Habermas, a member of the so-called "second generation of the Frankfurt School," is a case in point. To put it in the terms of the activist, how does one critique society without a positively stated foundation, an ethical platform and an alternative program for society?

Adorno himself refused to give any such platform. With regard to political activism and revolution Adorno states,

> ...being consumed, swallowed up, is indeed just what I understand as "participation"... No longer wanting to know anything new, above all anything that is open and unguarded. The guardedness of the revolution.[61]

In this regard the program of the theory did not alter its pre-war stance. There is no revolutionary subject. There is no evolutionary path for history. The total rejection of any theory of social change and action is a difficult and disturbing element of Critical Theory. Susan Buck-Morss makes a telling criticism,

> ...in the name of the revolution, thought could never acknowledge a

> revolutionary situation; in the name of utopia, it could never work for utopia's realization. Adorno ensured perhaps too successfully that reason did not become "instrumental." For instrumental reason preserved a moment of "use value" which negative dialectics had to abandon. The result was that as opposites, they too converged: instrumental reason lost sight of rational goals, ceased to be a means, and became an end in itself; but negative dialectics abrogated political utility, and thus became an end in itself as well.[62]

I believe at least part of the problem with this issue rests with the theoretical task specific to Adorno. Adorno was primarily interested in negative dialectics applied to philosophical discourse. As Buck-Morss points out, Adorno was interested in questions of truth and beauty.[63] In this sense negative dialectics retains its radical and vital meaning. No matter how liberating the praxis, no matter how horrendous the suffering or necessary the revolution, practice and "truth" must remain philosophically non-identical. Left-wing practice proved no less totalitarian and brutal than ring-wing programs when this point is forgotten.

Moreover, "negative dialectics" also retains a great deal more validity when its historical context is recalled. The Frankfurters did not seek an eternal philosophical system in their Critical Theory, but a way to understand the human condition in the precise historical context of mid-twentieth century western society. As we discussed above, that historical context proves to be highly infertile to radical change. Adorno's wariness is drawn from a historicized understanding of the enormous barriers to Utopia. His famous statement, "philosophy

lives on because the movement to realize it was missed,"[64] explicitly recognizes the historical and contextual nature of Critical Theory. When this factor is observed alongside Adorno's own elitism, his refusal to involve himself in communities of change, his reluctance to understand the Third World and to involve himself in anything other than philosphical and esthetic practices, then it becomes clear that Adorno emphasized only a certain element of his own dialectics. Dialectics is a process of recovery, negation and transcendence. Thus the root of all change must come from that relationship, that is, from within society. That which the dialectical process draws forward is always an element of change. Adorno's negative dialectic always sought balance. Thus in domination-wrought western technocracy balance implies emphasis on the negation. Moreover, Adorno's own insensitivity to the "real world" exacerbated this emphasis in his theory. Clearly though, negative dialectics itself allows us the opportunity to gaze upon the world, no matter the degree of suffering and oppression, and identify the roots of change that destabilize and confront dominant structures.

Furthermore, Adorno and Horkheimer cautiously suggested a category that helps in the understanding of negative dialectics. "Mimesis" refers to the possibility of filtering the return of repressed nature through the critical mechanism of ethical reason. The project of liberation is not simply a rational process, but is a partnership of the extra-rational and the rational. While this point is basic to Christians it is far more controversial in secular theory. Adorno frequently links "mimesis" to esthetics. The artistic impulse is seen as both non-rational and liberative, but it is nonetheless interpreted after the fact by reason. He states,

> To represent the mimesis it supplanted, the concept has no other way than to adopt something mimetic in its own conduct, without abandoning itself... The esthetic moment is thus not accidental to philosophy...but it is no less incumbent upon philosophy tc void its etheticism, to sublimate the esthetic into the real, by cogent insights.[65]

In a broad interpretation appealing to Christian ethics, "mimesis" might be understood as a critical concept that unifies the extra-rational aspects of human experience--the unconscious, religious experience, nature, the emotions--with an ethical reason. "Mimesis" must be understood with caution, especially since it is a combination of the rational and non-rational that cements the power of modern forms of domination. Nonetheless, given the particular historical and contextual content that fills out given incarnations of mimesis it stands as a useful critical device. Certainly, Christian ethics emerging from the paradigm of liberation theology can be interpreted, to some extent, as an example of "mimesis."

However, even with these caveats to Buck-Morss' critique, negative dialectics as I've described it so far presents a difficult interpretive challenge to the Christian ethicist in terms of a program for change. The activist may adopt from Critical Theory a trenchant and thoughtful analysis about the domination and the human condition. Christians learn that there is no inevitable course to history and thus that human thought and action has central importance. The Christian learns to avoid identifying liberation with any one social collectivity; domination operates on myriads of planes and relationships. The Christian also learns from Adorno and Horkheimer

that he or she may in some dialectical or partial way represent a crack or contradiction in the edifice of domination. The Frankfurt School teaches Christians to avoid associating the pragmatics of social action with ultimate truth. In and of themselves these are vitally important aspects of social theory. Yet still, has Critical Theory nothing more concrete to offer those struggling for change?

I believe the answer to this question is a qualitative yes. Further, and vitally important to the dialectical recovery of the Frankfurt School for Christian social ethics, I believe this qualified yes depends on the sometimes maligned, usually ignored, theological aspect of Critical Theory. Late in his life Horkheimer wrote a book, never translated into English, called The Longing for The Wholly Other.[66] This book was a development of a root that had appeared in Dialectic of Enlightenment, "Politics that does not contain theology within itself, however little considered, may often be shrewd but remains in the end no more than a business."[67] It is this theological view by the athiests Adorno and Horkheimer that provides the key link for the activist between positive programs for social change and Critical Theory. It is theology, the faith in the transcendent, which fills out and resolves Critical Theory. I turn to this intriguing exploration of theology in the dialectical recovery of the Frankfurt School in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Justice as Theology: The Eschatology of Critical Theory

Horkheimer and Adorno do not plead for the recovery of ethical reason for the sake of philosophy but for the sake of humanity. The root of Critical Theory is indignant and despairing in face of injustice; it is passionate and moral about the task of liberation. Despite the fact that all but Walter Benjamin were athiests, a great deal of the motivation and content of Critical Theory emerged from the Jewish and Christian traditions. While the Frankfurt School's theories of religion suggest that the Enlightenment will make religion obsolete, there are nonetheless many passionate and sometime profound echoes of Judaism and Christianity within their writings.

While the Critical Theorists argue that religion itself will decline, and that the project of justice will shed its religious costume, the remaining transcendent yearning of humanity is itself a faith experience of sorts, a faith in ultimate justice, a faith that the suffering of today is not the whole story of humanity. Justice as eschatalogical hope liberates humanity from the bonds of present suffering and despair.

This theological resonance makes Critical Theory appealing to Christians. Unlike so many secular theories of society, Critical Theory maintains an epistemological heart that is at the very least empathetic to the experience of the believer. Faith is not simply an addendum. The

thought of the Frankfurt School is much more than a spiritually numb idea of society that happens to be useful to Christians. Critical Theory is a worldview that understands the human longing for transcendence not only as vital to the human experience but also vital to the confrontation with domination. While the members of the Frankfurt School, except Benjamin, were not able to believe in a Transcendence as God there is nonetheless a longing for that belief. This longing makes Adorno and especially Horkheimer sympathetic to and perhaps even envious at times of the faith of Christians and Jews struggling for change.

In this chapter I will illustrate some of the religious and theological content of the Frankfurt School and argue that this theological dimension of Critical Theory helps recover it from the threat of self-absorption. The criticism that Buck-Morss makes above, that "negative dialectics abrogated political utility, and thus became an end in itself..." is met by the theological statement made late in Horkheimer's life in The Longing for the Wholly Other. Without this eschatalogical dimension the recovery of ethical reason as negative dialectics is indeed an end in itself, a "fetish" that dissolves structures but inhibits the practical struggle to form, support and guide communities that struggle for social change. The theological dimension grounds the recovery of ethical reason in justice and puts to rest the temptation to associate negative dialectics with a postmodern deconstructionism that cannot tell the difference between good and evil. The theological content of Critical Theory allows Christians to reaffirm the commitment to human emancipation, subjectivity and love that is the heart of the faith tradition and to struggle for change despite the challenges of faith in western, technological society.

I will begin this chapter by exploring the Jewish roots of the Frankfurt School. This exploration will include an analysis of the influence of Walter Benjamin, the only theologian within the inner circle. From there I will describe the content and importance of Horkheimer's theological statements for Critical Theory and for Christians seeking to explore connections between a critical, dialectical and emancipatory reason and Christian faith.

The "theological" thought of the Frankfurt School was not received well in left-wing circles. To this day it is often ignored by secular interpreters of Horkheiemer and Adorno. The Longing for the Wholly Other has not even been translated into English. For this reason my comments about this work and about Horkheimer's theories of the transcendent rely heavily on the work of Rudolph Siebert, whose book, Horkheimer's Critical Sociology of Religion: The Relative and the Transcendent, is one of the few examinations of this topic in English.[68]

Jewish Moral and Theological Foundations

When Walter Benjamin committed suicide in 1940 while fleeing the Nazis the members of the Frankfurt School lost one of their closest colleagues and a truly creative and original member of their circle. Moreover, the always multi-disciplinary Frankfurt School also lost its only member deeply concerned with theological issues. If Benjamin had heeded Adorno and Horkheimer's warnings to leave Paris before it was too late the theological character of Critical Theory would contain far more than what Rudolph Siebert calls their "mystical atheism."[69] Five

years before Benjamin died, Adorno, long suspicious of Benjamin's theologizing, nonetheless encouraged him to resuscitate theology and thus radicalize dialectical materialism into its, "inner theological glowing fire."[70] Needless to say, Benjamin's tragic and premature death ensured that this never happened.

Adorno's ambivalent encouragement of Benjamin is an indicator of an important theological influence for many members of the Frankfurt School. The early Critical Theorists emerged in a German milieu full of influential and radical believers, nearly all Jews. Jürgen Habermas has suggested a connection between German idealist reason and the Jewish thought in the Diaspora. He makes a connection between dialectical forms of reason and the Jewish form of mysticism called Kabbalism that was so influential on Benjamin and other members of the Frankfurt School. The Kabbalist idea that speech is the only way to develop knowledge of God lends itself to critical reason. Martin Jay summarizes Habermas's arguement, "The distance between Hebrew, the sacred language, and the profane speech of the Diaspora made its impact on Jews who were distrustful of the current universe of discourse. This, so Habermas has argued, parallels the idealist critique of empirical reality, which reached its height in Hegelian dialectics."[71]

Indeed, many Jewish radicals fashioned the ground from which Critical Theory grew. For example, Benjamin, Adorno and Horkheimer were influenced by Ersnt Bloch's work. Bloch, though arguing for a secular vision of Utopia, was Jewish, though he had religious beliefs that Buck-Morss calls "pansectarian."[72] Bloch's ideas of the transcendent in his utopian vision was a strong challenge to the mechanistic and

instrumental view of orthodox Marxism. Bloch argued that social change was not just a product of changes in objective reality but of subjective factors such as religious consciousness.

Also influential were Jewish theologians like Franz Rosenzweig, Gersholm Scholem, Siegfried Kracauer, Martin Buber and Nehemiah Nobel. In The Star of Redemption Rosenzweig uses Jewish theology to critique and augment Hegelian dialectics. This theological perspective is suspicious of the attempt to resolve history in the positive dialectics that one finds in Hegel. Rosenzweig states, "Only in redemption, God becomes the One and All which, from the first, human reason in its rashness has everywhere sought and everywhere asserted, and yet nowhere found because it simply was nowhere to be found yet, for it did not exist yet."[73] This theme, in secularized form, would dominate Horkheimer's view of the transcendent in The Longing for the Wholly Other. While humanity pleads for transcendent justice in the midst of suffering, this transcendence is nowhere present in practical realities, except as motivation. Horkheimer's redemption, the truly reconciled society of autonomous, loving subjects, is like the redemption of Rosenzweig, "nowhere to be found." Rosenzweig's further explorations reveal some of the themes that are familiar in Critical Theory. His subject-object relation was at least in part a mystical one, leading him to claim that the object was, "incapable of utter absorption into the category, for there can be no category for it to belong to; it is its own category."[74] This notion bears a particular continuity to negative dialectics, which abhors the claim that positivism can fully know its object. In Critical Theory the object is never fully subsumed in "the concept." Presumptions that this

object-consuming knowledge is possible is actually knowledge as domination.

Walter Benjamin learned of Rosenzweig's work through his closest intellectual compa...n before he met Adorno, Gershom Sholem. Sholem devoted much of his intellectual work to recovering the mystic Kabbalah tradition of Judaism. Sholem connected the philosophical thought of Rosenzweig with the mystic aspects of Kabbalism and the traditional Jewish refusal to name God. The friendship of Benjamin and Scholem was a highly interactive one. As a twenty-three year old, Benjamin had only a passing knowledge of Jewish theology. However, it was his frienship with Scholem, the Zionist, socialist and activist, that gave him a route though which he could develop his theological skills.[75] By the 1920's Benjamin was attempting to learn Hebrew and considering following Scholem to Palestine. During these years Benjamin struggled to create a philosophical paradigm that could accommodate his mystical experience, certain Kantian perspectives and his recently discovered Marxism. As it turned out the Marxist interest began to take on greater importance. Benjamin, suspicious of Martin Buber and other Zionists, went to Moscow rather than Palestine and ended up meeting Bertold Brecht, thus increasing Marxist influences on his thought. Benjamin concluded his integrative work nonetheless, writing Passagenarbeit and the Trauerspiel study.[76] Benjamin claimed that the cognition of Kantian philosophy and of Kabbalist mysticism is mutually resolved in relation to dialectical materialism. Benjamin wrote the following analogy to express the important relation of theology and Marxism,

> A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table... Actually, a little hunchback

> who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called "historical materialism" is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight.[77]

Benjamin shared these insights with Adorno and a relatively new member of their circle, Max Horkheimer. While Adorno did not share Benjamin's religious beliefs he was nonetheless deeply influenced. Adorno's work began to reflect Benjamin's vocabulary and by 1931 Adorno had presented a study of music and Marxism that applied the insights of Benjamin's Trauerspiel.[78] Adorno submitted this work to theologian Paul Tillich as his Habilitationsschrift.

The direct influence of Jewish mysticism on Benjamin, Adorno and Horkheimer is found in Kabbalist exegesis. This highly dialectical method sought to uncover truth in the particularities of a text and in an interactive dialogue between the text and the present. This exegetical constellation of truths often overturned traditional interpretations of the Torah. Kabbalism asserted that these revelations of truth were frequently not the intentions of the author, but they were derived by the hermeneutical process itself.[79] Benjamin wrote, "I have never been able to do research and think in a way other than, if I may so put it, in a theological sense--namely, in accordance with the Talmudic teaching of the forty-nine levels of meaning in every passage of the Torah."[80] These insights were quickly adapted to a dialectic theory of society that resisted claims to true or false consciousness within objects. The critical, Kabbalist dialectical

"exegesis" that influenced the foundation of Critical Theory always discovered both emancipatory and reactionary trends in the development of proletarian consciousness and for that matter in all objects of interpretation. Meaning is always ambiguous, especially in Enlightenment, where every bit of progress comes with loss. The Frankfurt School, unlike the proponents of scientific Marxism, was highly skilled at drawing out the positive nuances in a wide variety of philosophical thought, despite its ultimate rejection of them.

This philosophical and theological perspective was fully in line with the Jewish prohibition on naming God. To do so was premature and dangerous. The transcendent is always beyond the present and its suffering. Neither the transcendence of God nor the coming of the Messianic age can be associated directly with present, flawed reality.[81] According to Horkheimer, the Jewish use of the apostrophe in the place of the word for God emerges from God's command to Moses that no images of God be created by humans. Horkheimer and Adorno developed, radicalized and universalized this prohibition on naming and creating images of the transcendent. For the Critical Theorists the resonances of human experiences of suffering carry far more weight than those of reconciliation, which are merely premature unities. The subjugation in Egypt resonates far more deeply than the specious promises of the Land of Milk and Honey. This hermeneutic of suffering yields the insight that humanity carries forth a universal yearning for unity and transcendence. Yet according to negative dialects, reality contains no images whatever of the divine, the transcendent or the full potential of human self-awareness beyond finitude. While the yearning for transcendence is expressed in justice-seeking praxis, the fruits of

this labour are not in any way incarnational. The "negation of the negation" is a constant swirling task in the space between subject and object.

Thus Adorno called this idea of religious consciousness a "negative" or "inverse" theology. Interestingly enough, the athiest Adorno used the phrase "our theology" when he wrote to Benjamin about it in 1934.[82] Despite phrases like this, Adorno and Horkheimer never did reject Enlightenment reason for an emphasis on faith. They were athiests to the end. Adorno and Horkheimer's desire to fully recover reason contrasted with much of the intellectual climate of the day. The emerging conservatism of Enlightenment perspectives on reason and society in the first decades of the twentieth century led many intellectuals to affirm the irrational. The theological revival that included Benjamin was perhaps one of the more helpful developments of the non-rationalist backlash against a stagnant Enlightenment. Others included renewed interest in Kierkegaard, the psychiatry of Jung, the fiction of Hesse and, as Buck-Morss expresses it, a general, "advocacy of 'culture' over civilization and 'community over society, and even an intellectual vogue for horoscopes and magic."[83] Plainly, some of the themes in this intellectual ferment became vital to the Frankfurt School, such as the stress on culture over political economy and the vigorous critique of Enlightenment. However, Adorno, Horkheimer and Benjamin parted company with the non-rationalists, preferring a dialectical theory that understood reason and irrationality as mutually interpenetrating modern society. This mutual critique of non-reason and reason eventually became grounded on the critique of fascism, where the use of technocratic rationality for the most horrible and irrational evil in history became manifest in reality.

Benjamin provided Adorno with this link between the rational and irrational. The two remained in vigorous communication until the former's tragic death in 1940. Benjamin's philosophical and theological influence on Adorno, and by extension on Horkheimer, cannot be underestimated.

Adorno brought this philosophical perspective with him to his courses with Hans Cornelius, another influential figure for the early Frankfurt School and another mentor committed to the importance of religion. Cornelius was something of a non-metaphysical Kantian, an empiricist and free thinker who worked closely with Adorno and Horkheimer. He wrote in 1923,

> Men have unlearned the ability to recognize the Godly in themselves and in things; nature and art, family and state only have interest for them as sensations. Therefore their lives now flow meaninglessly by, and their shared culture is inwardly empty and will collapse because it is worthy of collapse. The new religion, however, which mankind needs, will first emerge from ruins of this culture.[84]

Cornelius was particularly influential on Horkheimer, and it was in Cornelius' classes that Adorno and Horkheimer became acquainted with each other. If Adorno brought a philosophical and aesthetic concern to the arena of the rational and irrational in the 1920s, Horkheimer brought a decidedly moral one. In some ways, the difference between Adorno's emphasis on the philosophical in Negative Dialectics and Horkheimer's union of transcendence with a moral sociology of domination can be traced back to their earliest years of work. While Adorno brought serious ambitions for musical composition and abstract reflection to his early study of philosophy Horkheimer brought moral

indignation about his forced participation in the First World War and a hatred for the textile business in which his father forced him to work. Horkheimer wrote a series of novels that expressed an abhorrence of war and his lack of freedom in the face of tyrannical commercial ideology and familial expectation. He wrote as a twenty-year old,

> By my craving for truth I will live, and search into what I desire to know; the afflicted will I aid, satisfy my hatred against injustice, and vanquish the Pharisees, but above all search for love, love and understanding...[85]

It is clear that Benjamin, Horkheimer and Adorno developed their earliest roots in philosophical ideas that at the very least respected the role of religion. Moreover, the recovery of "ethical reason" that became so vital in the dialectic of enlightenment period of their work finds its origin in the search for a moral usefulness for reason.

Judaism itself played a small but important role within the research of the Institute over the years. The Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt was endowed by a wealthy Jew on the promise that research would be done on anti-semitism in Germany. This research was carried out in the 1940's in the studies on fascism and The Authoritarian Personality.[86] In general terms, anti-semitic German fascism was the pivotal expression of domination and the terror of Enlightenment gone bad. References to Auschwitz became a basic expression of Enligtenment's heart of evil. In "Elements of Anti-Semitism," a chapter in Dialectic of Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the goals of liberal assimilation of Jews was a facade because Bourgeois anti-semites projected their own self-hatred onto Jews. Judaism was, therefore a socio-economic category and the

hatred of Jews was necessary in liberal capitalism. All at once Jews were hated, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, because they were envied and because the challenged instrumental rationality and the work ethic.[87]

Given these realities and the virulence of German anti-semitism in the 1930s it remains surprising that so many members of the Frankfurt School vehemently deny any importance to their heritage.[88] Istvan Deak, whose has researched the lives and commitments of the many Jews on the Weimar left, claims that most of these intellectuals and activists recognized "the fact that business, artistic, or scientific careers do not help solve the Jewish problem, and that Weimar Germany had to undergo dire transformation if German anti-semitism was to end."[89] This reality promoted radicalism in the German Jewish community. Despite this, one member of the Frankfurt School, Frederich Pollach, stated, "All of us, up to the last years before Hitler, had no feeling of insecurity originating from our ethnic descent."[90] Martin Jay, states in The Dialectical Imagination,

> ...for all their claims to total assimilation and assertions about the lack of discrimination in Weimar, one cannot avoid a sense of their protesting too much...This is not to say that that the Institute's program can be solely, or even predominantly, attributed to its members' ethnic roots, but merely to argue that to ignore them entirely is to lose sight of one contributing factor...In fact, one might argue that the strong ethical tone of Critical Theory was a product of the incorporation of the values likely to be espoused in a close-knit Jewish home.[91]

The research of Susan Buck-Morss, referred to above, has shown the

enormous importance of Benjamin's thinking to that of Adorno, and there is no underestimating the importance of Judaism to Benjamin. Surprisingly, Jay spends very little time talking about Benjamin's theological influence on Critical Theory. Perhaps some explanation can be found for this in the narrow parameters of Jay's study. The Dialectical Imagination ends its account of the Frankfurt School in 1950, well before Horkheimer's Longing for the Wholly Other tied up the many loose theological ends in Critical Theory. It is to that work and its importance both to Critical Theory and Christian social ethics that I now turn.

Critical Theory's "theological glowing fire"

If Benjamin's death ended Adorno's hope that his friend would describe Critical Theory's "theological glowing fire" then Horkheimer, at the very least, set up some of the parameters for that study. I will argue in this section that Horkheimer's descriptions in Longing for The Wholly Other not only clarify the theological and religious perspectives of Critical Theory, but that Horkheimer's statements on transcendence give Critical Theory its necessary critical distance from reality and clarify the understanding of negative dialectics in a way that is vital if Critical Theory is to be useful for Christian ethics. Moreover, the theological content of Adorno and Horkheimer's work is a direct result of their critique of positivism and is essential to the dialectic of enlightenment.

While Horkheimer's critical theory of religion draws on the work of many important Enlightenment thinkers it is most especially a

dialogue with Hegel's concepts of the finite and infinite in his theory of religion. When Horkheimer states that any philosophy that does not contain a theological moment is not philosophical he is arguing for the importance of the transcendent in relation to the given.[92] As metaphysical as his appeal to the transcendent may sound, any critical theory of society requires a theoretical distance between given reality and a utopian vision. Without this transcendent perspective theory becomes a reflection and refinement on the status quo, a baptism of what is.

Horkheimer took seriously the Marxian critique of Hegel's dialectical philosophy of religion. Like Marx, Horkheimer was anxious to preserve the dialectical nature of the theory and the importance of the transcendent, yet he sought to eliminate Hegel's positive dialectics. Not only does reason not know of God, according to Horkheimer, but the dialectic of infinite and finite cannot be resolved in any positive form. Horkheimer and Adorno posit a negative dialectics the precludes the premature closure and unity of Hegelian and Marxist dialectics. Horkheimer, as we have discussed, rejects the identification of transcendence with the proletariat, or any other subject or idea. Yet, in Horkheimer's theory the famous Marxist dictum to turn Hegel on his head is shown to be misleading. Horkheimer re-establishes the theological notion of a transcendent truth. He states that "It is useless to attempt to rescue an absolute meaning without God....If God dies, eternal truth also dies."[93] Yet for Horkheimer "theology" is not the interpretation of faith but the historical expression of humanity's longing for justice. Rudolph Siebert says,

> Horkheimer understands theology as an argument for the hope that the extant world-wide injustice may not have the last word. Practically, faith in the transcendent should overstep the framework of what is immediately given--the status quo. It should help to liberate reason from the positivistic-operational-functional limitation... Theology is for Horkheimer the consciousness that the world is appearance, that it is not the absolute truth or what Hegel called in his phenomenology, the Ultimate Reality.[94]

It is in this sense that Horkheimer says that "Politics that does not contain theology within itself, however little considered, may often be shrewd but remains in the end no more than business."[95] Horkheimer rejects Hegel's divine content for the transcendent. In the absolute Hegel sees God, while Horkheimer sees only the longing for hope, truth and justice. By formulating his theory in this way Horkheimer accomplishes three things. First, the transcendent is not given a specific character. Thus the critical ability of the category of transcendence is maintained. While Hegel's Spirit became easily associated with practical programs of the right and left, and thus lost much of its critical potential, Horkheimer avoids this possibility. Second, the transcendent is not recognizable in any terms but the longing of humanity for just . . . This ontological statement suggests that in suffering and alienation humanity recognizes its grief and searches desperately for something different than "what is." This longing for the Other is reflected in the praxis of liberation, but as motivation rather than content. Third, and most important, it is this transcendent notion which contains Critical Theory's negation of positivism and foundation for ethics. Horkheimer appeals to theology,

to the transcendent, to the "hereafter" to show that concepts of good and bad, love and evil cannot be explained in western, technological reason. He claims,

> For how can it be proved exactly that I should not hate if I feel like doing so. Positivism cannot find any authority transcending men, to distinguish between helpfulness and cupidity, kindness and cruelty, avarice and unselfishness. Logic too remains silent, it does not concede any precedence to moral sentiment. All attempts to justify morality by worldly prudence instead of looking to the hereafter--even Kant did not always resist this inclination--rest on harmonistic illusions.[96]

Horkheimer claims that the possibility of ethics depends on human longings that are the substance of religious belief. While this longing needn't be expressed in a religious way, Horkheimer nonetheless brings religion to front and centre stage in struggle for liberation. Most nearly every other secular theory of society employed by Christians denies the legitimacy of the religious experience--Marx, Freud, Habermas to name but a few. Horkheimer and the Critical Theorists, while athiest, make room in their theory for a theologically inspired ethics of justice.

Horkheimer believes that religion has been a carrier of this ontological human longing for transcendent justice in history. He firmly rejects secular and religious notions such as that expressed by Schleiermacher that religion is an expression of the dependent state of humanity.[97] In this reading, clearly loathed by Horkheimer, humanity is child-like, dependent, inhibited and limited. The transcendent urge or God acts as a protective apology for reality rather than an

instigator of change. By contrast, Horkheimer builds upon Hegel's notion that religion is the opposite of dependence. Horkheimer agrees with Hegel that humanity is indeed limited and finite, but that consciousness of this finitude impels humanity not to dependence but to an urge to transcend the finitude, to negate the negation of limited, contingent and invariably suffering human experience.[98] Religion, in its pure form, is an expression of humanity's conscious desire to move beyond, to seek unity, to create anew. Horkheimer sees religion not simply as opiate or "sigh of the oppressed creature" but as an expression of a human essence that is potentiality. Thus Horkheimer says,

> The concept of God was for a long time the place where the idea was kept alive that there are other norms besides those to which nature and society give expression in their operation. Dissatisfaction with earthly destiny is the strongest motive for acceptance of a transcendental being. If justice resides with God, then it is not to be found in the same measure in the world. Religion is the record of the wishes, desires, and accusations of countless generations.[99]

Horkheimer is, in other respects, a fairly typical Enlightenment secularizer. He deeply understands the religious yearning, yet still does not believe in God himself and claims that Enlightenment will ultimately transcend religious belief. In this sense he draws directly from Marx, suggesting that while religion may contain many hopes and longings of humanity knowledge of God is beyond rational possibility. Religion will, however, leave its mark. He writes in 1935,

> Mankind loses religion as it moves through history, but the loss leaves its mark behind. Part of the drives and desires which

> religious belief preserved and kept alive are detached from the inhibiting religious form and become productive forces in social practice. In the process even the immoderation characteristic of shattered illusions acquires a positive form and is truly transformed. In a really free mind the concept of infinity is preserved in an awareness of the finality of human life and of the inalterable aloneness of man and it keeps society from indulging in a thoughtless optimism, an inflation of its own knowledge into a new religion.[100]

Horkheimer yearns for the survival of this residual faith in transcendence despite the inevitable assault of the technocratic, one-dimensional society, for it is this residue that carries the impulse that sparks humanity to seek justice. Thus Horkheimer's prediction that religion will disappear is, in some extremely important ways to his critical theory, a lament. The maintenance of the transcendent accusation against suffering, whether as residue of religion or even as faith itself, is the content of Horkheimer's deepest "prayer" for humanity. Even as Enlightenment secularizer, Horkheimer impacts upon the religious reader as a man who wishes he believed; who, despite his materialist background, clings to the idea that God or no God, humanity has a soul.

Not only does religion maintain the human yearning for justice and transcendence in Horkheimer's dialectical theory of religion, but Judaism and Christianity have been particularly profound interpreters of the human condition. I have explored above some of the Jewish roots in Critical Theory. Horkheimer also recognizes the importance of

Christian insights into the transcendent justice and sees the emancipatory goals of Christianity as vital to liberation in a one dimensional, totally administered society where the subject loses his or her ability to affect history. Horkheimer recognizes the notions of free will and subjectivity, original sin and solidaric love as the precious gifts of Christianity's insight into the "wholly other."

In his Critical Theory of society Horkheimer emphasizes the importance of the human subject to the creation of justice and autonomy. Horkheimer believes that the doctrine of Original Sin and its corollary of a free will for the human subject create the foundation for an emancipatory, critical theory. While the creation story is, of course, an important part of the Jewish experience the full elaboration of the philosophical/theological implications of Original Sin come in the Christian tradition. Within an analysis of this doctrine are found many of the important elements of potential liberation in Critical Theory--elements that Horkheimer seeks to preserve despite the decline of Christianity in western, technocratic society.

Once again, Horkheimer draws heavily on Hegel. As Adam and Eve eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they symbolize two vital components of Critical Theory. First, humanity's evil takes place in consciousness, in that which is particularly human. Humanity is alienated from its original state of pleasure and happiness and finds itself contained, finite and prone to evil. For Hegel, the limited nature of the person as she or he encounters the object takes on its full importance when considered in its appropriate theological light. Human consciousness of this truncated state impels people to recognize this limitation and seek the transcendent. For Jews, Christians and

Hegel himself this is the search for God and God's justice. Of course Horkheimer rejects the Christian notion, supported by Hegel, that through the Trinity the potential unity of the finite and the transcendent is made manifest in Christ and his saving word. Humanity recognizes God, the wholly other, the true human essence. This yearning carries with it the recognition of God's infinite love of the individual. Hegel points out that his love carries with it the implication that freedom is the highest purpose and destiny of humankind. Horkheimer, with Adorno, always emphasizes the negativity, the absense of the universal, the complete non-identity of the finite and the infinite. However, this negativity does not foreclose their recognition of humanity's transcendent purpose for freedom, albeit in a secularized form.[101]

Thus Hegel's God and Horkheimer's ontological purposefulness of human emancipation toward the transcendent share a common motivational platform for the creation of the moral good in the individual, made realizable through the freedom of the human subject. This is the second major input of Christianity into Critical Theory. Conscious free will, created in God's image, allows humanity the capacity to sin but also to do the good, to love the other, to do justice and to know God. Again, Horkheimer rejects Hegel's assertion that either God or the Transcendent Spirit can be known or even identified with human activities. However, he affirms that this holiness can be reflected in the human subject in his terms as the praxis that responds to the yearning for the wholly Other.

For Horkheimer the free will of humanity is the foundation of freedom and autonomy. He seeks to affirm those remaining roots of this

Judeo-Christian belief in secularized culture through a recognition of the mark left by institutionalized religion: free, transcendent seeking human activity as love and solidarity. Horkheimer agrees with Hegel and Schopenhauer that the true meaning of Original Sin is denial of other.[102] As I have mentioned earlier, Horkheimer brought a passionate moral concern to his theorizing right from the time of his early novels and diary writings. Horkheimer acknowledged that the roots of this morality were religious. As a man only a few years from death Horkheimer affirms his lifelong yearning for justice as love for the other in a command that resonates deeply with Christianity, "Act as if the interest in solidarity with humanity and the emancipation of humanity were your own existential interest."[103] Clearly, Horkheimer's own moral foundation is informed by Christianity. The human person must see love for the other as the measure of all activity, including political praxis. This love is expressed both infinitely for the human essence, for the "wholly other" and for the human other.

Yet Horkheimer's love and longing are always recognized in the context of suffering and pain or in the individualistic, controlled and cold subjectivity of one dimensional society. Love always finds itself struggling either in the midst of oppression and pain or boredom and busyness. Once again, Horkheimer laments the loss of solidaristic love in western, technocratic society and thus laments also the loss of religion and its remnants. Horkheimer felt that the domination of instrumental, positivist reason infected humanity on a profound level. He was saddened that those on the left shared common goals of productivity and technology with capitalism.[104] The subjectivity produced in this context is that which is capable of Auschwitz,

Hiroshima, the Soviet purges and more recently the Contras, the Gulf War and ethnic cleansing.

In this struggle emerges the full theory of dialectic of enlightenment. Despite the many aspects of progress in western society—health care, economic security for most people, higher levels of social justice, free time for pleasure--the actual possibilities for autonomy and emancipation are in decline.

Horkheimer sees the maintenance of Christianity's notion of radical human freedom as essential if there is any hope of overcoming subject-weakening effects of technocratic, administered society. In so doing he criticizes the forms of bourgeois religion that water down the core of Christianity, leaving its moral teaching squarely in the hands of narcissistic, incapacitated subjects. Just as Horkheimer rejects the bourgeois agnostics for their laissez-faire morality he accuses liberal Christianity of contributing to the demise of religion but also to the weakening of the free, loving subject that Christianity created. Yet Horkheimer is not optimistic. He predicts that organized religion will decline along with western society. Enlightenment as de-mystification is a force that has long ago drained Christianity and its insight into free subjectivity. Rudolf Siebert claims,

> Horkheimer agrees with Hegel's prediction that Western Civilization can no longer be rescued by the power of state, church, philosophy, or science, since the disintegration of its moral and religious fiber has gone to far... The salt of the earth as the revolutionary Christian principle of free subjectivity has lost its power... The critical theory aims at a future just society, which because of its justice, can afford to live without legends. But at present, as the

people lose their myth in civil society they also lose the Absolute without which morality is not possible. Demythologization in late society means demoralization.[105]

As I have hinted, Horkheimer does maintain some faint hope. He suggests that if the Christian notions of free, loving, and solidarity-seeking subjectivity can be maintained in some form it may combine with two factors in technocratic society to produce the kind of reconciled utopia that Horkheimer envisions. First, the material well-being of individuals in western society will create a boredom that impels persons to seek an understanding of the Universal, of justice and--though Horkheimer would not suggest it--of God. Second, this encouraged reflection may well lead to a recognition of the commonality of the human condition, which is finitude as suffering and death. This possibility may create, in tandem with the remnants of the loving, free subject a renewed sense of human solidarity.[106]

Horkheimer's theories of religion and society are important and insightful. Ironically, the athiest and secularizer Horkheimer reminds Christians of the importance of their own faith, both in its very existence as longing for the universal justice of the wholly other and in its content as love and solidarity between free subjects. At a time when many Christians freely adapt their faith into a commoditized, individualistic cult in line with technocratic pressures it is ironic that a Jewish athiest would encourage Christians not to drain the essence from their doctrines. Furthermore, Horkheimer's profound consciousness of human suffering is a dissonant voice that echoes with Christianity, a religion that is based upon the suffering, death and resurrection of its savior and a faith that empowers the lives of so

many millions of the world's most poor and powerless. In that light, the "pessimism" of Critical Theory is actually a sober recognition of the extent of suffering and the narrowing paths of liberation in the late twentieth century world. Critical Theory is pessimistic only in the light of false optimism predicated on the denial of the real impacts of the way humanity currently organizes its economic, political and social life. Also, Horkheimer the athiest appears to extend a hand of companionship to Christians and Jews struggling for justice. He expresses the very morality of love and solidarity that he advocates and consciously derives from Christianity in his clear empathy with, and possibly even envy for, the person of faith.

The Christian critical theorist is wary, however, of certain aspects of the the Frankfurt School's theories of religion and the Absolute. A dialectical recovery of the Frankfurt School, while drawing forward many of the insights outlined above, must challenge the degree of non-identity between finite, contingent human experience and universal justice. While Horkheimer eloquently names the human longing for justice, and recognizes the energy of that longing present in praxis, his claim that the transcendent is in no way present in the creations of that energy depreciates the value of the human subject that Horkheimer otherwise elevates. Horkheimer, as well as his comrade Adorno, are not unlike the many Christian theologians who emphasize Original Sin to such an extent that the so called free, justice-seeking subject is left so foul and base as to deserve the suffering that he or she endures. While the Critical Theorists never dip into the kind of theory reminiscent of theologies which claim that suffering on earth is the will of God--suffering that will be redeemed only in heaven--their

theories do reveal limiting elements that emerge from their radical non-identity theory. The emphasis on suffering, as profound and important as it is, seems to dim the perception of the love, creativity and work for justice that actually takes place. In this light the one-dimensional, fully administered, technocratic society is not as closed as the Frankfurt School suggests. Countless individuals and organizations illustrate that the fissures in western civilization are large, creating room for loving people seeking solidarity with others. While I do not advocate much of theologian Matthew Fox's program, his emphasis on "Original Blessing" in addition to Original Sin is an important reminder to Christians embedded in a struggle that sometimes seems hopeless.[107] Horkheimer and Adorno's bleak outlook for western society becomes self-fulfilling without a full theoretical recognition of the praxis for liberation that is happening. In other words, a more dialectical relationship between finite human subjects and the transcendent justice is necessary. Incarnational theology, from this critical perspective, does not simply involve the contrast of the saviour Christ with sinful, suffering humanity, but recognizes the incarnational power in all of humanity, not just as an unrealized essence but as a real though partial and dialectical presence. God continues to work in history, through humanity. God does not simply occupy a utopian horizon.

These critiques of the Frankfurt School also impact on their theories of secularization. The suffering oriented hermeneutic of Horkheimer and Adorno fails to recognize the divergence of places where the longing for the wholly Other remains tangible. Not only have social justice organizations not collapsed in the totally administered society

but a prophetic Christianity remains a strong and viable minority force in western societies and a powerful mass movement in the third world. The longing for the wholly Other as Christian God may not be as vulnerable to technocratic society as Horkheimer and Adorno thought.

With these criticisms in mind, a dialectical recovery of the Frankfurt School for Christian ethics finds particularly rich theoretical ground in Horkheimer and Adorno's theories of religion. Critical Theory, despite its secularizing streams, maintains epistemological room for belief in a God of justice. While political and liberation theologies call Christians to understand their society and to engage in a praxis for justice, most Christian encounters with secular theory remain incompatible at the base. The Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School provides a foundation of solidarity between both secular and religious advocates of justice. This helps explain why the solidarity shared by the Christian and secular left goes beyond a mere programatic compatibility but is rooted in a common awareness of the human longing for justice.

Conclusion

The resonance of Critical Theory and Christian social ethics at the epistemological base--that is, the mutual recognition that the longing for a transcendent justice is a essential aspect of the human condition--illustrates the degree to which justice-making is a project of networking. The dialogue between Horkheimer, Adorno and Christian ethics illuminates points of learning for both a renewed Critical Theory and an invigorated Christian activism. It is clear to Christians adhering to various forms of liberation theology that secular social analysis is a vital ingredient to Christian life. By the same token, Horkheimer and Adorno show that some consciousness of the transcendent is necessary even to secular people who work for justice.

The mutual dialogue between Christian ethics and Critical Theory explored above has also affirmed that Christian ethics must reject an alliance with only one social group, thus affirming liberation theology's shifting concept of "the people." Furthermore, Christians cannot trust in any ontological nature of reason to propel us into the future. Human freedom, to sin and to do the good, is total. The future is in the hands of all humanity. Thus the importance of recovering an ethical "embodied" reason is all the more clear. Furthermore, the project of justice making requires a struggle at the practical level, but one that is fully conscious of the impediments to social change in a society predicated on enormously powerful structures of domination. Still, radical change cannot reside simply in the potential for

revolution nor seek refuge in theory. Radical justice begins in the same place as the recovery of ethical reason: communities who seek to become fissures in the system; groups of people who embody a negative dialectics in the sense both of a radical critique of domination and a radical self-criticism as well.

These Christian and secular communities, locations of "negativity", learn from Horkheimer and Adorno that modern society is predicated on a tripartite foundation that includes the domination of nature, the domination of humanity and increasing insecurity born from escalating social conflict. The profundity of the social structure, borne on the wings of multi-national capitalism, technology and the mass media infects humanity at the deepest psychological level. Thus Critical Theory reminds Christians to take careful account of psychoanalytic analysis in the project of social change.

The great irony of the dialogue between Christian ethics and Critical Theory is that it is the athiest Horkheimer that reminds Christians of the importance of the theological insight and the subversion of Christian doctrine. While humanity lives a "damaged life," to use Adorno's phrase from Minima Moralia, the knowledge of the transcendent, shared by believers and nonbelievers alike calls all humanity in its freedom and its awareness of God's work in history to work toward justice. Adorno reminds Christians and Jews, religious and secular, that "Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption..."[108] A new dialogue between The Frankfurt School and Christian ethics casts this light on both.

Endnotes

Chapter One

[1]The works of liberation theology are numerous and varied. Several of the more widely read works include Gustavo Gutierrez, The Theology of Liberation, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973); Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, trans.John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976); and Jon Sobrino. Christology at the Crossroads. trans. John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976).

[2]Notable works of "political theology" include Johannes B. Metz. Theology of the World, trans. William Glen-Doepel (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1969); Jürgen Moltman, Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967); Dorothee Soelle with Shirley A. Cloyes, To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

[3]Moltmann, The Theology of Hope and Helmut Peukert, Science, Action and Fundamental Theology: Toward a Theology of Communicative Action, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).

[4]Theodor Adorno, Negative Dialectics, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1990), 3.

[5]Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1971).

[6]Lukacs, 83.

[7]This discussion of Lukacs is indebted to the analysis of Susan Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute, (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 24-28.

[8]Theodor Adorno, Letter to Walter Benjamin, March 18, 1936, in Theodor Adorno, Über Walter Benjamin, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 67, quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 30.

[9]Works of feminist theology include Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987) and Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983). Works of black liberation theology include Alan Aubrey Boesak, Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Power, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977) and James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation, Second Edition, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977).

[10]Max Horkheimer, Anfänge der bürgerlichen Geschichtsphilosophie

(Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1930), 46; quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 47.

[11]Adorno, Husserl ms., Zur Philosophie Husserls, 1934-37; quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 47.

[12]Walter Benjamin, Über den Begriff der Geschichte. Gesammelte Schriften, 6 vols., ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, vol. I:2: "Abhandlungen (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 696 quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 48.

[13]Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature and Psyche, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 85.

[14]Adorno, "Reaktion und Fortschritt" (1930), Moments Musicaux, (1964), 160. Quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 49.

[15]Buck-Morss, 49.

[16]Adorno, "Die Idee der Naturgeschichte" (1932) Gesammelte Schriften. Vol. II. Rolf Tiedemann ed., (Frankfurt am Maim: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970). 346. Quoted in English in Buck-Morss, 54.

[17]Buck-Morss, 55-56.

[18]Adorno, "Die Idee der Naturgeschichte", 346. Quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 54.

[19]Seigfried Kracauer, History: The Last Things before the Last, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 201. Quoted in Buck-Morss, 227.

[20]Adorno, Über Mannheims Wissenssoziologie, (1947?) unpublished., 2. Quoted from Buck-Morss, 53.

[21]Soelle, 46.

[22]Johannes B. Metz, Theology of the World.

[23]Segundo, 7-38.

[24]Lukacs in Paul Breines, "Praxis and its Theorists: The Impact of Lukacs and Korsch in the 1920's." Telos 11 (Spring 1972), 17. Quoted from Buck-Morss, 31.

[25]Buck-Morss, 32.

[26]Adorno, "Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik," Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung. Part I., 104. Quoted in English in Buck-Morss 37.

[27]Adorno, "Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik", 106-7. Quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 38.

[28]Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology. Trans. Paul Burns. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), 13.

[29]Marilyn Legge, The Grace of Difference: A Canadian Feminist Theological Ethic, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 12.

[30]Gutierrez, 11.

[31]Soelle, "Introduction" to Sergio Arce, The Church and Socialism: Reflections from a Cuban Context, (New York: Circus Publications Inc, 1985), xviii-xix.

[32]Buck-Morss, 41.

[33]Buck-Morss, 42.

[34]Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen, Bible and Ethics in Christian Life, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 40. Quoted in Legge, 12-13.

[35]Legge, 8.

Chapter Two

[36]Buck-Morss challenges Martin Jays assertion that the post-war period of Critical Theory was discontinuous with its earlier work. See Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute For Social Research, 1923-1950, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), 253 and Buck-Morss, xi-xii.

[37]Adorno, Drei Studien zu Hegel, (Frankfurt am Maim: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), 99. Quoted in English from Fred Dallmayr, "Critical Theory and Reconciliation" in Don S. Browning and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, Habermas, Modernity and Public Theology. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1992), 129-30.

[38]Adorno, Negative Dialectics; Minima Moralia: Reflections From Damaged Life, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974); Prisms, Trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990); The Jargon of Authenticity, Trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973); The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture, J.M. Bernstein Ed., (London: Routledge, 1991.) Adorno and Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, Trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1987); Horkheimer, Critical Theory: Selected Essays, Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell and others. (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1986.);Eclipse of Reason, (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1974);Critique of Instrumental Reason, (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1974. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966);One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society, (London: Arc Paperbacks, 1986).

[39]Marcuse, One Dimensional Man, x.

[40]One of the best summaries of dialectic of enlightenment appears in William Leiss, The Domination of Nature, (New York:George Braziller Inc., 1972), 145-65.

[41]Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason, 3-4.

[42]Eclipse of Reason, 4-5.

[43]Gregory Baum, Theology and Society, (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 224.

[44]Baum, 225.

[45]Beverly Wildung Harrison, Making The Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics, Carol S. Robb, Ed., (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 13.

[46]Harrison, xix.

[47]Adorno, Minima Moralia

[48]Dialectic of Enlightenment, 3.

[49]Eclipse of Reason, 97.

[50]Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality. Vol I. "An Introduction." Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

[51]Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason, 28.

[52]Leiss, Domination of Nature, 161-65.

[53]Leiss, 158.

[54]Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason, 108.

[55]See Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason, and Marcuse, Eros and Civilization.

[56]Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason, 94.

[57]Mills, Woman, Nature and Psyche.

[58]Leiss, 163.

[59]An excellent review of the wide array of integrations of critical social theory and psychoanalysis is by Anthony Elliot, Social Theory and Psychoanalysis in Transition: Self and Society from Freud to Kristeva, (Oxford: Basil Blackwood Ltd., 1992).

[60]See Legge, The Grace of Difference for a summary of the Canadian radical Christian tradition.

[61]Adorno, "Notizen zur Klassentheorie" (1942) unpublished, 12. Quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 189.

[62]Buck-Morss, 189.

[63]Buck-Morss, 67.

[64]Adorno, Negative Dialectics, 3.

[65]Adorno, Negative Dialectics, 14-15.

[66]Horkheimer, Die Sehnsucht Nach dem Ganz Anderen, (Hamburg: Furche, 1970).

[67]Horkheimer repeated this in Die Sehnsucht, 59-62. Quoted in Siebert, The Critical Theory of Religion: The Frankfurt School, From the Universal Pragmatic to Political Theology, (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985), 159. It is surprising that theological statements Horkheimer made at the end of his life had such an impact, since they appear throughout his other works. See for example, "Thoughts on Religion" in Critical Theory, and "The Concept of Man" and "Theism and Atheism" in Critique of Instrumental Reason.

Chapter Three

[68]Rudolph Siebert, Horkheimer's Critical Sociology of Religion: Immanence and Transcendence (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1979).

[69]Siebert, Horkheimer's, 23.

[70]Siebert, Horkheimer's, 23.

[71]Jay, 34.

[72]Buck-Morss, 193.

[73]Franz Rosenzweig, The Star of Redemption, Trans. William W. Hallo, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

[74]Rosenzweig, 186-7.

[75]See Gershom Scholem, Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publishing Society of America, 1981.

[76]Walter Benjamin, Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972) and Gesammelte Schriften. Vol. 6, "Die Passagenarbeit", unfinished.

[77]Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 255.

[78]Adorno produced several articles integrating Benjamin's work, including "Die Oper Wozzeck"(1929) and Der Scheinwerfer: Blätter der Städtischen Bühnen Essen 3, 4 (1929-30).

[79]Buck-Morss, 210.

[80]Benjamin, Briefe, Ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor Adorno, Vol. II, (Frankfurt: 1966), 524.

[81]Horkheimer and Adorno, 23. Siebert, Horkheimer's, 23.

[82]Adorno, Letter to Benjamin, December 17, 1934. from Adorno, Über Walter Benjamin, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970) 103-4. Quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 195.

[83]Buck-Morss, 7.

[84]Hans Cornelius, "Leben un Lehre," in Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen, ed. Raymund Schmidt, vol. II (Leipzig, 1933), 19. Quoted in English in Jay, 45.

[85]Max Horkheimer, Aus der Pubertat: Novellen und Tagebuchblatter, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Munich: Kosel-Verlag, 1974), 150-1. Quoted in English from Buck-Morss, 9.

[86]Adorno et al, The Authoritarian Personality (New York: 1950).

[87]See also Jay, 230-32.

[88]Jay, 32.

[89]Istvan Deak, Weimar Germany's Left-Wing Intellectuals, (Berkeley, 1968), 29. Quoted in Jay, 33.

[90]Friederich Pollock, Letter to Martin Jay, March 24,1970. Quoted in Jay, 33.

[91]Jay, 34-5.

[92]Siebert, 1.

[93]Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason, 47-8.

[94]Siebert, 12.

[95]Horkheimer, Die Sehnsucht, 60. Quoted in Kung, 490.

[96]Horkheimer, Die Sehnsucht, 60-1. Quoted in Kung, 490.

[97]Siebert, 19.

[98]Siebert, 20.

[99]Siebert, 17.

[100]Horkheimer, Critical Theory, 131

[101]Siebert, Horkheimer's, 33-44.

[102]Siebert, Horkheimer's, 25.

[103]Siebert, Horkheimer's, 43.

[104]Siebert, Horkheimer's, 35.

[105]Siebert, Horkheimer's, 69.

[106]Siebert, Horkheimer's, 73.

[107]Matthew Fox, Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality, (Sante Fe: Bear and Co., 1983).

[108]Adorno, Minima Moralia, 247.

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