

# Struggling for Objectivity

*Theory and Empirical Research in the Early Frankfurt School*

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Master Thesis in *History and Philosophy of Science*

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## Introduction:

*Insistence on a concretely quantitative economics means the use of statistics of physical magnitudes, whose economic meaning and significance is uncertain and dubious. (Even wheat is approximately homogeneous only if measured in economic terms.) And a similar statement would even apply more to other social sciences. In this field, the Kelvin dictum very largely means in practice, 'if you cannot measure, measure anyhow!'*<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, the validity research in the social sciences has extensively been challenged. Especially in the Netherlands, the public trust in the results of social scientific research has greatly decreased after the discovery that the conclusions of Diederik Stapel, a professor in social psychology at Tilburg University, were grounded in imaginative data sets. It is suggested that Stapel's fraud is not an isolated case, but is the tip of the iceberg and more cases of fraud in the social sciences are likely to be discovered. Therefore, Stapel's fraud crossed the Dutch borders and became a topic of discussion in the entire English-speaking world. On 26. April 2013, even in the New York Times an article on Stapel appeared from the hand of Yudhiyit Bhattacharjee. In *The Mind of a Con Man*, he traces the fraud back to Stapel's individual ambitions and psychology.<sup>2</sup> Other articles stress that the fraud is symptomatic for the institutional organization of universities. In a culture where publishing as many scientific articles as possible in high-noted journals is a necessary requisite for having a successful academic career, fraudulent research becomes an increasingly attractive possibility for researchers.

While these kind of suggestions partly explain Stapel's and future other scientific misconducts, they neglect that fraud can also be the consequence of a more general problem in the social sciences. As Janet D. Stemwedel pointed out in her series of articles *The Quest for Underlying Order: Inside the Frauds of Diederik Stapel*, Stapel's fraud reveals a more fundamental problem in the research of the social sciences. She suggests that *'it is probably worth thinking about the ways that commitments within scientific communities — especially methodological commitments that start to take on the strength of metaphysical commitments — could have made crossing it [the boundaries of scientific integrity] more tempting.'*<sup>3</sup> Institutional and personal explanations cannot completely account for the occurrence of fraudulent research. According to Stemwedel, the problematic relation between metaphysics

and methodology in social science is the breeding ground for misconduct such as Stapel's. This suggests that all social scientific researchers interpret their data from a set of personal or shared metaphysical commitments. It makes clear that social scientists failed to develop a coherent system capable of integrating empirical research into a theoretical framework. Therefore, the distinction between scientific misconduct and proper research in the social sciences is not as sharp as it seems to be at first sight.

It is this problematic relation between theory and empirical research that is addressed in this thesis. While this relation has especially been highlighted in the context of recent scientific misconduct, it was already subject of discussion from the moment social research became scientific in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the time, social scientists were either heavily influenced by Marx' and Engels' theories, or were trying to fulfill the needs of the political rulers. In both cases, research in the social sciences was heavily influenced by ideological preferences. Especially in early twentieth-century Germany, social science started from a set of metaphysical commitments they wanted to become reality. One group of social scientists tried to make Weimar Republic work and made a case for a German parliamentary democracy, while another group was convinced that the Weimar Republic had to be overthrown and a German socialist state had to be established.

To avoid these kinds of ideological commitments in social research, Felix Weil, a German scholar and son of a wealthy businessman, wanted to establish an institute for social research in Frankfurt that remained politically neutral and could guarantee that social research was scientifically objective. In 1924, Weil realized his dream and the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung was established. However, it was clear from the start that also in this institute, the relation between theory and empirical research was problematic. An affiliation with the Frankfurt University should make clear that the Institut's research was not just grounded in Marxist theory, indicating that although Weil was aiming for scientific objectivity, others were questioning that this was indeed his primary goal. When Weil's quest for scientific objectivity is taken seriously, an investigation into the Institut's theories and empirical research shows how its aim for objectivity was still subject to several ideological commitments. The Institut's research before 1950 is especially interesting for present purposes, because its methodology was presented as fundamentally different from other research in the social sciences.

An enormous amount of literature on the history and research of the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung has yet appeared, but its methodology and the relation between

their theories and empirical research has never been serious subject of inquiry. The Institut was hyped in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States when its theories gained wide attention by the American and German radical students under the header 'Frankfurt School'. Especially the later works *The One-Dimensional Man* and *Repressive Tolerance* by Herbert Marcuse became enormously popular and an image of the Institut as a group of anti-capitalist scholars calling for revolution was created. This new image had hardly anything to do with the Institut's work though. While some of Marcuse's work contained some revolutionary aspects, he stated that he felt uncomfortable and misinterpreted when he was described as the 'guru' of the New Left. Adorno felt even less sympathy for the new student movement and stated in 1969 that 'when I made my theoretical model, I could not have guessed that people tried to realize it with Molotov cocktails.'<sup>4</sup>

The popularity of the Frankfurt School also gained the attention of several academic historians and philosophers, who tried to dismantle the myth that the Institut was a group of revolutionary scholars aiming to overthrow the capitalist order. *The Dialectic Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950* by the historian Martin Jay appeared in the middle of the storm in 1973 and showed that the Institut consisted of a group of scholars that had no clear revolutionary agenda from the beginning. Rather, Jay stressed the enormous diversity of the theories of its members and the vagueness of the label 'Frankfurt School'. While Jay had the opportunity to interview the most important members of the Institut and had immediate access to the primary sources, the private communication of the Institut's members was still disclosed at the time. Therefore, several aspects of the Institut's history were still unknown to Jay. Moreover, his book suffered from the criticism that his personal relation with his subjects of investigation prevented him from being critical on the Institut's work and personal feelings.

In 1986, a second comprehensive history of the Institut appeared. In the monumental *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance; Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought*, Rolf Wiggershaus integrated the personal communication of the Institut's members in its history. This enabled him to add a surprising element to the history of the Institut: money. According to Wiggershaus, especially Horkheimer's actions were motivated by the need to be a criticist of capitalist society and have the comforts of a bourgeois lifestyle at the same time. Therefore, his history of the Institut is less glorifying as Jay's was. However, his book is more concerned with the institutional history of the Institut and its members than with its theoretical achievements. I

have mainly used this book to situate the historical background in which the personal and theoretical developments of the members of the Institut took place. My account of the history of the Institut from its establishment until its return to Germany after being in exile in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s differs from Wiggershaus', because it especially stresses the Institut's theoretical and social scientific achievements at the background of the German and American political and academic situation.

Another persistent myth about the Frankfurt School was that its period in American exile was one of 'splendid isolation'. It was thought for several decades that the Institut hardly interacted with American social science in particular and American society in general. However, it was very recently shown by Thomas Wheatland in his book *The Frankfurt School in Exile* that the opposite is true. Especially in the 1940s, the Institut tried to become a strong force within American social science in order to attract funding. It shows that the Institut had to adapt to the American standards of social research, which meant that it had to focus on empirical research and to shift to a quantitative methodology. Wheatland convincingly shows that the Institut actively interacted with American social scientists and that its focus shifted from theory to empirical research in the United States, but he devotes no attention to the theoretical and methodological consequences of this change. Just as most of the other historians of the Frankfurt School, Wheatland develops an almost biographical account of the Institut in the United States, and tends to neglect its theoretical development in this period.

The theoretical developments of the Institut are primarily the field of philosophers and self-declared Critical Theorists. However, while a lot of effort is done to understand the meaning and impact of the philosophical work of Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno, way less attention is given to the Institut's empirical research. In these philosophical works, Critical Theory is mostly considered a cultural critique that can be applied on subjects from aesthetics to politics with the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as its central work. Symptomatic for these philosophical works is the lack of attention on the two most important empirical studies of the Institut, the *Studies on Authority and Family* and the *Studies and Prejudice*. This is justified when these works formed a minor part of the Institut's history, but the opposite is the case. In the early 1930s and in the 1940s, most of the Institut's members were engaged in empirical research, instead of writing purely philosophical works. Therefore, these recent philosophical analyses are of less help for present purposes, because the relation between the Institut's theories and empirical research is not discussed in these works.

The only book that aims to bridge the gap between the philosophical theories and the empirical research of the Institut is Eva-Maria Ziege's *Anti-Semitism and Social Theory: The Frankfurt School in American Exile*. However, this account is limited in two important aspects. Firstly, Ziege's book is limited to the Institut's period in exile and neglects both the Institut's work under Carl Grünberg, its first director, and the Institut's first years under Horkheimer's directorship in which the empirical research for the *Studies on Authority and Family* was conducted. Secondly, she highlights anti-Semitism as the Institut's core topic of research. While this may be partly true for the *Studies and Prejudice*, it does not apply to the Institut's activities before this project. In order to understand how the Institut's theories were influenced by the ideological preferences of its members and the way they affected its empirical research, it is insufficient to focus on the Institut's research on anti-Semitism. This question can only be answered if the changes and similarities between the different theoretical and methodological approaches over time are taken into account.

In the present account, the Institut functions as an example of a group of people that wanted to get rid of ideological commitments in social science and of the theoretical and institutional difficulties that arise when such a task is set. It aims to show how the members of the Institut's struggled to get rid of their ideological preferences in times that were politically disturbing and how these changed when the democratic Weimar Republic was replaced by the totalitarian Nazi Regime. Moreover, the exact nature of the relation between theory and empirical research was also unclear to the members of the Institut. They tended to let theory prevail over empirical research, but were aware of the fact that ideological preferences were a necessary part of every theory. Therefore, they tried to develop a methodology in which the empirical data was used to adjust their social theories. In this project, it is aimed to show that such a goal is very hard to obtain; even though the Institut used empirical research as a control mechanism, it was still unable to get rid of its ideological commitments. What it did was creating a different approach to traditional social science that provided new insight in social phenomena, but was still filled with the ideological preferences of its members.

Instead of giving the traditional picture of the Frankfurt School as a group of radical philosophers who wrote critiques on capitalist society, the focus on empirical research reveals another side of the Institut's work. It shows that empirical research was from its establishment an important pillar for its theories. The originality of the Institut's research consisted in Horkheimer's idea that empirical data should be used in a different way than his contemporary scientists were used to do. According to Horkheimer, empirical data should be



used to develop critical theories of society and could not be used to solve pressing issues in society. Key in developing these critical theories is an interdisciplinary approach: society can only be understood when the fields of philosophy, psychoanalysis, economics, sociology and history work together. Therefore, both philosophical theorizing and sophisticated empirical techniques were part of the Institut's research. It is the relation between the two that is the overarching theme of the present history of the Institut.

I have approached this subject primarily by looking at the figures who were of the biggest influence on the theoretical development of the Institut. For example, Horkheimer's *Traditional and Critical Theory* and Grünberg's inaugural speech were of great influence on the theoretical development of the Institut and the way empirical research was conducted. While this approach has the advantage that it focuses on the relation between theory and empirical research in the Institut's internal history, the fact that it makes it more difficult to give broader cultural explanations about the place of the Institut within the history of ideas in Germany and the USA can be criticized. However, since it is my aim to analyze the relation between theory and empirical research within the development of the Frankfurt School, I think that this criticism does not apply to the present study. The focus on the works of the central figures in the history of the Institut is an advantage rather than a weakness for present purposes. It is only in these works that explicit references to the way empirical research should be conducted and theoretically interpreted can be found.

Chapter I deals with the Institut's work under Carl Grünberg, its first director from 1924 until 1929. It explores the reasons why Grünberg became director and places the Institut in the more general history of the Weimar Republic and the German quest for socialism between the wars. Furthermore, Grünberg's intellectual life from 1909 onwards, most importantly his journal *Grünberg's Archive*, is placed into the context of the discussions between different groups of socialists at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An analysis of this period shows that Grünberg in no way confirmed to Weil's statement that he wanted to establish an institute that could guarantee for objectivity in social research. Grünberg was an outspoken socialist, who was convinced that a democratic government should take a firmly socialist course, grounded in Marxist revisionism. The research of the Institut in this period reflected these convictions, and the authorities suspected them of having contacts with several communist organizations. Unique in the Institut's research in the 1920s was not its objectivity, but its interdisciplinary approach. The Institut's members were convinced that an economic perspective was insufficient to understand the organization of society, and believed

that it was needed to add a historical approach to economic analysis in order to understand the nature of socialism. While this approach was novel, it was still serving the Marxist ideal of establishing a socialist state. Their interpretation of the world was not the consequence of a methodology stating that empirical research should guarantee for objectivity, but was a reflection of the ideological preferences of the members of the Institut.

In Chapter II, it is described how a change in the Institut's directorship caused a theoretical transformation. When Horkheimer became director of the Institut, he immediately started to stress the importance of political neutrality. Contrary to Grünberg, he believed that it was possible to eliminate all ideological preferences from social research. Horkheimer wanted to develop an alternative to the Marxist oriented research of Grünberg, and believed that a focus on individual psychology was needed for this approach to be successful. He argued that a combination of historical materialism and psychoanalysis was needed to transform socialism from a political ideology into a scientific theory. Furthermore, it is investigated how this new theoretical approach eventually culminated into the Institut's massive empirical study on authority in families. This is especially interesting since the Institut left Germany in 1934 and ended up in the United States. In the United States, sociology took another course than its European counterpart. While the primary focus in Europe was on theory, empirical data was considered most important in social research in the USA. The last part of the chapter is an analysis of the way the relation between the theory and empirical research of the Institut was affected by its encounter with American sociology.

The third chapter focuses less on the relation between theory and empirical research, but is mainly concerned with the philosophical cooperation between Horkheimer and Adorno in the late 1930s and 1940s. Horkheimer felt increasingly uncomfortable with the Institut's focus on empirical research and wanted to return to philosophy, his original subject of research. In combination with the financial problems of the Institut in the late 1930s, this marked an important change in the structure of the Institut. It broke with Erich Fromm, its most important empirical researcher, and was divided in two branches: Horkheimer and Adorno moved to Los Angeles to work on philosophy, while the other member of the Institut stayed in New York and focused on empirical research. In Los Angeles, Horkheimer and Adorno wrote several philosophical pieces that expressed great pessimism towards the way civilization had developed. They were greatly impressed by the horrors of the Nazi Regime and believed that there was no way back. Collecting empirical data was no longer needed since the total structure of society had to be altered in order to prevent it from sinking into

barbarism. A fundamental critique of the structure should necessarily be philosophical. However, it is clear that such a critique cannot do without reference to the actual world. The difference with the Institut's research in the 1930s was that objectivity was no longer a primary goal. Instead of focusing on an empirical methodology, Horkheimer and Adorno gave a philosophical interpretation of the world.

The last chapter deals with the Institut's empirical research in the 1940s and shows how it tried to find a place within American sociology. It starts with the way Horkheimer developed an alternative to the traditional American sociological approach by developing a methodology for a critical theory of society. The difference between traditional and critical theory did not consist in the fact that the former was engaged in empirical research while the latter was not, but can be found in the way the empirical data is used. Traditional theories used data as an instrument to solve the problems in society, while critical theory used it to criticize the general structure of society in which these problems took place. The realization of this new approach was hindered by the Institut's lack of finances though. In order to get funding from American organizations, it had to show its practical usefulness and to get familiar with the American sophisticated empirical techniques. Eventually, this was realized in cooperation with the American Jewish Organization, which granted the Institut finances for an extensive research project on prejudice in American society.

In order to find external funding, the Institut had to cut off its critical ties. Not only was the research almost completely conducted without the help of Horkheimer and Adorno, the Institut also had to embrace the competitive capitalist structure of American society and had to solve the problems that occurred within this given structure. Therefore, it could no longer criticize the general structure of American society, but had to interpret their empirical findings from a practical point of view. Where the Institut's earlier research was biased by its socialist convictions, it was still affected by ideological preferences in the 1940s when its research was serving the American liberal ideology. At the same time that Horkheimer and Adorno rejected the need of quantitative research in their philosophical work, the Institut had to actively engage in it to save its existence. Despite its attempts to get rid of metaphysical commitments and ideological preferences, the Institut failed to develop an objective, scientific sociology.

It should be noted that the structure of my story is not entirely chronological. In the last two chapters I have chosen to devote separate chapters to the Institut's philosophical and sociological work in the same period. The third chapter starts when Adorno joined the Institut

after his move to the United States in 1938, because this is an important event in the philosophical development of Horkheimer and the Institut. The fourth chapter starts a year earlier and opens with an analysis of Horkheimer's sociological methodology in *Traditional and Critical Theory* which was published in 1937. I have chosen to do so because this text developed a methodology for the sociological research of the Institut that was mainly conducted in the 1940s. I felt that such an account did not hinder me from giving a coherent picture of the Institut's activities between 1937 and 1950, because the philosophical work was not of influence on its empirical counterpart in this period. While the sociological research aimed to solve immediate problems in society, the philosophical theories stressed that this was impossible without a fundamental change in the general structure of society.

The conclusion consists of an elaboration on the question what the Institut's failure to develop an objective theory can tell about the role of ideological preferences and metaphysical commitments in social research. Moreover, it explores the reasons that motivated the Institut to start engaging in highly quantitative research in its period in American exile and why Horkheimer and Adorno, on the contrary, decided to return to purely philosophical work. Lastly, the relation between Horkheimer's and Adorno's philosophical work and the empirical research of the Institut is examined. It seems that while in the early 1930s, the Institut's philosophy and empirical research were closely tied together; this was no longer the case during the 1940s. The history of the relation between theory and empirical research of the Institut from its establishment until its return to Germany in 1950 shows its struggle to conduct objective social research. Even though the Institut extensively tried to avoid it, both its theories and its motivation to engage in empirical research were firmly grounded in ideological preferences.

### **History, Sociology and Contemporary Relevance**

When we return to the problem formulated at the beginning of the introduction, it can be asked how an analysis of the social scientific works of a group intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century can be of help in contemporary discussions. Just as in the history of the Institut, sociologists today are still struggling to develop a coherent view of the way theory and empirical research are related. However, it is needed to develop a theory capable of explain how the problems of the Institut, which took place in a totally different historical situation, can tell us something about the present state of sociology. The philosophy history developed by David Little in his book *New Contributions to the Philosophy of History*

can be of help as a solution to this problem. According to Little, the craft of history is always characterized by two different relation between the historian and his respective subject. On the one hand, the historian wants to understand what occurred at a certain place and time, which he calls the epistemic relation with the past. However, this relation is necessarily disturbed by another relation to the past: the specific case study is always studied because the historian has a particular interest in its subject. In some sense, historians have the idea that their study can be of help in representing the right way of acting and can distinguish between right and wrong ways of behavior.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to establish a way of interpreting historical evidence in a way that overcomes the problem that a historical situation is fundamentally different from every later situation, but is still of relevance to the contemporary situation.

A way of overcoming this problem is to investigate whether the concepts that were used in the past are still applicable today, even though these were used in historically different situations. In Little's formulation, one must ask:

*To what extent is a given concept deeply rooted in a particular historical example – with the likely result that the concept is not readily transportable to other historical contexts? Perhaps “feudalism” and “capitalism” fall in this category, as does the “theatre state of Bali.”*<sup>6</sup>

It is the present challenge to determine whether the concepts of “theory” and “empirical research” are in the same category as Little's examples or that it is possible transport them to the present situation in the social sciences.. When the notion of theory has changed to such an extent that it differs fundamentally from its meaning at the beginning of the twentieth century, it seems that an investigation into its previous use can be of little use for present purposes. However, when important similarities in the use and meaning of “theory” exist between the present situation and the way the Institut used it, the history of the Institut and its social research can be of help in present discussions. The problem with this historical approach is that it cannot be determined beforehand which of the two is the case. It takes to do the historical research to determine whether the previous concepts can be of help in the present situation.

The possibility that the same concept can be used in different historical situations is the consequence of the idea that fundamental historical change is always caused by a

combination of human agency and the material circumstances. The presence of the organization of institutions, the economic situation and a certain political order should be acknowledged as a force in causing historical change, but in the end it does also proceed through the needs and interests of individual agents. When the material circumstances of different historical situations greatly resemble each other, it is therefore possible to determine whether radical change in the use of a certain concept has occurred. However, since the needs and interests of individual agents are only partly determined by the material circumstances, this similarity indicates rather than determines whether the concept is still used in the same way. For example, even when the social sciences are organized in a similar way as they were in the 1930s, it cannot be extrapolated that the same necessarily holds for the use of the concept of 'social theory.'

A sign that the exact relation between theory and empirical research is still unclear is that seminars and conferences on this subject remain to be organized. For example, the American Sociological Association organized the conference *Sociological Theory and Empirical Research* in 2001, which aimed to reach a consensus on the exact relation between theory and empirical data. However, it turned out that sociologists were still greatly divided whether theory should be intimately related to empirical research, or that this should not necessarily be the case.<sup>7</sup> In his article *The Meaning of 'Theory'*, Gabriel Abend argues that it is still unclear what sociologists mean when they speak of concepts as 'theory' or 'empirical research'. Some sociologists believe that it is their task to develop universal laws capable of explaining social phenomena, others believe that the primary purpose of sociology is to develop a certain way of looking at the world. The former typically argue for a close connection between theory and empirical research, while the latter believe that a framework to look at the world has to be developed, which should not necessarily be grounded in empirical evidence. This indicates that just as in the beginning of the twentieth century, it is neither clear how to develop a social theory, nor how it should be related to reality.

In Abend's view, this lack of a clear definition what it means to conduct sociological research is the consequence of the fact that sociologists adhering to different definitions of 'sociological theory' think that the concept of theory is universal and therefore can only be defined in one way. These problems are caused by the erroneous belief that something exists

in the world and that the word 'theory' corresponds with it.<sup>8</sup> He distinguishes seven different definitions used by different groups of sociologists, which will be briefly mentioned here.<sup>i</sup>

1. *A general proposition or a set of general propositions which establish a relation between two or more variables independent of things like time and place.*
2. *An explanation of a particular social phenomenon which acknowledges its particular time and place.*
3. *An interpretation of a social phenomenon, trying to answer what it means that this event has happened.*
4. *An hermeneutical understanding of the studies of earlier important social theorists such as Marx or Durkheim.*
5. *An overall perspective from which one interprets the world.*
6. *A normative theory what the world ought to look like.*
7. *A way of overcoming the problems sociologists have encountered in the past.*

While some overlap between these definitions of theory surely exist, they also define the primary task of sociology in greatly different ways. For present purposes it is most interesting to discuss the status of empirical research in these different conceptions of sociological theory. The first two definitions heavily depend on the use of empirical research: the first definition aims to collect big amounts of data which can be generalized into theories and laws telling what society does look like. The second has a similar goal, focuses on the particular, instead of developing universal laws. All other definitions of theory depend less on the collection of empirical data, and all acknowledge the hermeneutical rather than the scientific component of sociology. However, even when the definitions of theory are categorized in this way, important differences between the different theories do still exist. In this thesis I aim to show that the contemporary problem Abend singled was also present in earlier times. An analysis of the way the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung dealt with different definitions of theory can shed new light on the way the concept of theory changes over time and how different conceptions of theory can exist next to each other. It shows that sociology functions in different ways when a different definition of theory is used. Moreover,

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<sup>i</sup> For an extensive discussion, see: Gabriel Abend, "The Meaning of 'Theory'," *Sociological Theory*, 26, no.2 (2008): 177-181.

it gives insight in the scientific and extra-scientific reasons one can have to adhere to a particular definition.

In the conclusion, I will attempt to fit the research of the Institut between 1923 and 1950 into the different contemporary definitions of theory in order to show that their struggling with the definition of theory and its relation to empirical research is still relevant. Furthermore, I will briefly comment on what it means that discussions at the beginning of the twentieth century are still relevant today for the development of a concept as theory over a period of 90 years. In line with Daniel Little's philosophy of history, I would like to show that some concepts can be transported from one historical situation to another and that the concept of 'theory' is currently one of those. Without stating that this will always be the case, up until now discussions about the status of theory and empirical research in sociology still greatly resemble the problems the Institut faced in its early history.



## Chapter I: An Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt

*An offer ... which financial benefit was uncommon among German scholars at the time. In Frankfurt am Main, an Argentinean millionaire with German-Jewish origins would establish an institute for social research, and I would become the director of this institute, as well as a professor in social history at the Frankfurt University.<sup>9</sup>*

### 1.1 The Dream of Felix Weil

Gustav Mayer, a possible candidate for the first directorship of the Institut wrote this memory down in his posthumously published autobiography. This indicates the uniqueness of establishing an institute for social research during the interbellum. Finances at German universities were generally low, and social research was considered a minor discipline within the field of philosophy. However, several important German and Austrian intellectuals were interested in Marxism and were convinced that social research should play an important role in exploring the practical possibilities of a theoretical Marxist program. German universities were uninterested in financing this kind of research, and thought that Marxist or socialist oriented research should not be part of the academic curriculum. When an Argentinean millionaire announced that he planned to found and finance an institute specializing in social research, Marxist scholars for the first time gained the opportunity to organize themselves on an academic level.

Now, who was this Argentinean millionaire who planned to found an institute of social research, and why was he stressing the importance of Marxist research on an academic level? Hermann Weil was a businessman from Baden who made his fortune as one of the world's most important grain traders. Weil made most of his fortune living in Argentina, but a heavy form of Syphilis obliged him to return to Frankfurt, where his disease could be cured. However, besides his fortune and willingness to finance an institute for social research, it was not Hermann, but his son Felix Weil who was dreaming of an institute whose members devoted their time to Marxist research. Felix Weil decided not to step into his father's shoes and preferred to be a scholar rather than a businessman. However, except the publication of a few essays on Argentinean economy, Weil never became a genuine scholar either. Most of his life he spent without any inclination for getting a genuine job. As Rolf Wiggershaus

characterized him, Weil was the 'patron of the left' who saw the promotion of Marxist theory as his most important activity.<sup>10</sup>

Felix Weil was one of the young Germans that were greatly impressed by the November revolution, and believed that a socialist order should also be established in Germany. While several intellectuals were attracted to socialism and the construction of a new social order, authorities and academic institutions were mostly not very fond of this idea. To underline the negative stance towards socialism during the German Revolution: it was sufficient to arrest Felix Weil in 1919 because he was accused of being engaged in 'socialist activities' without having any definite proof of those.<sup>11</sup> This example is symptomatic for the way revolutionary socialists were treated in the Weimar Republic. These kinds of happenings did not stop socialist intellectuals from organizing themselves though. They criticized both the bourgeois narrowness and the rigid orthodox Marxism of the communist party and organized seminars and other possibilities for discussion. Since they expected that a revolution similar to the Russian Bolshevik revolution would improve the situation of the proletariat in Germany, these seminars were often platforms for discussions about the way praxis and theory were related within Marxist and socialist theory.

One of these occasions is often seen as the prelude for the establishment of the Institut. In 1923, Felix Weil organized the *Marxist Week of Labor*, which was attended by all the important Marxist scholars of the time. Later members of the Institut as Karl Wittfogel, Friedrich Pollock and Julian Gumperz attended the conference. The most important topic of discussion were the recent publications of two other attendants of the conference; the Marxist theoreticians Karl Korsch and Georg Lukács. Central into the works of both Korsch and Lukács was the idea that intellectuals should connect with the workers, and that it cannot be expected that the proletariat becomes active when its organization is left to the workers. Rather, the workers should be 'intellectualized' and form a group with socialist theoreticians in order to create the circumstances in which capitalism could be overcome. One way of doing this was doing research in social theory and the history of labor and transmit this knowledge to the proletariat. Wiggershaus suggests that the success of this conference encouraged Weil to establish an institute that was actually fulfilling those goals, and states that this conference can be considered the 'first seminar on theory by the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung'.<sup>12</sup>

In a memorandum of a conversation between Weil and his friend Kurt Gerlach, Weil expresses his belief that scientific objectivity was of the greatest importance in social research

and that an institute fulfilling this goal should be established.<sup>13</sup> It is clear, however, that Weil and the people surrounding him were all leftist intellectuals, and could hardly be considered politically neutral. Weil was either equating socialism with scientific objectivity, or he wanted to construct an institute able to criticize the political situation in Germany and Europe from a socialist point of view. Since he was an outspoken socialist, it can be imagined that for him scientific objectivity and socialism were indeed fundamentally intertwined. The organization of society would be objectively improved when a socialist regime was established. Criticizing all other political systems could therefore still confirm to the standard of scientific objectivity.

Kurt Gerlach, with whom Weil planned to open an institute for social research, was an intellectual openly sympathizing with communism, and Weil considered him the ideal candidate to become the first director of the institute Weil was going to finance. However, Kurt Gerlach died from diabetes in October 1922, and Weil had to search for a new candidate. Again, he only approached intellectuals with socialist sympathies. Firstly, he approached Gustav Mayer, a well-known German journalist and Social Democrat who had written a famous biography of Friedrich Engels. However, their political and ideological views differed on many points; Mayer was a convinced Social Democrat and rejected the need for a socialist revolution in Germany, while Felix Weil wanted to establish an institute that took this possibility seriously and devoted its research to the question under what circumstances this revolution could take place.

The second candidate approached by Weil was Carl Grünberg who eventually became the first director of the institute. For Gustav Mayer, it was clear that the only reason Grünberg became director of the institute was the fact that he shared Weil's ideology that a revolution was needed to establish a socialist regime in Germany.

*A close friend of Rosa Luxemburg, both familiar with me and with the founder of the institute, comforted the capitalist [Weil] that the new director was, contrary to Mayer, a revolutionary socialist.*<sup>14</sup>

According to Mayer, it was clear that the institute Weil was trying to establish would be a platform where revolutionary socialists could meet and share their ideas, rather than an institute that held scientific objectivity in high regard. In order to work towards this goal, Weil needed an outspoken revolutionary socialist or orthodox Marxist as director of the institute to make sure that the research conducted by the institute fitted Weil's socialist interests.

## 1.2 Carl Grünberg and the *Archive for the History of Socialism and the Labor Movement*

Carl Grünberg was a Romanian-born economist who came to Vienna in 1881, and worked as a professor in political economy at the Vienna University until he moved to Frankfurt in 1924. Besides his studies in political economy and his work at the Vienna University, he was also a practicing lawyer. In his biography of Carl Grünberg, Günther Nanning argues that the combination of political economy and law was unique for the way Grünberg and some other Viennese intellectuals understood Marxism.<sup>15</sup> According to Grünberg, Marxism was a normative ideology, and he felt that it was needed to establish socialist laws, when the society Marx had sketched had to be created in reality. This approach differs from orthodox Marxism since for Grünberg, laws were not the necessary outcome of socio-economic conditions, but can be established independent of and can even influence these conditions.

Several other Viennese intellectuals held similar views as Grünberg. Günther Nanning refers to this group of Marxists as proponents of 'lectural Marxism'.<sup>16</sup> These 'lectural Marxists' believed that the masses should be properly educated in Marxist theory before socialism could be applied in reality. Contrary to other 'lectural Marxists' or other recognized Marxist scholars; Grünberg had not been politically active. Grünberg's Marxism combined with his lack of political activity made him an ideal candidate for the directorship of the Institut. Weil had negotiated with the Frankfurt University that the director of the Institut should also obtain a professorship at the university.<sup>17</sup> This agreement between the Frankfurt University and Felix Weil ensured that the Institut was taken seriously within academic circles, instead of being considered socialist outsiders. However, as a consequence of this agreement, the director of the Institut should not just be approved by Felix Weil, but also by the board of the Frankfurt University. Since the university was wary of becoming involved in political affairs, politically active communists such as Karl Korsch or Georg Lukács were not in the race for the directorship. Grünberg had never been politically active, but firmly believed in the scientific value of Marxism, which made him the ideal candidate for the directorship of the Institut.

To show that Grünberg was not the revolutionary socialist Mayer thought him to be, it suffices to compare the content of his journal *Grünberg's Archive* with the articles in the

German socialist journal *The New Time*. In the foreword to the first issue of *Grünberg's Archive* published in 1911, Grünberg briefly outlined how the history of socialism and the labor movement should be written and how improved knowledge of this history could lead to valuable insights:

*How little pragmatic knowledge do we have of the way they [socialism and the labor movement] differ in space and time, how little do we know about their theoretical foundations and practical functions? How little do we know about their positive and negative influence on economy, political economy, social politics, philosophy of law and central management and the influence of these things on socialism and the labor movement? We do not know how these things change and how these changes are ultimately caused!*<sup>18</sup>

He was not just legitimating his object of research, but also formulated an important methodological desideratum:

*If we see the same object through the eyes of many different people, we start to see this object more and more objectively.*<sup>19</sup>

When many different people with different political ideologies studied the history of socialism and the labor movement, the result would be that socialism and the labor movement would be perceived in an objective way. The lessons of this history had to be communicated to politicians and workers, indicating that Grünberg thought that political decisions could be objectively improved when socialist politicians got more acquainted with the history of socialism and the labor movement. However, Grünberg had not outlined a definite methodology explaining how the object of study had to be approached by the different researchers. The only thing that was clear was that the history of socialism had to be interpreted from different ideological perspectives, but no concrete program how to research it was yet developed.

On the other hand of the socialist spectrum, the writings of Karl Kautsky and other revolutionary socialists can be found in *The New Time*. In Kautsky's 1913 article *From the Württemberger Inferno*, he ends his article with a call for a proletarian revolution, and stresses the immediate need for a socialist regime:

*We must eliminate the false impression that the bourgeois political system has an irresistible power, and that everything, socialism included, should bow for it in honor. The class conscious proletariat does not feel approval for the current authorities, but considers itself a factor designated to establish a new social order. It desires that the members of the parliament resign accordingly.*<sup>20</sup>

Ideological references of this kind were absent in the early issues *Grünberg's Archive*, which indicates that Grünberg had indeed established a journal that aimed to be scientific instead of political. Contrary to Kautsky's, his journal was not designed to praise the power of socialism and the need for a proletarian revolution. Grünberg stated that the difference between Kautsky's and his journal was that Kautsky's was mainly theoretical while his was historically orientated. However, also in *Grünberg's Archive* several theoretical texts were published. The difference with the articles in *The New Times* was that Grünberg tried to examine socialism critically and was not stressing the immediate need of a socialist revolution.

For example, in the second issue of his journal, Grünberg wrote an article called *The Origin of the words Socialism and Socialist* in which he expressed that he was aware of the fact that socialism cannot be considered a unified system that remains unchanged over time: '*Giuliani, the creator of the neologisms socialismo, socialista and socializzare, applies these concepts in a totally different way we currently do.*'<sup>21</sup> While in Grünberg's times, socialism was often contrasted with capitalism, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in France it was common to contrast socialism with Catholicism, or sometimes with individualism. This suggests that Grünberg did not believe that the same socialism has a positive effect in different times on every society. Rather, he argued that the meaning of the concept socialism changed over time, as well as the social reforms advocated by socialists should.

Almost all of the contributors to the issues published before the First World War were outspoken socialists, but the content of the journal shows that they were still unsure of what it meant to call oneself a socialist. However, during and after the First World War the contributions to the journal became less politically diverse. While Grünberg was initially aiming for scientific objectivity, in this period, the journal got an increasingly socialist character. In the earlier issues, most of the articles dealt with socialism at a certain place in a certain period and had historically inspired titles as *The Social Movement in France 1893-*

1910 (Georges Weill, 1911) or *The 48<sup>th</sup> Labor Movement in Norway* (Halvdan Koht, 1912). In the 1914 issue, theoretical examinations of Marxism became the central focus of the journal. For example, in *Social Meaning of Karl Marx' Theory* by the Marxist theoretician Max Adler, orthodox Marxism is criticized and Adler tries to develop a new Marxist theory of society. Such a defense of a certain political ideology differed from the articles mentioned earlier, because these just described the history the labor movement, without developing their own theoretical framework.

Adler argued against Marx' idea that the proletarian revolution and the establishment of a socialist regime were a necessary consequence of the way the history of humanity has been developing. He stated that the establishment of socialism could be caused by the conscious distribution of Marxist ideas among the proletariat rather than it was the necessary outcome of history.

*History and politics have to communicate that such ideas [socialist ideas], which have been circling in society for several generations, can become reality when the long and terrible detour of class struggle is taken.<sup>22</sup>*

This indicates that while the first three issues of *Grünberg's Archive* indeed aimed for objectivity through political diversity, from 1914 onwards, a socialist ideology was actively promoted.

### **1.3 Socialism, War and Revolution**

In 1914, it became clear how difficult it was to realize Marx' call for international socialism in practice. It was established in the Second International that the different national socialist movements should all be united in their opposition against war. However, when the chances for a war increased after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, this theoretical position seemed untenable. The different socialist movements all wanted to defend their own nation and decided, contrary to the arrangements made in the Second International, to support the war investments of their governments. The different national movements all considered their own nation the defensive party in this international conflict, and had the feeling that the situation in their country would worsen when invaded by a foreign army.<sup>23</sup> It turned out that

The Second International consisted of superficial arrangements when an actual international war was likely to start.

In practice, the international proletariat was no harmonious unit, but consisted of different groups having their own interests. However, this was not taken for granted by the socialist organizations, and in line with their socialist ideology, the obvious explanation for this situation was that capitalism had undermined the unification of the international proletariat. The proposed solutions to this problem of disharmony can roughly be divided in two camps. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht believed that the proletariat should be better educated in socialism. Better education should convince it of the necessity to call for a revolution and overthrow the capitalist regime. The radical version of this idea was promoted by Lenin who stated that the proletariat needed a strong socialist leader able to convince it that socialism fitted interests best. Both positions shared the idea that a socialist revolution was needed for the unification of the international proletariat. Only after this revolution had taken place, it was possible to account for the real interests of the proletariat. The other socialist camp consisted of Marxist revisionists such as the German SPD-politician Eduard Bernstein, argued that the socio-economic conditions of the proletariat should be gradually improved within national democratic regimes.<sup>24</sup> These revisionists were convinced that the international proletariat would not benefit from a socialist revolution. They believed that the different national regimes should be responsible for fulfilling the needs of the workers.

Since most members of the Second International advocated some form of Marxist revisionism, it is easy to understand why it was so difficult to organize an international socialist organization when an international war was likely to begin. When national democracies were responsible for the worker's interests, a foreign invasion would prevent them from doing it. Therefore, the different socialist parties decided to defend the war investments of their governments, instead of presenting their selves as united opposition against the war. Revolutionary socialists such as Luxemburg and Liebknecht were disappointed with the fact that the SPD supported the war and broke with the party in 1915 and established the Spartacus League, a revolutionary socialist movement. In 1917, even more members of the SPD organized themselves in a new independent movement, the anti-war USPD. Similar situations also happened within the socialist parties in the other European countries.

The fact that socialists failed to organize on an international level at the start and during the First World War is reflected in *Grünberg's Archive*. The journal no longer



consisted of a collection of articles and book reviews, but also started to publish outlines of public announcements from before the war of socialists all across Europe. According to Grünberg, a systematic overview of these public announcements could shed new light on the way the international socialist movement should be organized:

*Does the behavior of the socialist parties, who we know to be in disagreement at the start of the war, conform to the principles of socialism and the decisions made at the international congresses, or are they plainly contradicting those? What are the consequences for the present and future relations between these parties?*<sup>25</sup>

The questions to be answered had a clear practical goal; a better organization of the international socialist movement after the war. This underlines the idea that after trying to remain politically neutral between 1911 and 1913, the journal was now inclined to embrace the socialist ideology without questioning it. Earlier, most of the contributors were questioning *if* socialism should be internationally recognized, while the current question to be answered was *how* socialism should be internationally organized. The idea that the world would benefit from an international socialist movement such as the Second International was taken for granted in the publications during the war. However, the absence of a clear methodology in the earlier issues was still present in this new project. While it was clear that the world had to be interpreted from a socialist perspective, it was not indicated how specific situations in reality should be investigated. During the war, Grünberg's research referred to the empirical world in some way, but he had not yet clearly defined how socialism related to reality.

The chances of reestablishing an international socialist movement increased when the war was coming to an end. When it became clear that Germany would eventually be defeated in the First World War, the German people had only one desire; to end this war as soon as possible. As a consequence, the Spartacus League and other German revolutionary movements who had protested against the war from the beginning received an increasing amount of support from the German people. Moreover, the Americans were only willing to consider a German peace offer, when the German Empire was replaced by a democratic regime. Under the chancellorship of the liberal prince Max von Baden, the Germans indeed

tried to establish a democratic government. Even social democrats were among the members of the new parliament while previously barred from power by the authoritarian elites.<sup>26</sup>

The German government thought that their political reformation and their withdrawing from battle were sufficient to grant them a good position at the negotiation table, but the Americans were unimpressed by the German changes since the Kaiser still functioned as the official head of the German state. This convinced the German masses that the official abdication of the Kaiser would grant them a more lenient peace offer. However, members of the monarchy and army leaders were not yet prepared to subordinate to a civil government and remained ruling as they had done before. Previously, the German people had always obeyed to these decisions, but in early November 1918, the authority of the commanders of the German Empire was fading. The most important example of this fading authority took place in Wilhelmshaven near Kiel, where sailors refused to follow the orders of their navy captains. Thousands of these mutineers were arrested in Wilhelmshaven and were sent to Kiel where even more arrests took place. In Kiel, the sailors and soldiers proved their solidarity with their comrades, disarmed their officers and formed their own councils. From 4 November 1918, Kiel was ruled by the mutinying soldiers and sailors. The sailor's rebellion was not restricted to Kiel though. In the days after their successful revolt, sailors and soldiers swarmed out over the country and were joined by local soldiers and workers in other German cities. This revolution reached Berlin on 9 November, and called for the Kaiser's abdication. Prince Max von Baden decided to give in to the demands of the revolutionaries and indeed announced Wilhelm's abdication.<sup>27</sup> Shortly after this decision, the government signed an armistice that ended the hostilities of the First World War at 19 November.<sup>28</sup>

After the signing of the armistice, the German political situation remained unstable though. While officially, Germany was a republic governed by Friedrich Ebert and his coalition, revolutionaries still aimed to establish a German socialist republic based on the Russian model after the Bolshevik revolution. Moreover, the German coalition was not recognized by all parts of Germany. Already on 8 November, with the support of the Bavarian workers and soldiers, Kurt Eisner of the USPD had proclaimed Bavaria an independent socialist republic. Also the members and supporters of the Spartacus League were hoping to establish a German socialist state, and were still calling for a socialist revolution. When the workers again started to demonstrate against the German government on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January, the uprising was joined by the Spartacus League. Ebert felt increasingly uncomfortable by these demonstrations and decided to shut them down violently on 15 January. In Berlin,

Liebkecht and Luxemburg were assassinated and also the initiators of the Bavarian socialist republic were killed by the German army.<sup>29</sup> This violent oppression of the revolutionaries is often seen as the end of the German revolution. From this moment on, it was clear that Germany was becoming a democratic, instead of a socialist state. Moreover, it shows that after the war, German socialists were divided to such a large extent that the democratic camp finally decided to attack and assassinate revolutionary socialists.

#### 1.4 *Grünberg's Archive after the War*

After the establishment of the Third International in 1919, it became quite clear that a European socialist unity could not be created after the war either. As shown earlier, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had broken with the German Social Democratic Party in 1915 and founded the Spartacus League. This situation happened in several other European countries and it were these kinds of movements that were united in the Third International. Less radical oriented parties such as the Social Democratic Party distanced themselves from these organizations, and were convinced that socialism should be realized within a democratic system. Thus, at the end of the 1910s socialism was divided into two camps; one of them advocated revolutionary socialism and was united in the Third International, the other one disapproved the idea of a revolution and supported the way the Weimar Republic was organized. While the former were marginalized and chased in the Weimar Republic, the latter were indeed the major stakeholder in the German parliament. In the years after the war, revolutionary and democratic socialists were even more divided they previously were. Their battle was not just fought on an intellectual level, but got the character of a civil war with the deaths of Luxemburg and Liebknecht as its tragic highlight.

The content of *Grünberg's Archive* in 1921 and 1922 suggests that he was satisfied with the way socialism was integrated in the Weimar Republic and can be divided into two subjects. On the one hand, overviews of earlier socialist texts were published with a short introduction explaining the context in which the text was written. On the other hand, it consisted of long theoretical articles defending the democratic system against revolutionary socialism. No articles by revolutionary socialists were published in these issues, which indicate that Grünberg himself opposed revolutionary socialism. The journal no longer met Grünberg's own standard '*If we see the same object through the eyes of many different people, we start to see this object more and more objectively*',<sup>30</sup> but Gustav Mayer's later

accusation that Grünberg was only interesting to Felix Weil because his revolutionary socialist ambitions does not corresponds to his ideological convictions either.

In the issues of 1921 and 1922, a quarter of the total amount of pages was reserved for a defense of democratic values. In 1921, the most important contribution to the journal was the article *Socialism and the State* by the German political philosopher Hans Kelsen. Kelsen argued against what he considers both Marx' and Engels' and the revolutionary socialists' central thesis that:

*This [socialism] is not an ethically grounded ideal, but the necessary consequence of the laws governing social processes.*<sup>31</sup>

A revolution of the proletariat would now be the last push in what can be considered the natural outcome of all social processes; the establishment of a socialist regime. According to Kelsen, this statement is plainly false for it is ultimately grounded in ideology rather than in the natural laws determining the way social processes are developing. He denies the idea that historical materialism had any scientific value, but is simply one view about the way society should be organized among others. Since it cannot be determined which view is better than the other, Kelsen defended the democratic system. In this system, all views can be represented, and offers civilians the possibility to vote for one of these during the elections. In the article, he applied this criticism to different absolute political systems such as communism, anarchism and aristocracy, and stated that there is no possibility to argue that one of these political ideologies is objectively more or less true than the other.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, democracy was the best political system he could think of since it acknowledges and gives a voice to all these different political ideologies. Only democracy offers *'the possibility for each political ideology to express itself, and to speak to the needs of the people in freedom and competition.'*<sup>33</sup>

In 1922, the prominent article of the volume was written by Paul Szende, a Hungarian lawyer and former Minister of Finance in the administration of the liberal Hungarian president Károlyi. In his article *Concealment and Disclosure: The struggle between Ideologies in History*, Szende argues for the dialectical character of ideology. He stated that historical materialism is an example of an absolute ideology which is considered true a priori.<sup>34</sup> In reaction to these kinds of ideologies, minorities will produce new ideologies that dismiss the truth of the ideology of the majority and, therefore, oppose the authorities expressing this

ideology. According to Szende, history has shown that one these minor ideologies eventually will get that many supporters that they are able to start a revolution overthrow the former major ideology, and will establish a new regime.

*Every revolution is nothing but the last phase of a period of disclosure; the gradual undermining of authority has already taken place. The revolution is just the eruption of the volcano. ... After the revolution, the strive for the return of balance and the harmonization of different classes starts again.*<sup>35</sup>

Instead of being the final stage of history, also the dictatorship of the proletariat will eventually be overthrown. The only system capable of surviving is a system trying to deal with personal differences and different political views. A democratic system is the only system able to fulfill these needs. This leaves two options; either establish a democratic system and hang on to it, or keep establishing absolute authorities such as the dictatorship of the proletariat and accept that they will eventually be overthrown. Just as in Kelsen's article, the universal validity of historical materialism is denied and democracy is defended as the one political system able to create a stable German nation.

This summary of the development of *Grünberg's Archive* between 1911 and 1922 shows that the nature of its content changes when the European political circumstances are changing. Between 1911 and 1914, we see that the articles in the journal tried to determine what socialism is and what it means to be a socialist, and did not take the universal validity of socialism for granted and tried to remain politically neutral. This is reflected in the foreword by the first issue of the journal where Grünberg stressed the need for a pluriformity of writers. When the nature of socialism was investigated by people with different political convictions, it became possible to come to an objective concept of the socialism. This is in line with Grünberg's idea that his journal was primarily a scientific journal without explicit political preferences.

During the First World War, it investigated how different national socialist organizations can be successfully integrated in an international socialist association. Socialism was no longer subject of critical inquiry, as it was before the war. At the beginning of the First World War, socialism became divided in two camps whose differences were sharpened by the Russian Revolution; revolutionary socialists and social democrats. The former wanted to establish a socialist regime through revolution, while the latter tried to obtain this by

democratic means. The articles in *Grünberg's Archive* examine how these two camps are differing and try to find a way of unifying them. The earlier ideal of establishing a scientific journal is replaced by a journal that has socialism as its political preference. The fact that there was no longer room for contributors opposing socialism confirms this change and indicates that unifying international socialism became the primary aim of *Grünberg's Archive*.

Assuming that the content of the journal is representative for Grünberg's own position in the debates between socialists, he was a supporter of social democracy rather than of revolutionary socialism. Therefore, it seems that when Weil approached Grünberg in 1923, he was not approaching someone likely to establish a platform for revolutionary socialists. He appointed a man whose earlier ambition was to create a journal and develop a way of research unaffected by political ideology. Moreover, he had earlier attempted to establish an institute for social research in Vienna, but eventually he failed to realize this idea.<sup>36</sup> His directorship at the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung enabled him to create an institute similar to the one he earlier tried to establish in Vienna.

### **1.5 Carl Grünberg as Director of the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung**

When Weil picked a building large enough to house the institute at the Victoria-Allee 17 near the campus of Frankfurt University, the official opening ceremony of the Institut took place in this freshly renovated building at June 22 1924.<sup>37</sup> In the speech Carl Grünberg gave during the ceremony, he outlined the research program of the Institut and described the role he would play as a director:

*It seems to me that at our institute, it is unthinkable to share the directorship with individuals having other ideological and methodological insights. From the beginning, we have aimed to investigate and solve problems in a uniform way. Under my directorship, this plan will be carried through.*<sup>38</sup>

The research carried out at the Institut was guided by a uniform research program, guaranteeing that both Weil's and Grünberg's needs were satisfied. In the remaining of the speech, Grünberg outlines what this research program should look like:

*The developing new order will be a socialist one, and that we are now in the transition from capitalism to socialism, which will be completed quickly. I consider it well-known that I also support this idea.*<sup>39</sup>

Grünberg was aware of the fact that this statement in no way expressed any political or ideological neutrality, but he considered it is impossible to obtain such a goal. While Grünberg's believed that acts are always at least partly determined by ideology, he still felt that it is possible to reflect on social phenomena in a scientific way. For Grünberg, this scientific approach was grounded in a Marxist conception of the world.<sup>40</sup>

Grünberg's methodology differed from orthodox Marxism because he denied that society was governed by natural laws, and that a dictatorship of the proletariat was its necessary outcome. He believed that social phenomena were always determined by underlying socio-economic conditions, but he denied that these phenomena are always determined by these conditions in the same way. In different times and at different places, the outcome of the socio-economic conditions is also always different. Since the research program of the Institut had to be uniform, it embraced historical materialism, but acknowledged that it only applied to specific social situations and cannot explain all of them in the same way. After outlining the research program of the Institut, Grünberg finished his speech by arguing for the necessity of the existence of an institute for social research. This was needed since universities were unable to satisfy the interests of students aiming for a scholarly career.<sup>41</sup> They had to offer programs which suited the needs and interests of the ones studying for a business career, and were less interested in obtaining deep scholarly knowledge. Therefore, independent institutes were needed to offer the possibility for a scholarly career and to guarantee for the quality of future university education.

Not much is known about the activities of the Institut under Grünberg's dictatorship, because its administration was destroyed and burned down when the Gestapo forced the Institut to close in 1933. A picture of Carl Grünberg as director of the Institut is the only thing referring to this period in the archives of the Institut. The only sources left are the reprinted issues of *Grünberg's Archive* between 1925 and 1930, Pollock's descriptions of the Institut during this period published in 1930 as *The Institute for Social Research at the Frankfurt University* in the collection *Research Institutes*, and a few notes referring to the Institut found in the Archives of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow by Rolf Wiggershaus.

Besides Grünberg, the most important members of the Institut in this period were Grünberg's assistants Friedrich Pollock and from 1926, also Henryk Grossmann. Friedrich Pollock was the closest friend of the later director of the Institut, Max Horkheimer, and was trained as a Marxist economist. Similar to Grünberg, Pollock considered himself an academic Marxist, and was not affiliated with a specific political party. In 1923, he took his doctorate in economics with a thesis on Marx' monetary theory. Immediately after the completion of this doctorate, Pollock started working for the Institut, and mostly performed administrative and financial activities rather than being of major influence on the Institut's theoretical development. Contrary to Grünberg and Pollock, Henryk Grossmann had been a politically active socialist, and had earlier lost his professorship in Economic History at the Warsaw University because of his socialist convictions. The other scholar that was full-time connected with the Institut at the time was just as Grossmann involved in leftist politics. Karl Wittfogel, the Institut's expert on Chinese economy was an active member of the German Communist Party. Other scholars known to be loosely connected to the Institut as doctoral students or scholarship holders shared Grossmann's and Wittfogel's political preferences. Thus, the people working at the Institut were mostly scholars with communist sympathies since this kind of research could not be performed at any other place in Germany.<sup>42</sup>

The fact that students referred to the Institut as 'Café Marx'<sup>43</sup>, seems to indicate that the Institut was indeed only visited by communists and scholars with socialist sympathies. However, Grünberg and Weil not only aimed to offer scholars the financial ability to work on research in the history of socialism, communism or the labor movement. As shown earlier, they saw that the time devoted to scientific social research at the university was limited since the numbers of students attending universities was increasing. Establishing an independent institute for social research should guarantee that this important work was continued to be performed and became accessible to anyone interested in the history of socialism since it was impossible to work on this topic alone.

In the early years of the Institut's existence, much time was devoted to collecting all the material related to the history of socialism and labor movements in order to create an all-comprehensive library of the subjects. According to Pollock, the Institut possessed an impressive library, and provided lots of cabinets and other places that could be used for studying. In November 1928, the library consisted of 37000 books, 340 different journals and received 37 different international newspapers. The Archive of the Institut specialized in the history of the German revolution in 1918 and the other important happenings for the labor



movement in the years after the revolution. Over 7000 different people used the reading room in the library of the Institut in 1927, others were studying in one of the three other study rooms that could house 120 people each.<sup>44</sup> When indeed such a big number of scholars was visiting the Institut, it seems unlikely that it was indeed only a 'Café Marx', and was more than a place where communists and socialists were discussing the possibility of political change. The fact that the research focus of its members was indeed communist orientated, does not necessarily imply that all people visiting the Institut shared the same sympathies.

One of the first tasks of the Institut in 1924 was to help preparing the first historical and critical edition of the complete works of Marx and Engels. However, both the Frankfurt University and the local authorities objected to this idea. Grünberg and several other members of the Institut were interrogated by the alarmed political police, and were suspected of having contact with people that had established a secret communist organization in an Archive in Berlin. Grünberg convinced the interrogators no one at the Institut was in connection with anyone from any secret communist organization. Eventually, the publishing house in the Institut was unofficially established, and six volumes of Marx' and Engels' works were published in Russian.<sup>45</sup> Grünberg had created a unique situation in Germany; nowhere else it was possible for scholars from all over the world to study the history of the labor movement, and to closely study en spread texts considered the foundation of the communist ideology.

The Institut was not only establishing a Marxist-English Archive in 1924, it also continued publishing *Grünberg's Archive*. The first issue of *Grünberg's Archive* under Grünberg's directorship of the Institut was published in 1925, and consisted of several articles concerning the history of labor movements and communism, as well as of a theoretical Marxist essay by Karl Korsch. This is especially interesting since Korsch was an active member of the German communist party. In the last two issues of *Grünberg's Archive* the major contributions were written by convinced social democrats. However, in the 1925 issue, articles written by social democrats were absent, and the major theoretical contributions were all written by politically active communists. According to Wiggershaus, the work at the Institut was a mirror of the Archive, and consisted mainly of research in the history of socialism and the labor movement, economic history and the history of criticism on political economy.<sup>46</sup> However, when the Institut was really a mirror of *Grünberg's Archive* its members should also be writing theoretical Marxist essays, of which Wiggershaus does not speak. It seems that the essays in *Grünberg's Archive* differed slightly from the earlier issues,

and that when Grünberg became director of the Institut, the journal started following a more radical course it earlier had done.

## 1.6 Grünberg's Marxism

This radicalization is in line with Grünberg's statements in his opening address, where he expressed his belief in historical materialism and the way it could be used in social science. Unfortunately, no articles concerning his specific stance towards Marxism were written by Carl Grünberg. The fact that he allowed Karl Korsch and Georg Lukács to give seminars at the Institut, gives sufficient reason to assume that Grünberg agreed with their ideas. Their approach to Marxism and its relation with philosophy is what Korsch elaborates on in his essay *Marxism and Philosophy*. Korsch argues against the orthodox Marxist argument that a practical revolution is sufficient to start a revolution and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. According to Korsch, such a socialist society cannot just be built on material grounds. The bourgeois only start to understand that their worldview is fundamentally wrong and should be replaced by the philosophy of the socialists, when a theoretical revolution is started.<sup>47</sup>

Korsch's and the Institut's Marxism differs from orthodox Marxism since they reject the idea that a practical revolution is sufficient to change the theoretical view of the bourgeois class. A revolution can only be successfully realized when the bourgeois worldview is theoretically overcome, and without an intellectual revolution, a practical revolution becomes a useless project. Thus, while orthodox Marxism considered intellectualism a useless hobby of the bourgeois elite, Korsch held intellectuals in high regard and saw them as a necessary part of the Marxist project. However, he agreed with orthodox Marxism that intellectuals cannot start a revolution without the practical help of the proletarian class themselves. Concepts such as 'state' and 'justice' do not exist independent of society, as in German idealist philosophy, but are always mediated by socio-economic conditions. This is the theoretical foundation of the worldview that should replace the bourgeois ideology.

While Korsch described the theoretical foundations of their Marxism, Friedrich Pollock's 1928 essay *On Marx' Monetary Theory* dealt with the concrete economic consequences of Marx' theory. Before starting his analysis of Marx' monetary theory, Pollock pointed out what he considered the biggest problem of this theory. He stated that it is a weakness that Marx' monetary theory cannot be separated from his general philosophy, which

makes it impossible for economic thinkers to judge its consequences.<sup>48</sup> Only when Marx' program is realized, the benefits and burdens of his economic ideas can be judged. However, before this moment comes into being, his theory can only be valued on philosophical or ideological grounds. As a consequence, the fundamental question in Marx' monetary theory cannot be something like 'Is Marx' theory financially beneficial?'<sup>49</sup> An economist is concerned with the question how it is possible that the needs of society can dominate the individual workers and the goods they need to produce. When one asks himself how society has developed in this system, only history can give answers. Moreover, the question how to replace this system with a system that can enable individuals to produce what they want, can only be answered when engaging in philosophical speculation. The weakness of Marx' monetary theory is that it cannot judge the present economic situation, because it only refers to the economy after the establishment of a socialist society.

Pollock's essay reveals a general problem of the research of the Institut under Grünberg's directorship and the line of research in *Grünberg's Archive*. Because Marxism and socialism were theories about a possible future organization of society, it was unclear what they could say about the world as given. However, Marxist theories were extensively criticizing the present organization of society, which necessarily involves an interpretation of the present situation. As Pollock shows, the focus on the realization of a future utopia undermines the possibility to interpret the present facts. Therefore, Marx' economic theory cannot be judged on empirical grounds. When someone believes in the strength of this theory, he can only refer to his ideological preference for Marxist theory in general. In the research of the Institut under Grünberg's directorship, theory always preceded the empirical data.

The research at the Institut thus corresponded with Grünberg's Marxist worldview as he had outlined in his inaugural speech. Most of the studies published in *Grünberg's Archive* were of a historical nature and were investigating how economic systems came into being and how labor movements reacted to these systems. These articles were mostly following the research program outlined in the theoretical articles, for example Pollock's suggestion that economic studies should be historical and philosophical and cannot be isolated from studies into politics is reflected in the articles. In the articles in *Grünberg's Archive*, economic problems are only described in the larger context of the development of labor movements in different countries and are not treated independently. For example, in Georges Weill's article *The Socialist Party in France 1920-1928*, the economic program is only discussed in connection with the political program of the French socialist party. Weill describes the

changes in the French socialist party in terms of ideology and personal relations, and argues that it is not the financial crisis in 1925, but the different ideologies within the party that are responsible for political change.<sup>50</sup>

Grünberg and his associates differed from orthodox Marxists since these would explain change in politics purely in terms of changes in economy. They were also aware that changes in society in general could not be explained when they should only focus on the economic level. In his history of the Institut, Martin Jay repeatedly argues that this awareness was typical for the Institut under the later directorship of Max Horkheimer.<sup>51</sup> However, Grünberg, his assistant Pollock, and his Marxist associates Korsch and Lukács were also stressing that society cannot be analyzed by only referring to economic circumstances. Just as Horkheimer's later research program, Grünberg's program was already interdisciplinary and can hardly be considered orthodox Marxist. As will become clear in the next chapter, there are two important differences between Grünberg's and Horkheimer's research program. Firstly, Horkheimer did not limit himself to the history of socialism and the labor movement, but tried to analyze all aspects of society. Secondly, for this analysis to be successful, Horkheimer argued that it was necessary to add social psychology to his research program. In the 1920s, the Institut's research approaches were mostly historical or philosophical. In the 1930s, Horkheimer integrated social psychology in Grünberg's program, and eventually social psychology became the fundament of the Institut's theoretical and empirical work.

## Chapter II: Max Horkheimer and Interdisciplinary Research

### 2.1 From Carl Grünberg to Max Horkheimer

When Carl Grünberg suffered from a stroke in 1929, Weil started his quest for a new director. However, it took until 1931 that Felix Weil and his colleagues found a candidate suitable for the job. In the years after the establishment of the Weimar Republic, the Institut received considerable support. In the end of the 1920s, it suffered from heavy criticism though. The Institut's focus on the history of socialism had become controversial and the German Ministry of Science started to suspect the Institut of communist sympathies. Felix Weil tried to convince the Ministry of his good intentions and stated that their research was unsuspecting and not aimed to undermine the political agenda of the Ministry. He tried to maintain the Institut's position as one of Germany's leading research institutes. The Institut was financially capable to remain in this position since Hermann Weill's donation was gracious enough to cover the expenses of the Institut for a longer period. However, if the Institut could no longer engage in German academic discussions, Weil feared that its ideas would quickly be forgotten.

Weil considered it of the greatest importance that the Institut remained a place where socialist should could work on Marxist or socialist theories and communicate these to a broader audience. It was insufficient that the Institut had enough financial support to continue their scholarly activities, but it should also be able to engage in academic discussions and give a Marxist perspective on contemporary issues. Weil had obtained this possibility, because of the Institut's affiliation with the Frankfurt University. Grünberg was not only the director of the Institut, but was also the head of the economical department at Frankfurt University. However, in the negotiations with the Ministry of Education, Weil had promised that the Institut would not just promote orthodox materialism, but tried to develop social theories able to function within a democratic system. Therefore, references to revolutionary socialism had to be avoided. The criticism that the Institut was a group of communists had to be countered in order to remain affiliated with the Frankfurt University.

An important candidate to become the new director was Max Horkheimer, a *Privatdozent* in philosophy at the time. Horkheimer was not closely associated with the Institut under Grünberg's directorship and was not known as a prominent socialist either. Moreover, he was neither familiar with economics and could not succeed Grünberg as the

head of the economics department at Frankfurt University nor had a big reputation within German philosophical circles. Apparently, his friendship with Pollock and his politically unsuspected profile still made him an important candidate for the job. Horkheimer had given several seminars at the Institut and had made a proposal for a book called *The Crisis of Marxism*, which indicates that Weil was familiar with Horkheimer's work. Moreover, Friedrich Pollock held Horkheimer's philosophical abilities in high regard and had strongly recommended Horkheimer as the new head of the Institut.<sup>52</sup>

In 1930, Weil decided that Horkheimer should become the new director of the Institut, and he was officially installed as Grünberg's successor in January 1931. He obtained a chair in social philosophy at Frankfurt University as a sign of the continuing cooperation between the Institut and the university. On 24 January 1931, Horkheimer held his inaugural speech, *The Present State of Social Philosophy and the Tasks for an Institute for Social Research*. In this speech, Horkheimer made it clear that the Institut intended to break with Grünberg's focus on the history of socialism and the labor movement. Social philosophy would become the Institut's central activity and Marxism was no longer its core business.

According to Horkheimer, a new social philosophy had to be developed since all earlier social philosophies failed to overcome one of its most important problems: they failed to exclude political ideologies from their thinking.<sup>53</sup> Also Karl Marx' philosophy was fundamentally political and was unable to speak about the cultural life of humanity in an objective way. To develop a social philosophy able to fulfill its own task, ideological preferences should be avoided. It should interpret cultural manifestations from a politically neutral point of view. Previously, social philosophers argued that this ideal could not be realized in practice. For example, Carl Grünberg stated in his inaugural speech that everybody was ideologically biased and that also his research was biased by his Marxist convictions. Horkheimer, on the contrary, believed in the possibility to deprive social philosophy of its ideological aspects:

*In short, the task is to do what all true researchers have always done: namely, to pursue their larger philosophical questions on the basis of the most precise scientific methods to revise and refine their questions in the course of their substantive work, and to develop new methods without losing sight of the larger context. With this approach, no yes-or-no answers arise to the philosophical questions. Instead, these questions themselves become integrated*

*into the empirical research process; their answers lie in the advance of objective knowledge, which itself affects the form of the questions.*<sup>54</sup>

In order to remove ideology from social research, it had to become interdisciplinary. When social philosophers started cooperating with empirical researchers, they could adjust their theories when they contradict the empirical data. This makes it impossible to hold on to an ideologically-laden theory (unless the final all-comprehensive theory of truth is found), because its theoretical statements had to conform to empirical data. According to Horkheimer, his research program could be the foundation of an ideologically neutral theory after a considerable amount of research. Horkheimer acknowledged the importance of empirical research, but he was aware that empirical generalizations without a proper theoretical background were unable to explain specific situations. Theorizing still has to remain the primary task of social philosophy.<sup>55</sup> However, while theorizing was previously seen as the only task of social philosophy, Horkheimer's social philosophy made it possible to test theories on specific situations in the real world.

Even though empirical research played an important in Horkheimer's thinking, he denied that that empirical research could do without philosophy. This marks a break with the Institut's work under Grünberg's directorship in which empirical research was of minor importance. Horkheimer's research program can be seen as an attempt to solve Pollock's complaints in his 1928 essay that Marxist theory was incapable of judging the present organization of society because of its ideological presuppositions. Horkheimer's speech provided almost exactly what Felix Weil had asked for. He answered the critics of the Institut by stating that the political preferences of Marxism had to be eliminated from social philosophy. Horkheimer developed an alternative to Marxism and all earlier social philosophies, which was no longer grounded in political ideology.

## **2.2 The *Journal for Social Research* and a Theory of Interdisciplinary Research**

The articles in the new journal of the Institut, the *Journal for Social Research*, reflected the interdisciplinary approach advocated by Horkheimer. In the first issue that was published in 1932, the articles dealt with several problems Grünberg had not touched upon. Erich Fromm wrote an article about the fusion of theory and empirical research, which was in accordance with Horkheimer's theory of interdisciplinary research. In his article *On the*

*Method and Task of an Analytical Social Psychology*, Erich Fromm explained why a combination of historical materialism and psychoanalysis could transform Marxism from a political ideology into a scientific theory.

Fromm started explaining why orthodox Marxists reacted negatively to Freud's individual psychology. They stated that individual psychology could not play a role in the determination of ideological preferences, because Marx had stated that ideologies were fully determined by socio-economic factors. According to Fromm, the development of ideology was also influenced by individual libidinal needs. He argued that socio-economic factors cannot account for the variety of ideologies in society. Therefore, the individual psychology of the members of a society has to be taken into account in order to understand the way ideologies are constructed:

*Psychoanalysis makes the theory of historical materialism more accurate, because it provides knowledge of one of the factors present in the developing of society at a specific place. It is able to provide knowledge of the nature of man.*<sup>56</sup>

Psychoanalysis is needed to get insight into one of the operative factors in the structure of society. It shows how ideologies are formed by a combination of natural drifts and socio-economic circumstances.<sup>57</sup> Society does not only consist of a certain socio-economic structure, but also possesses a libidinal structure, which could not be understood without the involvement of psychoanalysis. This integration of psychoanalysis in Marxist theory provided a scientific basis for a Marxist social theory (this specific version became widely known as Freudo-Marxism). Fromm dismissed the idea that Marxism was the only true ideology, which stated that socialism would be realized under the right set of socio-economic conditions. An analytical social psychology aimed to investigate how specific ideologies were developed instead of trying to establish a socialist regime.

This suggests that Horkheimer's inaugural speech in which he argued for the need for empirical research in social philosophy was immediately picked up by the other members of the Institut. However, this view is distorted by the fact that Fromm became a member of the Institut in 1929, and was already leading a group that was engaged in empirical research before Horkheimer came in charge. Already in 1929, Fromm started an investigation into the political practices and consciousness of the German working class. Fromm tried to understand



why the working class failed to realize the revolutionary potential Marx had ascribed to them. Just as in Fromm's article in 1932, he argued that psychoanalysis is needed to understand the inactivity of the workers and their failure to organize themselves.<sup>58</sup>

When Fromm's interest in psychoanalysis is taken into account, it is to be expected that clinical observations were the fundament of his analytical social psychology. However, the outcome of his study was the result of an analysis of questionnaires and was not based on clinical observations. The questionnaires consisted of questions varying from the amount of wages to the aesthetic and philosophical tastes of the workers. Fromm analyzed the questionnaires from a socio-psychological perspective, which enabled him to develop different character types. For example, one group of workers was characterized as revolutionary, while another group was characterized as democratic. The answers to the questionnaires enabled Fromm to argue that the success of the social democratic party and the failure of the German communist revolution was the consequence of the fact that only a minority of the workers had a revolutionary character.

New in both Horkheimer's approach and in Fromm's article in the *Journal for Social Research* was the idea that Marxism should not necessarily be the foundation of a social theory. Questions why a group of workers failed to realize its revolutionary potential were replaced by questions that did not start from orthodox Marxist assumptions. Fromm extended his research from workers to other groups of civilians and he wanted to understand how ideologies are constructed, instead of investigating why the workers have a 'wrong' ideology. The new approach that was introduced when Horkheimer became director of the Institut, was not only a change from purely theoretical work to a combination of theory and empirical research, but also a transformation from Marxism into a social scientific theory. The Institut opened the possibility to question the foundations of Marxism itself.

In Horkheimer's article *History and Psychology* that was also published in the first issue of the new journal, the assumptions of orthodox Marxism were also questioned. According to Horkheimer, '*Psychology is intertwined with history in such a way, that individuals cannot be solely understood in terms of their economic circumstances.*'<sup>59</sup> He proposed a new understanding of history that focuses on individual psychology. Individuals cannot be understood when they are treated as belonging to a group that shares similar economic circumstances. Previously, social theories neglected the importance of individual psychology and have overestimated the explanatory power of economy. If psychology is integrated in historical research, it provides a better insight in the way society was previously

organized.<sup>60</sup> Previously, it was only possible to differentiate between different classes living under specific socio-economic conditions. When psychology becomes part of it, history can show how these groups develop specific ideologies, and how these are grounded in the psychology of the individual members of the group. To explain the ideological structure of society, it is needed to take individual psychology into account.

How the Institut understood the way ideologies were constructed by the psychology of individuals, was explicated for the first time in an article by Fromm in the second issue of the *Journal for Social Research*. In *Psychoanalytical Characterology and its Meaning for Social Psychology*, Fromm develops different character types and argues that ideologies originate from these types. For example, when the major part of a group of workers has a specific character type, the group's ideological preferences will correspond to this character type. According to Fromm, the ideology of a group with similar socio-economic circumstances can only be explained when it is known of which character types this group consists. While this resembles Fromm's study started in 1929, this approach answers the question how to investigate the worker's individual psychology, instead of only concluding that psychology should be part of every social theory.

Fromm follows Freud's idea that all people have a set of sexual drives, which can be inexhaustibly fulfilled in the early child age. However, in order to become a member of society, these drives have to be repressed. People try to transform these drives into needs that fit the way society is organized and are not considered taboos. For example, anal fascinations are drives common among children, but are no longer accepted in the mature world. According to Fromm, a typical repression of such fascinations is the idea that one should earn more money than one can spend, and becomes capable to start saving his money. A set of these repressions is of determining influence on the development of someone's character. In his article, Fromm argues that the development of someone's character cannot be just psychoanalytically understood. It has also to be understood how the libidinal structure is mediated by the nature of society. According to him, the best way to get understanding of this relation is by looking at the family:

*The social influence that is of greatest importance must be the influence under which one's psychological traits develop firstly. This influence must be the family.*<sup>61</sup>

Fromm suggests that individual psychology is mediated both by the libidinal structure of individuals and the organization of society. It is also needed to understand how society to understand how society influences the development of someone's character. Since character types are responsible for the development of ideology, research should focus on the way the repression of sexual drifts is mediated by society. Fromm concludes his article with the theory that family has the most important influence on characterological development. Therefore, it should be investigated how psychological development is influenced by the family. Without knowledge of psychological development, irrational behavior cannot be explained. For example, when an individual represses his anal fascinations by saving money and develops a corresponding bourgeois ideology, he remains supporting this ideology even when he is no longer able to save money. This indicates that the development of ideology is not purely determined by socio-economic circumstances. According to Fromm, a merger of Marxism and psychoanalysis is a necessary prerequisite of a sociology that aims to understand how specific ideologies are constructed.<sup>62</sup>

The first article in the *Journal for Social Research* specifically dealing with the influence of the family on the development of individual character was *Family Sentiments*, an article written by the English-French anthropologist Robert Briffault that was followed by a commentary on Briffault's work by Erich Fromm. Briffault argued against the dominating anthropological theory about the formation of society and the construction of ideological principles. Originally, anthropological theories stated that the organization of society reflects the structure of paternal authoritarian families, and that the ideology of economic individualism is a consequence of the structure of these families.<sup>63</sup> These theories take it for granted that paternal families arise from the natural condition for man. Therefore, also economic individualism corresponds to the natural condition of mankind. Briffault argues against this view and states that paternal families do not arise from natural condition, but are a reflection of economic circumstances.

According to Briffault, societies characterized by economical individualism lack certain natural properties. The results of his ethnographical studies show that the first structure of families is characterized by the loving maternal care for children, instead of the authoritarian position of the father. He states that the paternal structure of the family is a reflection of specific economic conditions, and is the consequence instead of the cause of economic individualism. Briffault proposes an alternative to our current organization of

society, and states that when the economic conditions have changed, the general structure of society also changes.

*Sentiments of companionship and brotherhood will no longer be artificial ideals, hypocritically professed as insincere formulas, which are impossible to realize in a competitive society, but will be the natural reactions to economic conditions.*<sup>64</sup>

Briffault believes in the possibility of changing society into a world that is not characterized by competition, but holds values as companionship, brotherhood and friendship in high regard. He argues that the current economic conditions must change in order to return to the natural situation in which maternal values were dominant.

Fromm's review of Briffault's theory was published in the same issue of the journal. Besides some critical notes about Briffault's methodology and the neglect of other contemporary authors, Fromm was highly positive of Briffault's work. Although Briffault did not combine historical materialism with psychoanalysis, he reached the same conclusions as Fromm. They both thought that a change in the economic conditions and a change in the way libidinal drifts are repressed can better the world.<sup>65</sup> Thus, Fromm believed that social philosophy combined with empirical research cannot only provide an understanding of the development of society, but can also be a tool to bring the maternal feelings of love and brotherhood back to society.

However, Fromm was not that naïve to think a change in society was easily obtained. The organization of society was based on paternal, authoritarian values, and which been stable fundamentals of society for a pretty long time. Fromm expected that most people were mostly not eager to engage in this process of change. Paternal values were grounded in libidinal and economic conditions, which made it unlikely that civilians were aware of the fact the organization of society was paternal. The rise of unemployment in the years before 1933 could have been a reason to make this change more likely though. Fromm and the other members of the Institut thought that an increase in unemployment would cause a new structure in the family, because the father was not able to provide enough income anymore. The other members were not as positive as Fromm about the possibility to change their patriarchal society into a maternal one. However, they were all convinced that unemployment would cause a change in the structure of the family.

Andries Sternheim was responsible for the reviews on research about the relation between unemployment and family and wrote a section in the *Journal for Social Research* about the recent literature on this subject. Sternheim concludes his series of reviews with the idea that unemployment has a bad influence on family life. Firstly, he noticed the same shift Fromm had anticipated and stated that the mother was becoming the central figure of the family. The father loses his prestige, because he is no longer able to take care of the family's finances and was replaced by the mother as the central caretaker of the children. Secondly and contrary to Fromm, Sternheim states that this shift is not necessarily positive. When the mother becomes the primary caretaker of a family, recent literature showed that the trust in institution outside the family increases.<sup>66</sup> Schools and sport clubs start to have an increasing influence on the development of the child's characterology. Therefore, it becomes less likely that the natural maternal position advocated by Briffault and Fromm becomes reality, because the family stops being the first social mediator of the child's drives. In order to understand the way society is organized, Sternheim suggests that it should be investigated how social institutions outside the family influence the development of individual characters.

The first issues of the *Journal for Social Research* in 1932 and 1933 were filled with publications from the Institut's prominent members and prominent European intellectuals. However, when the Nazis came into power and the Institut had to move to the United States, the contribution of American intellectuals increased. In 1934, an American article was published in the *Journal for Social Research* for the first time. The Russian-American sociologist Pauline V. Young wrote a short article about the way psychiatrists dealt with the difference between delinquent and non-delinquent boys.<sup>67</sup> Not only was this contribution written by someone who made a career within American academia, the research she referred to took place in the United States. This indicates that the Institut tried to integrate American problems in the social sciences and did not limit itself exclusively to European problems. The most notable American contribution was written by the historian Charles A. Beard and dealt with the most important problems in the American social sciences. Similar to Horkheimer, Beard argued that the situation in American social science became increasingly worse, because it became overly specialized.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Beard stated that when American social scientists want to have practical impact, they have to stop focusing on specialized subjects, without referring to a comprehensive theory of which their specialization are part of. Therefore, American social science has to cooperate with philosophy in order to investigate how their research relates to the general structure of society. When the Institut arrived in the

United States, it started to deal with new and typical American problems, and its focus was no longer concentrated on European problems.

### 2.3 From Frankfurt to New York

In 1932, Horkheimer and Fromm developed two sets of questionnaires which should shed new light on the structure of the family and how this structure was influenced by the rise of unemployment. The first set of questionnaires was sent to workers and their families, and contained questions about the personal circumstances of the family. The second set was sent to professionals dealing with family and family problems. They were asked questions of a different nature, because Horkheimer and Fromm expected that their analysis of the structure of families would differ from the first group. Another subject of the questionnaires was the sexual morality among the youth, and was also sent to both young people and professionals dealing with sexuality, such as gynecologists. Later on, they highlighted this insight in a report sent to the University of Columbia board when they had to show to the Columbia University that their questionnaires were reliable. Horkheimer wrote that *'In the first place, the questionnaires reveal what the respondent thinks he feels or believes. The question is then raised whether and to what extent the answers are objective.'*<sup>69</sup> It was insufficient to ask correspondents to describe the structure of their family, it was necessary to include the experts as a 'control group' to decide whether the judgments of the correspondents conformed to reality.

At the time the Institut started to spread these questionnaires, the Nazis became increasingly powerful in Germany. The members of the Institut were mostly Jewish left-wing intellectuals and they felt that they were no longer safe in Germany. Max Horkheimer decided that it was time to leave Germany and move to Geneva, where the Institut had already established another research center directed by Andries Sternheim. Between January and March 1933, Horkheimer, Pollock, Wittfogel, and Löwenthal all moved from Frankfurt to Geneva and continued their work in Swiss exile. The research center in Geneva was already responsible for the analysis of the questionnaires, which seemed an advance for the Institut's empirical research on family and authority.

The members of the Institut did not feel safe in Geneva though.<sup>70</sup> Horkheimer failed to house the Institut in London or Paris and decided that it should look for a home at the other side of the ocean. Eventually, they found a home at the Columbia University in New York.

The social sciences in the United States had taken a different course than they did in Europe. In Germany, the social sciences sprung from philosophy and were considered one of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. However, in the United States, the quantitative model of the natural sciences functioned as the standard for research in the social sciences. In his book *Trust in Numbers*, Theodore Porter links this quantitative approach to an increasing faith in objectivity over personal judgment. In stable political democratic systems, social scientists were often of advice to politicians, who wanted to win the trust of their voters. To win this trust, politicians had to show that they were providing objective information, instead of giving their own opinions. Quantified statements were the utmost possibility to show the objectivity of their statements, because these statements depend on mathematic rules that are believed to be universally true. When these rules are followed, personal preferences can no longer affect the outcome of an investigation. Therefore, politicians and by extension also social scientists are able to show that they provide trustworthy information.<sup>71</sup>

It should be understood that quantified statements can only become the ultimate sign of trustworthiness when other qualities can no longer proved for it. In Europe, and especially in Germany, objectivity was not considered the chief important quality of politicians. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, European countries were often in conflict with each other. For example, during the First World War, no countries in Europe had a democratic political system comparable to the American one. Politicians were trusted for their wisdom, military power or political ideology, instead of their objectivity or moral impartiality. European social scientists were developing social theories that functioned as the ideologies of the possible leaders of their nation. These theories could be developed without the help of quantitative research, which explains the difference between the social sciences in the United States.

The fact that the Institut were part of the European tradition within the social sciences did not prevent it from becoming a part of the sociological department at Columbia though. This raises the question why the Columbia sociological department was interested to house a group of people that did not belong to the American quantitative tradition. At the time it was approached by the Institut, the most prominent members of the Columbia sociology department were Robert MacIver and Robert Lynd, respectively professor in social science and sociology. MacIver was a Scottish political theorist with vast knowledge of European sociology and was most famous for his theoretical work on social processes and social cohesion. Lynd was a famous sociologist in the United States after the publication of

*Middletown* in 1929, a work known for its quantitative thoroughness. Despite the fact that both MacIver and Lynd had experience with quantitative research, they both opposed the idea that the social sciences should be shaped as the natural sciences. Instead of stressing the importance of quantitative research, their work approached sociology theoretically. Moreover, after the start of The Great Depression, less money was invested in research in the social sciences. Because MacIver and Lynd wanted to expand their department, they looked for a cooperation with an institute that was both familiar with quantitative research and was economically self-sufficient even before they came in contact with the Institut.<sup>72</sup> The only thing the Institut had to do was to show that they indeed were able to fulfill these needs.

The Institut was without doubt financially capable to repair the place where they continued their studies and was able to provide for the salaries of its permanent members until 1938. However, in order to continue their empirical research they had to find their place within American academia, because they needed American resources and funding. In 1934, Julian Gumperz, a member of the Institut who was fluent in English, gave a talk in which he tried to encourage American funders for the Institut's scientific activities. He stated that the Institut's approach had several advantages over research in the American social sciences, but was positive about the possibilities of the American quantitative approach.<sup>73</sup> Gumperz argued that when the Institut wanted to meet the requirements of the Columbia sociology department and had to integrate quantitative research in their work, they needed some extra investments. This indicates that Lynd and MacIver had communicated their demands to Gumperz, because he was aware of the importance of quantitative research in American social science. Thus, the Institut was willing to pay the prize for their move to the United States and assimilate to the American quantitative approach, as Gumperz had stressed in his negotiations with Columbia University.<sup>74</sup>

However, this description of the Institut's research hardly corresponds with the activities of the members of the Institut before it left Frankfurt. Most of the time, the Institut's members worked on theoretical projects, an activity that was marginalized during Gumperz' negotiations with Columbia University. Instead of focusing on the empirical testability of their theories, they mostly wrote critiques of society from a Freudo-Marxist perspective. In 1933, Horkheimer decided to put their theories into the field, which culminated in their research about how authority in families was influenced by an increasing unemployment rate. These studies were officially performed under the direction of Horkheimer, but the gathered data was analyzed in Geneva by Andries Sternheim and Erich Fromm. Thus, Gumperz



exaggerated the Institut's, or at least Horkheimer's, interest in empirical research in order to show the Institut's value to the sociology department of Columbia University.

However, it should also be taken into account that the Institut's empirical studies on authority became an increasingly important area of research, which would benefit from the American experience in quantitative research. When the results of their empirical studies were published in the *Studies on Authority and Family* in 1936, Fromm was very happy with the fact that his knowledge of American sociology had improved:

*The members of the Institut had the opportunity to get acquainted with the newest research methods, Moreover, the amount of completed questionnaires in the United States, means that the social classes whose cooperation is needed for our scientific research are way better prepared for such investigations.*<sup>75</sup>

This indicates that the members of the Institut were convinced that their research would benefit from the American sociological and saw America as an excellent place continuing research on authority in families.

In New York, Horkheimer contacted Paul Lazarsfeld, an empirical specialist he knew from an earlier cooperation and who was also in American exile. He was expected to analyze thousands of questionnaires filled in by young Americans, and to use innovative statistical techniques in this process. However, the Newark University had no extensive funding abilities, and Lazarsfeld was expected to establish research contacts with nearby research institutes that were interest to give extra funding for Lazarsfeld's project. Horkheimer decided to give Lazarsfeld's small financial support in exchange for Lazarsfeld's help with the Institut's analysis of the questionnaires of the Institut's studies on authority in families. For example, Lazarsfeld and his group helped analyzing the questionnaires sent to young people in Switzerland.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the Institut not only presented itself as a bureau actively engaged in quantitative research during the negotiations with Columbia University, it also tried to fulfill this promise by renewing its contact with a sociologist that was familiar with American methods. This cooperation gave Horkheimer and Fromm the opportunity to continue their work on the *Studies on Authority and Family* with a group of researchers who got way more experience in empirical research than their European colleagues had.

## 2.4 *The Studies on Authority and Family*

The Institut's studies on authority in families conducted between 1932 and 1935 were eventually published in 1936 in an almost thousand page volume called *Studies on Authority and Family*. Instead of a book with an explicit thesis about the nature of authority in families and the influence of unemployment on these relations, the book consisted of an overview of the empirical studies conducted by the Institut's members during the early 1930s.<sup>77</sup> According to Horkheimer, the publication of the studies still lacked a theoretical and empirical fundament that is needed to fully understand the nature of the phenomenon. However, when more material was collected and more time was devoted, the research could provide a scientific theory about the role of authority in families, and by extension its role in society. Horkheimer thought that their American hosts needed time to get acquainted with the way theory and empirical research were combined in the works of the Institut though. He believed that it was necessary to show a selection of the Institut's results to the American public, even if these were of preliminary character. These remarks suggest that a study of the book gives a coherent picture of the empirical research activities performed by the Institut in the early 1930s.

The first section of the book consists of three essays that explain the theoretical foundations of the Institut's research. The first essay by Horkheimer gave an overview of the problematic relation between individuals and the authorities in history and explains the role of the family in this relation. The essay started with a repetition of what Horkheimer had argued in earlier essays and expresses the idea that human behavior and thought are not only mediated by their material circumstances.<sup>78</sup> Horkheimer argued against orthodox Marxist theories, which stated that the remaining presence of older forms of society is merely grounded in the material circumstances of the different classes. Contrary to these theories, Horkheimer believed that a part of human nature likes to preserve these older forms of society. This theory expressed the shared convictions of the Institut's members; the possibility of an integration of Marxist theory and Freudian psychoanalysis.

The second part of the essay is a short history of bourgeois ideology and its relation towards authority. Firstly, Horkheimer describes the roots of this ideology, and trace these back to the liberal enlightened tradition. As a consequence of Enlightenment, civilians became increasingly individualistic and were no longer willing to subordinate to any form of authority. However, because the bourgeois no longer submitted to the authority of a political

leader, they fell prey to the authority of the irrational economic order. The bourgeois ideology was unable free itself from authority because they just replaced political authority with economic authority. The last part of the essay deals specifically with the theoretical assumptions underlying the Institut's research on the role of the family in authority relations. In this part, Horkheimer elaborates on what Sternheim had already anticipated in his overview of the new literature on family and unemployment in 1933. In line with Sternheim's conclusions, Horkheimer argued that a society in crisis necessarily provides a change in the way authority is perceived. The increasing amount of unemployment causes a crisis in society, which indicates that a change in the relation between authorities and individuals is to be expected. Previously, it was perfectly clear that the father was the authoritarian figure within the family, and mediated the authority of the state. However, because unemployment made the authority of the father fade, the authority of the state is no longer mediated.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the state stopped being subject of criticism with families and becomes the only legitimate authority.

In the second theoretical essay, Fromm explains why psychoanalysis is needed to understand the nature of this problem. He begins the essay with the statement that insight in the relation between authorities and individuals provides fundamental insight in the nature of man.

*Most people's relation to authorities is what characterizes them most. On one side, there are people who are only happy when they can acquiesce or submit an authority, whereby they do so to a higher degree the stricter and more ruthless such authorities are. On the other side, there are people who behave revolting and defiant as soon as they are asked to comply with some instruction even if those were reasonable and practical for themselves.<sup>80</sup>*

According to Fromm, this difference can best be understood when the psychological structure of the individual characters who feel great satisfaction when submitting to authority are investigated. He states that a society becomes authoritarian when a great number of its inhabitants like to submit to authority, and do not feel like resisting it. Fromm considers the society he lives in fundamentally authoritarian, and tries to understand why the members of this society prefer to submit to authority, e.g. why these members do all possess authoritarian character traits. Importance to notice is that Fromm considers the authoritarian society a two-

way street. A society cannot be authoritarian when its members do not want to subordinate to its authoritarian leaders. Therefore, it is needed to understand why the members of society feel like subordinating to authority, because society could also be organized in another way.

The first step in the construction of an authoritarian character can be traced back to the relation between the young child and its father. According to Freud, the authority of the father and the child's identification with it are part of the Oedipus-complex of the child and his fear of castration. The young child has sexual feelings towards its mother, but knows that he cannot blindly follow these feelings, because the mother belongs to his father. The child fears that the father will castrate it when it approaches the mother with his sexual feelings. Freud states that this is the fundament of the father's authority. However, Fromm doubts whether this is the only authority that influences the young child.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, the structure of the child's character is not just a consequence of its problematic relation with the father, but also of the structure of society. The place of the father in society is grounded in its socio-economic structure, which means that this structure is also present in the father's authority over the child. Thus, the character of the child is not only determined by the relation with its father, but also by the socio-economic structure of the society.

In the next step of Fromm's analysis, he asks to what extent the adult's character is determined by socio-economic conditions. Fromm suggests that the sado-masochistic character corresponds to the present conditions. A monopolistic capitalist society is particularly likely to create this character type, because a small group in society owns the majority of the resources. Therefore, the financial situation of the majority of society depends on the graces of a rich minority. However, the majority not just desires economic security from this small group, but also wants to become part of it. They also want to be able to exert power on other people.<sup>82</sup> A monopolistic capitalistic society becomes authoritarian when it creates sado-masochistic characters and individuals cannot escape the web of dependency relations. An authoritarian society not only establishes these relations, but also makes sure that they provide for all individual needs. According to Fromm, in such a society, authority is no longer questioned, because all individual needs are satisfied. The authorities are celebrated, because they are held responsible for this satisfaction, which strengthens their position. This idea particularly contributes to the research on authority in families, because it implies that when the authority of the father fades, children become directly dependent on the grace of the minority from the moment they are born. This makes the position of the authoritarian society even stronger.

The last essay of the theoretical part by Herbert Marcuse is an intellectual history of the relation between freedom and authority. He states that bourgeois philosophers were mostly concerned with the relationship between authority and negative freedom. These kinds of theories express the idea that freedom is that what can be done under the approval of the authorities. For example, Marcuse states that people only preserved their inner autonomy, because they were willing to accept an authority that offered them physical protection. Individuals were able to have their own thoughts, as long as they physically submitted to the authorities.<sup>83</sup> After these general statements, Marcuse outlines the theories of different philosophers about the relation between freedom and authority in more detail. His overview starts with the Reformation and ends with the difference between the theories of the sociologists Pareto and Sorel about liberalism and totalitarianism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Marcuse, from the Reformation until the Marxist ideologies, the submission of the bourgeois to an authority was always rational. Antiauthoritarian behavior was only rational when the bourgeois could no longer benefit from the authority they had earlier submitted to. In totalitarian societies this possibility is ruled out since submission to authority is no longer rational. The transition from liberal forms of government into totalitarian ones is caused by a decreasing trust in individual rationality. The absence of rationality paved the way for authoritarian regimes, because their authority can no longer be questioned. In totalitarian societies, inner autonomy is no longer present, which marks a radical change in the relation between authority and freedom.

The second section of the book consists of an overview of the Institut's empirical on authority in families. Horkheimer argues that the results of these studies cannot be considered conclusive though. They should be considered an experiment and a model for future research on authority and family in the United States. Still, the interdisciplinary approach Horkheimer outlined in his inaugural speech in 1931 echoes through the preface to the empirical section of the book:

*We never have generalized any of our results, and the questionnaires were never considered a means to gather statistical evidence. Rather, they should keep us in touch with the facts of daily life, and avoid us from making unrealistic hypotheses.*<sup>84</sup>

The number of questionnaires was inconclusive for trustworthy statistical generalizations, but still enabled the members of the Institut to move their theories from their armchairs into the real world. Horkheimer was in favor of the use of empirical research, because it was able to get rid of metaphysical speculation philosophical theories. Originally, philosophical theories were based on unrealistic hypotheses, which could be avoided when theoretical and empirical work was combined.

The empirical part of the book starts with a short history of the way the data was gathered and explains the methodology used in the analysis of the results. The section continues with an analysis of the questionnaires sent to the workers by Erich Fromm. Firstly, Fromm differentiates between groups with the use of objective data, such as gender, type of job and income. Secondly, he aims to investigate the psychological structure of the participants. He elaborates on the argument of his theoretical essay and suggests that each participant belongs to a certain characterological category. Participants can have an authoritarian, a revolutionary, or an ambivalent character. The first has a positive stance towards authority, the second an explicitly negative one, while the third is in between. For each character type counts that when a certain set of answers is given to political questions, it is possible to predict the answers the participant is likely to give to another set of political questions.<sup>85</sup> These character types do not exist in reality, but are theoretical archetypes that help understanding which types of opinions are related. Fromm gives the example that when people have pictures of political leaders in their houses, like modern architecture, and think that society is responsible for the fate of individuals, they were all in favor of sexual education and opponents of corporal punishment.<sup>86</sup> Thus, the answers given to the questionnaires reveal a part of the participant's psychological structure and open the possibility to predict his opinion on other matters.

The next sections of the empirical part of the book link these different character types to specific problems in society, mostly to authority and families. The first investigation investigated if the father had a different position in different occupational groups. Questionnaires were sent to specialists in family relations (teachers, social workers, etc.), and these families were divided into three different groups; workers, middle class members and farmers. An analysis of the questionnaires showed that the authority of the father was biggest in farmer families, while in middle class and worker families, the mother started to be the authoritarian figure.<sup>87</sup> The questionnaires were not straightforwardly asking which of the elders was most authoritarian, but addressed examples of authoritarian behavior. For instance,

it was asked who was responsible for the punishment of the children, or who was responsible for the purchase of expensive materials. In farmer families, the father was mostly responsible for these matters while in the worker's and middle class families, the mother was most influential on these subjects. This indicates that authority relations in families differ when parents have different occupations or belong to a different social class.

The collected material not only suggests that authority relations in families differ in different occupational groups, but also confirms Fromm's hypothesis that the authority of parents on their children is fading. All contacted specialist believed that this was indeed the case, and most of them highlighted unemployment as the most important reason. Also the war and the way the increasing amount of spare time is spent are believed to have a bad influence on the authority of parents.<sup>88</sup> An analysis of the questionnaires that were sent to the European youth, also suggests that the authority of the parents was fading, and showed that the youth would have less trust in their parents when they should become unemployed. Therefore, the Institut wanted to send a new set of questionnaires to families who were indeed suffering from unemployment. However, at the time the volume was published, this research was still of a preliminary character.

In 1936, only 14 questionnaires specifically dealing with the influence of unemployment on authority were analyzed. However, a specific hypothesis was already developed. As Fromm had already suggested in his analysis of Robert Briffault's work, he wanted to investigate if unemployment would cause a shift from patriarchal to matriarchal authority. While the former was characterized by discipline and order, the latter focused on values as love, happiness and help. According to Briffault and Fromm, this type of authority could be the fundament of a new structure of society in which people were more interested in helping each other than being concurrent all the time. The Institut's future research aimed to investigate whether unemployment indeed marked a shift patriarchal to matriarchal authority, and if a positive change in the order of society was to be expected.

First of all, it should be noted that the results of these 14 questionnaires were not considered statistically conclusive.<sup>89</sup> However, Fromm stated that an analysis of 11 completed questionnaires suggested that in unemployed families, the mother started to become the authoritarian figure.<sup>90</sup> This indicates that the rise of unemployment increased the chances of establishing a matriarchal society, but an explicit conclusion could not yet be drawn from the amount of analyzed questionnaires. It is stated that future research would investigate whether this conclusion could indeed be drawn, the research was never continued. Horkheimer

opposed Fromm's idea that a maternal society could be established, and as director, he was responsible for the Institut's research program. Therefore, no more time and money were devoted to research into possible matriarchal tendencies in society.

In comparison with the research in the period under Grünberg's directorship, a clear change in the way the world is approached can be noticed. While Grünberg had no clear methodology how to approach the world, Horkheimer constructed a research program in which an analysis of questionnaires should guarantee that the Institut's research applied to reality. The complaints Pollock had in 1928, when he criticized Marxist theories because it was unclear how they related to reality, were overcome in this new approach. Instead of theorizing how the world should be under a socialist regime, the Institut investigated the ideology and corresponding behavior of the workers in the present situation. The merger of Marxism and psychoanalysis enabled it to understand the organization of society as such, instead of developing a normative theory what the world would look like.

## **2.5 The American Reception of the Institut's First Empirical Publication**

Only Martin Jay's first history of the Institut deals briefly with the American reception of the *Studies on Authority and Family*. According to Jay, the book was not well received by American sociologists and psychologists. Psychology was dominated by Gestalt theories, which rejected the value of psychoanalysis. Sociological departments opposed the results of the studies, because they were grounded in Marxist theory.<sup>91</sup> These ideas are expressed in a review in *Social Research* by Hans Speier, who spoke extremely negative about the use of psychoanalysis in the Institut's research:

*The reviewer has been doubtful as the value of Freudian psychology for an analysis of social phenomena. He must confess that the performance of Erich Fromm has not removed these doubts.*<sup>92</sup>

In combination with the fact that the volume was published in German, and only brief summaries in French and English were added, Jay concludes that the book was not well received in the United States.

However, this reaction is not representative for the general reception of the *Studies on Authority and Family*. Other reviewers were greatly intrigued by the use of psychoanalysis in



the investigation of social phenomena. For example, John Dollard's review in *American Sociological Review* expressed great interest in the Institut's research program.

*This brilliant analysis by Fromm sets the stage for a development of a characterology which actually relates social institutions to individual behavior and offers an excellent example of the type of collaborative work which is possible in such an institute as that which produced this book.*<sup>93</sup>

According to Dollard, psychoanalysis opens a new path in the analysis of individuals and social institutions, because they were previously only investigated separately. The application of psychoanalysis in sociology enables to start research on the relation between the two. Leonard Cottrell Jr., the later president of the American Sociological Association also states that social research could benefit from cooperation with psychoanalysis.<sup>94</sup> Thus, while Speier explicitly rejected that sociology could benefit from integration with psychoanalysis, other reviewers considered it an excellent opportunity to open a fruitful new research area within sociology.

Besides the broader American reception of the book, the question rises how the book was received by the sociological department at Columbia University. Unfortunately, neither specific letters from Lynd and MacIver to Horkheimer about these subjects, nor any specific statements about the quality of the book by any member of Columbia University can be found. However, the results presented in the book correspond with the promises the Institut made in its negotiations with Lynd and MacIver. Therefore, it is to be expected that they were satisfied with the Institut's research. It had integrated quantitative sociology in their research, but distinguished itself from the other American sociological schools. The use of psychoanalysis in their research gave the Columbia sociological department a distinct character, and held the promise that it could become influential in the future. After the publication of the *Studies on Authority and Family*, no such extensive empirical research was conducted though. The focus on empirical research in the period 1931-1936 shifted to a focus on philosophical research, mainly because Horkheimer became increasingly interested in philosophy. His idea that only an interdisciplinary sociology was able to analyze the problems in society was replaced with the idea that using philosophical theory was sufficient to achieve this goal.

## Chapter III: A Return to Philosophy?

### 3.1 Horkheimer, Adorno and Financial Trouble

Despite the fact that in 1936 the *Studies on Authority and Family* were published and Horkheimer's call for an interdisciplinary approach in social research was realized for the first time, Horkheimer got renewed interest into his earlier ideal: social philosophy. Instead of continuing the research on authority in American families, as was promised in the *Studies on Authority and Family*, Horkheimer preferred to leave this kind of research to the other members of the Institut. In 1938, Horkheimer's wanted to move as quickly as possible to the American west coast, to a climate that fitted his weak health better than the climate in New York did.<sup>95</sup> When Horkheimer was in Los Angeles, Pollock could replace him as a director in New York and Horkheimer's tasks were reduced to consulting in methodological and philosophical matters and the organization of seminars. This should enable Horkheimer to focus on his main strength: writing theoretical philosophy. In the meantime, Pollock was asked to manage the empirical research of the other members of the Institut such as Frank Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer.<sup>ii</sup>

At the time Horkheimer wanted to move to the west coast, the Institut's financial situation worsened. The economic depression in the United States and some bad stock investments had limited the Institut's financial resources. As a consequence, the number of studies that could be conducted greatly decreased. Previously, the Institut's financial resources were bottomless, and its members were able to live comfortable and start every study they wanted as long as these were approved by Horkheimer. This situation changed drastically after 1937, and Horkheimer had to cut some of the member's salaries in order to preserve the future of the Institut.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, Horkheimer's dream to work on his philosophical writings in California could not be realized when the Institut's financial situation was in trouble. Horkheimer's income fully depended on the finances of the Institut which should also cover his move to Los Angeles. The financial crisis at the Institut thus prevented Horkheimer from moving.

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<sup>ii</sup> The next chapter will deal with the Institut's empirical research conducted after the publication of the *Studies on Authority and Family*.

On top of this, this philosophical work should be conducted in cooperation with Theodor Adorno, one of the few people Horkheimer considered capable to cooperate on this project. Adorno had only contributed once to the *Journal for Social Research* in 1933, and had no part in the theoretical development of the Institut in the 1930s. However, Horkheimer was impressed by Adorno's writings he knew from his period in Frankfurt. In a letter to Adorno in 1934, Horkheimer had already expressed his desire for a closer cooperation between the Institut and Adorno. He stated that '*unless you have changed greatly, you are still one of the very few people from whom the Institute, and the special theoretical tasks it is trying to undertake, can expect anything intellectually.*'<sup>97</sup> While the members of the Institut almost immediately went to Geneva and afterwards to the United States, Adorno was less scared of the danger of the Nazi regime and decided to stay in Europe. It took until 1938 for Adorno to come to the USA and to become a part of the Institut.

In 1938, Horkheimer and Adorno had the first opportunity to take their philosophical cooperation seriously. To answer the question why Horkheimer specifically wanted to work with Adorno, it is needed to take a closer look at the philosophy he wanted to develop. Moreover, Adorno's early work that brought Horkheimer to the conclusion that he was indispensable for the completion of his dialectics project has to be discussed. Martin Jay suggests that this philosophical work marks an important shift in the works of the Institut.<sup>98</sup> Previously, the members of the Institut analyzed the history of society in terms of class conflicts, but with the arrival of Adorno, this Marxist emphasis was replaced by the view that society should be interpreted in terms of a fundamental conflict between man and nature. The fact that Adorno's work was less Marxist orientated fitted Horkheimer's interpretation of society better than the ideas of the other members of the Institut did. However, Horkheimer and Adorno did not fully drop their Marxist convictions. The relation between economic conditions and ideology fundamental in Marxist thought was still prominent in Horkheimer's and Adorno's works.

Contrary to Horkheimer, Adorno was not initially interested in general social theory, but was fascinated by the way art and society interacted. In 1931, Adorno habilitated under the supervision of Paul Tillich with a study called *The Construction of the Aesthetic in Kierkegaard*. Tillich and Horkheimer, who was a professor in social philosophy and director of the Institut at the time, were his examiners and decided to grant Adorno his habilitation. Adorno's dissertation was a critique of Kierkegaard's aesthetics. In this study, Adorno argued that Kierkegaard neglected the dialectics aspects of aesthetics. Kierkegaard stated that

aesthetics was the equivalent of sexual enjoyment, and argued that its central aim was to dream about a better place. Since dreaming prevented individuals from seeking improvements in their real lives, aesthetic manifestations hindered the improvement of society. Adorno denied the truth of this statement because he believed that aesthetic experiences were always also material experiences.<sup>99</sup> The observer was not just enjoying a pleasant experience, but was also experiencing the material and historical circumstances in which the aesthetic object was constructed. These circumstances reveal that an aesthetic object has also a profound ethical dimension; it forces the observer to think how this dream about a better place can actually be realized.

Adorno's treatment of aesthetics enabled him to integrate aesthetics into social theory. It was this aspect of Adorno's thinking that had attracted Horkheimer. He believed that aesthetic manifestations were indeed an important aspect of society and were able to influence its moral standards. Not only economy was of influence on the ideology of the masses, culture was also an important factor in the shaping of ideologies. The other reason for Horkheimer's interest in working with Adorno was that the only member of the Institut that could be of assistance in theoretical matters to Horkheimer in the United States was Erich Fromm. Horkheimer was in need of a new theoretical philosopher with whom he could discuss the theoretical program of the Institut and Adorno seemed capable for this function.<sup>100</sup> However, when Adorno came to the United States in 1938, it was still unclear what the cooperation between Horkheimer and Adorno would look like. They had not yet developed a way to combine Horkheimer's merger between social theory and empirical research with Adorno's application of aesthetic theory on society.

### **3.2 Conflicts**

The bad financial state of the Institut not only prevented Horkheimer from moving to California, but also asked for an increasing amount of attention to managerial issues. Adorno's income was granted by the Rockefeller foundation, but there were still members of the Institut whose salaries had to be cut. Moreover, Horkheimer also wanted that the Institut continued its empirical research. The Institut wanted to become more visible within American academic circles, which made it impossible to cut off this type of research and keep on offering the same salaries. Horkheimer and Pollock faced the task to both provide for the financial needs of their colleagues and to find money that enabled the continuation of their

empirical research. Considering that Horkheimer rather went to California to work on his theoretical research, it is easy to imagine that conflicts arose easily in this situation. In the end, Horkheimer prioritized his philosophical project over empirical research, but he was forced to find a way to combine those.<sup>101</sup>

The biggest conflict culminated into Erich Fromm's break with the Institut. This break was triggered by Pollock's and Horkheimer's refusal to pay Fromm's salaries in 1939. Contrary to the other members of the Institut, Fromm was also a practicing psychoanalyst, and was financially independent from the Institut.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, Horkheimer and Pollock were under the impression that Fromm's financial needs were already taken care of, and that it was sufficient to cover the costs of his empirical research. Fromm was astonished by this sudden and in his eyes unfair cut in his financial resources. He decided to leave the Institut and continued his studies apart from the Institut. The Institut's financial trouble had forced it to break with its most experienced empirical researcher, who had greatly influenced its theoretical foundations.

The break between Fromm and the Institut was not purely financial though. Horkheimer's decision to cut Fromm's salaries was the final trigger in an earlier conflict between Fromm and Horkheimer about the role of the psychoanalyst in Freudian therapy and the practical application of psychoanalytical theory. Moreover, Adorno's arrival in the United States in 1938 intensified this conflict since he was highly critical of Fromm on both a personal and an intellectual level. In a letter to Horkheimer in 1935, Adorno referred to Fromm as a 'professional Jew' who got along well with too many people, which indicates that Adorno and Fromm did not get along well on a personal level.<sup>103</sup> Since Horkheimer preferred to work on a philosophical project with Adorno, his problems with Fromm intensified with the arrival of Adorno.

Their personal and financial disagreements could be overcome if Horkheimer and Fromm respected each other's work, even if their theories were differing. However, Fromm's and Horkheimer's theoretical disputes were fundamental to such an extent that they touched upon their ideological differences. To understand the nature of these conflicts, Neill McLaughlin suggests starting to look at the different status of psychoanalysis in their theories.<sup>104</sup> As a practicing psychoanalyst, Fromm was convinced that his sessions could indeed help a patient to get a healthy mental life. Horkheimer was less interested in the clinical aspects of psychoanalysis, and saw psychoanalysis primarily as a social theory. Already in *Dawn*, his collection of aphorisms written between 1926 and 1933, he expressed

his fear that psychoanalysis could easily help creating a uniform society when curing patients was its primary goal.<sup>105</sup> According to Horkheimer, psychoanalytical practice was necessarily biased by a bourgeois mentality. It cannot be used as an instrument in the overcoming of class struggle and the call for the need for a socialist society. The practical use of psychoanalysis brings the risk that eventually everyone would conform to a bourgeois mentality. Horkheimer seriously doubted that psychoanalysts increased the mental health of their patients when they were learned how to conform to a given society.

In the United States, Fromm started working with Karen Horney, another German psychoanalyst in exile. Both of them were primarily concerned with the individual health of their patients, and were less interested in the idea that neurotic patients were potential revolutionaries able to change the structure society. Horney's psychoanalytical theory can best be seen as a reaction on Freud's biological theory of female behavior. According to Freud, penis envy was fundamental in the understanding female of neurotic behavior. Horney argued against this idea and stated that female neurotic behavior was shaped by the patriarchal organization of social institutions. Female neurotics were experiencing mental illnesses because their instinctual structure contradicted with the way institutions were organized. Contrary to Freud, who considered patriarchal institutions the consequence of female penis envy, Horney argued that the conflict with these institutions was the cause of penis envy resulting in female neurotic behavior.<sup>106</sup> She argued that a complete understanding of this conflict enabled her to understand how female behavior was defined and eventually how it could be reshaped.

Fromm's article *On the Feeling of Impotence* in the 1937 issue of the *Journal for Social Research* shared many of Horney's ideas. Fromm argued that feelings of impotence and neurotic behavior in general are due to the contradiction between individuals and social institutions. Contrary to Horney, Fromm does not treat impotence and neurotic behavior as pathologies though.<sup>107</sup> The goal of Fromm's psychoanalytical approach was not just to enable his patients to adapt to the organization of society. He singles out a fundamental deficit in the organization of society that not only affects neurotic individuals, but extends to every individual. The remainder of the article explains how society is responsible for the establishment of feelings of impotence in every individual. He traces the foundations of these feelings back to early childhood experiences. He argued that this hypothesis is straightforwardly confirmed '*when we look at the situation of children in bourgeois families.*

*The relation between children and adults is characterized by the fact that in the end, the child is not taken seriously.*<sup>108</sup>

Not only are feelings of impotence caused by the structure of the family, they are also caused by the place of the adult in modern society. Individual choices and ideological preferences are always determined by socio-economic circumstances.<sup>109</sup> A possible psychoanalytic cure for neurotic patients could be to embrace their lack of choice. This suggests that Horkheimer's criticism is justified; Fromm's patients are cured when they conform to the structure of bourgeois capitalist society. Revolutionaries were doomed to be forever unhappy if they refused to embrace the bourgeois values. The change of individual behavior is subordinate to the structure of society. On the contrary, Horkheimer and Adorno were convinced that revolutionaries were able to alter the structure of society. Revolutionaries were the healthy inhabitants of society, rather than its pathologies. As orthodox Freudians, they believed that the revolutionary potential of individuals was biologically determined, instead of mediated by society. Contrary to Fromm, they were able to explain why individuals were calling for the establishment of a socialist regime.

A quick look at Fromm's earlier ideas shows that this criticism is somewhat unfair though. In a 1931 seminar Fromm had already stated that libidinal needs and the structure of society could be in conflict, which could explain the desire for a revolution. *'There will be revolution on an economically, socially and psychologically determined point. This will happen when the libidinal needs do not conform to the socio-economic circumstances.'*<sup>110</sup> Adorno's and Horkheimer's criticism applied to Horney's theory, but neglected Fromm's idea that individuals who remained unable to adapt to the values of society would eventually call for a revolution. However, Fromm never explained this nuance in his theory properly and simply denied Adorno's authority as a psychoanalytical expert. This shows that the causes for the break between the Institut and its empirical forerunner were not purely financial. Horkheimer and Adorno had a fundamental dispute with Fromm about the nature of psychoanalytic theories of society. Thus, a combination of a theoretical conflict and the Institut's financial trouble made Horkheimer to get rid of its only empirical specialist.

### **3.3 Dialectics in Los Angeles: a Prelude**

In April 1941, three years later than originally planned, Horkheimer finally realized his dream and moved to California with Adorno. The other members of the Institut remained

in New York and to continue the Institut's empirical research at Columbia University. Horkheimer was still engaged in the management of the daily business of the Institut's branch in New York, but he and Adorno managed to write several philosophical pieces in Los Angeles. The most well-known piece was their cooperative work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which was published in 1944 and re-published in 1947. The other important philosophical project in the 1940s was Horkheimer's *The Eclipse of Reason*, Horkheimer's attempt to express the ideas in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* more clearly in order to reach a broader public. This indicates that Horkheimer's idea to start working with Adorno in California culminated into a successful philosophical cooperation.

In Los Angeles, Horkheimer lived among lots of other German exiles. The same circles of German intellectuals from Berlin and Frankfurt had moved almost intact to the same places.<sup>111</sup> Thomas Mann (Horkheimer's direct neighbor), Bertolt Brecht and Arnold Schönberg were also living in Pacific Palisades, a little town between Los Angeles and the North Pacific coast. Not only moved Horkheimer and Adorno to a new environment with the stimulating presence of their fellow exiles, they also received the last manuscripts of their former associate Walter Benjamin. On September 26, 1940, Walter Benjamin had committed suicide when he was arrested by the German border police during his attempt to flee from France to Germany. A few months later, Hannah Arendt managed to cross the border the same way Benjamin had tried, and passed Benjamin's latest manuscripts to Adorno. Horkheimer and Adorno agreed that this manuscript called *Theses on the Philosophy of History* essentially captured Benjamin's philosophical intentions. Especially Horkheimer expressed enormous enthusiasm for this work and believed that it could be used as a theoretical axiom for their philosophical project.

In his *Theses*, Benjamin distinguished between two different approaches in history: historical materialism and historicism. According to Benjamin, historicism claims to describe the past objectively, but fails to acknowledge that history is incapable to capture all past events. Historical materialism shows the failure of historicism and offers an improved historical theory.<sup>112</sup> Benjamin argues that historicists sympathize too much with the eventual victors of the past. Historical materialists are the only ones able to understand that the past is not just an enumeration of heroic individuals, but acknowledges that the masses are also part of every event. However, the efforts of the masses and the defeated are ignored by the victors. According to Benjamin, the apparent civilized order praised by its victors necessarily contains barbaric elements because it ignores the importance of other historical actors.<sup>113</sup>



The rise of Fascism in Germany should also be seen in this light. Fascism interprets itself as the necessary consequence of all earlier historical developments. Fascists are able to construct their history in this way, because they neglect all events that deviate from the path apparently leading to the establishment of a Fascist regime. In his 8<sup>th</sup> philosophical thesis, Benjamin states that historical materialism can play an important role in tackling Fascism and other future totalitarian systems because it shows the plurality of history. For example, it points out that Fascism is just the apparent consequence of a set of selected historical events, instead of being determined by the general course of history.

*... We shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism. One reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of the progress its opponents treat it as a historical norm. The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are “still” possible in twentieth century is **not** philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge – unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable.*<sup>114</sup>

The task of historical materialism is showing that the Fascist view of history is untenable and that Fascism is not the necessary consequence of earlier historical developments. It should point out that the Fascists excluded important historical factors to construct their own account of history. In Benjamin's view, the true historian admits that history is a dialectic between civilization and barbarism. He acknowledges that barbarism is a necessary part of every society.

When Adorno joined Horkheimer in Los Angeles in November 1941, he had written two articles which elaborated further on Benjamin's dialectic between civilization and barbarism. These two articles called *Spengler Today* and *Veblen's Attack on Culture* appeared both in journal of the Institut in 1941. In *Spengler Today*, Adorno discusses what still can be learned from Oswald Spengler's book *The Decline of the West* published in two volumes between 1918 and 1923. Spengler was a philosopher of history arguing that dominant civilizations could only last for a certain period, and that the dominant Western civilization was currently at the end of its period of domination. He stated that history showed continuous processes of the rise and decay of dominant civilizations. Approximately every 1000 years, the dominant civilization had lost its authority and was replaced by new ones.<sup>115</sup> According to

Adorno, Spengler's arguments for the near decay of Western civilization still applied. The increase of totalitarian and barbaric elements in Western culture anticipated its decline. Adorno argued that Western manifestations of culture as freedom of press and art started to cage the masses, instead of freeing them.<sup>116</sup>

Spengler had argued that Western cultural mechanisms oppressed its inhabitants in the same way armies previously did. Journalists hid their desired goals and pretended to work under the flag of freedom. These seemingly enlightened cultural manifestations are as barbaric as the violence used by earlier leaders to oppress the masses. History has shown that *'the civilizations that came and gone inherently lacked an equilibrium because they have built upon the injustice of exploitation.'*<sup>117</sup> If the decay of Western civilization has to be avoided, the exploitation of Western civilians has to stop. However, when barbarism becomes an increasingly important element of Western culture, it is impossible to stop this process and eventually Western civilization will cease to exist. Adorno agrees with Spengler's analysis and states that the rise of Hitler's fascist regime is caused by the fact that fascist propaganda is seen as a Western cultural treasure, instead of being identified as a barbaric aspect of Western civilization.

*... We should become aware of the element of barbarism in culture itself. Only the considerations that challenge the idea of culture no less than they challenge the reality of barbarism have a chance to survive Spengler's verdict.*<sup>118</sup>

Adorno agrees with both Spengler and Benjamin that culture necessarily contains barbaric elements, and believes that it is essential to keep protesting against traces of barbarism in culture in order to establish a truly democratic society. Interestingly, Adorno's agreement with Spengler contradicts with Benjamin's idea that only historical materialism can function as a weapon against barbarism. Spengler's argument that the decay of Western civilization was a necessary historical process that resembles the fall of earlier civilizations is in plain contradiction with Benjamin's 8<sup>th</sup> thesis. According to Benjamin, Fascism became successful because its opponents treated it as the historical norm. Spengler and Adorno consider Fascism the potential last phase of Western civilization. Contrary to Benjamin, they treat Fascism as a historical norm since they interpret it in light of the development of earlier civilizations.

Adorno embraces Benjamin's dialectic between culture and barbarism, but is less convinced that historical materialism can function as a weapon against Hitler's Fascist regime.

In *Veblen's Attack on Culture*, Adorno argues again that barbarism is a necessary part of every cultural manifestation. Thorstein Veblen was a famous Norwegian-American economist and sociologist well-known for his criticism of capitalist society. In his book *Theory of the Leisure Class*, Veblen had argued that every cultural manifestation was essentially barbaric, and was designed to oppress individuals. All cultural manifestations from sports to archaic castles are signs of oppression; every cultural element is inherently barbaric and should be eliminated. While Adorno was also stressing the dialectical relation between culture and barbarism, he disagreed with Veblen's idea that every cultural form should be rejected. According to Adorno, Veblen's criticism '*follows a traditional enlightened pattern arguing that religion is a hoax of the clergy.*'<sup>119</sup> Adorno trusted the moral function of cultural manifestations and believed that these were not necessarily aiming for the oppression of the masses. Propagandistic forms of art used by the Fascists have to be aggressively contested, but Adorno still believed that not all artistic manifestations were fundamentally propagandistic.<sup>120</sup>

Adorno's articles in the 1941 issue of *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* were in line with Benjamin's theses since they both acknowledge the dialectical relation between culture and civilization. Moreover, Adorno agrees with Benjamin's idea that barbarism must be fought in order to come to a culture in which barbarism is absent. However, while Benjamin singles out historical materialism as the crucial weapon against barbarism in culture, Adorno only states that the barbaric aspects of culture have to be attacked. He is unsure whether historical materialism should be the fundament of these attacks. In Horkheimer's article *The End of Reason* in the same issue, he adopts the same stance towards historical materialism. Contrary to Adorno, he focuses less on the barbaric aspects of culture, but stresses that reason tends to fade away in civilizations that strive for a rational order. According to Horkheimer, even Fascist societies are thoroughly rationalistic since they understand reason purely in instrumental terms.

*When even the dictators of today appeal to reason they mean that they possess the most tanks. They were rational enough to build them; others should be rational enough to yield to them. Within the range of Fascism, to defy such*

*reason is the cardinal crime. As close as the bond between reason and efficiency is here revealed to be, in reality so has it always been.*<sup>121</sup>

In Fascism, reason manifests itself as barbarism and undermines its own ideals of freedom, justice and truth when it is equated with efficiency. Reason causes total domination in the Fascist regime, and is no longer able to realize its ideals. In the Fascist society *'the progress of reason that leads to its self-destruction has come to an end; there is nothing left but barbarism or freedom.'*<sup>122</sup> However, the barbarism of Fascist regimes is not a necessary consequence of the progress of reason. Horkheimer believes that reason is possible to realize its own potential and is able to establish freedom. He argues that if barbarism is fought with the right weapons, reason can fulfill its promise of freedom. Similar to Adorno's idea that culture can improve society when its barbaric aspects are properly fought, Horkheimer believes in the possibility of realizing a society that is both rational and free. At the start of the Second World War, the writings by Horkheimer and Adorno were still optimistic about successful protests against barbarism; they just were unsure which weapon had to be used in battle!

The dialectic relation between culture and barbarism in Adorno's work and between barbarism and reason in Horkheimer's can obviously not only be traced back to Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Already in 1934, Horkheimer had stated that he wanted to write a dialectic analysis of society, and his and Adorno's writings were influenced by Hegel's dialectical thought from the beginning. In Adorno's early critique on Kierkegaard, he was already acquainted with a dialectical way of reasoning. Also more recent, in Horkheimer's 1940 article *The Social Function of Philosophy*, Horkheimer argued that philosophy has to be dialectical when it aims to discuss society critically. Moreover, Horkheimer argues that *'a dialectical philosophy, for example, in keeping with its principles, will tend to extract the relative truths of the individual points of view and introduce them in its own comprehensive theory.'*<sup>123</sup> While Horkheimer's use of 'for example' suggests that other forms of philosophy can, in principle, obtain the same goal, he states that other forms of philosophy such as pragmatism or positivism do not aim to integrate the arguments of other philosophies in their own theories. Later on, Horkheimer makes clear that when philosophy has to play a part in society it has indeed to be dialectical.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, both Horkheimer and Adorno were convinced that a comprehensive theory of society should necessarily invoke a dialectical way of reasoning. Only when a critical

philosophy is developed, reason can be brought back to the world and improve the organization of society. It is the most important task of the philosopher *'to struggle, lest mankind becomes completely disheartened by the frightful happenings of the present, lest man's belief in a worthy, peaceful and happy direction of society perishes from the earth.'*<sup>125</sup> In this essay, critical philosophy appears as the only way to protest against barbaric aspects of society, and is the only mechanism able to bring reason and freedom back into society. Before Benjamin had written his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, both Horkheimer and Adorno were convinced that dialectical philosophy should be used to protest against the organization of society. The main influence of Benjamin's argument on Horkheimer's and Adorno's philosophy was his idea that culture, and therefore philosophy itself is inherently barbaric. They learned from Benjamin that it was insufficient to use philosophy as a critique on barbarism, but should acknowledge that also philosophy contains elements of barbarism and can be used to legitimize a Fascist social order.

### **3.4 The *Dialectic of Enlightenment***

In order to solve the Institut's financial problems, Horkheimer tried to convince several American institutes to finance the Institut's research. While Horkheimer and Adorno kept working on their dialectics projects in Los Angeles, the other members of the Institut stayed in New York and wrote proposals to attract American funders. In 1943, the American Jewish Committee decided to grant one of these proposals that focused on anti-Semitism.<sup>126</sup> In an oration for the American Jewish Committee, Horkheimer had outlined what kind of activities they could expect from the Institut's members. According to Horkheimer the activities of the New York branch of the Institut which will be discussed in the next chapter, would conduct empirical investigations into the socio-economic causes of anti-Semitism. They were investigating whether totalitarian anti-Semitism was a special form of anti-Semitism, and whether the Nazi regime was using this typical form in both their actions and propaganda.<sup>127</sup>

In the meantime, Horkheimer and Adorno focused on the theoretical aspects of anti-Semitism in Los Angeles. According to Horkheimer they would devote their time to *'transforming the writings of philosophers and theologians concerning irrational opposition to civilization into empirically verifiable hypotheses and enlarge their understanding with psychological sessions of specific social groups.'* In order to get an even deeper understanding

of anti-Semitism, they would also conduct *'textual analysis of Anti-Semitic writings of autobiographies of people that turned Anti-Semite.'*<sup>128</sup> Indeed, one of the chapters of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* gave a critical analysis of anti-Semitism. However, it was not the initial plan to include the section of anti-Semitism in the book. Contrary to the other parts of the book, the chapter on anti-Semitism was written in cooperation with the other members of the Institut working in New York, which indicates that it was initially not a part of the dialectics project.<sup>129</sup>

However, anti-Semitism did play an important role in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. While the book is no straightforward investigation into the nature of anti-Semitism, it was still an important problem for Horkheimer and Adorno. The reception of the book by the New Left in the 1960s focused on the critique of mass culture, but for Adorno and Horkheimer this theme was connected with their discussion of anti-Semitism.<sup>130</sup> They stated that anti-Semitism cannot be discussed independently, but is a byproduct of the societal structure. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, it is necessary to analyze society in general to understand the fundamentals of anti-Semitic thought. The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was an attempt to investigate society as a whole, and tries to show how anti-Semitism and mass culture are function of the general organization of society.

In the preface Horkheimer and Adorno state that the highly ambitious task of the book was *'nothing less than to explain why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking in a new kind of barbarism.'*<sup>131</sup> While the book became immensely popular in the late 1960s and the 1970s, its reception in the 1940s was relatively marginal. Even Marcuse and Kirchheimer were baffled by the unreadability of the book, and had nothing else to say about the book but expressing their gratitude for receiving it.<sup>132</sup> This reaction to Horkheimer's and Adorno's attempt to explain why humanity was sinking into barbarism was symptomatic for its reception in the 1940s. It seems that American intellectuals failed to understand the book's message and considered it just another product of continental philosophy. Considering that a substantial part of the book consists of notes taken by Adorno's wife during discussions between Adorno and Horkheimer, it is easy to imagine that the book was not particularly attractive to the American public.<sup>133</sup> In a 1949 review of the book, Bayard Q. Morgan, a professor in German literature, stated that he failed to understand why the book was even published. He stated that the writers of the book should have waited until they were able to deliver a finished product. While he recognizes that *'there are so many clear insights and*

*sound judgments present in the book*, he regrets *'the unlikelihood that it will even pass the threshold of consciousness of those who might most profit by its message.'*<sup>134</sup>

Thus, shortly after the appearance of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, nobody except Horkheimer and Adorno was able to grasp the meaning of their analysis of their contemporary society. Even though this work was not an essential part of the Institut's external image in the 1940s, it cannot be neglected for two reasons. Firstly, while initially largely ignored by the American public, the dialectics project was the most important activity of both Horkheimer and Adorno and is the most important source to their philosophical positions in the 1940s. Secondly, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is currently considered one of the key publications of the Institut, because of its immense popularity in New Left circles in the 1960s and 1970s. This is especially interesting since Horkheimer and Adorno were aware that it was likely that their contemporaries would be unable to grasp their analysis. According to them, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was a message in a bottle. They considered it as a message in a bottle of which they hoped that it would be found back and understood in later decades.

The central theme of the book can be compared with Horkheimer's earlier analysis in *The End of Reason*. While the aim of Enlightenment was to free individuals and enables them to master nature, it is self-destructive by its own logic. Instead that mastery over nature caused freedom, its consequence was that individuals could be oppressed even more effectively.<sup>135</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno opposed the idea that society would benefit from the possibility of more effective domination. In the first section of the book called *The Concept of Enlightenment*, they intent to *'prepare a positive concept of Enlightenment which liberates it from its entanglement in blind domination.'*<sup>136</sup> This new concept of Enlightenment acknowledges that it stands in a dialectical relation with myth and that this relation is responsible for the dominating forces in society. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, myth is already Enlightenment and Enlightenment is reverting towards myth. They try to prove the existence of this dialectical relation in two excurses. Firstly, they try to prove that in Homer's *Odyssey*, one of the earliest documents of Western civilization, enlightened elements were already present. Moreover, they argue that present Western civilization still contains barbaric elements. The second excursus aims to prove that the texts by Kant, De Sade and Nietzsche anticipated that Enlightened ideas can lead to the blind domination of the subject, and were already aware that Enlightened ideal of reason would not be able to realize individual freedom.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the primary aim of Enlightenment was to liberate individuals from their fear of nature. Previously, individuals were constructing myths about the unknown aspects of nature which they were frightened about. Enlightenment provided another way to deal with this fear and aimed to eliminate this fear through a scientific investigation of all aspects of nature.<sup>137</sup> However, instead of liberating individuals from mythical fear, the logic of enlightened thinking caused to the contrary and created an intensified form of mythical fear. Its aim of mastering nature is a radicalization of the earlier mythical fear, and is just a difference method to deal with the natural forces. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that this mythical aim of mastering nature present in the Enlightenment is the cause of its culmination into a totalitarian ideology. Both socialism and bourgeois philosophies fail to understand the true meaning of freedom, and confuses it too often with self-preservation. As a consequence of this confusion, Enlightenment will eventually evolve into totalitarianism.<sup>138</sup>

Just as in Horkheimer's earlier analysis of Fascism in *The End of Reason*, it is argued that rationality often follows the logic of self-preservation instead of the logic of freedom. In Fascism, this rationality prescribes that in order to guarantee for self-preservation, it is necessary to build an army strong enough to defend the country from outer danger. As a consequence, Enlightenment eventually oppresses individuals instead of providing freedom of thought. When individuals want to preserve their own lives, they have to obey to the leaders of this army and can no longer criticize them in freedom without bringing their lives in danger. In the end, Enlightenment fails to provide a maximal amount of individual freedom, but '*is turning itself into an outright deception of the masses.*'<sup>139</sup>

The first chapter of the book and the two excurses that function as a proof for its thesis are an attempt to develop a positive concept of Enlightenment. The consequence of their interpretation of Enlightenment is that it necessarily destructs itself and will sink into barbarism again. In their introduction Horkheimer and Adorno wrote that they aimed to develop '*a positive concept of Enlightenment which liberates it from its entanglement in blind domination.*'<sup>140</sup> However, the concept they develop can hardly be considered positive; Enlightenment sinks into barbarism and there is no way back. In his 1940 article *The Social Function of Philosophy*, Horkheimer argued that critical philosophy could bring reason to the world and deprive civilization of its barbaric aspects. This suggests that in 1940, Horkheimer believed that critical philosophy could help fulfilling the initial promise of Enlightenment. Therefore, it remained possible that freedom of reason could be realized in the end.



The first chapter of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* does not share Horkheimer's earlier optimism though. Horkheimer's and Adorno's definition of Enlightenment is thoroughly pessimistic; it states that barbarism cannot be avoided. The horrors of the Second World War had deprived them of their earlier optimism. A critical philosophy was no longer able to stop the ship from sinking. However, Horkheimer earlier argued that each critique was rooted in history and could therefore never be universal. The fact that the historical circumstances Horkheimer and Adorno were living in forced them to develop a pessimistic vision on Enlightenment does not mean that the same vision applied to every other historical period. In a future period, a critique of the barbaric aspects of Enlightenment can possibly prevent that the masses lose their freedom of reason. Moreover, it will be shown in the next chapter that the empirical research of the Institut in the 1940s aimed to improve the social position of oppressed groups, which indicates that a glimpse of optimism was still present. In a speech given at a conference on December 11, 1943, Horkheimer argued that scientific research was able to provide solutions to societal problems.

*Nobody expects that a serum against a mortal disease can be bound without the application of intensive laboratory work. The search for a therapy against anti-Semitism must be futile unless it is subject to the same scientific standards.*<sup>141</sup>

This corresponds with Horkheimer's and Adorno's idea that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was a message in a bottle, which could only be useful for future generations. Maybe the Institut's empirical research could help creating a society in which future generations are able to use a critical philosophy to deprive society of its barbaric elements. However, it is clear that this will be a long and difficult process. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the transition from a barbarian to a civilized society was not to be expected in the near future.

It took until the late 1960s that the book was picked up by the next generation. At the time the New Left movement found inspiration in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the fourth chapter was considered the most important part of the book. In *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, Horkheimer and Adorno criticize the way culture is exploited as a form of propaganda, and how Enlightenment opened the possibility to use culture in this way. In line with Marcuse's book *The One-Dimensional Man* and his essay *Repressive Tolerance* which were immensely popular among students in the late 1960s and

1970s, Horkheimer's and Adorno's theory stated that cultural manifestations promoted an uncritical understanding of political developments. This theory fitted the idea of the New Left students who believed that the American government was using cultural propaganda to lure individuals into supporting an unnecessary war in Vietnam.

The section on the culture industry aims to show that *'the regression of enlightenment to ideology which is graphically expressed in film and radio. ...The specific content of the ideology is exhausted in the idolization of the existing order and of the power by which the technology is controlled.'*<sup>142</sup> Popular culture is designed to praise the greatness of the existing political order and presents culture in a way that the masses can do nothing else but being in awe of the power of this order. The first step in this process was convincing the masses that entertainment was the highest value of life. Previously, amusement was a side-effect of engaging in cultural manifestations. Culture was designed to examine the organization of society critically, and amusement was just a possible side-effect of it. The culture industry has absolutized this side-effect as the most important part of culture and has reduced aesthetic experiences to low forms of amusement, which are no longer able to encourage a critical discussion of the established social order.<sup>143</sup> Just as Enlightenment had failed to realize individual freedom, it had deprived culture of its critical function.

### **3.5 A Philosophical Theory of Anti-Semitism**

The last chapter of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is the only one specifically addressing the research the Institut did in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee. However, while the empirical research aimed to eliminate anti-Semitic behavior in American society, Horkheimer's and Adorno's theory could not be applied in practice. Their analysis was in line with Horkheimer's earlier comments on anti-Semitism, in his 1939 article *The Jews and Europe* where he stated that *'those who do not wish to speak about capitalism should be silent about fascism.'*<sup>144</sup> Instead of giving practical solutions for anti-Semitism, the chapter fits it into the central theme of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* since Horkheimer and Adorno argue that anti-Semitic tendencies are also a product of the Enlightenment.

Anti-Semitism occurs so frequently since it follows the enlightened ideal of sameness. Traditionally, Jewish people have always been working in upper-class functions, mostly in financial institutions. However, the opportunity for Jews to work in these institutions was never a consequence of their own authority. They were always dependent on the grace of the

rulers who enabled them to work in the monetary sphere. Therefore, the masses singled them out as a different group. The Jews were the people that did not have to engage in physical labor. Just as the intellectuals, Jews are '*spared the sweat of toil and bodily strength.*'<sup>145</sup> The fact that both Jews and intellectuals undermined the ideal of sameness created a great advantage for enlightened rulers. They served as '*a distraction, a cheap means of corruption, a terrorist warning.*'<sup>146</sup> The rulers refer to Jews and intellectuals as the ones undermining the happiness of the masses and distract them from the fact that the authorities are responsible for this lack of happiness. This line of reasoning serves the rulers in two ways. Firstly, they make sure that the masses do not hold the rulers responsible for their unhappiness. Secondly, they deprive both Jews and intellectuals of their critical potential, because the masses no longer consider them trustworthy citizens. Their ideas do not apply to the needs of the masses, because Jews and intellectuals belong to a distinct group. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, this is another argument for their theory that the Enlightenment ideal of mastering nature culminates into the blind domination of the masses.

Previously, anti-Semitism was solely based on these feelings of envy present among the masses. The masses had to go in pain to earn their daily living, and they felt that Jews were in a privileged position and were exploiting the masses to remain in this position.<sup>147</sup> While this kind of anti-Semitism is only concerned with the economic frustrations of the masses, the nationalist anti-Semitism cultivated by the Nazi regime takes another course. It stresses the idea that Jews are racially inferior and must be banished from German society, because they are inferior to the German race. Therefore, they have not earned a place in the German nation. In combination with an appeal to the idea that Jews are a distinct group, this proved to be a successful strategy. Earlier, this distinction was theological: '*The adherents of the religion of the Son hated the supporters of the religion of the Father as one hates those who know better.*'<sup>148</sup> When the Nazi regime came into power and deprived religious institutions of their power, National Socialism replaced Christianity as the ultimate truth. However, they used the same argument to exclude Jews from German society. The people that were previously opposed by the German religious leaders were now oppressed by the German political leaders. The earlier theological argument now became political. The Nazi statement: 'The adherents of National Socialism hated the supporters of the religion of the Father as one hates those who know better.' was such a convincing argument because it resembled the earlier theological logic the masses were already used to.

The last thesis on anti-Semitism was added by Horkheimer to the second publication of the book in 1947. He argues that anti-Semitism can no longer be treated as an autonomous category. The anti-Semitist stereotype of the thieving Jew has become the common pattern of thought: *'In the world of mass communication, stereotypes replace intellectual categories. Judgment is no longer based on a real act of synthesis but on blind subsumption.'*<sup>149</sup> Individuals are no longer able to criticize these stereotypes, because they are brainwashed by the authorities. Stereotypical thinking has become the core of reason. The chapter on anti-Semitism is thus as pessimistic as the rest of the book. Enlightenment has destructed itself, and society has sunk into barbarism. However, after the war Horkheimer had regained a glimmer of hope for the minimization of barbarism. He was not as optimistic as in his earlier essay *The Social Function of Philosophy* in which he stated that philosophy could bring reason back into the world, but the last sentence of the new thesis on anti-Semitism still contains some optimism: *'Enlightenment itself, having mastered itself and assumed its own power, could break to the limits of enlightenment.'*<sup>150</sup>

In sum, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is an attempt to understand why the Nazi regime gained the possibility to rule Germany. In an enlightened world that held individual freedom in high regard, individuals would understand that such the world would not benefit from such a regime. Moreover, also the Nazi regime itself would understand that their ideology undermines the highest value of human life; freedom of reason. The only possible explanation was to acknowledge that Fascism was a consequence of Enlightenment itself. It was not an attack on the traditional Western values, but was caused by them. However, Horkheimer and Adorno were aware that their judgment cannot be extended to other eras. Their book judges a civilization during a terrible war which they viewed with amazement and horror. The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can best be considered a reaction to the terror of the Nazi regime, instead of a pessimistic philosophy about the development of civilization in general.

While Horkheimer wanted to quit the empirical research he conducted in the 1930s, his and Adorno's philosophical work in the 1940s was not as clearly demarcated from it as it is often interpreted. Despite the fact that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was explicitly presented as message in a bottle that could only be of use to future generations, it clearly was an analysis of the condition of the world at the advent and during the Second World War. Just as in the Institut's research under Grünberg's directorship, it was clear that Horkheimer's and Adorno's philosophy was a theory about the real world in some sense, but contrary to the

earlier empirical research of the Institut, they had no clear methodology how to approach it. However, the fundamental difference with Grünberg's Marxist line of argument was that Horkheimer and Adorno had not developed an encompassing normative theory what the world would like in the future. Their criticism applied to reality, but they felt that it was impossible to develop a satisfactory alternative to the horrors they experienced.

### **3.6 The Eclipse of Reason and a Lack of American attention**

Most of Horkheimer's and Adorno's contemporary exiles had difficulties to grasp the meaning of the *Dialectical of Enlightenment*, but were highly positive about Horkheimer's other important publication in the 1940s. Even Paul Lazarsfeld, the empirical sociologist who was wary of philosophical speculation greatly appreciated it. He wrote that the *Eclipse of Reason* 'is written in such a way as to make it understandable to many people and will undoubtedly also influence many readers.'<sup>151</sup> Not only was the book written in a more understandable way than the *Dialectical of Enlightenment* was, it was also published in English. This indicates that Horkheimer hoped to make name in American academia and knew that this was more easily achieved when he would write a popular version of his earlier work in English. Instead of being a message in a bottle, the *Eclipse of Reason* aimed to have an immediate impact on American society.

The reception of the *Eclipse of Reason* failed to meet the expectations of both Horkheimer and the other German exiles though. Already in the early 1950s, the remaining copies of the book were sold at bargain prices at a sale of the American book company Gimbels.<sup>152</sup> The book that should guarantee Horkheimer's American success was sold alongside books about sports and hobbies, and failed to have any impact on American society. Even in the 1960s, it was not picked up by the New Left movement and was not even discussed independently in Martin Jay's first history of the Institut. Horkheimer's attempt to gain influence on American academia had failed dramatically and his major publications in the 1940s were largely ignored by the American public. Horkheimer's attempt to communicate the ideas of the *Dialectical of Enlightenment* to a bigger public by simplifying its language had failed.

As Lazarsfeld's earlier comments indicate, the lack of success of the *Eclipse of Reason* must have been a total surprise for both Horkheimer and his close friends. The book was the outcome of a series of lectures gave at Columbia University in February and March 1944.

These lectures were given in a room that could house up to 60 people, indicating that Horkheimer's philosophical work had finally found a public in the United States. In his lectures, he presented his philosophical theory as a response to the pragmatism of American philosophers as John Dewey and Sydney Hook in order to show its relevance.<sup>153</sup> According to Horkheimer, pragmatism was one of the enlightened philosophies legitimizing the blind domination of the masses.

*... In its instrumental aspect, stressed by pragmatism, its surrender to heteronymous contents is emphasized. Reason has become completely harnessed to the social process. Its operational value, its role in the domination of nature has been made the sole criterion.*<sup>154</sup>

According to Horkheimer, pragmatism has reduced reason to mere instrumentality, and in fact he accused pragmatists that they offered a possibility to legitimize the horrors of the Nazi regime. While it was to be expected that the pragmatists would defend themselves against such accusations, they hardly reacted. It sufficed to state that Horkheimer's definition of pragmatism was at best a caricature. In a review of the book by the philosopher Glenn Negley, we see clearly that Horkheimer's attack on pragmatism was not taken seriously at all.

*I hold no brief for positivism or pragmatism, whatever these may mean to Mr. Horkheimer; but it does to me seem reasonable to expect that arguments for the use of reason be presented with reasonable regard for the analytical products of reason.*<sup>155</sup>

Other American philosophers and pragmatists shared the idea that Horkheimer had made a caricature of pragmatism, and even failed to convincingly criticize this caricatured formulation. Moreover, they were irritated that Horkheimer criticized the instrumentality of pragmatism without giving any alternative for instrumental reason. According to them, Horkheimer was just another continental philosopher moaning about the vulgarization of Western society without proposing an alternative for it. Horkheimer's philosophy was to utopian for his American colleagues who tried to find solutions to the immediate societal problems, while Horkheimer's philosophy had no practical application at all because its relation to reality was not well-defined.

Contrary to the Institut's empirical work in the 1930s and 1940s, Horkheimer's and Adorno's philosophical work failed to get the attention of American academia. Horkheimer's and Adorno's conviction that it was necessary to interpret Enlightenment dialectically to understand the way society was organized met no American support. Americans believed that their approach was neither useful nor very original. The earlier work of the Institut was valued highly by their American colleagues, because it held the promise of an interdisciplinary approach absent in American sociology. It was believed that the combination of psychoanalytical and empirical work would provide useful insight into the nature of immediate societal problems. However, this approach was mainly due to the efforts of Erich Fromm with whom the Institut broke in 1939. On the contrary, Horkheimer and Adorno offered a critique of society grounded in continental philosophy. It was not until the 1960s that their message in a bottle found a public in the radical New Left student movement. Horkheimer had indeed realized his dream of working on his precious dialectics project in the 1940s, but besides himself and Adorno, nobody saw the importance of its result.

## Chapter 4: A Second Wave of Empirical Research

### 4.1 Horkheimer's Sociological Methodology

Considering that Horkheimer published his essay *Traditional and Critical Theory* in the *Journal for Social Research* in 1937, it is to be expected that this article would have encouraged Horkheimer to focus on the mixture of philosophy and empirical science even more intensive. However, he preferred to move to Los Angeles to start working on his theoretical philosophy rather than being actively engaged in empirical research. While Horkheimer was in Los Angeles, Friedrich Pollock and Leo Lowenthal were running the branch of the Institut in New York where empirical researchers such as Franz Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer were still working. Since the task of the Institut's director was to make sure that the researchers shared the same methodology, the question arises how the empirical research conducted in New York related to Horkheimer's dialectics project and his methodological writings in the *Journal for Social Research* in the late 1930s.

In the early 1930s, Horkheimer and Fromm developed a research program for the empirical studies of the Institut. The core of this program was the idea that both history and the present cannot be understood without referring to the individual psychology of the actors. In practice, this meant that empirical research aimed to develop psychoanalytical categories which enabled the researchers at the Institut to understand individual and mass behavior. In this period, the differences between the Institut's methodology and the traditional sociological methodology were not explicitly stressed by either Horkheimer or Fromm. In the 1930s, however, they felt increasingly uncomfortable with the fact that the social sciences were modeled after the methodology of the natural sciences. According to Horkheimer, the positivism of the natural sciences should not become the leading approach in social research. He argued that a positivistic outlook deprived the social sciences of their critical ability. In 1937, a long article on this subject by Horkheimer appeared in the *Journal for Social Research: Traditional and Critical Theory*. In this article, Horkheimer explained how this positivistic approach damaged research in the social sciences and developed an alternative methodology.

In his inaugural speech on 24 January 1931, Horkheimer had outlined a methodology for social research. He argued that the social sciences should get rid of their ideological tendencies in order to avoid dogmatic rigidity and get a better understanding of the social



phenomena. To overcome the earlier dogmatism, a constant interaction between empirical facts and philosophical theories was needed. Social theories should be empirically tested and should be adjusted when they no longer conformed to the empirical data. Previously, social theories aimed to solve societal problems, but the research program sketched in *Traditional and Critical Theory* was less concerned with immediate problem solving. Critical theory's primary task was criticizing the general organization of society. Horkheimer no longer believed in the possibility to improve certain aspects of society, because these cannot be isolated from its general organization.<sup>156</sup>

The task of critical theory was primarily to single out the negative aspects of society, instead of developing a concrete alternative to the present organization. These alternatives were developed in traditional sociology, and Horkheimer argued that all these attempts had failed. Social research should acknowledge the impossibility of developing a universal theory of society; hence it would be a waste of time to make the effort to develop a methodology for such a theory. Traditional theorists had not yet noticed this impossibility. They believed that *'when experience and theory contradict, one of the two has to be adjusted. Either one was observing incorrectly or some of the theoretical principles are false. When confronted with the facts, a theory remains a hypothesis. One must be constantly willing to change it when the facts reveal its weaknesses.'*<sup>157</sup> In traditional theory, the existing social relations are taken for granted and its only purpose is interpreting these relations within the context of the given structure of society.

The fundamental idea of critical theory is that social relations are always historically constructed. The failure of traditional theory is exactly grounded in the fact that it neglects the historical character of the organization of society. Critical theory interprets the history of society and criticizes its organization, instead of giving a correct description of it. However, this does not imply that critical theory sketches utopian panoramas of society that cannot be realized in practice. Critical theory acknowledges the way individuals experience the organization of society. In this aspect, it fundamentally differed from earlier German theories of society in which references to a transcendental notion of society were always present. Contrary to critical theorists, Idealist philosophers were convinced that the metaphysical ideal of the perfect organization of society existed and had a clear idea what the ideal society looked like.

Horkheimer clearly disagrees with these earlier German philosophies. According to him, idealist philosophies *'either become utopian fantasies or are reduced to formalistic sham*

battles.<sup>158</sup> A critical theory of society should be aware of the fact that the present organization could change, but should reject the notion of an ideal organization of society. The combination of these should culminate into to the fundamental task of critical theory; giving an existential judgment of society:

*Broadly formulated, it [critical theory] states that the historically constructed commodity society is the fundament of modern history. It contains the internal and external contradictions of the era and during the years these contradictions are sharpened. After a period of progress, manifested in the development of human power, the emancipation of the individual and the immense increase of human's power over nature, its further development will stop, and humanity will sink into barbarism again.*<sup>159</sup>

Critical theory shows the moral failures the organization of society, instead of giving practical advice on particular situations. It tells which aspects of contemporary society have to change in order to avoid a catastrophe. However, it has to be noted that its existential judgments by no means strives for universality. The existential judgment given above only applies to the current organization of society, and future judgments can differ from and even contradict the above statement.

While it seems that the only task of critical theory is to single out the negative aspects of society and their consequences, Horkheimer argues that it still has one positive task. Firmly grounded in the Marxist tradition, the sole positive purpose of critical theory is the elimination of the class society for the benefit of the future of humanity. Only a critical approach can guarantee for this preservation: *'The conformism of thinking, as if other ways of thinking are impossible, as if thinking is a closed realm within the given society, betrays the nature of thinking itself.'*<sup>160</sup> In the end, critical theory is not only capable of giving existential judgments, but has a task in the preservation of the future of humanity.

In comparison with the sociological methodology in Horkheimer's had outlined in his inaugural speech, the interaction between empirical facts and philosophical theories became less important in critical theory. The earlier methodology had great trust in psychoanalysis as a theory able to investigate the individual psychology of the members of a certain class, but this was no longer the core of the new theory. First and foremost, critical theory should give an existential judgment of society and should not necessarily engage in psychoanalysis.

Moreover, this new research program is less clear in the way one should come to these existential judgments. In the early 1930s, Horkheimer and Fromm argued that an interdisciplinary program of theoretical research in philosophy and history combined with the empirical studies of economics and psychoanalysis could provide for a better understanding of a society and its inhabitants. No such exact recipe for developing social theories was outlined in *Traditional and Critical Theory*.

#### **4.2 Empirical Studies after *Traditional and Critical Theory***

Since Horkheimer gave no clear indication what critical research should exactly look like, its implementation can only be determined by looking at the empirical studies of the members of the Institut after the publication of the essay. Were they indeed using the critical methodology Horkheimer had sketched, and if so what did their existential judgments of society look like and how did they relate to the Institut's earlier empirical projects? From 1937 onwards, the most important contributors to the empirical work of the Institut were Franz Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer. Just as the other members of the Institut they were Jewish exiles from Germany who were happy to have found an appointment in the United States. Earlier, both Neumann and Kirchheimer were active members of the SPD, but after the fall of the Weimar Republic in 1933 they were forced to abandon their political ambitions. Instead of continuing their political careers, they both became political scientists trying to explain how Hitler could gain such enormous support in Germany.

Just as the other members of the Institut, Neumann and Kirchheimer were attracted to Marx' critique of bourgeois society. However, while Horkheimer, Fromm, Adorno and Marcuse were all trained philosophers, Kirchheimer and Neumann graduated in law and later on in political science. Since they both joined the Institut in 1937 and were not acquainted with the use of socio-psychological techniques<sup>161</sup>, it is likely that they considered the program outlined in *Traditional and Critical Theory* representative for the way the Institut's research should be conducted. From this perspective, their job was giving a critique of contemporary society and pointing out which negative aspects of society were responsible for the collapse of civilized society. For example, this meant to point out which aspects of society made it possible that the Nazi regime came into power.

When Neumann was appointed by the Institut, his first tasks were directing the legal business of the Institut and giving a series of lectures at Columbia University on the concept

of the totalitarian state, which Horkheimer had already prepared. It was not until 1939 that his qualities as a political and social scientist were put into practice again when Neumann started his analysis of National Socialism in the book *Behemoth*. Kirchheimer's career at the Institut started the same way as Neumann's. His first task was also not particularly challenging and consisted of the revision of several works of minor importance.<sup>162</sup> They had to perform these kinds of tasks of minor importance, because Horkheimer was initially unimpressed by their knowledge of psychological issues, but Neumann and Kirchheimer were permitted to publish on legal issues in the *Journal for Social Research* at the end of the 1930s. After the Institut's break with Fromm, Horkheimer knew the importance of having experts in empirical research at the Institut in order to satisfy the American quantitative standards.

The first articles by the two new empirical experts appeared in 1939 in the first issue of *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, the English successor of the *Journal for Social Research*. Neumann wrote an article on the history of natural law and its consequences for democracy. Kirchheimer's article was more in line with the subjects the empirical research of the Institut was focusing on; Fascism and National Socialism. As the title *Criminal Law in National Socialist Germany* indicates, the article was a discussion of the Nazi penitentiary system. In the article, Kirchheimer describes how the German National Socialists changed several laws in order to strengthen the authority of the Nazi regime. Kirchheimer's article not just differs from the articles by the other members of the Institut, because its focus on law. The most importance difference is the fact that Kirchheimer made extensive use of the German official statistics. He uses the exact numbers of the amount of convictions and amnesties between 1928 and 1938 as a proof that changes in law were of influence on the number of granted amnesties. The statistics show that while in 1928 the number of amnesties was 139899, this number more than tripled to 437000 under the Nazi Regime. This increase is the consequence of a completely changed treatment of petty criminality.<sup>163</sup> Because every German civilian was needed to defend the country, criminal charges against petty criminals were dropped.

While the laws concerning petty criminality were loosened, the laws dealing with the punishment of political enemies were intensified. The fundament of the German legal order has become what Kirchheimer calls *Reichsgerichtheit*, the idea to 'embrace the punishment of all violations of German interests',<sup>164</sup> became prevalent. This makes clear why the numbers of amnesties in cases of petty criminality increased, because these crimes were not explicitly violating the interests of the German nation. This demonstrates clearly how Kirchheimer's

articles differed from the works of Horkheimer and Adorno. Kirchheimer starts describing how German law is changed by the National Socialists and uses statistics to show how these changes affect the practical legal situation. While Adorno and Horkheimer started from a theoretical point of view, Kirchheimer departed from an analysis of the empirical data.

Even in comparison with the Institut's empirical research in the *Studies on Authority and Family*, Kirchheimer's approach is fundamentally different. Kirchheimer did not use any psychoanalytical explanations, but explains the increase of amnesties purely from a numerical point of view and used the data of the German court as primary evidence. The fact that this research was supported by Horkheimer was caused by his changed conception of the task of a scientific theory. Its primary task was coming to an existential judgment by means of a critical examination of the facts. With this task in mind, it is easy to understand why Kirchheimer's work had attracted the attention of Horkheimer. He ends his empirical analysis of the German legal order with the following statement:

*In effect, it is difficult to see how the goal of improving public morality could be obtained by a State which not only operates at such a low level of satisfaction of needs, but which also rests on a supervision and direction of all spheres of life by an oppressive political organization.*<sup>165</sup>

Even though the Nazis stated that they tried to improve the public morality, this attempt will necessarily fail because the goals of the political organization do not aim to satisfy the needs of the masses. The primary aim of the legal changes is the more effective oppression of the German individuals. In such a society individual freedom ceases to exist. This judgment is in line with the way Horkheimer had described the task of Critical Theory: it should tell that society has to change in order to avoid a catastrophe. This is exactly what Kirchheimer does: he states that German society has to change for the German masses to be free.

In his book *Behemoth*, Franz Neumann uses roughly the same research method to analyze and judge the state of German society under the Nazi regime. In the introduction of the book, Neumann outlines his research approach. He uses only German sources, because his aim is to understand how Germany has evolved from a democracy into a totalitarian state. At the time, other interpretations of National Socialism were focusing on the ideological flaws in the Nazi ideology. However, these interpretations assumed that it was their task to develop an alternative to the Nazi regime. On the contrary, Neumann started from the idea that the Nazi

political system was a given entity and his research aimed to understand the internal dynamics of this system. He *'seeks merely to bring out the structural defects of the system.'*<sup>166</sup> He follows the research approach Horkheimer had outlined in *Traditional and Critical Theory*. Horkheimer stated that when *'a problem arises from the structure of society, both its intention and its objective meaning tell us that it cannot function any better within this structure.'*<sup>167</sup> Neumann follows this idea when he tries to show the defects in the structure of National Socialism and how its individual problems are the consequence of it. In order to understand and criticize the Nazi system, it is necessary to understand its foundations.

According to Neumann, the strength of National Socialism was the lack of a clear political theory. Because it is profoundly irrational, it can use aspects of all different political ideologies to extend its power. Its opportunistic character enables the National Socialists to keep on convincing the masses that they represent the interests of society.<sup>168</sup> This propaganda works even more effective, because it is not mediated by any legal consequences; if one is not susceptible to the propaganda, the Nazi regime has the ability to dominate this individual directly. Its irrational structure allows it to eliminate everyone who is potentially critical of the actions of National Socialism. Because the only goal of the regime is to extend its power, it can legitimately erase all aspects of society that try to stop this extension. Accordingly, it is impossible to find a specific trait that is responsible for the violence of the German regime. *The 'imperialism is inherent of the German monopolistic economy, the one-party system, the army, and the bureaucracy.'*<sup>169</sup> Just as in Kirchheimer's work, the judgment of society has no practical input, but is purely existential. A direct practical solution for the problems and violence of the Nazi regime is impossible, because these are embedded in the structure of its organization. Only a total change in this organization can provide a solution for the oppression of the masses. According to Neumann, the only way to do this is to develop *'a political theory that proves as efficient as National Socialism without sacrificing the liberties of man.'*<sup>170</sup>

Both Neumann and Kirchheimer followed Horkheimer's methodology in the sense that they gave existential judgments of society and were not concerned with the practical application of their analyses. However, their treatment of empirical data greatly differed from the Institut's empirical research in the early 1930s. The earlier research aimed to understand how individual psychology caused one's susceptibility to propaganda, and how it was possible that the masses had elected an authoritarian regime. The works of Neumann and Kirchheimer differed from the Institut's on two important points. Firstly, individual

psychology was no longer the primary object of research. They took it for granted that the Nazi regime was able to dominate the psychology of the masses and investigated what role economic and legal changes played in the structure of National Socialism. Secondly, they gathered their data in a different way. Instead of developing and analyzing questionnaires, Neumann and Kirchheimer collected German official statistics. They wanted to give an explanation of the changes in a certain aspect of society, while the earlier research of the Institut was less concerned with this desk research. Kirchheimer and Neumann collected the already existing data, while the *Studies on Authority and Family* was the outcome of an analysis of the data the Institut had created itself. When Horkheimer constructed a new sociological methodology, the first empirical studies of the Institut analyzed the structure of society and resulted in an existential judgment. Initially, the innovative part of Critical Theory was that it judged society as a whole which was an alternative to positivism that could only be applied to small problems within the structure of a given society.

### **4.3 The Institut in Need of External Funding**

As shown in the previous chapter, the Institut suffered from a financial setback in the late 1930s and had to find new sources of funding to continue their empirical research. The Institut needed to find recognition and funding within American sociology, which forced it to engage in the world of traditional theory Horkheimer had criticized in his earlier essays.<sup>171</sup> In its attempt to find external funding, the proposals of the Institut argued that anti-Semitism was not an exclusively German phenomenon, but was also present among American citizens. Consequently, they express the conviction that the German situation could also happen in American society. The most obvious organizations to turn to were the American Jewish organizations, because their fellow Jews were victims of the German situation. However, it took until March 1943 to convince one of these organizations to invest in the research of the Institut. Finally, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) decided to finance the Institut's research on anti-Semitism for one year.<sup>172</sup> It was only after several years that the Institut's attempts to develop a public image and create an academic network bore its fruits.<sup>iii</sup> Between

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<sup>iii</sup> For a detailed analysis of this period of networking see: Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 214-225.

1937 and 1943, the Institut's finances had prevented them from conducting empirical research, and almost all its time was devoted to the writing of research proposals.

The promotion of these proposals started in the last issue of *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* in 1941. The issue started with an article by Paul Lazarsfeld, a well-known figure in American social science. In the article, he promoted the power of the Institut's critical approach. He tried to show how research on mass communication could be improved with the use of Horkheimer's critical theory, which can be seen as a way to convince communication research centers to start financing the Institut's projects. Critical researchers in mass communication will be able to '*uncover the unintentional (for the most part) and often very subtle ways in which these media contribute to living habits and social attitudes that he considers deplorable.*'<sup>173</sup> Traditional administrative research on mass communication wanted to understand what kinds of radio programs or songs will attract the greatest amount of listeners. However, it was unable to explain why these programs and songs are more popular than other ones. According to Lazarsfeld, only a critical theory of mass communication was capable of investigating these aspects of mass communication.

Besides Lazarsfeld's contribution, the issue also contained a proposal for research on anti-Semitism. It was argued that research on this subject could also greatly benefit from the use of Critical Theory. A fundamental understanding of the problem can only be obtained when anti-Semitism was studied from a critical perspective. Contrary to Lazarsfeld and the empirical work by Kirchheimer and Neumann, the proposal on anti-Semitism stresses the importance of a socio-psychological approach.<sup>174</sup> Similar to the Institut's earlier research in the *Studies on Authority and Family*, the goal of the research on anti-Semitism was developing different character types that are likely to have anti-Semitic behavior. These character traits are often indiscernible in daily life and can only be identified through careful psychological research. According to the Institut, no such thing as the archetypical 'anti-Semite' exists. Research on anti-Semitism has to be '*freed from the erroneous belief that anti-Semitism exists only where it is openly expressed, for it finds nooks even in the hearts of the nobles of humans.*'<sup>175</sup> Only a critical theory of anti-Semitism that invokes socio-psychological explanations is able to understand the fundament of anti-Semitic behavior. In order to combat anti-Semitism effectively, critical theory is a necessary instrument.

Previously, the Institut had not explicitly stressed the practical consequences of their theories. However, when looking for external funding, they tried to convince the American public that Critical Theory has to be a necessary and effective weapon against the spread of



anti-Semitism. It is worthwhile to notice how this focus on practical application differs from both Horkheimer's methodology in *Traditional and Critical Theory* and from Horkheimer's and Adorno's philosophical writings in the 1940s. Firstly, the focus on practical application contradicted with Horkheimer's earlier idea that a critical theory of society should result into an existential judgment. At the moment the Institut had to find external financial sources, it was forced to conform to the standards of traditional theory and to show its practical benefits. Secondly, it differed from the way Horkheimer and Adorno had described the function of their philosophical work. They saw their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* primarily as a message in a bottle; they were hoping that it could be useful for future generations and believed that society in the 1940s was unable to grasp the meaning of their project. However, in order to attract external funding, they had to avoid such notions and needed to stress the immediate impact of their work.

#### **4.4 The Institut and the American Jewish Committee**

In the years before the Institut got its grant from the AJC in 1943 it had asked several American sociologists for help. This cooperation had resulted in a proposal that adapted to the American standards of empirical research. Horkheimer agreed that he and Adorno should research the psychological aspects of anti-Semitism in Los Angeles, while Pollock, MacIver and Lowenthal were responsible for empirical research on the origins and functions of totalitarian societies. However, none of the members of the Institut were trained in empirical sociology. The members that were able to conduct this kind of research such as Fromm, Neumann and Kirchheimer had all left the Institut in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Institut had to establish new contacts with American researchers willing to engage in their study of anti-Semitism. While the previous research of the Institut was conducted in cooperation with Paul Lazarsfeld, Horkheimer's move to Los Angeles forced him to seek new research partners. In Los Angeles, an alternative arose when the works of R. Nevitt-Sanford, Else Frenkel-Brunswik and Daniel J. Levinson (the Berkeley group) came under Horkheimer's attention.<sup>176</sup>

The members of the Berkeley Group were all associated with the Berkeley Institute for Child Welfare, where they had learned sophisticated empirical techniques. Moreover, they were all convinced that psychoanalysis should be an integral part of social research. This offered Horkheimer the possibility to work with a group of academics who agreed with his

theoretical framework and had the knowledge of empirical techniques he lacked. They all shared the assumption that anti-Semitic behavior could only be explained by a combination of internal and external factors. Previous research on anti-Semitism had mainly focused on external explanations. These theories stated that anti-Semitic behavior was the consequence of socio-economic circumstances. Horkheimer and the Berkeley Group believed that these kinds of explanations were insufficient and believed that anti-Semitism was also grounded in individual characterology. This enabled them to construct a model that explained both the underlying structure of anti-Semitic behavior and the susceptibility for anti-Semitic propaganda.<sup>177</sup> The theoretical framework of their research on anti-Semitism thus greatly resembles the empirical research in the *Studies on Authority and Family*. In 1943, the promise to investigate social phenomena from a psychoanalytical perspective could finally be continued.

Not only the theoretical framework, but also the methodology resembled the Institut's earlier empirical research. The most important way to investigate the underlying personality structure of anti-Semitism were their analyses of questionnaires. These questionnaires consisted of a list of anti-Semitic statements which had to be answered on a Likert-scale. Furthermore, they consisted of open questions such as 'What great people, living or dead, do you admire most?' The answers to these questions allowed them to draw provisional conclusions about the respondent's characterology. Up to this point, the research method is exactly the same as used in the Institut's earlier research. Earlier, the analysis of questionnaires was the basis of determining one's personality structure, but an extra element was added in 1943. It was no longer thought that questionnaires were sufficient to get insight in the character of the respondent. In order to get a deeper understanding of anti-Semitism, clinical case-studies were added to the Institut's program.

In these case-studies, participants were interviewed for approximately three hours. They were asked to explain the answers they gave to the open questions in the questionnaires and were invited to elaborate on their personal background. Furthermore, they were asked to interpret ink dots that resembled real people in order to investigate the imagination of the participant. According to Horkheimer, these interviews deepened their insight into the nature of anti-Semitism, because they showed that anti-Semitism was not an independent phenomenon, but a symptom of a personality having a general hostility against.<sup>178</sup> This resembles the Institut's interpretation of its earlier results. Instead of treating authority

relations in families or anti-Semitism as independent phenomena, they thought that these were embedded in the individual's general personality structure.

Horkheimer knew that a year of funding was insufficient to give a satisfactory explanation of anti-Semitic behavior. The Institut's earlier empirical data was gathered in a period of 4 years and at the time they even had a special branch in Geneva that was particularly concerned with the analysis of empirical data. Therefore, it was necessary to convince the AJC to extend their financial support. Horkheimer used the same strategy that had resulted in getting the AJC grant in the first place and stressed the practical applicability of the Institut's theory of anti-Semitism. Earlier, he argued that the Institut's theory could help eliminate the anti-Semitic tendencies in American society. However, when Horkheimer became convinced that anti-Semitism was not an isolated phenomenon, but a symptom of anti-democraticism, the practical results of this theory could extend even further. Even though Horkheimer was not yet able to show the practical benefits of his theory, the members of the AJC were very enthusiastic about its prospects and decided to extend their grant generously. For the period 1945-1950, the Horkheimer was given a grant for a new project.<sup>179</sup>

This financial security enabled the Institut to extend their research on anti-Semitism to prejudice in general. However, this new financial security had its practical consequences. Because it provided a large amount of money for the Institut's research, the AJC desired a bigger influence on the research. It established a scientific department in New York from which the research was directed and asked Horkheimer to manage it. The financial dependence on the AJC had two important consequences for the structure of the Institut. Firstly, the Institut had to give up their theoretical independence, which meant that it was expected to show the practical input of their theories and was forced to adapt to the American sociological standards. Secondly, it prevented Horkheimer from continuing his philosophical work. He had to leave Los Angeles, and was no longer able to devote all of his time to the development of a dialectical theory of society. Just as in the 1930s, Horkheimer became the full-time director of a scientific institute.

At the time it started working on the *Studies in Prejudice*, the structure of the Institut had greatly changed. Previously, it was possible to speak of a coherent group, because the Institut consisted of a small group German exiles working in the same continental tradition. The intensive cooperation with the AJC created a different situation. The combination of German and American scholars meant a departure from the continental speculative tradition and an enlarged focus on quantitative research. Moreover, Horkheimer could no longer

personally decide with whom he liked to cooperate in his research. The AJC got a hand in which researchers were appointed for the project. The *Studies in Prejudice* created new ties between the original members of the Institut and their American colleagues. In short, the Institut changed from a small, independent unit into a leading American organization with many associates whose research focused on the needs of the American Jewish Committee.

Not only the structure of the Institut had changed in 1945, it also became clear that the Second World War was coming to an end and that Nazi Germany would lose the battle. This made the *Studies in Prejudice* an even more interesting project for Horkheimer and Adorno. During the war, they were forced to restrict their research to the American situation, but the end of the war opened the possibility to extend their research to the European continent. When the Second World War was finished, Europe was left in ruins and their governments were divided how to obtain a stable political situation again. While Horkheimer and Adorno got several offers from Germany to help rebuilding its democracy, they decided to stay in the United States and finish their cooperation with the AJC. From a distance, they were offering several plans how to obtain stability in Europe. For example, Horkheimer offered the plan to start an inter-European academy that stressed the importance of a unified Europe. They considered it important to create a situation in which the different European countries got to know each other and established friendship ties since '*in Fascism, we may say, the illness of this civilization has become manifest; Hitler seems to be rather a symptom than a cause.*'<sup>180</sup>

Contrary to the pessimistic interpretation of Western society in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, both the *Studies in Prejudice* and the Institut's plans for the re-shaping of Europe clearly express the possibility that a civilization can get rid of its barbaric elements when rightly triggered. The establishment of an inter-European academy was one of those triggers.

*Here the young man destined for a leading role in European economic and cultural life would have the opportunity to study during a few terms and become acquainted with each other in an international and democratic atmosphere. A plan could be worked out with a view toward granting scholarships to students of the impoverished European countries.*<sup>181</sup>

Thus, there is a remarkable divide between the sociological and public manifestations and the philosophical writings of Horkheimer and Adorno. While their philosophical works judge

society pessimistically and express no hope for future improvement, their public manifestations and empirical research have the aim to improve the organization of society. The results of the *Studies in Prejudice* were presented as a tool that could help improving the structure of society.

#### 4.5 *The Authoritarian Personality*

The Institut had negotiated with the AJC that the *Studies in Prejudice* would appear in five volumes that dealt with prejudices in different groups of society. Moreover, the fact that the studies were not all written by the same authors suggests that the methodological and theoretical approaches were also different. Two of the volumes of the *Studies in Prejudice* were socio-psychological investigations into anti-Semitism. At the moment, the most famous of those is *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno and the Berkeley Group. The other socio-psychological study *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder* was written from a psychoanalytical perspective by the practicing psychoanalysts Marie Jahoda and Nathan W. Ackermann. The other studies were not using the Institut's socio-psychological methodology. Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman wrote *Prophets of Deceit*, a literary analysis of Fascist speeches. Paul Massing wrote a history of anti-Semitism in Germany, while Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz conducted a sociological study of the economic circumstances of American war veterans. Therefore, to understand how the Institut's was of influence on the studies, it is sufficient to focus on the two socio-psychological studies.

In the foreword to the *Studies in Prejudice* which six volumes were simultaneously published in 1950, Horkheimer expressed the aim of the studies:

*We believe that any study that bear upon this central theme [prejudice], if carried out in a truly scientific spirit, cannot help but bring us closer to the theoretical, and ultimately to the practical, solution of the problem of reducing intergroup prejudice and hatred.*<sup>182</sup>

When a comprehensive theory of prejudice is developed, this will eventually result in direct practical application and can eliminate the hatred between different social groups. Horkheimer seems to suggest that a correct theory can be equated with its practical application, which is its ultimate goal. In his earlier outline of a critical theory of society, he

had stated that such a thing was impossible. According to Horkheimer, reality was constantly changing, which made it impossible to construct one correct theory of society. Theories should constantly be adjusted when the facts were changed. In the *Studies in Prejudice*, theory becomes an actor that is able to change the facts instead of the other way around. The function of theory is no longer to give a passive judgment of society in a certain moment in time, but has become an active instrument that can effectively cure society from its unhealthy elements. The idea that the facts have to be altered when a theory proves to be wrong which brings a normative component in his sociological methodology.

In *The Authoritarian Personality*, Adorno and the Berkeley Group indeed develop a theory that aims to eliminate negative elements from society. It seeks to eliminate the authoritarian personality type who *'is at the same time enlightened and superstitious, proud to be an individualist and in constant fear of not being like all the others, jealous of his independence and inclined to submit blindly to power and authority.'*<sup>183</sup> They believe that a *'progressive analysis of this new "anthropological" type and of its growth conditions, with an ever-increasing scientific differentiation, will enhance the chances of a genuinely educational counterattack.'*<sup>184</sup> The appearance of this authoritarian type enabled for example the Fascist regime in coming to power, because it is likely to submit to a strong leader. This new type is extremely susceptible to propaganda because it is unable not single it out as such. An analysis of this personality can enlarge the understanding of the way propaganda affects these characters. A successful theory of the authoritarian personality can help reeducating these personality into a democratic or liberal ones when the right propaganda is used, which eliminates the possibility that a Fascist regime can rise in the future.

It should be noted that the existence of an authoritarian personality was not an assumption made, but was the outcome of the study:

*It is one of the major findings of the present study that individuals who show extreme susceptibility to fascist propaganda have a great deal in common. (They exhibit numerous characteristics that go together to form a "syndrome" although typical variations within this major pattern can be distinguished.*<sup>185</sup>

This indicates that the outcome of the study indeed intended to be of great value in practical situations. Before scientific investigations into the nature of prejudice were started, it was unknown that individuals susceptible to fascist propaganda could be treated as a group. This

opens the possibility to reeducate more effectively, because it is no longer needed to limit it to individual treatment

The dichotomy between potentially anti-democratic and truly democratic personalities is often criticized. The social critic Christopher Lasch argued that they simply invented an authoritarian pathology and assumed that their left-wing political ideology was the norm. He states that the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* believed that only when everyone assimilated to left-wing democratism, a stable political system could be established.<sup>186</sup> Slavoj Žižek goes even further in accusing the authors to have '*adopted what eventually became a favorite Soviet tactic against dissidents: anyone whose political views differed from theirs was insane.*'<sup>187</sup> While there are indeed elements of moral superiorism in *The Authoritarian Personality*, these accusations are unfair. Its authors were aware that they could not speak of authoritarianism as a pathology. According to them, '*what is "pathological" today may with changing social conditions become the dominant trend of tomorrow.*'<sup>188</sup> Authoritarian personalities are not pathological, but reflect their social circumstances. In order to 'cure' those individuals, the structure of society itself has to be altered. While this indeed suggests that Adorno and the Berkeley Group thought that they knew what the right social would look like, no Soviet tactics were employed. They thought that in the right socio-economic circumstances the authoritarian personality would not exist at all. Their idea of reeducation was only a solution within the given societal circumstances.

Just as in the research on anti-Semitism in 1943, questionnaires and clinical interviews were the most important sources of information in the *The Authoritarian Personality*. A combination of those different research methods should guarantee a deeper insight in the psychology of a group.<sup>189</sup> The questionnaires were used to measure how anti-democratic tendencies varied among groups while the clinical interviews were used to investigate which personal characteristics were underlying the answers of the respondents. These answers allowed the researchers to develop a scale that could measure anti-democratic tendencies and a selection of the participants who were in the high or low quartiles of this scale were invited for an interview. The advantage of combining those methods was not that nor was neither the questionnaire nor the clinical interviewing a decisive tool in measuring anti-democraticism. The questionnaires determined which participants had to be selected for clinical interviews, and the results of these interviews shed new light in the interpretation of the questionnaires. The result of this combination '*make it possible to carry over into group studies the insights*

*and hypotheses derived from clinical investigation; it would test whether we could study on a mass scale features ordinarily regarded as individualistic and qualitative.*<sup>190</sup>

In order to understand the methodology used in *The Authoritarian Personality*, it is needed to know how anti-democraticism was measured. An analysis of the construction of the most famous concept of the book, the Fascism-scale (F-scale), will suffice as an illustration. The F-scale was used to show that anti-Semitic and ethnocentric thought were no isolated attitudes, but were part of a larger ideological framework. Earlier, the researchers had developed scales capable of measuring anti-Semitism and ethnocentrism. The construction of these scales was the result of a process of trial and error. Based on the questionnaires, the researchers looked if the individuals they had invited for an interview were indeed anti-Semitic or ethnocentric. This process was repeated until the analysis of the questionnaires could predict if the interviewed participants indeed showed the anti-Semitic tendencies as the scale had indicated. Thus, the combination of quantitative and qualitative research made it possible to develop these scales. Similar to the research in the 1930s, a clear methodology how to interpret the world was developed. A combination of questionnaires and clinical research should account for an objective interpretation of American society and should guarantee for the future prospect of practical application.

The Fascism-scale was the result of a different methodological process. It was not the outcome of a process of trial and error, but was fully based on the earlier research. What was new about the Fascism-scale was that it placed the earlier results of the earlier research in different personality categories. For example, *'a consideration of E-scale [Ethnocentric-scale] results strongly suggested that underlying several of the prejudiced responses was a general disposition to glorify, to be subservient to and remain uncritical toward authoritative figures of the in-group and to take an attitude of punishing out-group figures in the name of some moral authority. Hence, authoritarianism assumed the proportions of a variable worthy to be investigated in its own right.'*<sup>191</sup> The 8 other variables to be investigated were the result of similar generalizations. The anti-Semitic and the ethnocentric scale were the consequence of the responses of participants to a certain set of statements, but the F-scale was used to develop a general theory of what kind of personalities were potentially anti-democratic. The score on the F-scale predicted what kind of personal characteristics a respondent is likely to possess. Moreover, the scale also works the other way around; when it is determined that a person has a certain set of characteristics, it can predict whether this person has anti-democratic potential.



The score on the F-Scale was the result of the respondent's answers to a set of certain statements. As stated, authoritarianism was one of the variables measured in the test. In order to determine whether one is likely to submit to authority, respondents were asked to express their attitude to certain statements on a six-point Likert-scale without a neutral option. For example, they were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'Nobody ever learned anything really important except through suffering.' When a person highly agreed with this and several other statements, it was expected that he was likely to submit to authority. The same procedure was used to measure the other variables, and the total outcome of the responses determined the respondent's place on the F-scale. When he had highly disagreed with all statements he would score 1.00, and when he highly agreed with them, he would score 7.00 on the F-scale, which made it extremely likely that he possessed anti-democratic tendencies.

Besides the quantitative approach in the analysis of the questionnaires, clinical interviews were held to come to a deeper understanding of the personalities of the respondents who scored in the high or low quartiles of the F-scale. The interviews were used to understand why respondents answered the questionnaires the way they did. For example, the fact that one respondent scored below his group mean on the statement 'It is entirely possible that this series of wars and conflicts will be ended once and for all by a world-destroying earthquake, flood, or other catastrophe.' is explained in the interview.

*That he is well below the group mean on Item 65 (World catastrophe) seems attributable to the value for hard-headed scientificness which he expresses both in his interview and in his response to items under the heading of Superstition.*<sup>192</sup>

The interviews enabled the researchers to understand how the scores on the F-scale related to the respondent's socio-economic circumstances. They are an appendix by the questionnaires, rather than a goal in its own. The use of interviews was a common methodology among American sociologists and cannot be seen as a unique feature of the Institut's research.<sup>193</sup> New in this approach was the idea that potentially anti-democratic individuals shared a set of character traits.

#### 4.6 The Authoritarian Personality as Patient

A comparison between *The Authoritarian Personality* and Jahoda's and Ackermann's study will show how Horkheimer's methodology differed from other psychoanalytical approaches in sociology. It seems that Horkheimer's notion of Critical Theory was only realized in the works of Neumann and Kirchheimer since no existential judgments were involved during the cooperation with the AJC. Critical Theory only refers to the methodological outline in *Traditional and Critical Theory*, but there are no clear examples how to use it in practice. Especially when Critical Theory is associated with the integration of psychoanalysis in social theory, no existential judgments are involved. Only the legal and economic analyses of Kirchheimer and Neumann follow Horkheimer's methodology, but they have not used any psychoanalytical concepts in their work. In the history of the Institut, Critical Theory only lived a short life.

However, the notion of giving an existential judgment of the condition of society was present in Jahoda's and Ackermann's study. Contrary to *The Authoritarian Personality* which aimed to understand which personalities had anti-democratic and anti-Semitic tendencies, the other socio-psychology study of the *Studies in Prejudice* had clinical purposes. In *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder*, Marie Jahoda and Nathan W. Ackermann seek to cure individual cases of anti-Semitism. Both trained as psychoanalysts, they treated anti-Semitism as a disease that can be cured. As Carl Binger indicated in his introduction:

*They [Jahoda & Ackermann] consider anti-Semitism an evil; a symptom of social illness. They are courageous enough to do battle with evil, using the combined weapons of their respective sciences. ... The day is now past when the true scientist can be indifferent to ethical values and moral judgments.*<sup>194</sup>

Slavoj Žižek's comment that all people with different political views were considered insane applies better to this book than to *The Authoritarian Personality*. Its title suggests that anti-Semitism is a consequence of emotional disorder and that it has to be treated as a mental illness. Therefore, if the emotional disorder is cured, the patient is cured from anti-Semitism and is able to function as a 'normal' citizen. Psychoanalysis is used to investigate the reasons of the patient's anti-Semitic tendencies. When these reasons are discovered, psychoanalytical therapy can be used to bring authoritarian personalities back to a mental health.

Jahoda's and Ackermann's research on the underlying reasons of anti-Semitism is based on an analysis of 40 case studies of anti-Semitic patients whose material they got from other American psychoanalysts. As is to be expected, the reasons for their anti-Semitic convictions varied among the selected case studies. However, '*the disturbance in intergroup relations in such persons appears to be psychologically determined.*'<sup>195</sup> They explain the bad relation between Jews and other groups in economic terms. Jews are either seen as the low class and inferior to the rest of society, or as powerful exploiters. Authoritarian personalities have no respect for the individual as such, but only respect power, success and conformity. Since Jews are either lacking power or success or do not conform to the standards of society, they are easy targets of hatred. Thus, to eliminate anti-Semitism is it necessary to replace the patient's set of values such that he starts to judge the individual, instead of its social position. Psychoanalysis can be a helpful tool in this process of change. However, it should be noted that the return to a system of ethics and values that has an eye for the individuality of man is not an easy process and can only be established after a great number of psychoanalytic sessions.<sup>196</sup>

Interestingly, the conclusions of *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder* resemble Horkheimer's idea of Critical Theory more than his and Adorno's contribution to empirical research throughout the 1940s. Only in the last pages of *The Authoritarian Personality*, it is pointed out that the rise of this personality is a consequence of the organization of society. Throughout the rest of the book no such existential judgments were made. Moreover, it were precisely these judgments that were met with great hesitation by the American reviewers. This suggests that the combination of Critical Theory and the sophisticated empirical research in *The Authoritarian Personality* is difficult to realize in practice. When the attitudes of individuals within the given structure of society have to be measured, a criticism of this structure is an unnecessary complication. It does not help to explain which groups share a set of characteristics that cause anti-democratic tendencies. This indicates that after all, Critical Theory is a philosophical theory which usefulness in empirical sociology is doubtful.

#### **4.7 Success in America and Return to Germany**

While the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was neglected by American intellectuals, and the *Studies on Authority and Family* also failed to become successful, the American interest in *The Authoritarian Personality* raised to such an extent that it is still considered a classic in

social psychology. Horkheimer's period of networking in the 1940s had made him and the circle around him prominent intellectuals in America. Their merger of psychoanalytical theory, social theory and statistical survey research was seen as one of the first constructive studies within social psychology. Moreover, the Americans were impressed by the interdisciplinary background of the involved researchers. For example, the Los Angeles social scientist J.F. Brown noted that '*The research is truly interdisciplinary a condition set up with increasing frequency as a goal by social scientists, but as yet rarely arrived at. In this research, specialists with national reputations in the fields of clinical psychology, social psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, sociology, political science, economics, and even social philosophy have tackled a central problem and have really acted like a team.*'<sup>197</sup>

The interdisciplinary approach that was already advocated by Horkheimer and Fromm in the early 1930s and which was also the fundament of the *Studies on Authority and Family* found its climax in the *Studies in Prejudice*. However, while this approach succeeded in attracting the attention of American intellectuals and scientists, some of its consequences were hard to swallow for Horkheimer. He was worried that the Institut's assimilation to American empirical research would affect its theoretical development and was aware that its engagement in traditional theory undermined the critical function of social theory he held in high regard.<sup>198</sup> The *Studies in Prejudice* can therefore best be seen as a concession. In order to find funding for such an enormous interdisciplinary research team, it was needed to give in to the demands of the American research methods. It was necessary to sacrifice the focus on theory to find a place within American academia.

The positive reception was not just caused by the project's interdisciplinary approach. When the *Studies on Authority and Family* was published, psychoanalysis was an almost unknown method in American social science and its use in the scientific research was therefore met with skepticism. However, it had become accepted and highly valued as both a practice and a research method in the 1940s. The works of psychoanalysts such as Fromm, Horney had successfully integrated psychoanalysis in social research and the idea that prejudices could be the consequence of the subconsciousness was widespread.<sup>199</sup> The idea that answers to questionnaires indicated the existence of certain character traits was not as controversial as it was in the 1930s. The fact that Horkheimer's treatment of psychoanalysis differed from Fromm's had no effect on the reception of the research on prejudice. The use of different psychoanalytical theories in empirical research had become common ground in the United States.

Most of the reviewers were impressed by the *Studies in Prejudice*, but several aspects of the study were still criticized. Most importantly, the practical applicability of the outcome of the studies was questioned. For example, the social psychologist Harry C. Bredemeir was impressed by the research in *The Authoritarian Personality*, but he believed that its pessimistic outcome eliminated the possibility of practical application. When prejudice is the consequence of individual development and personal circumstances, 'how are these early learning experiences, especially the crucial ones in the family environment, to be controlled?'<sup>200</sup> Also Joseph Bunzel asks himself where the results of the investigation will lead us; 'It now becomes important to ask what therapies the doctors propose. Here we shall have "to be content" because the answers to our questions are neither positive nor very instructive nor specific.'<sup>201</sup> Thus, while Horkheimer and Adorno had assimilated to American research methods to guarantee for practical results, it was precisely the lack of these that was criticized by the American reviewers. It was first and foremost the methodology of the studies that impressed social scientists in the United States and it was believed that this methodology should be a model for future research in social psychology.

At the time the *Studies in Prejudice* were to be published in the United States, Horkheimer and Adorno planned to return to their homeland. They wanted to contribute to the establishment of a stable democracy in postwar Germany. From early 1948 onwards, Horkheimer and Adorno had travelled frequently to Frankfurt and held lectures and seminars throughout the country. In November 1949 Adorno settled in Frankfurt and was joined by Horkheimer and Pollock in early 1950. Shortly after his return, Horkheimer regained his seat as professor in social philosophy and also became dean of the philosophy faculty of the Frankfurt University. He used his position to convince both American and German authorities of the necessity to re-establish the Institut in Frankfurt. Eventually this strategy worked and the Institut was re-opened in 1951 with Adorno as its director.

Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the Institut could be of great help in the rebuilding of Germany. They could offer a unique combination of continental philosophy and American research methods in sociology which no one else could offer. Just as they had presented themselves to Columbia University in 1934 as the only group of intellectuals able to integrate German philosophy into American sociology, they argued that this combination could be of great help to the establishment of a new German sociological tradition.<sup>202</sup> They wanted to have the chance to conduct a series of studies similar to the *Studies in Prejudice* in German society and argued that their practical approach was needed in the rebuilding of

Germany. Not their dialectical philosophy, but their empirical research was presented as their innovative force. Just as in the United States, it was not Critical Theory, but the combination of psychoanalytic insights and sophisticated empirical techniques that granted the Institut a new place in postwar Germany.

## Conclusion:

The changes in the relation between the theoretical and empirical research of the Institut are caused by different answers to the fundamental question ‘How do I interpret the world?’ This question was not only fundamental in the history of the Institut, but also in the social sciences in general. Answers to this question determine the answers to other important theoretical questions in the social sciences, such as ‘Is the goal of social science to change or to understand the world?’ and ‘What kind of methodology should be used to obtain one this goal?’ While these questions are of a philosophical nature, a more down to earth element also plays an important role in social science: how to come to and remain in a position in which I will have a voice? The story of the *Eclipse of Reason* exemplifies the importance of this question; even though Horkheimer and Adorno were convinced of the importance of their work, they failed to make an impression on their audience, because their work was not in accordance with the American sociological and philosophical standards. This resulted in the fact that both the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and the *Eclipse of Reason* were ignored until they were picked up by the New Left in the 1960s.

Contrary to these works, the *Studies in Prejudice* received much attention in the United States after its publication in the 1950s, because the studies assimilated to the American research methods and were the result of extensive quantitative research. Moreover, these studies attempted to realize the most important goal of American social research: practical application. It was needed to assimilate to these two aspects of American social science to get a voice within American academia. Considering that the Institut’s earlier research was highly theoretical and Horkheimer argued that practical application should not be the primary goal of social research, these studies can best be seen as a concession. In order to make novel claims about American social phenomena, it was necessary to adapt to its standards. Only when this was realized, the Institut gained the possibility to shed new light on the structure of American society.

From the Institut’s period in the USA until now, the question whether a theory is needed to analyze empirical data or that data speaks for itself still remains unanswered. In other words, it is still unclear if a highly quantitative, a theoretical approach in social science or a combination of the two can provide for objectivity. In the history of the Institut the same struggle for objectivity can be seen. The question how theory and the empirical data are related was the major point of debate in its methodological works. The clearest example is

Horkheimer's inaugural speech in which he outlined a research program that should guarantee for objectivity in social research. He argued that theory and empirical research should be in constant interaction. Theories were needed to interpret the data, but should be adjusted when they contradicted the collected data. This should make sure that social theories were no utopian panorama's, but did apply to reality.

In other periods of the Institut's history such methodological notions were also explicitly or implicitly present. From Grünberg onwards, collecting empirical data was never a goal in itself, but was always done to improve its social theories. The empirical data were always interpreted in the light of the Institut's theoretical convictions. However, what it meant to be 'empirical' differed from time to time in its history. In the articles in *Grünberg's Archive* before and during his directorship of the Institut, it is very broadly interpreted what 'empirical' means. For example, when it was investigated how to unite the international proletariat took it for granted that it was no harmonious unit, because the European countries were at war. This observation became the core assumption of Grünberg's research in this period and its primary goal was comparing the behavior of the different national socialist parties during the advent of the First World War with the official program of the Second International. If research on these subjects was conducted by many different people, Grünberg was convinced that its objectivity could be guaranteed. To be a social scientist meant to contemplate on the organization of society, whether or not a clear methodology is involved. The research of the Institut argued against the liberal tendencies in the Weimar Republic, and aimed to convince the workers that socialism was in their best interests. In this research, 'empirical' was not a well-defined concept at the time and was as broadly interpreted as in Grünberg's earlier research.

When Horkheimer became director of the Institut in 1931, its social research started to interpret the world in a different way. Grünberg made no clear distinction between theory and empirical research, but for Horkheimer these were two different research methods. Empirical research functioned as a control mechanism guaranteeing that social theories indeed applied to reality. Moreover, Horkheimer argued that a strict divide between empirical research and theory paved the way for social research that was not guided by political preferences, e.g. could account for objectivity. He was aware that the earlier research of the Institut was not objective because the world was primarily interpreted from a socialist perspective. In order to avoid such ideological commitments, the Institut's research changed. It started to send



questionnaires to different groups of workers in order to get insight in their political preferences and social circumstances.

An analysis of these questionnaires should provide insight into the worker's individual psychology. Contrary to Grünberg's research, Horkheimer and Fromm wanted to know which needs the workers had in reality, instead of defining these normatively from a socialist perspective. Rather than stressing the apparent homogeneity of the international proletariat, they identified the workers as individual persons with different individual needs and preferences. They argued that psychoanalytical theory should be used to understand these individual differences, because they were the consequence of repressed sexual drives. These drives were not individually repressed, but were mediated by the structure of society. In this process, the ideological framework of the individual was constructed. Since the family was the first societal unit a child gets acquainted with, their questionnaires were specifically asking about the influence of the family on the child's development. The questionnaires functioned as a way to investigate whether the family was indeed of great influence on individual development as the Institut's theory indicated. This approach should guarantee for the objectivity of the Institut's social research. However, the Marxist assumption that economic circumstances were of great influence on the development of character was still prevalent in this study. New in this approach was the idea that it was needed to look inside the head of the workers to understand the development of anti-socialist ideologies.

From 1937 onwards, the Institut suffered from a financial setback and was no longer able to finance extensive empirical research. Moreover, Horkheimer wanted to devote his time to social philosophy, instead of being involved in the empirical sociology of the Institut. From this moment, the Institut consisted of two branches. Horkheimer and Adorno started working on a philosophical project in Los Angeles, while the other members of the Institut were engaged in empirical sociology in New York. Their research was guided by Horkheimer's new sociological methodology outlined in *Traditional and Critical Theory* and tried to attract American funding. In the philosophical writings of Horkheimer and Adorno, what was empirical was as broadly interpreted as was the case in the research of the Institut under Grünberg, while the proposals of the New York branch used a methodology similar to the one used in the *Studies on Authority and Family*.

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was clearly a philosophical product, but was no metaphysical abstraction that had nothing to do with reality. On the contrary, its pessimistic analysis of the condition of mankind was triggered by of the horrors of the Second World

War. Before the war, the works of Horkheimer and Adorno still expressed a sense of optimism. They still believed that culture and philosophy were able to deprive society of its barbaric aspects and could help bringing reason back to the world. When it became clear that the power of the Nazi regime was increasing, Horkheimer and Adorno's lost their trust in the idea that culture and philosophy were able to undermine the position of fascist thought. Not the internal dynamics of their philosophy, but the horrors of reality were the foundation of their pessimism. However, the way reality was perceived did not aim to guarantee for objectivity. The philosophical position developed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was the consequence of Horkheimer and Adorno's subjective interpretation of reality.

The research of Kirchheimer and Neumann, the most important empirical researchers of the Institut after its break with Fromm, was of a different nature than the earlier research on family. Instead of sending questionnaires, their most important sources were bureaucratic data. For example, Kirchheimer used the official court statistics of the number of convictions and amnesties in German court to analyze the legal changes happening under the Nazi regime. This analysis helped fulfilling the central task of Critical Theory: giving an existential judgment about the structure of society. Kirchheimer's judgment of German society was thoroughly pessimistic. He argued that German law was changed to oppress human individuality and that the structure of society must change if freedom has to be preserved. This judgment of German society cannot be extrapolated from the numbers of German convictions though. In critical theory, the empirical data have another function than in the Institut's earlier research. Data was no longer used to guarantee for objectivity, but functioned as a way to come to a subjective judgment.

In 1943, the Institut started its cooperation with the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in which it worked with several important American social scientists on a project on anti-Semitism and prejudice. The AJC provided the finances that allowed the Institut to continue the empirical research it had to stop in 1937. However, while the Institut was able to conduct its earlier research in relative independence, its cooperation with AJC forced it to adapt to the methods of American sociology in order to meet the demands of its financiers. As a consequence, the research on prejudice differed from the earlier studies on three points. Firstly, it focused on practical application; the main goal of the research was to eliminate anti-Semitism from American society. Secondly, clinical sessions with respondents were added to get deeper insight in their characteristics. Not only the questionnaires, but also the respondents were subject of psychoanalytical interpretation. Lastly, the research was far more

quantitatively orientated than the studies on families had been. During its cooperation with the AJC, the Institut had to engage in the world of traditional theory that Horkheimer had extensively criticized in 1937.

It should be clear now that the definition of the concept 'empirical' differed throughout the Institut's history. However, the question which theories were used to interpret the world remains yet unanswered. During the period under the directorship of Carl Grünberg, a socialist perspective on reality was equated with a scientific perspective on reality. Understanding of socioeconomic circumstances was considered sufficient to get insight into the nature of social phenomena. In *Grünberg's Archive*, therefore, the world was primarily understood from an economic perspective. Grünberg was also convinced that historical knowledge was needed though. For example, an understanding of the economic situation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was needed to explain the behavior of the masses under different socioeconomic circumstances. Grünberg's interpretation of history differed from orthodox Marxist theories. He did not share the idea that the dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary outcome of history, but believed that legal and political issues were the primary instrument in the change of the socioeconomic circumstances of the masses. Therefore, it was needed to study the history of law, politics and economics to understand how politicians were able to influence the economic situation.

When Horkheimer became director of the Institut, the theoretical foundations of its research were slightly altered. Horkheimer still believed in the importance of investigating the economic situation of the masses, but he and Erich Fromm introduced a new element to the Institut's research: personal ideology. They argued that the fact that the proletariat failed to start a revolution was not just the consequence of the socioeconomic circumstances, but was also caused by the fact that it did not share a socialist ideology. Instead of explaining the development of ideology in economic terms, they stated that an understanding of the individual psychology of the workers was needed. This understanding could only be provided when social science became interdisciplinary. In practice, this meant that besides history and economy, psychoanalysis should be used as an instrument to investigate the ideological development of the masses. According to Horkheimer and Fromm, without reference to individual psychology, the development of ideology and its role in political developments cannot be properly understood.

In Horkheimer's Critical Theory, the importance of psychoanalysis decreased. While social science should still be highly interdisciplinary, no specific theoretical view of the world

was proposed. Whether economy, history, philosophy or sociology was used as a research perspective was subordinate to the central task of Critical Theory: give an existential judgment of society. However, during the Institut's cooperation with the AJC, psychoanalysis again became an integral part of the research. In the *Studies on Prejudice*, the interpretation of the data resembled the Institut's earlier research. Just as in the research on family, the characterology of the individuals was considered the most important cause of prejudice. This marked an enormous difference with the theoretical framework of the Institut at its establishment. Economy was no longer considered the primary cause of behavior and thought, but the Institut started to interpret society as a set of individuals that contained of groups of people sharing certain psychological characteristics.

The history of the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung shows that the way empirical data in the social sciences is treated crucially depends on the theoretical convictions of the researchers. This indicates that no such thing as 'the data as such' exists. Empirical data are always part of a broader interpretation of the world and this interpretation is always colored with metaphysical, theoretical and ideological commitments. The struggle for objectivity at the Institut indicates that even if objectivity is the ultimate goal of social research, its outcome is still heavily influenced by ideological preferences. Both the philosophical and empirical approaches in the social research of the Institut provided new and interesting insights into the nature of society, but were part of a larger ideological framework. Just as the social scientists who thought that objectivity could be obtained the extensive use of quantification and state that empirical data is the heart of social science, also the critics of this approach suffered from the same problem and failed to develop a method that guaranteed for an objective interpretation of the empirical data.

When the history of the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung is primarily seen as the history of a group of sociologist using a distinguished methodology, it reveals a deeper problem in the history of the social sciences in general and the history of sociology in particular. As Jennifer Platt has argued, this history has mainly been written as an intellectual biography of the great man of sociology, who were mainly engaged in social theorizing instead of in empirical sociology.<sup>203</sup> At the same time, empirical sociology as the primary approach within the sociological curriculum, which reveals that sociology has a somewhat ambiguous relation with its past. On the one hand, it aims to overcome the problems of social theory and establish a clearer relation with reality, while on the other, it are the social theorists that are considered the champions of their discipline.

According to Platt, this unease is caused by the fact that sociologists before the Second World War were not necessarily conducting their own empirical research. Being a sociologist meant to have extensive knowledge of the studies of the specialized social sciences and to integrate it into an overarching theory of society.<sup>204</sup> This indicates that in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sociology lacked a clear subject which empirical research could provide knowledge of. While this explains why histories of sociology tend to focus on important social theorists such as Max Weber or George Simmel, it remains silent about the introduction of empirical research. In the context of the present study, this perspective enables it to understand the way Carl Grünberg organized his research, but fails to shed light on the theoretical developments when Max Horkheimer became the Institut's director.

In a broader sense it means that it is needed to develop a framework in which it is possible to interpret the increasing number of empirical sociological studies from the 1920s onwards. Not only the Institut started conducting empirical research that they called sociological, they were part of a much broader trend that can be detected both in Europe and the USA. For example, Robert Lynd, the head of the social scientific department that eventually chose the house the Institut at Columbia University, became a famous sociologist after the publication of his book *Middletown* in 1929. Moreover, he and his Columbia colleague Robert MacIver struggled to legitimate their independent sociological department since other social scientists argued that sociology had no distinguished object that was not covered by the specialized social sciences.<sup>205</sup> Considering that *Middletown* was championed for its pioneering use of empirical research in sociology, it seems that an empirical approach in sociology was, among other things, an attempt to show the legitimacy of sociology as an independent academic discipline.

When the first chairs in sociology were established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century no such accusations were made. In Germany, these chairs were part of philosophical departments and were not strictly distinguished from earlier versions of social philosophy. In the United States, independent sociological departments were established and were funded by the American government because of the promise that sociology was able to solve societal problems. Moreover, the government saw a clear link between sociology and political practice, and thought that sociology would contribute to spread democracy.<sup>206</sup> Especially during and shortly after the Second World War, social science was considered a tool in the spread of the American political ideal. It is in this context that the later studies of the Institut on anti-Semitism and authoritarian behavior can best be understood. Contrary to the earlier

empirical studies conducted by the Institut in the early 1930s, these were clearly driven by the need to confirm to the American idea that social scientific studies should be practically applicable.

More general, the struggling of the Institut to adapt to a certain sociological approach while it initially had another conception what a sociological theory should look like reveals that great similarities with the present situation does exist. The difficulties of the Institut had in defining the tasks and methodology of social research are of the same character as the contemporary problems Gabriel Abend singles out in his article *The Meaning of 'Theory'*. I will reclaim the different definitions of theory Abend distinguishes and try to show how the Institut's struggle for objective social science resemble the contemporary discussions concerning the task of social science and the role of empirical research in it. Moreover, its encounter with American sociology when coming from the totally different German tradition sheds new light on the way sociologists from different theoretical backgrounds can cooperate fruitfully.

1. *A general proposition or a set of general propositions which establish a relation between two or more variables independent of things like time and place.*
2. *An explanation of a particular social phenomenon which acknowledges its particular time and place.*
3. *An interpretation of a social phenomenon, trying to answer what it means that this event has happened.*
4. *An hermeneutical understanding of the studies of earlier important social theorists such as Marx or Durkheim.*
5. *An overall perspective from which one interprets the world.*
6. *A normative theory what the world ought to look like.*
7. *A way of overcoming the problems sociologists have encountered in the past.*<sup>iv</sup>

In the early years of the Institut under Grünberg's directorship, no empirical research was conducted. Just as Jennifer Platt has argued, for him and other sociologists in the first decades of the twentieth century, being a sociologist meant to have knowledge of the

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<sup>iv</sup> The same set of definitions can be found in this thesis on page 15. I will refer to these definitions as theory1 ..... theory 7.

empirical studies of the other social sciences and develop a theory of society in which the results of these studies were integrated. In Grünberg early work, his aim was to develop a theory<sup>5</sup> and argued that he wanted to develop an overall framework to interpret the social world that could exist among other perspectives. While his framework was grounded in socialist thought, he acknowledged that other frameworks could also be useful ways to come to an objective understanding of the world. However, after the First World War and during his directorship of the Institut, his ideal shifted to developing a normative theory formulating what the world should look like.

Such a theory<sup>6</sup> approach is often considered as independent of any empirical foundation, but in this case it was grounded in Grünberg's knowledge of the empirical studies of the other social sciences as well as the societal situation as he interpreted it. Rather than being an utopian ideal, his call for a socialist organization of society was the consequence of what he considered a factual analysis of the world. In this sense, he worked from a theory<sup>3</sup> perspective and tried to understand why certain social events had happened. His normative theory was the consequence of the way he interpreted the occurrence of the First World War and the German Revolution: these could only take place because the socialists failed to establish a socialist political regime.

In the later years of Grünbergs directorship, especially in Pollock's article *On Marx' Monetary Theory*, and under the early directorship of Max Horkheimer, a theoretical shift in the Institut's sociology occurred. Horkheimer and Erich Fromm wanted to get rid of Grünberg ideological commitments and tried to develop a perspective that made it possible to interpret the world more and more objective. When psychoanalysis was added to a historical materialist perspective, they believed that they could develop a theory capable of giving an objective interpretation of society. Instead of developing a normative theory of society, they aimed to develop a theory<sup>5</sup> of society in which psychoanalysis could guarantee for objectivity. However, this enterprise was not only theoretical; they wanted to have an empirical foundation showing that a psychoanalytical perspective was indeed capable of giving an accurate description of society.

This empirical foundation consisted of an extensive investigation into the authority structure of the family. At the time Fromm and Horkheimer acknowledged the importance of empirical research, it became clear that they could no longer stay in Germany because of the establishment of the Nazi regime. In 1934, the Institut moved to New York where they were housed at Columbia University and arrived in an environment in which the use of empirical

research was common use in sociological research. In cooperation with empirical researchers such as Paul Lazarsfeld, they tried to give an explanation of a particular social phenomenon (authority structures in families) at a certain place and time. Just as in Grünberg's times, this research was not limited to this theory2 perspective. Their explanations for the authority structure of families functioned as a control mechanism for the perspective from which they interpreted society. In a modern formulation, they believed that a theory2 approach should guarantee for the objectivity of their interpretation of the world developed from a theory5 perspective.

In the Institut's later work in the late 1930s and 1940s, the world was interpreted from a different theoretical perspective. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno moved to Los Angeles and stopped being engaged in empirical research. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they developed a new overall perspective from which they interpreted the social world. Contrary to the Institut's research in the 1930s, no empirical research was conducted to test the plausibility of their interpretation. However, their theory5 still applied to the world as organized at the time and was not a metaphysical theory that ignored the way society looked like in reality. They tried to understand why certain social phenomena they encountered did happen and tried to integrate those in a larger theoretical framework. Similar to the earlier research of the Institut, the way the world was interpreted was not dependent on one specific definition of sociology, but was a combination of theory5 and theory2 perspectives.

At the same time Horkheimer and Adorno worked on the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in Los Angeles, a financial setback forced the other Institut's members to adapt to the standards of American sociology. In order to find funding for research, it was needed to write research proposals that were firmly grounded in empirical research and were practically applicable. Among other things, the empirical research showed that individuals that adhered to a certain set of ideological statements were more likely to conduct fascist behavior and were a danger to a democratic society. While the American approach in sociology stated that it would obtain objectivity through a focus on empirical research, a normative theory of society still played an important role. As Jennifer Platt argued, sociology should play an important role in the spread of democracy and the obtaining of stable democratic American society. Even a sociological approach that seemed to be strictly limited to a theory1 or theory2 approach and greatly valued the importance of empirical research still failed to be objective since it is still committed to the normative input of a theory6 approach.



In this thesis, I initially adopted a theory7 perspective and aimed to show how sociologists attempted to overcome the problems they encountered in the past and to show the contemporary relevance of such an analysis. However, also for this approach it is clear that it is not fully limited to this specific theoretical definition. It cannot do without a proper understanding of the texts of the invoked sociologists (in this case Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, Theodor Adorno etc.), showing that it a theory4 is a necessary part of a theory7 perspective. Moreover, an interpretation of the history of the Institut also invokes trying to understand what it means that it developed in this specific way. Eventually, my perspective is in a way also a contribution to the development of a normative theory formulating what sociological research should look like. Just as the history of the relation between theory and empirical research in the early Frankfurt School, this thesis continues to show that different notions of theory are involved in every part of sociology, whether it is historical or not. The impact and interpretation of a certain sociological or social theory is never limited to its particular definition, but is always a relation with another definition. As shown in the case of the Frankfurt School, even the purely empirical approach present in the United States in the 1940s was triggered by the normative theory that a democratic political system should be spread.

Not only does this thesis show that the status and definition of theory is ongoing problem from the 1920s up until now, it also indicates that the different notions of theory present in the first half of the twentieth century can be transported to the present situation and can be still of use in contemporary debates. Just as in the period 1923-1950 within the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung, the same struggle for objectivity and the development of a coherent framework within the social sciences that can establish a satisfactory relation between theory and empirical research is still present in contemporary sociology. This indicates that as Daniel Little speculated, it seems possible to use historical concepts in different historical situations.<sup>207</sup> While it has to be investigated what other concepts have the same possibility, the history of the struggle for objectivity in the sociological research of the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung at least shows that the history of the concept of social theory and its relation to empirical research remain to be of interest in present times.

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**Conclusion:**

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