

Bringing the Critical Back in: Towards the Resurrection of The Frankfurt School

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Abstract

Conceptual Paper

Purpose

To resurrect and revalorize the tradition of the early Frankfurt School, whose of Marxist-Hegelian dialectical approach to understanding the societal conditions of its emergence -- post WWI Germany, the rise of fascism, New Deal politics, the defeat of fascism and the subsequent rise of consumer society – remains relevant to studying present circumstances, stressing the cultural dimension of capitalism, the proliferation of alienation, ideology and mass media, and, finally, the nature of the society-character/subjectivity nexus.

Methodology

Employing a comparative-historical approach to the study of alienation, ideology and character, to articulate social-theoretical standards for critical social research today.

Social Implications

Global civilization faces an array of crises, beginning with economies whose lack of stability undercuts the ability of a large segment of the world's population to obtain jobs conducive to a decent standard of life. With governments' inability to implement public policies to buffer instabilities, cultural values are in crisis as well. Reviving the framework of the early Frankfurt School is necessary to promote a better world.

Originality

Reconstructing key concerns of the Frankfurt School is conducive to critiquing this tradition's recent preoccupation with communication and recognition, and demonstrates how the first generation's legacy helps us understand contemporary social movements of the Right and the Left, in ways that compare to the Weimar Republic in Germany. Both the Right and the Left being products of legitimation crises that trigger a desire for regressive or progressive social change -- the Right would restore a mythical past, the Left would foster a new social order based on humanistic concerns.

Keywords: Frankfurt School, alienation, ideology, character, social-movements

Introduction

These are indeed the times that try men's and women's souls. Since the elections of Thatcher and Reagan in 1979 and 1980, it has been ever more evident that the Golden Age of America's postwar capitalist prosperity had come to an end. Between advanced technologies of production and administration, globalization and its embrace of neoliberalism, while economic growth continued, the distributions of income and wealth began to change, slowly but surely: while workers kept losing jobs, there was greater and greater inequality. But meanwhile, by the end of the 80s, between the incorporation of China into the global economy as its low wage factory and the collapse of the Soviet Union, capitalism celebrated its triumphal moment--it was the "end of history" (Fukayama, 1992). Margaret Thatcher proclaimed "TINA"--There is no alternative"--and so it seemed. Although the Colossus of global capital saw unabated growth, its underlying foundation, financialization, increasingly was based on profits resulting from speculation, fictional capital, or what Susan Strange (1986) called "casino capitalism." Then came 2008.

While history may not repeat itself, the conditions of today are strangely reminiscent of Europe after WWI. The various economic crises (including especially the Euro crisis that began in 2010) have not been ameliorated by government policies. If anything, austerity programs have made the conditions worse. In Europe, we see growing right wing mobilizations that are typically nationalist, and many are even embracing the symbols and ideologies of fascism. In many places, Muslims have become the new Jews, some of the more virulent strains of these mobilizations have indeed revived a seemingly lost anti-Semitism. These post WWI conditions were the social context for the emergence of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, the foundations of cultural Marxism. As will be argued, the Frankfurt School, while deeply rooted in the Marxist critique of domination, was primarily concerned with understanding the various cultural aspects of capitalism, beginning with its rationality, its culture (mediated by ideology), and especially its then new mass-mediated forms of leisure—entertainment via film and radio. Its members—especially Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Theodor W. Adorno—were also concerned with the psychodynamics of character, especially authoritarianism, which they saw as disposing the embrace of right-wing nationalisms or, quite often, indeed fascist movements. In the pages that follow I will endeavor to demonstrate the continuing importance of three features of the early Frankfurt School project. (i) the Frankfurt School offered a profound theoretical framework, rooted in both Western philosophy and Marx's critiques*, which, informed also by Weber and Freud--spoke to the issues of its time. While the social and economic consequences of WWI were especially evident in Europe, we must also note that government policies were ever less able to deal with the crises of the time. But further, these crises were not only political-economic, but ideological and indeed characterological as well. (ii) Despite the complexity and abstract nature of German Idealism, the erudition of its proponents, and the marginalization of Marxist thought – especially in the post-war United States -- the Frankfurt School members nevertheless had considerable impact beyond their small number of actual practitioners. (iii) The "second generation" of Frankfurt School scholars, beginning with Jürgen Habermas, moved the locus of critique from a Marxian critique of capitalist culture, consciousness and character to a philosophical concern with language, communication and recognition. This approach drew upon such diverse sources as analytic philosophy, symbolic interactionism,

developmental psychologies of morality and psychoanalytic theories of object relations. But in doing so, they clearly left the realm of cultural Marxism behind. Although scholars may debate when this began, this was clearly evident in when Habermas published *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1983, 1987) that presented an alternative to Marx's materialist theory of history.

At this point I would like to call for the resurrection, revitalization and renewal of classical Critical Theory as the very kind of multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary theory that is needed to understand our present age, and bring about the kind of freedom and democracy that can and will enable the conditions in which the self-realization of each would be dependent on the self-realization of all. In the pages that follow I would like to show how the foundations of the Frankfurt School good offered us profound insights into the rise of fascism, the domination of Reason, the concerns with culture and ideology and last but not least the concerns with character psycho dynamically understood yet offer the starting point for revitalized critical theory 21st century.

PART I: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

The roots of critical theory

By the end of the 19th century, with urbanization, industrialization and growing populations of exploited workers, there were also working class organizations and mobilizations seeking amelioration of the adversities of capitalism. Often their members were socialists or communists. Marxism had morphed from a philosophically informed critique of capitalist political economy into a significant political force especially evident in 1917 when the Bolsheviks overthrew the czar. Marxism was becoming a significant intellectual force as evident in the writings of some of its intellectual leaders, especially Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg. This prepared the intellectual context of the 1920s that would lead to the emergence of the Frankfurt School. The work of three scholars might be noted.

1. *Georg Lukács*. One of the most important influences on the Frankfurt School was the philosopher Georg Lukács, a friend of Max Weber (see below) who offered a profound reinterpretation of Marx's critique of commodity fetishism, further informed by acknowledgement of the problematic nature of means-end rationality (later to be framed as "instrumental reason" by Max Horkheimer, and "functionalist reason" by Jurgen Habermas). Lukács attempted to illuminate the salience of culture as more than a simple epiphenomenon of capitalist and industrial machinery. More specifically, his analysis of consciousness suggested that the fundamental logic of bourgeois thought – a process of reification -- systematically and effectively eroded the capacity of proletarians to understand their own position, and become revolutionary class.

2. *Wilhelm Reich*. It was at about this time that Wilhelm Reich, a psychoanalyst informed by Marx, began a reformulation of psychoanalytic theory that is likely to have had a considerable amount of influence on Fromm and Marcuse, though he was little cited. More specifically, for Wilhelm Reich, Freud had conflated civilization with its specifically repressive, capitalist forms that demanded the obedience of the proletariat for the sake of submitting to the discipline of factory work much as it required subordination of the lower middle classes to perform highly

regulated work within bureaucratized organizations, both public and private. For Reich, early forms of subordination to authority began with inculcation of drive repression, specifically sexual repression. At that time, bourgeois society attempted to control the sexuality of the young (beginning with masturbation and ending with the suppression of adolescent sexuality). Reich argued that this repression, aided by a strict superego in the service of capitalist society, was the basis of psychopathology and support for fascism. One of the main reasons for his unpopularity was his Sex-Pol movement, an attempt to encourage adolescents to engage in safe, mutual satisfying, safe, sexual relations. For Reich, this was not simply extolling hedonism, but it was political, subverting the authoritarianism that sustained capitalism. Not surprisingly, he was forced out of both the International Psychoanalytic Association and the Communist Party. Not only was he often cited Nevertheless, as will be apparent, he did influence Eric Fromm and Herbert Marcuse.

3. *Max Weber*. The concern with rationality was central to the work of Weber in his attempts to understand the rise of Western modernity, how modern rational capitalism emerged, while at the same time, though underdeveloped, he noted that rationality, as the price of modernity, demanded the suppression of the self-its entrapment in iron cages. For Weber, modern capitalism emerged with the rise of the market societies of southern Europe in which rational law, based on Roman law, rational methods of accounting, and rational organization of commerce would enable efficient commerce and prosperity. Accordingly, he differentiated means-ends rationality as the most efficient way to pursue a specific, set, secular goal, while substantive rationality was the means to attain a particular religious or perhaps political value, or desirable “end” itself subject to evaluation. For Weber, bureaucracy was the most efficient form of administration, yet a form that became a source of domination and dehumanization. One of the major contributions of the Frankfurt School has been its critique of Enlightenment rationality as valorized by the Enlightenment philosophers and now the dominant logic of modern societies.

The First Generation of Frankfurt School Critical Theorists

Given the intellectual legacies noted, an interdisciplinary group of scholars established the Institute for Social Research that brought together a number of “permanent colleagues” (as Horkheimer put it in his inaugural address) with a variety of backgrounds, especially philosophy, economics, political science, including even Eric Fromm, a psychoanalyst. Moreover, many of the philosophers, especially Horkheimer and Marcuse [Adorno did not join officially until 1938], were trained in German idealism, especially Hegelian dialectics with its concerns with Reason, phenomenology, and ethics. The publications of Korsch’s *Marxism and Philosophy* (1923) and Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness* (1971), and the rediscovery of Marx’s early writings, of 1844, the *Manuscripts* with its systematic critique of alienation as estrangement and objectification informed by his view of human nature in terms of “species-being” that was warped and truncated by the demands of wage labor. The worker had become estranged from his/her community, denuded of his/her agency, without creativity and self-fulfillment. S/he was shorn of dignity or recognition and reduced to little more than an objective factor of production. For Hegel and indeed Marx as well, human beings produced themselves in their work, but given that wage labor was alienating, the resulting self was, in the words of Eric Fromm, a monstrosity. For the sake of exposition, I would like to briefly note contributions of some the central fig-

ures of the early Frankfurt School whose work I will argue was not only insightful, and remains so, but needs to be resurrected in order to make sense of our times and envision a better world

If any single publication embodied the early Frankfurt School, it would be *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (DOE) by **Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno**, which wove together the philosophical anthropology of Marx's 1844 Manuscripts, Nietzsche's notion of conscience as *ressentiment*, and Freud's view of patricide, guilt and the rise of civilization. DOE was a lamentation on the conditions of modernity in which Reason led to its own negation fostering the collapse or "regression" of Reason; functional Reason was used to fashion the weapons and concentration camps of World War II to attain irrational ends. Much of the Frankfurt School critique was in reaction to this kind of (non) thinking in which reified thought, traditional thought, the logic of science seeking objectification and control initiated the new economic, political and cultural realities of the 20th C. eg the advanced technologies of Fordist production, the administered State if not the entire society, advertising and propaganda. It would seem as if modernity and the mastery of nature had not brought forth freedom, democracy and human fulfillment but the contradictions of capitalism led to the return of barbarism in National Socialism and with it, WWII, and unprecedented degradation, debasement, genocidal death, destruction, nihilism and mass celebrations of the irrational, Weber charted the "disenchantment of the world", they would argue that "Myth is already Enlightenment, and Enlightenment reverts to mythology."¹ It should also be noted that the DOE introduced the idea of the "culture industry" in which the production of mass culture much like the mass production of factory produced mass media that much like classical propaganda serves political ends fostering passivity and compliance distraction and often escapes to fantasy.

It was Eric Fromm, sociologist-turned psychoanalyst who had the most direct influence in the Frankfurt School's interest in psychodynamics, culminating with a variety of studies on the German working class and later, the still classical study of authoritarianism – *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al, 1950). For Fromm, a central concept was the historical constitution of "social character", the most typical psychological character structure (desires, defenses, internalized values and conscious self-representations, ego identity), of the members of a people or perhaps more specifically of a social class, that disposed people to "want to do what society required them to do". "The social character comprised only a selection of traits, ***the essential nucleus of the character structure of most members of a group which has developed as the result of the basic experiences and mode of life common to that group*** Fromm, 1941)."

Herbert Marcuse's now eponymous *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) updated, and indeed expanded upon the early work of the Frankfurt School and perhaps developed one of the most systematic critiques of ideology, consciousness and subjectivity in his analysis of the new forms of repression in late industrial society that begins with the intersection of capitalism and the nature of its rational, "one-dimensional" logic of technology which could potentially enable human freedom, but which instead maintains new and perhaps seemingly "benign" forces of invisible domination and repression. (And the goal of imminent critique is precisely to unmask these moments of cultural and characterological domination.) All aspects of life have become domi-

¹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, (2002) *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Pp. xviii.

nated in the “administered society”, including especially sexuality. Whereas for the early Frankfurt School, following Freud and Reich, sexual repression fostered the compliance of the “docile bodies” of workers, for Marcuse, with the explosion of consumer society, sexual freedom, qua “repressive desublimation”, extolling sexuality, served to reproduce domination while indeed reproducing subjugation. Consumerism depended on the erosion of restraints such as asceticism and thrift, instead, its culture industries and advertising fostered the insinuation of “false needs” to prompt consumption and thereby both distract from concerns with the social and grant legitimacy to the system in which subjectivity was increasingly restricted-to one dimension. But Marcuse would also argue that such conditions called for a “great refusal” and in the late 60s, many people anointed him as the guru of both the hedonistic counterculture and the politicized, antiwar movements. But these were not working class movements, workers had been incorporated into the system. Rather, these were coalitions of the disaffected, especially certain college student and minorities. Between Freedom Summer, antiwar movements and “be-ins” these folks would spearhead the “movements.”

At this point, let us just quickly review some of the fundamental insights of the early Frankfurt School to which we will return. We might perhaps begin with 1), alienation and the distortion of what is essentially human, 2), the immanent critique of ideology (today further informed by the work of Lukács (1972) on reification and Gramsci (1971) on the hegemony of values, norms and consciousness. For many people, religiously based anti-intellectualism, an integral aspect of authoritarianism, greatly limits the capacity for self-understanding let alone a critique of power and/or ameliorative praxis. If reification limited the self-s of the workers circa 1920, one dimensional thought, its iteration of the 60’s kept people in general oblivious to both their domination and more gratifying possibilities. The critique of culture needed to consider the influence of mass media from its propaganda function to its pure escapism to its hedonistic forms of carnivalesque distractions. Closely allied is the importance of consumerism as both a legitimating ideology and for many people, the consumption of fashions, homes, cars and life style became the fundamental basis of identity; you were what you buy. Finally, 3) the role of character remains a salient a moment of hegemonic process in which people reproduce their own subjugation. While many consider the Frankfurt school traditions pessimistic, it is also an emancipatory critique in which the roles of hope and vision are especially salient. Given the conditions of our age, crises at the level of political economic crises of migrated have to into the life worlds, not be resolved by any form of capitalism, crises of our culture (see below pp. 17-19). The barely nascent social movements of today, may foretell the emergence of “a better kind of world.”

The Eclipse of Critique:

Slowly but surely the early concerns of the Frankfurt School with alienation and domination, sustained by culture and ideology that had shaped character in which domination, acceptance of power and “artificial needs” for consumerism were insinuated within the individual began to wane. There are several reasons why. From within, the critique of domination/emancipation shifted from immanent critique that revealed the often mystified workings of capitalist ideology and domination. Habermas moved from his early concerns with legitimation crises and the public sphere to language and communication and then to democratic theory and constitutionalism. The next generation of Frankfurt School “students” moved to concerns with discourse and

communication in which a “theory of communicative action” displaced the materialist basis of classical critical theory. Social mobilizations had become little more than quests for “truth speaking situations where disembodied male elites could engage in “undistorted communication”.² This movement was especially clear in the work of his acolytes such as Honneth, Fraser, Jaeggi etc, who have moved further and further away from its early, and I would argue, even more, can little address the radical changes in our age of fluid modernity that rests upon neoliberal, global capitalism,

For Habermas, all that was left of Freud was the methodology of dream interpretation as if decoding a rubric led to social transformation. Freud’s concerns with character structure, embodiment and bodily desire and defense/repression, especially the nature of the superego/authority relationships were generally forgotten. And with that amnesia, a site of resistance against the new forms of domination were lost.

At the present moment, even when a serious scholar like Nancy Fraser has retained a concern with the political-economic and has made the issue of redistribution central to her work as well as the basis of her critique of Honneth. But in her case, she rests her analysis primarily on Karl Polanyi. Redistribution generally takes place in social democratic societies and may have relieved some of the issues of dire poverty, but the fundamental basis of a critique of capitalism was not simply the economic impoverishment of workers as the alienation, dehumanization and domination. For Marx the issue was the possibilities their creative self-fulfillment and indeed the dignity. This was especially clear to Marcuse who yet critiqued the new forms of alienation, ideology and character at time of relative affluence that had “incorporated”, or should we say bought of the working classes who would become bastions of support for conservative cause and support for imperialist misadventures starting with Viet Nam. With Axel Honneth, the migration away from Marx indeed the explicit rejection of Marxism has been completed.

We should also note several other factors from without limited the concerns with the classical Frankfurt School perspectives, not the least of which was the all-pervasive anti-communism if not the rabid McCarthyism of the American postwar years. While there were a few critical voices like C. Wright Mills (who actually read a number of the Frankfurt School publications) most critique was liberal rather than radical. It was not until the 70s that most university level theory classes would even include Marx as a major terrorist. Furthermore, understanding the Frankfurt School requires familiarity with German idealism, especially the importance of Reason as we have seen in Kant and Hegel, dialectics, Hegel who addressed questions of recognition raised by Fichte, and the more psychological insights of people like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and indeed Freud. Most social scientists, and regrettably even many social theorists, generally have little background in these traditions and instead, for both personal reasons and the nature of the disciplines, it is been much easier to embrace various “traditional” theories in which prediction and control theory and research has been more rewarding for academic careers. For many years, structural functionalism served this purpose. Similarly, the preferred mode of research has been the large-scale surveys devoid of any theory. While to be sure such surveys may provide

² Fraser (1990) has of course critiqued this notion and has spoken about feminist public spheres as well as oppositional spheres.

us with a great deal of information, especially when the researchers have a background in history and philosophy as did Adorno, most such research might be considered part of the problem.

One might also note several other issues, such as complex and abstract nature of German idealism and dialectical arguments might seem either complex or contrary to more pragmatic forms of explanation. Similarly the elitism of critical theorists was confronted by the egalitarianism of American culture. This was especially evident in the massive rejection of Adorno's interpretation of jazz as proto-fascism indicating his limited understandings of American cultural traditions and his personal biases against popular culture. Moreover with growing interests in communication studies, and the emergent approach of the Birmingham school, the Frankfurt School approach to mass culture was criticized as denuding the subject of agency and rendering him/her a "cultural dupe" incapable of negotiating and creating alternative if not reversals of cultural meanings as forms of resistance. Similarly academic psychology in general, largely dominated by behaviorists, disdained psychoanalytic understandings of character. For example Fromm's publications were widely read by the general population but unheard of in psychology departments.

Part II: The Enduring Relevance Critical Theory

The second generation of the Frankfurt School version of critical theory moved further and further away from its original Marxist – Hegelian roots. The theory was cleansed of its pessimism and became "domesticated" for mass consumption, and while indeed most of their positions were quite liberal, indeed social democratic they could no longer envision a radical transformation of capitalist society.³ Nevertheless given the rise of identity politics in the 70s and 80s, there was a natural affinity with philosophical concerns for recognition and dignity especially among various subordinated groups such as women, gays, and minorities whom had been the victims of either misrecognition, typically denigrations, or quite often, the very denial of any recognition of their humanity. Thus with the growth of academic interests and programs in women's studies, queer studies, and minority studies, there was an "elective affinity" not only toward these developments and changes in the later generations of the Frankfurt School, but so too did other theories especially postmodern and post structural theories gain popularity in so far as these theories too, were often quite critical of domination, especially what was embedded within discourses. Yet their critique was little concerned with the early Frankfurt School. But that said, if we consider the major questions of today, the legacies of the Frankfurt School, updated for the present age, yet offer profound insights. Moreover, as shall be later suggested, among these insights are the embrace of hope and indeed utopian vision.

1. Alienation

³ The utopian moment within the classical Frankfurt School especially the legacy of messianic Judaism, and the importance of hope, Bloch 1995 will be noted in the conclusion.

As was noted one of the primary influences on Frankfurt School thought was the publication of Marx's 1844 critique of estranged labor. From Hegel Marx drew upon the need for recognition as the basis of self-consciousness that begins with work as the transformation of nature. Although the concept of alienation was rooted in Hegelian theory, Marx focused on material factors beginning with agents who alienated their labor power in exchange for wages. With wage labor as the basis of capital, the production of the commodity turned the worker herself into a commodity, a thing; the worker's sense of self, her identity, was reduced to a cost of production as the basis of value. When people neither own their tools nor the products of their work, such alienated labor turns and attenuates agency, elides dignity as a human being, fosters the estrangement between people and fragmentation of the social greatly attenuated any sense of community and estranges humanity from its species being. As Marx notes:

It is therefore in his fashioning of the objective that man really proves himself to be a species being. Such production is as active species life. Through it nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labor therefore is the object of negation of the species life of man for man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness but actively and actually and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself is. (Marx, 1975, p. 329)

Most work in capitalist societies, even among many of the higher paid higher skilled jobs tends to be repetitive, boring, allows for little creativity or autonomy. It should be noted that a recent Gallup survey found that about 70% of Americans do not really feel connected to, engage with their work. It might be parenthetically noted that workers in worker/community owned plants where they have a degree of autonomy and self-management report far higher levels of personal satisfaction. Thus alienated labor, the objectification of the human essence which is its potential, and the frustration of fundamental human desires created contradictions that need to be overcome and this could only happen with the abolition of private property. But it should also be noted that one of the contradictions of contemporary capitalism it can no longer provide enough jobs and in many of the advanced countries, what jobs do exist, tend to be intermittent short term and without any benefits or permanent connections to the workplace. Such work is been described as precarious and as economist Guy Standing (2011) has noted the lack of connection to work organizations, and the denial of dignity to the unemployed and/or underemployed not only leads to a form of alienation, but such alienation can make the precariat a dangerous class.

A central concern for the Frankfurt School was and remained the alienation of industrial society especially the given the domination by rationality. But they expanded the concept beyond the factory. Following Weber, and to an extent Nietzsche on repression, *ressentiment* and the conformity of the herd mentality, the domination of modern life by rationality, the basis of modern science and capitalism, along with the demystification of the world, was the basis of a world "without feelings -- or without heart." Modernity in general left people with a life that was sterile, empty and devoid of passion or meaning. For the Weber, the rationality of modern soci-

ety facilitated the administration of government while rational capitalism efficiently produced vast amounts of wealth but led to the dehumanization of everyone now trapped in iron cages.⁴

After WWII, the Frankfurt scholars initiated a critique of consumerism which they saw as a form of alienation that had migrated from wage labor at the site of factory production to the culture/ideology of capitalist societies in general and consumerism in particular (Langman 1992; Langman 2001). More specifically, as was noted, alienated labor frustrates basic human desires and without meaningful self-production in work, empties the self. But the intertwining of mass consumption and mass media, rooted in of the psychology of propaganda, is extremely successful in insinuating a variety of "false needs" that tap into people's unfulfilled desires. The consumption of goods and particular services offers a variety of compensatory gratification, beginning perhaps with providing a sense of agency as people believe they make empowering choices in the selection of mass produced goods especially fashions that might express their "uniqueness" and sophistication as a buyer. Moreover the possession of goods, or perhaps the display of specialized services (trainers, stylists, even plastic surgeons, might bring individual a certain degree of recognition and ersatz feelings of self-esteem. Similarly certain patterns of consumption, those especially tied to leisure and lifestyle, serve to incorporate people into various groups where people find more meaningful relationships than they do in work, especially when work is becoming more and more a series of short time and involvements finally, for many people consumerism, as a way of life, provides them with a sense of meaning, "I shop therefore I am." Moreover as will be noted below, consumerism that promises the "goods life" not only serves as an alienated, albeit compensatory form of subjectivity, but as a central aspect of contemporary society.

Alienation in modern society is often seen in terms of meaninglessness and to a great extent to that is often rooted in the kinds of work one does. For Eric Fromm, people had a very deep and fundamental need for meaning, but as we will know the accumulation of goods, or the possession of wealth over and above which enables a decent lifestyle provides people with neither happiness nor meaning. If a person produces himself/herself in their work, but that work is alienating s/he is not likely to find life meaningful. Indeed recent research has shown fundamental differences between happiness and meaning and indeed, more and more people today seek a meaningful life rather than a happy one.⁵ Happy lives tend to be more individualistic and concerned with gratifying one's own needs, focusing on the present. Meaningful lives are more likely concerned with the past and future as well there is more concerned with relationships and especially giving to others, and finding realms of self-expression.

2. Character

⁴ As they argued, one appeal of fascism was the valorization of intense emotions, joyously celebrating the *Volk* hating the "other" and participating in the emotion laden rituals.

⁵ http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/happy_life_different_from_meaningful_life
http://faculty-gsb.stanford.edu/aaker/pages/documents/SomeKeyDifferencesHappyLifeMeaningfullife_2012.pdf

⁵ [Jill Suttie, et als Is a Happy Life Different from a Meaningful One?](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/happy_life_different_from_meaningful_life)
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/happy_life_different_from_meaningful_life
http://faculty-gsb.stanford.edu/aaker/pages/documents/SomeKeyDifferencesHappyLifeMeaningfullife_2012.pdf

Marx's theory of alienation rested on a tacit theory of human nature/subjectivity that was never fully articulated (Geras, 1983). Marx could draw upon Aristotle to see that human beings were inherently social. For Hegel, alienation meant objectification and estrangement which Marx saw as estrangement from species-being. Marx focused on material factors impacting agents who theoretically produced themselves through creative self-fulfillment in work. Freud's psychodynamic theory of character, sharpened by the insights of Reich, further developed by Eric Fromm and later Marcuse, provided a theory of character, desire and defence as it was shaped by social conditions or perhaps we might better say misshaped, thwarted and alienated by capitalism. By character is meant the totality of the person's conscious and unconscious psychological structure, his/her self-reflexive ego, defenses/modes of repression, goals and values e.g. the superego and basic desires of the id. For Freud the demands of civilization to minimize conflict between people and maximize their work limited the full and free development of character, not just through external constraints, but perhaps more important, the internalization of those rules and regulations in which guilt maintained the repression of desire and thus limited human happiness for which people might find alternative compensations such as intoxicants. But what was crucial for Frankfurt School, as noted by Wilhelm Reich, Freud had conflated civilization with its repressive capitalist forms that demanded the obedience of the proletariat for the sake of the discipline of factory work as well as the subordination of the lower middle classes to enable the highly regulated work required by bureaucratized organizations. This was especially true in terms of the internalization of authority relationships and the intergenerational reproduction of subjugation to authority (Horkheimer, 1972).

For Eric Fromm, "social character", the widely shared, historically determined, most typical psychological character structure (desires, defenses, internalized values and conscious self-representations, ego identity), of a people or perhaps more specifically of a social class. "The social character comprises a selection of traits, ***the essential nucleus of the character structure of most members of a group which has developed as the result of the basic experiences and mode of life common to that group.*** (Fromm 1941)." Just as labor was historically variable, so too was a particular character structure most frequently found within a particular society or at least a class within that society. Moreover, such a character was motivated by socially shaped desires and regulated by social norms to "do that which s/he must do" in any particular historical moment. Feudal society demanded a passive, receptive character structure-one ideally suited to accept dynastic rule. The early stages of capitalism required self-constraint to enable the accumulation of capital which fostered an anal compulsive "hoarding character" ideally suited for the small merchants and independent farmers at the dawn of the rising capitalist class in which Protestant asceticism became the basis for capital accumulation and investment. Later, given the nature of industrial capitalism in which most people either did factory work office/small business work and/or state functionaries, such people were especially likely to be highly repressed "somasochistic" authoritarians. Not only do such people willingly submit to authority while from below demanding obedience, but are prone to authoritarian aggression that is more likely than not, "projected" toward "out groups" seen as dangerous, deviant and perhaps both. Such somasochistic authoritarians actually enjoy inflicting pain or observing others suffer – especially out groups and/or subordinates. ***As they argued, following Wilhelm Reich, the authoritarian character structure, instilled by repressive and often punitive chil-***

drearing practices, disposed both the willingness to engage in the kinds of work demanded by a capitalist system and the fervent embrace of authoritarian ideologies that extolled obedience to authority and suppression of the self. Thus ideology was not simply a set of intellectual explanations as to how the world functions, its dominant ethical norms and ways to navigate everyday life. Rather, those perceptions, interpretations and logics of everyday experience, were insinuated within the person, specifically his/her superego and anchored by powerful emotions that in turn impacted individual's identity.

Particular character structures shaped by a materialist based ideology not only sustained class relationships, but embraced ideologies mystifying those relationships, while the internalization of authority more often than not led to the acceptance of domination which became part and parcel of colonized individual consciousness and motivation that thwarted human fulfillment. In other words alienated labor was and supplemented by an alienated character. Moreover if we move our theoretical framework from the early Freudian theory of character to more contemporary concerns with identity, it becomes easy to note that one of the consequences of alienation in the classical sense of Marx, as well as the dehumanization by "rationality", we would easily note that whatever else capitalism may produce in the way of commodities, capitalist production also fosters particular modes of subjectivity, a deformed character structures with alienated identities and colonized desires who actively reproducethe system

3. Ideology, Culture and Character

For Marx, ideology was a systematically distorted view of reality that sustained the power of the ruling class, "the ideas of all societies were the ideas of its ruling classes". These ideas generally justified social arrangements and valorized compliance to elites. One of the main systems of ideological justification was religion, which served to sustain class domination by distracting from earthly arrangements, while sacralizing elite rule. Religion served to provide comfort to the oppressed, the "opiate" of the people assuaged the "cry of the oppressed." Religion promised workers a better life -- in the next world. Similarly, as Marx would show in the 18th *Brunaire*, the French peasant landowners, notwithstanding their high taxes and exploitative mortgages disdained the proletariat and instead cast their lot with Louis Napoleon, the foolish nephew. This of course did nothing for the peasant farmers but furthered the riches of the urban capitalists.

The immanent critique of ideology that was inspired by Marx's writings on the distortions of consciousness, and mystifications of self-interest, and the fundamental contradictions of bourgeois ideology in which "freedom" meant the freedom of the marketplace, free of restrictions for the bourgeoisie; democracy gave the "people", primarily rich male people, the right to select between equally rich candidates. By the early 20th C, three moments impacted the Frankfurt School's ideology critique. First, Weber's analysis of rationality, the dominant value of modernity had become quite influential in the academic community. Then, Georg Lukács melded Marxist theory of reification within the commodity fetish with Weber's notion of rationality that became theorized as a legitimating ideology for modern societies that itself became a sourceof domination and dehumanization. Further, given the new technologies of communication, the then new mass media was utilized by the fascists for dissemination their propaganda

via film – including endless showings of *“The Triumph of the Will”* which was one of the first great “media spectacles”. Moreover, radio provided endless martial music or Hitler’s speeches. The study of propaganda led directly to the post war concerns with mass media is itself a form of propaganda that might seem neutral, but serves more political ends such as sustaining the system, supporting government policies, or advancing political agendas – think Fox news. Or, consider the propaganda campaign of the Bush administration that engendered mass support for the attack on Iraq. The concern with propaganda raised psychological question about why some were “prepared” for its messages and just what impact it had.

Following the traditions of Lukács, the Frankfurt School and the work of Antonio Gramsci, we can now better understand ideology and how hegemony, the ideological control of culture, sustains particular historic blocs –coalitions of economic, political and cultural elites of every society at a particular moment. Hegemony rendered the interests of the ruling classes as normal, natural, “common sense” in the “best interests of all”. Hegemony normalized the historically arbitrary system of domination. Moreover those who might critique the hegemony of the ruling classes would be marginalized, rendered as deviants, immature and perhaps pathological. For Gramsci, hegemony was the result of a number of groups with common interests in maintaining their economic, political and social domination. Thus hegemonic ideologies were instilled from the earliest of ages by schools/educational institutions, the Church and mass culture/mass media that would today include consumerism.

But how and why do people accept the values, worldviews and understandings that engender consent to the status quo that is the basis of their domination and subjugation? As noted above, to understand the willing part of “willing assent” we must move to a critical social psychology based upon the insights of Freud to fully understand the insinuation of hegemonic ideologies within one’s very identity, and how such an identity provided the basis for 1) “willing assent to domination”, and 2) an active denial of the validity of alternative claims. People acquire identities that have been ideologically crafted, but not under circumstances of their own choosing, the identities of prior generations, shaped by earlier authority relationships, weigh down upon the individual and colonize consciousness and desire. But this is not rational process, as was evident in the Frankfurt School studies of authoritarianism and anti-Semitism. One function of ideologies is to alleviate anxieties over uncertainties in this world and perhaps the next. Moreover, the maintenance of group ties through conformity to group norms can be a source of gratifying attachments as well as a basis for self-esteem. Thus, ideologies are not simply rational explanations of social reality, or misrepresentations of social reality that both mystify and sustain the power of the ruling classes. Rather, ideologies and values are essential components of one’s identity which itself has both conscious and unconscious components that are closely intertwined with powerful feelings and emotions. Thus “willing assent” to hegemonic ideologies and/or social arrangements rested upon emotional configurations. For Fromm:

“The fact that ideas have an emotional matrix is of the utmost importance because it is the key to the understanding of the spirit of a culture. Different societies or classes within a society have a specific social character, and on its basis different ideas develop and become powerful...our analysis of Protestant and Calvinist doctrines has shown that those ideas were powerful forces within the

adherents of the new religion, because they appealed to needs and anxieties that were present in the character structure of the people to whom they were addressed. In other words, *ideas can become powerful forces, but only to the extent to which they are answers to specific human needs prominent in a given social character*. Not only thinking and feeling are determined by man's character structure but also his actions...the actions of a normal person appear to be determined only by rational considerations and the necessities of reality. However with the new tools of observation that psychoanalysis offers, we can recognize that so-called rational behavior is largely determined by the character structure. (Fromm, 1941, p 277-78).

The concerns of Eric Fromm and the Frankfurt School provided an early framework for understanding the emotional basis of how ideologies were actively internalized the course of early life. Moreover, the "willing assent" to hegemonic ideologies/particular historic blocs, was not based on logic, reason, facts or figures, but feelings and emotions which are intrinsic moments of character structure that people employ "motivated reasoning" to "accept" facts or evidence or deny and reject that which is inconsistent with their own identity that has not only itself been fashioned by various ideological agencies from family to school and media, but identity acts as either a facilitator or barrier to worldviews, information's and understandings and in turn motivates both reasoning and action.

Part III: American Character: Stability and Social Change

In order to demonstrate enduring value of the early Frankfurt School for a critical understanding of our times, as earlier noted, we need to consider the impacts the various legitimation crises of the economy, the limitations of governments, intense cultural conflicts, some of which have to do with questions of what is "acceptable sexuality", and social movements left and right in some ways echo the 1920s and 30s. Many the contributions of the Frankfurt School not only remain insightful, but are especially so. Generational differences indicate this is a time in which American social character is in the process of change that intersects with the various legitimation crises of our time. This is clearly evident in the political polarizations of left and right and the resulting social mobilizations reflecting intense passions, the contentious movements of our times. Moreover, foregrounded by the decline of American hegemony and the deteriorating economic conditions for the majority, the outcome of this bifurcation suggests an outcome of either a new barbarism of a Mad Max World, or the kind of a democratic egalitarian society envisioned by Marx

The study of American character constitutes a vast literature that surely goes back to 1797 most clearly the 1820s and the work of Alexis de Tocqueville. Let us first begin with the observation of Eric Fromm that every historical era especially its political economy shapes a particular social character that is more or less well adapted to its milieu. As Horkheimer (1972) so brilliantly argued, cultural legacies can endure for several generations – indeed long after the conditions that gave rise to these patterns have changed. And thus as will be argued, certain qualities of American character can yet be traced to the early Puritan settlements of New England. But at the same time, as Fromm observed, the concept of

“dynamic character change” suggests that given changing circumstances, characterological transformations are indeed quite possible long after childhood, quite often during the crucial moments of adolescence/youth when people establish an identity that is indeed shaped by the context of the times. For the sake of simplicity one might discern four major patterns of American culture that continue to impact our society. For the sake of brevity we would note the importance of religion, violence, achievement and exceptionalism.

Religion

The first point that should be noted is the salience of religion especially the strident Puritanism of the early settlers. Although headed to the Virginia colony of Jamestown they wound up in Massachusetts and after years of hardship were somehow able to survive. As devout Protestants this was interpreted as a sign of God’s blessing. They likened themselves to the ancient Jews and saw themselves creating a “New Jerusalem.” Moreover given the verdant forests and fields of the relatively unsettled lands –and like most settler colonialists they would eventually displace indigenous peoples. They would prosper. With abundant forests they became shipbuilders and in turn whalers and traders. The northern colonies turned Caribbean sugarcane into rum which was sold to England. Meanwhile the Southern colonies prospered from the exports of cotton and tobacco. Of course Southern agriculture depended on slavery which was a problem for Protestant doctrines of the equality of all men (sic) before God. The solution was simple. African slaves would be dehumanized and for the most part little more than workhorses or pack animals. And to be sure, the Bible justified slavery. And guns enforced the Biblical dictates.

Their survival in the New World then coupled by their relative prosperity was seen as an indication of God’s blessing, as first articulated in John Winthrop would proclaim in his “City on the Hill” address

The Lord will be our God, and delight to dwell among us, as his own people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways, so that we shall see much more of his wisdom, power, goodness and truth, than formerly we have been acquainted with. We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when he shall make us a praise and glory that men shall say of succeeding plantations, “the Lord make it like that of *New England*.” **For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill.** The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.⁶

For our purposes the salience of religion was more than simply a legitimating ideology and explanation for earthly success but became an enduring part of American character that is indeed with us till this very day, this is the basis for this American exceptionalism that notwithstanding the Enlightenment, a fervent embrace of religion endures. Two points might be noted. Protestantism has long stressed the importance of the individual in terms of his/her relationship to God and the secular world, his or her economic self-sufficiency indeed success was the indication of one’s moral worth. But further as de Tocqueville asked, why did religion have such staying power when it was no longer required by the State. But he answered his own question by

⁶ Winthrop, J. 'A model of Christian Charity' speech (1630)
<http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/charity.html> (Accessed 2 March, 2014).

noting that in this new nation with abundant land, people lived relatively isolated from each other and the only time they came together as a group was for church services. Surely this observation influenced Durkheim who saw the primary function of religion as granting and celebrating identity based on common kinship and solidarity through the collective efflorescence of emotions that come from singing, dancing, eating and even a few cases drinking with each other. Moreover as de Tocqueville noted, given the frailty of social bonds in the new nation, individuals dared not stand out from one another on the basis of intellectual attainments. Thus part and parcel of what would become American social character, was not simply an anti-intellectualism that disdained ideas, but a virulent rejection of ideas that might be considered critical of the system.

In these ways, religion as an ideology has not only become an intrinsic aspect of American character, but for the most part, has endured till this very day. Closely associated with the legacies of early Protestantism are a number of other values such as the "this worldly asceticism" which according to Weber linked together a motivational basis for achievement, namely salvation anxiety assuaged by the results of work as well as a repression of the sensual the bodily, the emotional and the passionate. And to be emphatically clear this included sexuality. Moreover despite the quality of all believers, orthodox religions tend to be authoritarian and structure the world in terms of hierarchy beginning with the subordination before God. But even within that subordination there are gradients that begin with the superiority of men over women much of which is often legitimated by the quotation of Scripture. Secondly while the Bible said little about race, it did accept slavery and the American case, there was little differentiation between slaves mostly Africans, but some Native Americans in which race and slavery were clearly **intertwined**. One might also note that the Bible the condemned sodomy and homosexuality.

Violence

Settler colonies generally have a problem with indigenous peoples that already live on the land and more often than not, displace them from lands deemed valuable. Given the importance of the rural economy in early America, slowly but surely Native American populations were displaced thus we should note this was not a gentle process but more often than not, depended on the use of force especially the use of guns. But we similarly note the importance of guns that have become central part of American character and identity. It was the widespread possession of guns that enabled a ragtag colonial army to defeat the most powerful empire at that time.⁷ The gun remains a salient feature of American character and identity. Between its Puritanism and the historical conditions of the colonial era, there emerged a cultural ideal of masculinity as coarseness and toughness, expressed in the celebrations of guns and violence, blessed by God that has been enshrined in our popular culture as "moral masculinity" (Cf; Wilkinson, 1984; Slotkin, 1992). The American hero-male could dish it out-especially when aggression was part of moral redemption (Cf. Wilkinson, 1998.)⁸

⁷ In point of fact, the hunting rifle was ill-suited for military combat given that much of the actual combat at that time was more likely close proximity combat using the bayonet than the legendary sharpshooter picking off enemy soldiers from afar. Most of the guns used by the colonial armies were supplied by the French since they not only had capacities for bayonets, but were far more quickly reloaded.

⁸ By way of comparison, Lipset (1997) has contrasted American "frontier justice" with Canadian respect for the law and order in the persons of the Mounties.

Achievement and Identity

Given the conditions we noted primarily in its fertile lands, the lack of an existing social structure such as feudal land ownership and political control that might impede individual commerce. Moreover religious based motivation, "salvation anxiety" combined with the moral evaluation of work was such that eventually the colonials prospered. But was extremely important is that in dilute scratch that individual achievement became a highly valued goal and basis of desirable identity. This was even clear to de Tocqueville who noted that workers did not feel animosity toward their employers since part of the national narrative suggested that at some later point they would move from employees to employers and become colleagues rather than workers.

Cohort Flow and the Changing American Character.

"American character" or should we say the relative distributions of character types in American society is in a process of change. More specifically, by understanding Eric Fromm's concept of "dynamic adaptation" it will be evident how and why American social character is changing at least for younger people while at the same time, characterological patterns among older populations are more recalcitrant to change. Finally I would like to show how these patterns of character have become articulated in the predominant social movements of our time, the Tea party and Occupy. The study of historically changing character structure needs to consider stability and change. One of the most remarkable aspects of American character has been its stability and the persistence of certain values, internalized as character that have endured for many years and indeed impact many immigrants such that second or definitely third generation immigrants quite closely approximate what has been the typical American character. Moreover in so far as this character structure today is most typical among the middle classes we also find elements of this character among the upwardly mobile. But what is especially important for us is to note the changes in culture and character. It should first be noted that there has been a long-term secular decline in the use of physical punishment which suggests a waning of authoritarianism and the embrace of religiously sanctioned "spare the rod and spoil the child".

Perhaps one of the most significant changes has been the waning of religious fervor and although this may not be evident from the mass media depictions of the mobilizations of evangelical/conservative Christians whose sound bites and sight bites provide great infotainment, in point of fact survey after survey has shown Americans becoming less and less religious. Although many may very well believe in God, fewer and fewer regularly attend church services indeed while half of Americans claim they regularly go to church. Empirical studies of church attendance shows that only about one fourth of Americans actually do get to the pews. Indeed as many sociologists of religion have shown, the fastest growing religion in America today are the "nones" who profess no formal religion that is to say those consider themselves atheists, agnostics, pagans and/or Wiccans.

There is no simple explanation for this change at least two factors should be noted. Traditional American character, as a legacy of Puritanism was quite restrictive about sexuality especially the sexuality of women. Perhaps the fate of Hester Prynne, forced to wear the A in *Scarlet Letter* captures this tradition. Evangelical Christians especially those in ministerial positions continually

extol repression and abstinence, but their messages typically fall on deaf ears since most American youth whatever their religion, if any generally lose their chastity by about 18 years or so. The change in American sex norms can be seen as a result of both material and cultural factors. Materially as more and more women entered the work force, married or single became more independent as was seen in women's movement. One of the major demands of the women's movement was the right for women to determine their own choices about their bodies and given the milieu of the 60s, there was a sexual revolution and revolutionaries won. Secondly there were gradual changes in the content of mass media and whereas at one time radio, recorded music, film, and early television were quite puritanical, this has indeed changed. This was of course noted by Marcuse (1964) who argued that consumer society not only required a relaxation of constraints in general but had used free and open sexuality to maintain new forms of domination. Close to 95% of the population has premarital sex, cohabitation is typical and any kind of porn is available with the click a mouse. As studies of cognitive dissonance have long noted, when values and behaviors are discordant something has to give, and thus more and more people especially young people have moved away from religious based norms of restriction. It should also be noted that among younger cohorts between 18 and 30 years of age, especially among the educated college attendees, there has been a profound increase in the toleration of differences of race, ethnicity and gender orientation. We might also simply note that interracial groups and couples are now quite common and that a majority of Americans approve gay marriage. Finally these changes in culture and character suggest that given the nature of more liberal social values, if not perhaps economic values, that there have been major changes in the nature of social character. In the classical studies of the Frankfurt School the dominant character type was the authoritarian predisposed to submit to authority and dominate subordinates that character was also prone to the projection of aggression to enemies and indeed needed those enemies to maintain his or her psychological equilibrium. As Sartre said "if the Jew did not exist the anti-Semite would have to create him.

Marcuse claimed that the authoritarian character with its rigid superego was becoming extinct obsolescent. The new character type found his/her identity through consumption and that in turn eroded values of thrift and ascetic. But that type is itself now obsolescent insofar as the nature of the contemporary is such that people are likely to have a number of jobs, move quite often and see partnership relationships as temporary. This can be seen in different kinds of alienation, the older generations see the economy as stagnant if not crisis prone, meanwhile their values and very identities are under attack. Younger Americans see a bleak economic future of poorly paid, intermittent jobs, often below their levels of education. At the same time, they are quite alienated from the older conservative values. Today the emerging dominant character type has been seen as more flexible, more fluid, or even Protean. On the one hand this character type is typically more flexible, s/he less committed to ideologies, and less able to sustain loyalties, relationships or commitments.

Kaboom!

It is often the case that changes or crises that suddenly emerge have had a very long incubation period. So too was the 2008 meltdown, which had indeed been long in the offing. Indeed, some might say that while globalization, import substitution, the search for ever lower wages and fi-

nancialization had long undermined the wages and incomes of most people, its crisis prone tendencies were already evident in the in the Thai real estate crisis, the crisis of the Asian Tigers, the Dot com crisis, and the collapse of Enron. Then came the massive implosion; the meltdown of 2007 – 8. Suddenly the fragility of the foundations of the Colossus became evident. In the years since, the economic toll has been evident in a variety of ways, growing unemployment in Europe that have met with austerity programs and in turn growing numbers of the precariat (Standing, 2011) – many of whom had come from the more affluent, educated classes who were now facing limited job prospects if any. Meanwhile, governments that generally support neo liberalism qua market fundamentalism have been little able to impact growing inequality. And the adversities of pollution/global warming are not only more evident, but between floods and draughts, very costly and perhaps threaten the very survival of humans as a species. Truly we face a systemic crisis.

To bring the various moments of the classical Frankfurt approach together and show the relevance for understanding contemporary society we might note the recent wave of protest movements that followed the 2007-8 implosion that triggered two different social movements, the Tea Party, TP, and Occupy Wall Street, OWS. While the TP may not quite be goose stepping Nazis any more than OWS consisted of Communists, these differences yet remind us of the 1920s and 30s. Perhaps one of the best ways of understanding what happened was suggested by Habermas (1975); legitimation crises occur when there are failures in the objective “steering mechanisms” of the systems of advanced capitalist industrial societies that provide 1) adaptation namely the economy that produces and distributes goods and services and 2) social integration, secured by ideology and the State. System integration depends on mechanisms of domination, e.g. the State and the mass media. Social integration, part of the life world however depends on normative structures-value systems that express norms and identity as well as secure loyalty and cohesion. But each form of integration possesses distinct logics and in turn, a different kind of rationality. Social integration comes through socialization and the creation of ‘life worlds’ of meaning, namely a culture/ideology that legitimates the system and provides personal meaning. In contemporary societies, states, markets and their ideologies have “migrated” into the subjective that is to say “colonized the life world”- ***thus crises at the level of political economy impact the subjective namely identity, motivation and values*** (Habermas, 1975, 1981). As Habermas suggests, these movements emerge at the seam between system and life-world (Habermas, 1981). ***Thus crises of political economy have subjective consequences in the life world where motivated identities are experienced and performed.*** At times of crises, people withdraw commitments to the existing social order-creating spaces for alternative views, values, understandings and even identities. But, these conditions do not lead to social movements per se. Crises need to arouse collective emotions, they must be interpreted within existing frames or newly emergent frames that resonate with an actor’s social/network locations, identities, character and their values to impel joining/creating networks of actors.

Anger, indignation and mobilization.

Following the 2007 implosion, many people lost jobs, careers or businesses. Insofar as such crises migrate to the subjective realm of the life world, they foster emotional reactions. People were outraged, angry, fearful, anxious and resentful toward the “system” and its elites and

withdrew their loyalty. But their understandings and reactions to crises were dependent on pre-existing fault lines which in turn fostered different understandings, actions and perhaps social mobilizations. Surely as we learned from the early Frankfurt School, economic crises foster reactionary responses from the lower middle classes and affluent workers, while most workers and some intellectuals support leftist parties. As will be argued, for both the TP and OWS, the economic duress and shocks were intertwined with feelings of alienation, anger and indignation. As has been noted, for the Frankfurt School, alienation was not just an aspect of wage labor, but a general condition of capitalist societies. Between the long term trends and sudden economic shock, many people felt powerless, without recognition and bereft of the possibilities of self-fulfillment. The anger toward economic hardship coupled with feeling of indignation, animated both of these movements. But we would also note that with the anger, fear and indignation came a disdain for the elites-but given class locations, cohort and character, each accepted and reconfigured radically different ideologies, the TPs would go back to an earlier, mythical time when the power of white, heteronormative, religious men was the basis of a dignified identity-based largely on work. Of course the elite targets differed, for the Tea Party, it was all the fault of Obama-no matter that he had not yet been president. Meanwhile for the young, cosmopolitan, secular OCW, embracing equality, radical democracy and visions of a better world to be made, the target of their outrage was the economic elites, the 1% who controlled the economy and had long fostered greater inequality while growing ever richer. While such movements have long incubation periods a precipitating event can trigger massive responses and the outpouring of long pent up emotions-anger, and indignation.

The Tea Party

Right populism has a long tradition in the USA, a country that began its history with the violent overthrow of a government and enduring ambivalence to the one that they created, often seen as an outside agent, if not a conspiracy that would deprive people of their freedom and support "unpopular," liberal agendas. If we go back to what was said about American Character, we noted the importance of religion, and indeed, for those outside of cities or academic centers, conservative Protestantism is the norm, especially conservative in the South. But at the same time, it was also noted that there has been a long term secular change, indeed, the country has become more secular! For religious people, their religious norms and beliefs are not simple choices like Starbuck coffee or Baskin Robbins ice cream. Rather they are major aspect of their identities that are undergirded by internalized norms of repression. As Nietzsche noted, religious moralism was based on denying others the very things you desire. Thus, despite mega-churches, TV programs, marches and demonstrations, there has been a decline in religiosity, combined with a greater toleration of sexuality. Wilhelm Reich may have been right after all. But, as noted, these assaults upon character and identity, as aspects of contemporary alienation foster anger, *ressentiment* and right wing mobilizations.

It should be noted that the TP was clearly racist. While most are not KKK members or subscribers to Stormfront, the membership is about 98% white. Much of their racism is cultural, eg their disdain of African Americans or Mexicans is they are lazy, parasites who enjoy unlimited benefits-that they support through taxes. In the 2008, election, when Sarah Palin ranted against him for his associations, the crowds began to shout kill the traitor. Even John McCain

was taken back and told her to shut up. But even before the election, the intense rage toward Obama was evident, and the dog whistled racism never abated. But then the economy crashed, Bush initiated the TARP programs that bailed out the banks, lest the economy totally collapse. Nevertheless, Obama was blamed. In much the same way, changes in gender roles have eroded male "superiority" and employed women show greater independence and autonomy. (This was also a factor disposing greater sexual freedom as women made their own choices.) And then comes the attacks on heteronormativity, it's the end of the world as gays come out and even marry. So now we can see that conservative religious doctrines over sexuality have been discarded. The "superior" status of whites has been eroded. The growing number of women in the workforce have eroded patriarchy and gay is ok. Thus we can understand how the TP, as an expression of long standing right populism, not only confronted economic shock, but the changing values of America challenged their identities and the bases of their dignity. And while they seemed all powerful and gained power in the 2010 election, buyer's remorse set in and their popularity has plunged. They are now on the losing side of demographic change. Like almost all reactionary movements, they would like to return to an earlier time when they were more financially secure and their conservative identities unchallenged.

Occupy Wall Street

In many way, the OWS folks were the mirror images of the TP, they were young not old, secular (or from tolerant religious backgrounds like Quakers or Reformed Judaism), not religious fundamentalists. They were typically urban, not rural, more tolerant of everything from sexuality to sexual orientation, more culturally diverse and cosmopolitan. (Some were sociology or philosophy majors, and some were indeed graduate students.) The basis for their mobilization was again not simply economic, but feeling alienated from a society which regarded them as surplus, OWS, was an expression of indignation, it was as much an attempt to find dignity as economic justice. Surely the OWS were offended by the injustices, if not criminal acts of the banking/finance communities and the complete indifference on the part of the government to the general welfare of the people, especially the newly jobless and the homeowners that were fleeced and lost their homes. Moreover, the recent college graduates did not often find jobs commensurate with their educations-while trying to pay of huge college loans. And in NYC, the inequality between the rich and poor is especially visible. Thus, OWS was as much a reaction to indignity, as to financial duress. As they proclaimed, the banks got bailed out, we got sold out. Thus the Occupiers, much like their counterparts in the Arab Spring or South European movement demanded recognition and dignity.

Insofar as the OWS movements were spontaneous, leaderless and rhizomatic, their most trenchant critiques were not so much in manifestos, documents and speeches, but in their practices in which "alternative" lifestyles, values and identities articulated in the encampments and protests were both a critique of the existing conditions and attempt to envision in practice if not theory, an alternative to neo liberal capitalism, as well as other aspects of domination, especially religion and patriarchy-themselves often intertwined. Occupiers had established an alternative community that highlighted the inequality between the 99%, and the 1% that controlled both political parties, the injustice of the bailouts to the rich and sellouts to the poor, and indifference to the plight of the masses. While the occupiers tended to be nonviolent, their

critique of inequality, together with their exemplifying an alternative type of participatory democratic, egalitarian society rapidly spread throughout the country and even the world. The very existence of OWS, naming the exploited the 99%, identifying the elite 1%, changed the discussions and raised challenges the legitimacy of the capitalist system in fundamental ways, and much like other such movements, perhaps, Paris commune as the best example, raising such questions, it needed to be crushed and the State mobilized the instruments of repression. It should also be noted that such movements take place in waves and initial mobilizations wane, yet prepare for the next stages

CONCLUSION

The foundational moments of the Frankfurt School were influenced by Marx's theories of the historically unique nature of the suffering under capitalism that rested on the exploitation, alienation and degradation of workers, along with denial of recognition of their basic humanity and their dignity. Marxism was understood *as both a critique of existing society and as a vision, often utopian, of an alternative possibility that cannot be foretold* (e.g., Jacoby, 2005). As has been argued, the concerns with alienation, ideology, consciousness and character remain essential for a critique of the present age, a time when neoliberal capitalism has fostered greater and greater adversities for many people around the world, while mass culture/mass consumption typically serves to distract from concern for seemingly "distant" political economic issues and to dull the capacity for critical thought. As I endeavored to illustrate, in order to understand the conditions of our age, considerations of the TP and OWS have shown the continuing explanatory power of the Frankfurt School's analysis. And while that analysis was an attempt to explain the conditions of our time, we once again need to remember that one of the central moments for that tradition was its emancipatory vision.

One of the most salient moments of Marx's critique of capital was dialectical, domination-created resistance based on the vision of an alternative possibility for society⁹. But that vision of the possible was thwarted by capitalism, warped by its alienation, stunted by its reification, and suppressed by the hegemonic ideologies that reproduced the system. Yet the vision of a better alternative was an essential part of the Enlightenment "project of modernity" -- even and especially for Habermas.¹⁰ The utopian visions of Marx have been preserved in the opus of the Frankfurt School, especially in the works of Bloch, Benjamin, Marcuse and Fromm, inspired in part by a messianic Judaism in the works of Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem (See Jacoby, 2005, Langman, 2013). More specifically, as Bloch (1995) had argued, hope was a fundamental

⁹ Marx's a rejection of utopian socialism was not a rejection of a Utopian vision, rather utopian socialism is did not provide any practical means for its realization. See (Hudis, 2012)

¹⁰ More specifically just as the French *philosophes* critiqued the tyranny of dynastic rule, German philosophy extolled Reason and rationality as the antidote to the tyranny of traditional thought, modernity offered the possibility of freedom. Just as Kant saw the Enlightenment as humanity's release from its past ignorance, from its self-imposed immaturity. "Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another". Hegel saw the Idea of the State as an "ethical totality" where true freedom came with the transcendence of the conflict between the individual and the ethical community. Neither Kant nor Hegel considered the material basis of social relations and ideas nor had they yet witnessed the extent to which the rising capitalist class would control the economy. Nor at that time could they imagine an alternative to capitalism.

human emotion rooted in the human capacity to dream, and dreams provided wish fulfillments. Indeed, in the West there is a long tradition – beginning, perhaps, with Thomas More's *Utopia* - that has understood that economic inequality creates a number of other inequalities, especially in the opportunities for personal fulfillment and dignity. Indeed, a great deal of empirical research has shown that in societies with more equality like Denmark or Japan, there is a greater sense of community and people are happier, healthier both psychologically and physically (less obesity, diabetes, cancer or heart disease) and live longer (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). Such societies have far less violence, drug abuse, or teen age pregnancies. This was understood by Marx whose emancipatory vision of a society was based on freedom from class domination based on private property and the freedom to enable creative self-fulfillment. As has been argued, the defining feature of the Frankfurt School, as a critique of domination, has been its continued critique of alienation, of ideologies that sustain it, and considerations of character patterns that act to reproduce their own subjugation. And just as surely, despite actual conditions, have yet maintained visions of an alternative to capitalism. As the progressives at the World Social Forum chant, "another world is possible".

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