4 Historical materialist psychology: the psychic dimension of manipulation and revolt

The analysis of manipulation, which was predominantly super-structural manipulation, began as a psychological undertaking. This was announced in Horkheimer's inaugural lecture, as well as his editorial preface to the first issue of the Zeitschrift. One of the central questions outlined by the Director was that of the 'psychic connecting links' between the economic base and the superstructural expression of ideology. An essay by Horkheimer in the first issue of the Zeitschrift continued to point out the problematicity of this question:

As long as theory has not recognised how structural changes in economic life are transformed, via the psychic constitution of the various social groups at a given moment in time, into changes in the expression of their life as a whole, then the theory of the dependence of the one on the other contains a dogmatic element which seriously restricts this theory's hypothetical value in the explanation of the present.¹

The question of a historical materialist psychology is thus not merely academic, but a crucial need of 'critical theory of society' in the face of modern history (the rise of monopoly capitalism and fascism). Horkheimer's inaugural lecture mentioned the need for a methodical study of the relevant scientific writings on the subject.² Hence, the Zeitschrift, in contrast to the Archive, undertook to review the writings of Freud, Jung and other psychologists. But before analysing the Frankfurt School's work in this field, it is essential to establish the fundamental question to be answered in this analysis: namely, is any psychological component compatible with historical materialism? This raises the problem of 'orthodox Marxism'. It is not a problem to be resolved easily. For example, Lukács stressed in 1923 that 'orthodoxy refers exclusively to method'. Marxist 'orthodoxy' was the belief that dialectical materialism is the 'road to truth', and that 'its methods can be developed, expanded and deepened only along the lines laid down by its founders', whereas 'all attempts to surpass or "improve" it have led and must lead to over simplification, triviality and eclecticism'.³

Despite Engels's admission (see Chapter 1) that he and Marx had, in their theory of ideology, 'stressed the content and neglected the form, i.e. the ways and means by which these notions come about', the general consensus among 'orthodox Marxists' (who are usually 'orthodox Marxist-Leninists') is that psychology cannot deepen historical materialism; psychology is not encompassed within the lines laid down by the founders of historical materialism, and must thus lead to 'eclecticism'. Walter Jopke, for example, maintains that even where the Frankfurt School does employ the basic concepts of Marxism, they are stripped of their real significance and replaced by 'an eclectic mixture of Hegelian, Marxist and Freudian categories'.⁴ Robert Steigerwald speaks of a 'biological, drive-structural revision of historical materialism',⁵ and Gert Meixner states that 'the attempt to transfer psychoanalysis to human society is doomed from the start'.⁶ Any combination of Marx and Freud is necessarily eclectic, at least according to Marxist 'orthodoxy'.

While it has already been established that the economic categories of 'critical theory of society' were not integrated into a coherent conceptual whole, and that this gap created a tendential idealisation and hypostatisation in the Zeitschrift period, it has also been established that the Frankfurt School's work on manipulation did make a considerable contribution to the theoretical armament of the student anti-authoritarian movement. What is thus called for is a careful appropriation of the Institute's progressive analyses, in such a way as to establish whether the eclecticism of 'critical theory of society' is in fact not due to the attempt to reconcile depth-psychology and historical materialism, but to the failure to integrate the former without undermining the latter.

1 Fromm and the significance of depth-psychology

The only adequate psychology that could be of use to 'critical theory of society', was, for the Frankfurt School, Freud's.⁷ The member of Horkheimer's team designated the task of propounding and realising the task of integrating Freud's work into 'critical theory of society' was Fromm. The first major statement on this problem by Fromm was The Development of the Dogma of Christ.⁸ Written before joining the Institute, Fromm's study had exposed both the historical materialist implications, as well as the a-historical distortions, of
Freudianism. The analysis was reviewed favourably by Borkenau, in the Zeitschrift, as the first attempt to illustrate, on the basis of a concrete example, the methodological synthesis of Marxism and Freudian psycho-analysis. 9 From then onwards, Horkheimer's team, undertaking to give an exhaustive exposé, and a concrete application of this synthesis.

Fromm's programmatic first essay bore the obvious title 'The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology'. 10 It did not fail to quote the relevant admission by Engels of a gap in historical materialism. 11 Fromm then proceeded to show how the attempts to fill this gap had, due to the complete ignorance as to the mechanisms of the psyche, produced a 'purely idealistic psychology', smuggling in a disguised 'innate moral principle'. 12 Therefore, a depth-psychological component was not only compatible with Marxism, but necessary to it, if it was to approach concrete analyses were to be foreclosed.

Fromm maintained that a largely acceptable psychology had been developed by Freud: psychoanalysis was a materialist, historical and social science. 13 The drive theory was compatible with Marxism. 14 Fromm argued, since the 'drive-constitution' only manifests itself in a dialectical interaction with the socio-historically specific 'life experiences'. 14 Marx, in his early writings, had referred to man's 'drives' or 'instincts' (Trieb), and in Capital he accepted the primary nature of certain drives, referring to 'human nature in general' and 'human nature as modified in each historical epoch'. 15 For Marx, the satisfaction of basic needs 'leads to new needs', while at the same time producing 'the object of consumption, the manner of consumption and the motive of consumption'. 16 Man thus produces himself by satisfying his needs, creating new forms of these needs, and creating new needs.

For Marx, production also involves intellectual production; this, in turn, involves the problem of ideology, a crucial concern of the Frankfurt School. Marx, it should be recalled, precluded any crude economic determinism:

Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. . . . Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

But this process, by which the alienated social world is then further distorted in an alienated form of intellectual activity, is a process which can be attested, but not explained, unless recourse is made to depth-psychology. This is the precise point at which the Frankfurt School intend to make an original contribution to the historical materialist analysis of ideological manipulation.

Fromm argues that Freudian psychology and Marxian materialism coincide in regarding consciousness not as the ultimate motor of history, but as the reflection of 'other, hidden forces'. 20 To Marx, these forces were precisely man's instincts, needs and productive capacities; they had become 'hidden' because these human forces had, within class-society, taken on a refined, alienated aspect. Man's own creative powers had turned into an alien force that dominated him. Fromm endeavours to reveal the psychic effect of this alienation; the key factor is the peculiarity of the sex-drive. Whereas hunger, though modifiable, is not so modifiable as to be capable of satisfaction by anything but food, the sexual urge is capable of extreme modification: it can be postponed, repressed, sublimated, transformed: 'A man's hunger can only be satisfied by food; his desire to be loved, however, can be satisfied by fantasies about a good and loving God...'. 21 The vicissitudes of the sexual drive mark off this instinct as capable of the greatest adaptations to the real possibilities for satisfaction that exist. 22 It thus actually has an accommodating, even justificatory, function; and this, for Fromm, is the key to ideology: 'Psychoanalysis can show that man's ideologies are the products of certain wishes, instinctual drives, interests, and needs, which themselves, in large measure, unconsciously find expression as rationalisations, i.e., as ideologies.' 23

2 Freud versus Jung

In the Studies, Fromm explained that the only psychologist to whom 'critical theory' could link was Freud, first because Freud's psychological categories, due to their 'dynamic character', were the 'only ones of any use', and, second, because Freud had applied these categories to the problem of authority (a central concern of the Institute), producing 'many important and fruitful insights'. 24 Freud's work passed through several quite distinct phases, of course, but it is essentially the post-1920 period of Freud's theoretical production which is of greatest significance for the Frankfurt School. It is this period of Freud's work from which Horkheimer's team draw most of their ideas and direct quotations. And this is because 1920 was a major turning-point in Freud's work, introducing the controversial thesis of a death-instinct, which in turn paved the way for the concept of the super-ego. It was this latter which, for the Frankfurt School, provided the key to the problem of ideology.

The attitude to Jung, by contrast, was wholly negative. Leo
HISTORICAL MATERIALIST PSYCHOLOGY

Löwenthal, as early as 1932, rejected the entire Jungian perspective, particularly its propensity for mythical doctrines of race. This evaluation in the Zeitschrift was echoed by Marcuse in later years: Jung was an example of the 'right wing' of neo-Freudian revisionism. It is significant that Jung, in turning his back on Freud, criticised the latter for precisely those qualities which Fromm regards as the historical materialist component of psychoanalysis. Whereas Freud, like Marx, accepted that even the primary needs of man were historically modified, Jung emphasised the a-historicality of both the drives and consciousness: 'From the unconscious there emanate determining influences which, independently of tradition, guarantee in every single individual a similarity and even a sameness of experience, and also of the way it is represented imaginatively.' This not only repudiates the dialectical interaction of man with his socio-historical context ('an exclusive reduction to causes', according to Jung), but also, in conjunction with the 'archetypes', produces an idealist distortion of the genesis of religions, which, says Jung, 'contain a revealed knowledge that was originally hidden', and now 'set forth the secrets of the soul in glorious images'.

To Freud, religion was a culturally induced 'illusion', a 'universal neurosis', a 'wish', a 'delusion', a 'mass-delusion'. This was, of course, the position of the Frankfurt School. Adorno, for example, wrote the following about Wagner's use of myth:

On the one hand, his mythological intention aims at the conscious illumination of the individual psychology and views the seemingly autonomous individual in his dependence on the totality. On the other hand, the myths themselves serve the regression to the primordial and would-be immutabel. The antithesis of Freud and Jung is virtually contained in Wagner's work.

To Marcuse, Jung's psychology was not even a mythology, but an 'obscurantist pseudo-mythology'. What was needed was not a revision of Freud's tendential historical materialism, but the realisation of the latter.

3 Strengths and weaknesses of Freud's depth-psychology

Freud's fundamental achievement was to evolve a critical methodological and categorial apparatus for illuminating the interaction of experience, response and 'human nature'. This is Fromm's judgment as to analytic psychology: 'It locates man's instinctual apparatus among the natural factors that modify the social process, although there are limits to this modifiability.... The human psyche always remains a psyche that has been modified by the social process.'

Unfortunately, Freud himself was no consistent historical materialist. On the contrary, his incisive analyses of the family are often complemented by a retrospective absolutisation of the psychic structures of modern society.

An example of this is Freud's thesis of the slaying of the 'primal father'. Mezner relates this thesis, though somewhat inaccurately, in order to reveal the absurd a-historicity of Freudian theory and thus vindicate his assertion that psychoanalysis is incompatible with the Marxian analysis of society. This particular anecdote is indeed an example of all that is bad in Freud. Although he tried to justify and qualify the thesis by calling it a 'hypothesis', a 'Just-So-Story' that endeavours to 'lighten the darkness of prehistoric times', the fact remains that the myth of the primal father's murder is lacking precisely in historical detail.

At best, this anecdote may cast light on the mechanisms of guilt within a contemporary society. But, unfortunately, Freud's analysis of contemporary man (or rather middle-class men) is presented by Freud himself as the depiction of 'man'. Consequently, there is no room for a conscious differentiation between class-society and classless society, let alone between classes themselves. Alienation becomes, as with Hegel, an integral aspect of material life: thus, 'the great majority of people only work under the stress of necessity', proof for Freud of a 'natural human aversion to work'. However, the historical materialist does not have to reject such a view out of hand; rather, by qualifying it, he can turn it into a valid indictment. Marx said, of Adam Smith's view of work as sacrifice: 'He is right, of course, that, in its historic forms as slave-labour, serf-labour, and wage-labour, labour always appears as repulsive, always as external forced labour: and not-labour, by contrast, as “freedom, and happiness”.' This is the same perspective as Horkheimer advocates in his essay on philosophical anthropology. And it is a method that the Frankfurt School applied, in large measure, to Freud's psychology.

But if the a-historical tendencies outlined above can be surmounted, there remains one major component of Freud's metapsychology which the Frankfurt School did not resolve: namely, the so-called 'death-drive'. The latter, paradoxically, gave rise to some of Freud's most critical social insights, including the operation of the super-ego; but the entire thesis of a 'death-instinct' in the sense of a primary, immutable psychic force, reveals a fundamentally a-historical and socially uncritical character. The Frankfurt School of the Zeitschrift period did reject this particular Freudian thesis, but they never resolved the problematic which had prompted Freud to it. And they appropriate, as the most telling of Freud's concepts, precisely those ones which were derived from the death-drive theory. The Frankfurt
School fail to reconstitute these concepts, and fail to free them from the metapsychological thesis out of which, sadly, they grew. Thus, the contradictions of Freud's theory are, in this crucial case, reproduced in the Frankfurt School's otherwise critical appropriation. This being the case, the question of fusing Marx and Freud can only be answered by taking the death-drive theory, laying bare its contradictions, and resolving them.

4 The pitfall of the death-drive theory

The Frankfurt School's rejection, in the figure of Fromm, of the death-drive theory does not fail to concede that Freud's argument for this thesis is 'significant'.

Going out from the problem of the 'repetition compulsion', Freud came to the conclusion that the human organism is essentially conservative, even retrogressive: the goal of the drives is 'an old state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or other departed and to which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads'. In the face of a human psyche which appears passive rather than active, retiring rather than forward, Freud concluded that the human organism longed for death, and peace.

But, paradoxically, the 'repetition compulsion' has the opposite significance for the sex-drive, which now, under the noble name of Eros, becomes 'the true life instincts'; combining organic substances into ever-larger units, and thus socially progressive. In this way, the earlier dualism of sex and self-preservation is replaced by the dualism of death-drive and Eros. Fromm rejects this, stating, on behalf of the Institute, that Freud's overall position of an 'adaptation to life's processes and necessities' implies that 'the instincts as such are contrary to the biological death principle'. As a general point, Fromm criticises Freud's post-1920 writings for being 'far more speculative and less empirical than his original position'.

Horkheimer, for his part, criticised the tendency to declare all psychic manifestations a 'drive', and felt that this applied to the otherwise discerning Freud. Horkheimer maintained that Freud had succumbed to the temptation to explain history in the metaphysical terms of a struggle between life and death, good and evil, thus losing the originally 'dialectical' quality his categories had possessed. All in all, Freud's postulating of a 'death-drive' is socially uncritical. For this reason, Fromm explains, 'we take off from Freud's original position'. However, the thesis of the death-drive is not refuted by being ignored: and, what makes matters worse, the Frankfurt School's work in psychology is based on concepts which were formulated by Freud in direct, inextricable conjunction with this very thesis. Thus, what is needed is not a preference for the earlier dualism, but an articulate refutation, or rather qualification, of the post-1920 position. Otherwise, the appropriation of Freud's method and categories will reproduce and exacerbate the latter's contradictions.

Freud's most critical contribution to the historical materialist theory of ideology and manipulation is the notion of the super-ego. This notion depends, logically and genetically, on the problem of aggression, sadism and masochism, which all in turn rest on the mysterious 'death-drive'. The latter thesis prompted Freud to revise the idea of a 'natural aggressive component' in sexuality, and he proceeded to explain aggression in terms of 'a death instinct, which, under the influence of the narcissistic libido, has been forced away from the ego and has consequently only emerged in relation to the object'.

This aggression assumes the significance of an autonomous 'instinct' in Freud's later writings. As Horkheimer pointed out, this meant both an abstract cultural pessimism and an undialectical social conformism:

Freud explains the cruelty manifested in war (and elsewhere) not in terms of a transformation of drives that are basically orientated to material goods, nor in terms of the compulsion to bear misery passively. Rather, he tends to regard the 'pressure of civilisation,' in as far as this affects sexuality, as a pressure on the inherent destruction-drive, rather than a pressure on the overall needs which the masses, despite the social potential for gratification, have to repress.

Freud, forgetting that Eros was 'the true life instincts', came to the point where he conceded, totally uncritically, a 'disinclination to give up an old position for a new one' on the part of Eros. This does not of itself preclude co-operative labour for the necessities of life, but taken in conjunction with man's 'natural aggression', the conservative nature of Eros makes social disintegration inevitable, unless sexuality is subjected to systematic repression. Manipulation becomes a sine qua non of social life, for Freud, and this is all due to the destruction-drive:

Civilisation has to use its utmost efforts in order to set limits to man's aggressive instincts and to hold the manifestations of them in check by psychical reaction-formations. Hence, therefore, the use of methods intended to incite people into identifications and aim-inhibited relationships of love, hence the restrictions upon sexual life.

Indeed, Freud doubts whether even this repression can ever be fully effective, and he uses this argument to 'refute' the Marxian
HISTORICAL MATERIALIST PSYCHOLOGY

doctrine that with the abolition of private property social hostilities would cease. No matter what man does to curb aggression, 'this indestructible feature of human nature will follow it there'. It is thus apparent that Freud's cultural pessimism and social conformism are not an accident but the logical outcome of the theory of a 'destruction-drive'. And this latter, it must be remembered, is itself only a manifestation of the 'death-drive'. The historical materialist appropriation of Freud's work must, ultimately, refute the latter thesis.

5 The super-ego and psychic manipulation

Fromm's expository first essay in the Zeitschrift stressed the significance of Freud's depth-psychology for the understanding of ideology; this is essentially the theory of the super-ego. Freud, in his major study of 1923, entitled 'The Ego and the Id', came to recognise within the ego a component which, while itself actively repressing and rendering unconscious, was also itself repressed and unconscious. Freud discerned an antithesis between the coherent ego and the repressed which is split off from it. Unlike Jung, who was concerned with a would-be a-historical 'collective unconscious', Freud now turned this 'dynamically unconscious' into a socially critical category. He did this by locating the genesis of the super-ego in the family; and while Freud does absolutise the nuclear family as the family, what he says about the latter is an incisive critique of the former.

Freud expounds the following model of the child's development: the boy (Freud concentrates on the male child, whose pattern of development is then superimposed on the girl) identifies with his father and develops an object-cathexis for his mother. As time passes, the boy requires, and receives, less attention and less physical contact. The father now appears to be monopolising the mother's attention, and the boy thus resents this competitor. But rebellion is useless, owing to physical inferiority; the object-cathexis is doomed. At this stage, the flexibility of Eros comes into play: the original psychic impulse gives way either to an identification with the mother or an intensification of the identification with the father. The latter is the usual outcome of the Oedipus Complex, and this is the key to the super-ego, which, by giving permanent expression to the influence of the parents, 'perpetuates the existence of the factors to which it owes its origins'.

Freud uses this theory to repudiate the notion of a 'herd instinct', reducing the latter to an extension of the concrete experience within the family: groups of individuals, all having gone through a similar Oedipal conflict can easily 'put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal'. Society, as shown above, actively manipulates the sex-drive so as to effect such identifications. But what is most important of all is that (as in the resolution of the Oedipal situation) the ego ideal, or super-ego, can be precisely that person, or group, who most deserves one's hatred and active hostility; thus, despite justified resentment, 'the suppressed classes can be emotionally attached to their masters'. This is Freud's central contribution to the theory of ideology.

The problem with the Freudian theory of the super-ego is that it is directly dependent on the thesis of the death-drive. Although Freud speaks of the super-ego's genesis in terms of the sublimated libido of the first object-cathexis, the vicissitudes of the death-drive play a crucial role in the perpetuation of this repressive instance. Freud views the consolidation of man's super-ego as follows:

His aggressiveness is introjected, internalised; it is, in point of fact, sent back to where it came from—that is, it is directed towards his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego, which sets itself over against the rest of the ego as super-ego, and which now, in the form of 'conscience', is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals.

As long as this aggressiveness is attributed to an irreducible 'death-drive', then Freud's insight into ideological deflection of consciousness is complemented by an uncritical defence of this process: repression and manipulation appear as the sine qua non of human society. Any historical materialist appropriation of the super-ego theory must, clearly, free it from its dependence on the death-drive.

Freud himself was never happy with the hypothesis of a death-drive; he could not identify any energy-source for it, as he had been able to do for Eros (libido). Prophetically, he wrote, concerning the polarities of love and hate, affection and aggression: 'If only we could succeed in relating these two polarities to each other and in deriving one from the other... Freud himself never achieved this reduction. Nor did Fromm, who simply ignored the problematic reduction and returned to the earlier position which Freud had been obliged, out of intellectual integrity, to abandon. But the reduction outlined was achieved by another Marxist critic of Freud: Wilhelm Reich.

Reich had never operated with any concept of a 'death-drive'. In fact, even his use of 'destruction-drive' was implicitly critical of Freud; Reich defined this phenomenon not in terms of an externalised 'death-drive', but as the biologically necessary process of breaking up and digesting. As for the irrational manifestation of such an urge, this was a 'product of civilisation': 'Man's destruction-drive...
Historical Materialist Psychology

is distinguished, above all, by the fact that its goals are not biologically necessary. In this regard, it corresponds exactly to the savagery of many animals who are deprived of sexual gratification. Nonetheless, in 1927, Reich sees irrational aggression as the response to a frustrating environment, not as a primary drive. Implicitly, the ‘destruction-drive’ is reduced to Eros, within an overall historical materialist framework. Reich’s final breakthrough came in 1933, a year after the programmatic essays by Fromm in the Zeitschrift. But long before that, Reich’s serious re-examination of Freudian metapsychology had put him on a path that made him not only an important forerunner of the Frankfurt School, but their decided superior.

6 The Frankfurt School and Wilhelm Reich

Fromm’s evaluation of Reich’s work in 1932 is mixed. On the one hand, Reich has produced some ‘outstanding empirical investigations’ into social psychology, as well as doing ‘extensive research into the social conditioning and the social function of sexual morality’. But Fromm does not recognise the profound implications of the latter for the refutation of the ‘death-drive’ theory. And otherwise, the evaluation of Reich is largely negative; Fromm, concentrating on methodological considerations, reveals that the Institute considers it erroneous ‘if one—as Wilhelm Reich, for example—restricts psychoanalysis to the sphere of individual psychology and argues against its applicability to social phenomena (politics, class consciousness, etc.).’ Although Fromm adds that ‘in his latest works Reich has modified this standpoint in a very fruitful way’, the fact is that Fromm does not fully understand Reich’s method, either now or later.

Reich’s original position, to which Fromm refers by quoting quite extensively, was as follows:

The real object of psychoanalysis is the psychic life of societised man. The masses come in for consideration only in so far as individual-based phenomena crop up in them (e.g., the problem of the leader), and only in so far as traits of the ‘mass psyche’—anxiety, panic, obedience, etc.—can be clarified from our knowledge of individuals. It would seem that the phenomenon of class consciousness is hardly accessible to psychoanalysis, and that sociological problems (mass movements, politics, etc.) cannot be the object of the psychoanalytic method.

Thus, for Reich, a historical materialist psychology cannot say anything positive about the genesis and nature of class-consciousness, but, at most, only explain the latter’s absence. Presumably, Fromm intends to show that psychoanalysis can explain the presence of class-consciousness. Whether he succeeds, however, remains to be seen.

But apart from anything else, Fromm’s general criticism seems remarkably misguided. First, Reich did not wish to ‘restrict psychoanalysis to the sphere of individual psychology’; on the contrary, his object was, from beginning to end, ‘societised man’. Second, the polemical, ironical rejection of the ‘mass psyche’ is obviously a deliberate distatiation from Jung’s ‘collective unconscious’. And, third, Reich’s controlled extension of ‘individual-based phenomena’ to social manifestations is the method that Horkheimer subscribes to in the essay ‘History and Psychology’, and which Fromm himself applies in his essay ‘Concerning the Sense of Impotence’.

Indicatively, Fromm only manages to give a socially orientated analysis of one of the ‘negative manifestations’ of the ‘mass’; namely, the sense of impotence. Nowhere did Fromm provide any meaningful illumination of the positive emergence and operation of class-consciousness. Reich, by contrast, developed his theory in this very regard. And he did so because of his active involvement in ideological struggle. In 1934, Reich wrote that class-consciousness was ‘present in every nook and cranny of everyday life’. He did not thereby reduce class-consciousness to the subjective state of the proletariat, which still needed the resolute ideological leadership of the political avant-garde. But Reich emphasised that the elements of a mass class-consciousness existed, in ‘the awareness of one’s own needs in all spheres’; in ‘the awareness of the means and possibilities of satisfying them’; and in ‘the awareness of the hindrances placed in their path by a society based on private ownership of the means of production’. Reich called these ‘concrete elements’, if seized upon, enlightened, and drawn together, would form a revolutionary consciousness. Thus, Reich’s version of a historical materialist psychology involved a Leninist conception of revolutionary organisation and leadership. It remains to be seen how the Frankfurt School responded to this stage of Reich’s work.

7 The Institute’s analysis of authority

Horkheimer’s ‘General Section’ of the Studies in Authority and Family introduces a method which is historical materialist in the differentiated sense of ‘critical theory of society’:

The production-process influences men not only in the immediate and contemporary form in which they themselves encounter it in their work, but also in the form it has assumed
HISTORICAL MATERIALIST PSYCHOLOGY

in the relatively stable, slow-changing institutions such as family, school, church, and art. As for the first form, it has already been shown (see Chapters 2 and 3) that the specific economic dimension of contemporary social determination is not analyzed adequately by the Frankfurt School. The corresponding contributions to the Studies are fragmentary, and do not provide the hoped-for economic back-up of the superstructural analyses by Horkheimer, Fromm and Marcuse. But the latter still constitute a significant contribution to the analysis of manipulation; the merits, and ultimate limits, of this contribution must now be established.

Horkheimer’s preface to the Studies introduces a categorial distinction that would seem to be programmatic: ‘authoritarian’ (autoritar) means authority-affirming, that is, on the part of the object of authority, the ruled; ‘authoritative’ (autoritativ) means authority-demanding, that is, on the part of the subject of authority, the ruler. In point of fact, this distinction is not adhered to with any stringency in the Studies themselves. This is not proof of laxity, however, but indicates the omnipresence and complexity of the authoritarian pattern within contemporary society. The fundamental authority is capital; economic conditions themselves are ‘authoritarian’. Thus, the authoritarian experience dominates the lives of all men, of all classes, in the sense that they are the objects, not the subjects, of social determination. Horkheimer and his team can therefore speak of ‘the authoritarian state’, and, within this constellation, of an ‘authoritarian intervention by parents’.

In exposing the network of mediations in this authoritarian society, ‘critical theory of society’ goes beyond Freud’s horizon, which focused almost exclusively on the child’s treatment at the hands of its parents, thereby ignoring the continued authoritarian experience of the father in the socio-economic sphere. This is particularly significant for the class of wage-labourers, for, in the ‘free’ selling and buying of labour-power, the ‘constraint to enter into the contract is not the same for both parties’. Thus, ultimately, the solution to the problem of authoritarian subjection is not ‘personal liberation’ but revolution. This is a reiteration of Capital.

The Frankfurt School’s concept of revolution, though lacking in concrete specificity, clarifies the psychological difference between the petit-bourgeois rebel and the true revolutionary. Although the Frankfurt School themselves failed to accept any sort of party discipline (Adorno holds up Lukács as an example of the misguided submission of intellectual to party organisation), Horkheimer’s team did subscribe to the theoretical principle of revolutionary discipline; Marcuse wrote: ‘Revolutionary subordination in one’s own ranks and revolutionary authority towards the class enemy are necessary prerequisites, in the struggle for the future organisation of society.’ Horkheimer stressed, as had Lenin, that anarchism was a product of the petite-bourgeoisie, stretching the ideology of ‘individual freedom’ to absurd limits, instead of transgressing it. Fromm backed this up by showing that the ‘rebellious’ type feels the oppressive weight of society but fails to perceive its true nature, thus revolting against all authority, and, in his disillusionment, often reinforcing authoritarianism by turning fascist. The ‘revolutionary’ type, by contrast, wants to eradicate the blind economic authority of class-society and realise in the socio-political sphere what he is already attempting to achieve in his personal relations with others: namely, the end of authoritarian character-formations. However, the Frankfurt School felt that revolutionary theory and strategy so far had failed to identify the full mediations of the blind economic authority as it determined the institutional and personal relations within society. Thus, the Institute’s analysis tried to rectify this imbalance by tracing the authoritarianism within the family.

8 The Institute’s analysis of the family and its dialectics

The active authoritarian figure of the nuclear family is clearly the father. Freud regarded this as the ‘natural’ outcome of the father’s physical and intellectual superiority; in this way, all society, for Freud, was viewed in patriarchal terms. Horkheimer points out that the father is the master in the home because he is usually the wage-earner. And as to the father’s need to dominate, Horkheimer stresses that the father’s experience in the work-process is the most direct exposure to the authority of capital. Horkheimer’s depiction of the repercussion of this authority on the home-life is a continuation of Kraeauer’s simile of ‘cycling’ (see Chapter 1).

But if the father’s authority is based on his wage, then this authority must be subject to all the vicissitudes of the labour-market. The first contradiction outlined by the Frankfurt School is the wage-earning capacity of the youths. The questionnaires distributed by the Institute reveal that adolescents, particularly boys, become ‘more independent of paternal authority’ and actually ‘an economic force to reckon with’. Certainly, this new-found authority does not survive its economic undermining in periods of unemployment, but the same applies to the father himself. This is the second contradiction discussed in the Studies: society inculcates the values of ‘work and discipline’, yet capitalist production cannot guarantee the availability of gainful employment; Horkheimer says of the father: ‘If he ceases to earn, or at least possess, money, he thereby loses his social standing, and that threatens his prestige in the family too.

The law of bourgeois society then takes its toll of him. Not even unemployment benefit and social security payment can completely compensate for the shattering of the normal authority-structure, as the questionnaires demonstrate.

But the Frankfurt School's attitude to the dissolution of the family is dialectical, and not without a note of sadness. While they do not entertain any illusions that 'the family' ever did exist in any real meaningful sense for the masses (Marcuse relates Marx and Engels's dreadful picture of proletarian existence and of prostitution), none the less, Horkheimer's team regard the family as more than a lie, more than just one more reification. In fact, the family is a sphere where reification is halted, if only slightly: here, man can be not just a 'function' but a man. Although authority-patterns are carried over into family life, and although sexual enjoyment is debased (as the Studies show so well), the family is regarded as more than this. The Frankfurt School are sorry to see it undermined by advertising, social engineering and fascism. The most poignant expression of this is Adorno's Minima Moralia: 'The rising collectivist order is the mockery of a classless one. While liquidating the bourgeois individual, it also liquidates the Utopia that once drew sustenance from motherly love. The family is being not sublated but annihilated. In the tradition of their general ideology-critique, the Frankfurt School thus jump to the rescue, at least of the idea of the family.

But the dialectical evaluation of the family goes beyond this note of sadness; Horkheimer actually perceives a new, constructive force emerging from the hollow shell of the nuclear family: on this basis, where the original interest in the family has largely vanished, perhaps it may generate that same feeling of community as unites these people with their kind outside the family. . . . The children will then be raised not as future heirs, but as man. Although authority-patterns are carried over into family life, and although sexual enjoyment is debased (as the Studies show so well), the family is regarded as more than this. The Frankfurt School are sorry to see it undermined by advertising, social engineering and fascism. The most poignant expression of this is Adorno's Minima Moralia: 'The rising collectivist order is the mockery of a classless one. While liquidating the bourgeois individual, it also liquidates the Utopia that once drew sustenance from motherly love. The family is being not sublated but annihilated. In the tradition of their general ideology-critique, the Frankfurt School thus jump to the rescue, at least of the idea of the family.

But the dialectical evaluation of the family goes beyond this note of sadness; Horkheimer actually perceives a new, constructive force emerging from the hollow shell of the nuclear family:

spontaneity-theory. This deficiency will be discussed below. But before that, an even more fundamental problem emerges: on what theoretical grounds does Horkheimer believe that liberation is possible at all? As a Marxist, of course, he can base his belief on the vision of a society where the control over the means of production has been socialised in the full sense of the word. But is Freud's depth-psychology compatible with this vision? After all, Freud uses the theory of a death-drive, upon which his explanation of ideology is based, to vindicate the repressive society and refute the doctrine of a classless society.

It is not enough simply to ignore Freud's cultural pessimism and social conformism, for the psychoanalytic analysis of ideology is bound up far too tightly with them. Horkheimer, for example, is right to deny the primacy of any 'submission-drive' and to reduce it instead to the authoritarian family. He is also correct to imply that this submissiveness draws on energies which could otherwise be progressive: 'The bad conscience developed in the family absorbs innumerable impulses which might otherwise direct themselves against the respective social conditions involved in the individual's disappointment'. Certainly, one can assert, as do Fromm and Horkheimer, that these 'impulses' do not presuppose any 'death-drive', but the fact remains that Freud was only able to explain the super-ego adequately by recourse to this pessimistic thesis. In addition, the posing of the 'death-drive' was based, as Fromm admits, on a 'significant' argument.

What is needed is the systematic refutation of the 'death-drive' and the reduction of all its seeming manifestations to a psychic force which would allow of, and actively require, liberation. This was the method employed by Reich in his appropriation of Freud. Reich's metacritique, beginning in the 1920s, first re-examined the notion of Eros. Anticipating Marcuse's later differentiation of 'repressive' and 'non-repressive' sublimation, Reich maintained that 'true' sublimation was not only not based on repression, but actually precluded by the latter: 'A sine qua non of sublimation is that the respective drive-forces are not exposed to the crippling effects of repression, which blocks not only direct gratification, but all constructive activity on the part of the drives'. Repression turned the remaining direct sexual activity into an unsatisfactory; neurotic experience that then called forth all the perversions and reifications normally attributed to 'free sex'; and, in this way, sexuality did indeed become anti-social.

The only answer to Freud's dilemma was to uphold the progressive interpretation of Eros, which alone made true sublimation possible; thus, Reich demanded the establishment of the 'ability to work and love'. Fromm, by contrast, while repudiating the thesis
HISTORICAL MATERIALIST PSYCHOLOGY

of a death-drive, returns to the earlier polarity of sex and ego instincts. Thus, Eros is no basis for a non-repressive society; on the contrary, some sort of control over it would seem to be called for. In addition, Fromm is uncritical as to what constitutes sexual gratification; he says that 'the drives towards self-preservation must be satisfied by real, concrete means, while the sex drives can often be satisfied by pure fantasies'. He does add that 'there is not only a physical but also a psychic minimum existence, and the sex instincts must be satisfied to some minimal extent'. But there is no indication as to the concrete limit of this minimum, nor as to the nature of non-repressive satisfaction.

However, the final resolution of the contradictions within Freud's metapsychology demands not only the progressive evaluation of Eros, but the eradication of the death-drive thesis. This was achieved by Reich in 1933, in Character Analysis, which is nothing less than a total restatement of the psychoanalytic theory of masochism, repetition-compulsion and the pleasure principle. The phenomenon of a repetition-compulsion only prompted the positing of a death-drive because this compulsion seemed to operate 'beyond the pleasure principle'. Thus, Reich re-examines this repetition-compulsion in the light of his theory of sexuality and repression. Reich differentiates two kinds of fear: 'real fear' (Reallängst), which is the normal response to a genuine threat, and which prompts either flight or aggression, depending on the prospect of victory; and 'storage fear' (Stauungsängst), which is the permanent, dynamic state of the neurotic character, who internalises what would otherwise be a rational aggression, directing this at himself. This is the key to masochism.

While the repetition-drive operates within the pleasure principle, there is no question of a 'death-drive'. So Reich endeavours to refute the interpretation of those cases where the compulsion seems to operate beyond the pleasure principle. This is essentially the phenomenon of masochism, which Freud viewed as follows:

I have been led to distinguish a primary or erotogenic masochism, out of which two later forms, feminine and moral masochism, have developed. Sadism which cannot find employment in actual life is turned round upon the subject's own self and so produces a secondary masochism, which is superadded to the primary kind.

But, in fact, what Freud had really done was to observe certain manifestations of 'secondary' masochism, and, owing to his uncritical acceptance of the 'need' for sexual repression, project this masochism backwards, inventing a 'primary' masochism as a theoretical expedient. And, in addition, Freud had actually misinterpreted masochism.

Reich took the most extreme manifestation of the 'death-drive', namely suicide, and reduced this to the mutilated sexual instinct, which had been channelled into an intolerable 'storage fear'. A human being commits suicide not because he 'wants to', nor because he is 'biologically motivated to', but simply because the social reality has produced 'tensions that have become too much to bear, and that can only be released by self-annihilation'. Less extreme forms of masochism reveal the same principle: they are a reinstated form of 'primary masochism' or 'death-drive', but the perverted release of a tension that is sexual in origin. In fact, Freud's whole interpretation of masochism as 'pleasure in pain' is incorrect: masochism is simply the endurance of pain by a neurotic personality as the only means of releasing 'storage fear'. There is no 'beyond the pleasure principle':

In as far as repetition-compulsion was taken to mean, firstly, that every drive strives for the establishment of a state of peace and quiet, and, secondly, that there is a compulsion to experience ever anew such pleasures as have already been experienced, there was no objection to the notion of a repetition-compulsion... But, understood in this sense, the repetition-compulsion remains within the framework of the pleasure principle. Indeed, it is the pleasure principle itself which alone can explain the compulsion to repeat.

In this way, the entire foundation upon which the 'death-drive' rested crumbles, and the ultimate contradiction of Freud's metapsychology is resolved.

In his next major work, Mass Psychology of Fascism, Reich extends the clinical findings of Character Analysis to the problem of political impotence:

The repressive moral restraints on the natural sexuality of the child, culminating in the severe restriction of genital sexuality, produces people who are anxious, shy, reverent, obedient, and, in the bourgeois sense, 'good' and responsive to education. Henceforth, every aggressive impulse is beset by extreme fear, thus crippling the rebellious powers within man. Similarly, the repressive precept of 'clean in mind' creates a general inhibition on all active thought and criticism.

Reich clearly shows that the Freudian thesis of the 'death-drive' can be demolished without relinquishing the critical concept of the super-ego. Indeed, the latter only assumes its full critical value through a systematic refutation of the 'death-drive'.

Fromm's position, by comparison, is much weaker: he never frees the super-ego from its fatal involvement with Freud's pessimistic
metapsychology. At one point, Fromm actually holds up Freud’s ‘The Economic Problem of Masochism’ as the authoritative work on masochism.102 This is no less than astounding, since Freud here bases his entire theory on the hypothesis of the ‘death-drive’, explaining the super-ego in terms precisely of the vicissitudes of ‘primary’ masochism.103 (When Fromm later104 details the Studies themselves as the authoritative text, he only perpetuates an unresolved contradiction.) Fromm does acknowledge that Reich has made some progress on the question of masochism, and that, in particular, Reich has demonstrated the fallacy of any ‘beyond the pleasure principle’. But Fromm fails to see, or, at least, to admit, that Reich has thereby demolished the ‘death-drive’. Instead of applauding Reich’s reduction of this ‘drive’ to Eros, Fromm actually states that the fecundity of Reich’s work on masochism is ‘seriously limited by his usual physiologist overestimation of the sexual factor’.105 Clearly, Fromm understands nothing of Reich’s theory.

10 Contemplative psychology and the loss of praxis

The Frankfurt School, in their appropriation of Freud’s work, fail to satisfy their own criterion of systematically exposing and eradicating the ideological distortions within otherwise critical works of contemporary theoreticians. But Horkheimer’s team, in their discussion of Freud, also fail to live up to their other methodological imperative: namely, that such critical studies as Nietzsche’s, Bergson’s and Freud’s should, in a new theoretical form, be constituted as components of a practically critical movement. How do the Frankfurt School envisage raising the contradictions of authoritarianism to the point of a ‘conscious contradiction’, so that consciousness unfolds ‘not only its liberating force, but also its inciting, disciplining and violently practical force’, thus ‘sharpening’ the ‘struggle’ with which the critical intellectual was ‘linked’, at least according to the Institute’s ‘manifesto’ of this period? In fact, none of these questions is answered.

The Frankfurt School of the Zeitschrift period lack not only all relation to concrete praxis, but, in addition, all notion of ideological struggle, even anti-authoritarian struggle. This is not due to the objective collapse of revolutionary potential within Germany, but, as in the case of class-struggle (see Chapter 3), reveals the Frankfurt School’s failure to even pose the question of organised struggle. This is why Horkheimer’s section in the Studies ends on such an enthusiastic, but contemplative note. Organised revolutionary praxis is regarded as spontaneous, and, consequently, the emergence of revolutionary consciousness does not have to be broached in terms of mass ideological struggle. Fromm implied, in his critique of Reich’s work, that a historical materialist psychology would illuminate the emergence of class-consciousness. But the Institute never fulfilled this promise.

In as far as the Frankfurt School have any conception at all of political organisation, there seems to be some room for an intellectual avant-garde: thus, ‘world-historic transformations’ (presumably revolutions!) are usually precipitated by ‘groups who are free of any deep-rooted psychic patterns, and who base their actions on knowledge (Erkenntnis)’.106 These groups are not specified as to their socio-political character; indeed, they seem to be destined to lead by virtue of some fortunate anti-authoritarian education. But even apart from this weakness, Horkheimer makes the theoretical transition from ‘knowledge’ to political leadership far too immediately, speaking of those moments when:

the economic decline of a specific mode of production has loosened the corresponding cultural life-forms to such an extent that the suffering of the majority of society can easily turn into revolt, and it only requires the resolute will of progressive groups to effect a victory over the mere force of weapons, which by now is all that is propping up the entire system.107

For the Institute, the ‘dialectics’ of the authority-structures are simply registered by ‘critical theory of society’ as something that may happen to materialise into revolution. The psychological theory of the Frankfurt School is not structured according to the needs of any ideological struggle of the present. Nowhere are there indications as to a theory and strategy of anti-authoritarian struggle.

Reich’s position was significantly different; although ‘only a socialist economy can provide a basis for the free development of intellect and sexuality’, none the less, psychoanalysis can and must play a revolutionary role in the sphere of child education ‘as a psychological basis for socialist education’.108 The strategy for the latter was outlined in Reich’s Sexual Maturity, Abstinence and Repressive Matrimonial Morality,109 as well as being pursued actively, under the auspices of the KPD, as ‘sexual politics towards a conscious social goal (zielbewusste Sexualpolitik)’.110 Reich actually criticised the KPD for its failure to appreciate fully the revolutionary significance of anti-authoritarian education. The party leadership made a fetish of ‘Politics’ and rested content with exposing Hitler as the agent of the most reactionary monopoly capitalism. They did not link positively to the ‘petty, banal, primitive, simple everyday life’ of the masses. Only such a link could ‘unify the objective sociological process and the subjective consciousness of men’. Reich stresses that it is not enough to note contradictions in

112
the socio-economic totality; these contradictions must be exploited to the full. Only the reconciliation of economic necessity and proletarian consciousness could produce the unifying deed of revolution.

Reich had been active in this work during the crucial, and fatal, class-struggles of the last years of Weimar Germany. The Frankfurt School, by contrast, held no hopes for changing the world; so they set about explaining it. That explanation, though dialectical, did not throw up any concepts for an anti-authoritarian strategy, and even failed to emphasise the need for such a strategy. Despite the Institute's repudiation of the SPD's reformism and abstract evolutionism, and despite the Institute's emphasis on the role of class-struggle, the Frankfurt School's psychological theory did not develop any practical concepts to further this struggle. The one exception, Marcuse's work since the mid-1960s, is discussed below.

11 The absolutisation of psychology

The lack of concrete praxis in the Frankfurt School's psychological theory is no mere slip, but is in fact the logical outcome of 'critical theory of society' as a whole. The materialist dimension of praxis can only be grasped by a theory which relates directly to what Horkheimer regards, in a generalised way, as the motor of history: namely, class-struggle. And that relation presupposes, and would be impossible without, a founded class analysis, which the Frankfurt School, despite criticising Freud for failing to differentiate his categories according to the class-constellation, never provided.

But in the absence of a sound economic theory, the role of psychology becomes distorted. Originally, Horkheimer conceived of it as an 'auxiliary science' in the elucidation of history, which was to be founded upon categories that were essentially economic. As Adorno stressed, quite rightly, the recourse to psychology was not without its dangers; speaking of Marx, he wrote:

The latter did not have a 'superficial psychology.' He had no psychology at all, and for good theoretical reasons. The world Marx scrutinised is ruled by the law of value, not by men's souls. Today men are still the objects or the functionaries of the societal process. To explain the world by means of the psychology of its victims already presupposes an abstraction from the basic and objective mechanisms to which men are subject.

While the Frankfurt School were head and shoulders above any crude psychologism themselves, their appropriation of psychology did, due to the lack of economic theory, tend towards precisely the 'abstraction' that Adorno points to above.

Ultimately, the Frankfurt School is unclear as to precisely what psychology can reveal about manipulation. Can it reveal anything about the failure of the united front in Weimar Germany? Can it reveal anything about fascism? The answer is that a historical materialist psychology might help to illuminate the psychic aspect of the petit-bourgeoisie's propensity for fascism. In this regard, Horkheimer was correct to announce that the Institute would concentrate its analysis on the white-collar workers (see Chapter 1). But as time went on, the psychological concern freed itself from the overall historical materialist intention, and the study of the so-called 'middle classes' was extended, as some 'ideal-type', to the urban proletariat. Thus, Horkheimer wrote in 1933, the year of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, that the proletariat, too, shows 'bourgeois traits'; and Horkheimer is talking here largely in psychological terms.

This thesis, simplistic and, to this day, unsubstantiated, of the 'embourgeoisement' (Verbourgerlichung) of the proletariat, militates against any real class-analysis. In particular, it hedges over the theoretical need for an analysis of economic manipulation, the sort of analysis Alfred Sohn-Rethel worked on and which is not encompassed by the method and categories of 'critical theory of society'. Martin Jay, in a chapter on the Institute's first studies on authority, wrote: "As to be expected, Critical Theory was applied to the most pressing problem of the time, the rise of fascism." Unfortunately, the problem of fascism encompasses far more aspects than the Frankfurt School of the Zeitschrift period undertook to examine. It should never be forgotten that in the last pre-terroristic election of Weimar Germany (November 1932), the 'combined' vote for the two workers' parties was greater than the Nazi vote. Clearly, any attempt to explain the rise of fascism in terms of a characterological 'embourgeoisement' of the proletariat is an eclectic mixture of Marx and Freud.

12 The role of psychology in Marcuse's radicalised 'critical theory of society'

Marcuse has recently revealed that one of his many disagreements with Horkheimer in the 1930s was that the Institute's work was 'too psychological'. Thus, it is interesting to see how Marcuse's own use of psychological categories in his radicalised theory since the 1960s differs from that of his colleagues in the Zeitschrift period. This is not the place for a thorough analysis of Marcuse's re-examination of Freud's entire metapsychology. Suffice it to say that Eros and Civilization, in contrast to Fromm's work, recognised the need to appropriate the problematic of Freud's post-1920 work, as well as to free Eros from Freud's ideologically limited theoretical horizon. Although Marcuse does defend the 'death-drive' (against
HISTORICAL MATERIALIST PSYCHOLOGY

`neo-Freudian revisionism`), this thesis is systematically disentangled from Freud’s ultimate pessimism.\(^{118}\)

But in Marcuse’s recent work, psychology has an entirely different significance than it had in the early Institute. Eros and Civilization was both a protest and a vision. In the 1960s, Marcuse’s theoretical activity became a response to an actual movement, the student anti-authoritarian movement, which was putting forth the demand for total liberation and tentatively evolving a theory and strategy for this liberation. While Horkheimer turned reactionary, renouncing his earlier work and actually defending the Pope’s pronouncements on the birth-pill,\(^{119}\) Marcuse allied himself to the new movement, drawing fresh inspiration from it for ‘critical theory of society’.

In the face of state monopoly capitalism and the degenerate, bureaucratic mass workers’ parties, Marcuse affirmed the significance of the struggle against reification within oneself and between friends; this is the meaning of the commonly misunderstood ‘biological’ tendency to hypostatise any ‘pure’ knowledge; instead, he views it as a protest against its Form—the commodity form of men and things, against the imposition of false values and a false morality.\(^{120}\)

But while the image of the libertarian potential of advanced industrial society is repressed (and hated) by the managers of repression and their consumers, it motivates the radical opposition and gives it its strange unorthodox character. Very different from the revolution at previous stages in history, this opposition is directed against the totality of a well-functioning, prosperous society—a protest against its Form—the commodity form of men and things, against the imposition of false values and a false morality.\(^{120}\)

But Marcuse is a critically ally, intent on pushing the new movement ever forward. He thus affirms the transition from anti-authoritarianism to the so-called ‘Organisational Phase’. Although, as already shown (Chapter 3), Marcuse’s position tends towards the spontaneity-theory of Council Communism, he does not fail to make some incisive judgments as to the legacy of the earlier phase. Anti-authoritarianism must be saved from the pitfall of petit-bourgeois anarchism: ‘individual liberation means transcendence beyond the bourgeois individual’, which presupposes the ‘liberation of society’.\(^{121}\)

And that presupposes revolutionary organisation.

Whereas the Studies spoke of the masses being led by ‘groups who are free of any deep-rooted psychic patterns, and who base their actions on knowledge’, Marcuse abandons the Frankfurt School’s tendency to hypostatise any ‘pure’ knowledge; instead, he views critical knowledge as knowledge of one’s own deformation by society:

In the formulation of one of the young German radicals, ‘each of us (radicals) is somehow infested, moronised, saturated, distorted’ by the contradictions of the established society. Since the resolution of these contradictions can be the work of only the revolution itself, they have to be borne by the movement, but as comprehended contradictions, entering the development of strategy.\(^{122}\)

Thus, Marcuse’s theory responded not only to the anti-authoritarian movement but also to the theoretical and strategic development beyond it. In conclusion, no matter how one evaluates Marcuse’s precise political significance, it is clear that his work since the 1960s marks an advance on the part of ‘critical theory of society’ beyond the Institute of the Zeitschrift period and beyond Marcuse’s erstwhile colleagues.

13 Manipulation: the transition from psychology to ‘culture industry’

Returning to the 1930s, it can be said that whereas Marcuse’s later work was the theoretical expression of an actual movement demanding liberation, the Institute’s psychological studies in the Zeitschrift period were essentially a theory of manipulation. The various distortions arising out of this extension of historical materialism have been outlined above. However, even during the 1930s, the analysis of manipulation underwent a transformation, and the role of Freudian psychology was qualified. On the surface, this was reflected in the fact that the Studies were published in an unfinished state, as well as in the departure of Fromm from the Institute, amidst an atmosphere of mutual resentment, the reasons for which are still not fully clear.\(^{123}\) But, in any case, the deeper reasons behind this change lie in the shift in the Frankfurt School’s object of study.

In the USA, the Frankfurt School were confronted with an advanced monopoly capitalist state, with an equally advanced network of non-fascist, but none the less manipulative, popular culture. They no longer saw the family as the decisive agent of socialisation; on the contrary, they perceived a dissolution of the family, and thus a drastic qualification of the significance of Freud’s model of id, ego, super-ego. The psychological component as a whole gradually became subsumed under a broader socio-political analysis of the production, distribution and consumption of popular culture. The notion of ‘culture industry’ will be discussed at length in Chapter 5; for the present, it is enough to understand the shift in the Frankfurt School’s attention from the analysis of the family to the more complex study of the mass media. Marcuse’s One-Dimensional Man is representative as an account of this shift and its reasons:

Introjection... implies the existence of an inner dimension distinguished from and even antagonistic to the external
HISTORICAL MATERIALIST PSYCHOLOGY

exigencies—an individual consciousness and an individual unconscious apart from public opinion and public behaviour. ... Today this private space has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality. Mass production and mass distribution claim the entire individual, and industrial psychology has long since ceased to be confined to the factory. The manifold processes of introjection seem to be ossified in almost mechanical reactions.124

Marcuse adds that the family's role as an agent of socialisation has been increasingly taken over by 'outside groups and media'.129 The specifically cultural media formed the focal point of the last issue of the Zeitschrift (by then entitled Studies in Philosophy and Social Science) and have become infamous under the Frankfurt School's label of 'Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception'.128 Psychological categories still played a role, of course, but the overall frame of reference was now that of popular mass culture.129

The Frankfurt School's critical work in this field goes back to the 1930s, particularly to the essays by Adorno, and constitutes one of the Frankfurt School's outstanding contributions to a critical theory of contemporary society. It is to this aspect of their work that this metacritical study must now turn. And, as before, the intention will be both to appropriate the critical categories and analyses, as well as to pinpoint the limits and distortions arising from their failure to evolve an adequate theory of economic manipulation and political emancipation.
Origin and significance of the Frankfurt School

A Marxist perspective

Phil Slater
Visiting Lecturer in Political Theory, Social Anthropology, and German Language and Culture, on the General Studies Programme, The City University

Routledge & Kegan Paul
London, Henley and Boston

Contents

A note on translation xi
Acknowledgments xii

Introduction xiii

The historical background of the Frankfurt School 1
Section One: the pre-Horkheimer tradition of the Institute 1
1 The founding of the Institute 1
2 Grünberg's directorship 2
3 The Institute's work in the 1920s 4
4 The 'Grünberg Archive' 6
5 Horkheimer's appointment as Director of the Institute 9
6 The Institute's work under Horkheimer 13

Section Two: the Weimar Republic and the rise of
fascism 15
1 Monopoly capitalism 16
2 The Weimar Republic and the German working class 17
3 Fascism and capitalism 19
4 The Third Reich and the German working class 21
5 The problem of manipulation 22

'Critical theory of society': the historical materialist
critique of ideology 26
1 The 'manifesto' of 1937 27
2 The pre-'manifesto' formulation of 'critical theory of
society' 30
3 Hegel's dialectics: 'critical theory' in philosophy 31
4 Hegel's idealism: 'traditional theory' in philosophy 33

Slater, P., 1977: Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School. A Marxist Perspective,
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Marxian critique of political economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dialectical versus undialectical thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The historical problematicity of the sublation of philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The historical materialist truth is the whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ideology-critique and the Marxian critique of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The problem of contemporary metaphysics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The critique of logical positivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The dialectical critique of liberalism in the era of monopoly capitalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The historical materialist theory-praxis nexus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marx, Lenin and the Frankfurt School on class-consciousness and the party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Socialist construction and the dictatorship of the proletariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Frankfurt School and Stalinism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The break in the theory-praxis nexus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Frankfurt School and Rosa Luxemburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Frankfurt School and the KPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Frankfurt School and Trotsky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Frankfurt School and Brandeis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Frankfurt School and ‘Council Communism’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Frankfurt School and reformism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Frankfurt School and left-wing Social Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The practical-theoretical metacritique of the Frankfurt School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Alfred Sohn-Rethel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The degeneration of ‘critical theory of society’ in Horkheimer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The radicalisation of ‘critical theory of society’ in Marcuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>‘Critical theory of society’ and the analysis of manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Historical materialist psychology: the psychic dimension of manipulation and revolt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fromm and the significance of depth-psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Freud versus Jung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Strengths and weaknesses of Freud’s depth-psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The pitfall of the death-drive theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The super-ego and psychic manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Frankfurt School and Wilhelm Reich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Institute’s analysis of authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 The Institute’s analysis of the family and its dialectics 107
9 The refutation of the ‘death-drive’ 108
10 Contemplative psychology and the loss of praxis 112
11 The absolutisation of psychology 114
12 The role of psychology in Marcuse’s radicalised ‘critical theory of society’ 115
13 Manipulation: the transition from psychology to ‘culture industry’ 117

5 Historical materialist aesthetics: art as ‘affirmation’, ‘culture industry’, and ‘negation’ 119
1 Art as affirmation 120
2 Art as manipulation: ‘culture industry’ 122
3 Lenin and Trotsky on revolutionary art 125
4 Georg Lukács and socialist realism 127
5 Brecht’s theatre 130
6 Art as negation 133
7 Walter Benjamin 136
8 Brecht’s work in radio 138
9 Brecht’s work in agitation songs 140
10 Aesthetic elitism and the loss of class praxis 142
11 Brecht’s attack on the Frankfurt School ‘Tuis’ 144
12 The role of aesthetics in Marcuse’s radicalised ‘critical theory of society’ 145

Notes 149
Bibliography 175
Index 183