I. Neo- Marxism: Critical Theory

A. Theorists: Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Jurgen Habermas

B. Major works

1. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: Horkheimer and Adorno

*2. One Dimensional Man*: Marcuse

3. *Escape From Freedom*: Erich Fromm

4. *Theory of Communicative Action*

C. Main question: how did Enlightenment turn into dystopian social formation of Western society?

D. Historical Context

1. Fascism

2. Communist totalitarianism

3. WWII

4. genocide

5. Consumer culture

E. Intellectual Context

1. Marx

a. analysis of economy

b. inadequacy

i. fascism

ii. welfare state

iii. cooptation of the working class

iv. consumerism

v. wealthfare state

vi. culture industry

2. Hegel

a. dialectical imagination

b. reason as critique

i. truth through negation

ii. power to demystify or see through illusion and falsehood

3. Lukacs

a. reification

b. commodification of everything

4. Nietzsche

a. critique of science

b. knowledge and human interests

c. scientic knowledge and will to self-preservation

d. scientific knowledge is not truth

e. human beings create truth out of needs: self-preservation, meaning, beauty

f. fail to see world as that which they have created

g. conform to world

5. Weber

a. bureaucratization

b. rationalization

6. Freud

a. reality principle

b. pleasure principle

E. Marx and domination

1. Marx’s assumptions

a. economy is system of exploitation by one class over another

b. economic exploitation =is system of domination

2. Marx’s analysis

a. understanding economy is way to understand society (social formation)

b. base (mode of production + relations of production) determines social formation

c. superstructure: political, legal, ideological, education

i. shaped by base

ii. reflects inequality of base

iii. contributes to system of domination

F. Critical theory (1920s to present)

1. society as a system of domination

2. domination is more fundamental: human beings relation to natural world

3. domination begins with “primitive fear of nature”

a. leads to drive to dominate nature (Nietzsche)

b. magic to religion to science as power over nature

c. but power over nature includes human beings

d. domination becomes total

4. total domination: dystopia

a. economy and domination

i. coopted workers

ii. state subsidized capitalism

iii. free market theory as ideological justification

b. culture as domination: culture industry

i. commodification of reality

ii. production of consumers

iii. organized creation of discontent

iv. standardized and unending desires

v. standardized never ending cultural products

vi. elimination of culture as subversive

c. technology as domination

i. Frankenstein

ii. automation as domination of worker

iii. automobile, computers, cell phones, cameras as domination

d. social organization as domination: Weber

i. bureaucracy

ii. dehumanization

5. Consequences

a. one dimensionality: loss of critical thinking (Hegel)

i. inability to demystify dominant ideology

ii. subversion of rational autonomous subjectivity

iii. inability to see other possibilities (Lukacs)

b. no possibility of historical change

G. The “Allegory of the Cave”

1. People are inside a cave and they are facing the

far wall

2. "Prisoners" whose legs and necks fastened so

a. they can only look at the far wall

b. can't see each other

c. since childhood

3. there is a fire behind them and a raised road upon

which people with objects travel

4. all the prisoners can see are the reflections

5. this is the only world they know

a. a shadow world

b. world of reflections

6. prisoners believe that this is reality

7. experts of the cave

F. Enlightenment

1. outside: image of sun is image of truth

2. what if: someone turns toward fire and sees whole cave

a. psychologically "at a loss"

b. shadows truer

3. needs to be dragged out

a. dazzled by the glare

b. takes awhile but finally "sees" the truth

4. chooses to return

a. hard to see in dark now

b. appears like a fool trying to explain the truth

c. threatened by death because he has upset their

"taken for granted" lives

G. Meaning of the metaphor - Plato

1. society controls the individual by creating

a. a false or shadow reality - images, illusions,

ideology

b. creating a dependent psychology, oriented to that reality

c. social structures and arrangements

i. institutions

ii. arrangements - social roles

iii. norms, values, rituals

2. individual

a. ego, subjectivity is defined by conditions of the cave

b. “freely” chooses life of the cave and because he hasn't experienced anything else

c. organizes life, goals, needs around false reality

d. existing power arrangements and the status

quo never questioned

e. alternatives: absent or undesirable

**Marcuse’s goals in Reason and Revolution are the following**;

1. He is trying to establish reason (negative and dialectical) as the primary category of social theory.

2. He is trying to establish that praxis, social theory (dialectical) and practice, must be the primary dynamic of revolution.

3. He is trying to reestablish the connection between Hegel’s thought and revolutionary praxis.

Why does Marcuse believe that this is important?

1. He believes that modern “man” is in danger of losing the “mental faculty” of critical thinking, or critical rationality.

2. He believes that modern western society is a society of total domination (see One Dimensional Man)

3. The idea of man being able to subject the world to his rational will (positive reason and individual human agency) and creating a society defined by the Enlightenment narrative given WWII, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Holocaust seems at best questionable.

4. The problem of positivism in sociology, positive reason and the scientific world view is ideological and supports the given order.

5. Hegel has been misinterpreted and in the misinterpretation his concept of critical rationality has been lost.

Social and Philosophical Background

1. German Idealism expressed philosophically the ideas of the French Revolution: Reason and its corollary freedom claimed the right to organize reality.

2. As a response to rationalism, the empiricists (Hume) restricted human truth to the “given,’ experience and custom eliminated all opposing truth. Ideas are only abstracted from the particular.

3. Kant attempted to rescue reason. For Kand everything starts from experience but “intuition” (space and time) and “categories” give shape, a priori, to reality. Reality itself the ding an sich remains unknowable.\*

4. Hegel felt this was not a complete rescuing of reason, it left reason a mere subjective principle with no power over the objective structure of reality.

5. For Hegel, the problem above is not just a philosophical/epistemological problem, but a concrete historical one.

a. Hegel’s concept of reason is negative, critical and dialectical.

b. For Hegel, reason establishes itself in opposition to objective reality and to common sense which are in totality negative

c. The process of negation (the dialectical process) allows objective reality to recovered in “truth”,

d. only when the natural world and social world are subjected to reason do they become true.

6. Hegel’s statement, “The rational is the real,’ does not mean the real does not exist as objective reality, but only exists as “determinate” reality, not “essential reality.” That is it doesn’t exist as truth until it has been subjected to critical reason.

**Hegel’s Argument and the transition from philosophy to social theory**

1. According to Marcuse, the most important concepts in Hegel’s thought are objectification and alienation.

a. Objectification is the process by which human reason (German Idealism) manifests itself as reality

b. The consequences of objectification is alienation. Man does not recognize that the material, social, and cultural objects of the world are his own creation (reification Lukacs)

c. Human history is the process whereby man recovers the truth of objectives reality that it is his creation

2. This is the Hegelian dialectic and its main category is reason—critical and negative-and its revolutionary character. For Hegel reason leads beyond brute fact to what ought to be. “Everything that is given has to be justified before reason, which but the totality of nature and man’s capacities.

Marcuse argues that in Hegel’s earlier writings, Hegel understood that there was a contradiction between the ideals of the “revolution” as they found expression in philosophical thought and the reality of the historical-social reality of the time which prevented the realization of those values. According to Hegel, philosophy’s task is to demonstrate the principle that would restore the missing unity-existence and essence, truth and fact. According to Marcuse, Hegel tried to do this with his concept of reason.

In doing this, according to Marcuse, Hegel placed what had been primarily a philosophical debate into an historical context. “Man’s hope knowledge, hope, and activity were referred in the direction of establishing a rational society. Therefore, true to the dialectic, the truth of philosophy was its negation and its task devolved to social theory and practice.

Hegel had demonstrated that the material and intellectual powers of humanity had developed far enough to call upon man’s social and political practice to realize reason, and because of the dialectical method beyond the present political social order.

Positivism

Marcuse

**Marx and dialectical reason**

Marx is the true heir to Hegel. Marx’s thought emerges in a critique of Hegel, he finds the truth in Hegel’s thought in its negation.

The weakness of Hegel’s position was that he concluded that the historical contradictions had been overcome in his life by the German Nation State. Marx retains the dialectical method and retains the concepts of alienation, objectification, reification and labor, and accepts the claims that these concepts reveal the historical contradiction as Marx understands it.

Marx’s critique of capitalism is a critique in the sense that all of his concepts are an indictment of the totality of reified reality, capitalism. This is the movement from philosophy to social theory and practices.

1. For Marx, man has created an objective reality through his labor, and in creating that reality has created himself, what it means to be human.

2. In capitalism, mas has created “this’ world as a result of alienated labor (man is alienated from the object of production, from himself, from his labor, from his fellow man, form the essence of his species being.

3. The result of the above is that man has created a world where dead matter rules.

4. The economic realm is, therefore, not just the realm of economic relations, for Marx, it is the existential realm, it is the realm in which man, in capitalism society, creates himself and his world.

(In The foundations of Dialectical Materialism, Marcuse argues that Marx negates political economy, it no longer a separate science having to do with the economy. It is the study of the totality of man’s reified existence under capitalism)

5. The truth revealed in the dialectical critique is that this “world” will self-destruct through the internal contradictions which drive it. However, in this collapse the truth will be revealed.

6. The truth following capitalism is not the end of history but what Marx calls history. Material conditions will not rule man but be subject to huma needs which be rationally conceived.

7. The need for rational and free individuals will precede as well as be a consequence of the negation of class society. And will create a social world tha is hum-that realizes reason and freedom.

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