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Malthus devoted much intellectual effort to social criticism. He was a Whig, opposed the French Revolution, favored compulsory education, and opposed slavery. As a proponent of strict charity laws to ensure that the nonworking poor are less well-off than the working poor, he evoked sharp controversy.

Much of Petersen's book is devoted to the disagreements between Malthus and some of his contemporaries. The original "Essay" had been written to refute the utopian views of Godwin and Condorcet, which Petersen describes in some detail. Malthus and Ricardo always remained good friends but did not always agree with each other. Ricardo was more inclined to making economics an abstract and deductive science; Malthus more to "institutional economics." In addition they disagreed over Ricardo's labor theory of value, which Malthus opposed and Marx subsequently espoused. Malthus disputed Say's contention that supply always creates its own demand.

In discussing the Malthusian legacy, Petersen details Darwin's indebtedness to Malthus for stimulating his thinking with regard to his theory of natural selection. He also outlines Keynes' debt to Malthus, especially Keynes' discovery of Malthus' rejection of Say's views. Peterson also discusses so-called neo-Malthusians, who agree with Malthus that population growth is a serious problem but disagree with him that contraception is immoral.

What is Malthus' place in history? E. P. Hutchinson and Joseph Spengler have pointed out that much of what Malthus said about population had already been said previously. But it is also true that Columbus was not the first European to set foot in America. What is important is that people paid attention to what Malthus said, in a way they had not to his predecessors, just as it was Columbus' voyage to the New World that sparked the great Age of Discovery. If one wants to understand the important place Malthus holds in the history of social ideas, Petersen's book provides an excellent means.

The Frankfurt School: The Critical Theories of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno.
By Zoltán Tar. New York: Wiley, 1977. 243 pp. $18.50.

Reviewer: A. P. SIMONDS, *University of Massachusetts at Boston*

The stream of writing on the social theory of the Frankfurt School is large and continues to grow, yet we are a long way from any consensus on how its contribution should be characterized, much less appraised. Martin Jay's 1973 history, *The Dialectical Imagination*, has been widely and justifiably praised as the standard work on the subject, but its viewpoint has by no means found acceptance as "definitive." On the contrary, it has been challenged, rebutted, extended, and refined in any number of ways in the work of Anderson, Slater, Jacoby, Shapiro, Buck-Morss, and many others.

The novelty of Zoltán Tar's contribution to the literature is the implied claim that the entire discussion has been largely pointless: the work of the Frankfurt School, on his reading, was not only wrong, but trivially and uninterestingly wrong. Whether judged by its own intentions, by the requirements of Marxism, or by the standards of scientific sociology, it must be counted a failure. His judgment,

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finally, is that "Critical Theory is the document of the disintegration of old Central European bourgeois society and the tragic fate of a group of intellectuals of that society."

The book comprises three chapters. In the first, Tar discusses Horkheimer's work of the thirties, concentrating on his programmatic essay "Traditional and Critical Theory." In the second, he examines the collaborative analysis of fascism and domination undertaken by Horkheimer and Adorno during the forties. In the last, he considers writings (chiefly by Adorno) after their return to Frankfurt in which the themes of cultural despair and political withdrawal become especially pronounced. Tar's remarks, then, are directed at a rather slimmed-down "school"; only Horkheimer and Adorno receive significant attention, and their works are taken up rather selectively. (Adorno's extensive work on the sociology of art is excluded altogether as "outside the objectives of this study.")

The charges which Tar brings against the Frankfurt School are familiar ones: that it represents a departure from Marxist orthodoxy, that it fails to meet the requirements of scientific method, that it effects a rupture between theory and praxis, that it suffers from the limitations of its historical location. But the arguments he presents on behalf of these claims are unusually weak. The failure of critical theory to meet the criteria of "Marxism" or "science" is established by an embarrassingly simple and question-begging enumeration of the "basic tenets" of Marxism and of the "canons of scientific sociology"; one might suppose, from this treatment of the issues, that the greater part of twentieth-century social theory and philosophy of science (much less of Marxism) had never been written. The important question of the political implications of critical theory is needlessly confused by Tar's reduction of the problem of *praxis* to the problem of the espousal or repudiation of *violence*. And his efforts to identify the "existential determinants" of the thought of the Frankfurt School come down to little more than casual and unconvincing references to such things as "revolt against paternal authority," "adherence to a bourgeois life style," and the culture shock of European refugee intellectuals transplanted to New York and California. A potentially interesting discussion of the Judaic influence on Horkheimer and Adorno (which Tar rebukes Jay for underestimating) proves to be somewhat shallow and certainly inconclusive. Tar's main substantive conclusion, that critical theory is to be counted just "another existential philosophy," is argued in much too desultory and imprecise a fashion to advance our understanding of critical theory or existentialism—much less to establish an identity between them.

It is difficult to believe that any reader not already and independently convinced of Tar's conclusions will find his case persuasive. But it is unclear, in any case, why a book was required to present it. Most of the pages are devoted to a recapitulation of the arguments presented in the writings of Horkheimer and Adorno (something that Jay has already done, done well, and done far more extensively).

Much of the rest is occupied by a miscellany of remarks peripheral to the main subject but too fleeting and insubstantial to broaden it in any helpful way: a discussion of the contrasting attitudes of Weber and Lukács toward the European revolutions of 1918–19, a look at the idea of the domination of nature in the thought of the ancient Confucian philosopher Hsün-Tzu, a recounting of the experience of Korsch, Brecht, and Mann as exiles, etc. Shorn of such filler, a modest article

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remains. The volume includes a very useful (if unsystematic) bibliography and a good index.

Improving Interview Method and Questionnaire Design: Response Effects to Threatening Questions in Survey Research.
By Norman M. Bradburn, Seymour Sudman, Edward Blair, William Locander, Carrie Miles, Eleanor Singer, and Carol Stocking. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979. 214 pp. $13.95.

Reviewer: HOWARD SCHUMAN, *University of Michigan*

Readers should pay more attention to this book's subtitle than to its title. The one tells quite accurately what the book is about, whereas the other suggests somewhat more in the way of practical advice than the volume contains. As a report of research on possible sources of distortion in responses to threatening questions, the book is quite valuable and should be of interest to all those concerned with understanding systematic error in surveys.

Bradburn, Sudman, and their associates report results primarily from two separate but related studies of threatening questions. One study obtained validation data on Chicago samples for five self-reported behaviors: voting registration, voting in a primary, ownership of a library card, past bankruptcy, and recent arrest for drunken driving. The other study asked national sample questions about sexual activity, drinking, and other sensitive behaviors. Validation data were not obtained, but the authors assumed that the more such behavior was reported, the more accurate the reports—a plausible but not air-tight assumption for most of the topics they deal with. About two-thirds of the chapters in the book have appeared previously in slightly different form in a variety of journals; it is useful to have them brought together, along with several completely new chapters.

The following results were most interesting to me.

Mode of administration (face-to-face, telephone, self-administration) had little or no effect on responses in the Chicago Study, though the samples were rather small for detecting reliable differences. Nor did the recently developed randomized response technique, treated as a fourth condition, justify itself by doing appreciably better. Considering all modes of administration together, the total amount of apparent distortion was high, approaching 50 percent for reports of drunken driving. Standard surveys evidently cannot get very accurate information on such subjects.

Non-threatening items and yes/no reports about presumed embarrassing behaviors ("Have you masturbated in the past month?") were not affected by question length; but follow-up questions to those reporting any embarrassing behavior yielded higher frequencies of occurrence when a question was "long" (i.e., included unnecessary additional words), and also when it was open-ended rather than offering fixed categories. Interpretations of these findings are somewhat uncertain, the more so since it is at least conceivable that the higher frequencies are less rather than more accurate in some cases. In addition, the authors do not tell us how the closed categories were developed, and the closed-alternative items are not included in the book for examination.

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