

The 10 Most Popular Dogmas of Critical Theory

1. Objective Knowledge is an Impossibility

or: How the pure difference between object and the reflection on it is to prove the impossibility of scientific objectivity

Critical theory is not a criticism of false theories but is critical of theoretical activity. It does not challenge the ideological results of thinking, but thinking itself.

"To think means to think something. By itself, the logically abstract form of "something," something that is meant or judged, does not claim to posit a being; and yet, surviving in it - indelible for a thinking that would delete it - is that which is not identical with thinking, which is not thinking at all. The ratio becomes irrational where it forgets this, where it runs counter to the meaning of thought by hypostasizing its products, the abstractions." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 34)

Critical theory knows about the achievements of thinking: Whoever judges, grasps in logical forms the identity of the object that is presupposed for thinking. And it is precisely this result, which all thinking is aimed at, which is considered particularly worthy of criticism. It is precisely the achievement of thinking, knowing what the thing is, that leads critical theory to the famous damning judgment:

"Identity is the primal form of ideology." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 148)

In this criticism, however, it insinuates an intention to the use of the mind, which is neither pursued nor can it be pursued at all. It wanted to "eliminate" its object. That can't be done with the worst faith in the world. In the "logical form of abstraction of something" it never achieves more than a judgement about its object. *Theoretically* the nature of the respective object is not eliminated *in* thought, but explained, provided there are no errors. At the very most, the non-knowledge that is the starting point of the effort has been eliminated. But for thinking and its result, the knowledge of the identity of the object, this is certainly not a shortcoming that would remain indelibly after thinking.

In practice, thinking does not at all tamper with the "existing", the "non-identical" that presupposes it: It is not possible to drink a theory of beer, nor does it "eliminate" the barley juice. There is no need to explain this either, because no thinker hypostasizes his findings "against the meaning of thinking" and confuses his book *on* the state with the same. Critical theorists warn of the swash they themselves buckle, of immodesty and illusions in thought that no one seriously cherishes.

On the other hand, if it were as they claim, that thinking, regardless of its content and result, already by its form erroneously denies the existence of things –

"Yet the appearance of identity is inherent in thought itself, in its pure form." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 5) -,

then the construction of illusory worlds could not be eliminated by the consciousness of the difference between thought and object either. But then it would not at all be obvious to what extent the Frankfurt spirit "knows how little it can touch what has been thought" and that there is a difference between thought and object at all. Then how would thinking know that what has been thought is more than what it, the thought, knows about it?

Precisely because thinking does not coincide with false assumptions, precisely because it is not self-evident that the activity of the mind leads to false insights, the systematic production of ideologies, i.e. untrue ideas about actuality, is worth explaining. It refers to reasons that lie outside the mental activity. "False" is added as an attribute to "consciousness" precisely because the difference between thinking and wrong thought is imputed. On the other hand, for anyone who claims that the contradiction of "thinking wrongly" belongs to thinking like trinity to the Christian God, for that person the characteristic of *bourgeois* thinking is the hallmark of thinking *as such*, for that person thinking is identical with ideology. Such a person takes the mistakes of bourgeois science for granted and does not even have to prove them. That person knows the thought *ever already* as wrong, because thinking would be a spiritual hubris. The attitude of modesty which critical theory recommends to science in order not to become irrational has freed itself from any compulsion to put forward an argument, to prove a false thought. This is the shameless side of this propaganda of unfounded skepticism towards thinking, which critical theory makes extensive use of.

To clarify: What is the meaning of the allegedly so tricky and calamitous "identity" in thinking? - It says that two sides which are not the same from the outset - otherwise statements of identity would be just as absurd as the $A = A$ of modern logic - have one and the same content. In the case of thinking, identity occurs twice as the aim of thinking. Identity between the person who recognizes, and the object of knowledge is created by thinking insofar as the *person who recognizes* at the end *knows* what the object is; the person has it in their mind. Secondly, in the result of thinking, the identity of the thing is known - that which constitutes its particularity.

The warning of critical theory against intellectual "hubris" lives off the trick to assert the *prerequisite* of thinking, the non-identity of thought and thing, against the *result* of knowledge, the identity of thought and object created in knowledge, and to polemicize with this accusation against the objectivity of science. By contrast, critical theory recommends the dialectic of universal and particular.

"Reciprocal criticism of the universal and of the particular; identifying acts of judgment whether the concept does justice to what it covers, and whether the particular fulfills its concept - these constitute the medium of thinking about the nonidentity of particular and concept." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 146)

This kind of criticism, in which universal and particular are mutually measured by the fact that one category is not the other, always succeeds: from the point of view of the particular, the universal is not the same, because it is universal and not particular. From the point of view of the universal, of course, the particular is not universal, etc.

In the judgement: "Mr. Meier is a capitalist", Adorno/Horkheimer don't ask: "Is that true? What are the ends pursued by Mr. Meier and what means does he use?" They do not ask for everything that is necessary to check the above assertion. Instead, they *problematize* such statements in general: "Is capitalist not too general for the individual Meier; isn't Meier too special for the abstraction capitalist?" They criticize abstraction *as* abstraction - and not with regard to any mistakes that are made. They do not examine the objectivity of the judgement but confirm to themselves what they always already know: the non-identity of object and concept.

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2. Knowledge is Ideology per se

or: Why the critique of positivism of critical theory proves bourgeois thinking right, instead of criticizing a single ideology.

Critical theory owes much of its reputation as a critique of prevailing science to its dispute with positivism. The climax of its attacks on positivism is the accusation of the "specialist's credence in facts",

"for whom every consideration of what is not (!) the case is an annoyance and possibly a sacrilege of the scientific spirit." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 209)

It may well be that the positivists are affirmative thinkers, but the justification that critical theory puts forward for this never ever provides an explanation for their partisanship for the prevailing conditions. What does the Frankfurt spirit accuse them of? - First things first:

1. the positivist theories somehow refer to the objects of the real world, to "facts" then.
2. that is precisely what is supposed to be an inadmissible limitation.
3. thus, critical theory is indifferent to what positivism has to report *about* facts. In any case, it will not be held responsible for its judgments.
4. a sin against the scientific mind is supposed to lie on the contrary in precisely the fact that the positivists do *not* do something - namely contemplate the non-existent.

That can't be.

Anyone who accuses someone of dealing theoretically with facts, as critical theory does, confuses thinking *about* an object with assuming a partisanship *for* it. The person thinks that "mere" unbiased reflection, e.g. on the bourgeois state, is already a declaration of agreement with its violence, the acceptance of its standpoint. As if it were not precisely the unbiased investigation of property rights and economic (stimulation) policy, of 'social net' and peace obligation, of freedom of opinion and 'internal security' that would prove the class character of domination and provide all the necessary arguments *against* it. Understanding being the same as having understanding, my ass! Critical theory, however, considers explanations to be legitimization and knowledge to be submission.

This criticism - whoever makes facts the object of thought has also already sold himself to them – is an easy one for positivism. It accuses critical theory of irrational speculation and bottomless do-gooderism. Adorno/Horkheimer do not see that positivism is anything but a "mere description of facts". The reference to the "facts" presupposed to thinking for it rather serves as an *argument against* the objectivity of any *explanation* of facts:

"All certainties in knowledge are self-made and thus worthless for the understanding of actuality." (Hans Albert, Treatise on Critical Reason, Princeton 1985, p. 40) –

this is how the positivists proclaim the impossibility of knowledge as the pinnacle of their intellectual efforts. This seems to make sense to critical theory when it echoes:

"Pure identity is that which the subject posits and thus brings up from outside." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 145)

and does not want to notice the contradiction which Albert, Popper and the like allow themselves: If facts are to correct thinking, then this assumes that they do *not* occur *in* thinking, but at the same time are made its yardstick. Because critical theory shares the view with its positivist opponents that knowledge is no good, because man himself thinks and does not leave this to objects, it also does not notice that the incantation of facts is a scientifically disguised *ban on criticism*. Positivism does not make facts the content of its thinking in order to judge them theoretically, but demands that science in thinking should commit itself to actuality allegedly well-founded by its pure existence, thus subordinating its knowledge to a yardstick whose validity lies completely outside thinking. The *anti-intellectual dogmatism* of Albert and the like lies in this desire for self-commitment of thinking to

standards of judgement which are not taken from thinking but should apply all the more unquestionably. And Adorno/Horkheimer, who are also concerned with a biased *attitude in* science, are not far from this standpoint. Neither critical theory nor positivism strive for valid knowledge (where, by the way, criticism and correction would occur by themselves where necessary), but they both assert the thought-hostile concern that the man of science should prove his integrity *before* and *beyond* every achievement of knowledge by the right conception of the world. Both call for a *world view* to become the maxim of *science* and the yardstick for its assessment. The difference is one of scientific morality: in the positivist party card the world bears the stamp "good", in the critical it is noted that the world is bad.

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3. Thinking is Violence

or: the theory hostility of the philosophical claim to reconciliation

Thinking "does violence to what it practices its syntheses on" - a strange judgment which has earned status and honour in educated thinker circles through critical theory.

"To prevail as a system, the ratio eliminated (?) virtually all qualitative definitions it referred to (?), thus coming into an irreconcilable conflict with the objectivity it violated by pretending to grasp it." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 21)

What's the statement? - In order to create the internal connection of the determinations of the object, thinking deprived the determinations of just their qualitative determinacy.

How is this supposed to happen? Such an "in order to" does not even characterize bourgeois thinking, which is rather uninterested in correct knowledge. The latter "only" determines its objects incorrectly and does not eliminate their qualities. Critical theory thinks of "system" from the outset as total access of thinking to the object, as the epitome of violence. That thinking is something similar to Stalinism and concentration camps is suggested by critical theory not only with its vocabulary ("eliminate"), but it actually means that.

"Whenever something that is to be conceived flees from identity with the concept, the concept will be forced to take exaggerated steps to prevent any doubts of the unassailable validity, solidity, and acribia of the thought product from stirring. Great philosophy was accompanied by a paranoid zeal to tolerate nothing else, and to pursue everything else with all the cunning of reason, while the other kept retreating farther and farther from the pursuit. The slightest remnant of nonidentity sufficed to deny an identity conceived as total." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 22)

Adorno/Horkheimer do not want to examine whether a theoretical system is the result of knowledge. They do not wish to distinguish whether the explanation of the object, which is intended in its systematic derivation as much as in each individual, unsystematic judgment on it, is correct, and whether the system depicts the immanent connection of the individual moments of the object, or whether it is rather a case of the will to measure everything by the same yardstick presumed by prejudice. Whether profit is explained by value, whether freedom of opinion follows from the will of the democratic authorities to give their subjects' discontent a sphere of inconsequential activity, or whether the whole world is subsumed under false abstractions such as "being", "system" and "structure" (according to the pattern: "poetry, law, economy is a system. There are many systems...') and the delusion of a deduction of everything and everyone, even of the greatest triviality and arbitrariness, of highest principles and freely invented necessities prevails - that does not matter to

critical theory. Such differences are of *no concern* to it, as it considers everything as proof of the *one* thought: thinking is violence.

The notion with which critical theory operates here is absurd: the object retreats, thinking wants everything, and out of fear of failure it follows the eternally virgin object. A perpetual rape that never succeeds because the object is always one step ahead of the scientific culprit. But knowledge does not affect its objects at all, and it does them no harm to be known. Yes, it would be nice if the explanation of profit, the law of movement of the free market economy, had already called them into question in practice. But not even objects as undesirable as the capitalist economy suffer in some way from one having seen through their laws and thus the ends they all serve.

Adorno/Horkheimer attribute achievements to thinking which - whether right or wrong - can never be achieved with it. As a theoretical process, it really can't assault the object. To be an object does not mean more than to be material of any external, purposeful activity. As far as knowledge is concerned, everything that can be experienced, everything that can become the object of the senses and of thinking, is suitable as a material of the activity of knowledge without it depriving its object of any of its moments. Even for false, legitimacy thinking, as is exclusively the case in the humanities and social sciences, the designation of thinking as violent does not apply. Political theories that derive state coercion from an alleged (chaotic-violent) nature of man, economics that deduces the laws and necessities of the capitalist economy from eternally scarce resources for limitless needs, psychology that justifies all the tribulations of the modern individual from an inability to inner balance, *invent* all kinds of laws, advantages and characteristics that their objects do not have in themselves and only proclaim one thing: the profound *understanding* of science for the real political and economic powers as a more or less successful solution to eternal human problems. As bourgeois business cycle theory shows, such partisan explanations also do not lead to the devouring of their objects and certainly not to their practical mastery, but at the very most to the fact that people who are subject to the ungrasped movement of capital accumulation have imaginary hopes for improvement.

All the fuss of critical theory about the highly problematic relationship between subject and object has yet another, reactionary side. The criticism of thinking as the "armament" of the object, as the violent elimination of its particularity, takes sides for the object and demands a silly love for things as the epitome of philosophical endeavour. The Frankfurt spirit celebrates this with the term "reconciliation".

"The reconciled condition would not be the philosophical imperialism of annexing the alien. Instead, its happiness would lie in the fact that the alien, in the proximity it is granted, remains what is distant and different, beyond the heterogeneous and beyond that which is one's own."
(Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, London 1973, p. 191)

On the one hand, an enormous overestimation of one's own discipline and tradition: philosophy is violent annexation. This is not true even where philosophers openly defend imperialism and whatever Adorno/Horkheimer may think of it. On the other hand, a childish moral ideal of contemplation, which requires thinking to give itself up, to renounce its achievements of knowledge and to propagate ideal reconciliation with an unknown but still 'authentic' world.

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4. Abstract Thinking and the Principle of Exchange go wonderfully together

or: Why the talk of reified immanent context is the dumbest variant of the theory of reflection and how it creates harmony

Critical theory, which emphasizes the inevitability of ideological thinking, does not despair about it, but believes to have discovered the same principle in the special functioning of commodity production which allegedly haunts thinking:

"The exchange principle, the reduction of human labor to the abstract universal concept of average working hours, is fundamentally akin to the principle of identification. Exchange is the social model of the principle, and without the principle there would be no exchange; it is through exchange that nonidentical individuals and performances become commensurable and identical. The spread of the principle imposes on the whole world an obligation to become identical, to become total." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 146)

The dialectic with which critical theory juggles now is: Thinking is *admittedly* untrue, *but* it fits in perfectly with the economic practice of the "society of exchange". And this again not because of its partisan content - a critical philosopher does not deny this - but because "identification" and "reduction" are supposed to be "fundamentally akin" principles: In both, Adorno senses the crime of abstraction.

The underlying correlation thus established owes itself in fact solely to the arbitrary art of abstraction of the inventor, insofar as he purposefully cuts out the entire content from intellectual respectively economic activity and thus prepares the ground for unscrupulously identifying knowledge as such with the specificity of capitalist production of value. That the abstraction of the mind belongs to the nature of thinking is therefore not critical as such, while the violent reduction of all different labours (and needs) to their suitability for the multiplication of a private wealth measured in money fixes the propertyless majority to its function as profitable labour-power, makes no difference to a master of theoretical levelling, at least not an important one. In return, the manner allows him to trace back intellect and exchange to analog logical operations, followed by the most beautiful idealisms. One can now "derive" market and wage labor alternately and crosswise from the logic of thinking and this in turn from that of the market.

The yield of the identification of thinking and exchange, two indeed incommensurable "magnitudes", consists of two things: unintentionally, critical theory agrees with the theory of reflection that it otherwise fights against - thinking reflects the exchange structure of society and the exchange structure reflects thinking -; on the other hand, peace enters into the problematic relationship between subject and object.

"As the extreme borderline case of ideology, the transcendental subject comes close to truth." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 178)

The thinking that violates the object only follows what the object - capitalist = reified = abstract - requires and thus (almost) becomes true. That way everything finally works out again.

The phrases that are still very popular in certain academic circles today, such as "universal context of delusion and immanence", "totality (claim)" etc., spread this idea of a universal correspondence relationship. Whoever has the same attribute at hand for every object of bourgeois society - no matter how disparate the respective ends -: abstract and/or reified, does not want to distinguish, but wants to communicate his moral message that nothing can escape the very total "sociality of this society". Theoretical ignorance is the self-confident program of such a critical science, which firmly confirms the practical transformation of conditions, which it has never tried, its impossibility. "There is no true life in the false", in the false everything is false - with such a negative doctrine of harmony the Frankfurt spirit also feels in agreement and in the most beautiful harmony with the bourgeois conditions.

5. Bad Actuality is at the same Time its Better Possibility

or: How critical theory commits thinking to the standards of permissible criticism and reconciles itself with the prevailing conditions

Critical theory has mastered the procedure of bourgeois, affirmative criticism, which consists in presenting ideals to reality. Measuring reality against ideals is always the prelude to reconciliation with it. In this way, society, which is abysmally bad and occupies the thinking completely, becomes at the same time a bearer of hope. It is only important to look at the object in *this* way; not according to its reality, according to what it is, but according to what it *could* be. Again exchange has to serve as proof.

"When we criticize the exchange principle as the identifying principle of thought, we want to realize the ideal of free and just exchange. To date, this ideal is only a pretext." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 147)

Exchange, according to critical theory as the epitome of reification the very worst of bourgeois society, now exists twice: as bad reality and as good potentiality. According to the arch-bourgeois moral formula that each thing has two sides, the criticized object becomes without much trouble the promise of overcoming itself. And if one no longer judges the object according to its condition, but rather takes the view that it could also be different, better, in order to take a look at reality from this point of view, then it immediately appears in a much brighter light: as the good that has not yet been realized. In this way, thinking creates points of hope for *itself*, for which it claims reality, which is still criticisable, as a witness. Indeed, if exchange is still something other than what it is, then it is no longer to be rejected, but must be held up as the *authority of appeal* for the *justification* of one's own idealism.

Exchange is here just one example of this procedure of critical theory to turn criticism constructively. On the other hand, it is not by chance the example for the fabrication of critical hope, as the ideal of bourgeois society par excellence, namely justice, is ingrained in it. In this way and only in this way does the Frankfurt spirit discuss exchange, irrespective of the fact that this is all about an economic issue. Its analysis would show that equality, the exchange of equivalents, as the law of exchange, is by no means violated if humanity is sorted into rich and poor in its wake. For this is exactly how exploitation works in bourgeois society. Exchange is very fair, and it is the misfortune of some that they have to sell their labour-power and carry it to the factory, whose use produces more value than is necessary to reproduce it, and the fortune of others that they dispose of the property of means of production in order to turn the surplus labour into capitalist wealth. Nothing is more cheap than to pit the form of exchange against this content, which is mediated by those, and to peddle with the pious ideal of how beautiful exchange could be, if it were not the exchange that produces the class antagonism.

This also explains why critical theorists never become rebellious and assert their ideals *against reality*. They are very insistent on emphasizing that these are the ideals of reality itself, which cannot therefore be fought "voluntaristically". They maintain the anti-critical dogma that those who want to criticize must already have reality as an authority of appeal on their side. Criticism deliberately makes itself dependent on the fact that the thing it criticizes itself already vouches for its change, that is, it allows the famous kind of "immanent critique" that vouches for the "concreteness" of "utopia". No surprise, then, that the ideals that are then brought to the forefront are always the ruling ones and those of the rulers. But the oh so critical criticism does not only affirm circulating ideologies. It even expressly warns against a criticism of the object that does not submit to its laws and even wants to become practical:

"If comparability as a category of measure were simply annulled, the rationality which is inherent in the exchange principle - as ideology, of course, but also as a promise - would give

way to direct appropriation, to force." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 147)

Without exchange - so the diagnosis - there would only be murder and manslaughter. In this sense, measured by the purposeful invention of a social *negative ideal*, the reality of exploitation and violence is not only to be welcomed, but also to be protected from any practical attack. Thus the dialectical wankery leads to the boring and arch-affirmative moralism that bourgeois society is still the best of all bad societies.

Here the truth of what is kept up in left-wing intellectual circles as utopian thinking is confessed: The latter has to get its act together and beware of surpassing the norms set by bourgeois society. Ideals are allowed - if they are the ones that are carrying this society and its economic and political violence before them. If one considers the bourgeois shit without prejudice from a point of view not committed to it from the outset, critical theory issues a spiritual call to order -

"Essence can be recognized only by the contradiction between what things are and what they claim to be." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 167)

so demands intellectual parry in the name of truth: Only such criticism may claim recognition, which compares the "being" bourgeois world with its good opinions about itself. And the "essence" of capitalism has only who, in principle, holds all euphemisms in its favor on principle.

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6. Knowledge – makes Auschwitz possible

or: The alleged moral dilemma of science: the danger of abuse through reaction and revolution

Anyone who problematizes the possibility and dangers of theory in order to give thinking a moral meaning has a tautological criticism of thinking: it is ethically neutral.

"Like any existing faith (!), science can also be used to serve the most devilish social forces." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

As much as the imputation made in this abstruse comparison is true, that unbiased science only determines what its objects are, and does not evaluate them - like faith and morality - by referring to a better world that ought to be, as little is the conclusion that thinking not guided by morality serves as a "tool" for "every particular endeavor, whether good or bad". This poor opinion of thinking, which can only imagine criticism as a measurement of reality against higher norms, does not, however, affect even the little appreciated "instrumental reason" of modern science as little as any other instrument. You can't grow roses with cannons and with insight into the laws of motion of capital you probably won't promote the course of business. That science, according to its insights into the laws of *nature* - i.e. independent of any reflection on the interests prevailing in society - provides the basis for all kinds of *possible* ways of practical mastery of nature and thus does not limit but increase the freedom of its utilization, does not speak against it or for a lack of its knowledge, but lies in the nature of the things it researches. The question of the ends for which machines and atomic bombs are being built and for which natural science is being systematically promoted is rightly a matter of social science. Here, however, the elucidation of the ends of social institutions and economic mechanisms is completely sufficient for their evaluation. Once the actual ends of an arms policy or the accumulation of capital have been identified, then it is no longer necessary to judge them "in the light of reason" so that those who are to act as cannon fodder or objects of exploitation know what they can expect from it and what

to make of it. The "Frankfurt School" proves its level of reflection by building up the sweet problem of first having to negatively evaluate ends that no one openly acknowledges. It does not happen at all that somewhere it is admitted that there is exploitation and oppression – but that it is just not (yet?) known whether this should be considered positive or negative.

Not even the bloodiest dictatorships renounce the name democracy for their concentration camps; Hitler also spoke of peace in the middle of a total war. Neither exploiters nor their victims subscribe to exploitation because they know that, once the nature of the issue is stated clearly and undisputedly, the practical judgment has been made. Even hypocritical complaints such as this one

"The statement that justice and freedom are better in themselves than injustice and oppression is scientifically unverifiable and useless." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

derive their power of persuasion from the general disapproval of a rule that does not meet the standards of the bourgeois one, in order to prove that this disapproval is not possible - at least not "in itself". They demand from the practical judgement, which measures itself in utility and interest and approves or rejects in accordance with the same, the universality of the scientific, the validity of which *no one* can reasonably deny, and only on this basis do they tautologically gain the absence of a generally binding criterion of practical judgement:

"Once the philosophical foundation of democracy has collapsed, the statement that dictatorship is bad is only rationally valid for people who are not its beneficiaries." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

Indeed, anyone who wants to hear from the dictator that his regime is evil has set himself a difficult task. He does not want to rely on the practical interest of those concerned to judge an end, nor does he want to tolerate any declarations of hostility against hostile ends from any side. Critical theory demands a *higher standpoint* from which an end can be endorsed or rejected "in itself" *without* reference to interests, a common maxim of master and slave, so that even the beneficiaries of a dictatorship can deem it reprehensible. Instead of reminding the exploited of their interests and proving their incompatibility with the necessities put into force by politics, the moralist turns to the rulers and beneficiaries to appeal to their unselfish motives of all people and to mobilize their better opinion of themselves. Instead of rationally criticizing rule, he tortures himself with relish with the worry of how rational criticism would even be possible.

The anti-critical longing for a generally binding yardstick that deliberately turns against interests as "merely particular" arises and by no means serves "reason" as such. The abstraction from interest and the commitment to the limits that the "game" of the state demands of the individual, precisely because it is practically taken into service for the greatness of the nation, just this abstraction, admittedly without all the compromising content, is held up as humanum against the interests as a whole, without regard for their content, and also against the actual common good, which places people under an obligation.

In critical theory, morality is called reason, a reason that is explicitly opposed to knowledge and practical reason, the interest. Its absence is in turn circularly reckoned up for the thinking:

"Since the ends are no longer determined in the light of reason, it is also impossible to say that one economic or political system, however cruel and despotic, is less reasonable than another." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

"There is (in today's science) no reasonable goal in itself." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

Why should there be any? After all, it is critical theory that constructs a false separation of knowledge and will - to express the need for a false identity of both in an irrefutable moral principle. As if the knowledge about the purpose and character of a political-economic system did not give the interest everything it needs to make a decision. And just as if the "reasonable" *decision* did not have a clear criterion in damage respectively benefit. *Beyond* thinking and practical end there should be a "reasonable end in itself", one that is not determined by the respective material situation and the particular will and for this very reason should be absolutely desired.

Therefore, Frankfurt philosophy is not objective where it should be objective, in science, and not 'subjective', where it is all about interest, in will and in the judgement of ends. So, what then should this anti-science amount to when considering practice, if it already rejects thinking as immoral? Precisely only to the *criticism of the practical will as such!*

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7. Mastery of Nature is Violence

or: How the blessing of technology brings forth the curse of mankind

Violence against Nature

Long before a 'movement for the protection of the environment' lamented the "dying" of the "German forest", the fathers of critical theory had already formulated the basic dogma of ecology:

"What human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings." (Max Horkheimer/Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, Stanford 2002, p. 2)

"Today more than ever, nature is seen as a mere tool of man." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

The complaint that nature becomes "completely" a "mere tool", probably communicates that the accuser wants to give it a different role in people's lives. However, it gives no information of what would be bad about the being a "tool" of nature. It is insinuated that nature has its own ends, which man would commit violence against if he did not let it as it pleases and makes it his means. But how can you oppress things that do not pursue an end at all? It is a pure moral argument with which leftist philosophy rides its attack against the domination and use of nature. One may think about morality what one wants, but the idea of applying it to wood and coal, which one stirs up, is quite a great nonsense.

The "industrial society" is accused of all things of no longer respecting trees and shrubs as their own beings, as in the natural religions. The subject is recommended to fall in love with the apple instead of, respectively before "raping" it, i.e. biting it –

"Things congeal as fragments of that which was subjugated; to rescue it means to love things." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 191).

and humanity preached to leave the "mere" point of view of knowledge, use and enjoyment and to rejoice in an agreement (here, above all, 'mood' must be emphasized!) with uncontrolled nature that is as stupid as it is imagined. The image of such a "reconciled state", which "man" assaults, draws up the equation according to which the use of nature in and for itself represents its abuse, i.e. a false position of subjectivity in relation to the objects. This equation is indeed critical - in that it denounces material interest as a craving for power!

Violence against Man

To anyone who knows of an obligation, a necessary respect of man for nature, even for being, the use of man - the proper theme of morality - is only one example. Of course, one that is completely in line with the demurred disrespect for being:

"In the process of his (!) emancipation, man shares the fate of the rest of the world. Mastery of nature includes mastery of man." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

Why? The proof of this transition would be worth a few arguments, especially since the lack of means of need can be overcome with the mastery of nature. But such proof is sought in vain. No surprise. How could the fact that nature is made to serve human ends by exploiting the laws that govern it give rise to the necessity of an antagonism between people? What critical theory has to offer instead are allusions to capitalism.

Of course, these also fail to prove the - indeed absurd - assertion that the stated exploitation of man by man is about a class-spanning "social" end called mastery of nature:

"For the rulers, however, human beings become mere material; as the whole of nature has become material for society." (Max Horkheimer/Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, Stanford 2002, p. 68)

A fine explanation for this, since mastery of nature leads to dominance over people, if one already presupposes it in the analogy!

The woman as an object of desire

The classical formula of morality - "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end" -, the abstract difference between end and means, is not suitable for judging and condemning actions. It depends very much on what one is used for.

The famous moral weapon in the talk about the woman as the man's object of desire accuses lust of having an object. What harm should the woman suffer from this - especially as the matter looks the same from her side: The participants can confidently dispense with the disrespect for the other's subjectivity.

But such distinctions do not interest the moralist, who wants to consider the fact that a person is an "object" of all possible ends of other people to be completely unjust, beyond the constitution and content of these ends.

The individual has a will of its own. It is violated if it becomes a means of interests incompatible with its own. The absurd polemic about the purpose-means relationship as such in the name of human dignity is the attack on practical subjectivity in general.

Utility itself is failure!

The indifference towards the objects of utility - Horkheimer applies the commandment of respect as an end in itself to people as well as to just about anything - makes it clear that the attack of critical morality applies to purposeful action as such. This not only reduces its objects to "mere" means, it must also necessarily fail as punishment:

"Today more than ever, nature is seen as a mere tool of man. It is the object of total exploitation which has no objective set by reason and therefore no limit. The boundless imperialism of man is never satisfied." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

Note this transition: the use of nature has no moral objective "set by reason", so it is "limitless", thus "never satisfied". That the use of any means has its modus operandi in *its* end and objective is not known to a moralist, for whom it is self-evident that measure and objective must be something negative against an end. The opposite is true. If the single, particular end disposes of the means of its actualisation, then it is also satisfied with this - and if beside and after it also another use of other natural objects takes place, then it is none of its business. Horkheimer, on the other hand, takes the "total exploitation of nature" as an independent end, which, if it were to be pursued in this way, i.e. as a total and final exploitation of all natural possibilities, would certainly never reach its goal.

This failure can also be expressed in such a way that the technical means of appropriating nature lead to people's slavish dependence on them:

"The more we invent apparatuses for the mastery of nature, the more we have to serve them if we want to survive." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

Firstly, the practical concern will not be affected if it adheres to the functional requirements of its means in order to achieve its end. Whoever wants to use the advantages of a washing machine or calculating machine will adhere to its operating instructions without self-denial. Here again only the cosmophilosopher, who wants to unite and reconcile himself with objectivity as such, is told that he has not become God *despite* (!) mastery of nature, that the most beautiful apparatuses still have their own modes of operation and that the subject's domineering desire is not a command to things and that he should therefore (!) refrain from doing so altogether.

"What appears as the triumph of subjectivity, the subjection of all existing things to logical formalism (means natural science), is bought with the obedient subordination of reason to what is immediately at hand." (Max Horkheimer/Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, Stanford 2002, p. 20)

"In the end, people retain voluntary submissiveness as a rational form of self-preservation. The autonomy of the individual unfolds to its heteronomy." (Max Horkheimer, Reason and Self-Preservation)

The only "real freedom" that man can obtain through the purposefulness of his productive activities of all things appears to those who regard the mastery of nature as a philosophical programme, as submission and heteronomy!

Secondly, however: "The more WE invent apparatuses, the greater our self-submission", is the dogma. Which society is this expertise actually about? This WE is a plain invention of the great masters and their disciples. As little as assembly lines, computers and combat bombers serve the innocent purpose of mastery of nature as such, just as little is a collective subject of me and you and all of us their ordering party. In the capitalist world of private property in land (= nature!) and in the means of appropriation of nature (= the so-called apparatuses!), it is virtually forbidden for the ordinary citizen of the earth simply to intervene in the world of nature in his favour, to change it and to use it. Rather,

this is done under the command of the state and according to the calculation of profits, i.e. according to the exclusive purposes of business & violence, for which the majority of the people have to be held accountable only through a lot of effort, exclusion from the wealth they produce and through patriotic frontline duties! The allusion to the capitalist factory, in which the wage workers in fact function as mere appendages of machinery, is not at all suited for the false conclusion that "society" is to blame itself for all this because of its selfish hubris. People do not become appendages of machines because of (workload reduction by) technology, but because the simplification of labour is used against the worker. So, because the workers' productivity is organized as the productivity of capital.

Freedom and Necessity

The only freedom vis-à-vis nature has been correctly copied by Engels from Hegel:

"Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the insight into necessity (die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit). "Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood [begriffen]." Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends. Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with knowledge of the subject. Therefore the freer a man's judgment is in relation to a definite question, the greater is the necessity with which the content of this judgment will be determined; while the uncertainty, founded on ignorance, which seems to make an arbitrary choice among many different and conflicting possible decisions, shows precisely by this that it is not free, that it is controlled by the very object it should itself control." (Engels, Anti-Dühring)

Will to Rule kills Nature of Drive

Critical theory has consistently applied this "negative dialectic" of mastery of nature to the "subjective factor", i.e. to the relationship of man - that monster-sausage horny for power - to its own nature and expanded it into a complete

Critique of Will

The human who builds apparatuses to ease his work becomes one himself:

"In order to survive, man transforms himself into an apparatus that answers the confusing and difficult situations that make up his life with exactly the right reaction at every moment. ... The process of adaptation has now become intentional and therefore total." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

"Every subject must not only participate in external nature, human and non-human, but must subjugate nature in itself to achieve this. Rule is 'internalized' for the sake of rule." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

If at first the mastery of nature was rejected in the name of the freedom of the subject, now the autonomous will itself is identified as the instance of (deliberate!) suppression of the inner nature, from which the human inner life is to guard itself:

*"Absolute volitional autonomy would be the same as absolute rule of one's inner nature."
(Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 256)*

Here the drives and some kind of animalistic aspirations - characteristically left in philosophical darkness - are juxtaposed with the will as if the form of the will - nothing other than the self-confidence of a content that ought to be - would set hostile contents to the drives.

"The individual impulses' objectification in the will that synthesizes and determines them is their sublimation, their [...] diversion from the primary goal of drives." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 238)

In reality, the content of the will is neither natural (impulse, i.e. the content of the will thought without will) nor unnatural, but identical to the cultivated needs that a person has in the 20th century - as long as the content of the will is a need at all. If it owes itself to a spiritual intention, then it is *something else*, but it is far from being directed against the need. Adorno, on the other hand, constructs an opposition between impulse and unity of impulses for himself - according to which man, whenever he wants one thing and concentrates on it, must suppress everything else that he could still want, but does not want at all.

"A will without physical impulses, impulses that survive, weakened, in imagination, would not be a will. At the same time, however, the will settles down as the centralizing unit of impulses, as the authority that tames them and potentially negates them." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 241)

Thus the will is once again broken down into its content and form, the "wanting something" into "wanting" and "something", and with the contrast of need and will, nature and spirit, heart and reason an arch-bourgeois image of soul life as a conflict of the soul instances is drawn up, which waits for philosophical overcoming. Adorno already knows how he would mediate the discord of the soul instances constructed by him, which he blames on the purposefulness of the will as such - if he were the world spirit:

"Perhaps, free men would be freed from the will also" (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 264)

Maybe also from needs, feelings etc. For the sake of reconciliation!

* * *

8. Estrangement through Society prevents Autonomy of the Individual or: The empty dualism of integration and identity

To what extent does 'in the light' of critical theory - the individual see itself socially suppressed at all?

*"Man is so thoroughly embedded in associations, groups and organizations that individuality, i.e. the element of the particular from the standpoint of reason, is suppressed and absorbed."
(Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)*

Extremely odd. The sheer embeddedness in all sorts of associations should cause the death of the individual particularity. Doesn't it depend a little on *what* is being organized there? The reference to the *extent* to which it happens, "thoroughly", may suggest an increase, but it does not make more plausible *in how far* an *intolerable* relationship should prevail. A Skat circle or a holiday club does not become an institution of oppression by constantly taking action instead of just once a year. Just as little

as from the permanent union of the capitalists in the "employers' association" the slavery of its members follows.

When the evil of modernity is indicated by the sociological keyword "integration", contentless individuality - contentless because separated from its will, need and its means - is presented as an *empty contrast* to society *as such*. The unthought of an exaggerated sociality, inflated into the creation of the word "total socialization", is supposed to characterize the bad condition, as if the problem of mankind and the insult to individuality consisted in the fact *that* man belongs to a society, and that quite intensively - and not to *which one*!

If critical theory, unlike its conservative sociology colleagues, condemns integration, then explicitly it is not the fact that individuals are subsumed under a social purpose hostile to their interests, but rather: that the contrast it invented between the subject imagined as being antisocial and the requirements of the "universal" (whose entire content in turn is: "not subjective!"), whose *counciliation* would be the programme of critical theory proper, but which has in fact meanwhile lapsed completely without it:

"Integration goes even further. The adaptation of people to social conditions and processes, ... without which it would have become difficult for people to continue to exist," (= there was once something good about this shit!!) "has become so sedimented" (dictionary: accumulate) "in them that the possibility of breaking out of it without unbearable conflicts of drives, even in consciousness," (that is the Adorno manner) "shrinks. They are, triumph of integration, identified with what is happening to them right down to their innermost behaviour. Subject and object have, in mocking contrast, become the hope of philosophy." (Theodor W. Adorno, Society)

What "is happening to them" is of course designed in such a way that it does nothing at all to the individuals concerned, because

"the universal, to which they bow without still feeling it (!), (is) tailored in such a way for them (!), appeals so little more to what did not resemble it in them that they bind themselves freely and easily and joyfully (!)." (Theodor W. Adorno, Society)

Thus the criticism of the "integrated society" in fact results in the assertion that the bad thing would be that society offers the individual exactly what it needs, wants and enjoys. And vice versa, it is precisely the satisfied materialism of the masses - what a common lie ("affluent society") has been reconstructed in a dialectical way and thus confirmed - that seems to be the obstacle to true autonomy. No wonder that critical theory is also pleased with the

Arch-Reactionary Criticism of the 'Welfare State'

And 'welfare thinking'; of the welfare state, which makes it too easy for people to deprive them of their freedom of poverty and thus reduces them to brainless parasites who are lazily plunging into the social net:

"The individual comforts itself with the thought that its government, its company (!), its federation, its trade union or insurance company will take care of it, if it becomes ill or ready for retirement." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

"Thus, the individual subject of reason tends to become a shrunken ego." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

Philosophers who have never known the welfare rate, and who certainly would not find it too high if they knew it, allow themselves the elitist criticism that any compensation to the victims of competition

is a curtailment of their freedom and self-responsibility. They see in it a "decomposition of the individual", for whom it is made too easy everywhere, even in love, because from the outset individuality is not seen as self-consciousness, will and interest of the individual, but as an *instance of self-responsibility* towards the whole. Thus, they actually imagine capitalism as a service-provider and criticize this very *ideal* of a society that excludes the majority from wealth and *exploits* it for its expansion as inhuman and de-individualizing.

To the complaint, which presents itself as the theory of late capitalism, that the autonomous subject has meanwhile been integrated and provided for to death, belongs the complementary assurance that the diagnosed downfall of the West was preceded by a period of ascent and the flowering of the own ideal subject.

Early Capitalism - an Eden of Free Individuality

Out of sheer interest in giving their picture of the individual responsible for itself and others a material existence in history, the masters of the Frankfurt School do not shy away from drawing a complete rose-tinted painting of that historical "era of free enterprise" and the "free market". They are sufficiently narrow-minded, loving - and unaffected by their own knowledge of the miserable proletarian living conditions that the compulsion to free wage labor brought about - to paint the old capitalists as a true stronghold of humanity and culture and to ascribe to them many qualities of exemplary reason and morality:

"Both businessman and manufacturer had to be equally prepared for all economic and political contingencies. This need inspired them, ... to learn from the past,... to make plans. They had to think for themselves and... promote independent thinking, even if it might differ from their interests." (When, where??) (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

So, at that time the capitalist calculation was learning, planning, thinking for oneself. (And even critics had been financed; what one can already study at Marx, who could cultivate his critical thinking all his life thanks to a well-endowed fellowship of the capitalist class!) Today, however, the same is highly negative:

"In the age of large-scale industry, the independent entrepreneur is no longer typical." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

"One needs (today) the knowledge of facts, the automated ability to behave correctly, but not the calm consideration of different possibilities, which presupposes freedom of choice and time to choose. Even though the freedom granted by the market was abstract and deceptive, it allowed room for reflection." (Max Horkheimer, Reason and Self-Preservation)

The modern capitalist is apparently subject to all kinds of factual laws, which leave no choice for his calculation - although the demanded ability to "behave correctly" also implies a possible wrong behaviour. Conversely, the capitalist of the 19th century only had to think for himself in order to adapt to "economic and political contingencies" which confronted him as objective conditions for his calculation. So, in all capitalist centuries, entrepreneurs have done exactly the same thing, they have always, after taking note of the business conditions, made their decision, which has the greatest profit in mind. Only the will to "dialectic", the intention to attribute to the private interest both the enabling of morality and its destruction, takes one and the same apart in a) decision = free, thinking and b) according to objective necessities = unfree, amphibian-like reaction. (Note the last remaining difference, according to which the old capitalist spent his time of calm consideration of business alternatives not with calculation but with "reflection" - as if the equation time = money had only recently been introduced!)

* * *

9. Art is (no longer) the True

or: How capitalism deprives its intellectuals of the last free spaces for the contemplative care of the humane

With the sad end of the old moral entrepreneurship of early capitalism, according to Horkheimer/Adorno, to make matters worse, the death bell for culture and art was also rung:

"His (the old capitalist's) independence also included an interest in his own cultivation - not as it is today for the sake of a better career, but (!) for his individual existence ... Although the masses could not strive for the position of the bourgeois, the presence of a relatively numerous class of individuals who were truly interested in humanistic values formed the background for the kind of theoretical thinking as well as for the artistic manifestations that could express the needs of society as a whole by virtue of their immanent truth." (Max Horkheimer, Critique of Instrumental Reason)

For what do the critical aesthetes from Frankfurt praise the early capitalists? For the fact that with their personality-building egoism, to which they committed themselves alongside their business, they have delivered nothing less to society as a whole than an expression of its true needs. What is the truth of humanistic values and art that pleases like this? Once again, their "non-identity", their empty opposition to careerism and "mere" utility, these identified enemies of autonomy.

Critical theory shares and exaggerates out of innermost conviction the arch-bourgeois judgement about art, according to which it is and must be *more* than a means of enjoyment. If this more can be discovered in it, i.e. one's own philosophical longing for harmony with a world that again and again disdainfully rejects the proposal of its unhappy lovers in this respect, can be read out or into the artistic work, the honorary title of "insubordination", of "resistance", the only and last embodiment of the tension between particularity and (bad) universality is awarded to it. Resistance and ideological need for reconciliation, that is identical for critical theory!

With the diagnosed loss of the autonomy of the cultural carriers, the capitalists, not only has society as a whole lost its humanity, but it is also the potency of cultivation of the lower people to the devil. A loss that is all the more painful for Adorno & Co because the masses do not even suffer from it. *Culture*, which according to its interpreter Adorno once pronounced the unspeakable, the desire for the "completely different", degenerates into a cultural industry by seizing, i.e. entertaining the masses. What disturbs the supreme aesthetes is not so much the *content* of the "mass culture" offered, than its "*uniformity*" and "*conformity*", with which the unique is degraded and leveled into a cheap "branded article", and the priceless also (!) becomes a "commodity". Its "consumption" – ugh, yuck! - closes the

"Cycle of manipulation and retroactive need [which] is unifying the system ever more tightly"
(Max Horkheimer/Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford 2002, p. 95)

and thus completes the integration of all, including the intellectual remnants of critical "transcendence", into the collective "self-estrangement" of uncultured materialism, with the exception of those whom the dying of true values inspired the obituary that - thank you, Theo! - in the form of critical theory has been preserved to this day.

* * *

10. Capitalism destroys True Community

or: The state nature as content of the 'autonomous will' - the moral of the story

Critical theory's criticism of modern class rule is as follows:

"Wherever people follow the law that is natural in this society, they only (!) immediately manage the affairs of the subject of interest bearing their own name." (Max Horkheimer, Materialism and Morality)

So, people *only* mind their own business. By "only" a criticism is voiced without anyone knowing what would be so bad about it. Of course Horkheimer tells us that he thinks something is missing.

"The life of the general public (results) blindly, accidentally and bad." (Max Horkheimer, Materialism and Morality)

Here the standpoint of "the general public" is assumed, from which one does not know who it is supposed be. Its life may - and indeed only possibly ("blindly, accidentally") be badly shaped, but who would be concerned about that, if meanwhile all individuals take care of themselves and enjoy life? The tautological argument is simply: private interest is not moral, not oriented towards the general public; so (!) morality is missing. A clean explanation in which Horkheimer - like all moral philosophers - ultimately refers to nothing more than the belief in the necessity of the virtues of altruism, instead of uncovering their "roots", which he himself had claimed were "to be sought in the broad outlines of the bourgeois order".

"If the reason of the bourgeois individual reaches beyond its particular ends, provided that it is not only this particular X with its private worries and desires, but at the same time can ask itself what these worries of the X actually concern it, even if they directly concern its personal existence; provided thus it is not alone this X, but a member of the human society, the 'autonomous' will exists in it." (Max Horkheimer, Materialism and Morality)

Insofar as one "can" abstract from his own interests, he is moral! And this should by no means be a criticism of the servant consciousness which credits its subordination to the great authority of the state as merit, but a compliment to humanity and a responsible attitude. Of course, as a practiced one, such unselfish "reason" is, according to critical theory, again out of place in capitalism. The absolute, because unquestionably good of morality, is not absolutely good: it is abusable.

"Not sense of duty, enthusiasm, sacrifice par excellence, but sense of duty, enthusiasm, sacrifice for what decides the fate of mankind in the face of the prevailing misery. Of course, willingness to make sacrifices may be a good means in the service of that power, even the most retrograde one; however, it is not the conscience but the right theory that provides information about the relationship in which its content stands to the development of society as a whole." (Max Horkheimer, Materialism and Morality)

The bourgeois order, which demands morality as "a good means" of maintaining power in the face of the misery it creates, thus abuses this morality at the same time. This does not detract from the goodness of the victim's idiocy - the philosopher only wonders whether this order is worth the sacrifice. As if a society that is not based on exploitation could even use the sacrifice of its citizens. A philosopher also knows that man must serve a power in all the future - but maybe it could be a progressive one! Philosophical moral criticism thus protects morality from society, in which it only arises and constitutes the necessarily false consciousness of those who want to continue to play along:

"The categorical imperative encounters in this society of isolated individuals the impossibility of being meaningfully actualised." (Max Horkheimer, Materialism and Morality)

Morality here and today is only possible as a double standard, which theoretically accompanies practical, selfish activity, is the accusation of the more radical moral imperative of critical theory against bourgeois *hypocrisy*:

"The whole thing therefore appears as a warning, as a demand and worries the conscience in moral concerns." (Max Horkheimer, Materialism and Morality)

Nobody knows as little about the reality of morality as a moralist, after all. Morality is no more and no less than the ideological justification of and consolation for the limitations of interests by law. No citizen actively practices morality as his end - and he doesn't need to. He pursues his competitive advantage and adheres to the law only negatively by respecting the limits it draws for him. The reality and effectiveness of morality does not at all consist in the programmatic practice of philanthropy and justice on the part of the citizens (the state would be grateful for that!), but precisely in the *ex post* interpretation of the legal prohibitions as external pillars of morality; which one had demanded of oneself anyway also without compulsion - for virtue - but perhaps the others not.

The total moralist considers the actuality of morality to be its impotence and accuses society that the principles of limiting individuality are *only* a negative barrier against self-interest, instead of being the positive and only true purpose of life of the citizens. This society makes morality too difficult for man by promoting his 'egoism' instead of outlawing it.

With this, so the message of the critical theorists, these literary lawyers of the free individual, capitalism sins against the autonomy of the subject. Not a particularly autonomous ideal, we think, that presents itself critically there.

* * *

Addition 1:

On the Tendency of Left-Wing Critics to deceive themselves, or
Existence as a Bad Quality

The criticism of the arguments and standpoints of critical theory presented here will be met with opposition. That Adorno sets out to anti-scientifically commit any criticism to constructiveness will not be obvious to many. They will point out that the "Frankfurt School" has always stood for the necessity of *criticism*. Indeed. However, the question is: *what* is being attacked and *with what* arguments!

In reading critical theory one repeatedly encounters "the merely existing", the "insufferableness of what exists", the "unspeakably existing" and the "despair over what is". The left-wing reader, always looking for allies, is happy: Adorno is also against this! For the rest, he quietly adds to what is now supposed to be "unspeakable", "unbearable" in the existing and to incite "despair". Everyone imagines something criticisable - and the indeterminacy of the metaphysical objects accommodates him in this striving - provided he does not agree from the outset with Adorno that one has to be against the existing - without further grandee. Whoever seeks the grandee in the "negative dialectic" for the alleged negativity of the existing will be disappointed. He does not find it! Or in other words, they are already given: The existing is unbearable *because it is*, which is why philosophy is needed, which expresses this negative attitude to everything and everyone - no matter what it is now:

"In spirit, mere entity becomes aware of its deficiency." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 392)

This criticism of reality qua reality becomes clear from the programmatic statement:

"What remains equal to itself, the pure identity, is the worst." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 121 f.)

Here is not the inversion of the sentence: "Honest lasts longest", "Bad lasts longest", but here that which "remains equal to itself" and does not change is determined. It is bad. It is not the bad that is said to be lasting in addition to its determinations of content, but vice versa, the lasting is said to be bad as such. Badness and existence are generally the same and are determined through each other. Everything that is, is bad, because it is;

"Good would be nothing but what has escaped from ontology (the doctrine of what is)." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 122)

For a closer definition of what "the bad" = "the existing" is, Adorno literally builds up a whole system (!) whose elements repeatedly say exactly the same thing on ever more remote levels of abstraction: What is, is bad because it is and is not not. From this otherworldly perspective, which seeks in vain in this world what does not exist, namely what does not exist, the world appears as something in which nothing is transcendent. Everything is 1. *immanence*. Before the urge for otherworldliness, that which is becomes an obstacle to the existence of that which cannot and must not exist.

2. so the fixed prevents the other world from breaking into this world, so immanence becomes 3. *invariance*. Because it does not want to make itself what it is not, invariance is tautologically 4. a *staying-equal-to-itself*. Thus, the battle for the other world has finally become a battle against logical categories, for what is staying-equal-to-itself other than 5. *identity*? Now that the "existing" has become rather monotonous and indiscriminate, there is still the same to discover - namely that which merely is - "pure identity", which appears to the colour symbolism of a person who imagines the colourful world of all that does not exist, as 6. *grey*.

Of course, one can also remember what results when everything in the world is identical with everything else by existence, the world becomes a unity, which philosophically 7. means *the whole* or Latin 8. *totum*, which does not at all exclude that one once again confuses the thing and the characteristic and scolds the bad world 9. *totality*.

Here the shift from philosophical word creations to sociological ones is already only a question of taste: While totality was only a code word for "the hopelessly dense web of immanence", one can call it just as good 10. and still not the least, *system*. Adorno believes the mistake of sociology, according to which all the limbs of the social system are interrelated, need each other and therefore see their highest purpose in strengthening the whole system, but he evaluates it the other way around. While the sociologists tell this complication of the fable already known in antiquity (of Menenius Agrippa) of the stomach and the limbs to people as their advantage, Adorno turns the tables when he relates social agitation to being. If the sociologists say: "You can be members of the system if you tinsel your stomach - and who wants to be alone anyway?" then Adorno is critical of this creation of unity. The system forbids the individual being not to be, this world is forcibly held in this world - although it would have liked to have migrated to the other world. Therefore the 11. and last determination of being is that of integration which prevents escape from it, which brings us back to 1. immanence!

* * *

Addition 2:

Critique on Principle

Freedom of Spirit

"You criticize on principle," people who find fault with something are told by those who are disturbed by such criticism. With this accusation, the critic is denied the grand of his criticism of the matter. For anyone who criticizes on principle no longer even looks at the peculiarity of the things on which he exercises his "lust for criticism". If the assertion that criticism is made on principle is true, then so is the accusation. It applies to Adorno; everything that exists is considered negative by him. His criticism is an attitude which does not follow from the knowledge of the objects, but precedes them and which seems appropriate to him completely independent of the object. Compared to the radicality of critical theory, Marxists, otherwise the epitome of the non-constructive, are apparently positive people. They have objections to the capitalist economy, to the power of the state and much more, because they do not like these institutions, but not because they are institutions and not imaginations as such. But what they like, they will be careful not to harm. The critical attitude, which makes everything equally bad, of course also makes everything equally good. It reduces itself to taking a *distanced* position on everything and everyone and demonstrating the same, while oppositional practice should "ever" make itself the same as what it is fighting against. For unfortunately, a policy that defends itself against the impositions of the rulers is also "only" practice and not non-practice and thus per se bad - it can do what it wants.

"Whereas praxis promises to lead people out of their self-isolation, praxis itself has always been isolated." (Theodor W. Adorno, Marginalia to Theory and Praxis)

And a person who considers the solution of practical tasks to be of benefit is

"a scoundrel who cannot see beyond the immediate tasks and moreover is proud of it; his behavior denounces the very spirit of praxis as a demon." (Theodor W. Adorno, Marginalia to Theory and Praxis)

The critical theorist has always been beyond tasks, because he has never reached them. He cultivates an attitude that prides itself on being theory and not practice. Thinking would be - and even more so as critical theory - grit in the gears. *That* one thinks - in deliberate negation of practice par excellence - is the only opposition that does not compromise itself. In fact, this attitude is a purely spiritual self-enjoyment and/or self-deception, that at least one does not get one's fingers dirty and has nothing to do with all that is happening. Such narrow-minded self-righteousness is the actualisation and as such the caricature - of the much-praised *freedom of spirit*.

"Theory speaks for what is not narrow-minded. Despite all of its unfreedom, theory is the guarantor of freedom in the midst of unfreedom." (Theodor W. Adorno, Marginalia to Theory and Praxis)

Thus the intellectual in its imagination has the cheap pleasure to stand with its valuable subjectivity far above everything in which it participates in the vile practice of daily life. In terms of its objective content, a ridiculous attitude, because it neither *knows* the facts nor claims an *interest* in practice, nor makes theoretical or practical criticism. It is the attitude of a view that is as elitist as it is without consequences. We assume that *this* is where all the appeal lies for today's academics.

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Addition 3:

About the Error and Subservience of the Question of Meaning

The Need for Satisfaction

The question of the "meaning" of a thing, of what worldly events and conditions "give me", "ultimately mean", lives off a fundamental contradiction. Its *starting point* is the identified *defectiveness* of a condition, i.e. the *dissatisfaction with* it. If, for example, labour were determined by and measured against the necessities and needs of those who work, the question of its meaning would not even arise. For with their material benefit, the "answer" would be obvious from the outset. The question of the meaning of a thing or "of life" thus *implies*, on the one hand, the experience that life obeys *foreign* necessities and purposes *incompatible* with one's own well-being. On the other hand, *it is* the denial of this fact. For it aims at nothing else but to accept these necessities that are harmful to oneself from a higher point of view, i.e. to want to *understand* them - in order to be able to subordinate oneself to them. Anyone *looking* for the meaning of wage labor and war, hunger and conjugal relations does not want to know anything about the objective nature of the living conditions that disturb him, let alone that he would consider ways and means of eliminating them. The question of meaning, *however* one asks and answers it (the dear God is only one possibility), is by its nature the longing for *good* reasons to put up with the conditions complained about. It is nothing more than an expression of the *need* for harmony with the world, and thus *regards* it solely from the anti-critical point of view of the possibility for the individual to reconcile itself with hostile circumstances. The question of meaning is the conscious negation of its condition, the *dissatisfaction with* the world, insofar as it is an expression of the will to be *satisfied* with the same world. So, firstly, it stems from a *slave's need* and, secondly, it is all the more in demand the harder the "times" that take the ordinary citizen into duty.

Critical theory consists in the program of philosophically asking the *question of meaning* and simultaneously declaring its positive *answer* to be impossible and reprehensible. Adorno's beautiful formula –

"A life that had any point would not need to inquire about it." (Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London 1973, p. 377)

accordingly does not turn *against* the ideological and affirmative desire for reconciliation, but wants to say that this (bad, life) inevitably forces him and humanity to constantly ask the question of meaning. In doing so, he uses his knowledge of its starting point - the constitution of the world offers every reason for dissatisfaction - to legitimize the idealistic will to be satisfied with his own existence - the existing need for meaning of the participants. His argument is: The "mere" fact *that* the question of meaning is raised shows that it is well-founded - after all, it testifies to the *meaninglessness* of the world.

Critical theory is directed against the satisfaction of the need for meaning - qua God, fate or fatherland -, i.e. against positive assessments which justify and exalt actuality as such. In contrast, they favour the persistent complaint that reality does not do justice to the submissive will for unswerving agreement with this reality. And considers this complaint the most radical form of criticism. In this way, i.e. with the equally programmatic and skeptical search for the undetectable universal meaning, it obtains theoretical satisfaction!