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**MAX HORKHEIMER'S CRITICAL THEORY OF RELIGION:  
THE MEANING OF RELIGION IN THE STRUGGLE  
FOR HUMAN EMANCIPATION**

by

**Michael R. Ott**

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Sociology

**Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
December 1998**

**MAX HORKHEIMER'S CRITICAL THEORY OF RELIGION:  
THE MEANING OF RELIGION IN THE STRUGGLE  
FOR HUMAN EMANCIPATION**

Michael R. Ott, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 1998

Over the past thirty years much has been written about the critical theory of society that was produced by a small group of left-wing Hegelians in the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt am Main, Germany and in the United States. However, except for the pioneering work of Rudolf Siebert, little has been written about the critical theory of religion as a fundamental and dynamic element of the entire critical theory's struggle for human emancipation. This study seeks to make a contribution in the development of the critical theory of religion as a corrective to the one-sided, positivistic development of the modern social sciences as well as to the increasing social irrelevancy of the contemporary church.

As such, this study is a content analysis of the critical theory of religion of Max Horkheimer, the Director of the so-called Frankfurt School, which was developed throughout almost all of his writings and later interviews from 1926 to 1973, the year of his death. According to Horkheimer, religion is the expression of human anguish and suffering that contains an implicit if not explicit indictment of the existing antagonistic social totality. Religion thereby also gives expression to the human longing for that which is beyond the existing socio-historical totality. Rather than projecting this cry of agony and hope of a better future society or life into the abstract form of a God, Horkheimer materialistically redirects such religious expression back to the economic mode of social production and the social structures from which such suffering comes.

Religion as the expression of human misery thereby becomes a practical historical force of resistance against all forms of social exploitation and domination in the hope of creating a better, more reconciled future society.

It is the conclusion of this study that Horkheimer's dialectical, materialistic critical theory of religion can help reconcile the modern antagonistic dualism between the secular and the religious dimensions of human consciousness and action through the dialectical negation of religious longing for the totally Other into a critical social theory and praxis that seeks a more free, just, rational, and happy future society.



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## Acknowledgments -- Continued

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### Acknowledgments -- Continued

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Michael R. Ott

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Development of the Critical Theory of Religion.....	1
Modern Enlightenment Movements' Critique of Religion .....	2
Traditional Religion .....	9
Dialectical Reformulation .....	10
The Critical Theory of Religion .....	11
Center for Humanistic Future Studies .....	11
Inter-University Centre of Post Graduate Studies.....	13
Three Versions of the Critical Theory of Religion .....	14
Dialectical Methodology.....	16
II. CRITIQUE OF BOURGEOIS RELIGION .....	20
Notes for the Future .....	20
Function of Religion .....	21
Exploitation and the Church.....	24
Metaphysical Pessimism .....	27
Influence of Schopenhauer .....	27
Materialistic Derivation .....	31
Religion as Fetish .....	33
Reification.....	34
Criticism of Religion.....	36



Table of Contents -- Continued

CHAPTER	
III.	THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY..... 45
	The Modern Antagonism Between Reason and Religion..... 45
	The Philosophical Legitimation of Civil Society and the State.. 46
	Utopian Reaction ..... 53
	Providence ..... 58
	New Research Program ..... 61
	Wrestling With Hegel ..... 61
	Dialectics ..... 64
IV.	THE SOCIAL AMBIGUITY OF RELIGION ..... 68
	Theory in Conflict..... 68
	Materialist Critique of Religion ..... 70
	Religion as Social Symptom ..... 72
	Secularization of Religion’s Content ..... 75
	Critical Theory Versus Christian Theology ..... 80
	A Real Religious Faith ..... 80
	Finite Goals ..... 84
V.	THE DETERMINATE NEGATION OF RELIGION..... 91
	The Methodology of Horkheimer’s Critical Theory of Religion ..... 91
	Antagonistic Mode of Production ..... 92
	Fascist Revolution..... 94
	No Return to Religion ..... 107
	Hope for the Future ..... 109
	Determinate Negation ..... 111

Table of Contents -- Continued

CHAPTER

VI. RESISTANCE AND HOPE.....	117
Appeal to a Totally Other.....	117
Revolutionary Task .....	118
Theoretical Shift.....	121
Critique of Pragmatic Religion .....	124
Good and Bad Religion.....	125
Church Betrayal .....	126
“Damaged Life” .....	128
First Encounter .....	130
Urgency of the Struggle .....	133
The Question of Religion .....	135
Need of Religion .....	136
Hope for Justice.....	139
Focus on the Negative.....	143
VII. CONCLUSION.....	146
The Critical Theory of Religion and the Church Today .....	146
The Angel of History .....	146
Social Progress .....	147
Dangerous Memory .....	148
Betrayal.....	153
Persecution.....	154
Integration.....	155
Prophetic and Messianic Mimesis .....	156

Table of Contents -- Continued

<b>CHAPTER</b>		
	Materialistic Roots.....	158
	The Cross .....	159
	Secular Heir.....	160
	Further Research Directions.....	161
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....		163

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Development of the Critical Theory of Religion

From the late 1960's to the present much has been written in the United States about the critical theory of society that was produced by a small group of left-wing Hegelians in the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, in Geneva, Switzerland, and in New York and California, USA. The main writings of the first, second, and now third generation of critical theorists have been translated into English and published. The names of Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Leo Lowenthal, Franz Neumann, Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, Alfred Schmidt, Helmut Dubiel, et al., are increasingly becoming a part of current social theory nomenclature. In Germany, this same concern for the writings of the critical theorists has been expressed through the collection and recent publication of the complete works of Horkheimer and Adorno. This developing interest in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School is further illustrated by the increasing amount of historical works, compendiums, and secondary source material that has been published in the last twenty five years, e.g., Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950, (Jay, 1973), Critical Sociology, (Connerton, 1976), On Critical Theory (O'Neill, 1976), The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute, (Buck-Morss, 1977), The Essential Frankfurt School Reader, (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978), Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas, (Held,

1980), Critical Theory and Society: A Reader, (Bronner & Kellner, 1989), On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives, (Benhabib, Bonß, & McCole, 1993), and The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance, (Wiggershaus, 1994). In a recent visit to Western Michigan University's Waldo Library, Professor Helmut Fritsche found over 1100 articles on the critical theory of the so-called Frankfurt School listed on the library's computer system.

An analysis of this material, however, quickly reveals that much has been written about the critical theory and such topics as the family; liberal, monopoly, and state capitalism; the authoritarian state; domination; the cultural industry, aesthetics, psychology, literature, and philosophy. However, little if anything is said in these very fine and well researched publications about a fundamental element of the entire critical theory, namely, the theory's critique of religion.

#### Modern Enlightenment Movements' Critique of Religion

The exclusion of religion from the discourse on and development of the critical theory can be understood within the context of the modern antagonism between enlightenment and religion, science and metaphysics, reason and revelation, the sacred and the profane, essence and form, ideality and reality. In pre-modern or traditional society, the sacred and the profane realms of individual and social life constituted a differentiated unity, with the religious dimension providing a universalizing unity and purpose to the individual, family, economic, political, and cultural life of society (Hegel, 1984, pp. 83-184; 1967, pp. 67-145; 1956, pp. 1-102; 1991; 1952). In modern society, however, this traditional psychological, social, and cultural unity has been shattered by the development of an instrumental, subjective rationality and its application through the positive, analytic sciences and its technology, which are both reflections and further

producers of the modern or capitalistic mode of social production. The divide between these two realms of human experience and growth -- reason and religion -- has developed into an ever-widening contradiction and crisis in modernity, as is expressed in a dehumanized, de-spiritualized, factual development of human reason, science, and technology on one side and a pursuit of humanity and meaning that is said to be devoid of reason on the other.

### The Protestant Reformation

This modern development of the separation of human reason and religious faith began in the 16th century with the ever increasing rise to power of the bourgeoisie, the advancement of mathematics and mechanics through the success of the natural sciences, and the Protestant Reformation's disparagement of human reason as a means of salvation. As Horkheimer (1974d) explained, the Protestant reformers of the Church denied the medieval, Scholastic attempt to rationalize and thereby reconcile Christianity with the world. The reformers denied that such a reconciliation of Christianity and the ways of the world was possible. For the reformers, the knowledge of God or of God's will for what is right and good is impossible. For the reformers, particularly John Calvin (1960), God was understood as the *Deus absconditus* -- the hidden God, who could not be known by human reason. The wisdom of this world cannot know God for such wisdom is attained only through the *Deus revelatus* -- the revelation of the hidden God of Holy Scripture (pp. 69-534). For Martin Luther (1963), human reason is "a vicious beast" (p. 230), the source of all evil in the world for it despises God. Such reason is to be slaughtered and killed by faith. Thus, the notion of the kingdom of God and that of the worldly realm of authority and knowledge were completely separated. The world and its concerns became the realm of science and human reason -- and ultimately

of the interest of those in power, whereas religion was privatized as a concern about one's spirit, soul, the attainment of salvation through faith and thus living a quiet worldly life, i.e., to conform to the established socio-political system of domination.

#### Descartes and the Development of Instrumental Rationality

This division of human knowledge and experience of the natural and social worlds into two increasingly antagonistic realms received its formal expression in the 17th century through the philosophy of Rene Descartes, the so-called originator of modern philosophy. Descartes gave expression and philosophical legitimation to the burgeoning instrumental rationality and its success in the field of the natural sciences as exemplified by what is known as the Scientific Revolution of the 17th. century which had the effect and further purpose of setting humanity free from their ignorance, fear, unnecessary suffering and death which was all too frequently condoned and legitimized by the myths and superstitions fostered by the religious authorities of the time. This new concept of reason is based on a subject - object dichotomy, in which the human subject is understood to be completely independent of all objects that it encounters, both natural and human. The notion of an instrumental, subjective rationality allows the independent subject to analyze, categorize, and understand all objects for the purpose of controlling and manipulating them according to the interest of the subject. The isolated, monadic individual set over and against objects in nature and society became the paradigmatic standard of the Modern age of the bourgeoisie.

Descartes (1958) gave expression to this one-sided emphasis on subjective reason in his well known "first principle" of modern philosophy: "*Cogito, ergo sum*" -- "I think, therefore I am" (p. 119). One's being was no longer seen to be an expression of or dependent on the "other," be it divine or human. Humanity was now understood

to be almost self-originating and self-sufficient by one's own thought and experience of the objectified world. The isolated, compartmentalized "ego" over and against the rest of the natural and socio-political world seen as object became the corner stone for the creation of the modern world, in both its liberating, progressive aspects -- as in the realization that the life of each individual is of the utmost value and importance as expressed in the bourgeoisie's formal laws and rights of independence: life, liberty, and happiness -- as well as its colonialism and imperialism that has produced the most terrible horror the history of the world has ever experienced.

Such a one-sided, positivistic emphasis on the subject-object paradigm of instrumental rationality has produced an instrumental praxis that objectifies, compartmentalizes, and functionalizes not only nature for the purpose of control and manipulation but also other human beings. People are no longer seen as subjects themselves but only objects or human resources to be used for the realization of an other's purpose. Through the development of this modern conception of reason, people are understood to no longer have meaning in and for themselves but only in how they can be used to realize the goals or interests of a dominant other. There is then no longer any sense of community, e.g., the finding one's autonomy in solidarity or covenant with others, but only a sense of proximity to the other conditioned by space and time and strategic purpose. With the elimination of dialectical thought by this modern dualistic concept of reason for which there is no objective meaning, truth, or reason, the subject itself becomes a mere functional coordinator and organizer of objects or facts that are to be dominated by society for its self-preservation. The once supposed autonomous subject becomes reduced to a natural object itself; one that seeks its own survival through the domination of the other, i.e., nature and humanity. In 1947, Horkheimer (1974a) gave expression to this development by saying,



The total transformation of each and every realm of being into a field of means leads to the liquidation of the subject who is supposed to use them. This gives modern industrialist society its nihilistic aspect. Subjectivization, which exalts the subject, also dooms him. The human being, in the process of his emancipation, shares the fate of the rest of his world. Domination of nature involves domination of man (p. 93).

Such sacrifice of the subject in the name of subjective reason is beneficial for production based on a logic of means and ends. However, as Horkheimer (1974a) states, this rational process also creates an “irrationality with reference to human existence” (p. 94). The result is the alienation of humanity in society and culture; “Civilization as rationalized irrationality” (p. 94).

The Cartesian dualistic, subject-object paradigm of the division between God and world, mind and body, human spirit and nature, a *res cogitans* and a *res extensa*, an instrumental rationality and a communicative, mimetic rationality, the social system and the everyday life-world remains the dominant logic and techné of modernity. Enlightenment and the development of a postmetaphysical, scientific, technical rationality have become the source and means of knowledge for the purpose of securing human self-preservation and security through the domination of nature and society. Religion, on the other hand, has become antiquated and obsolete, as it has nothing to offer -- not even “consolation” (Habermas, 1993, pp. 133-146) -- in addressing the problems of modernity. In place of the traditional society’s understanding of God’s unifying presence and involvement in the natural and social worlds, modern science and its instrumental rationality have succeeded in creating a godless world while also positing a worldless God, if a God is acknowledged at all (Metz, 1973).

### The Bourgeois Enlightenment

Since the 18th century and the modern philosophical achievement known as the Bourgeois Enlightenment, religion has been increasingly under attack and ultimately

rejected by the more modern and progressive as being nothing but meaningless myth and superstition; an exploitive, barbaric ideology of those that dominate society to keep the masses ignorant and servile. Peter Gay (1966) states that the modern, bourgeois Enlightenment's conception of history was understood as a battle between two opposing types of mentality. The battle between these two antagonistic understandings and approaches to life were divided into four epochs, "the first and third were paired off as ages of myth, belief, and superstition, while the second and fourth were ages of rationality, science, and enlightenment" (p. 34). The Enlightenment's battle cry of *écrasez l'infâme* (Voltaire) -- crush the evil that oppresses humanity -- was specifically directed at religion in the form of Christianity and the Church.

### The Marxian Enlightenment

The Marxian enlightenment movement has also contributed to the dismissal of religion as a topic of discourse in addressing the crisis of modernity. According to Marx (1964), religion is the creation of an alienated and oppressed human self-consciousness; "a reversed world-consciousness" (p. 41) due to a reversed and exploitive socio-historical world. For Marx, religion is the spiritual smell or "reflex" of a commodity producing society based on domination and terror, that offers a fantastic, "other worldly" consolation to the victims of the society's violence while it conversely legitimates the very same social system of domination and those who benefit from its violence. According to Marx, this religion is a false consciousness that is produced by an exploitive and terror producing society, that will be abolished through the revolutionary praxis that puts an end to the barbaric "pre-history" of humanity and ushers in the beginning of a truly human history of freedom and justice based on the socialized ownership of the society's mode of economic production and reproduction. However,

the depth of Marx's (1964) dialectical evaluation of religion as being not only an instrument of class domination and false consciousness but also being the expression of real human distress and of its protest against the reality of it, e.g., "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people" (p. 42), is overlooked through its one-sided subsumption into the overall rejection of religion. In this aspect of Marx's critique of religion, the people themselves produce religion as a drug that dulls their sense of misery and oppression in the projected hope of a better life beyond the hell of this natural and socially produced world.

### The Freudian Enlightenment

Like the Bourgeois and Marxian enlightenment movements, the Freudian enlightenment considers religion to be an "illusion" (Freud, 1961). According to Freud, religious ideas, which are psychically created from the experience of human need and fear in the face of the overwhelming power of nature and the injustice in human society, are projected into a beyond as divine revelation. This is an infantile projection of the need for a divine providence or God who will protect the individual kept in a child-like state of ignorance and weakness. Religious ideas, according to Freud, have their origin in the psychic experience of weakness and vulnerability that the individual wishes to overcome. Such religious ideas and beliefs were understood by Freud (1961b) to be illusory since they were created by a desire that the person's wish be fulfilled; a fulfillment that has little relationship to reality and is not thereby verifiable. Religion is "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity" (p. 43) that arises out of the Oedipus complex of a child's relationship to the father. According to Freud, modern civilization is founded on such psychic experiences of humanity's weakness in the face of the natural

and social worlds, the solution of which are humanity's projected religious beliefs and ideas, which assuage the psychic sense of weakness while also legitimating the unjust conditions that create such a religious/neurotic need and wishful thinking. According to Freud (1961b), it is this religious thinking, which like Marx he compares to a "narcotic" (p. 49), that needs to be replaced by the rational functioning of the intellect free of all illusion. People must grow up -- "*Sapere Audi!*" (Kant, 1977b, p. 132), the cry of the Enlightenment -- and go out into the "hostile life" (Freud, 1961b, p. 49) and be educated to reality as it is with no consolation. Freud (1961a) expresses this hostile, historical reality of life in terms of the struggle between Eros and Death, between the innate drive for life or for death. Human life and the development of civilization is thus characterized as the struggle between these two powerful and natural psychic instincts that, as he states, the religion tries to assuage with its "lullaby about Heaven" (p. 69).

### Traditional Religion

With its rationalization, cybernetic utilization, privatization, or even abstract negation and thus loss of the truth content of humanity's religious expression, modern society has lost its cohesiveness and has developed into increasing antagonisms between disparate particulars, e.g., between the various classes, races, sexes, nations, etc. This is not to say that the inclusion of a traditional religion in the development of modern society would have prevented this collapse into particularity/singularity and antagonism. It was precisely because of religion's role in the legitimization of the status quo of traditional society, with its limitations of the developing bourgeoisie, the oppression of the peasant masses, and its wars of conquest, that modern societies have marginalized if not negated religion as a inhibiting, reactionary force against the development of the positive sciences and society toward a more emancipatory, just, and rec-

onciled society. However, with modernity's bifurcation of human experience into a religious and secular dichotomy, with its emphasis and reliance placed singularly on the development of secularity through a subjective, formal, and instrumental rationality for the advancement of society and human well-being, a "dialectic of enlightenment" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1969) - a turning over of the enlightenment into its opposite: myth, domination, alienation, terror - has developed in the modern world. With the continued development of this modern dichotomy between the universality of religion and particularity/singularity of the secular in human experience, society and history also unfolds a growing, pervasive sense of meaninglessness, apathy, alienation, fear, hatred, resignation, and hopelessness in modern life.

#### Dialectical Reformulation

Based on this enlightened rejection of religion, it is understandable that the critical theory, being a critical and dynamic mixture of these three modern, secular enlightenment movements and thus, a thoroughly modern theory that seeks to further the project of human enlightenment and emancipation, is perceived as having little to say about religion. However, like other social theorists and philosophers, e.g., Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, Marx, August Comte, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Freud, et al., Max Horkheimer also struggled with and sought to resolve dialectically the destructive dichotomy between the religious and secular realms of modern life and society. Building on the dialectical tradition of the Jewish and Christian religions as well as that of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Freud, Horkheimer and other members of the Institute developed a theory of religion that was a dynamic and integral part of the entire project of the critical theory of society. Their dialectical theory of religion presented a new and liberating reformulation

of the form and content of religion -- particularly the prophetic Judeo-Christian religions -- into a modern, secular theory and praxis for the transformation of a one-dimensional, technologically oriented and capital dominated, unjust and oppressive modern society toward a more humane, reasonable, emancipatory future society. In a historical materialistic form, the critical theorists sought the dialectical subsumption of the human, emancipatory content of religion into the secular form of the critical theory (e.g., Horkheimer, 1972c, pp. 129-131). Without the inclusion of this dialectical materialist theory of religion as an essential dynamic element of the entire critical theory, the continued discourse on the critical theory and its goal of human enlightenment and emancipation in a better future society is in danger of being distorted.

### The Critical Theory of Religion

This omission of religion from the developing contemporary discourse on the critical theory of the Frankfurt School has been addressed in numerous articles and books by Rudolf Siebert (1979, 1985, 1989, 1994), who is the originator of the study called the critical theory of religion. This theme of the critical theory of religion has been researched and developed by Siebert since 1947, when he came directly into contact with the critical theory at the Institute of Social Research during his student days in Frankfurt, Germany. Since 1954, Siebert has been developing the critical theory of religion through his teaching and writing.

### Center for Humanistic Future Studies

In 1970, Siebert and other professors and students at Western Michigan University put the critical theory of religion into further praxis through a Hegel Symposium, which was held in honor of the two hundredth birthday of Hegel, an essential

intellectual ancestor of the critical theory. An ancillary purpose of this Symposium was to begin the promotion for the creation of a Center for Humanistic Future Studies at Western Michigan University. As a brochure entitled "Humanistic Future Studies Program" (1980) produced by the University Center for Environmental Affairs at Western Michigan University states, at that time a number of universities and high schools in the USA and throughout the world had established Future Studies programs (p. 4). The program of this proposed Center was based on the critical theory's method of determinate negation -- the negation, preservation, and furtherance -- of past economic/social, psychological, and cultural attempts of addressing the antagonistic crisis of modernity for the purpose of creating a better, more just, free, and reconciled future society at the level of human intellectual, scientific, and technological ability of the 1970's and 1980's. As it states in this brochure (1980), "Humanistic" was not included in the title to give expression to the totally modern and conventional opposition between the method of the positive sciences and that of the humanities (pp. 1-4). True to its foundation in *dialectical methodology* and the critical theory's interdisciplinary spirit, the proposed Future Studies Program included the positive natural and social sciences in the Studies' program of research for the sake of creating a more free and just future society. Humanistic was included in the title because the program was "concerned with human values, e.g., freedom, justice, solidarity, in terms of individual and community, on all levels of human experience and action," which included "art, religion, philosophy, science and technology" (p. 2).

The humanism referred to here is closely associated with humaneness, a practical humanism, passionately dedicated to minimizing physical and psychic suffering. Humanistic Future Studies is essentially future-oriented remembrance of the innocent victims of history with the practical intent to diminish or mitigate at least human suffering in the different dimensions of human experience and interaction, be it the human body or character structure, family, economic order, government or international relations (p. 3).

Official approval for the establishment of this Center and its Minor in Future Studies at Western Michigan University occurred on December 31, 1977. This Center and its program have since been eliminated.

#### Inter-University Centre of Post Graduate Studies

Siebert's work in developing the notion of the critical theory of religion was greatly furthered through the Inter-University Centre of Post-graduate Studies (ICU) in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, now Croatia. In 1975, Siebert presented two papers on Marxism's conception of religion at the ICU. The quantum physicist Ivan Supec, founder of the ICU and then President of the University of Zagreb, invited Siebert (1990) to introduce a course in the ICU curriculum on "The Future of Religion." As stated in James Reimer's (1992) "*Festschrift*" for Siebert's sixty fifth birthday, this Siebert did in 1977 and for the past 22 years, scholars and students from the East and West have come together in Dubrovnik to enter into discourse on the critical theory of religion.

Along with his continued teaching at Western Michigan University, where he has developed a Critical Theory of Religion web page, Siebert has also advanced the notion of the critical theory of religion through his teaching in Germany, Canada, Poland, Hungary, Greece, Israel, France, Spain, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Japan, and Russia. In July 1998, another seminar on the "Future of Religion" was held in the Futures Research section of the XIV World Congress of Sociology in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. In the Fall of 1998 at Yalta in the Ukraine, Siebert will continue the development of the critical theory of religion by chairing a Conference on Religion and Politics. His development of the critical theory of religion and its entrance into the academic discourse on the crisis of modernity and its possible future resolution has also



been furthered through numerous papers and presentations at the American Academy of Religion, the International and American Hegel Society, as well as his course on the theme in the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters. The influence of his work to fill the void in critical theory of religion research has spread as the notion of this theory has been incorporated by others in their work, as indicated by Marsha Aileen Hewitt's (1995) use of the specialized notion in her book entitled Critical Theory of Religion: A Feminist Analysis.

### Three Versions of the Critical Theory of Religion

According to Siebert (1998), there are three different versions that make up the one critical theory of religion. The first expression of the critical theory of religion is that of Max Horkheimer in collaboration with Th. W. Adorno, who focused his theory on the radicalization of the second and third commandment of the Jewish Decalogue and secularized its prohibition against making names or images of the Absolute into the driving methodological force of their theory: the dialectic of determinate negation. The second form of the critical theory of religion was developed by Adorno and Benjamin, and the third form by Habermas.

### Time Core

This particular study focuses on Horkheimer's critical theory of religion. The critical theory of religion in all its forms, like the entire critical theory, is an interdisciplinary study from a materialist perspective. Horkheimer's critical theory of religion therefore is not a topic that he could analytically excise from the dynamic interrelationship of the various realms of the existing social totality and its historical context. According to the materialist critical theory, knowledge has a time core which thereby af-

fects changes in human knowledge and in the concept of truth, right, morality, praxis, etc. Horkheimer's critical theory of religion is therefore not presented in an abstract, systematic, thematic book form. Rather it was developed in continuous discourse with his colleagues in the Institute as they sought to address the changing socio-historical situation of their time. As the development of his entire critical theory, Horkheimer's critical theory of religion was therefore presented in a dialectical form that was most relevant for addressing the changing socio-political issues of the time: through aphorisms, letters, and essays. As Habermas (1981; 1987) has illustrated with regards to his theory of communicative action, so too the critical theory in general is a response to a particular, concrete situation, which sets the temporal context and purpose for the discussion. The text of Horkheimer's critical writings is thus rooted in and expressive of the historic situation in which it was produced.

### Content Analysis

As such, Horkheimer's critical theory of religion is not contained in any particular volume of his work and cannot be expressed in isolation from the dynamic of the socio-historical situation. Rather, as a dynamic element of his entire theory it is expressed in almost all of his writings and later interviews. This study is therefore a systematic content analysis of the translated works of Horkheimer that follows the development of his theory of religion by allowing Horkheimer's critical theory of religion to unfold itself in response to the socio-political situation and its development from 1926 - 1973, the year of his death. No artificial or external system is imposed on these texts in order to arrange them according to a pre-established idea. Rather, the historical dialectical relationship between subject and object, between the theory and socio-historical context will be followed to let the development of Horkheimer's critical theory of re-

ligion present itself in his writings. By following the evolution of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion in his various writings, this study also reveals the development of Horkheimer's attempt to overcome the modern separation of reason and religion through the Hegelian dialectical method of determinate negation.

### Dialectical Methodology

The theoretical and practical methodology of the entire critical theory is the dialectical method of determinate negation that the critical theory received, negated, preserved, and furthered in itself from Hegel. Hegel gave expression to this dialectical methodology throughout his writings, but specifically states its conception in his Phenomenology of Spirit (1967a) and in his Science of Logic (1969). This method will be further clarified in the body of this study, particularly in Chapter V. However a brief summary of this method is appropriate in this Introduction.

Unlike the rationalistic and empiricistic dualistic methodology of the modern natural and positive social sciences, wherein there is a radical separation between the subject and object and in which something either is or it is not, the dialectical method of determinate negation is a process whereby a new form not only negates the old but also preserves and elevates the old form in itself. Hegel (1984, 1987, 1985) illustrated the development of this method in his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion as Buddha and Buddhism determinately negates the historically inadequate religious response to human suffering (theodicy) of its religious parent Hinduism, or as Jesus of Nazareth and Christianity determinately negates the more obsolete theodicy solution of Moses and Judaism: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; *I have come not to abolish but to fulfill*. ... You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder, [commit adultery, swear falsely] ... *But I say to you...*'"

(Matthew 5:17ff, New Revised Standard Version). The Jewish Torah and the prophets are both negated, preserved, and furthered in the radical praxis and teaching of Jesus which broke out of the non-threatening social role of institutionalized Judaism and made the religious content that seeks justice, mercy, reconciliation, and shalom for all people but particularly for the poor and socially disenfranchized disturbingly relevant.

Hegel (1956) also expressed this process of *determinate negation* in the history of world politics, as the Oriental despotic rule of One who was free was determinately negated in the Greek polis and Roman empire where a Few were understood to be free and capable of rule. This oligarchic notion of concrete freedom was determinately negated, at least in theory, through the religiously fostered notion that All people are free. The Modern world functions with this as its ideal but it has been corrupted by capitalism, as the Modern world has collapsed back to where again only a Few -- the rich, the owner, the powerful -- are really free and able to have their voice heard and politically realized. Capitalism and its steering mechanisms of money (economics) and power/domination (politics) must be determinately negated into a new socialized whole, where in reality All people are free. Thus, the goal of *determinate negation* is not an abstract or *indeterminate negation* which annihilates the other or the previous life form completely. Through the *determinate negation* of the old, the new form that rises from it is, in Hegel's (1969) terms, "the unity of itself and its opposite" (p. 54) in the historical movement toward the concrete emancipation of all humanity.

Hegel's philosophy contains both a negative and a positive dialectic, understood as the negation of the negative in both the subjective and objective realms of the human spirit which thereby produces a new, more just and free social totality. However, for Hegel (1956) who acknowledged the tremendous suffering and negativity that takes place in history as a gigantic Golgotha and a "slaughter-bench" (p. 21), both the begin-

ning and the end of this historical dialectical process is known. For both Horkheimer and Adorno, Hegel's thought was an identity philosophy which became mythical, ideological, and oppressive through such professed knowledge of the beginning and end of history. Such absolute knowledge of the beginning and end of human and natural history ultimately devalued and thereby legitimated the horror of human suffering through which history developed to its idealized realization and fulfillment.

Unlike the Hegelian philosophy and in keeping with the second and third commandment of the Jewish Decalogue, which prohibits the naming or making of an image of the Absolute, Horkheimer's critical theory does not contain both a negative and positive dialectic. As Horkheimer states in a prefatory letter to Martin Jay's (1973) book The Dialectical Imagination, the critical theory is expressive of a negative dialectic, which does not identify the positive of society but seeks only to formulate the "negative" (p. xi) of the present society whose negation might allow for the possibility of creating such a more just and reconciled future society.

Based on his concrete knowledge and experience of human suffering and his longing to negate the socio-historical causes of such suffering, Horkheimer radicalized Hegel's methodology of determinate negation, in the sense that he was not as optimistic of the realization of the goal of wholeness or the reconciliation of the crisis of modernity in the form of the antagonism between the universal and the particular, the sacred and the profane, notion and reality, reason and history, individual and collective, as Hegel was. For Horkheimer (1970) and for Adorno, the goal of this historical whole, which is known as still being the "untrue", is the unknown "totally other" in which he hoped and for which he longed. Due to the dialectics of the Bourgeois and Marxian enlightenment movements, which saw these originally liberation movements turn over into their oppressive and deadly opposites, it was enough for Horkheimer, whose eyes

were focused on the concrete suffering of the innocent victims of this historical process of Modernity, to seek the determinate negation of negativity without seeking to establish a positive result. The future is opened, if at all, in a negative not a positive way. The iron cage of positivism and capitalism is to be determinately negated by the historical, human struggle to overcome their inherent contradictions. However, there are no guarantees. What the future holds is not positively known. Rather, a new, reconciled, more free, just, rational future is hoped and longed for but not given as the consequence of the negative dialectics.

It is this dynamic, dialectical methodology of determinate negation that Horkheimer applies to the form and content of religion. Thus, for Horkheimer (1993, pg. 285ff; 1978a, pg. 148) and the critical theory in general, the historical form of religion, i.e., its positive institutional structure, dogmas, rituals, etc., which has become obsolete in the historical struggle for human emancipation is to be negated, while religion's emancipatory content, which cries out against both unjust natural and socio-historical conditions and longs practically for the creation of an unknown yet better future society, is preserved and changed into the new, secular form of the critical theory and praxis. Horkheimer's critical theory does not thereby become a new religion itself. Rather, it is the historical transformation of the critical, negative, emancipatory elements of religion into a modern, secular, critical theory and praxis directed toward the revolutionary creation of a better, more enlightened, just, and reconciled future society.

## CHAPTER II

### CRITIQUE OF BOURGEOIS RELIGION

#### Notes for the Future

From 1926-1931, Horkheimer wrote a number of short, critically reflective notes about various aspects of bourgeois society in the post-World War I and pre-fascist phase of capitalism. As Wiggershaus (1994) states these notes, aphorisms, and short essays were written during the time that Horkheimer began his teaching career as a *Privatdozent* at the University of Frankfurt, lecturing on such topics as “German Idealist Philosophy from Kant to Hegel,” the “Philosophy of History,” “Materialism and Idealism,” “Hegel and Marx,” and “The Enlightenment in England and France” (p. 47). It was also during this time that he married Rose Riekher, his “Maidon” in 1928, and addressed himself to the writing of longer essays, one of which will be discussed at length in the next chapter. According to Martin Jay (1973), in 1934 while in exile in Switzerland from Nazi Germany, Horkheimer published these unrefined notes as Dämmerung. Notizen in Deutschland [Dawn. Notes 1926-1931] under the pseudonym “Heinrich Regius” (p. 35), the name of a seventeenth century natural philosopher. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, these Notes “critically examine and re-examine the meaning concepts such as metaphysics, character, morality, personality and the value of the human being had during that phase of capitalism” (p. 13). Although these Notes are dated, being written during a time before the victory of National Socialism in Germany, it was Horkheimer’s hope that they might still contain some meaning and relevance for a later time; as Siebert (1994) states, a kind of “Flaschenpost” (p. 15) -- a note put in a

bottle by a person in distress and set adrift in the sea for someone to find in the future.

These Notes were not his first attempt to give expression to his critical reflections on the development of bourgeois society in the twentieth century. Prior to and during the First World War, Horkheimer (1974i) wrote a number of short novels which contained many of the very same notions contained in the Notes. However, these critical notions remained in a subjective and aesthetical form and were thus socially, scientifically, and historically undeveloped. Essentially, the ideas of these early, adolescent novellas were not understood nor presented by the author in relationship to or as a consequence of the totality of modern society and its development. The first expression of this dialectical relationship between the particular and universal, the individual and collective, a particular topic understood as a window on the antagonistic social totality is found in his Notes of 1926-1931. Therefore, this study on Horkheimer's critical theory of religion begins with these more social-scientific and philosophical reflections.

### Function of Religion

In the years that these Notes were written, the auspicious days of revolutionary social change in Germany were fading into the past as the reactionary forces of bourgeois society were gathering strength. Yet, for Horkheimer and other socialists, there still was the hope and possibility of the revolutionary transformation of society toward socialism. As Horkheimer (1978a) stated, "the form morality has taken in our time is the implementation of socialism" (p. 36). In this struggle for the creation of a more humane, just, moral, and reconciled socialist society, Horkheimer (1978a) critiques religion as to its reactionary and thus "evil" quality or its emancipatory or "good" social potential (p. 29).

In these early Notes, Horkheimer expresses the reactionary ideological quality



of religion as it performs a legitimating, cybernetic function of social control or domination in bourgeois society. Horkheimer differentiates between the social realms of appearance and necessity; between the surface structures of society, e.g., the political or economic forms of administration -- that can change and give the appearance of newness, hope, progress -- and the foundational economic content of those forms that do not change. He states that just as there is the economic base structure of bourgeois society that does not change, i.e., the oppressive relations of production between those who own the means of production and privately appropriate the collective surplus value of production and the workers who produce that value, there are also certain cultural principles of the society that are guarded against any change. The two fundamental principles are that of the nation and religion. These two concepts and their interrelationship are of essential importance in the development of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion.

For the existing bourgeois society, the concepts of religion and the nation are considered sacred and are thus under the ban of taboo since they are fundamental for the domination of the masses by the ruling elite. As Freud (1950) explains, that which is labeled as taboo is considered as unapproachable, and is expressed in negative terms of prohibitions (p. 18). Such prohibitions are not derived from religion or morality but appear to have no known grounds of their being while nevertheless being generally accepted by those members of the society. This unknown origin of the taboo prohibition, such as that applied to the concepts of religion and nation, corresponds to the hidden antagonistic mode of capitalist social production and reproduction, that is the materialistic ground of the bourgeois social totality.

Through these religious and nationalistic notions, the social domination of the ruling class is legitimated and made into a national, collective ideology in which the in-

dividual finds his or her identity. As used by Horkheimer (1993c), ideology is not understood in terms of the bourgeois sociology of knowledge in which every idea is relativized as a limited perception or theory in comparison to an abstract, universalized notion of total knowledge. Rather, following Hegel and Marx, Horkheimer's understanding of ideology is that of a socially produced false consciousness that distorts, hides, and thereby legitimates the inherent antagonism of bourgeois society. Through such abstract, ideological concepts as religion and the nation, the psyche of the individual is incorporated as a dynamic force into the process of its social domination.

These notions of the nation and religion are to be taken with the utmost seriousness. In Germany at this time, Horkheimer (1978a) states that criticism could be leveled at almost anything or anyone, except the totems of God, the German fatherland, or "the field of honor where the masses are to stand ready to die" (p. 27). As Horkheimer (1978a) states, if these sacred social structures are criticized, the person doing the critiquing will quickly become "personally acquainted with the very direct interest capitalism takes in the inviolability of the concepts" (p. 28). Horkheimer grounds this pragmatic, functional conception of religion by illustrating its change of importance in the historical development of bourgeois society. As he states, atheism was tolerated in the nineteenth century because it served the function of helping the bourgeoisie break the religious legitimation of feudal society in Germany. Such atheistic critique, however, is no longer allowed in the dominant bourgeois society as various legal and social punishments are prepared for the one who commits such blasphemy against the socially produced notions of God and the nation.

Horkheimer states that after Germany's loss in World War I, in which millions of lives were sacrificed for the capitalist class's increasing interest in acquiring colonies, cheap labor and natural resources, and surplus value, there was hope that the

masses would no longer fall victim to such lies and manipulation. As illustrated in the struggles and ultimate defeat of the socialist and communist parties in the Weimar republic (Riddell, 1986), the masses did not learn from their experience of war and its horror. They did not learn who their enemy truly is -- their capitalist exploiters. Rather, it was the capitalists that became more adept in their strategy of domination through developing new forms of oppression and terror to control the masses. It is this strategy for oppression and domination of the masses that Horkheimer (1978a) states constitutes the capitalist "class solidarity" (p. 28). The proletariat are brought to submission and are integrated into their own social oppression by their hunger, which is produced by the antagonistic capitalist mode of production. It is because of this economic exploitation that the workers again submitted themselves to the machinery of war. To help create an artificial, ideological enthusiasm for the masses' continued sacrifice for the interests of the capitalist masters, which the masses have been led to believe are their own interests, the fetishized and interrelated concepts of nation and religion are needed. However, as Horkheimer (1978a) states, the person who criticizes these ideological concepts of religion and the nation conversely "lays hands on (the society's) very foundation" (p. 28).

### Exploitation and the Church

Horkheimer (1978a) critiques the capitalist system as organized, world-wide exploitation that creates limitless suffering for the masses of humanity. It is analogous to a "penitentiary" (p. 31, 43-44, 47) into which most people are born, have their lives and thoughts dragged through the society's filth as they are crushed by the deadliness of the everyday economic process. Horkheimer (1978a) also compares bourgeois society to a "skyscraper" (p. 66-67), in which superficial talk about God and things eternal

is like the mortar that holds the structure together. Horkheimer (1978a) gives a critical structural-functionalist description of this bourgeois skyscraper in which “the basement of that house is the slaughterhouse, its roof a cathedral, but from the windows of the upper floors, it affords a really beautiful view of the starry heavens” (p. 67). Religion rests on the top of the socially produced human carnage of capitalism, not as an expression of humanity’s misery, indictment of society and of its God, and of the masses’ hope of change, but as the ideological tool that legitimates both the living hell of the masses and the aesthetic pleasures of the elite.

Horkheimer emphasized the fact that already in the late 1920’s there were the scientific and technical capabilities to put an end to the most obvious forms of socially produced human suffering and wretchedness. However, such suffering is caused by the economic relations of production and society’s property arrangements which are expressive of the capitalist’s interests. All forms of capitalist society, from the economic mode of production, its technology, science, to its cultural structures of education, religion, art, function in the service of the dominant few who exploit the masses. According to Horkheimer, religion in this society functions to distract and dull people’s minds from obtaining real knowledge about the system and structures of this social totality of domination. As Horkheimer (1978a) states the social function of both the base and superstructures of society is “to distract from the truth” (p. 29).

Expressing the time core of dialectical thought, Horkheimer (1978a) states that the material or economic base system and social structure of society in the early twentieth century is “characterized by an exploitation that is no longer justifiable” (p. 29). Horkheimer’s critical theory is not an abstract utopia that seeks the realization of the ideals of humanity in an unhistorical manner. Horkheimer’s theory is expressive of the development of what Engels (1935) called “Scientific Socialism,” which focuses on the

concrete, economic, scientific, and technological capabilities of society to create a more humane, just, and reconciled social totality. The domination of the few who owned the means of social production over the many was a historical necessity in the development of modern society out of its feudalistic past. However, such domination is no longer a necessity. That it continues to exist illustrates the reifying power of the capitalist class that has stopped the materialistic movement of society toward the realization of its more just and moral form for its continued appropriation of the society's collective surplus value.

This situation presents a dilemma, however, to the person or class seeking to bring about social change in such a society. To fight against an outdated and exploitive form of society means that the person or class struggles against a social totality that nevertheless maintains life at a certain historical level. As Horkheimer states, the continued existence of such an exploitive form of society is an evil because a better, more cohesive form of society expressive materially and formally of justice, equality, and freedom is scientifically and technically possible. Such a society however, is also good because it expresses the present form of human social achievement and contains the unfolded moments of its improvement. Horkheimer states that the evil of the society cannot be abstractly disengaged from its good. The struggle against the evil of society therefore also appears as a struggle against that which is good in the society.

However, as Horkheimer (1978a) states, the capitalist system was already producing the "sensitive mechanisms" (p. 29) needed for its increased administrative control of society as a whole. Based on their market value of maintaining the interests of the ruling class, those social structures and/or personal actions and work that support and legitimate the evilness of society are rewarded accordingly. To bring people into conformity with this exploitive social status quo is the purpose of the church, according

to Horkheimer (1978a), which functions as “a large scale ideological institution” (p. 30). Conversely, those efforts on behalf of a better society in the interest of humanity as a whole are condemned. There is a cost with regards to how a person responds to the existing society. To stand against it in the name of a better society risks one’s personal and material existence. To conform to an evil society also requires the sacrifice of one’s humanity, which is created in solidarity with all others in society. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, “the system affects everything, down to the most delicate tendrils of the individual’s soul. It has placed a premium on vileness” (p. 31).

### Metaphysical Pessimism

In this struggle, according to Horkheimer, the consciousness of human freedom, which also brings with it a consciousness of suffering and domination, can enable humans to empathize with all forms of suffering in nature and in society. Such insight into the pervasiveness of suffering in the world is derived not only from Horkheimer’s own experience of life but is also informed by the philosophy of Schopenhauer. Habermas states that Horkheimer returned to Schopenhauer in the later part of his life to help him overcome the contradiction of the historical development of the irrationality of society and the ever-present longing for society becoming rational and reconciled. However, as the research of Alfred Schmidt (1993) makes clear, the influence of Schopenhauer’s metaphysical pessimism was part of Horkheimer’s critical theory from the very start. Horkheimer determinately negated Schopenhauer’s pessimistic metaphysics into the materialism of his own critical theory.

### Influence of Schopenhauer

According to Schopenhauer’s magnum opus, The World As Will and Repre-

sentation (1969), eternal justice rules the world, a justice that is not retributive nor is it forgiving but is to be found in the inner nature of the world. The totality of the world is the objectivity of the one will-to-life, which is “free” and “almighty” (p. 351). This will-to-life appears in everything, as the world in its universality, particularity, and singularity is only “the mirror of this willing” (p. 351). According to Schopenhauer, all the world’s suffering, horror, misery, and death is an expression of the action of this will. Thus, everything is an expression of and supports this will-to-life. “In all that happens or indeed can happen to the individual, justice is always done to it” (pp. 351-352), for it is an expression and embodiment of the will-to-life.

Without knowledge of the totality of the world as the objectivity of the one will-to-life which produces all the antagonisms of existence, e.g., good and evil, rich and poor, happiness and suffering, murderer and victim, owner-worker, master-slave, male-female, the antagonism between the races, nations, etc., one is only left with these disparate parts and their antagonism; what Schopenhauer (1969) called the “*principium individuationis*” (pp. 352-353). For such a person that only perceives the immediate, concrete, disparate facts of existence, as Schopenhauer (1969) states, “the boundless world, everywhere full of suffering in the infinite past, in the infinite future, is strange to him, is indeed a fiction” (p. 353). For Schopenhauer, this antagonistic condition is an ontological condition of the world due to the driving will-to-life, which is the world’s foundation and purpose. According to Schopenhauer, there is no possibility of creating a better future world where such socially created antagonisms, if not the antagonisms of nature, are overcome. Without knowledge of this one, producing and reproducing will-to-life, humanity is left with only the positivistic particularity of what is for their knowledge; “[one’s] vanishing person, his extensionless present, his momentary gratification, these alone have reality for him, and he does everything to maintain

them, so long as his eyes are not opened by a better knowledge” (p. 353). Without this better, ontological knowledge of the will-to-life, such will animistically remains a mysterious unknown, of which people have an intuition or sense in their inmost depths of their consciousness. The driving force of the world and society remains unknown as unenlightened people are left with the positivistic *principium individuationis* and its knowledge derived from the principle of sufficient reason, “a knowledge that ... is the only appropriate kind for serving the will and also for science” (p. 196). Schopenhauer implicitly critiques the limitedness of modern, positive sciences, which deny any totality to society/world as they focus myopically on individual phenomenon. Thus, as Horkheimer explains from a materialistic standpoint, for Schopenhauer such modern positive sciences are a production of this socially antagonistic totality, an antagonism that they reproduce by their very work.

For Schopenhauer (1969), without such knowledge of the one will-to-life which creates and reproduces itself in the social/world antagonisms, humanity is trapped within an antagonistic historical continuum, in which humanity first seeks to survive and secondly seeks to reproduce. Humanity has a knowledge then of particular things - *principium individuationis* - derived from the cause-effect principle of sufficient reason as well as a “presentiment” (p. 353) or premonition of the one will-to-life of which the individual is part. As Schopenhauer (1969) states, due to this premonition of his connection to the will-to-life and thus to the whole of the world, an “ineradicable dread” ... a “fearful terror” comes over the individual - which is common to all humanity - when there is a break in this historical antagonistic continuum, e.g., “some change has occurred without a cause, or a deceased person exists again” (p. 353). This break into the positivistic knowledge of the *principium individuationis* and its historical continuum from the outside disturbs the assumed knowledge of the world’s phenomena, a



knowledge that keeps one's own individuality separate from the rest of the world. The break of this antagonistic continuum which produces such terror for the individual and the sciences shows the lie of the continuum and the positive sciences that are based on it itself. This difference between the thing-in-itself and the historical, empirical appearance is the bases of Schopenhauer's concept of eternal justice. Humanity's security, happiness, wealth, prudence, all that protects one from the evil and accidents of this world is undermined by the will-to-life, for the person is mere phenomenon like all the rest of humanity and the difference from other individuals and the sufferings they bear rests on the positivistic knowledge derived from the *principium individuationis*. The world and society that our sciences and technology create based on this bourgeois, positivistic principle of the separateness and isolation of things from the whole -- this positivistic break of the dialectic between the universal, particular, and singular -- based on the principle of sufficient reason -- contributes to and reproduces the antagonism and suffering of the world. It continues doing the will of the will-to-life, which is the eternal reproduction of itself and the resulting suffering, horror, and death.

As Schopenhauer states, the true nature of all things is that everything has the suffering of the whole as its very own. All the possible sufferings in the world belong to every person, as long as they affirm this historical life with all their strength, which is the same as affirming the will of the will-to-life. As Schopenhauer (1969) states, the knowledge that sees through the *principium individuationis* - a knowledge of a happy, secure life in this world which is given by chance or secured through one's own work is just "a beggars dream" (p. 353); a dream in which the person is a ruler above all the suffering and need; a dream however from which one must awake and once again realize ones' entrapment in the suffering of life.

### Materialistic Derivation

Horkheimer's critical theory of religion as well as his entire critical theory is a materialistic derivation of Schopenhauer's pessimism regarding the nature of life and reality in both society and the world. Based on Judaism's prohibition of making any image or name of the Absolute, Kant's enlightened critique of pure reason, Hegel's dialectical method, Marx's materialistic critique of bourgeois political economy, and Schopenhauer's pessimism, for Horkheimer, humanity has no knowledge of anything beyond this world that can give meaning to or consolation for the life-death antagonism of life. All ideas of happiness, justice, friendliness, and a good or bad life are rooted in the present. Such ideas become illusions when they are turned into means to an eternal life or of some deeper meaning. Life in an eternity, which is a Christian conception, is of no interest and is not the motivation for action in the present. Rather, solidarity with those past and present and with those who come after us, which is a Jewish concept of a person's salvation - remembrance in the community, is what motivates a person toward a better future.

The love of humanity, which is the heart of Jewish and Christian religion, is done in the present historical context; in the here and now. Beyond this present socio-historical context of humanity, there is no knowledge of anything sacred. According to Horkheimer (1978a), it is up to the socio-political praxis of human beings to make the religious love of humanity a historical reality.

To the extent that men do not themselves set the world aright, it will remain the plaything of blind nature. Kindness and justice do not dwell in the universe, the universe is unfeeling and remorseless." ... "Mankind is utterly alone" (pp. 102-103).

This struggle for a better life is all there is for there is nothing beyond it. Unlike Schopenhauer's categorical rejection of such a possibility, Horkheimer bases the po-

tentiality of a better and more happy future society and life on such enlightened and tough knowledge of the universality and inescapable nature of suffering that produces a sense of human solidarity and empathy. Such empathy, however, is not the same as becoming one with those that suffer nor does it alleviate such suffering by one's identification with it. Horkheimer critiques a positive, bourgeois religion that is based on the isolated individual's intuition and feeling for others that is expressed through acts of charity; acts that for all the immediate good that they do, do nothing to address the social system and structures that cause the need of such charity. Ultimately, such uncritical empathy with the socially disenfranchised, works to maintain and justify the antagonistic class structure of society. Echoing more Schopenhauer's than Hegel's emphasis on taking such negativity seriously, Horkheimer (1978a) states that life can be made easier for people but it still must be remembered that, "we are still surrounded by a sea of darkness" (p. 31) of ignorance, exploitation, oppression, suffering, and death that cannot be alleviated by any language or action. For Horkheimer, language, science, technology, education, religion, art, etc., can either be a tool used for human liberation or an instrument of ideology and domination. According to Horkheimer, such pessimism or negative dialectics is a powerful weapon against an ideological, positive religion and the empty claim of positivism, that its limited knowledge based on facts is total knowledge, that falsely consoles people for or denies the absoluteness of such negativity.

As Schopenhauer illustrated his pessimistic metaphysics through the concept of eternal justice, so Horkheimer (1978a) illustrates the meaning of his materialistic pessimism through the critique of the bourgeois concept of absolute justice (p. 32). This religious and metaphysical concept is an ideological abstraction from the concrete, socio-historical struggle for justice that is applied to the abstract, pure and leveled image

of humanity. However, according to Horkheimer, the meaning of the concept of absolute justice is unknowable and thus unobtainable. In the real socio-historical world, justice takes on a very precise and specific meaning of what changes need to be made for its realization. Thus, Horkheimer (1978a) states, "absolute justice is as unthinkable as absolute truth. The revolution need not bother with it" (p. 32).

### Religion as Fetish

In the midst of this revolutionary, emergency situation of capitalist society, which could be transformed into a moral socialistic society or into the barbarism of a totalitarian state capitalism, Horkheimer (1978a) expresses another aspect of religion as ideology through the projection of humanity's autonomy to other people, events, or to a similarly viewed divine will that is active in all worldly events. This is religion as fetishism, i.e., the religious attribution of humanity's strengths, abilities, hopes, etc., to a finite or infinite "other," which disempowers and alienates humanity from its historical potential. As such a fetishized projection, religion is understood to be independent of the human mind and thereby outside the critique of science, which furthers the bourgeois division of labor between religion and science.

The religion of the deluded masses under capitalism certainly is a form of animism. Faced with death in a horrible reality, [people] wish that there might be someone with good intentions known only to himself that is responsible for it all. Although a clearer understanding is possible, suffering keeps the psychic mechanism of animism going, and those responsible for that suffering see to it that nothing interferes with the mechanism. The doctrine of animism of the primitives can therefore be more adequately explained by the wretchedness of the present than can the present by recourse to the primitives (p. 42).

On the psychological level, according to Horkheimer, religion is a survival mechanism -- a projection of humanity's wish, desire, longing, hope of something totally other than what is -- within an unjust, oppressive, and death creating society. On the sociological level, religion in capitalist society is used as a justification of violence

and state terrorism. Horkheimer (1978a) refers to the biblical story of Jesus driving the money changers and sellers of doves -- the sacrificial animal sold to the poor -- from the Temple (p. 42; Mark 11:15-19). That Jesus used force to drive the money-changers from the Temple is used as a legitimating rationale of the dominant class's use of violence to realize their goals or to maintain the social status quo. Yet, as Horkheimer (1978a) ironically states, "it is curious how rarely the purpose of the biblical act is discussed" (p. 42). By driving out the money changers and sellers of doves who cheated the poor, Jesus was destroying the religious legitimation for the continued exploitation of the poor by the social system of his day. According to Horkheimer, this story of liberation is ideologically turned around to continue the exploitation of the poor by the capitalists. As Horkheimer (1978a) states concerning those that turn the story around to legitimate their domination of others, "what fine Christians they are!" (p. 42).

Such a religious projection of humanity's hope of emancipation to the divinity also takes the form of a metaphysics, understood according to Horkheimer (1978a) as insight into the true nature of things and as "flight toward the eternal" (p. 46). However, such metaphysical flight does little if anything to improve the concrete conditions of the suffering masses due to an exploitive social totality. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, "I don't know to what extent metaphysicians are right. Perhaps there is an especially apposite metaphysical system or fragment somewhere. But I do know that ordinarily metaphysicians are not terribly impressed by what torments men" (p. 46).

### Reification

Through modernity's diremption of humanity's potentials for self-realization into two antagonistic realms of science and religion, reason and revelation, finite and infinite, subject and object, humanity's alienation and oppression takes place not only

through religious projection but also through the reification of human life and society to the standard of the existing status quo. According to Horkheimer, the laws of the economic base structure that govern the social process and production of capitalist society - laws that were not rationally created with any purpose or deliberation but must nevertheless be accepted as fact -- are eternalized in bourgeois thought. Like the dead, mechanical laws of nature, the laws of capitalism are hypostatized as being the laws of God. Horkheimer states that these laws, however, are the product of human beings not God and can thus be changed. The social reality created by human beings is abstracted from the socio-historical process of its own historical development and thereby becomes an autonomous thing in itself over and against its human creator. It thus is imputed to have an objective life of its own that humanity has no control over. Social relations and production in capitalism thus proceed in a blind, irrational fashion. Just as religion became a fetish, so too does society itself and its economic relations of production become fetishized. The correction to this alienated, oppressive, and dominating social condition, according to Horkheimer (1978a), is the creation of "the free subject that consciously shapes social life. And this subject is nothing other than the rationally organized socialist society which regulates its own existence" (p. 51).

According to Horkheimer, the masses of humanity are enslaved in capitalist society because they act unconsciously and mechanically according to the established social production laws as divinely given. For Horkheimer, there is no divine being that creates reality and establishes the given laws of society. Such laws are created by human beings in a particular historical context of time and location, and can therefore be changed. However, this is where bourgeois religion and metaphysics enter as ideology, through the claim that such a divine ground of society exists, which thereby socio-historically legitimates the existing status quo and psychically leads people to such a

belief. Such religion prevents human beings from taking control of their lives and creating a free, rational, and just society. The capitalist rulers of society, on the other hand, support such religion that keeps society mystified and fetishized, while also keeping people blind and unconscious of their own alienation and domination by the capitalist status quo.

As Horkheimer (1978a) states, “bourgeois morality and religion are nowhere as tolerant as when they judge the life of the rich, and nowhere as strict as toward those that want to eliminate poverty” (p. 54). Such bourgeois religion and its morality sanctify the class structure, division, and horror of capitalist society by giving the rich and powerful the appearance of being religious and ethical according to the status quo of capitalist society. Those on the bottom of society -- the proletariat, who seek the liberation of humanity from domination and who thus seek to overcome the injustice of capitalism -- are seen as being irreligious and immoral for they resist and deny the divinely established and blessed laws of capitalist society.

### Criticism of Religion

However, according to Horkheimer, there is another aspect of religion besides its structural, functionalistic role as bourgeois ideology of domination and social integration. Religion is also a concrete expression of human hope if not struggle for emancipation and justice. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, “in its symbols, religion places an apparatus at the disposal of tortured men through which they express their suffering and their hope. This is one of its most important functions” (p. 58). According to Horkheimer (1978a), “a respectable psychology of religion” (p. 58) is needed to differentiate between religion as the legitimation of the capitalist system and structure of society and religion as the expression and longing for human emancipation. As Hork-

heimer states, the religious, mythical form of humanity's cry against the world's injustice has to be transformed into a this-worldly, revolutionary praxis to overcome the causes of this injustice. This is the purpose of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion. This sublimation of the emancipatory truth of religion from its inadequate form is based on the historical fact that religion did not always ideologically distract people from such praxis. At times, religion functioned to expose the injustice and resist it. Horkheimer (1978a) explains this through the following example:

The idea of a justice which is absolutely impartial toward the things of this world is contained in the belief in the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment. If those ideas were to be discarded along with the myth, mankind would be deprived of a propulsive concept which, though certainly not as a belief, might today be applied as a criterion to judge the powers that be, and the church in particular. The criticism of religion as mere ideology is justified, if it reveals that what were previously impulses in religious disguise, such as dissatisfaction with the order on earth, may become effective today in a different form. The life of the revolutionary is such a revelation (p. 58).

Horkheimer's revolutionary critique of religion as ideology seeks to free religion's emancipatory impulses from its limited mythological and religiously distorted form that is created by and for the legitimation of the antagonistic economic mode of social production. This distorted form and content of religion is what distracts humanity from its purpose and goal of realizing its psychic, social, economic, political, cultural, and historical emancipation. Such critique of religion illustrates the dialectical process of determinate negation as the obsolete and repressive form of religion is negated so as to allow the dynamic, emancipatory content of religion to migrate into the *modern secular struggle for human enlightenment and emancipation*. According to Horkheimer, however, the content or truth of religion, is found in its concern with and historical praxis for the liberation of humanity from oppression and injustice, for the purposes of freeing humanity to realize their own rationality and to take control of their life and future as individuals and as a society.



The bourgeois critique of religion -- that does not contain this goal of human emancipation -- is thus a lie; a dirty trick that gives the appearance of concern for the religious content of humanity's liberation while enslaving them even further to the capitalist system. This lie is the social function of the church in bourgeois society, according to Horkheimer, as it ministers to and classifies the poor. As Horkheimer states, "nowadays, man becomes the object of the churches when he is totally helpless: in poorhouses, in hospital wards, in prisons" (p. 77). In this capacity the church is to mop up the human dregs of capitalist society and either assuage and thereby justify their wounds on behalf of the capitalist masters or officiate at the burial of the poor.

As Horkheimer stated earlier, bourgeois religion, as well as bourgeois materialism, positivism, and conservative idealism, instrumentalizes and fetishizes religion according to the profit motives of the capitalist class. Thus, religion's function changes with the market place: when the market is stable and employment is up, there is little need for a religious "Beyond." However, when the market is in turmoil and unemployment is up, when the spiral of inflation -- unemployment -- recession occurs, religion is called into service to assuage the misery of the workers as well as that of the capitalists, who need divine assurance that their profit and way of life will once again be blessed. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, "these days, Christianity is not primarily used as a religion but as a crude transfiguration of existing conditions" (p. 59).

As Horkheimer (1978a) states, "the alliance between the church and the ruling clique ... is a fact, and that fact is all the more revolting because it is directed against the one element which might serve the church as an excuse: suffering humanity" (p. 60). In an earlier reflection written in 1926, Horkheimer (1978a) states that "shared suffering" (p. 18), in the form of a willful identification with the sufferings of others is the only way he knows that human beings can break out of their socially produced isolated,

alienated, monadic life and enter into solidarity with others in the attempt to create a better future society. Horkheimer emphasizes that suffering humanity could be the church's excuse to break free of this alliance, because the church's real purpose is the negation of such suffering and its causes.

### Emancipation

According to Horkheimer (1978a), modernity is characterized by the fundamental clear-sightedness of reason that is free "from any and every belief in the existence of a power which is independent of history, yet governs it" (p. 65). This is the Enlightenment's emancipation from the oppressive form and content of positive religion, the need for which is created by the horrors of both life and death in an unjust society that does not seek to reduce or end such horror. According to Horkheimer (1978a), such religion, with its temples and the gods it worships, is created in "defiance of the gods" (p. 65) for such positive religion diverts humanity's indignation, outrage, sorrow, and tears from the cause of such social suffering toward a heaven and a divine otherness that defuses such resistance to the unjust ways of society while at the same time sanctifying the social existence of such horror. This again is religion as a fetish.

Horkheimer (1978a) states that it is "enormously difficult to avoid making a new religion" (p. 65) out of this modern, enlightened, critical rejection of religion. As he states, there is no logical necessity for the creation of a new atheistic religion. Human beings could even "forget irreligion. But they are too weak for that" (p. 66). According to Horkheimer, humanity in its current historical stage cannot forget either religion or irreligion because it is too weak in the face of the unjust living conditions in capitalistically dominated society.

### Religion and Labor

Horkheimer again illustrates the bourgeois, ideological manipulation of a biblical statement made by the Apostle Paul to the church in Thessalonika sometime around 70 A.D. Due to the infiltration of an antinomian gnostic belief into the church, Paul addressed the need of a social ethic of labor for the sake of the entire community in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13:

Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have the right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

According to bourgeois religion, this Pauline maxim -- "Anyone unwilling to work should not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10) -- is not understood to be an ethic that defines the social relations of a more just, future society, but as a maxim that justifies the present capitalist society and those who work to produce surplus labor for the capitalist, as it condemns the poor. The revolutionary intent of this maxim toward the creation of a new future society has been turned around to sanctify the reactionary morality of the ruling elite and the present fetishism of work that has occurred in capitalist society. Yet, as Horkheimer (1978a) states, "the phrase envisages a future society, and what should be inferred from it now is not the sanctification of work but the struggle against its present form" (p. 84).

### The Lie of Religion

In an essay, toward the end of his Notes, entitled “Europe and Christianity,” Horkheimer focused on the destruction of the emancipatory content of the Christian religion in the name of bourgeois Christianity. According to Horkheimer (1978a), there is an enormous “gulf between the moral criteria Europeans have acknowledged since the advent of Christianity, and their real conduct” (p. 88). In modernity, this gulf is furthered by the social system and structures that are created to meet the interests of the capitalist elite. It is in this historical context that the liberating content of the Christian religion has been perverted for the purpose of sanctifying the capitalist’s interest of domination for the increase of profit.

However, Horkheimer (1978a), expresses the fundamental antagonism or lie between Christianity and capitalism:

The daily, perfectly commonplace lie which characterizes private life in our time: That Christians remain unruffled when confronted with the misery of others; that they do nothing to help where injustice is done to the powerless but themselves torture children and animals; they calmly pass by the walls behind which misery and despair take their course because their interest must be furthered; that it is always a misfortune to fall into their hands; that in view of all this, they daily worship someone as their divine model who, they believe, sacrificed himself for humanity, this lie marks every step of European life (p. 90).

Horkheimer criticizes the lie of religion in its idealistic, metaphysical form that alienates humanity from its own historical potentials for emancipation through their projection on to some fetishized political totem, e.g., the *Führer*, the nation, or religiously on to a god, which thereby serves to legitimate the further degradation and domination of the masses to the service of their social masters. By appealing to the very ideals professed by Western civilization Horkheimer exposes the cruel lie of bourgeois Christianity which legitimates the very misery, despair, injustice, imprisonment, torture, and death of the innocent victims that its professed founder sought to negate. At the very begin-

ning of Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:18-19), he identified the concrete subject of his prophetic and messianic praxis of announcing the coming of God's kingdom: the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed.

The lie of religion, particularly that of bourgeois Christianity, in modern capitalist society is that this prophetic, Messianic, revolutionary, emancipatory character of Christianity is compromised and thus, destroyed by it being made into a soporific salve that dulls and soothes away the horror of existing conditions in capitalism rather than a dynamic force that seeks to overcome and change these conditions. Through such class distortion of the content of religion, the concrete, historical and religious distinction between the oppressed and innocent victims of society and their oppressors is thus erased. Quite abstractly then, Jesus becomes the Messiah/Christ, the Savior of all people. Through the class domination of the capitalist society and its ideological process of abstraction, which generalizes the work and word of the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah into a "cheap grace" as Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1959) called it, all people can be justified in their life-style with no concrete repentance or discipleship, as long as their actions are in accord with the interests of the dominant, capitalist class. As Horkheimer states, in this contemporary, capitalist society the very rich are thus also considered especially devout persons.

According to Horkheimer (1978a), "it is not part of life in this civilization to take religion seriously" (p. 91). What is taken seriously however is the maintenance, legitimation, and development of the capitalist mode of social production, in which religion has a cybernetic, equilibrium function to perform. The fundamental dualism of bourgeois rationality, i.e., the dichotomy of subject-object, reason and faith, science and religion, legitimates the concrete social antagonism between owners and workers, rich and poor, powerful and weak. This social antagonism is imputed to Christianity as

this society's dominant religion. Horkheimer (1978a) illustrates this point in saying:

Only the powerful have to be respected; the poor and powerless are worshipped in religion, i.e., in spirit, but mistreated in reality. The lamb must be embroidered on the white and yellow banner but for the movie audience, one lets it wait its death (in a trap) in the dusk of the jungle. One must worship the Lord on His cross and drag Him to the scaffold alive (p. 91).

Since the critical, prophetic, Messianic, eschatological if not apocalyptic teeth of Christianity have been knocked out by capitalism, bourgeois Christianity has become merely another comforting support and justification for the systematic and structural domination of the few over the many, the rich over the poor, the powerful over the weak, the owners over the workers, the "wolves" over the "lambs" (Isaiah 11:6). It is this compromising religious lie that grants religion a place in modern, capitalistic society. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, it is also this compromising lie that prevents the critical "implementation of religion" or its "expedient abolition" (p. 91).

### Social Class and Religion

In the last essay of his Notes from 1931, Horkheimer differentiated between the two types of religious expression created by the antagonistic classes in a capitalistic society. According to Horkheimer, religion is a human creation the content of which is conditioned by one's location in the society's class hierarchy. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, neither the representatives of the society's base or superstructures give any expression to human "grief, let alone indignation about injustice, or compassion with victims" (p. 111). Such complaint is voiced by the society's poor and wretched, and with their complaint develops the idea of eternity. The idea of eternity, according to Horkheimer (1978a), "manifests itself with greater purity and sublimity in the most naive, the most crudely sensuous hope, than in the most spiritual metaphysics and theory" (p. 111). As expressed earlier in these Notes, it is this type of religious complaint against

earthly injustice and the hope of the resurrection of the dead, a Last Judgment, an eternity where the innocent victims of this world can receive justice that contains a critical, materialistic potential for the purpose of human emancipation.

This is not the case with the official metaphysicians' expressions of eternity, which has been stripped of its critical human and social content and made into an abstraction; a myth which mediates and rationalizes the critical distinction between the idea of eternity and an unjust social totality. According to Horkheimer (1978a), the conception of eternity "was removed from the excessively material ideals of the ruled and adapted to the purposes of the rulers" (p. 112) by bourgeois society's official metaphysicians and intellectuals. God becomes now not merely transcendent to the natural and social worlds, but completely unknowable. In bourgeois, deistic fashion, a total separation is made between God's ways and the ways of the world. This leaves this world in the hands of the dominant class to be used for the realization of its own interests and goals. In this process of abstraction, not even the characteristics of justice, mercy, or love are attributed to God by the bourgeois metaphysicians, so as not to allow another standard beside that of capitalism itself to be available as a critique of the practices of the capitalist class and thereby produce even a hope of something other than what is.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY

#### The Modern Antagonism Between Reason and Religion

Throughout his writings, the philosopher Hegel (1956, 1967a, 1967b, 1984) identified and critiqued the modern diremption of human consciousness and experience into two increasingly antagonistic realms on two different levels: the split between reason/science and religion, and that between the individual and the collective. These two divisions of human life into opposing camps are the foundation of what is called the crisis of modernity. In 1930, the left-wing Hegelian Horkheimer (1993b) critiqued the development of this modern crisis in the form of a bourgeois philosophy of history and society and an idealistic, utopian reaction to this development in a long essay entitled, "The Beginnings of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History." As Wiggershaus (1994) states, this essay was one of Horkheimer's "first important public statements" (p. 47) that gave a theoretical expression to the crisis of bourgeois society that his critical theory sought to address. This chapter focuses on Horkheimer's critique of religion, both in its function of legitimizing the developing bourgeois society and in its utopian expression as resistance as contained in this essay from 1930.

In 1929, Carl Grünberg stepped down as the second director of the Institute for Social Research after suffering a stroke in 1927. Horkheimer was the clear choice as his successor to this position. However, one of the requirements of being the director of the Institute was that he also had to be a full professor of the University of Frankfurt. Horkheimer was only a "Privatdozent" at this time. With the help of the Christian



theologian, Paul Tillich, then holding the chair of Philosophy at Frankfurt, a new chair of Social Philosophy - the first of its kind in a German university - was established for Horkheimer in 1929. The publication of his essay on the origins of the bourgeois philosophy of history in 1930 was the needed document for Horkheimer to become a full professor and take the newly created chair of Social Philosophy, which set the stage for him becoming the new director of the Institute for Social Research.

### The Philosophical Legitimation of Civil Society and the State

As Horkheimer states, this essay was made up of several studies concerning current reflections on history and the development of modern society, which for Horkheimer were rooted in a more comprehensive set of historical relations of human social production. Horkheimer's study focused particularly on the traditional bourgeois approaches of Machiavelli's, Hobbes', and Vico's theories, which justified the development as well as the oppression of modern bourgeois society based on its antagonistic economic mode of social production. All of these philosophies came from the same historical dynamic of the rising bourgeoisie that was consolidating itself into a new social structure, free from the restrictions of feudal society. As Horkheimer (1993b) states, these philosophies are therefore of necessity grounded in and expressive of the concrete needs, class interests, contradictions, and hopes of this developing bourgeois society (p. 314).

### Religion and Domination

For the beginnings of the bourgeois philosophy of history, Horkheimer looked to the Renaissance and the beginning of the natural sciences attempt to understand the laws of nature, which were used for the domination of nature and the development of

technology and industry. As Horkheimer (1993b), states, the origins of “bourgeois science is inextricable linked to the development of technology and industry, and cannot be understood apart from bourgeois society’s domination of nature” (p. 316). However, bourgeois society is not based solely on the domination of nature but also on the domination of human beings. According to Horkheimer’s (1993b) study of Machiavelli’s writings, such human domination goes by the name of “politics” (p. 316). The greatness of Machiavelli, according to Horkheimer, is that he developed a new form of politics at the dawn of the bourgeois society which was based on the principles of modern physics and psychology. Machiavelli’s simple and systematic purpose was to develop the principles and methods, derived from observation and the study of the facts obtained from such observation, by which human beings could achieve and maintain domination over other human beings.

Eternal Natural Law. Already in the early stages of the development of bourgeois society, humanity was being conceptualized according to the mechanical and universalized laws of the natural sciences. There was an eternal, natural law that determined the actions of human beings, regardless of time or historical context. Based on this natural, psychological understanding of humanity the study of history provided the regularities -- the facts -- by which one could learn the timeless rules of domination. Such class domination of civil society was the function or purpose of the bourgeois state. According to Horkheimer (1993b), what was of utmost importance for Machiavelli’s theory was that “the welfare of the whole depends upon the unfolding of trade, upon the unchecked spread of bourgeois efficiency in business and industry, and upon the free play of economic powers” (p. 321). The bourgeois state then was the guarantor and defender by all means possible of bourgeois civil society and of the dominant social class.

Means of Domination. In the development of bourgeois society, religion and morality were to be instrumentalized as means of social domination in the service of this socio-political highest good. According to Horkheimer's study of Machiavelli, everything in society is to be subsumed to the service of the bourgeois state, which is the defender of bourgeois civil society. This according to Horkheimer (1993b) is "a significant historical-philosophical doctrine" (p. 323) that Machiavelli created, for he hypostatized the bourgeois economic and political means of domination in the service of the Italian bourgeoisie of the 16th century and applied these means to past history as well as to the future. This "eternalizing of the temporal bound" (p. 323) is the characteristic error of modern philosophy of history. As George Friedman (1981), states, this is the modern crisis of history, "the failure of history to transcend itself - the freezing of history at an inhuman moment" (p. 186). Without the dynamic and critical "spiritual" or human hope of transcendence, which historically is expressed in religious terms, involvement in the socio-political-historical realms of human life becomes reified. The religious expression of hope becomes subjectivized and mystified as the real world becomes a realm of exploitation and domination according to the interests of the powerful.

According to Horkheimer, the modern concept of religion as ideology, as false consciousness for the purpose of protecting the system of domination, is rooted in Machiavelli's philosophy. Yet, according to Horkheimer, Machiavelli made the mistake of not keeping it secret that everything including religion in the burgeoning bourgeois society was now to be subservient to the state. As Horkheimer states, religion loses its power to make people bow their heads to the state when it is known to be an political instrument of the state. It can accomplish this task only when it remains hidden in the shadows of the state and thus mystified.

### Religion as Ideology

Horkheimer's study followed this ideological development and legitimation of bourgeois civil society and its state in the writing of the 17th century social philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes was a student of Machiavelli's writings and further developed the concept of the state as the protector of the bourgeois mode of social production. Like Machiavelli, Hobbes' philosophy was based on the analogy between natural science and history; a non-dialectical conception of nature's influence on human history. According to Horkheimer (1993b), like Machiavelli, Hobbes' understanding of civil society, the state, and history was based on his "mechanistic understanding of nature with which the rising new society confronted the medieval cosmos" (p. 337). Based on his mechanical understanding of the workings of nature, Hobbes' concept of the state was based on the properties of its smallest parts, namely human beings. All changes in the state and its structures, e.g., political, economic, cultural were explained by the notion and the action of this isolated, bourgeois individual, "whose properties are eternal and immutable" (p. 339). According to Horkheimer's study of Hobbes, that which determines the actions of people comes from the drive to increase pleasure and decrease pain and suffering. Based on this eternalized biological conception of humanity, human beings do not have freedom of will, only a relative freedom of choice expressive of this early form of behaviorism.

The Monster of Rebellion. Hobbes' concept of the state is based on the theory of social contract. The state of nature is characterized by the boundless appetites of the individual, which thereby produces fear in other individuals. The social contract is a compromise between human aggression and fear, in which people transfer a portion of their freedom to another individual or group who acts in the name of the whole. This is

the authority of the state against which the individual has no power. According to Horkheimer's (1993b) reading of Hobbes, the state is this gigantic machine whose function it is

to hold at bay the horror and anarchy of the original condition, to keep down all the monsters capable of endangering civil peace and security, above all the "behemoth": the monster of rebellion. Yet in truth, the state itself is none other than the most powerful monster, the "leviathan": the "mortal god" that governs as it pleases, and before whom the will of all other mortals keeps dumb (p. 345).

As with Machiavelli so it is with Hobbes philosophy that the highest law of this bourgeois doctrine of the state is the safeguarding the capitalist mode of production. Based on this eternalized notion of the state being established by God or by natural reason, the individual is thereby sacrificed to the reified interest of the civil society and its state. As with Machiavelli before so for Hobbes, everything in civil society was to serve the social control purpose of the bourgeois state. Horkheimer (1993b) states that Hobbes advanced the theory that

the state declare as a religion those illusions most useful for its own purpose, make its form of worship a matter of law, and (following the example of the English High Church) sustain and extend it by means of state-sponsored ecclesiastics. ... "The fear of invisible powers, whether it be invented or handed down from tradition, is religion when established for the sake of the state, and superstition when not established for the sake of the state." Hence fear, the most basic element of human nature, is to be delivered by religion into the service of the state, principally to foster obedience to the law, or more broadly, to induce the proper conduct of the citizenry (p. 355).

Thus, in the developing bourgeois philosophy of history, religion is understood as a tool for the domination of the masses in the interest of the feudal aristocracy as well as of the church and its priests. For both Machiavelli and Hobbes, religion as a legitimating and obfuscating ideology is to be put into use of the bourgeois state's defense of the bourgeois mode of production and reproduction in civil society. Based on the bifurcation of the historical human experience into reified religious and secular spheres, herein lies the origin of bourgeois civil religion, which has lost all longing for transcendence

of the existing socio-historical reality toward a better future society.

Ideology. Although he does not use the term “ideology,” according to Horkheimer (1993b, p. 356) the meaning of the term permeates Hobbes’ writing. For Hobbes and thinkers of the Enlightenment, throughout history ideology - of which religion is a major element - was used to control and direct individuals according to the interests of the socially dominant. Ideology thus is contrasted with reason, which is equated with science and the natural law, upon which society and the state are founded. Once the principles of society and state are founded, they are understood to become eternal categories that are self-evident and valid in their own right. For Hobbes, history becomes the process in which humanity acquires reason and thereby loses the need of ideology. Ideology is the tool of domination of the past institutions, particularly that of the church and its priesthood, that keeps people from understanding the natural law and reason that is given from the very beginning. For the Enlightenment thinkers, it is a natural law that ideology is also from the very beginning present along with reason and that it is through history and on the basis of socially organized experience that ideology is removed and people come to reason.

Dialectical Critique. However, this bourgeois theory gives expression to the modern diremption of human thought and experience as it does exactly the same thing as the ideology that it rejects, i.e., religion, by promising to deliver absolute and final truth. According to Horkheimer, this bourgeois concept of reason is something absolute and thus, untouched by history or human activity. Reason, like the bourgeois conception of religion, is taken out of its historical context and absolutized. This abstract and reified concept of reason is thereby made the standard by which all things past, present, and future are judged. For the early bourgeois philosophers of history as for

the dominant thinkers of the Enlightenment, religion is an antiquated ideology, the need of which is totally negated by acquiring this absolute, bourgeois notion of reason.

Following Hegel's dialectical method, Horkheimer critiques these abstract notions developed by the bourgeois philosophy of history and by the Enlightenment. For Horkheimer, ideas can only be understood after their specific historical contexts in which they are created are understood. Ideas are grounded in and expressive of the whole social life process of their time. According to Horkheimer's (1993b) historical materialist dialectic, religious, metaphysical, moral conceptions and systems are based on the structures of the given society (p. 360). The bourgeois, either-or conception of ideology and thus religion makes no systematic attempt to understand the content of these systems as derived from the existing societal forms of relationship and production. It rather abstracts the content of these systems, theories, ideas, etc., from their socio-historical basis, thereby losing their specific and relevant social meaning and purpose. As Horkheimer (1993b) states,

... for the purposes of historical knowledge, it is wholly inadequate to treat as mere errors those religious or metaphysical ideas that can no longer be brought into accord with the current state of knowledge, just as one discards a false hypothesis in the natural sciences as the error of some researcher (p. 360).

In this statement Horkheimer expresses the dialectical approach of his critical theory of religion, that does not abstractly negate religion or ideologically use it as a means of social control, but understands it as a human expression that is made within and conditioned by a particular socio-historical context. It is this dialectical relation between the religious expression and the particular social context from which it comes that reveals whether a particular religion is either an expression of social legitimation and equilibrium or an expression of human distress and humanity's longing for emancipation and justice. Such a critical analysis not only of what a religion professes but also for whom the religion speaks -- *cui bono?* -- within the existing system and struc-

tures of society expresses Horkheimer's critical materialism as opposed to the bourgeois mechanical, positivistic materialism.

Horkheimer (1993b) states that Hobbes and the Enlightenment were the first modern philosophers of history to address the problem of ideology, "i.e., how the social situation relates to prevailing ideas that come to be recognized as false" (p. 361). However, according to Horkheimer (1993b), they stopped short in their analysis of the social structure dependency of ideology by limiting their focus to the psychology of the individual, such that "psychological determinants of the bourgeois world, e.g., private interest, shrewdness, the acquisitive drive, cheating, profit - were made to appear as the content and purpose of medieval religiosity"/ideology (p. 361). The fundamental element of bourgeois society, the psychologized isolated individual -- the bourgeois -- became the basis for understanding the concept of ideology. This static philosophy of Hobbes and the bourgeois Enlightenment simply juxtaposed the concepts of reason and ideology/religion without ever seeking to understand either in terms of their social roles. The error of Hobbes and the Enlightenment, according to Horkheimer, is that they hypostatized their own stock of knowledge in total as eternal reason, rather than recognizing its historical-social structural dependency. According to Horkheimer (1993b), based on the knowledge of the interrelationship between the content of human concepts and thought and the historical context of the social totality in which they occur and by which they are conditioned, "it is of the very essence of authentic knowledge never to be settled once and for all. This is perhaps the most profound insight of all dialectical philosophy" (p. 362).

### Utopian Reaction

In response to the development of bourgeois society and its legitimating phi-



losophy of history, Horkheimer states that utopian reaction against this development and its negation of religion occurred. As Horkheimer states, utopias are created by the dispossessed classes of people, who have to bear the cost and suffering of the transition from one economic form to another. According to Horkheimer, Thomas More's Utopia of 1516 was the first great utopia of the modern age that gave expression to the suffering and horror of the life for the non-bourgeoisie: the peasants, and farmers, who were the beginnings of the modern proletariat class.

### Means of Production

As Horkheimer states, the utopians of the Renaissance came to the realization that profit was the motivating factor of the developing bourgeois trade economy. A new system of production was being created, based on enormous factories and financial ventures. One group began to possess all the means of production that would be required for such new forms of production: the educated and skilled entrepreneurs possessed the working space, the tools of production, raw materials, ships, etc. Without these means, profitable labor was no longer possible in the developing new economy. The vast majority of the people, therefore, who did not and could not own any of these means of production became destitute and were forced to become wage laborers. The utopians blamed private property for the creation of such inhuman conditions. Private ownership of the means of production which included the labor of the workers for the sake of profit was the engine that ran the new economy. Horkheimer (1993b) states that it was no accident that the two great Renaissance utopians, Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella, were Catholics (p. 364).

Demand for Justice. As Horkheimer (1993b) states, both of these utopians took their religion at its word. Campanella and More remained true to the doctrine of

their religion of a unified humanity, which was being torn apart by the developing European wars which resulted from “the new, anarchic economy” (p. 365). Their understanding of religion was directly opposite to that of Machiavelli. For the utopians More and Campanella, “religion was the vessel that preserved the demand for justice in the face of actual misery” (p. 365). According to Horkheimer’s study, the utopians wanted to achieve a unified, holy community on earth according to the commandments of Christ that would overcome the development of an antagonistic society based on the laws of free competition. Contrary to Hobbes understanding of human nature being savage and selfish, the utopians thought human beings were socialized into this way of living by participating in unjust worldly institutions, particularly through private property. For the utopians of the Enlightenment, private property also was the historical corrupter of human beings and the origin of evil.

Fantasy. According to Horkheimer, like the philosophy of Hobbes the utopians’ theory was not rooted in the actual historical situation or context of the time. The utopians thought that a perfect society could be created at any place and at any time if people would only freely resolve to create it. Yet, as Horkheimer (1993b) states, “a utopia leaps over time.” ... It is “a dreamland of a historically bound fantasy” (p. 367). It is a fantasy because it creates its future just society out of the hopes and longings that are shaped by the specific society in which it is created, which will themselves be changed as the society in which it is produced changes. The utopian, according to Horkheimer, fails to understand that there are material conditions for the development, existence, and decline of the existing society and its structures, against which the utopias argue. These material conditions must be precisely understood and examined in detail scientifically in order to bring any new social order into being. This emphasis on the material conditions of social change is the difference between such abstract, dream-

like utopias and Horkheimer's scientific socialism and critical theory of religion. Utopians want to overcome the suffering of the present and preserve the good. However, echoing one of his earlier Notes, Horkheimer (1978a) states that the good and evil of a society are two sides of the same coin, for the existing conditions of the society give rise to both (p. 29). The transformation of society in utopias are thus creations of the subjective mind, which do not include the hard and terrible work of transforming the system and structures of society.

### Logical Dilemma

For Horkheimer, utopian theory contains the same logical dilemma as that of the concept of absolute universal reason, as expressed by bourgeois philosophers. It is still structured according to the modern dualism between reason and religion, subject and object, mind and body, individual and collective. Utopians correctly state that the material condition of a society is the actual bases for the spiritual state of human beings. Yet, this very same concrete existence is also to bring about the elimination of those very same material conditions, e.g., private property, without any fundamental or radical change. Like the bourgeois philosophers of history, who abstracted and hypostatized certain historically created categories in their attempt to legitimate the development of bourgeois civil society, so the utopians abstract from the existing material conditions of society to create their illusory perfect society. This, as Horkheimer expresses, is a false solution.

As Horkheimer (1993b) states, utopias have two qualities: they critique the society as it is and they create a representation of what should be (p. 369). For Horkheimer, the importance of utopias is found in its first task; its critique of the social living conditions of the status quo. By the same logic, this is also the importance of

(good) religion. Utopias give form to the suffering and longing of the desperate, whose condition is created by the actual social reality in which they live. Modern utopian writings are a secularized translation of former religious longings for eternity. As Horkheimer (1993b) states, “the utopia of the Renaissance is the secularized heaven of the Middle Ages” (p. 369).

Proletariat. Horkheimer states that it is wrong to jump over the existing social conditions and create a utopian perfect society that ignores the concrete potentials of change that exist in the present social life structures. However, it is also equally wrong not to theoretically create a more just and better future society or to recognize its existing preconditions in the given society. A better society is not created through utopia or by better ideas in education (Schiller, 1965) or legislation (Kant, 1977a). As Horkheimer (1993b), states, this is a deception of “the chimera of a harmonious society whose establishment depends simply on the correct insight and the good will of all members” (p. 371). The creators of such a society are not the educators nor the legislators, but the groups or class of people who suffer due to their position in the social production process, i.e., the proletariat -- those workers knowledgeable of the cause of their suffering and who seek their liberation from it.

Longing. According to Horkheimer (1993b), in comparison to the ideological apologetics of bourgeois theory that legitimates the civil society, “utopias were purely literary exercises that were at bottom expressions of impotent longing” (p. 372). Such longing however is able to cast off reciprocally its impotency and be put into praxis as society becomes more prepared concretely for its transformation. Horkheimer states, however, that neither this historical development argument nor the impossibility of utopian realization justify the contradictions of the existing society. The individual suffer-

ing under these antagonistic conditions can take refuge only in dreams and subjective longing -- thus the importance of religion among the lower classes in an antagonistic society. In terms of Schopenhauer's metaphysical pessimism, humanity is caught in the dilemma that on the one hand, new and better societies are created historically out of inferior ones, while on the other hand, it is also true that in this course of history, the suffering, misery, and death of individuals is ignored or more horribly justified. As Horkheimer (1993b) states,

Between these two facts there exists a series of demonstrative associations, but no justifying meaning. ... there is no way to make death theoretically 'meaningful.' Rather, death reveals the impotence of any metaphysics that would impart meaning, as well as of all theodicies (p. 373).

Thus, for Horkheimer, there is no providence nor Reason that governs the world, ala Anaxagoras, Socrates, religion, or Hegel, whereby the advancement of society in history which brings with it the crushing of individuals lives is legitimated. Rather, reason can be introduced into history by those who put into praxis a theoretical resolve that seeks human emancipation and justice in the midst of the existing social context in which they find themselves. This is the very heart and purpose of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion.

### Providence

To end his study of early bourgeois philosophy of history and society, Horkheimer focused on the 18th century Italian philosopher, sociologist, and psychologist Giambattista Vico's philosophical reaction to the developing bourgeois society and its mechanical philosophy of history. According to Horkheimer (1993b, p. 376), Vico's philosophy of history was a polemic against the dualistic, mathematical, and mechanical philosophy of Descartes. Vico's theory was the attempt to reconcile the modern antagonism between God and the world, religion and science, faith and reason by show-

ing that providence is the guiding force of history and that it is realized through human action, even when humans are not aware that their actions are leading to this end. As a pious Catholic, Vico sought history's purposive laws and relationships through the concept of providence. According to Horkheimer's (1993b, p. 377) study, Vico rejected the Cartesian apotheosis of mathematics as the only form of knowledge since God's providence had not yet been contemplated in relation to the most proper element of being human, namely, the social.

According to Horkheimer, Vico did accept the Cartesian doctrine that the only thing we can truly know are the things human beings create, and in so doing gives it a new twist by applying it not to the hypothetical constructions of mathematics but to historical reality. All the socio-historical creations of humanity -- economics, politics, religion, art, science, etc., can be understood only in relation to the historical context and from the relations of people from which they arise. According to Horkheimer's (1993b) reading of Vico, providence when it is applied concretely is understood as the law through which humans are led to social and cultural refinement despite their individualistic, barbaric, selfish drives (p. 378). The succession of forms of society in history is what is providential in history; a succession that takes place without the consciousness of individuals.

### Idealism

According to Horkheimer's reading of Vico, providence realizes a humane and rational order of society through all of the conflicts, misery, suffering, and death of individuals, groups, and nations. As he did concerning the abstract idealism of utopia so Horkheimer (1993b) critiques this idealistic position of Vico by saying that "it is impossible to discuss either a utopia and its ideal system of justice or the benign intention

of providence while human beings are trampled under the foot of history, which is supposed to lead them into the light” (p. 379). However, as he (1978a) stated in his Notes of 1926-1931 (pp. 58-60), so Horkheimer (1993b) again states the concrete potential of religion’s critique of the existing socio-political conditions:

The examples of Hegel and Vico illustrate that, in the modern age at least, sincere belief in a revealed, transcendent religion allows for an inquiry into this world that is less prejudiced than one that stems from a pantheistic conflation of God and world, reason and reality (p. 379).

Vico’s was an idealistic attempt to reconcile God and the world, reason and religion. As such, it falls under Horkheimer’s critique that it is ultimately an ideological and thus false reconciliation that might provide some form of consolation but no social change.

### Mythology

However, Vico’s historical examination of the civilizing influence of religion expressed in mythology has import in the development of Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion. According to Horkheimer (1993b), Vico showed the historical dialectical development of mythology “as a necessary and primitive form of knowledge, one that provides modern science with its roots” (p. 383). Thus, unlike the Enlightenment’s simple rejection of myth and religion as the false and strategic creation of the priests, Vico illustrated the socio-historical necessity of the development of myth in humanity’s struggle with nature. Unlike the Enlightenment’s critique that all religion is false, Vico showed that a religion becomes false when it can no longer answer humanity’s questions concerning life in a particular, historical time period. For Horkheimer (1993b), Vico showed that myths contained civil truths; that they are created from experience in social reality albeit “reflected in a distorted manner” (p. 383).

## New Research Program

In January 1931, Horkheimer officially became the Director of the Institute for Social Research. Jürgen Habermas (1993b) states that Horkheimer was not only the administrative director, who essentially had dictatorial powers over the running of the Institute, but was also the “spiritus rector” (p. 49) of the entire research program of the Institute. By its very materialist, historical, dialectical nature, there was and is no one, harmonious version of the critical theory to which all critical theorists subscribe. Each individual of the Institute developed their own version of the critical theory according to their own research interests. Yet, it was Horkheimer who gave the inspiration and established the direction that the critical theory in whatever form took. In his inaugural address Horkheimer expressed the research method and the purpose of the Institute under his guidance as it sought to address the crisis of modern society and history. He expressed the Institute’s goals through its juxtaposition with the current state of bourgeois social philosophy and empirical scientific research.

### Wrestling With Hegel

The focus for his critique of social philosophy and for giving expression to the nature of his Institute’s research was on the philosophy of Hegel, particularly his social philosophy -- the philosophy of objective spirit. To comprehend the critical theory, particularly the critical theory of religion, a person has to enter into the very same wrestling match with Hegel as the original critical theorists did. As Horkheimer (1993a) states, the ultimate aim of social philosophy “is the philosophical interpretation of the vicissitudes of human fate - the fate of humans not as mere individuals, however, but as members of a community” (p. 1). The critical theory is concerned with what he termed “the entire material and intellectual culture of humanity,” i.e., the social totality



(Horkheimer, 1993a, p. 1).

### Social Philosophy

For bourgeois subjective idealists, I. Kant., J. Fichte, F. Schelling, these cultural realms were understood to be expressions of the autonomous human subject or ego. The dichotomy between subject and object, universal and particular, essence and existence, idea and reality, reason and religion was resolved in and through the self-consciousness of the isolated, autonomous subject. Hegel shifted the question of the contradiction between human essence and existence from the realm of subjective self-conscious to the objective realm of the state and world history. World history became the realm through which the Spirit unfolds itself in the cultural developments of a civilization, i.e., art, religion, philosophy. It is in this realm of absolute Spirit that humanity find its fulfillment. According to Horkheimer (1993a), with Hegel German Idealism became social philosophy, "the philosophic understanding of the collective whole in which we live -- and which constitutes the foundation for the creations of absolute culture," i.e., art, religion, philosophy, and thus the philosophic insight into the meaning of human existence "according to its true value and content" (p. 3). The world spirit unfolds itself through the means of the conflict of interests of individuals in civil society and through the conflict of interests of nation-states in world history. Individuals and states are both used as means by the cunning of reason for its own realization.

According to Horkheimer, as in his critique of Vico, Hegel's philosophy lifts both the empirical observer and philosopher out of the struggle of life -- the conflict of interests in an antagonistic society which produces the indescribable torments and horror in which people and nations live and die. According to Horkheimer (1993a), such philosophy "transfigures"(p. 4) this all too real conflict of interests, which is the dy-

namic of world history by which reason realizes itself, and abstractly reconciles it with the rational. According to Horkheimer, true human existence is not realized in the life, struggles, and fate of the finite individual but only through the life of the state in world history. The individual can come to this understanding only through reality's transfiguration by means of its mediation through such idealistic speculation, which is the purpose of Hegel's philosophy.

### Positivism

By the mid-19th. century, Horkheimer states, Hegel's philosophy was replaced by the positivistic concept of linear progress and the capitalistic belief in the pre-established harmony of individual interests. Human beings were now left without the philosophical transfiguration of social reality to face alone the continual and increasingly brutal conflicts of interests, suffering, and death of individuals. As Horkheimer (1993a) stated, "the suffering and death of individuals threatened to appear in their naked senselessness - ultimate facts in an age that believed naively in facts" (p. 5). The brutal contradiction between reason and reality, essence and existence in capitalistic society was widening and thus, becoming crystal clear. New social philosophies as transfigurations of reality were needed due to the increasing contradiction between reason and reality: the class antagonism of bourgeois society.

As Horkheimer stated, human beings are doubly trapped. They are trapped in the present contradiction and antagonism of capitalist society, and they are trapped in their longing for happiness which cannot be realized in the existing social totality. According to Horkheimer (1993a), there are two opposite theoretical sides addressing the contemporary contradiction between reason and reality, essence and existence, truth and fact: on the one hand, social philosophy which focuses on essences, ideas, totali-

ties, independent spheres of objective spirit and, on the other hand, positivism which focuses on the particulars and facts. Social philosophy becomes isolated from the other forms of research, e.g., sociology, which “is capable of objective judgment, but has nothing to say about the degree of reality or about the value of these phenomena” (p. 8). Such concern for fundamental questions of meaning is left to social philosophy.

### Dialectics

However, Horkheimer (1993a) states that such division between social philosophy and particularly the science of sociology is an arbitrary distinction at best. By such artificial separation, both realms thus become depleted of meaning. It was the intention of the Institute’s new program of critical theory to overcome this division of labor in science and social research through “the idea of a continuous, dialectical penetration and development of philosophical theory and specialized scientific praxis” (p. 9). The errors of both realms of knowledge are to be negated through the interpenetration of both sides with each other. Social philosophy, which contains the human religious cries of indignation, suffering, indictment of the world as well as the longing for something other than what is -- the theodicy question, is to provide the particular sciences with their dynamic purpose, their problem and direction of research, while the particular sciences provide empirical information whereby the philosophical approach can be influenced and changed. Thus, the larger philosophical questions concerning human life become integrated into the empirical research process.

### Reconciliation

As Horkheimer (1993a) stated, the critical theory of society was to address “the contemporary version of the oldest and most important set of philosophical problems:

namely, the question of the connection between the economic life of society, the psychological development of individuals, and the changes in the realm of culture in the narrower sense" (p. 10). According to Horkheimer (1993a), this is a modern reformulation of the old philosophical question concerning "the connection of particular existence and universal reason, of reality and Idea, of life and Spirit" (p. 11). It is in the historical context and movement of this social totality that the meaning and truth of religion is found as well as what is needed to historically and socially reconcile the modern crisis between reason and religion, the individual and the collective. This contextual, dialectical connection between the economic life of society, the psychic life of the individual, and the changes in that society's culture provided the material for real social research to take place. All of the empirical scientific methods that had been developed at the current level of knowledge, which would keep the critical theorists in constant touch with real life, were to be used in this critical research, yet, never forgetting the philosophical foundation and impetus of such research.

### Social Totality

In a 1932 article entitled "History and Psychology," Horkheimer (1993d) described the dynamic interconnection of these three realms that make up the social totality from the economic or materialist perspective of the critical theory. The historical mode of economic production -- the development of the forces of production, i.e., tools, technology, science, and the relations of production -- is the basis of the political, legislative, and cultural expressions of the society. The critical theory however is not based on economic determinism, for the critical theory resists the absorption of the psychic realm of the individual or the cultural realm into the economic relationship. The integrity and psychic dignity of the individual is maintained in the theory. As Hork-

heimer (1993d) states, although the culture of a society is expressive of and dependent on the established mode of production and that every aspect of culture is an “index of those fundamental relationships” (p. 119) and the consciousness of individuals changes along with the changes of the economic mode of production, this does not deny the autonomy and initiative of the individual. According to Horkheimer (1993d), the investigation of the actions of individuals who both act to maintain the given mode of production and of those who seek its transformation is the task of psychology, which from the materialist theoretical perspective is an “auxiliary science” (p. 119). In this trifold diagnosis of society, which is based on the Hegelian logical concepts of universal -- culture, particular -- economic/social structure, and singular -- the individual psyche, there is a psychic mediation between the economic foundations of society and cultural creations. Religion as a part of a society’s culture can thereby reflect and legitimate the existing economic mode of social production. However, as Horkheimer (1993d) explains, there is a dialectical relationship between the realms of the social totality. Just as culture can be a psychically mediated expression of the existing economic mode of production, so too can the existing economic mode of production be reciprocally influenced if not critiqued by the psychically mediated culture (p. 120). This would be an example of the critical theory of religion as a transcending human critique of the social status quo and a longing for a better society/world that is psychically mediated and put into social praxis, which would have a completely different effect on the economic mode of social production as compared to the former function of religion for social equilibrium.

### Pursuit of Truth

The critical theory is admittedly not a value-free theory such as the vast majority

of contemporary social sciences claim to be. As Horkheimer expressed, the critical theory is a philosophically oriented social research that is concerned with overcoming in both theory and praxis the economically and socially caused distortions, injustice, oppression, exploitation, domination, needless human suffering and death that takes place in modern capitalist class society. The critical theory is concerned with the emancipation of humanity in very empirical ways from such horror in the hope of creating a more just, rational, free, and peaceful society. As Horkheimer (1993a) stated to end his address, the guiding impulse of the Institute and its theory is to be “the indomitable will unswervingly to serve the truth!” (p. 14). At this point, Horkheimer does not address the materialist dialectical notion of the truth or how it is to be served. Truth and knowledge are not dead, positivistic facts that can be defined and measured. As Horkheimer (1972b) states in an essay of 1933, “Materialism and Metaphysics,” truth and knowledge have a time core and can therefore change as the socio-historical context from which they come changes. Horkheimer’s defiant pursuit of the truth is the dialectical interrelationship of all the modern, positive sciences in the socio-historical research of the ancient yet modern philosophical questions concerning human social life. His critical theory of religion is a fundamental part of this pursuit of truth.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SOCIAL AMBIGUITY OF RELIGION

The years 1935-1936 were pivotal in the development of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion. In his book, Max Horkheimer, the Israeli philosopher, Zvi Rosen (1995) states that Horkheimer (1972c; 1985a) developed his conception of religion and its social function in two essays during this time: the 1935 "Thoughts on Religion" and the 1936 "On Theodor Haecker's 'The Christian and History'." The importance of these essays for the development of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion is also expressed by Siebert (1979a) when he states that all of Horkheimer's earlier and later writings on the topic of religion "are merely variations of this theme" (p. 45), i.e., the longing for universal justice, love and freedom, which Horkheimer developed in his critique of Haecker's Christian theory of history. This chapter focuses on these two foundational documents of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion, while supplementing them with readings from other essays written by Horkheimer during this period that concretely develop particular points contained in these two essays.

#### Theory in Conflict

As the critical theory in total, the critical theory of religion is a theory in conflict. In Hegel's (1967b) terms, the theory is "a child of its time" (p. 11); it belongs to and is an expression of the modern, bourgeois antagonistic society. According to Horkheimer (1972d), it is from the midst of the antagonism of the bourgeois social totality -- which has reified the dialectical relationship between and within the three realms of the economic mode of production and its social structures, the psyche of the individual, and

the society's culture -- "whose inner forces are driving [this capitalist form of society] towards destruction" (p. 53) despite all pattern maintenance efforts, that he understands religion in a twofold, ambiguous sense. As Horkheimer (1993h) stated in a 1936 essay entitled, "Egoism and Freedom Movements: On the Anthropology of the Bourgeois Era," social inequality was a historical precondition for social progress. The development of the bourgeoisie as a class, who led in the revolution against the antiquated form of feudalism, and the resulting mode of social life production that was created improved the lives of some and set the stage for greater improvement in the lives of all. However the power arrangements of the bourgeoisie vis-à-vis the masses became reified and hypostatized so that the masses could not benefit from the social improvements equally. Misery, suffering, sickness, death were the consequences of reification of bourgeois society for the masses of those who owned no means of production other than their own labor, i.e., workers, farmers, peasants. As Horkheimer (1993h) states, "the miserable condition of the oppressed corresponded to the utopian wish for equality and justice" (p. 61). This material impoverishment resulting in the utopian wish was expressed often in religious terms, and became the basis for religion as a structure in bourgeois society. The function of this civil religion was to distract the masses from the social system and structural causes of their suffering by directing their attention to the moral state of their inner being to which their desire for material happiness was reduced, or to the consolation of heaven that they would experience after death, provided they were good workers on earth. Another function of religion however was and is to keep alive the vision of a just society beyond that which is; a society toward which people would continue to work and struggle to make it a historical reality.

Therefore, on the one hand, religion can be a liberating human expression of critique of the existing conditions of life and of hope for a better future, or it can func-



tion as a conservative, reactionary force of social integration and legitimation of the existing status quo. According to Horkheimer (1972d), the entire content of religion is derived from “the psychic elaboration of earthly data” (p. 58). However, according to Horkheimer (1972d), in this process religion “acquires its own specific form” (p. 58), which dialectically turns around and influences the development of the human psyche as well as becomes a “reality within social evolution as a whole” (p. 58). This dialectical process is the same for all realms of culture. These cultural realms have an inherent dialectic in themselves; between their content and form. As fundamentally forms of mediation of the society’s domination and coercion to conformity, these cultural realms in the human psyche become independent, specific powers which can lead people to conform to or resist the existing social conditions. It is in this trifold, dialectical relationship between the foundational economic mode of production, the cultural forms and institutions that are thereby created and conditioned, and the human psyche that religion obtains its potential liberational, critical, good quality, as well as its reactionary, pattern maintenance function. It is in this dialectical mix of the modern antagonistic social totality of capitalism that Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion is developed.

### Materialist Critique of Religion

Next to his short essays and aphorisms in his Notes of 1926-1931, Horkheimer (1972c) specifically focused on the topic of religion for the first time, as far as I am aware, in his 1935 essay “Thoughts on Religion.” It was in this essay that he expressed not only his materialistic critique of religion, but also the inherent dialectics of religion itself. According to Horkheimer, the suffering of humanity and its longing for justice in both the natural and social worlds was historically expressed in the form of religious language, concepts, and myths. Religion was the realm that possessed differ-

ent norms, e.g., love, justice, shalom - human wholeness, hope, mercy, truth, than those of either nature or society, and, thus contained the voice of accusation against the injustice experienced by the masses of humanity for countless generations in the world. Since such justice was not experienced in the natural or social worlds, it was thought to exist in a transcendent place, e.g., heaven, or with a transcendent God. At the same time that Horkheimer was writing this article in exile in the USA in 1935, these very unjust norms of nature and society that such religion condemns were being forcibly institutionalized in Nazi Germany. In Adolf Hitler's (1971) Mein Kampf these worldly norms are an expression of "the aristocratic principle of Nature" (p. 65); a social Darwinistic conception of society that competitively pits a particular individual, class, race, gender, or nation against others for the purpose of self-preservation and the survival of the fittest. Hitler's aristocratic law of nature, which according to him is expressive of the will of the Almighty Creator -- the "Alpha" of the Christian creed, eternalizes the privilege of power and strength of the one and/or the few over the resulting oppressed masses.

According to Horkheimer, in counter distinction to people's experience of injustice and oppression, this religious projection of justice, truth, righteousness, etc., to a transcendent God originally served a critical and negative function. However, according to Horkheimer, it was Christianity in both its Catholic and Protestant forms that perverted religion from expressing the critical ideal of justice, an ideal which according to materialism can never be identified with reality, into a religious harmonization of this ideal with the existing power structures of the status quo. Christianity, in its modern civil religion/Constantinian form, gave up its negative function of critique and took on a positive function of legitimating the domination of the socially powerful class in the form of the state. This turn over from its negative function to a positive one expresses

the inherent dialectics of religion.

### Religion as Social Symptom

This contradictory development in the social history of religion, according to Horkheimer (1978b) in his 1935 essay "On the Problem of Truth," is a symptom of the inherent antagonism of the modern social totality which contains within itself both a progressive and a reactive element. As Horkheimer pointed out, in 1935 both in Nazi Germany but also in the USA where the Institute had moved during its exile, it was the reactive, oppressive element of bourgeois society that was dominating and threatening to destroy its progressive, democratic, liberal, emancipatory tendency. The socio-economic and scientific progress of bourgeois society turns against itself and becomes an uncontrollable force and incomprehensible fate to which individuals and society as a whole must submit. Instead of increased rationality and liberty, modern people have become necessarily dependent on and subservient to the very forces and social structures that they created, which drives them into a life and death, survival of the fittest competition. The more modernity has liberated itself from the dictates of nature, the more nature and its aristocratic law of power and strength as well as its jungle competition for survival has dominated modern society due to its positivistic fragmentation of isolated and alienated individuals. This dynamic of modern society is what Horkheimer and Adorno (1969) later called the dialectics of enlightenment.

### Consolation and Meaning

This dialectic of modern, enlightened, bourgeois society, which produces such great insecurity, inhuman pressure to succeed/survive, misery, and horror, is presented and generally accepted as being essentially unchangeable and eternal by that very soci-

ety. Because the contradictory inner mechanism of exploitation in modern society remains hidden from the masses, the need arises for a religion or a metaphysics to help people make sense of their lives and not to be overcome by despair in the midst of this unknowable, uncontrollable, hostile historical fate to which they have been cast and which offers no way out. In the form of a critique, Horkheimer expresses the structural functional analysis of religion's role in society by stating that religion as a function of society in general mediates the social class power arrangements established by the economic relations of production to the psyche of the individual, which thereby has the overall tendency of legitimating these antagonistic class relations and the individual's place in it. This is, for Horkheimer, the consoling and integrating function of religion in bourgeois society and monopoly capitalism. According to Horkheimer, the more the individual's creativity and thus humanity is restricted, the greater the socially enforced alienation of the individual from him or herself and from others in community, the more willingly is a sense of security and certainty sought in religious faith or in the authority of the powerful one or few, who are viewed as ambassadors of truth. In modern, antagonistic bourgeois society, religion provides a harmonizing and legitimating understanding of the social status quo. As Horkheimer (1993h) states, "(bourgeois) society needs a religion as a means of domination because the general interest does not hold it together" (p. 92). Religion in such an antagonistic society, that is founded on and expressive of the contradiction between the individual and the collective, wherein the individual is understood as an isolated monad in a life or death competition with other isolated individuals, functions as the consolation and justification of the monadic individual or of a particular social group or class. Horkheimer (1993f) states that such religion is the "ideological mystification" and "song of praise" (p. 222) that integrates people into an oppressive social system.

### Privatization of Religion

Due to its subjective solipsism and the resulting economic life of bourgeois society, religion has also increasingly been subjectivized as a concern for the individual's moral well-being and immortal soul. In antagonistic bourgeois society, religion becomes a tool of domination that teaches the masses to sublimate their instinct for happiness to the requirements of the bourgeois status quo. In such a society, according to Horkheimer (1993h), religion is to "domesticate the masses" through the teaching of "self-discipline" and "self-denial," having a "conciliatory spirit" to all people but particularly to the upper class (pp. 56-57). Through sermons and Christian education, religion is to inculcate the masses with a higher morality which equates to the bourgeois values of duty, work, sacrifice for the nation, and being good, quiet citizens. According to Horkheimer, this privatization of religion in contemporary society is a result of the pitiless competition that characterizes the bourgeois economic mode of social production, which permeates not only all of society's structures but also the human psyche and its conception of God.

### Contradiction

However, as Horkheimer (1978b) states, this antagonistic, dehumanizing society and its religion contradict the essential teachings of Christianity, which it professes as its foundational heritage (p. 439). Horkheimer (1972c) stated that it was inevitable that the contradictory principle of Christianity to the economic and social way of life in bourgeois/capitalistic society would be willingly sacrificed to the development of capitalism, as "the vulgar positivism of bare facts along with the worship of success" (p. 439) would be raised up as the highest truth. Ironically, due to the developing economy's need of a technically educated work force, this gross contradiction of the teach-

ings of Christianity occurred while the masses were being educated to read and write, and thus were able to read the revolutionary contents of the Bible for themselves. As Horkheimer states, the dominant intellectual and cultural concern over the past few centuries was not to expose this contradiction, but, echoing his study of Machiavelli to hide and mystify it. Thus, religion and particularly Christianity in this case was robbed of its critical content as it became formalized, institutionalized, spiritualized, and relegated to the inner depths of the isolated individual. Through such evisceration and perversion of Christianity's dangerous prophetic and Messianic content, religion became compatible with any and all practices in capitalist society -- what Horkheimer (1978b) called "this atheistic reality" (p. 440).

#### Secularization of Religion's Content

However, according to Horkheimer (1972c), due to religion's betrayal of itself, i.e., of its critical function of negatively expressing the ideals of justice, truth, human dignity and freedom derived from the socio-historical situation of the oppressed and their cry for help, this critical/negative content of religion has shed its religious form and has been transformed into a secular, materialistic praxis of historical struggle for a more communicatively and technically rational, just, free, humane, and happy future society (p. 129). This transformation of the religious negative, emancipatory content into a secular, revolutionary form is the very heart of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion.

Horkheimer (1972c) cautioned against the idealistic distortion of this historical struggle for a more rational and humane future society into becoming the illusion of creating a society of perfect justice (pp. 129-130). As he stated in his Notes of 1926-1931, so Horkheimer (1972c, p. 129) again reiterates that a society of perfect justice

can never be created in history. Such an idealistic notion is an ideological distortion of and a distraction from materialism's socio-historical struggle to change the concrete social conditions that cause human suffering by using the existing scientific knowledge and society's reproductive capabilities to create a better future society. For Horkheimer (1972c, p. 130; 1993g, p. 155), no future society, no matter how just it would be, could compensate for the horror and suffering of the past nor will it ever be able to alleviate the suffering caused by nature, i.e., disease, natural catastrophes, death. In his essay "Thoughts on Religion" Horkheimer (1972c) explained that such an ideal as absolute justice came from a primitive economic principle of exchange, that universalized and thus projected the principle that each person should have an equal share as well as have a right to happiness. However, according to Horkheimer, such a projection of a historically created principle into a conceptually transcendent absolute is powerless against the actual existing social conditions. This is the powerlessness of an abstract, idealistic utopia. In fact, such a metaphysical projection can be dialectically turned around and used to legitimate the very worldly lack of justice from which it came as a protest, as is done in bourgeois religion. For Horkheimer, then, the distinction between a progressive person and a retrogressive or reactionary person is not in rejecting the idea of perfect justice but in understanding the limits to such an idea's realization in history.

### Religion and the State

This distinction between the progressive and the reactionary praxis is the basis of Horkheimer's critique of religion and particularly the church in the modern bourgeois society of 1935. Dialectically developing the relationship between the two fundamental notions of domination in bourgeois society, i.e., religion and the nation that

he expressed in his Notes of 1926-1931 and his 1930 essay on the “Beginnings of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History,” Horkheimer (1972c) stated in his “Thoughts on Religion” essay that religion enters into a historical conflict with such a state on the fundamental issue of whether it will act in a social functional manner, in which it legitimates the state’s authority and the society’s antagonism, or whether it will resist the state and become the voice of the oppressed and exploited (p. 130). As stated earlier, religion can be either socially and psychically progressive, i.e., active in the creation of a more humane, just and happy future society, or reactionary as it blesses the social antagonism of a capitalist totalitarian state.

Quite possibly in reference to the Third Reich’s reorganization of the church’s relationship to the state, based on the doctrine of “positive Christianity” (Matheson, 1981), as expressed in Article 24 of the NSDAP’s program as well as the Reich’s concordat with the Roman Catholic Church in July 1933, Horkheimer states that the church, for its own self-preservation as a functional institution of the society which thereby has a share in the ideological legitimation of the state, must support the existing status quo authority no matter what the sacrifice to continue its own existence. If the fundamental elements of the existing society were to change, so Horkheimer contends, the church would no longer exist. Thus, according to Horkheimer, the church holds on to and proclaims belief in perfect justice not only as a projection of the present system to infinity but as an absolute, eternal power outside of history. Horkheimer (1972c; 1993g) asserts that if a future society were ever to be created where the essential and inherently contradictory relationships and structures of existing capitalistic society were negated, the belief in absolute justice as well as the thought of God who protects people from the contingencies and horrors of life would no longer be needed. According to Horkheimer’s materialistic critique, since religion is a psychically mediated cultural ex-



pression of the present antagonistic mode of social production, religion will not be needed in a better, more just future society.

Thus, for Horkheimer, religion is ambiguous in contemporary bourgeois society, as it contains both a progressive, critical, liberating power for the creation of a more just, rational, humane, and peaceful society, while it also functions to harmonize and legitimate the reified, antagonistic social status quo and its power. As Horkheimer states, according to dialectical thought, religious phenomena are understood and critiqued in connection with the analysis of the social totality and the whole historical situation. Thus, people and groups are identified or divided today not by their religion but by their interest, desire, and work for conditions that promote the free development of human beings in a more just, free, humane, and peaceful future society.

#### “True Discipleship”

Because of the society's dominant religion's -- Christianity's -- capitulation to and dependency on the existing, antagonistic society of modern capitalism, Horkheimer sees no hope in the debates within the church for making the church once again a vital, liberating force as it was in its beginning. Once again, Horkheimer (1972c) asserted that the original dynamic and liberating content of religion -- “good will, solidarity with wretchedness, and the struggle for a better world” (p. 130) -- had freed itself of its religious form and had taken on the secular form of social praxis. The attitude and goal of progressive people, who can also become modern day martyrs because of their future-oriented, emancipatory theory and action, was not the salvation of their souls nor patience for the coming of God's absolute justice. Such a spiritual resistance functioned to divert attention and energies from working for social change, and thus further maintained and ultimately legitimated the machinery of the totalitarian state. Rather, ac-

According to Horkheimer (1972c), a truly progressive person takes the liberating truth content of religion and translates it into social action which struggles toward the creation of a better, more just, rational, and peaceful future society for “the happiness of people who come after them and for whom they know how to die” (p. 130). As Horkheimer (1972c) states, “true discipleship” (p. 130) does not lead back to religion but to social praxis for the creation of a happier, freer and more rational future society expressive of human solidarity; a society for which such disciples know how to die. Christians, Horkheimer (1972c) states, who take the religious meaning of the love of one’s neighbor seriously, may once again be called as they were originally to such praxis by the increasing barbarism of a monopoly capitalist society (pp. 130-131).

#### Historical Negation of Religion

For Horkheimer, this transformation of the original dialectical, critical, and liberational content of religion, particularly that of Christianity, into a secular, practical form is a historical act. Horkheimer (1972c) states that as humanity develops historically, religion is something that humanity leaves behind (p. 131). However, this historical negation of religion is not something abstract but is a determinate negation, for in this historical movement, so Horkheimer states, religion leaves its mark. Those desires, wishes, longings, and accusations that first gave rise to religion and the concept of God are not only negated but preserved and furthered as they shed their religious, spiritual form and become forces of a critical social theory and praxis for the creation of a more just and humane future society. According to Horkheimer, the dialectical concept of infinity for the progressive, critical, and free mind keeps alive the awareness of humanity’s finitude and ultimate aloneness in the universe. This critical conception of infinity also prevents the hypostatization of any nation and/or society into viewing itself

as the “end of history” (Fukuyama, 1995) or the elevation of its culture or knowledge into a new religion, e.g., Comte’s positivism.

### Critical Theory Versus Christian Theology

In 1936, Horkheimer (1985a) wrote an essay critiquing Theodor Haecker’s book The Christian and History, which had been published a year earlier in 1935. Unlike Horkheimer, who went into exile in 1933 first to Switzerland and then to the USA, Haecker remained inside National Socialist Germany where he continued his resistance to fascism. Ultimately, Haecker was forbidden by the Nazi’s to teach or to write any longer. Haecker died in Germany toward the end of World War II.

#### A Real Religious Faith

According to Horkheimer (1985a), by means of his appeal to his Catholic faith and a Christian theory of history Haecker gave expression to his contempt for the mass delusion of the contemporary fascist world view which deified the finite in the form of the nation, the *Führer*, or past and present heroes of National Socialism; “‘eternal heroes, eternal nations’ -- temporal eternity’s, *contradictions in adjecto*” (p. 91). Reminiscent of Hegel’s (1967a) statement in the Phenomenology of Mind that “by the little which can thus satisfy the needs of the human spirit we can measure the extent of its loss” (p. 73), Haecker knew that there was nothing too false, too tasteless or base for the oppressed German masses that could not serve as consolation for them and establish a false sense of solidarity and meaning among them. As Horkheimer (1985a) stated, unlike other philosophers of religion who spiritualized and emptied religion of its content, Haecker expressed a real religious faith as the “longing for universal justice,” which awakened a deep respect in Horkheimer even though he called Haecker’s

faith position a “fraud” (p. 91).

### Idealism and Positivism

From the very beginning, in his Notes of 1926-1931, through his inaugural address, the 1933 essays on “Materialism and Metaphysics” and “Materialism and Morality” to this article, Horkheimer (1972b) expressed the two antagonistic sides of modernity’s crisis with which his materialistic and dialectic critical theory was locked in battle: i.e., idealism and metaphysics on the one hand, and positivism -- “the metaphysics of the elements” (pp. 39-40) which is close to a metaphysics of intuition - on the other hand. For Horkheimer (1972b), both positivism and metaphysics are two sides of the same modern, dualistic, philosophical approach. Throughout these articles, Horkheimer expressed elements of his critical theory of religion. However, it is with this article in which he responded to Haecker’s idealistic faith position that Horkheimer fully explained in a concise form his materialistic and dialectical theory of religion. It was after reading this essay that Walter Benjamin congratulated Horkheimer. In comparison to a review he wrote of another of Haecker’s works, which as he says was “very moderate,” Benjamin (1994) applauds Horkheimer’s critique as the “resolve of a person who is determined for once to call a spade a spade” (p. 535). It was also with his writing of this article that his former psychoanalyst, Karl Landauer, congratulated Horkheimer for finally freeing himself from his inhibition to speak boldly and critically (Wiggershaus, 1994, pg. 47; Jay, 1973, pp. 87-88); or as it is said in the German language, to finally “speak German” [Told to author by R. J. Siebert].

According to Horkheimer (1985a), Haecker’s book demanded a decision to be made that would translated into concrete action, “a good politics against a bad one” (p. 92), against a bourgeois relativism of all things in the service of the socially dominant,

which was found in both the liberal and totalitarian phases of bourgeois society. As Horkheimer (1985a) understood Haecker, in regards to religion “the bourgeois believed passionately in the necessity of religion but not so much in its truth” (p. 93). This was not the case with the Haecker, however, who combined in himself the emancipatory concerns of a humanism and of the Catholic Christian tradition.

### Metaphysical First Principle

However, according to Horkheimer, Haecker’s Catholic philosophy was similar to idealistic philosophy in that every position toward society could ultimately be justified by its essential, abstract, metaphysical first principle, i.e., the existence of a God. According to Horkheimer’s understanding of Haecker philosophical faith, which sounds very similar to Hegel’s (1956) philosophy of world history God as the lord of history uses both the devil and humanity to accomplish God’s purpose in history, which is the salvation of the human soul. For all of its intent to console the fears and suffering of humanity and give meaning to history, such a theodicy, i.e., a justification of God and God’s purpose in the world in the face of that world’s horror, ultimately sanctifies all of the tragedy and horror of the world. Through such a theodicy, God becomes a murderer and a monstrosity. As Horkheimer stated, through his theodicy Haecker was able to give the socio-historical reality a meaning, but could not conversely give meaning, i.e., God, a reality. In this critique, Horkheimer attacked the Christian ontological argument of Anselm of Canterbury (1962) for the existence of God, i.e., that the highest thought of humanity must have being/existence. For Horkheimer, Haecker’s faithful proclamation of a Christian philosophy of history as theodicy could not prove the existence of God in whom Haecker was demanding a decision of faith and action. As Horkheimer (1972b, 1972c, 1993e, 1993f, 1993g) stated

in other essays of the time so he again asserted that there is no ontological, metaphysical, idealistic meaning to history.

### No God Outside of History

To illustrate this point, Horkheimer (1985a) told an old Chinese story of 6 princes: four who were good, just, honest, self-sacrificing for the sake of their subjects and land, and two who were tyrants and oppressors of their people (pp. 95-96). Unlike the Christian myth of a providential God, the resurrection of the dead, and a last judgment of a person or a nation based on what that person or collective did to others in life, this Chinese tale states that all six of these princes finally died, the four good princes died in misery while the 2 corrupt princes died after a rich and happy life. After a period of time all of them were forgotten. For Horkheimer, this Chinese tale is closer to the truth of this world than Haecker's Christian philosophy of history. For Horkheimer's critical theory of religion, there is no God outside of human history who remembers human lives. As Horkheimer (1993g) states, however, the materialist critical theory of religion does not deny "objective Being, but rather an absolute meaning that ... can in fact never be separated from that theistic precondition" (p. 157). Humanity has no knowledge of any such absolute, objective being beyond the material world. Once again, echoing his statement from his Notes of 1926-1931, Horkheimer (1978a, p. 31) states that humanity is surrounded by a sea of darkness in which everything good and bad vanishes.

### Idolatry

According to Horkheimer, based on Haecker's pronouncement of God as the Absolute meaning of history, society, and of life, all other positions against this relig-

ious one were considered to be false and idolatrous. If God is not recognized as the Absolute meaning of the world, then something finite has to be put in God's place, be it money, power, prestige, pleasure, etc. According to Horkheimer, this analysis applies to the bourgeoisie, who are fundamentally indifferent about religion, but not to the critical theorist. According to Horkheimer, such a religious theory and praxis as Haecker's reifies and abstracts its ultimate goal from the struggles of history. For Horkheimer, such a theology that degrades the idea of the highest love, justice, and wisdom into the lord of history is just as guilty of idolatry as are the bourgeois materialists/capitalists. For Horkheimer, the historical materialists, who through the sharpness of dialectical thought have the emancipation of exploited and oppressed humanity as its historical goal, must not eternalize this position against that of the church. To do so would be to abstractly negate the meaning of the religious position, rather than determinately negate it while incorporating its truth content into the materialist theory and praxis.

### Finite Goals

Horkheimer countered Haecker's religious philosophy of history as resistance against totalitarianism with his critical theory of religion. According to Horkheimer, religious theorists are idealists because they make their highest notions, e.g., justice, wisdom, freedom, into an abstract reality in the form of a God. Such ideas, however, do not have to be made into a God to preserve their meaning. For Horkheimer, there is another way of conceiving history without making it into a religious salvation history. Historical materialists know that the good for which they fight, e.g., the realization of justice, autonomy, happiness, etc., are finite goals and once realized will pass away. These finite goals are not the same as the vain selfish goals of the bourgeoisie. Their end is not simply the death of all things finite as Haecker thinks. Rather, these goals

differentiate themselves from such finite idols through the short span of happiness that their historical realization brings to people, for whom enlighteners give up their lives. As Horkheimer (1972b) stated already in 1933, the value laden theory and praxis of the critical theory seeks to be in solidarity with suffering people, which is realized through a selfless dedication to the cause of human freedom and happiness.

Horkheimer (1993f) stated already in 1934, “to be sure, the actions and, more importantly, the happiness of individuals have always been functions of society” (p. 245). The individuals ability to affect his or her own happiness, however, is contingent on the historic mode of social life production of the society in which they live, as well as upon the social class to which they belong. For Horkheimer, humanity’s domination and unhappiness is due to economic conditions that are not at all subject to the will of the masses. According to Horkheimer, at the beginning of the bourgeois epoch, materialism encouraged individuals to pursue their own individual well-being. However, in the mid-1930’s with the development of monopoly capitalism, such activity is hopeless. In this socio-historical context, individual well-being can be achieved only through participation in social struggle in solidarity with others for a more just and happy future society.

### Happiness

The standard by which society is judged according to the critical theory of Horkheimer is the standard of human happiness, which is itself judged according to the level of scientific knowledge attained as well as the technological capability of the existing society. As Horkheimer (1993f) states, “the rational justification of any action can ultimately be related only to the happiness of human beings” (p. 250). Such happiness is measured not by the individual but by the social whole. “In a life that tran-



scends the bourgeois forms of existence in a progressive sense, individualistic values are neither opposed nor suppressed, but recede behind the aims decisive for the entire society” (p. 255). In an earlier article of 1933, Horkheimer (1993e) states that this dialectical conception of the relationship of the individual and the social totality is expressive of the biblical statement in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 12:25): “That there should be no discord in the body; but that the members may have the same care one for another” (p. 290). Although Horkheimer does not make the connection, this statement also indicates the determinate negation into a secularized form of the Christian parables of the “Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37), “The Rich Man & Lazarus” (Luke 16:19ff), “The Rich Ruler” (Luke 18:18-25), as well as “The Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5-7).

For Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion, there is no higher, hidden purpose to the striving for a better social life process. As Horkheimer (1993f) states,

the happiness and peace that human beings do not receive on earth is not just apparently but actually lost to them, and for all eternity - for death is not peace, but truly leads to nothingness. Love of one’s fellow human beings, as materialism understands it, has nothing to do with beings that find eternal security after their death, but with individuals that are quite literally ephemeral (p. 259).

Materialism does not reconcile itself with the course of history or a God who is lord of history and the savior of souls, but diverts all energies toward this world and the creation of a better society. It thereby opens to disappointment the only belief it has: “the hope for the earthly possibilities of humanity” (p. 260). Metaphysical and religious optimism, such as Haecker’s, does not have to hold on to such a desperate hope nor to the struggle for such a better, more humane future society.

### Meaning of Religion

The materialist critical theory is thus differentiated from the believing Catholic

and bourgeois materialist/capitalist. According to Horkheimer's critique, both the religious person and the bourgeois materialist's actions focus on their own subjective well-being, whether it be for a heaven or for the attainment of world goods and advantage. It is because of this subjective, self centered concern that Horkheimer states that the Christian and the capitalist attitude can often be found in the same person. Yet, Horkheimer states that the simple and honest religious faith of Haecker cannot be completely understood as part of an unjust society's cultural superstructure. For Horkheimer, the Christian religion, in its Catholic more so than its Protestant form, contains a meaning, i.e., the longing for universal justice and happiness, that goes beyond that of being merely a cultural function of society. It is this meaning of religion that is determinately negated into the materialist critical theory. The very concept of God is thereby determinately negated as it is understood to be an expression of concrete historical conditions.

### Projection

In terms of Feuerbach's (1957) criticism of religion as an anthropological projection, Horkheimer's (1993h) critique understands the concept of God to be a social creation; an abstraction of modern humanity formed by the capitalist mode of social production that received its first religious legitimation through the Protestant reformers Luther and Calvin. According to Horkheimer, human beings are abstractly understood in bourgeois society to be free, isolated, monadic subjects who in the exchange system of the capitalist market place are viewed as being without time, place, identity, or fate. Such a rationalistic abstraction of humanity is projected into an equally abstract notion of a God, to which a faith gives life and meaning. This God is not a reality. Yet, Horkheimer cautions that not every concept or thought is a socially conditioned idea.

Horkheimer's critical theory is an heir of the French Enlightenment, which according to Horkheimer (1972d) "was not attacking the claim that God exists, but the acceptance of God on pure authority" (p. 73). In other words, Horkheimer does not abstractly and thus totally negate the meaning of God. Following Kant's critiques of reason as well as the meaning of the second and third commandment of the Jewish Decalogue to not make any images of God, human beings have no knowledge of God. Human beings cannot say anything positive about God. However, as an inverse ontology of humanity's highest concept and desire, human beings can say what God is not, e.g., God is not something finite, God is not hatred, God does not will exploitation, a class society, concentration camps, etc. This is the basis of Horkheimer's materialistic, negative, inverse critical theory of religion.

Materialist Inversion. Although it can be said that modernity's God is an abstract projection of bourgeois society and is thus not real, the historical subjects of this God -- the people who make up the social totality from which this God comes -- are real. Their hopes and dreams, their happiness and their suffering, their lives and deaths are real. Although this concept of God is a transient, bourgeois social construction and an abstraction of living human beings in society, it nevertheless gives dialectical expression to the real needs of human beings for happiness and justice that are expressed in the religious dogmas of God, resurrection, last judgment, and eternal life. Through the materialist inversion of these religious expressions, the injustice, oppression, and horror of this world is not legitimated, mystified, or hidden but is made known.

According to Horkheimer, unlike the bourgeois materialist the critical theorist of religion does not have to establish finite things as an absolute to give meaning to life or to history. For Horkheimer's critical theory of religion as a materialist inversion of religion, meaning is created in the historical struggle for human happiness and well-being

-- shalom, all the while knowing that humanity's religious dream of eternal happiness cannot be fulfilled. According to Horkheimer, humanity has no knowledge of a God and without God there is no eternal truth nor an infinite love. This is a horror-filled and frightening thought. Yet, as Horkheimer states, this judgment is not canceled by it being horrible. According to Horkheimer, Haecker's religious faith in God corresponds to the materialist's longing for real, concrete social change, unlike the lifeless approach to the world of the positivist. However, for Horkheimer, the error of Haecker and other religious thinkers is the belief that their wish for universal happiness and justice is already fulfilled in the concept of God. This is an implicit critique of Christianity's theodicy that the Messiah has already come into the world, thus establishing the new creation in which there is no more mourning, crying, exploitation, or death since now God lives with people (Revelation 21). Yet, the kingdom of God which the Messiah is to establish still waits to be realized. According to Judaism (Isaiah 11; 65), which materialistically is far more correct, the Messiah has not come and the world continues to be a place of cruelty and horror, in which the predatory wolves of the world continue to slaughter and live off the innocent and weak lambs. For Horkheimer's critical theory of religion, there is no Messiah and nothing is coming to right the wrongs of the past. The injustice, sufferings, horror, and death of the innocent victims of the meaninglessness and barbarism of history can never be undone or justified. For Horkheimer, the negativity of history in all of its horror has to be taken seriously. In this regard, history for Horkheimer (1972b; 1972c; 1993g, p. 158) is closed (see Siebert, 1985, pp. 355-362). Humanity is totally alone and abandoned.

Dialectic of Knowledge. It was Haecker's opinion that without faith in God a person would fall in utter despair and insanity. According to Horkheimer, this does not have to be the case. Materialism focuses essentially on the attainment of human desire,

pleasure, and happiness. With knowledge of these however also comes knowledge of their opposite, frustration, pain, sadness and death. According to the materialist Horkheimer, this is part of the dialectic of knowledge, which produces the sense of injustice and sadness that the majority of humanity live in such unhappy conditions. It is such knowledge, however, that provides the motivation to overcome the socially produced need of the abstract religious myth as social alienation through the creation of a better future society. Such a society would not be able to overcome the natural fear of death. No social system can overcome this fear. However, the human created, social cause of such fear and anxiety of suffering and death can be overcome through the collective work of individuals in solidarity with each other, wherein each individual's need is met in the social whole. In such a new social totality in which people live and die in solidarity even death would change its appearance. As Horkheimer states, death in such a society which no longer needs religious or non-religious ideologies for its justification could unconditionally increase human solidarity through compassion.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DETERMINATE NEGATION OF RELIGION

#### The Methodology of Horkheimer's Critical Theory of Religion

Disrespect for anything mortal that puffs itself up as a god is the religion of those who cannot resist devoting their life to the preparation of something better, even in the Europe of the Iron Heel (Horkheimer, 1989a, p. 94).

For the rest of his life, Horkheimer's critical theory of religion did not fundamentally change from the formulation he developed in 1935-1936. However, with the historical development of capitalist society into the totalitarian terror of fascism, Horkheimer's critical theory of religion poignantly emphasized the dialectical dynamic of the theory as a method of continued Enlightenment and emancipation. In Horkheimer's (1989a) 1939 article on "The Jews and Europe" he stated that the development of fascism, or "state capitalism" -- a notion created by his friend Friedrich Pollock (1989c), -- was not an aberration of bourgeois society. Rather, fascism was the result of the unfolding of the capitalist mode of social production and reproduction itself. Horkheimer (1989a) stated, "whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about fascism" (p. 78). Martin Jay (1973) commented that with this statement Horkheimer only referred to state capitalism and not its liberal or monopoly phases (p. 156). By Horkheimer's analysis of fascism, however, Jay's statement is seen to be completely incorrect. The fascist authoritarian state was the political result of the entire development of the antagonism of capitalism's mode of production, from its liberal to its state capitalist stage. As expressed in Chapter II, the theoretical seeds of the fascist authoritarian state were already expressed by Machiavelli and Hobbes at the dawn of

bourgeois civil society. Horkheimer (1989a) quoted Engels concerning this advanced political development of the bourgeois authoritarian state:

One way or another, with or without the trusts, the official representative of capitalist society, the state, must finally take over the management of production ... And the modern state is once again only the organization which bourgeois society creates for itself to maintain the general external conditions for the capitalist means of production against encroachment either by the workers or by individual capitalist ... The more productive forces the state takes over as its own property, the more it becomes a collective capitalist, the more citizens of the state it exploits. The workers remain wage laborers, proletarians. The relationship to capital is not abolished but becomes far more acute (p. 96).

### Antagonistic Mode of Production

According to Horkheimer, National Socialism did not happen by accident but was the direct result of the inherent contradictions of liberal capitalism itself. As Horkheimer (1989a) stated, fascism is the expression of the “atomistic” (p. 86) capitalist principle which is derived from the antagonistic mode of social production that is based on the hypostatization of the individual owner of the means of production’s private appropriation of the collective surplus value produced by the workers. The owner’s success is founded on the exploitation and misery of the workers. Such exploitation is the essence of capitalism as well as what Horkheimer (1978d) calls “the gangster theory of National Socialism” (p. 34). The bourgeoisie and their exploitive capitalistic mode of social production seek only the increase in their accumulation of the collective surplus value created by social labor. As Horkheimer states, all of the historically achieved civil and social advancements of modern, bourgeois society, e.g., formal civil rights, the advancement of education, etc., occurred to further this goal of the bourgeoisie. When such human civil and social advancements detract from this goal, they are then attacked and undermined. Horkheimer (1978c) ironically stated that such a drive for the increased production of surplus value is “the humanity of the bourgeoisie” (p. 100).

The modern development of the dualistic, subject-object concept of reason and of positive science that is based on it arise from this socio-economic development of liberal capitalism. Dialectically, these cultural developments turn around and thereby become themselves further tools of production of the antagonisms of bourgeois society by legitimating scientifically the domination of the capitalist owner over the masses and the human misery and horror it produces.

According to Horkheimer (1978c, pp. 100-101; 1989a, p. 89), the seeds of National Socialism can be found in the radical parties of the French Revolution, e.g., Robespierre's organization and control of the Jacobin party, who were responsible for the "holocaust for liberty" (Schama, 1989, p. 619) -- the revolutionary terror of the guillotine. The shift from the liberal capitalist market economy -- with its emphasis on acquiring more and more of the market share through increased production which thus necessitated masses of workers from whose labor the surplus value was made, to monopoly capitalism -- in which the more powerful bought out or destroyed the weaker competitor, wherein industry is not concerned with production as much as increased profit, is due to the obsolescence of the market economy in producing increased surplus value through the development of cheap labor, cheap resources and more markets. The totalitarian state is the next step in making certain that such profit increases which is thereby protected by the state. The fascist authoritarian state thereby does away with the contingencies of the market place and further reifies the existing social class antagonisms. As Horkheimer states, state capitalism discards the old mechanism of the free market and creates a new, more efficient and controlled, yet more terrifying social structure. This social structure of state capitalism, however, is not new in a human progressive sense as it still represents and guarantees the interests of the dominant, the exploitation of nature and society for profit, and the rule of the ever fewer capitalists



over the mass of workers.

### Fascist Revolution

Fascism is the beginning of the potential totally administered society of capitalism, as exploitation is no longer left to the contingencies of the market place but is now socially administered by an instrumental and strategic rationality in the form of positivism and pragmatism that penetrates into the culture and human psyche through mass culture, education, religion, and the family. According to Horkheimer (1989a), this is the “fascist revolution” (p. 81) for which “as a world system, no economic end is visible” (p. 83). It produces a social totality of domination that “differs from its bourgeois predecessor only in that it has lost its inhibitions” (p. 78). Nothing fundamentally changes in the social productive relationships of capitalist society except that the ideological human mask that liberal bourgeois culture supplied the capitalist mode of social production was taken off. A new, fascist ideology took its place that hid “the same relationship as the old harmonizing ideology: domination by a minority on the basis of actual possession of the tools of production. The aspiration for profit today ends in what it always was: striving for social power” (p. 82). Fascism as state capitalism is the further development of the instrumental and strategic rationalization of the capitalist mode of production. As Horkheimer (1989a) stated in 1939, fascism as a totalitarian economic system will not be ended by the Second World War since by its historical realization in modernity “a seamless militarization [of society] will lead the world further into authoritarian-collectivistic ways of life” (p. 91). The blatant cruelty of the National Socialists will be expurgated as the system corrects itself and no longer needs such obvious cruelty or terror. Individuals will be socialized in society’s machine-like, technological, instrumental, cybernetic, computer-like image and incorporate into them-

selves out of sheer necessity the system's brutality in the interest of self-preservation.

The instrumental rationalization of society and the terror of totalitarianism was prepared by the earlier phases of capitalism, just as that totalitarianism now further prepares the way for the totally administered society of the future. As Horkheimer states, even in the face of war, fascism will survive into the future unless the proletariat come to the realization that the forces of social production, e.g., machines, industry, science, as well as the relations of production built on solidarity must serve their own happiness rather than further their oppression. However, as Horkheimer (1978c) states, the enemies of the authoritarian state have lost the knowledge of and thus the will to create a society based on freedom in solidarity with others (pp. 114-117). Without this knowledge and resolve to create a better future society, state capitalism and the rebarbarization of society will continue into the future. The oppressed of this society have lost the knowledge of their own liberation due to the creation of a mass culture which obscures the existing social class antagonism while inculcating to the masses the values of the capitalist status quo.

### Mass Culture

According to Horkheimer, the possibility for the development of human history has been greatly diminished with the development of totalitarian state capitalism. For Horkheimer (1969), the realm of culture, which once expressed and preserved the vision and hope of a better society and world, has become the "mass culture" of a "cultural industry" (pp. 120-167) which has been socially created to replicate the mechanical repetition of the economic process and instill the values of commodity fetishism among the masses. Through such a mass culture, people are socialized into being myopic, one-dimensional subjects over and against the multitudinous objective world.

which is there to be used while yet being ultimately out of people's control. People become good consumers of the society's planned mass production. They also thereby lose their own subjectivity and become part of the amorphous collective of the administered capitalist society. Through this development, humanity loses the ability to conceive of itself or of society as being anything different than what is.

As Horkheimer (1989a) states, the purpose of a mass culture is "the concealment of the antagonism between the concept of the human being and the capitalist reality" (p. 93) in which people live. This blurring of the fundamental difference between the concept of humanity and its socio-historical reality destroys the possibility of critical thought as well as revolutionary action. As an heir of religious and humanistic thought, for the critical theory there is an ever present tension between reason and the material existence of people in society. As Horkheimer (1972g) states, social problems are the motive of all philosophical systems of thought (p. 267). However, due to the modern diremption of human thought and experience into the schizophrenic and reified division of an isolated, monadic subject over and against the world of objects both natural and human, such social problems become the crisis of the individual who will not or cannot conform to the existing social totality (Pfohl, 1994). According to the instrumental logic of economic production and reproduction process as well as the rationalized mass culture of contemporary society, everything becomes homogenized, leveled, and subsumed into the service of the capitalist and now state enforced economic principle of the capitalist appropriation of collective surplus value.

#### "A New Kind of Barbarism"

According to Wiggershaus (1994), Horkheimer put all of his writings from the 1930's under the title of "dialectical logic" (p. 177). For the further development of the

critical theory, Horkheimer wanted to write a book on the logic and methodology of materialistic dialectics. This was the “Plan” (Wiggershaus, 1994, p. 178) for the book that ultimately came to be called The Dialectic of Enlightenment (1969). Since the critical theory is not an abstract, academic exercise but a dialectical theory and praxis that is closely connected with the socio-historical context in which it exists, the plan for this book changed due to the development of fascism and the betrayal of the human hope of enlightenment and emancipation. Horkheimer (1969) expressed the new plan in the Introduction to the book in asking the question “why humankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism” (p. xi). For Horkheimer (1969), the dialectical reversal of enlightenment through the reification of reason into scientific positivism, which is “the myth of things as they actually are” (p. x), as well as the industrialization of culture are fundamental elements of the rebarbarization of modern bourgeois civilization.

### Enlightenment

Horkheimer (1969) states that a fundamental yet unproved principle, a “*petitio principii*,” of the critical theory is that “social freedom is inseparable from enlightenment” (xiii). What this means, according to Horkheimer (1972g), is that the goal of enlightenment is “the realization of the good...[which means] the rational organization of human society” (p. 267) in which all the realms of the social totality, e.g., economic, political, scientific, technological, psychological, artistic, religious, philosophical, etc., function to achieve the greatest possible human autonomy and happiness for all people. Enlightenment is the process of humanity gaining wisdom so as to free itself from all forms of domination be they self or socially imposed. Enlightenment is the process through which humanity matures in wisdom and courage, theory and praxis, disen-

chanting the world of superstition and irrationality so as to make life the happiest it can be at the given stage of human scientific and technological development for all in society.

As Horkheimer (1969) states however, "the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant" (p. 3). The seeds of this disaster, according to Horkheimer and his co-author Adorno, are to be found in the program of Enlightenment itself. The Enlightenment itself has become an enslaving mythology due to the Enlightenment's fear of the truth that calls it to go beyond the facts of the society, which have themselves been preformed by the dominant process of the economic mode of production and its handmaids of science, commerce, and politics. As Horkheimer (1969) states, the fear that destroys the Enlightenment is the fear of becoming "socially deviant" (p. xiv). According to Horkheimer, the Enlightenment destroyed past myths and metaphysics only to establish a new myth and metaphysic of the fact and the positivistic social order established upon it. In such an order, however, the individual subject vanishes into the sea of objects that all fall under the domination of the most powerful subject -- the antagonistic fascist social order, which remains hidden behind the ideological mask of facts and commodities.

Disenchantment. According to Horkheimer (1969), based on the dualistic rationality of Descartes and Bacon, the Enlightenment sought the disenchantment of the world through the power of an instrumental rationality that expunged all meaning from objects, thereby leaving mere facts that the independent subject could manipulate and dominate. "The disenchantment of the world is the extirpation of animism" (p. 5). All forms of spirit, mystery, magic, quality, meaning supposedly inherent in nature is to be removed so as to free humanity from the fear of nature as well as from those who control the myths, i.e., magicians, priests, etc. In this process of the human subject's in-

dependence from and domination of demythologized nature, Horkheimer (1969) states that “Enlightenment is totalitarian” (p. 6). With the Enlightenment’s demystification of nature, matter becomes leveled and reducible to the repetitive method of mathematics and number.

Myth. However, Horkheimer identified this modern philosophic dualism between the subject and object and the process of Enlightenment already in the development of myth. Myths are human creations in the attempt to bring meaning to life in the face of the terror of nature and the unknown. Through the rationalization of local myths into more unified forms of narratives, the power of the local myths were overcome while yet continued in the new form. The spirits that were said to inhabit a particular location or object now became differentiated from the matter and entered into a location of their own, e.g., the pantheon of Mount Olympia, the Nordic Valhalla, heaven. According to Horkheimer (1969), the concept of Being thereby divides itself up into “Logos ... and into the mass of all things and creatures without” (p. 8). The gods are the beings who are ultimately in control of creation. This godly domination of creation becomes that of human domination, as humanity is understood to be created in the image of the creator god, the Logos, e.g., Jewish creation myth in Genesis 1-2, the first chapter of the gospel of John. This mythic rationalization of the dualistic split of Being into Logos and material is the legitimation of the powerful’s domination of nature and people. Thus, already in myth, the inherent quality and meaning of objects is devalued. With this identification of humanity with God, “myth turns into enlightenment and nature into mere objectivity” (p. 9). As Horkheimer (1969) states,

mythology itself set off the unending process of enlightenment in which ever and again, with the inevitability of necessity, every specific theoretical view succumbs to the destructive criticism that it is only a belief -- until even the various notions of spirit, of truth and, indeed, enlightenment itself, have become animistic magic (p. 11).

Through myths, humanity overcomes the terror of nature by naming the unknown and by symbolically participating in and controlling the unknown's power through the creation of totems or fetishes. Unlike the bourgeois Enlighteners for whom myth and religion were forms of false consciousness and superstition which were to be radically negated, Horkheimer understands myths to be a form of human rationality in the struggle with nature for survival. By means of myth and ritual, human beings created meaning and order to life. Through conformity to the myth and the rituals fear of the terrifying other, the unknown is relieved. However, through such conformity to the limited rationality of a mythically created world, people also submitted to the domination of those who control the sacred symbols.

Fear. As Horkheimer states, fear is the originator of the Enlightenment in both its mythic and modern forms. Yet it is that very same fear which contributes to the destruction of human Enlightenment. According to Horkheimer (1969), "myths signify self-repetitive nature" (p. 17); the otherness of nature is brought under control by the myth and the resulting social structure. It is just this element of otherness or the unknown that Enlightenment seeks to overcome through the attainment of knowledge which becomes translated into domination over that which is now known. Horkheimer (1969) states,

Humanity imagines itself free from fear when there is no longer anything unknown. That determines the course of demythologization, of enlightenment...Enlightenment is mythic fear turned radical. The pure immanence of positivism, its ultimate product, is no more than a so to speak universal taboo. Nothing at all may remain outside, because the mere idea of outsideness is the very source of fear (p. 16).

The equivalence of all objects and the repetition of nature recognized in myth thereby become the new fetishized principles of Enlightenment and its scientific knowledge: positivism and technology. As a form of human rationality and domination, modern

science is the inheritor of myth. The symbols and tools of the shaman have become the scientific concepts of the positivist through which nature and humanity can be known and dominated. As with the sacred totems of myth, however, these modern scientific conceptual constructs give expression to the class antagonism as well as the division of labor in the existing social totality which they serve. This is due to the reification of the Enlightenment process to the facts of the status quo. Such facts however are socially created and through the reification of human knowledge to them, such knowledge becomes a tool of mythic social production and domination. Again Horkheimer (1969) states,

In the enlightened world, mythology has entered into the profane. ... Under the title of brute facts, the social injustice from which they proceed is now as assuredly sacred a preserve as the medicine man was sacrosanct by reason of the protection of his gods (p. 28).

Positivism and Domination. It is in this way that Enlightenment turns into mythology: the mythology of the isolated subject; the mythology of positivism and the society of domination it helps to create; the myth of progress. As Horkheimer stated, the Enlightenment has rid the world of superstition to such an extent that now only superstition in the form of positivism remains. Yet, according to Horkheimer, the achievements of science and technological advances do not guarantee human progress. Human beings can be materially, intellectually, culturally, emotionally starving despite the advancements of science and technology. Science and technology are only parts of the social totality - tools of the society's mode of production. Society as a whole can be moving backward with the increase of human unhappiness, injustice, oppression, etc., all the while science and technology continue to advance. As Horkheimer (1972g) states, "Rationalism in details can readily go with a general irrationalism" (p. 260). As he states, the social totality must be taken into account in any analysis or critique of so-



ciety, for it is the social totality that gives meaning and purpose to the developments in the scientific and cultural expert domains. Horkheimer (1972g) uses the New Testament phrase of Jesus (Luke 23:34) with regard to the myopia of the positive sciences, technology, academia, and culture that disregard the social totality: “They know not what they do” (p. 260).

Totalitarian Order. The development of positivism as the new myth of modernity and the domination of a totalitarian order go hand in hand. This instrumental, strategic, and positivistic reason in this totalitarian order is illustrated for Horkheimer in the cold, calculating cruelty of the SS officer and the German concentration camps. In the face of the social catastrophe and horror of the totalitarian order of modern society, reason stands mute. The reality of National Socialism’s totalitarian order as an inevitable consequence of capitalism’s antagonistic mode of productivity that is expressive of the diremption of reason and human experience kills any sense of justice, love, or hope. The machine-like system has become historically victorious. According to Horkheimer (1978d), “Hope has become overshadowed by the consciousness of universal doom” (p. 44). For Horkheimer (1978d; 1972h; 1969), totalitarianism in all of its forms is the “iron system” universalized by the myth of positivism, into which the individual, love, childhood, the family, culture, and all forms of difference vanish. In such an order, the dominant and most readily accepted standards of thought and behavior are those set by those who control the society’s economic mode of production and the mass culture itself, in which all things correspond to the functioning of the economy and its authorities; e.g., obedience, readiness, strength, conformity, sacrifice of the self -- whatever is left of it. Practicality, dexterity, manipulation, physical and technical knowledge is what is required to survive and function in such a “one dimensional” society (Marcuse, 1964). Horkheimer (1978d) states that the non-technological

rationality and its reflective, theoretical “animistic carryovers” (p. 40) are of no value in this society. As Horkheimer (1978d) states, capitalism and its most recent embodiment, the totalitarian state have resulted in the sacrificial death of human intelligence -- a “*sacrificium intellectus*” (p. 40). However, where such a sacrifice is needed, the dominant form of reason in society is seen to be deficient. As Horkheimer (1969) states, the irrationality of the society is thereby rationalized by the myth to maintain the status quo of social domination (p. 52). As positivism is the Enlightenment revealing itself as mythology, so according to Horkheimer (1978d) “the new order of fascism is reason revealing itself as unreason” (p. 46).

#### Religion as Cultural Commodity

Due to the victory of the mechanical, instrumental, strategic, subjectivized, and formalized concept of reason, which liquidates any aspect of objective meaning, purpose, or end for itself, religion has been stripped of its connection with truth and has become a cultural commodity of bourgeois society. As Horkheimer states, the nationalist’s version of anti-Semitism ignores its religious aspect because they know that the modern individual has given up long ago any thought of eternal salvation, which is based on the love of and the seeking of justice for the neighbor. According to Horkheimer (1969), religion was not negated when it became a cultural commodity in modern society. Rather, the “form” (p. 176) of religion was subsumed into the service of the modern social totality. This formal religion is what qualifies and artificially shows the difference between itself and positivistic knowledge. As Horkheimer (1972i) states, with science reflecting the antagonism of society, religion is needed to ideologically balance the increasing sense of meaninglessness (p. 134). However, as Horkheimer (1969) states, “as long as faith remains unhesitatingly tied -- as friend or foe --

to knowledge, it perpetuates the separation in the very course of the struggle to overcome it" (p. 20). Such a socially defined and uncritical religion and faith are a fundamental part of the contemporary myth of modern society. Such religion and faith are lies that further dull people's hearts and minds and thereby further society on the road to barbarism.

By emptying religion of its truth content and movement while yet retaining religion's form, the door of the religious longing for the other, a better society, -- which for Horkheimer is its truth -- is also artificially kept open. This longing of the masses then becomes a tool for the dominant ideology, e.g., Fascism, to become the idolatrous content of the religious form as the hope of the masses is manipulated to focus on the nation, race, gender, etc., as their Messiah. Thus, as Horkheimer (1969) states "religion as an institution is partly embodied in the system and partly converted into mass culture" (p. 176). The form of religion remains, only the content has been changed. According to Horkheimer (1969), the hatred of those who do not worship the false idols is also retained, which produces anti-Semitism. "Anti-Semitism is all that the German Christians have retained of the religion of love" (p. 176).

The divorce of reason from religion thus neutralizes and formalizes them both. By its very existence in modern antagonistic society, religion, now free from rational critique about its conception of truth, goodness, etc., performs a function of social integration and legitimation of the existing status quo. However, as Horkheimer (1974a) states,

At the same time, [religion's] neutrality means the wasting away of its real spirit, its relatedness to truth, once believed to be the same in science, art, and politics, and for all humankind. The death of speculative reason, at first religion's servant and later its foe, may prove catastrophic for religion itself (p. 18).

Self-Denial. In the early, liberal stage of the development of capitalist society,

religion as a function of this society was the vehicle through which the economic necessity of the developing society for self-denial and sacrifice for a greater good was taught, particularly to the lower classes. However, as Horkheimer states, such rational expectation and demand of self-sacrifice for the maintenance of the social collective effects each social class differently. Those with the least wealth, property, power, prestige, etc., ultimately have to be forced into such sacrifice for a totality that does not meet their own individual or class needs. As Horkheimer (1978d) states, it was "Protestantism [that] promoted the spread of that cold rationality which is so characteristic of the modern individual" (pp. 33-34). Through the Reformation, people were freed from the mediation of religious authorities, e.g., priests, Pope, and the veneration of religious objects, only to be given over to the cruel world of the developing capitalist mode of production, with which the Reformation allied itself. According to Horkheimer (1993h), the Protestant Reformers, e.g., Luther and Calvin, were the first representatives of the new bureaucracy that was being created by the bourgeois mode of production, whose great spiritual achievement was the new concept of salvation that was not contingent on church sacraments or the social preparation for the coming Reign of God but was determined by the subjective condition of the individual's soul (p. 83). This according to Horkheimer, gave people their independence in an ideological form which again was expressive of the developing bourgeois mode of production, both for the owners of the means of production -- who were the real independent subjects of the revolution as well as the need of "independent" masses of individual workers -- who understood themselves to be responsible for themselves and their families but who did not have the means other than their own work to provide and secure such independence in the developing bourgeois mode of economic and social production. Thus, the recourse of such independent workers, e.g., former serfs, peasants, farmers, guild workers, and

their families, was to work in the factories of bourgeoisie. This was nothing but a new form of slavery. As Horkheimer states, the capitalist economic mode of production's need for the privatization and interiorization of the masses in the name of freedom for the sake of creating a compliant work force was blessed theoretically by the Reformers as being expressive of the grace of an unknowable God -- which corresponds to the unknowable and uncontrollable process of the market. According to Horkheimer (1978d) misery and the poor laws were not enough to force people into the factories (p. 34). During the early phase of capitalism, the new religious spirit acted as a form of coercion by internalizing the external compulsion to work, to make profit, and to gain power.

End of Religion. According to Horkheimer, under monopoly and state capitalism, people no longer need such religious compulsion to conform to the dominant economic mode of social life production. By conforming to the socially dominant "aristocratic law" of self-preservation, people have lost the need of religion. In 1939, Horkheimer (1989a) critiqued "apathetic Christianity" (p. 87) in comparison to the fascist oppressive solutions to the needs of the masses. Fascism and its leaders at least provided something tangible, experiential, while Christianity and the church merely spoke about God and heaven. "The society is abandoned by the idolized leaders, but not quite as abandoned as it always was by the True God" (p. 87). Horkheimer gives further expression to the theodicy issue concerning the existence of the divine in the face of the horror in the social and natural world. According to Horkheimer (1989a), that the fascist oppressors of humanity can cause such misery and terror without the intervention of God's judgment, punishment, or counter-movement only proves again that God does not exist (p. 92). The ever-developing, historical reproduction of inhumanity only confirms that the old humanism and religion have no value whatsoever.

Already under monopoly capitalism, a bourgeois rationalized culture was beginning to take over the old religious function of unifying and legitimating the status quo. Horkheimer (1969) states that such culture is the symptom of the antagonistic mode of social production and reproduction that reflects the “rhythm of the iron system” (p. 120), from which there is little hope of escape. As Horkheimer (1969) states, this culture creates the “false identity of the general and the particular” (p. 121), a one-sided universality in which the social collective -- under the domination of the monopoly capitalists -- effectively subsumes and absorbs the individual into itself. Echoing Hegel’s (1967a) critique of abstract universals which absorb all particularity in a “night in which ... all cows are black” (p. 79), Horkheimer (1969) states, “under monopoly all mass culture is identical ” (p. 121).

#### No Return to Religion

As a form of resistance to this modern, schizophrenic development of knowledge and human life into the reified dualism of a *res cognitans* and *res extensa*, subject and object, understanding and feeling, reason and faith, science and religion, the individual and the collective which has developed into the myth of positivism and the rhythm of the iron system of state capitalism, Horkheimer rejected any return to religion or the humanism of the past. Those who seek to go back to the days of liberal capitalism seek to return to a time when the increasing divide between religion and reason was not as far apart as it is in a fascist society. For Horkheimer, such a return to religion is bankrupt because it misunderstands and misrepresents the historical reality and crisis of modernity. Returning to the past in the form of religion or of neo-humanism is a return to the seedbed of fascism itself. Such a non-dialectical, non-critical return to the past as a cure for the crisis of modernity is a distraction to the work that needs to be done to

address the crisis. In the process of such reaction, religion and its objective reason become means for the maintenance and legitimation of the subjective purposes of society's dominant class. As Horkheimer (1974a) states such a return to religion or its philosophic interpretation "perform[s] a function that is useful for the powers that be: they transform the surviving remnants of mythological thought into workable devices for mass culture" (p. 62). Thus, religion's original critical content and power is eliminated as it becomes a formalized tool and commodity of the existing antagonistic society. "This brings clearly to light the dangers that threaten religion through the formalization of reason" (p. 66). The stories and dogmas, which contain a "dangerous memory" (Metz, 1980) of emancipation, resistance, and redemption are forgotten or trivialized as being archaic and meaningless while the emphasis becomes the formalized importance of being religious in the modern world. Being religious in this sense is another way of saying being conformed, lobotomized, hardened to the cruelty, and thus, accepting of the class antagonism and the existential and historical horror it has and continues to produce in modern society. As Horkheimer (1974a) states, through such a non-dialectical return to religion as a means of combating the modern social crisis "the religious end is perverted to a mundane means" (p. 66).

The contemporary process of the development of subjective, formalized reason and its consequence in the development of an antagonistic society of domination is irreversible, according to Horkheimer. Thus, all the attempts to return to past value systems of religion or philosophy are futile. The existing society has already overcome the resistance of these traditional forms of religion and in many cases has incorporated these forms into the social status quo as cultural commodities or instruments of legitimation. Past ontological, metaphysical, religious, or moral/philosophical arguments used as correctives do nothing to overcome the present social/cultural crisis of antago-

nism and domination. Rather, they tend to contribute to the furtherance of such domination.

### Hope for the Future

For Horkheimer the solution to the crisis of modernity lies not in the past but in a dynamic hope and struggle for a better future society, which has its basis in the present. In his 1939 article on anti-Semitism in Europe, Horkheimer (1989a), criticized the Jews for having lost the fundamental religious notion or key to their identity; an identity real or perceived for which they were being persecuted (p. 94). As Jesus condemned the positivism of the religious leaders of his day for removing the “key of knowledge” (Luke 11:52) of God’s promised future from the people, so Horkheimer critiqued the positivism and conformity of the Jews to the capitalist system in both its liberal and fascist form. Horkheimer states that because of their persecutions the Jews are directed back once again to their once proud religious foundation of refusing to make anything finite into the infinite.

### Prohibition

This refusal to make anything finite into the infinite is expressive of the second and third commandment of the Jewish Decalogue’s prohibition of making any images or names for God as found in Exodus 20:2-7:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; ... You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the Jewish conception of God is that of the to-



tally Other than this world, who is the unknown and un-namable, who is thus beyond the sphere of human magical or mythical control. This negative conception of God as the totally Other is the destruction of all myth, and thus also of all forms of social domination that mythology legitimates. According to Horkheimer (1969), the idea of the Jewish patriarchate destroys myth since the bond between the name and being is maintained in the ban on pronouncing the name of God (p. 23). God is beyond human control in the magical form of the name. To have the name of God means to have possession of the essence of God. Such knowledge is impossible. As such, the Jewish religion cannot be used to legitimate any finite form of life, economy, politics, nation, etc., as being expressive of God or of God's will. The people who profess this unknown, totally Other God also cannot be fully integrated into a unjust social totality. According to Horkheimer (1969), it was for this reason that the fascists viewed the Jews and Marxists as "the embodiment of the negative principle" (p. 168). They represented and obtain their identity from some "Other" beyond the existing status quo and its power. As Horkheimer (1972h) states, like "the negative function of true art," such a people have the ability of "awaken[ing] memories of a freedom" that reveal the injustice and inhumanity of the existing social reality (p. 275).

### No Consolation

The Jewish religion also can provide no worldly consolation to remove the pain and despair of all things finite. For the Jewish religion, human hope is associated only with the prohibition against calling or equating anything finite with God. It is only in this negative and thus critical conception of God as the totally Other that truth is to be found. According to Horkheimer (1989a), salvation for the Jews as well as for all of humanity is to be found in the rejection of all things finite that "puff themselves up into

gods” (p. 94). As Horkheimer (1969) states, this conception of God as the totally Other is not an abstract and thus total negation of God, which is done in bourgeois Deism, skepticism, and positivism. Rather, the Jewish religion’s prohibition of making anything finite into God is expressive of the dialectical method of “determinate negativity” (p. 24).

### Determinate Negation

From his very earliest writings, Horkheimer referred to the dynamic, historical method of determinate negation as the method of the critical theory. As stated in the first chapter, Horkheimer inherited this philosophic method from the works of Hegel (1967a; 1969), particularly from his Phenomenology of Mind and his Logic. Yet, as stated above, the critical theory, particularly the critical theory of religion, is grounded in the method of determinate negation derived from the Jewish Decalogue’s prohibition in the second and third commandment.

In order to explain the method of determinate negation, it seems best to compare it to its opposite: abstract, indeterminate negation. Abstract, indeterminate negation is a total negation of the other as it is swept aside by something new. Abstract, indeterminate negation is the result of the dualistic logic in which something either is or it is not. In Horkheimer’s (1972e) words, such indeterminate negation maintains the antagonistic “two-sided character” (p. 207) of bourgeois society. There is no dialectical flow or historical synthesis of the opposites into a new, more relevant future totality that nevertheless preserves the meaning or truth of the earlier forms. As Horkheimer (1969) states, this socio-historical movement of concepts and structures however is grasped through the dialectical method of determinate negation which “interprets every image as writing. It shows how the admission of its falsity is to be read in the lines of its fea-

tures -- a confession that deprives it of its power and appropriates it for truth" (p. 24) in a new, more relevant historical form. Expressive of the Jewish Decalogue's prohibition of naming the infinite, in Horkheimer's critical theory the tension between the concept and its historical reality, mind and being, subject and object is maintained. It is by means of this dialectical differentiation between the concept and reality that provides the possibility of a dynamic if not revolutionary critique of what is. Thus, as Horkheimer (1972g) states, his critical theory never gave up idealism's goal of introducing the notion of objective reason and the happiness of all individuals into society and history (p. 270). Rather, it has determinately negated this idealistic goal and its false theoretical form into a dialectical, historical materialism that seeks to realize the ideal of human happiness concretely yet negatively in society and history. Humanity can have no knowledge of anything beyond its historical experience. In this, Horkheimer follows Kant's (1791) Critique of Pure Reason which proves the impossibility of human knowledge of the noumenal. However, Horkheimer qualifies Kant's limitation of human reason to this world through the similar Jewish prohibition against naming God which provides the prospect for the human longing for the totally Other than this world as the determinate negation of human suffering, misery, oppression, unhappiness, and death in society and the world. This Jewish religious prohibition is thus determinately negated, preserved, and furthered in the new form of the materialist critical theory and its struggle for a better, more humane and happy future society. Horkheimer's critical of religion and thus his entire critical theory is not the abstract negation of religion but the determinate negation of its false form, e.g., myth, ritual, reified belief in a projected, known Other, positive authority in the form of priests/ministers, systematic theology, organized/rationalized institutions such as the church, into the critical theory itself, now not as belief but as an uncompromising commitment and praxis toward the

creation of a better future society for all people but particularly for those that are oppressed. The critical theory of religion thereby liberates religion's human content of hope and longing for the unknown, un-namable, totally Other in a new form of rational theory and praxis. This negative, inverse, political theology is the essence of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion as well as his entire critical theory of society.

### Materialism Versus Idealism

With no positive knowledge of a God, Horkheimer's materialistic method of determinate negation is different from that of Hegel's absolute idealism. Rather than begin with the meaning giving notions of God and God's Goodness, Truth, Righteousness, and Justice, Horkheimer's critical theory of religion begins with the negative, e.g., human suffering, abandonment, meaninglessness, oppression, and death. Following Schopenhauer's pessimistic metaphysics, this negativity is understood to be the socio-historical reality which does not accord with the highest ideas of humanity. According to Horkheimer (1972g) in 1939, the task of the critical theory is to expose the contradiction between humanity's actual existence and "the great ideas which humanity acknowledges" (p. 265). This was the inter-disciplinary task of the critical theory as outlined in his Inaugural address of 1931: the determinate negation of the socially created limitation and antagonism of both the sciences and philosophy in a new critical form that would continue the program of human Enlightenment and emancipation. In modern, antagonistic, bourgeois society, the real critical and thus humanly progressive struggle is to see how these highest ideas, e.g., the longing for the totally Other as determinate negation of human misery, can be made a reality in society and history.

Secular Version. Horkheimer's critical theory of religion, which is an inherent and dynamic element of his entire critical theory of society, is the modern, secular version of the Jewish religion's prohibition against naming the absolute. Such refusal to name the absolute has nothing to do with bourgeois skepticism or positivism which claims no knowledge of the absolute and is thereby free of it. Nor is the critical theory of religion like bourgeois phenomenology which brackets out the absolute and is thereby free of it. The Jewish religion's as well as the critical theory's refusal to name anything finite as the absolute is an expression of a serious commitment to the struggle to overcome the causes of human suffering, oppression and death, motivated by the knowledge not of what God or God's will is but by knowing what in the existing society does not accord with humanity's highest and best ideas. In not knowing what the absolute is other than it is the totally Other allows the critical theory to be able to say what the absolute is not, which can thereby empower people to resist the social powers of domination in the struggle to create a better future society for all. It is this totally Other so negatively conceived that can bring liberating critique on the existing social reality and thereby open up the future in hope.

Radical Indictment. Like Judaism and Schopenhauer, Horkheimer's critical theory of religion offers no form of consolation for the tragedy of humanity in society and the world. The longing for the totally Other as the longing for the end of the suffering of humanity and nature is a radical indictment of the injustice and horror produced by the existing totalitarian social totality's pursuit of increased surplus value. As Horkheimer (1972h) states, "evil does not stem from nature, but from the violence committed by society against human nature striving to develop" (p. 276). This longing for the totally Other as the determinate negation of the unjust suffering and death of people in society and the world is the basis for the critical theory's critique and call for

revolutionary action for the creation of a more just, free, happy, and humane future society.

### Remembrance and Redemption

Horkheimer's critical theory of religion's longing for the totally Other than the existing mode of social production and for that which is beyond human control is also expressive of the remembrance of the dead. In 1940, Horkheimer (1978c) stated that it was "only the bad in history that is irrevocable: the unrealized possibilities, missed opportunities, murder with and without legal procedures, and that which those in power inflict upon humanity. The other [the good] is always in danger" (p. 102). As stated earlier, for Horkheimer history is closed. The dead are dead and there is nothing that can undo what has happened to them. Thus, in the Introduction to the Dialectic of Enlightenment Horkheimer (1969) stated that the task of the critical theory and of humanity in the face of social rebarbarization and destruction of humanity by totalitarianism was "not the conservation of the past, but the redemption of the hopes of the past" (p. xv).

Unlike the positivistic approach that sets aside or forgets as soon as possible the injustices of the past so as to continue them, according to Horkheimer (1969), it is only the remembrance of the horrible destruction of humanity in the past that "creates the correct relationship with the dead: unity with them because we, like them, are the victims of the same conditions and the same disappointed hope" (p. 215). The correct relationship with the dead is that created by remembrance: remembrance of their sufferings, their hopes of redemption and happiness which were frustrated due to the same power of domination and destruction that distorts and kills the hopes and lives of people today. Keeping alive these memories through the continued social praxis of hope

and longing for the Other -- a better, more humane and happy future society and beyond -- is the essence of good religion, which reason, the enlightenment, and the critical theory advance in a secular form through the dialectical methodology of determinate negation.

Conversely, in bourgeois society, history and the dead are forgotten, pushed aside by the requirements and pressures of the present to survive and achieve some degree of social status or position. Reflective thought on the dead and history, if it is more than just amusement, a hobby, or an ideological justification for what is, contains a dangerous element for an unjust society: Such remembrance in solidarity with the dead can remind the living of the sacrifices, sufferings, hopes, and longings of the past, which were not and continue not to be realized in the continued progress of contemporary society. Such remembrance can bring to mind the progressive degeneration of the hopes and lives of the living. According to Horkheimer (1969), such remembrance of history and the dead, as well as the mourning for the dead that it brings, is considered useless in capitalist society since it has no market value whatsoever (p. 216). As he states, in modern society the dead suffer a fate that the ancient Jews considered to be the harshest curse: not to be remembered by the community of the living. This callousness of forgetfulness of the dead which allows the cruelty of exploitation and the domination of others for the sake of an unjust society's survival is what Horkheimer's critical theory of religion seeks to determinately negate through the struggle for a better future society empowered by the longing for the totally Other.

## CHAPTER VI

### RESISTANCE AND HOPE

#### Appeal to a Totally Other

The appeal to an entirely other [ein ganz Anderes] than this world had primarily a social-philosophical impetus. It led finally to a more positive evaluation of certain metaphysical trends, because the empirical 'whole is the untrue' [Adorno]. The hope that earthly horror does not possess the last word is, to be sure, a non-scientific wish (Horkheimer, 1973, p. xii).

Horkheimer's critical theory of religion is expressive of the determinate negation of Kant's critique of reason and epistemology, Hegel's dialectical logic and methodology of determinate negation, Marx and Engel's critique of political economy, Schopenhauer's metaphysical pessimism that is qualified by the Jewish religion's prohibition of naming the Absolute and its hope in the totally Other, Freud's critical psychology, as well as the developing bourgeois positive sciences. All of these elements are translated into the critical theory's materialistic struggle to reveal and thereby help in the negation of the socio-historical causes of human suffering, exploitation, oppression, unhappiness, and death in the reified capitalist relations of social production. The goal of such negation is the creation of a more just and emancipatory future society for all people according to humanity's existing scientific, technological, and cultural ability. This historical struggle for a better future society is thus based on the socio-economic ability of the existing society as well as the human hope and longing in the totally Other than this world that such historical injustice and horror will not have the last word; that, in Horkheimer's (1969) terms, there will be a "Judgment Day" (p. 225) in which the innocent victims of this world will have their day in court. As Horkheimer states



above, this is not a scientific statement. It is rather a religious statement of indictment of the oppressive injustice of the social world in the form of an unscientific longing that this injustice will ultimately be overcome by a totally Other. In the meantime, the struggle against society's rebarbarization through all forms of resistance and hope for a better, more reconciled future social totality continues. This is the essence of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion, from beginning to end.

### Revolutionary Task

Horkheimer's critical theory of religion expresses the social class conflict of modern capitalist society caused by the reification of anachronistic and exploitive economic relations of production that create an antagonistic society of domination by the rich and powerful over the society's workers. In such an antagonistic society, religion has the capability of being either an expression of legitimation of the exploitive social status quo or the cry of the society's oppressed for a better, more just and free future society that is totally other than the progressive continuation of the existing society. As stated earlier in this paper, the historical revolutionary subject of Horkheimer's theory was the oppressed proletariat who he had hoped would rise up against their capitalist oppressors, throw off their chains, and begin the process of creating a better society. Although the hope of a proletariat led revolution diminished with each passing year, the plausibility of this defiant expectation nevertheless stayed with him through the second World War. As Horkheimer (1978c) stated in 1940, "the revolution that ends domination is as far-reaching as the will of the liberated. Any resignation is already a regression into prehistory" (p. 104). For Horkheimer (1978c), the critical theory "confronts history with that possibility which is always concretely visible with it" (p. 106) and is not turned away from this revolutionary task by the socio-historical facts. As Hork-

heimer (1978c) states, humanity is not betrayed by the “untimely” (p. 106) efforts of the revolutionary who stands with the oppressed and desperate people. Rather, humanity is betrayed by those timely efforts that are bound to the facts of the status quo. This revolutionary hope was still an intransigent part of his theory as expressed in the Dialectic of Enlightenment. This was the hope that Horkheimer (1974h) along with “the other founders of Scientific Socialism” (p. ix) held on to: that an authentic human history would begin in the advanced nations of the world in which the bourgeois liberation of human creativity, “a spiritual productivity -- stripped now of all elements of force and exploitation” (p. ix) would become a reality.

#### Failure of Nerve

Horkheimer’s was not a theory of utopian socialism but of a concrete, scientific socialism that was built on the existing social totality and the actual scientific, technological, and cultural capabilities of humanity in the given historical context. Horkheimer stated throughout his writings that the existing state of human knowledge and technological ability is completely at odds with the continuing irrationality and thus horror of contemporary society. It was not the limitation of the forces of production that prohibited the transition to a better and more just future society. He attributed this cultural decline to the point of barbarism to the failure of nerve of people to give much support to any form of thinking that did not serve the further development of the social machine. As Horkheimer (1974b) states, “the material and even the intellectual factors needed for improvement are there, but the minds and hearts of men are too heavily claimed already” (p. 30). This claim of people’s spirit had been accomplished by the instrumental rationalization and administration of the mode of economic and social production, as well as by the mass culture that functions as its ideological and legitimating

force.

### Sacrifice

After the War, according to Horkheimer (1972j), the possibility of such a revolution had become an impossibility, as “the proletariat [had] been integrated into society” (p. vi). Modern society was entering into a new phase of its development toward a rationalized, automated, totally managed world in which all remnants of the relative autonomy of the individual were vanishing. Corporations, collectives, and monopolies became the dominant managers of the economy over that of the individual. “The perfecting of technology, the spread of commerce and communication, the growth of population all drive society toward stricter organization” (p. viii). In this development, the material conditions of life for the workers had changed as more and more commodities became accessible to the masses. However, as Horkheimer warned throughout this later time, there is a price to be paid for all of this material progress in an antagonistic society, namely, the sacrifice of human individuality, autonomy, love, spirit, or soul. The increased material prosperity of the lower classes created a different psychological and political attitude among the masses from that of the early proletariat. The longing for freedom was being integrated and rationalized as part of the dominant social system. Whereas revolution on the part of the workers in the past was the only feasible way of overcoming social injustice, in the post World War II years this struggle against social injustice was being fought through the rationalized work of trade-unions. According to Horkheimer (1978c) already in 1940 such working class unions were undermining the proletariat’s revolutionary, emancipatory purpose as they “fell victim to the spirit of administration” (p. 98). Even the revolutionary opposition to this social development, who struggle for human emancipation against this instrumentaliza-

tion of society and humanity, become co-opted and integrated into the society as it is. The warning that Horkheimer (1989a) gave in 1939 concerning the development of the totalitarian state, that not only the Jews but also all people “must tremble ... at what is now coming over the Earth” (p. 92), was coming true in the post war, advanced Western society.

### Theoretical Shift

As Horkheimer (1974b) stated in 1957 again, it is impossible to stop the development of modern society and the domination of the capitalist mode of social production and reproduction through the advancement of instrumental reason (p.19). The economic and social system development of modern society cannot be stopped. It is for this reason that Horkheimer shifted his theoretical attention from this social realm to that of the culture of the social totality. The history of society’s culture still held out the possibility of resistance and hope for the determinate negation of the social forces of oppression and suffering and based on the existing society the creation of a more just, rational in the sense of both logos and techné, and human future society. However, Horkheimer (1974b) states,

the only question is whether in the phase upon which mankind is now entering the cultural qualities of past ages will, while undergoing a change, be carried over as part of the coming civilization, or whether they will simply be eliminated and have to be rediscovered later on (p. 19).

Horkheimer (1974b) named the elements that he thought were needed for resisting the reduction of all things human to the false collectivity of modern society and its deceptive, instrumental, and strategic rationality. What is needed is the study of the great philosophers of the past: Hegel’s Phenomenology of Mind and his Logic; knowledge of theological tradition that wrestled with the issue of the collective and individual, autonomy and solidarity, human freedom and the social totality; as well as

knowledge of Kant's philosophical conception of hope which is rooted in this theological tradition (p. 7). What is also needed, he says, is knowledge of the contemporary contradiction between the notions of body and spirit as it pertains to the individual and of the dialectical interconnectiveness of society and the individual. As Horkheimer (1974b) states,

the belief which declares the abstract concepts of being and man to be concrete reality depends for its existence on decadence in education. Productive negation, on the contrary, depends at every point on solid education. It is impossible to oppose falsity without falling prey to it, unless the knowledge won by past and present generations is kept alive (p. 7).

#### Future Oriented Remembrance

This "productive negation" is the process of determinate negation that remembers and thereby preserves the past sufferings, longings, and sacrifices of humanity so as to negate them through the continued struggle against the inhuman forces at work in the contemporary society. Through such remembrance, the past struggles for a more reconciled future society are preserved in the contemporary struggle for human emancipation which thereby contains the hope of redeeming the past as well as the present and the future of humanity. For Horkheimer, everything depended on the preservation and remembrance of these religious, artistic, and philosophic expressions of hope as well as the determinate negation of their inadequate cultural forms to allow the human concern and expression of liberation and hope contained therein to be expressed in a new cultural and social form that is relevant and emancipatory in the present historical period.

#### Pseudoconservative Act

With this development, Horkheimer's (1972j) emphasis in his materialistic critical theory of religion switched from being a motivation for social revolution to being

what he called a “pseudoconservative act” (p. ix). As he stated in 1968, this pseudo-conservative act was now

to protect, preserve, and where possible, extend the limited and ephemeral freedom of the individual in the face of the growing threat to it ... [rather] than to issue abstract denunciations of it or to endanger it by actions that have no hope of success (p. viii).

A year later, in 1969, Horkheimer (1969) stated that in the face of the continuing development of modern society toward a totally mechanical, industrialized, administered, and cybernetic form, critical thought must “support the residues of freedom” (p. ix) and any historical tendencies that work toward true humanism, “even if these seem powerless in regard to the main course of history” (p. x).

Through all of these shifts of theoretical focus and response to the development of modern society, however, the purpose of Horkheimer’s theory was the same: the liberation of humanity from the contemporary form of economic, cultural, and psychic oppression through revealing and naming the form of domination and alienation that was crushing the human spirit and destroying human hope of a better, happier future society. This hope had been expressed in true art, religion, and philosophy; true in the sense that these cultural forms gave expression both to humanity’s and nature’s suffering in contemporary society and in so doing revealed the causes of the suffering which could then be addressed. As capitalist society and its domination of both nature and humanity developed toward a totally administered, instrumentally rationalized, dominated society, Horkheimer’s form of resistance responded not by returning to religion in some reactionary, romantic fashion, but in holding up the truth elements of human hope, dignity, resistance, and liberation that the antiquated forms of religion, particularly that of Judaism and Christianity, expressed. In the later stages of contemporary society’s development, Horkheimer sought to remind people of the human content and hope expressed by these past cultural forms for the purpose of instilling in people a re-

sistance to the triumphal historical march of the horror producing capitalist juggernaut toward a totally rationalized social totality in the weak if not vain hope of a better future society.

### Critique of Pragmatic Religion

This development of his critical theory of religion was expressed in his writings of this time, from 1950-1969, as well as his later interviews before his death in 1973. As he did at the beginning of his theoretical development, so from 1950-1969 did Horkheimer (1978a) write a number of aphorisms and short essays concerning the function or task of religion in this new rationalized and administered stage of capitalism's social development. Contrasting the "thinness" (p. 123) of socially positive, functionalistic, civil religion to his critical theory of religion, in the early 1950's Horkheimer critiqued such a pragmatic religion as being a system created by the dominant class of the society for the establishment of pattern maintenance and equilibrium of the given social mechanism. Echoing the theoretically espoused position of Machiavelli and Hobbes concerning the relationship of religion and the state in the beginning stages of bourgeois society from his study in 1930, so Horkheimer again asserted twenty years later that the interests of the modern nation states and that of the positive world religions are the same. The nation and positive religion serve the same master: capitalism. This is religion's "thinness," shallowness, and/or transparency, i.e., its lack of any real substance and depth that seeks to critically address the injustice of the given, capitalist social system for the purpose of envisioning and creating a more just, rational, free, and humane future society. This functionalistic service of the positive world religions to the given social system of which it is a part is what Horkheimer (1978a) calls the "profound pragmatism at the core of world religions, the lack of illusions" (p. 123).

The world religions' pragmatic lack of illusions expresses religion's lack of hope for anything other than what is as it has conformed to the historical masters of the world; conformed to the facts of reality. As Horkheimer states, even the most sincere believers today have no illusions that the purpose of their religion is just such pragmatism, such realism, such pattern maintenance and conformity with what is.

For Horkheimer (1978a) this conformity and thinness, this "synthetic, artificial, manipulatory, and trashy" (p. 123) characteristic of world religions is why the form of religion has to change. Again, for Horkheimer, there is a dialectical tension between the form and content of reality that provides its historical dynamic and revolutionary potential. For Horkheimer's critical theory of religion, the anachronistic form of religion needs to be determinately negated in order to allow the relevant revolutionary, emancipatory, and enlightening content of religion to be expressed in a new secular form of hope and motivation for the creation of a new future society. Horkheimer (1978a) expressed the dialectic nature of his critique of religion by saying that such religious conformity to and manipulation of the nations "was least true for the poorest and most naive believers, and perhaps for Jesus of Nazareth" (p. 123). As Horkheimer (1978a) also stated twenty years earlier, the liberating, historically empowering, critical hope of eternity, for the totally Other, is to be found amongst this world's "wretched in their despair" (p. 111). Giving a new, relevant and secular voice to the religion of the poorest is the purpose of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion.

### Good and Bad Religion

In 1957-1958, Horkheimer characterized this opposition between the social function of a civil, bourgeois religion and that of the critical theory as that between good and bad religion. For Horkheimer (1978a), good religion is the spiritual force



and motivation that “sustains ... the impulse for change, the desire that the [mythical] spell be broken, that things take the right turn. We have religion where life down to its every gesture is marked by this resolve” (p. 163). Good religion, for Horkheimer, is a negative, critical religion that seeks the determinate negation of the mythic rationalization of injustice, inhumanity, and horror of society and history while looking to help create a more rational, freer, and humane future society. The critical theory is the heir and secular, materialistic continuance of such good religion.

Expressing the same critique he voiced concerning Theodor Haecker’s conception of religion, Horkheimer (1978a) describes bad religion as being motivated by the same desire for change as good religion but in a perverted, abstract form. As he states, through such affirmative and prophetic abstraction bad religion “gilds reality in the very act of castigating it” (p. 163). Bad religion is the lie that there is some providential reason, meaning, and thus justification for the evil suffering of humanity and nature, and horror of society and history. In reference to the crucifixion death of Jesus of Nazareth, Horkheimer (1978a) states: “The lie does not need the cross, it already lives in the ontological concept of transcendence” (p. 163). For the truth of the cross is found in its resistance to the evil and horror of society and history in the hope of a better, more reconciled future. This is the purpose of good religion.

### Church Betrayal

It is for this reason that Horkheimer (1974j) says the church in the person of the Church Fathers perverted the actions and the story of Jesus of Nazareth. They made Jesus into a consolation for evil in the world; one that gilds the injustice of the world rather than one who identified himself with those that suffer in this world from its injustice and sought its end. As Horkheimer states, this distortion of Jesus is the worst

thing that has ever happened to a thought, for Jesus lived against his contemporary representatives and died because of their conformity to the horror of the world. This is the result of bad religion!

As an example of this betrayal of Jesus, the church in the fourth century A.D. finally accepted soldiers -- representatives of those who crucified Jesus at the order of the Empire, representatives whose task it was and continues to be the maintenance and furtherance of the existing domination in the world -- into the Body of Christ. The church however has furthered its perversion beyond that of the early church as it now serves to bless the weapons as well as the opposing armies in the name of Christ, e.g., army chaplains blessing both Germans and French soldiers in the name of the Triune God before they bayoneted each other in the fields, forests, and trenches of Europe in W.W.I; the blessing of the Atom bomb before it was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, etc.

However, Horkheimer states that if such a distortion of Jesus -- the creation of a religion that calls itself by the title of Christ, which moved from imitating Jesus' actions to focusing in adoration on his person -- had not occurred, Jesus would not be remembered at all. The church at least, for all its betrayal and apostasy, keeps the story of Jesus alive and has done so for almost two thousand years. This however must not be understood as Horkheimer's agreement with the betrayal of Jesus of Nazareth that the church has done throughout the centuries. Rather, in historical, dialectical terms, it illustrates the need of the church's determinate negation, that salvages its emancipatory content by jettisoning its old religious form. The emancipatory religious content can thereby migrate into a new, secular, critical form which is more appropriate and relevant to the contemporary socio-historical situation. This is the purpose of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion.

Without the historical church, Jesus would have been correct: his kingdom would not be of this world. It would remain, if at all, as an abstraction, a religious ideal, which it has been turned into by the contemporary church. Yet, in the form of gospel stories of Jesus' revolutionary praxis and the call for the faithful to mimic his actions by "picking up the cross," this religious institution contains the seeds of the concrete socio-political struggle for the liberation of humanity and nature from the exploitation and domination of the rich and powerful. Yet, as Horkheimer (1974j) states, no one dares say whether it would be better if the church never existed as a social institution due to this emancipatory content that the church contains.

#### "Damaged Life"

In the early 1960's, Horkheimer gave explicit expression to the influence of Schopenhauer in the development of his critical theory of religion. Echoing a statement from the sub-title of Adorno's (1974) book Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life, Jürgen Habermas (1993a) states that Horkheimer's theoretical writings during this later part of his life were an expression of a "damaged life" (p. 133). His explanation of this phrase "damaged life" is based on Horkheimer's pessimism regarding the development of instrumental reason as the dominant form of human rationality that was and is contributing to the development of society toward a totally administered, cold, manipulated, rationalized society in which humanity is turned into automatons. According to Habermas, Horkheimer turned to Schopenhauer in his later years -- particularly his philosophy of religion -- as he sought to overcome the aporia between the historical development of the irrationality and tragedy of contemporary society toward a gigantic administered and dominated collectivity in which all traces of individuality disappear and the longing for a reconciled future society as well as for the totally Other.

Although Horkheimer's struggle between the eternal nature of suffering and the human struggle and longing for its end is more pronounced in his later writings, as has been illustrated in this dissertation, the philosophy of Schopenhauer was a fundamental element of Horkheimer's theory of religion from the very beginning. Axel Honneth (1987), a third generation critical theorist, is more correct in saying that Horkheimer's Schopenhaurian pessimism regarding human history reaches back to his earliest phase of theoretical development (p. 358) - to his adolescent novels. However, according to Honneth, Horkheimer set aside the pessimism of Schopenhauer for the revolutionary optimism of Marx for a proletarian revolution in his writings of the 1930's. Thus, during this later stage of his theoretical development, Horkheimer returned to his roots in Schopenhauer. This study has not found that Horkheimer either turned or returned to Schopenhauer's metaphysical pessimism in this later stage of his theory development. As a fully modern and enlightened individual -- thus, maybe in this one can speak of his damaged life, Horkheimer had given up all delusions about the goodness of the world and its history. The Schopenhaurian pessimism concerning the ever-present horror of this world was a fundamental element of Horkheimer's theory since his experience of World War I. As Horkheimer (1972j) stated in 1968, metaphysical pessimism is always an implicit element of any authentic materialist theory (p. ix). Even in his writings of the 1930's, contra Honneth, this pessimism was a dynamic force in his writings concerning the historical possibility of creating a happier and more reconciled society at that moment. Such reform or revolution of the antagonistic capitalist society was incumbent on every human being, particularly the enlightened. In this world, that which is good and worthy of humanity is involved in the struggle for such a reconciled, compassionate, and happy future society. The only other option is to fall back into the natural and social horror of rebarbarization.

### First Encounter

Horkheimer (1970) first encountered the philosophy of Schopenhauer when he was eighteen years old in 1913 through his friend Friedrich Pollock (p. 15). It was only after his study of Schopenhauer's metaphysical pessimism that he studied the more optimistic, dialectical philosophies of Hegel and Marx, from which he derived the goal of a better future society. Yet, as Horkheimer (1972j) states, this encounter with Hegel and Marx never destroyed his sense of Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy that remained implicit if not explicit throughout the development of his critical theory of religion (p. ix).

### Teacher for Modernity

According to Horkheimer (1974c) not Hegel and not Marx but Schopenhauer is "the teacher for modern times" (p. 81). This is due to the fact that Schopenhauer did not sugar coat the reality of human history, which he saw as not being the idealistic Good but the blind will to life that is the foundation of all living beings. According to Horkheimer (1974c), Schopenhauer saw straight into the heart of history (p. 66). His was not a philosophy of consolation or the rationalization for suffering and injustice. His philosophy could not be used to legitimate the status quo. He did not posit a better future as hope for those suffering now, for nothing better was to come. All history, past, present, and future is an expression of the natural and indomitable will to life and happiness, which produces and rests on the horror of suffering and death.

Struggle for Enlightenment. According to Horkheimer (1974c), Schopenhauer's method of resistance to the eternal force of the will to life was the struggle for Enlightenment against all forms of superstition, ignorance, and the resulting domination

of the few over the many. For the enlightened person, there is no peace in life as long as there is hunger and misery on the earth (p. 75). Describing not only the moral nature of Schopenhauer's resistance to the metaphysical power and horror of the will to life but also the morality of his own critical theory of religion Horkheimer (1974c) states,

The more lucid thinking is, the more will it drive towards the abolition of misery; and yet any assurance that this is the ultimate meaning of existence, the end of pre-history, the beginning of reason is nothing but an endearing illusion. The heroic, even the holy life, without ideology, is the consequence of suffering and rejoicing with others, of sharing in the lives of others; perceptive people cannot stop fighting horror until they die (pp. 75-76).

Because everything is expressive of this imperialistic will to life, enlightened people -- secular and religious -- are to resist this power of domination in themselves and in history by seeking to be in selfless solidarity with others in the struggle for a better future society and world. Happiness is to be found in such compassionate self-denial for the well-being of the other. Thus, Horkheimer (1974c) states that such happiness is negation of the selfish will to life for that which is higher in the form of dialectical solidarity with others in and for their joy and happiness (p. 76).

Merciless Eternity. Herein lies the roots of the critical theory in Schopenhauer's philosophy. Schopenhauer stripped away the ideological wrappings that gilded history by exposing the negative, eternal force of the will to life that drives it. Dialectically, it is the will to life and the ultimate abandonment of humanity to its negativity that creates the will for solidarity among people as a way of resistance. There is nothing beyond what is that will provide any consolation for humanity. The will to life is combated only by those who, fully aware of its truth as curse, cannot tolerate it when there is a chance of stopping it. Thus, solidarity arises due to its opposite, i.e., oppression; hope from hopelessness. As Horkheimer (1974c) states, "to stand up for the temporal against merciless eternity is morality in Schopenhauer's sense" (p. 82). The merciless

structure of eternity, for Schopenhauer and for Horkheimer, can create the will to resist it. Knowledge of the contradiction between the existent possibilities of human knowledge and its technology and the existing situation in society and history can provide the stimulus and the will for resistance of the current state of the will to life through seeking such solidarity that guarantees personal autonomy and vice versa. According to Horkheimer, contemporary society and its history need Schopenhauer's philosophy, since it gives a precise expression to that socio-historical reality: a philosophy that confronts the utter abandonment and hopelessness of humanity and creation and thus reveal the possibility of real hope.

### Compassion

However, as he states in his Notes of 1950-1969, Horkheimer (1978a) determinately negated Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy into his critical theory of religion since Schopenhauer ultimately undermined his own philosophical insight into the nature of human resistance to the horrible nature of human life and history by denying the very compassion that he proclaimed was the foundation of all that is good (p. 188). According to Horkheimer (1978a), such compassion is the ability to "love happiness" (p. 188); the ability "to love love so deeply that it becomes [one's own]" (p. 208); to find one's own happiness in solidarity with the joy of others. According to Horkheimer, such compassion ultimately became hopeless for Schopenhauer since so few people possessed it. With this Schopenhauer cynically gave up the resistance to the oppressive will to life and became rather its ideologue. Due to this pessimistic undermining of himself, Horkheimer (1978a) calls Schopenhauer a "bourgeois" since his thought ultimately came from the "coldness and avarice" (p. 188) of the damaged, isolated, and lonely bourgeois subject.

Even in the face of the knowledge that “salvation from unending misery is ungraspable... [since] suffering is eternal” (p. 219), Horkheimer (1978a) did not fall into such a bourgeois pessimism due to his critical theory of religion as resistance, hope, and struggle for any amount of historical happiness which is motivated by the longing for the totally Other as truth. Even in the face of the historical development of modern society toward the destruction of human individuality in a totally mechanical, cybernetic, insidiously false, and dominated collectivity, Horkheimer did not give up the struggle for a more reconciled and happy future social totality. His critical theory of religion was a dynamic force in the struggle of resistance and hope.

### Urgency of the Struggle

Yet, in this struggle, Horkheimer gives expression to the enormous power of both sides of the battle, i.e., the power of nature and its aristocratic law that human society and history mimic to its own destruction and the power of resistance and hope for a more reconciled future society and for the totally Other. Due to the closing down of all alternatives to the development of the totally administered society, Horkheimer expresses the reality and the urgency of the battle for a reconciled society. The dialectical mixture of pessimism and hope, Schopenhauer and Hegel/Marx, science and religion is expressed in his materialistic critique of religion. According to Horkheimer (1978a), the work of the human mind, as an end not just as an instrumental means, in the struggle for human meaning, purpose, dignity, solidarity and autonomy, truth, is losing its meaning in contemporary society (p. 173). All things are being leveled according to the needs of maintenance and survival of the increasingly administered antagonistic society. Horkheimer (1972h) states that human individuality can hardly resist the “plastic surgery” (p. 273) performed on it by the dominant system and power structures of the ex-



isting society that creates all people according to one pattern. Yet, Horkheimer (1978a) looked to the religious longing and anticipation of a better life that in the past both relativized the fear of death and offered people a sense of happiness (pp. 173-174). Human pleasure and happiness are linked with the hope of their future concrete fulfillment. Religion is the expression of this longing for happiness and pleasure, that conversely is a damning critique of the present which does not allow or produce such happiness. Such religious longing for happiness is materialistically and historically rooted, for Horkheimer, in the natural, human instinct. Here Horkheimer implicitly expresses and furthers Marx's critique of religion as being a protest against real world conditions; of being the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the human spirit that longs for such happiness.

The same understanding holds for the concept of freedom. However, freedom becomes a translation of this longing into a practical, historical reality. Freedom became secularized as a political principle for the attainment of material needs in the early, liberal modern bourgeois epoch. These material needs, e.g., food, water, shelter, community/solidarity, work, recognition, love, and nation, which were projected into the future or into a beyond, still retained something of their spiritual aura as they were being attained by more and more people in the early phase of modernity. However, when such needs and their longing are ended by the developing consumer society and mass culture/propaganda, the mediation of such material needs through longing -- spirit and freedom -- is also ended. As Horkheimer states, human consciousness then is left with itself and its struggle with nature to maintain if not increase the satisfaction of such physical needs. Spirit, freedom, religious longing for the other than what is no longer have a purpose as a means toward an end, and thus they stop being even an end themselves. Horkheimer states that only if society would need these human, spiritual things

for its future survival would they as well as humanity ever have a future again. According to Horkheimer (1978a), such a human subjective and objective, individual and collective need and longing for that better, higher life is the truth of religion (pp. 177-179).

### The Question of Religion

Yet, according to Horkheimer, the question of religion can be addressed unambiguously only when it has been freed of its ideological function. Religion as a means of explanation, rationalization, and/or legitimation of life in society and history is ideology. Thus, the radical and absolute negation of religion by the philosophes of the Enlightenment, who understood religion as a means of explaining the unexplainable. Religion became increasingly useless the more scientific reason explained the functioning of the natural world. By its imitation of this natural world which is legitimated by the myth of positivism, the modern, enlightened, administered society no longer needs religion as society itself has become what the New Testament (Ephesians 4:6) says of God -- "all in all." It is only when its cybernetic system breaks down that contemporary society still returns to religion as an ideological form of integration and legitimation. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, "rather than quite consciously bringing to fruition the Enlightenment into which religion had passed, rather than transforming the illusory freedom of the revolution into justice, western society has given up" (p. 185). Western society has returned to the past form of religion as its attempt to save itself from its own annihilation. However, as Horkheimer states, such a return to religion does not mean a belief or trust in heaven, but the disbelief in a better future society other than what is.

### Need of Religion

As an expression of resistance to this enlightened absolute negation of religion, Horkheimer (1978a) asks the ever-present question of theodicy: “Isn’t religion always needed because the earth remains a place of horror even if society were as it ought to be?” (p. 181). This is a change in Horkheimer’s theory of religion that is due to the socio-historical development of modern society. In the 1930’s, when there was still a real chance of changing the society through revolution toward a more reconciled and just totality, Horkheimer thought religion and theology would wither away as the false consciousness that they are. Even the dying would not need the consolation of religion, since in an enlightened, reconciled, and just society, people -- particularly the poor -- would no longer have the fear of death since they knew their loved ones would be taken care of by the society. With contemporary society’s crowning of the aristocratic law of nature as history’s victor in the form of monopoly capitalism and its increasingly managed social totality, such a compassionate society is no longer a possibility. Religion in its true form, as the cry of human need, fear, and longing for compassion, happiness, and justice is still needed in the struggle with the continuing social theodicy of injustice, suffering, and death. The truth of religion, according to Horkheimer (1978a), is the dialectical transformation of oneself into something higher and better, “to want oneself in the other” (p. 185). This transformation, Western society has denied through its devaluation and reification of religion into a thing that can be, through the dominant market mentality, exchanged for something else.

### No God

Yet, Horkheimer (1978a) expresses the tremendous if not impossible odds of such a compassionate and reconciled future form of life in society. Those that seek to

make life happy for another, that through mutual devotion exalt the other and seek to make "life more beautiful against the dark background of reality live in a self-created world of appearance" (p. 182). This is so, for Horkheimer (1978a), because "there is no God" (p. 182) to hear, to remember, and thus to preserve such appearance. Both the good and the bad, the words of love and the screams of murder get washed away by the merciless progression of history. There is no God, no Other who transcends the dominating of reality of the world, and thus can overcome its oppression. Only if there was such a God, who could hear, remember and preserve human attempts of resistance against the oppressive status quo for the creation of a better world, would such resistance and action have truth against what is. Since there is no God, no absolute Other, resistance to what is is doomed to failure, according to Horkheimer.

Reminiscent of his discourse with Benjamin concerning the openness or closedness of history (Siebert, 1985, pp. 355-358), Horkheimer emphasizes the closedness of history, that what has happened in history cannot be reconciled or undone. The injustice, suffering, horror, and death experienced by people and by nature cannot be justified. It is only in such knowledge that the real and honest human desire for human autonomy in solidarity in a concrete, socio-historical joy and happiness can be fought for through resistance to what is in the hope of a better future, not only for oneself but for those that come after us. This is the dialectical nature of knowledge; that we have knowledge or awareness of something due to its opposite. This is the case of our awareness of life -- it is based on our awareness of death. Life seen in the light of death, gives things the value and perspective that they deserve. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, the current repression of death, old age, sickness, etc., that is systematically and structurally provided in modern society creates a perverted sense of life that focuses on work, the lust for commodities, a naive acceptance of what is, a lack of the

sense of horror at life's cruelty to nature and humanity, and the insane thirst for power and wealth that produces such terror (pp. 211-212). Life is truly experienced and valued only through the awareness of death.

### Harsh Reality

According to Horkheimer (1987a), the same dialectic of awareness of death as the curse that nothing endures in this world produces the value of each moment and day, each relationship and experience, as well as the feeling of "longing for the paradise" (p. 212) that the person will never enter. In the face of this harsh reality of life, however, Horkheimer states a love that diminishes due to the knowledge of the curse of life does not deserve the name of love. Yet, the love that resists this curse does so in vain. For Horkheimer as well as for the person who holds onto the dynamic dialectical tension between the highest human ideals and the socio-historical reality and who struggles to narrow the distance between them, this enlightened knowledge expresses the ultimate hopelessness of love and yet its urgent historical need as a force of resistance and hope.

Due to the victorious historical march and development of monopoly and state capitalism, positivism, an instrumental rationality that moves humanity toward the totally administered society, as well as the betrayal of the Jewish faith and hope in the Messiah through the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the making of "Jewry into a religion" (p. 221), Horkheimer (1978a) states that such hope for the Messiah and for justice on the earth is now completely gone. It belongs to the "backwoods" (p. 221), as does the notion of the realm of freedom. The Diaspora, i.e., the historic exile of the Jews from any sense of homeland in this world, as well as that of communists and socialists and critical theorists has no meaning any longer. As Hork-

heimer (1978a) states, those who still remain loyal and hopeful for the realm of freedom are the remnant of humanity and its future, just like those who hold on to the Talmud and the messianic hope (pp. 221-222). As Horkheimer states, the Jews that have remained Jews -- who have not given up their identity in compassion, resistance, and hope of the Messiah -- have identified with and represent those that suffer and are oppressed.

### Hope for Justice

For Horkheimer (1978a), to be Jewish means to “hope for justice at the end of the world” (p. 206). It is in this sense that Horkheimer (1974f) calls “Judaism , the religion I myself profess” (p. 150) -- which is negated, maintained, and furthered in the form of his critical theory of religion. To be Jewish according to Horkheimer means to be a representative of all people to whom injustice, suffering, oppression has occurred, as well as to represent the accusation of all people against such injustice. As it did during the time of the Judges (1 Samuel 8), by forming a state in order to become like all the other nations, Israel has resigned itself to the world as it is. For Horkheimer, this produces sadness due to the historical resistance and hope for something other that has been sacrificed through such a worldly victory. The same thing happened to Christianity, he says, through its victory under Constantine. As Horkheimer (1978a) states, “the good is good, not because it is victorious but because it resists victory” (p. 207). The true Jew, and thus the truly religious person as the critical theorist is an alien in a foreign land.

### Militant Atheists

Horkheimer (1978a) returns to the dialectical motif that “to the extent that

something other than what is can be expressed, it appears in its true negation” (p. 219). Theistic theology, even that of their friend and colleague Paul Tillich, who they considered a member of the Institute, has historically lost this notion of negation in its discussion of the Absolute and has become an ideological tool of the existing society. Thus, Horkheimer (1974d) asserts that the real intent and purpose of religion has survived the development of bourgeois society throughout all of its stages through “militant atheists” (p. 41) who were inspired by “the spirit of the Gospels” (p. 41). Through the radical work of the militant atheists, according to Horkheimer, the true, emancipatory meaning of religion was furthered and not denied. The earlier bourgeois atheism of the Enlightenment, e.g., the metaphysical materialism of Voltaire, Holbach, et al., was not a serious threat to positive Christianity nor to the developing bourgeois states since “it lacked a dialectical and idealistic -- or in reality, a utopian and messianic -- theory of history” (p. 41). The philosophes of the Enlightenment gave a materialistic account of the origins of religion in human suffering, but their solution to this creation of God and religion was not to critique or to determinately negate the causes of this human suffering in its economic and political form in bourgeois society but to return to nature and its idealized, mechanical laws. Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion is the contemporary embodiment of “good” religion’s longing for emancipation that has come to it through its historical process of determinate negation in the theory and praxis of the Jewish and Christian mystics, the Enlightenment, German Idealism, and the militant atheism of historical materialism. As Horkheimer (1974d) states,

the idea of a better world has not only been given shape in theological treatises, but often just as well in the so-called ‘nihilistic’ works -- the critique of political economy, the theory of Marx and Engels, psychoanalysis -- works that have been blacklisted, whether in the East or in the West, and provoked the wrath of the mighty as the inflammatory speeches of Christ did among his contemporaries. The opposition between theism and atheism has ceased to be actual (p. 48-49).

Theism is thereby to be determinately negated so that its truth content, which gives expression to human hope, dignity, and emancipation from oppression, fear, suffering, and death, can be furthered in a new, more relevant practical, socio-political form, i.e., the critical theory itself. Positivism, on the other hand, is the radical and abstract negation of theism and its truth content. Horkheimer's emphasis on religion and its truth content in this phase of capitalist society's development toward total administration and rationalization is thus not a defeatist retreat behind the historical development of modern society but a way of critically combating positivism's lack of transcendence and hope, which locks humanity in a stagnant society of domination and dehumanization. It is in this struggle with the positivistic closing down of all otherness and hope for the future that Horkheimer states, "without God one will try in vain to preserve absolute meaning" (p. 47). With Christian theology sacrificing the transcendent, emancipatory truth of the very doctrine that it represents, Horkheimer (1974d) completed the above thought by saying, "the death of God is also the death of eternal truth" (p. 48).

In the late 1960's, the meaning of the concepts of theism and atheism had become reversed for Horkheimer. The truth of theism -- the transcendent thought and hope of a totally Other and the desire for better and more just world -- has been expressed in modern society more by those atheistic forces that resist and deny the ideological theism that justifies an unjust society. According to Horkheimer (1974d), those who profess themselves to be or who are called atheists by the contemporary society tend to be the ones who identify themselves with the religious commandment to love one's neighbor as well as all creation (p. 49). As Horkheimer (1978d) states, this selflessness as resistance for the sake of the other has its roots in the Judeo-Christian conception of the unity of truth, love, and justice, which goes back to the teachings of



the Messiah (p. 50). This prophetic and messianic/theistic teaching flies in the face of an instrumental, positivistic rationality which emphasizes survival of the self at all costs. Thus, as Horkheimer states, the reflective thinkers can see the connection between the tradition of theism and the negation of the aristocratic law of self-preservation -- the established and horrific way of life in an antagonistic society based on a monopoly capitalistic mode of production and the increasingly rationalized social totality that is being created. Here, again, is the reason for his emphasis on religion in these later years: it is a form of resistance and hope against the historical current of domination. This same re-evaluation of theistic concepts applies to the notion of the soul, which contradicts the understanding of humanity as a self-serving automaton in the contemporary antagonistic social totality. As Horkheimer (1978d) states, if the idea of God or the soul is to be kept alive today, doubt nourished by knowledge of the theological and philosophical traditions must also be kept alive (p. 62).

### True Theists

For Horkheimer, in a religiously legitimated antagonistic society, the real atheists are the ones -- religious or not -- who pledge allegiance to those who hold power, wealth, and prestige in a society that lives on the dehumanization, subjugation and domination of the masses. The true theists are the ones who continue to resist the advancement of this society by holding on to the spiritual, humanistic, and emancipatory element of the civilization to which they still belong. According to Horkheimer (1978d), true theism is "the thought of something other than the world, something over which the fixed rules of nature, the perennial source of doom, have no dominion" (p. 50). As Horkheimer (1978d) states, the ideas and theory that can balance this one-sided and thus oppressive development of the collective over the individual is

“inseparable from [Judeo-Christian] theology” (p. 157), since it is from this religious tradition that the unconditional value and autonomy of the individual was first proclaimed. In his chapter on “Principle of Subjectivity,” Siebert (1979a) gives expression to Horkheimer’s secularized development of this Christian principle of subjective freedom derived from the philosophy of Hegel (p. 33-44). Such ideas however are quickly fading due to the advance of the monopoly capitalist mode of production which levels and makes everything into a means, the development of nationalism as the protector of the monopolies and as a false collective for the masses, as well as the development of a mass culture that offers no transcendence, no hope but merely reflects that same deadly, mechanical and antagonistic process. As Horkheimer (1978d) states, the culture based on the uniqueness of the individual is over, as it is being “unlearned” (p. 158) and forgotten. In the face of this social development, there is the desperate need of memory -- not in a romantic, reactionary, or nostalgic form -- as a way of keeping the past hopes, struggles, and accomplishments for human emancipation alive in a new form as the struggle continues. This is the purpose of Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion.

#### Focus on the Negative

From the late 1960’s to the time of his death in 1973, questions were asked of Horkheimer concerning the relationship between his critical theory of religion and theology or faith. Adhering to the Jewish prohibition in the Decalogue of naming or making an image of God and Kant’s philosophical rejection of human reason knowing the noumenal Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion cannot identify the Absolute, the Good. According to Horkheimer (1978d) that which is evil primarily in the social sphere can be identified but the good cannot (p. 236). The concept of evil also implies by its very nature its opposite and the action one could take to resist or counteract the

negative. The critical analysis of society focuses on the negative. The negation of the negative is the only quality of the good that can be said. This, as Horkheimer states, is the teaching of the critical theory: to define the good by the evil that is to be negated. Through such a determinately negative dialectical method, Horkheimer seeks to avoid the dialectics of Enlightenment process inherent in the naming of anything as good.

It is in this that "the role of faith becomes central" (p. 239) for Horkheimer's (1978d) dialectical theory of religion. Horkheimer's notion of faith expressed in the concept of the unknown and ineffable Absolute however is not expressed as a positive dogma that is to be believed but as a longing that unites all people in the hope that the horror of history will not be the ultimate end of its innocent victims. The longing for this totally Other than what is is the materialistic determinate negation of the Jewish and Christian, prophetic and messianic teaching of the coming reign of God into hope and longing and struggle for a better, more reconciled and just future society.

As Horkheimer (1985c) stated in a 1971 interview with Claus Grossner, this longing for the totally Other than the world that is a socially and historically conditioned representation -- and thus changeable -- is the right granted to theology in Horkheimer's critical theory of religion (p. 419). Horkheimer does not agree with Kant that everyone possesses within them the universal categorical imperative. Humanity is not so abstractly or metaphysically identified or united. Following Schopenhauer, moral human action is expressed as compassion for others, that the injustice and horror of undeserved historical fate will not be the ultimate last word. Such compassion and ethics is expressive of the unsatisfiable longing for the totally Other. As Horkheimer states, the critical theory rests on the thought that the Absolute cannot be made into an object and that the theological assertion of the existence of God should be transformed into the longing that such a God exists who will not allow injustice to ultimately triumph over

**the innocent victims of society and history.**

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

#### The Critical Theory of Religion and the Church Today

... the question always arises whether the founder of Christianity, were he to come again, could ever have found a refuge in the Church since its earliest days. In his own day he thought little of prevailing rules and customs; he acted contrary to accepted ways; he was much closer to the heretic than to the orthodox. Would he not have recognized himself in the atheist at the stake rather than in the executioner and judge or in the priest who blessed the whole business (Horkheimer, 1974f, p. 156)?

#### The Angel of History

On the mantle in our living room, there is a small picture of an angel painted in 1920 by the artist Paul Klee called "Angelus Novus." Walter Benjamin purchased this painting in 1921, which according to Gershom Scholem (1988) he considered to be "his most important possession" (p. 62). The Museum of Israel in Jerusalem sent me a small copy this picture when I asked them about the original that was given to the museum by Scholem. Scholem inherited this picture after Benjamin's suicide at Portbou, Spain in 1940 as he was fleeing Nazi Germany. The significance of this angel is that it represented for Benjamin (1968) the "angel of history" (p. 257) of which he wrote in his Theses on the Philosophy of History. This angel represents the weakness of the good in the face of the historical force of modernity that is moving into the eternal night. Benjamin describes the appearance of the angel as one who wants to avoid what he sees but is mesmerized by it nevertheless. The angel's eyes are open in amazement, with its mouth open and wings spread wide. Benjamin says that the angel is facing the

past where it sees one horror after another piling up at its feet. The angel wants to stay, awaken the dead produced by this historical horror and reconcile all that has been shattered. However, a violent wind storm has gotten caught in the angel's wings so that it cannot close them any longer. This storm continues to force the angel into the future to which its back is turned. The angel is unable to do anything about the increasing historical destruction that rises up to the heavens. Benjamin (1968) states that "this storm is what we call progress" (p. 258). It is this dynamic social and historical reality of growing darkness, destruction, and horror for humanity that Benjamin's "angel" represents. Horkheimer and Adorno called this historical process the dialectics of Enlightenment that creates both human wisdom and emancipation as well as increased human ignorance and enslavement to new forms of social mythology and domination. Horkheimer (1993h) stated that it is this "impetuous progressive stream" (p. 73) of history toward human destruction that his critical theory of religion as well as his entire critical theory of society seeks to resist in the struggle for a better and happier future society in the power of human longing for a totally unknown Other than this world, who will bring an end to this progress of history.

### Social Progress

Horkheimer (1974f) expressed this struggle for a rational, human future in an article from 1965 entitled "Threats to Freedom." For Horkheimer, reason or rationality meant the dialectical balance and dynamics between the individual and the collective; between individual autonomy and social solidarity. Modern society has become irrational through the destruction of this dialectical dynamic between the individual and the collective by the one-sided development of an instrumental, strategic rationality that levels all aspects of human individuality into a false collectivity that is under the domina-

tion of those that control the economic means of social production. Thus, Horkheimer (1974f) asked people not to consider him “an enemy of the better” (p. 137), which meant someone who condemns the progress of modern society in a romantic or reactionary way. However, in focusing on the contemporary threat to freedom embodied in the cybernetic development of modern society toward total administration and class domination, the negativity of contemporary society in comparison to the past and to what is historically possible in the immediate future has to be emphasized. As has been stated, Horkheimer’s is not an abstract, either-or negativity but a determinate or specific negativity of all concepts, actions, systems, and structures that prevent the further historical realization of humanity’s potential for autonomy and solidarity given the existing scientific and technological abilities of the society. Horkheimer does not suggest that humanity has not progressed in its material well being, made possible by the development of an instrumental rationality, science, and technology. However, due to the one-sided development of this form of rationality, which has dialectically produced the techniques and instruments of domination and terror, Horkheimer emphasizes the human, spiritual, cultural cost of such irrational social progress. As Horkheimer (1974f) states,

if social progress is really to live up to its name, it must preserve what was good in the past. To suppress the thought of the cost a culture pays for its new miracles and to adopt an official optimism is to be enslaved to an evil status quo (p. 138).

Such a dialectical insight into the human cost of the development of modern society is the task of Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion.

### Dangerous Memory

For the past 22 years, as an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ I have fought the same battle as Horkheimer and others against this historical and social

wind of “progress” that is causing people to lose their individuality, their creativity, their imagination, their hope, their souls. During these years I have served four churches in Michigan as a pastor and teacher of what Metz (1980) calls the essential “dangerous memory of the freedom of Jesus Christ” (pp. 88-99). As Metz (1980) states, the fundamental task of the church and its “political” theology today is to speak “about God by making the connection between the Christian message and the modern world visible and expressing the Christian tradition in this world as a dangerous memory” (p. 89). This dangerous memory is of one who resisted the religious, political, and social dehumanization of people in his time in the name of the common faith of a people based on the Law and the prophets. This is the memory of an individual who radicalized the Law and the prophets by embodying their truth content that is concerned with human freedom and shalom in his teaching and social action on behalf of and along with the poor, exploited, oppressed, socially disenfranchised, and dying. This is the dangerous memory of a radical individual that condemned to hell the socially successful, i.e., the rich and powerful and their social system that crushed the hopes and lives of the unsuccessful, in the eschatological hope of the coming of God’s new economic and political reign, wherein the lives of history’s innocent victims will be redeemed. This is the dangerous memory of Jesus’ brutal rejection and crucifixion death, which by Roman law was the punishment for run away slaves - those that threaten the economic security of the masters of the status quo, and seditionists - those that threaten the economic and political powers that maintains the exploitive system of the status quo.

### Dangerous for Whom?

As Horkheimer (1978a) stated already in the late 1920’s, in contemporary soci-



ety such an announcement of the death of Jesus would hardly cause a ripple of concern or interest anymore since such deaths have become common place and people have become hardened by their frequency (p. 19). This dangerous memory of the scriptures is thus a proclamation of the divine negation of Jesus' death; the divine determinate negation of the aristocratic law of nature which produces human fear, selfishness, cruelty, exploitation, oppression, and hatred of the other as the cause of such death of the innocent and the hope of resurrection in the Last Judgment and coming of God's new Reign. Such a memory is dangerous to a society that has lost the distinction and tension between its great philosophic ideals and the reality of the existing society. Such a memory is dangerous to a social totality that has lost its vision of a better, more humane, reconciled and thus just and peaceful future society of individual autonomy in solidarity and compassion with others. Such a memory is dangerous to those that dominate the social totality according to their own interests and power since it speaks of something new and Other breaking into their controlled world from both the outside and from within. Such a memory either has to be expunged from peoples' mind and experience or co-opted to become a legitimating part of the existing antagonistic social totality.

This dangerous memory of Jesus has been the content of my critical, political theology that I have struggled to teach and to put into social praxis throughout my ministry. However, this memory -- which is the common ground or "rock" upon which the church's identity and socio-historical relevance is based -- is a difficult if not foreign recollection for the very body -- the church -- that is to witness to and continue to make that dangerous memory a historical reality in the social struggle for humanity and its well-being. The radically and totally Other of religion, which is its threat to an antagonistic class society, has become integrated into the existing social totality. The liberat-

ing threat or danger of religion to a society based on the exploitation of nature and human resources -- as people are called in this society -- has been systematically weakened if not destroyed by the historical progression of society toward its total administration. Due to the neo-conservative political swing in the United States, which has cut social programs for the poor such as food stamps and changed social welfare into the forced labor of "workfare" (Katz, 1989; Wilson, 1987), religion's function in this society of providing charity and consolation to the poor has been renewed. Humanity's religious cry of distress, fear, suffering, social indictment, and hope for an Other that is contained in the dangerous memory of Jesus as the Christ is not the same as charity given to the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the voiceless, etc., by the social or ecclesiastical status quo. The need of such charity is an indictment not only of the society that produces such need but even more harshly of the church which restricts its social witness of the dangerous Christ to such patch-work reform that does not address the systematic and structural, material causes of such human misery.

With the clarity of understanding and insight that suffering produces, the poor themselves see through this social and ecclesiastical charade of such love of neighbor in the form of charity. In an conversation with Jonathan Kozol (1995) concerning such charity given the poor around Christmas time, "Mrs. Washington" states,

"Come on, Jonathan! They do this once a year. What's goin' to happen on December 26? Who is this charity for? In a way, it's for themselves so they won't feel ashamed goin' to church to pray on Christmas Eve. Maybe they think this way they won't end up in hell." I ask if she believes in heaven and hell. "We have our hell right here on earth. They'll get theirs after their last breath" (p. 44).

Such charity in the name of Christ that is not part of the larger fight to end the hell of the poor here on earth is a sacrilege and has nothing to do with the life of Christ. Such charity is bad religion.

### False Consolation

During a seminar in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, in 1985 where I presented a paper on the theodicy issue and the church's responsibility to address it honestly, the status quo, religious ideology of domination was expressed to me in a critique by a Canadian Mennonite theologian. In response to my emphasis on the dangerous memory of Jesus actions for the sake of a better future in preparation for the hoped for coming of God's kingdom, he said that I was disturbing the members of my congregation, causing them to be filled with unnecessary doubts about their faith in God. According to his critique, people are religious in order to be consoled and to set aside the harsh reality of everyday life, not to be reminded of it. In Adorno's and Habermas' terms, this expresses the "damaged life" of the church due to the victory of the powerful winds of social instrumental and strategic "progress." Through my experience as a pastor of the church, this theologian is quite correct in saying that the vast majority of people who belong to or attend a church do so to escape the harshness of the society and to receive a sense of consolation. However, such avoidance of the causes of people's misery provides a false consolation that ultimately leaves people where they are as victims of the society. Horkheimer is correct that the church cannot offer any consolation for the horror of this society or the world. The church however can be both the mystical and political Body of Christ that is actively in solidarity with the innocent victims of this society and world in the socio-political struggle to end as best they can the suffering of people for which they need consolation.

To use an example of Horkheimer (1969), this conformed, consoling, bourgeois conception of the church as a social institution in the contemporary antagonistic social totality is the image of a snail's horn (p. 257). Through its horn the snail senses and experiences its environment. When it experiences resistance to its movement, the

horn retreats back into its shell until it emerges more cautiously later. This is the damagedness of the church as a social institution as its “horn” of creativity, compassion, hope, and resistance has met with destructive opposition from society for centuries. As Horkheimer states, such perpetual opposition produces calluses and scars on the probing horn of the church to the point that it gives up its prophetic and messianic identity and purpose as well as all hope for what is other than the status quo.

### Betrayal

Horkheimer (1974d) gave voice to the church’s betrayal of its founder, “the divine delinquent” (p. 35), throughout his writings on religion. Religion in general, but Christianity in particular, is singled out by Horkheimer for its resignation to the various structures of social domination and human oppression throughout history. In such resignation and conformity to the social status quo lies Christianity’s betrayal not only of its founder but of those for whom he fought and died: those who suffer from, are exploited by, and who live and die in misery due to the reification and oppression of the existing economic mode of production and the society that it produces.

According to Horkheimer (1974a), the justification of this betrayal of the prophetic and messianic socio-political praxis of creating a better future society and the hope in the totally Other has been the function of any type of systematic theology (p. 63). As he states, organized Christianity’s betrayal of Jesus’ call was sealed in its pact with worldly wisdom at the Council of Nicea, where the concern focused not on Jesus’ key of knowledge for the kingdom of God and the conversion of life needed to prepare the world for its coming through love and compassion for the neighbor but on the theological/Christological doctrine of the mystical nature of Christ. As Horkheimer (1974a) states, through its increasing ascendancy to power in the world since the time

of Constantine, the history of Christianity revealed the church's "secret and indomitable hatred for that attitude of mind for which its founder had earlier been put to death" (p. 35). Horkheimer states that it is because of this hatred of Jesus' teaching and of the historical subject for whom he fought and died that Jesus was divinized; made "*homoousios*" (p. 241) -- of equal nature with God, as Robert Grant (1970) states, and thus removed from the realm of society and the world. According to Horkheimer (1985b), "through the divinization of Jesus we can still feel the disgust and the resistance which his teaching encountered among all those who were not slaves" (p. 294). In order to counteract its failure to imitate the life of Jesus, the church invented the devil as "the compensation for the immaculate conception" (p. 294). The hatred of Jesus' teachings could now be unleashed against those who did not live according to the standards not of the Christ but of "Christian" society. However, these social reprobates were all too often the very ones that Jesus represented. The religion of the poor, the oppressed, and the innocent victims of the world and its hope for a better future social and eternal life had been changed into a religion of the rich, the powerful, the oppressors, the murderers.

### Persecution

In the first centuries of the Christian era, the followers of Jesus were periodically brutally persecuted in the Roman Empire because of the original intent of the religion to set at liberty all who were oppressed. This new religion was a religion of and for the "*anawim*," i.e., an Aramaic word meaning those who are materially poor as well as those who are poor in spirit (Bammel, 1968, p. 904; Luke 6:20; Matthew 5:3), who do not live for riches, power, prestige, "worldly" security but who live first to make historically real the prophetic and messianic promise of the coming of God's fu-

ture Reign and its righteousness in the world (Matthew 6:25-33). This hope of a future messianic Reign in the world that will not be oppressive but where all people will be free in solidarity with each other in a spirit of love and “*shalom*,” i.e. wholeness of body and spirit, as well as the promise that eternal life in heaven was open to all who live for this divine promise, gave meaning and purpose to the lives of the masses who suffer under the existing system of domination.

### Integration

However, with Christianity’s integration into the Roman empire as its official religion, it lost its sense of transcendence and hope of another future form of socio-political life as it conformed its message to the requirements for the preservation of the socially dominant and the status quo. According to Horkheimer (1974d), the hope of heaven and of a better future life in the world was replaced in Christian theology with the threat of hell and eternal damnation for those who do not conform to and obey the religious and political authorities (p. 36). For Horkheimer (1974d), the task of theology was and continues to be the legitimation of this historical betrayal of the radically emancipatory theory and praxis of the original message of Christ concerning the coming Reign of God for the sake of those who suffer and are oppressed to that of Christianity’s legitimation of the existing systems of domination of which it is a part. “Theology has always tried to reconcile the demands of the Gospel and of power” (p. 36). This critique, however, does not apply to the new political theology of Metz, Moltmann, Peukert, and Arens, nor to the critical, political theology of Siebert, or to the liberation theology of the third world church. These theologies unite both the idealistic and materialistic critique of the antagonistic contemporary society in their theory and praxis of Christianity toward the creation of a more reconciled future society.

### Prophetic and Messianic Mimesis

Throughout the centuries, the church in both its Catholic and Protestant forms has removed from its teaching the danger that the prophets and the Messiah might have caused society so that the masses would not be tempted to imitate the radicality of their love, hope for the totally Other God, and desire for justice in solidarity with the socially disenfranchised. According to Horkheimer (1978a), such mimesis of Jesus as the Messiah is “the core of Christian teaching” (p. 208), by which the life of the Christian is distinguished from life that imitates nature’s aristocratic law of conformity to what is for the purpose of survival at all costs. Mimesis of the Messiah is the motive and spirit for Christian ethics. Laws, dogma, restriction to facts are of secondary importance for such action. Such mimesis sets people free from the limitation to what is -- the myth of positivism -- as it seeks what is possible from the facts of the present with an eye toward a better future. Due to its capitulation to the victors of history and the dominant of society since the time of Constantine, the church and its theology have given up the emancipatory power of the negative, which can break the mythic spell of domination. As Horkheimer (1974a) states, “when a doctrine hypostatizes an isolated principle that excludes negation, it is paradoxically predisposing itself to conformism” (p. 87). The lack of negation in any theory, be it religious, philosophical, or scientific, implicitly if not explicitly identifies the Ideal, e.g., that which is good and true, with reality. There is then no hope and no transcendence but only conformity to what is socially and historically created. This sacrifice of its foundational prophetic and messianic dialectical negativity of society which thereby constantly pushes toward a better, more humane, just, free, happy, and reconciled future society is what Horkheimer (1978a) calls the “weakness of theology” (p. 219).

This “weakness” is the ambiguity of religion itself, whose content in its Judeo-Christian form expresses both a revolutionary indictment of the existing society in the empowering hope for a better future society as well as the longing for absolute justice of the totally Other God, as well as a conservative if not reactionary sanctification of the existing social totality and its system of social domination. It is due to this ambiguity that Horkheimer seeks the determinate negation of the historical form of religion, i.e., its positive social form of institutional structure, dogmas, rituals, the role of priests and ministers, religious language, etc., which have become obsolete in the historical struggle for human emancipation so as to allow that religious prophetic and messianic content that is still relevant in the existing socio-historical context to migrate into a new secular form. As has been stated throughout this paper, this new secular form of the emancipatory and thus negative content of religion is Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion, which does not thereby become a new religion itself. According to Horkheimer (1978a), the critical theory of religion has no dogmas or complicated ideas, e.g., the Trinity (p. 239). The critical theory also has no confession of faith. As Horkheimer (1985c) states, “the critical theory rests on the thought that the Absolute, that is God, cannot be made into an object” (p. 434).

The critical theory holds on to the thought that this world is not identical with the Absolute. For Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion, there is a tension between the Absolute and the world, the Infinite and the finite which is not too quickly or artificially reconciled as Horkheimer (1969) states happens in Christianity with the notion of the “crucified God” (p. 177; p. 114). Horkheimer’s critical theory of religion expresses the Jewish notion of the radical otherness of God from the world. Thus, in its analysis of society the critical theory focuses on the negative in society. The negation of this negation is the only quality of the good that can be identified. The teaching of



the critical theory is that the good is defined by the evil that is to be negated, and that which is evil is knowable as anything that needlessly oppresses, exploits, enslaves, deceives, alienates, or causes suffering and death to humanity. In a post-religious, post-metaphysical, positivistic society that is developing toward its fulfillment in a hermetically sealed, totally administered social totality, Horkheimer's entire critical theory becomes the heir of the critical, negative, emancipatory content of religion in the historical struggle for a better, more enlightened, just, and reconciled future society, in the hope and longing for a totally Other who will not allow those who grind humanity's life into the dirt to ultimately be victorious over their innocent victims.

### Materialistic Roots

Horkheimer's critical theory of religion redirects humanity's cry's of misery and hopes for happiness and justice back to the economic mode of the social totality's production and reproduction process which, along with nature that it imitates, produces the religious cry of terror and indictment and longing for the totally Other than what is in the first place. It is this analysis and critique of the concrete, antagonistic mode of social life production of capitalism that religion in general and Christianity in particular must make its own in order for it to again establish its identity and relevancy for human enlightenment and emancipation. The church has to return to its materialistic roots found in the human experience and expression of exploitation, alienation, devaluation, fear, misery, suffering, and death produced by an antagonistic social system that is dominated by the interests and power of those who control the means of production. For this to happen, however, the anachronistic form of religion, i.e., its liturgy, forms of worship, institutional character and organization, theology, form and content of educational concerns, involvement in society, etc., has to be determinately negated so as

to allow the emancipatory content of religion to become relevant through its migration into the secular language and contemporary struggles of people. Horkheimer's critical theory of religion is of utmost importance for such a critical and emancipatory migration of religion into the secular to take place.

### The Cross

The German political theologian Jürgen Moltmann (1974) states that "in Christianity the cross is the test of everything which deserves to be called Christian" (p. 7). According to Moltmann (1974), the cross and the cross alone is the standard by which all things are to be judged "since the cross refutes everything, and excludes the syncretistic elements in Christianity" (p. 7). Moltmann presents the cross of the crucified God as the fundamental solution to the crisis of Christianity's identity and relevance in the modern world. The cross of Jesus, however, cannot be only interpreted historically or theologically, for as Horkheimer has shown such theology falls victim to its own dialectics and is in danger of perverting the original horror and outrage of the cross into a mythic totem that serves to assuage the wounds of society's innocent victims as it legitimates their oppressors. For the church and Christianity to reclaim its revolutionary identity and relevance for humanity, the cross of Jesus needs to be understood materialistically as the real socio-historical instrument of terror, domination, and horrific death prepared by the masters of the social totality for the masses if they try to break free from their exploitation. Jesus was crucified by the will of the socially dominant of his day, the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman empire, to whom he would not capitulate but continued to resist in the name of the poor and socially dispossessed -- which is equivalent to today's growing "underclass" (Wilson, 1987; Wilson, 1997; Katz, 1987, pp. 185-244; Gans, 1995) -- as well as in the unknown name of the to-

tally Other God. It is this materialistic cross that Jesus calls people to pick up if they want to be his followers (Mark 8:36-38), if they truly love their neighbor and seek to stop humanity's further degradation and misery. It is this materialistically understood cross that Horkheimer's critical theory of religion represents in a new, non-religious but secular form in the same spirit and hope of human emancipation that was Jesus'.

### Secular Heir

The materialistic critique of society and the longing for the totally Other of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion is the secular heir of the theory and praxis of prophetic Judaism and a Christianity expressive of the dangerous memory and hope of the freedom of Jesus as the Messiah for all people. Horkheimer's critical theory of religion is not a religious faith but a critical existential, sociological, and philosophical theory and praxis based on the dialectical method of determinate negation for sake of human enlightenment and emancipation in a future society of justice, compassion, happiness and solidarity. This dynamic critique of Horkheimer's entire critical theory is derived from the enlightened understanding of the struggle of history as well as from the religious longing for the unknown and un-named totally Other and the hope that the destruction of the innocent victims of society and history will not ultimately have the last word. It is this critical theory of religion and society that the contemporary church needs to reclaim as its own in a new, more relevant and socially critical form of revolutionary socio-political praxis. The religious cries of suffering and its indictment of society as well as its proclamation of hope and longing for the totally Other needs to be dialectically coupled with such critical materialist concepts as that of social exploitation, of surplus value and surplus labor, of the existing antagonistic capitalist mode of social production, of the differentiation and antagonism of classes based on ownership of the

means of production and the socially dominating power that accrues to such ownership. Through the church's longing not only for a heaven but its pursuit of human Enlightenment and emancipation, the socially produced and destructive divide between religion and science, faith and reason, meaning and fact, the ideal and the real can be determinately negated into a new, more relevant and dynamic form of social critique for the creation of a more just, reconciled, and happy future society in the eternal longing for the totally Other. It is into such a church as this, I think, that Jesus, if he were to return as the quote from Horkheimer suggested at beginning of this chapter, would not only find refuge from the horror of the world but would also find allies in the struggle for a better future society in the hope and longing for the totally Other.

#### Further Research Directions

This relationship between the critical theory of religion and the contemporary church and its theology needs to be explored in more depth. Particularly, the inverse, negative theology of Horkheimer's critical theory of religion needs to be critically unfolded as a corrective to the abstract, metaphysical, idealistic theological conceptions of the contemporary church that function as false consolation and legitimation of the unjust social status quo. It is this study to which I plan to turn next. A fundamental element of this study is the development of the other forms of the critical theory of religion contained in the work of Benjamin, Adorno, Fromm, and Habermas.

There are many specifically sociological issues that Horkheimer's critical theory of religion and its method of determinate negation raises. Developing Thomas Kuhn's (1970) notion of paradigms in the realm of social theory, social theorists such as George Ritzer (1990; 1992, Part III), et al. have been searching for a synthetic paradigm for social research; one that determinately negates the isolated categories of macro

and micro, subjective and objective, social facts and social construction paradigms into a new, social research model. Horkheimer's dynamic, dialectical and materialist notion of the totality of society, that is comprised of the economic mode of social life production, the human psyche, and the society's culture gives expression to just such a synthetic paradigm. This non-structural functionalist notion of the social totality needs to enter into the sociological discourse not only on paradigmatic issues but also on the topic of social problems. The notion of the totality of society coupled with the dialectical methodology of determinate negation could provide a different, more critical understanding of the various issues and give insight to their possible resolution in the struggle for a better future.

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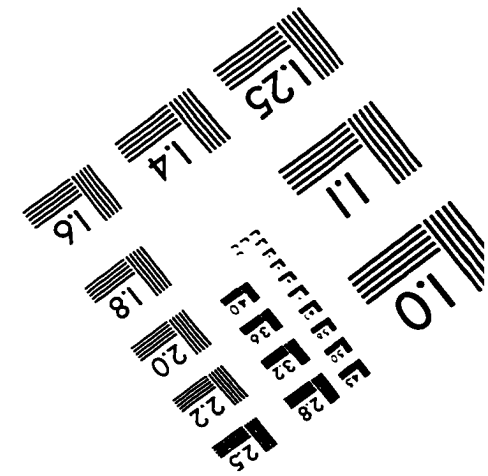
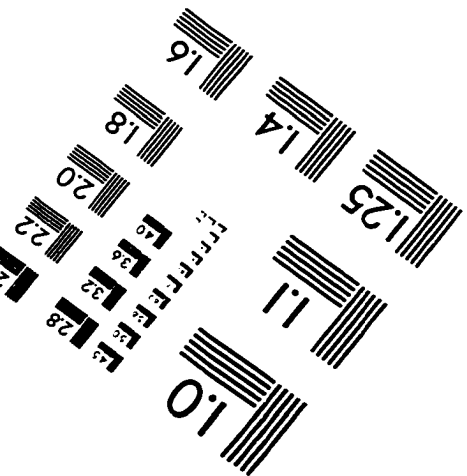
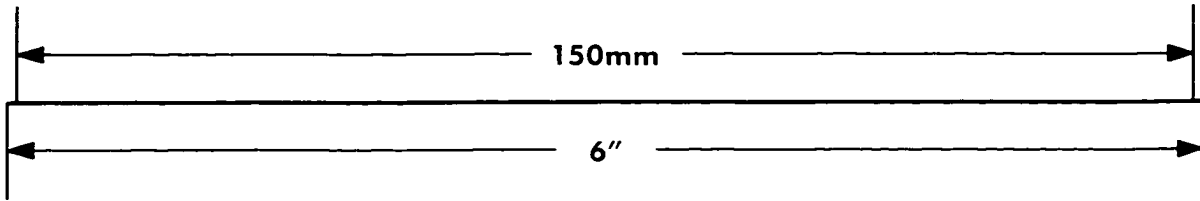
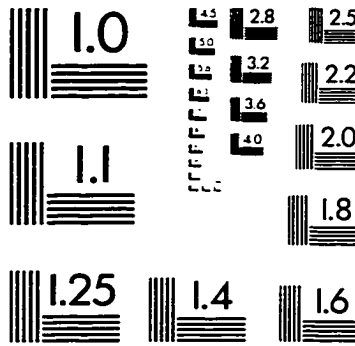
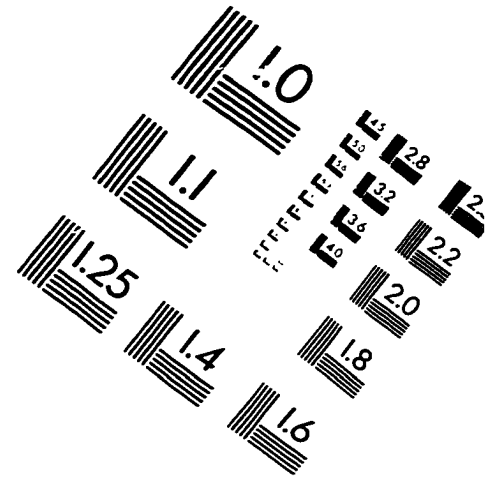
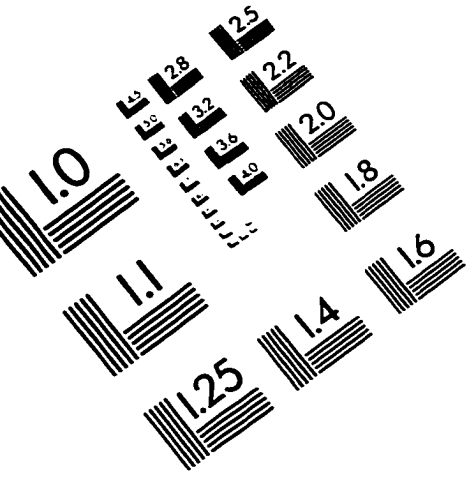
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