Critical Theory Today: Revisiting the Classics

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The critical theory of society of the Frankfurt School continues to excite interest and controversy. The critical theorists have deeply influenced contemporary social theory, philosophy, communications theory and research, cultural theory, and other disciplines for six decades. The dream of a interdisciplinary social theory continues to animate the sociological imagination. In recent decades there have been many different attempts to articulate the connections between the economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions of contemporary society in the spirit of critical theory.

 Furthermore, the ideas, methods, and texts of the critical theorists have influenced the ways that many of us continue to view the interplay of theory, culture, and society. The metaphors of the critical theorists have provided global visions of contemporary societies, ranging from "the totally administered society," "one-dimensional society," to "legitimation crisis." Terms like "culture industries" describe the intersection of economics and culture that have informed many critical studies of mass culture and communication. Studies of the consumer society have been influenced by critical theory's analyses of needs, consumption, advertising, and consumer capitalism. The critical theorists critiques of positivism have engendered forms of qualitative social theory and their defenses of dialectical social theory have enlivened Hegelian and Marxian analyses of the contemporary moment.

 Critical theory has always produced its own theories and articulated and defended its positions in polemics with contemporary theory. During the present moment, the critical theorists have been among the most active critics of postmodern theory and the polemics between critical and postmodern theory have inspired much critical discussion and new syntheses drawing on both traditions. In this context, a return to the classics of critical theory should focus on the resources that its tradition continues to offer contemporary social theory, as well as the limitations that require going beyond the classical versions of critical theory. These concerns animate the following introduction to this collection of unpublished classics of critical theory and recent re-evaluations of its tradition published in this issue.

 I. Critical theory has had its ups and downs. Critical theory from the 1930s through the 1960s was arguably on the cutting edge of social theory.[1] The critical theorists were among the first to analyze the new configurations of state and economy in the social formations of state capitalism. They were among the first to see the importance of mass communications and culture in the constitution of advanced capitalist societies. The critical theorists developed some of the first critiques of the consumer society and saw the important role of needs, commodities, and consumption in the contemporary organization of society. They saw science and technology as forces and relations of production and as providing legitimating ideologies for contemporary capitalist societies. Critical theory distinguished itself through its critique of positivism, noting that the positivist sciences were instrumental in reproducing existing social relations and obstructing social change. Critical theory, by contrast, nurtured a critical approach to social

analysis that would detect existing social problems and promote social transformation.

Critical theorists also excelled in ideology critique and discerned the important role of ideology in integrating individuals into the existing social order. They developed the first left critiques of the mass society and provided early warnings concerning the decline of individuality and freedom and threats to democracy in the brave new world of consumer capitalism. The critical theorists analyzed the integration of the working class into advanced capitalist societies and suggested the need for new agents of social change. They analyzed contemporary forms of capitalist stabilization and social control, focusing on new modes of socialization that increased conformity and diminished individual autonomy and democratic participation.

Thus critical theory introduced themes that dominated social theory from the 1930s through the 1960s. By the early 1970s, most of the now classical theorists of the first generation of critical theory were dead, or were not producing important new ideas or approaches to social theory. Herbert Marcuse, to be sure, had influenced a generation of 60s radicals and introduced critical theory to the new generation of critical scholars and activists. J¸rgen Habermas, moreover, was adding new motifs to critical theory and a new generation in Germany, the United States, England, and elsewhere were producing new versions of critical theory and adding new content and methods to the tradition. Translations and secondary literature on the classics mushroomed and individuals throughout the world began studying and appropriating critical theory anew.

Yet as a social theory, by the 1980s, critical theory no longer seemed to be the cutting edge of radical social theory. The new French postmodern theories inspired by Baudrillard, Foucault, Lyotard, and others seemed to provide more vivid descriptions of the present configurations of culture and society (see Best and Kellner, 1991). To be sure, Habermas and his colleagues polemicized heartily against what they perceived as the irrationalism, cynicism, and nihilism of postmodern theory (Habermas, 1987), but critical theory began to look old-fashioned and somewhat obsolete in the new world of media, computers, fashion, cybernetics, post-avant garde art, and new technologies of the postmodern scene. But Foucault is now dead and Baudrillard, Lyotard, Derrida, and other postmodern theorists have yielded little in the way of substantive social theory. Moreover, the limitations of postmodern theory are becoming evident. Their avoidance of political economy seems peculiar during an era of frantic reorganization of the capitalist system on both the national and international scale. The postmodern notion of the "end of history," advanced by Baudrillard (1987) and U.S. State Department employee and neo-Hegelian Francis Fukyama (1992) seems odd in an era marked by such momentous historical events as the collapse of communism, the end of the Cold War, the Gulf war and Bush's fantasy of a "new world order," European integration accompanied by national disintegrations throughout the former communist world, and frequent historical surprises and novelties. The postmodern emphasis on fragments and microtheory and prohibition against macrotheory is perverse in the face of the new global restructuring and configurations just mentioned. The postmodern theory of micropolitics has been put in question by the dramatic macropolitics that have overthrown communism, by the Gulf war, and by nationalist explosions which are producing turmoil throughout the former communist world.

Postmodern microtheory and politics also fail to illuminate the confusing clash between premodern traditionalism, liberal democracy, and the intensification of media politics in highly

unpredictable and novel conjunctures from Eastern Europe to the Middle East. Postmodern microtheories cannot adequately explain the dynamics of the 1992 U.S. Presidential election, in which the Perot candidacy suggested the possibility of the end of the two-party system and the inauguration of a highly unstable configuration of new politics, mass riots and rebellions, and a crisis-ridden economy. Consequently, it is not clear that postmodern theory provides the theoretical and political resources to deal with the burning issues of the contemporary era. As the year 2000 approaches, we clearly need new social theories and politics. The times, they are a changin' and historical events are not following the scenarios of any specific social theories. We need new theories to make sense of the turbulence and confusing events of the contemporary era, and need to draw on the resources of the most advanced classical and contemporary social theory to produce new theories and politics for the present age.

It is my conviction that the critical theory of the Frankfurt School continues to provide theoretical and political resources to draw upon to create theories and politics adequate to the contemporary era, an era of unpheaval, unpredictability, utopian possibilities, authoritarian horrors, the resurgence of the radical right, and as yet unforeseen crises and openings for social transformation. The critical theorists of the 1930s found themselves in a similar complex socio-political conjuncture and revised the classical theories of Marx and Weber accordingly to provide new theoretical syntheses for their present moment. They filled in some of the missing parts of classical Marxism, developing theories of culture, society, psychology, and the state, lacking in the Marxian theory, while fleshing out the philosophical dimension of the Marxian theory. They also updated the Marxian theory and critique of monopoly state capitalism, analyzing the transition to the new stages of capitalism and fascism. They developed the Weberian themes of rationalization and the Nietzschen themes of the massification of society and decline of individuality to describe the dynamics of their social situation.

Critical theory remains of intense interest for the present conjuncture and provides crucial resources for a renewal of critical social theory and democratic politics in the current age precisely because, like the 1930s, our age is undergoing vast transformations, some of which are promising and some of which are threatening. Going back to the classics in critical theory is therefore not a matter of mere antiquarian pleasure, but of gaining methodological insight, theoretical illumination, and political inspiration to carry on the tasks of critical social theory in the present conjuncture.

II.Many of those now doing critical theory in the English-speaking world have found the heroic stage of the 1930s of particular relevance and importance. Martin Jay's ground breaking study focused on this period (1973), as did the important study of critical theory's research program, method, and metatheory by Helmut Dubiel (1985; orig. 1978). I too have argued that the 1930s program of developing an interdisciplinary social theory synthesizing philosophy and special sciences remains a compelling model for critical social theory today (Kellner, 1989). 1930s critical theory rooted their efforts in the Marxian critique of political economy and attempted to unite theory and practice (whether they actually succeeded in doing this is another story). Their attempts to develop an interdisciplinary social theory brought together the social sciences and philosophy to produce a theory of the present age and of the transition to a new stage of state and monopoly capitalism. Their dialectical methodology called for a synthesis of philosophy, the social sciences, and radical politics, attempting to articulate the interconnections between the

economy, state, society, culture and individual experiences. Dialectics for the critical theorists was the art of making connections and discerning contradictions which opened the space for thought and action in the oppressively closed totalitarian universes of fascism, Stalinism, and, as they saw it, the totally administered societies of consumer capitalism.

The work of the 1930s critical theorists was deeply historical and their investigations took the form of a development of a theory of the present age which depicted the transition to a new stage of capitalism and of fascism. They reconstructed the Marxian categories of reification, commodification, exchange, exploitation, and domination in order to analyze the dynamics of the contemporary era and to give these categories new social content. These "totalizing" categories were used to capture the dynamics of contemporary society and to describe the processes through which capitalist hegemony was established and the individual was dominated by her or his society. They practiced what they called "immanent critique," which compared society to its own norms. During an era when fascist, communist, and other totalitarian state forms were eroding human rights and individual freedom, destroying democracy, producing new hierarchies and atavistic ideologies, the classical Enlightenment ideals of freedom, equality, justice, and individualism could be used as norms of social critique. In an inhuman society, humanism possessed socially critical potential.

This strategy involved a critical appropriation of the ideals of the Enlightenment and liberalism that were used strategically to attack unenlightened and illiberal societies. Immanent critique presupposes that there are progressive ideals in the society and that individuals will respond critically and actively to attack on civil liberties, inequalities, oppression, threats to democracy, and other reactionary attacks on human freedom. In this context, immanent critique attempts to promote social criticism and change by utilizing the norms of the existing society. By the 1940s, however, Adorno and Horkheimer questioned this strategy and sought other strategies for social criticism.

During the 1940s, Horkheimer and Adorno, abandoned the earlier program of interdisciplinary social theory and immanent critique. Their collaborative text **Dialectic of Enlightenment** thus enacted a genuine turning-point within critical theory (1972; orig. 1947). Horkheimer and Adorno believed that reason -- previously the organon of philosophical critique -- had been instrumentalized and incorporated into the very structure of society. Thus reason was being used to strengthen rather than transform the system. Enlightenment had turned into its opposite and turned from being an instrument of liberation to domination. Enlightenment had always been infused with myth, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, and the project of dominating nature, of using reason to control and dominate the world, was being applied to humans in oppressive and monstrous ways. The Nazi rationalization of death in the concentration camps and the rationalization of war during World War II raised deep questions concerning the progressive force of reason and the efficacy of immanent critique in the light of such powerful social systems.

During the 1940s, the main focus of Horkheimer and Adorno's critical theory was developing a critique of science, technology, instrumental reason, and a theory of the administered society, shifting focus from critique of capitalism which was previously a major focus. On a methodological level, Horkheimer and Adorno's focus shifted to philosophy of history,

philosophical anthropology, and a philosophical critique of culture from efforts to develop a social theory rooted in a synthesis of philosophy and the social sciences. And while they continued their critiques of fascism and capitalism, they distanced themselves from the Marxian theory of history and critique of political economy, and tended to make the relations between humans and nature and the theme of the domination of nature the fulcrum of their analysis rather than, say, class struggle within the new stage of capitalism or the transition to socialism.

Their critical questioning of Marxism was induced in part by historical conditions such as the demise of the labor movement, the spread of fascism and war, and oppressive developments in the Soviet Union which made it difficult to envisage critical theory as part of a revolutionary movement, or to unproblematically call for socialist revolution. But the new developments of critical theory were also occasioned by the breaking up of the Institute's interdisciplinary group; this happened in part because Horkheimer was forced to go to California on account of his health where he was joined by Adorno who henceforth became his closest collaborator. In addition, many of the Institute inner circle and other colleagues joined the U.S. government as part of their struggle against fascism. At this time, Adorno and Horkheimer took over the development of critical theory and this stage is particularly marked by the imprint of Adorno's ideas and style of writing, which I address below.

Adorno and Horkheimer's work during this period is addressed to "critical intellectuals" and the pretense that they were writing for a temporarily defeated revolutionary movement is surrendered. Likewise, the attempt to integrate philosophy and the social sciences is replaced by more aggressive philosophical theorizing and speculation. Given that both Adorno and Horkheimer were trained as philosophers, and in the absence of the interdisciplinary research Institute, it is not surprising that critical theory would turn more philosophical and radicalize its critique of science and instrumental reason. This development was also conditioned by the instrumentalization of science and technology in the Nazi and other war machines and by Adorno's and Horkheimer's growing aversion to the sort of scientific philosophy and positivistic science dominant in the United States. Consequently, the critique of instrumental reason and the "dialectic of enlightenment" replaced the earlier Marxian emphasis on class struggle and critique of political economy with a focus on the primacy of the relation between humans and nature, in which Marxism, enlightenment rationality, science and technology, the culture industries, and the trends of development of both capitalist and socialist societies were interpreted under the rubric of the "dialectic of enlightenment."

Dialectic of Enlightenment seeks to discover "why humanity, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism" (1972: xi). Horkheimer and Adorno indicate that they were forced to abandon trust in the special sciences and to turn to critical philosophy because of the integration of science and scientific thought into the apparatus of the current systems of domination, fascist, communist, and capitalist. Yet since philosophy also has become implicated in the existing system of domination, it too must distance itself from traditional notions, become critical, and develop its own concepts and methods of inquiry, thought, and expression: "There is no longer any available form of linguistic expression which has not tended toward accommodation to dominant currents of thought; and what a devalued language does not do automatically is proficiently executed by societal mechanisms" (i.e. censorship, editing, the current system of education, publishing, the media, etc.) (1972: xii-xiii).

In retrospect, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is an extremely interesting text in that it provides the first critical questioning of modernity, Marxism, and the Enlightenment from within the traditional of critical social theory. It thus anticipates by some decades the postmodern critique of modernity and anticipates some of the features of later postmodern theory. Indeed, I see the text as standing between modern and postmodern theory, as continuing some of the problematic of modern theory while anticipating a new sort of postmodern theory. The text is subtitled "Philosophical Fragments," an important designation left out of the English translation and the text consists of a fragmentary collage of philosophical essays, literary-philosophical excurses, and notes and aphorisms. Horkheimer and Adorno combine philosophical analysis with social theory, cultural criticism, and experimental style and norm. The "Notes and Drafts" which conclude the book use Nietzsche-inspired aphorisms to illuminate the present age. Some aphorisms characterize what Horkheimer and Adorno see as the barbarism of the present, while others point to the standardization, rationalization, and conformity being produced by mass societies.

The experimental style, difficulty, and complexity of the text clearly shared the modernist project of producing a text which requires an actively engaged reader, and Horkheimer and Adorno make clear that their work is intended "to contribute to the health of the theoretical understanding" (1972: xiii). It is the author's conviction that "Enlightenment *must consider itself*, if men are not to be wholly betrayed" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972: xv). They also insisted that their task" is not the conservation of the past, but the redemption of the hopes of the past" (ibid). From this perspective, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can be read as an Enlightenment text seeking demystification, liberation, and social change that calls for the reconstruction of reason to preserve its critical import. While their theme is the "self-destruction of the Enlightenment," they also assume that "social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, xiii). In classic Enlightenment fashion, they affirm the "transcending quality" of thought and "its relation to truth" (ibid).

Yet *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can also be read as a deconstructive text that takes apart the Enlightenment, reason, social theory, positivism, and bourgeois concepts, which pursues Nietzschen motifs and which anticipates postmodern theory. The introduction to the text, cited above, privileges the first reading -- as do some passages in the text -- but the relentless critique of Enlightenment, the motif of the interweaving of reason and domination, and the critical distance from classical Marxism anticipate key features of postmodern theory. Furthermore, the complexity of the text, its difficulty to the point of willful obscurity, its failure to affirm clear positions, either theoretical or practical, and its dark vision put it in close relation with what Habermas called "the 'black' writers of the bourgeoisie" (1987: 106). These features also point it its affinities with certain versions of postmodern theory --especially, Nietzsche, Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault. Thus, it is ultimately undecidable as to whether Horkheimer and Adorno are affirming a reconstructed version of Enlightenment, or rejecting Enlightenment altogether for something else; one can offer either reading, or argue, as I would, that they are both producing a text that is between modern and postmodern theory and conceptualizing a society in transition. Several aspects of the text besides its fragmentary, open, and complex character point to its experimental qualities. Horkheimer and Adorno offer two philosophical excurses, one of which provides a reading of Homer's **Odyssey** and the other which interprets the connections between

the role of system in modern philosophy and Enlightenment projects of social transformation. Several interpreters have stressed the allegorical reading of Homer as demonstrating the entanglement of myth and Enlightenment, of juxtaposing the past with the present that highlights the "modern" features of antiquity and the "barbaric" features of the present (see Mills, 1987; Habermas, 1987; Geyer-Ryan and Lethen, 1987; and Kellner, 1989). The methodological point I wish to stress is that Horkheimer and Adorno here use the techniques of philosophical and literary interpretation to unfold the social truth contained in literary and philosophical texts. This move decenters the sort of analytic social theory that constituted the critical theory of the 1930s and marks a significant departure and growing mistrust of social sciences and theory.

In addition, the theses on anti-semitism also provide models of a multiperspectival social theory, inspired by Nietzsche's thought. In *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche writes: "There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be" (1967: 119). Thus, Nietzsche urges that one should learn "to employ a *variety* of perspectives in the service of knowledge" (1967: 119). In the third section of the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche provides an interpretation of ascetic ideals, insisting that ascetic ideals are very different in artists, philosophers, priests, and scientists. The concept of modern philosophy thus provides Nietzsche with a critical counter-concept of essentialism: objects do not have an inherent essence, but will simply appear differently according to the perspective from which they are viewed and interpreted.

Expanding this call for multiperspectival interpretation in later aphorisms collected in *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche argues: "every elevation of man brings with it the overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons" (1968: 330). Horkheimer and Adorno's "Elements of Anti-Semitism" in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* follow this method, providing different perspectives on anti-semitism, rather than a systematic social theory that attempts to grasp the essence of the phenomenon. Rather anti-semitism is approached from a politico-historical perspective, a religious perspective, an economic perspective, an anthropological-cultural perspective, a psychoanalytic perspective, and the perspective of critical theory that anticipates their theory of the authoritarian personality (Horkheimer and Adorno, 192: 200ff.). From the critical theory perspective, explicated in thesis seven, anti-semitism is explained as a consequence of the decline of reason, trends toward conformity, stereotypical thinking, and massification analyzed in their social theory.

The experimental form of the "Theses on Anti-Semitism" thus provides a multiperspectival model for social theory that is still useful for social theory today (for development of the model within a critical theory perspective, see Best and Kellner, 1991). Multiperspectival theory is open, non-essentialist, and cultivates new ways of seeing and thinking. Indeed, as Rocco suggests (unpublished), the collaborative project of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* itself contains a weaving of two, sometimes conflictual voices,[2] and the renunciation of providing a clear position on reason and Enlightenment forces the reader to produce their own positions on modernity and its intellectual heritage. Such an open form exemplifies modernist textual strategies and anticipates postmodern theoretical discourse, positioning Horkheimer's and Adorno's text between modern and postmodern theory.

Interestingly, while Adorno and Horkheimer were transforming critical theory into a philosophical critique of modernity, Franz Neuman and Herbert Marcuse were working to politicize critical theory. Research in the Herbert Marcuse archive in Frankfurt uncovered some manuscripts by Marcuse and Neumann on "Theories of Social Change" (see Kellner, 1992: 301ff.). In the early 1940s when Horkheimer and Adorno were working on *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Marcuse and Neumann were engaged in a historical study of theories of social change within Western thought that could help produce a theory of social change for the present age. This project is extremely interesting within the history of critical theory since it shows that in the 1940s there were two tendencies within critical theory: 1) the philosophical-cultural analysis of the trends of Western civilization being developed by Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; and 2) the more practical-political development of critical theory as a theory of social change anticipated by Marcuse and Neumann. For Marcuse and Neumann, critical theory was conceptualized as a theory of social change that would connect philosophy, social theory, and radical politics -- precisely the project of 1930s critical theory that Horkheimer and Adorno were abandoning in the early 1940s in their turn toward philosophical and cultural criticism divorced from social theory and radical politics. Marcuse and Neumann by contrast were focusing precisely on the issue that Horkheimer and Adorno had neglected: the theory of social change.

III. Recent scholarship in critical theory, evident in the essays in this issue, has involved historical studies of the stages of critical theory and re-examinations of the classical texts, facilitated by the publication of complete editions in German and English translations which have made available a wealth of new texts.[3] Wiggershaus' *Die Frankfurter Schule* (1986) has drawn on this archival material and presented a history of the entire trajectory of critical theory in its classical stages (the text will be published in English by Polity Press in 1993). Wiggershaus provides much new information on the Frankfurt School and some provocative interpretations of key thinkers, texts, and stages. Publication of the complete works of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Fromm, Lowenthal, and Benjamin in German makes serious scholarly study of the entire tradition of critical theory possible, although unfortunately much important material remains untranslated.

Habermas's article "Notes on the Developmental History of Horkheimer's Works," translated in this issue, draws on this scholarship and provides a fresh interpretation of Horkheimer's most productive decade, his collaboration with Adorno, and his later theoretical decline. Although Habermas was personally closer to Adorno, and in fact had serious political differences with the late Horkheimer, he is more philosophically sympathetic to Horkheimer's positions. Habermas points to the tensions between Horkheimer's previous work and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written with Adorno. His argument that Horkheimer's agreement with Adorno was short-lived and was primarily a product of their intense collaboration during the writing of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is convincing, especially in the light of Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason* and the article published in this issue "Reason Against Itself: Some Notes on Enlightenment." In these texts, Horkheimer more positively evaluates the legacy of the Enlightenment and calls for a reconstruction of reason and the more radical critique of reason and Enlightenment of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is not evident. Horkheimer's style too follows that of the classical philosophical essay which clearly sets out arguments, contextualizes its problematic within intellectual history,

and advances specific positions. Such a rational discursive procedure evident in "Reason Against Itself" is significantly different from the textual strategy of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and its more distanced relation to Enlightenment and reason.

Previous scholars had, in fact, argued that there were two different theoretical tendencies within critical theory during the 1930s, one evident in the programmatic works of Horkheimer and Marcuse that delineated the method and presuppositions of the critical theory of society, and the other evident in the works of philosophy and cultural criticism of Adorno and Benjamin (see Buck-Morss, 1977 and Breuer, 1985). While the inner circle of critical theory during the 1930s engaged in the production of an interdisciplinary social theory that positively appropriated the results of the sciences of the day, Adorno and Benjamin engaged in philosophical and cultural criticism that was more literary than analytical and descriptive, that elicited social truth more in the works of philosophy and art, rather than social theory. Adorno, however, was more affirmative toward social theory than Benjamin, complaining in a famous letter that Benjamin's method of "profane illumination," which depended on a juxtaposition of images and collage, was too ascetic and that social theory was needed to mediate cultural criticism (1977: 110ff.). And the micrological approach of Benjamin and, occasionally, Adorno contrasted with the macro approaches of the Institute social theory.

Fascination with both Benjamin and Adorno is evident in a series of recent books on both theorists and in the essays in this issue. Gaines' article on "Research on Walter Benjamin" dissects the contributions of the collection of essays on Benjamin edited by Gary Smith (1988), which assembles much of the important German Benjamin studies that had not been translated or collected in English. Gaines also discusses Jennings' study of Benjamin's literary criticism (1987) and Buck-Morss' work on Benjamin's cultural criticism (1989). Gaines sorts out the contributions in these texts and notes some of their limitations, including the fact there still does not exist in English a systematic study of the entirety of Benjamin's life and work.

Richard Wolin, who has himself produced a study of Benjamin (1982), publishes here a critique of critical theory's aestheticism, using the case of Benjamin's *Passagenwerk* to illustrate some of the strengths and limitations of critical theory's cultural criticism. Paul Mattick Jr. contributes a study of the concepts of aura and reproduction in Benjamin's cultural criticism, pointing to the lack of conceptual rigor in some of his key concepts. Mattick explores the terrain of reproduction in art, building on and supplementing Benjamin's positions. He contests Benjamin's claim that photography and mechanical reproduction destroyed the "aura" of great art and attempts to rethink these concepts in the contemporary situation.

Marcuse too turned toward the aesthetic dimension in the 1940s in a previously unpublished study of "Notes on Aragon: Art and Politics in the Totalitarian Era." His study of novels of Aragon and contemporary French poetry disclose his commitment to the utopian dimension of literature and the interconnection between the aesthetic and erotic dimension. The experience of love in this literature, Marcuse suggests, contains a political dimension because its negation and impossibility in the totalitarian era shows the monstrousness of a world that refuses the simplest and deepest source of human happiness. This fascinating study is one of the most detailed of Marcuse's aesthetic reflections and adumbrates his philosophical and political perspectives on art which would be central to his post-1950s critical theory. Written near the end of World War II, it

would be another ten years before Marcuse would fully present his theory of art and emancipation (1955), which distinguishes his version of critical theory.

 When Marcuse became the guru of the New Left and counterculture and his books *Eros and Civilization* and *One-Dimensional Man* were the most influential texts of the period, Erich Fromm bitterly polemicized against his former colleague. The polemic began in a 1955 exchange in *Dissent* over the epilogue to *Eros and Civilization*, which presented Fromm as advocate of a conformist culturalist version of psychoanalysis that denied the primacy of the Freudian instinct theory (see the discussion in Kellner 1984). Fromm immediately responded, arguing that Marcuse lacked psychoanalytic experience and insight into the analytic origins of Freud's concepts. Fromm published later criticisms of Marcuse's appropriation of Freud, but his most sustained attack, "Infantilization and Despair Masquerading as Radicalism," published in this issue, was never published during his lifetime. Intended as an epilogue for *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis* (Fromm, 1970), the text was found in the form of a separate essay in the Fromm archive in T¸bingen.[4] Focusing on Marcuse's theory of polymorphic sexuality and sexual liberation, Fromm claims that Marcuse irresponsibly celebrates sexual perversions and illicitly interprets Freud's instinct theory.

 Melanie Klein was also skeptical that the free release of Eros was the key to human liberation and happiness and Fred Alford takes up Kleinian motifs in a ground-breaking study of "Melanie Klein and the Frankfurt School." Alford argues that the psychoanalytic theories of Klein provide new substance for the Frankfurt School motif of reconciliation with nature. He also believes that Kleinian object-relations theory provides superior psychoanalytic perspectives for critical theory today. While he believes that some Kleinian motifs provide "psychological content and depth" to some of the ideals of critical theory, Alford also notes that the Kleinian perspectives sacrifice some of the utopian vision of a radically different world that has animated much of the best of critical theory. IV. The essays collected here reveal some of the strengths and deficits of critical theory. Obviously, aesthetic analysis and cultural criticism is a main focus of critical theory and the work of Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse, and their colleagues on these topics have produced a wealth of valuable work. The philosophical dimension was also an important part of critical theory and Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas, and other critical theorists have made many valuable contributions in these areas. Critical theory also presented more compelling theories of the psyche and socio-psychological perspectives than most versions of social theory, drawing on, though revising, Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Yet the critical theorists were often weak on detailed social analysis and political practice and their absence in these studies is symptomatic of some of the characteristic weaknesses of critical theory. The deficit of social theory and political economy within critical theory today is especially unfortunate in the light of the reorganization of capitalism in the present age, the collapse of communism and end of the Cold War, and the global restructuring occurring in the light of these developments. The great transformations occurring before our eyes require the sort of radical reconstruction of social theory that the critical theorists performed on Marxism in the 1930s and similar new syntheses are needed today to provide new life and relevance to social theory. We need the sort of systematic historical analysis characteristic of classical critical theory to grasp the changes now occurring, yet a more intense focus on political economy than is found in the classical theory is probably needed.

As I suggested earlier, Baudrillard, Lyotard, and other forms of postmodern theory which reject macrotheory and political economy, or wallow in implosion, fragmentation, irony, and nihilism, lack the theoretical resources to develop a critical theory of contemporary society. Instead, theories are needed that articulate both fragmentation and new forms of social structuration, that stress disorganization and reorganization within the present order, and that combine macro and micro perspectives. The classical models of critical theory provide aspects of a critical theory of the present age and their models of social theory, philosophy, and cultural critique continue to be relevant to the present situation. Although we need new syntheses of social theory and politics today, the continuing relevance of the Frankfurt School for these concerns makes their work more than a nostalgic remembrance of things past. A better tomorrow depends on building on the best of yesterday and new theories should appreciate the most valuable legacies of the heritage of contemporary social theory.

Notes

1 For presentations of critical theory qua social theory, see Dubiel, 1984; orig. 1978; the papers in W. Bonss and A. Honneth, 1982; and Kellner, 1989. For the classical histories of the Frankfurt school, see Jay, 1973 and Wiggershaus, 1986.

2 I thus reject the claim of Robert Hullot-Kentor who wishes to "refer to Adorno as *the* author of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*" (1992: 105). Examinations of the various layers of the text in the Adorno and Horkheimer archives reveal the large amount of editing and the collaborative process of producing the manuscript and that Horkheimer wrote much of the manuscript.

3 Adorno's and Benjamin's *Gesammelte Schriften* have been published by Suhrkamp, while Fisher is publishing the collected works of Max Horkheimer and Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag is publishing Erich Fromm's collected works. Suhrkamp has published a nine-volume set of Marcuse's *Schriften* and is contemplating publishing a series of unpublished and uncollected works, while Peter Marcuse and I are negotiating with Beacon Press to publish six volumes of this material. In the English-speaking world, only a few of Horkheimer's works have been translated and while many key Adorno and Benjamin texts have been translated, in recent years there have been few new major translations, as literary executors, heirs, and publishers squabble about translations, rights, publication strategy, and the like. Most of Fromm's work has been translated and Lowenthal has prepared a collection of his works published by Transaction press.

4 Fromm published a milder version of his attack on Marcuse in *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, see Fromm, 1970: 9-41. Rainer Funk has just published Fromm's critique of Marcuse (under a different title than the article appearing here), along with some other unpublished articles by Fromm, under the title of *The Revision of Psychoanalysis* (Fromm 1992).