

*Enlightenment and Repression: A Comparison of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment and Herbert Marcuse's Eros and Civilization.*

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Max Horkheimer and Theodor W Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* are considered two of the major works of the Frankfurt School. Although thematically different—one an exploration of the recurrent and intertwining nature of myth and enlightenment, the other a re-examination of Freud's theory of instincts—both works trace the cyclical emergence of liberating tendencies arising counter to the established order and their subsequent betrayal. For Horkheimer and Adorno this is the unfolding of the myth/enlightenment dialectic, where enlightenment pledges to undo the illusion and superstition of myth, yet upon its ascension falls short of its own promise and congeals into a new mythical totality. In Marcuse's novel appropriation of Freud, the first act of liberation—the band of sons who dispose of the oppressive father and his monopolization of pleasure—despite a brief reprieve, actually reasserts the instinctual repression necessary for the maintenance of the social whole, and from the sons' betrayed revolution, unfolds all the guilt which continues to curb our instinctual energy into sublimated forms.<sup>1</sup> Finally, in both texts, the latest recurrence of domination, under the name Enlightenment, is qualitatively different in that its repression is nearly total; its mode marks the almost perfect confluence, the absolute identity, of the individual and the whole, as in this latest turn the repressive order

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<sup>1</sup> Although Marcuse does not engage Freud gendered terminology to its full extent, one could argue that there is an implicit disruption of gender roles which emerges in Marcuse's work.

has been depersonalized and elevated to the level of objective law; it forms a complete logical system whose negation appears as the very height of irrationality.

In “Excursus II: Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality”, Horkheimer and Adorno quote Kant in describing enlightenment as the human being’s “emergence from self-incurred minority... [the] inability to make use of one’s own understanding without direction from another.” It is understanding guided by reason; the mind bringing cognition in line with its own internal logic.<sup>2</sup> In Kant, reason’s aim is the construction of a hierarchical system of knowledge in which one can move upward to the genus or downward to the species; in other words, a system which brings discrete objects into a formal unity.<sup>3</sup> In this manner, enlightenment aims at the disenchantment of nature and the triumph of reason—systematic thought—over myth and superstition; the substitution of ‘knowledge’ for ‘belief’ and the installation of humans as masters. In a sense, the task of enlightenment is to distinguish itself from myth, which Horkheimer and Adorno describe as “false clarity”, simultaneously obscure and luminous, and both familiar yet at arm’s length from concepts.<sup>4</sup>

Because of the power once represented by nature, myth as an organizing principle or a story of origins arises from fear and awe of nature. “The cry of terror”, they write, “called forth by the unfamiliar becomes its name.”<sup>5</sup> Early myths explained genesis from earthly substances such as fire, dirt and water—the first instance of scientific hypothesis. Later, the natural elements are rendered into deities who then

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<sup>2</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002), 63.

Also see: Immanuel Kant. “An Answer to the Question ‘What is Enlightenment?’”. *Political Writings*. H.S. Reiss, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)  
Stanford, California: Stanford University press, 2002, p63

<sup>3</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford, California: Stanford University press, 2002, p63

<sup>4</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xvi

<sup>5</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p10

became the Platonic forms. In short, the elements of nature become the basic categories of thought and understanding; the gods are no longer identical with nature but come to signify it; in myth the gods begin as substance and end in quintessence.<sup>6</sup> A new myth, new religion or new mode of thought and its parallel social form emerge and cast out the old gods, deriding them as ridiculous, irrational, remnants of superstition. In order to achieve its twin goals of emancipation from superstition and the installation of humans as masters over nature, Enlightenment must necessarily employ strategic repressions to safe-guard against slipping back into the fear and uncertainty, the fatalism of nature.<sup>7</sup> They write:

This line is at once that of destruction and of civilization. Each step has been an advance, a stage of enlightenment. But whereas all the earlier changes, from preanimism to magic, from matriarchal to patriarchal culture, from the polytheism of the slave traders to the Catholic hierarchy, replaced the older mythologies with new albeit enlightened ones, the Great Mother with the God of Hosts, the totem with the veneration of the Lamb, in the glare of enlightened reason any devotion which believed itself objective, grounded in the matter at hand, was dispelled as mythological.<sup>8</sup>

Just as the “solar patriarchal” myth usurped and derided the old gods for their profanity, their all-too-human flaws, mythology itself, in annihilating previous sets of beliefs at every stage and proclaiming itself the new organizing principle, set the tone for all future ‘enlightenments’.<sup>9</sup> Evermore repressive and alienating forms of domination come about to protect us from slipping back under the spell of nature—for as a species we collectively remember its uncertainty, its terror, and wish to keep ourselves firmly ensconced as masters—just as the bourgeois mentality encourages us to come out from under the influence of ‘another’, as Kant

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<sup>6</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp2-5

<sup>7</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p72

<sup>8</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p72

<sup>9</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p7

argues; to be 'free' in that freedom comes to mean the individual's employment of its faculty to reason.

In its latest turn enlightenment has cast aside all which cannot be made quantifiable, equivalent, and, ultimately brought under the conceptual unity required for the functioning of the exchange society; 'knowledge' is reduced to what is immediately graspable in the categories of the present.<sup>10</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno write, "Nature, stripped of qualities, becomes the chaotic stuff of mere classification, and the all-powerful self becomes a mere having, an abstract identity".<sup>11</sup> In the ancient sacrifice, there were early versions of this exchange principle in that one species could be sacrificed in place of another, but Enlightenment has taken this to its logical end as the commodity form strips away all qualities, allowing for the exchange of all for all.<sup>12</sup> The final step in this process was the full commodification of not only the products of labour but of labour itself, whose abstraction thus became the common denominator congealed in all commodities; Kant's transcendental subject perhaps, which constitutes objects in line with its own cognition, is the condition of possibility for the real comparison of apples and oranges.

But the market for Horkheimer and Adorno is just one manifestation of this tendency, as Enlightenment's latest incarnation attempts to reduce even thought itself to a coherent set of interlocking nodes and formulas where every concept is frozen in its immediacy and can be made relatable or comparable to every other. In this quest for utility, modern science has eliminated meaning; it has replaced the 'concept' with the 'formula'; it no longer needs philosophic categories of 'quality', 'being' or 'existence' for they merely persist as idolatrous, mnemonic fragments

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<sup>10</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p5

<sup>11</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p6

<sup>12</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp5-6

of the power of the old gods.<sup>13</sup> “The multiplicity of forms”, they write, “is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter”.<sup>14</sup>

Further on, they add:

For the enlightenment, anything which cannot be resolved into numbers, and ultimately into one, is illusion; modern positivism consigns it to poetry. Unity remains the watchword from Parmenides to Russell. All gods and qualities must be destroyed.<sup>15</sup>

This unity, in keeping with Kant’s claim of the individual’s awakening to its own self-directed existence, is the self-preservation of the human subject, the conveyor of meaning, emerging to proclaim power over nature whose essence is always the same, it is the stuff of domination. What is different is made the same, thus limiting the boundaries of possible experience, and all that falls outside of these bounds, all that violates the law of ‘sameness’, in other words all concepts which “transcend immediate experience” are cast off as ghosts, spectres, and this ‘sameness’ is the reassertion of the cyclical fatalism of myth which Enlightenment strives so hard to forget.<sup>16</sup>

Reason is a “purely formal entity”; it is neutral with respect to ends, its essence is calculation and the subject employs it to achieve its own ends of self-preservation and continued propagation.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, ‘freedom’ unfolds on the grounds of individual self-preservation and mastery over the object; self-interest underpins epistemology, and this frames the bourgeois mentality as logical and natural. Horkheimer and Adorno further argue that the Marquis de Sade’s amorality is the logical conclusion of Kant’s bourgeois idealist morality as the organization of all

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<sup>13</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p3, 82

<sup>14</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p4

<sup>15</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p4

<sup>16</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp8-10, 64-65

<sup>17</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp68-69

thought into a unitary system whose central organizing principle is the self-preservation of the subject who constitutes itself as a logical, integral unity, and who turns everything into objects of manipulation and domination. “Sade,” they argue, “demonstrated empirically what Kant grounded transcendently: the affinity between knowledge and planning which has set its stamp of inescapable functionality on a bourgeois existence even in its breathing spaces.”<sup>18</sup> In Sade, the scientific principle becomes extreme; his character Juliette demonizes Catholicism and the decadence of a feudal Europe in decline to instead favour the ascendancy of logic and rationality. As a matter of principle she proceeds to engage in all forms of sacrilege, yet her endeavour is not undertaken fanatically but purposely; her tabooed behaviour is an intellectual exercise, almost a duty in the Kantian sense; it is a course of action guided by reason, self-direction without the influence of another. In the thoughtful and reflective destruction of the old ideologies, she goes beyond her friend Clairwil who still revels in sacrilege. Juliette’s response to him:

Now that we do not believe in God, my dear...the desecrations you desire are no more than useless childish games...I may be still firmer in my disbelief than you; my atheism is unshakable. So do not imagine that I need the childish pranks to confirm it.<sup>19</sup>

Clairwil, who takes pleasure in the acts themselves as he strays from the dictates of reason, thus abandons himself to pleasure. Juliette, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, is the true Kantian as her actions are always self-directed; she does not lose herself in the objects of her sacrilege, in the moments of pleasure, as does Clairwil; she remains forever detached, ensuring that the objects never gain power over her. She is a child of the Enlightenment, she abhors anything—good or evil—which is not based on science, calculation rational thought and

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<sup>18</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p69

<sup>19</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p81

systematic logic as its own end. Even murder, torture, mutilation, are undertaken calmly, purposely, resolutely.

Horkheimer and Adorno claim that the formalization of reason is the intellectual counterpart to mechanized production. The Enlightenment removed the ideological veil of the old order, undermining it philosophically, just as production, by granting us material abundance, shattered it practically.<sup>20</sup> However, mass production does not live up to its own promise as there is always an unequal character to exchange as individuals never quite fit the conceptual mould; there is always a remainder, necessitating the coercive apparatus required over and above ones' own rationality to enforce conformity. Underneath seethes violence and repression, as people take on distorted, irrational shapes; and domination, stripped of its former goals, becomes an end in itself.<sup>21</sup> From this springs *ennui*, feeding its own individualistic ideology, as hardship appears so great that the subject withdraws from the world, relating to it only in base economic terms. They write, "Apathy arises at the turning point in bourgeois history, as in the history of antiquity, when the *pauci beati* become aware of their powerlessness in face of the overwhelming historical tendency."<sup>22</sup> When suffering becomes too great, the individual retreats into the private sphere, and in positing this split inadvertently reaffirms the antagonistic whole. This is bourgeois life.

Sade's work is significant as it laid bare the mythological principles upon which European civilization was based after the demise of religion. Yet this "fear of falsehoods", the unending drive to unmask all superstitions and replace them with self-legislation, implants itself as the new superstition, the new unitary, monolithic principle whose sole aim is

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<sup>20</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p82

<sup>21</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp21-22

<sup>22</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p76

insulation from the uncertainty and self-abandonment found in nature. In a different manner than the positivists, Sade—and later Nietzsche—simply took science at its word and were not afraid to highlight the identity of reason and power that emerged in its most concrete form out of the early bourgeois era. In closing, Horkheimer and Adorno write:

The darker writers of the bourgeoisie, unlike its apologists, did not seek to avert the consequences of the Enlightenment with harmonistic doctrines. They did not pretend that formalistic reason had a closer affinity to morality than to immorality. While the light bringing writers protected the indissoluble alliance of reason and atrocity, the bearers of darker messages pitilessly expressed the shocking truth.<sup>23</sup>

This is the terrible ambiguity of late capitalism; its intellectual and material achievements seem to promise liberation from toil in inhumane labour processes, yet these very achievements become the most efficient tools used in service of repression. As they breed a higher standard of living for many, its antithesis seems illogical. Modernity is the most insidious manifestation of the repressive tendencies of the myth/enlightenment dialectic for never has the gap between the potential found within (so-called) ‘civilization’ and the actual experience of that civilization been greater.

According to Herbert Marcuse, in Freud’s theory of instincts, the same relationship between progress and domination is apparent as progress is grounded on the “permanent subjugation of the human instincts”. Early in *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse writes:

According to Freud, the history of man is the history of his repression. Culture constrains not only his societal but also his biological existence, not only parts of the human being but his instinctual structure itself. However, such constraint is the very precondition of progress. Left free to pursue their natural objectives,

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<sup>23</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p93

the basic instincts of man would be incompatible with all lasting association and preservation: they would destroy even where they unite.<sup>24</sup>

The unfettered fulfillment of the basic human instincts is incommensurate with the requirements of civilization. In Freudian terms, the pleasure principle—the unsublimated gratification of instinctual needs—is transformed into the reality principle, the ‘normal’, progressive functioning of society. The instinctual drives which blindly grope for immediate gratification come into conflict with the material necessities and conditions of the natural world and the individual comes to the traumatic realization that immediate gratification and the avoidance of pain are not always possible. The reality principle, although it may appear opposed to the pleasure principle, emerges out of it as the individual learns to renounce immediate gratification, which can be destructive in that it is unproductive.<sup>25</sup> Marcuse writes:

The scope of man’s desires and the instrumentalities for their gratification are thus immeasurably increased, and his ability to alter reality consciously in accordance with “what is useful” seems to promise a gradual removal of extraneous barriers to his gratification. However, neither his desires nor his alteration of reality are henceforth his own: they are now “organized” by his society. And this “organization” represses and transubstantiates his original instinctual needs. If absence from repression is the archetype of freedom, then civilization is the struggle against this freedom.<sup>26</sup>

The overabundance of means and objects give repressive society the power to regulate enjoyment as never before; an entire coercive apparatus exists to ensure that enjoyment only occurs in avenues which are not ultimately disruptive of the labour process. Also, this labour process is continuously creating new objects of enjoyment, further fusing

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<sup>24</sup> Herbert Marcuse. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. (Boston: Beacon press, 1974), p11

Although his work probably could be employed for such a project, unfortunately, Marcuse does little to disrupt the gendered implications of this argument.

<sup>25</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p13

<sup>26</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p14

individuals to its alienating nature in the pursuit of the limited pleasures it guarantees. Hence, according to Marcuse, 'culture' for Freud is the curbing and rechanneling of instinctual drives into their socially useful forms which promise greater pleasures, although a pleasure which is never fully realized. In other words, the very fact that the instincts forever strive for gratification, is also the root of its continued deferral.

In Freud, the two primary instincts are that of eros, in general sex, rechanneled into the impulse to create ever more complex social systems, and death, the desire to return to a simpler state. Although they seem to be polar opposites, there is even some overlap between the two, as both aim at stability by reducing external stimuli (or at the very least keeping it at a constant). In this light, the instincts are fundamentally conservative, struggling to maintain the inertial unity of the individual, a sort of equilibrium that we have been forced to abandon through our encounters with the external world. This most primary principle or drive is known as the Nirvana principle, the "effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli," and the other instincts are manifestations of it.<sup>27</sup>

In attempting to realize the Nirvana principle, the psyche moves even farther from it; repression of the instincts underlies all historical forms of the reality principle. Thus what we term 'progress' is realized through increasingly rationalized forms of domination. Marcuse writes:

...the instinctual energy thus withdrawn does not accrue to the (unsublimated) aggressive instincts because its social utilization (in labour) sustains and even enriches the life of the individual. The restrictions imposed upon the libido appear as the more rational, the more universal they become, the more they permeate the whole society. They operate on the individual as external objective laws and as internalized force: the societal authority is absorbed into the

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<sup>27</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, pp23-29

‘conscience’ and into the unconscious of the individual and works as his own desire, morality and fulfillment.<sup>28</sup>

We live our repression ‘freely’ in that we desire what we are *supposed* to desire. This move is so totalizing that it in fact no longer registers as repression, but as the objectively determined, ‘normal’, or ‘common sense’; its rationalization can be shown empirically, in the material comforts we experience every day, and its unitary schematic expressed in the language of scientific rationality appears theoretically sound.

One could even surmise that the Nirvana principle is not much different from Kant’s wish for self-directed action, free from the influence of another, or even Juliette’s disdain for all thought that transcends her immediately apparent logical whole. In all three cases, one can surmise the ego’s boundless desire to remain an integral unity, a self-constituted stable ‘whole’. Although this may at first ring tautological, in a sense, the ego is constituted by the desire to be an ego; it has no ontological status apart from the repetition of its own self-constituting performance.

But the trauma of the replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle occurs again and again, suggesting that perhaps its victory over the pleasure principle is never complete; this incompleteness perhaps harkens back to Horkheimer and Adorno’s claim that enlightenment is an unending process as nature is never fully subdued. Marcuse argues that the pleasure principle in fact survives as the “tabooed and subterranean history of civilization”, thus necessitating the ever increasing repression of civilization.<sup>29</sup> The “subterranean” history which lurks in the unconscious is the remainder of the incomplete identification of the individual and the whole. The unconscious is the drive for “integral gratification;” it is the immediate identity of necessity

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<sup>28</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p45

<sup>29</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p15

and freedom. In Freud, this identification is tabooed by the conscious, but upheld in the unconscious. Marcuse writes that “its truth...continues to haunt the mind”; it preserves the memory of past stages when gratification was more readily or immediately available, and it generates a wish for a time when this paradise will be resurrected.<sup>30</sup> “The memory of gratification,” as Marcuse describes it, “is at the origin of all thinking, and the impulse to recapture past gratification is the hidden driving power behind the process of thought.”<sup>31</sup> In memory there is a constant drive to recapture this “past gratification.” The past is never entirely forgotten; memory explodes the rationality of the reality principle. “The ‘*recherche du temps perdu*’ becomes the vehicle of future liberation,” and this, according to Marcuse, is the hidden trend in psychoanalysis.<sup>32</sup>

This is where Marcuse breaks with Freud. Although he agrees with him that immediate gratification is incommensurate with the reality principle as material existence necessitates work, he argues that specific historical formations ensconce forms of repression over and above what is required to meet material needs. In other words, the hostility of nature and the scarcity of resources require a basic level of repression, but specific historical incarnations of the reality principle institute a surplus of repression in service of a particular social group.<sup>33</sup> In short, Marcuse is adding a Marxist class analysis to Freud’s theory of instincts. He writes:

...various modes of domination (of man and nature) result in various historical forms of the reality principle...These differences affect the very content of the reality principle, for every form of the reality principle must be embodied in a system of societal institutions and relations, laws and values which transmit and enforce the required ‘modifications’ of the instincts.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p18

<sup>31</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p31

<sup>32</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p19

<sup>33</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, pp32-35

<sup>34</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 37

In other words, Marcuse accepts the general schematic of Freud's theory of instincts, but criticizes him for ignoring the class character of instinctual gratification, as well as the shifting historical dynamics which alter specific configurations of the reality principle, adding that perhaps social conditions could be altered, and societal progress and instinctual gratification are perhaps not, as Freud assumes, forever doomed to be at odds.

Marcuse's argument about surplus repression is also strongly reminiscent of Horkheimer and Adorno's claim that the repressive apparatus steps in where the enlightenment project is incomplete. In Marcuse, surplus-repression arises as a function of the reality principle's incomplete victory over the pleasure principle, and its latest guise has become increasingly rationalized and directed at a singular purpose more so than ever before: the stratification of society according to competitive economic interests, and the universal expansion of the marketplace.<sup>35</sup> Due to the performance principle, libido is redirected toward interests that are only partially fulfilling. To once again invoke Marx, Marcuse writes that "alienated labour is the negation of the pleasure principle."<sup>36</sup> Under the performance principle, pleasure is only released under very specific time constraints and is only allowed to unfold in ways that support the perpetuation of the labour process; alienated labour *is* the performance principle.<sup>37</sup>

In early human society the father in Freud's primal horde had a monopoly on Eros as he, according to Freud, regulated all sexual relationships. The father, thus, also mediated the death instinct by blocking the return to the Nirvana of the womb. This society was characterized by an unequal distribution of pleasure and pain, rational in

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<sup>35</sup> Here his addition of Marx to Freud steps into the spotlight.

<sup>36</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, pp44-45

<sup>37</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p47

the sense that the father curbed the instincts to ensure the continued propagation of the life of the clan. He does the work of Eros, not only by suppressing the death instinct, but by curbing both into socially constructive endeavours. In the primal horde the sons know they are being deprived of their fair share. They know that their father is standing in the way of their gratification. In the totalitarianism of late capitalism, due to the near perfect superimposition of the interests of the repressed on to the interests of the whole—in the political, material and instinctual sense—the repression is masked as the system itself appears as benefactor and liberator. In other words, the reason why the society which displays the most potential for progress in an egalitarian sense, is also the furthest from realizing it is because the very notion of the unfulfilled promise seems ridiculous in a society which gives so much. The attained level of productivity is both the seat of this potential as scarcity today could be overcome, and the cause of its failure, for the very tools of modernity are used in the service of continued instinctual repression.<sup>38</sup>

Domination has become cemented in a system of “objective administration.” Formerly, the superego was fed personified concepts such as benevolence, cruelty, respect, fear, hate and love from within the family. But these personalized sentiments have disappeared into rationalized institutions in which “all domination assumes the form of administration;” there is no more father and even those at the very top appear powerless in face of the social whole. We are simply left with “The pain, frustration, impotence of the individual” which “derives from a highly productive and efficiently functioning system in which he makes a better living than ever before.”<sup>39</sup> There are spurious freedoms and the illusion of choice, false critiques amongst media who all hold the same

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<sup>38</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, pp92-93

<sup>39</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p98

point of view and a high standard of living which is restrictive as goods and services control the needs of the individual. The repressiveness of the whole lies in its efficiency; high levels of production and consumption justify domination. Individuals become, in a sense, less conscious as the dynamics between the three components of the psyche—the id, the ego and the super-ego—become congealed into “automatic reactions and response,” a static system of rationalized, operational processes; thought itself is made formulaic, a prospect which would ‘thrill’ Juliette to no end.

Early in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Horkheimer and Adorno write:

The more completely the machinery of thought subjugates existence, the more blindly it is satisfied with reproducing it. Enlightenment thereby regresses to the mythology it has never been able to escape. For mythology had reflected in its forms the essence of the existing order—cyclical motion, fate, domination of the world as truth—and had renounced hope. In the terseness of the mythical image, as in the clarity of the scientific formula, the eternity of the actual is confirmed and mere existence is pronounced as the meaning it obstructs... The subsumption of the actual, whether under mythical prehistory or under mathematical formalism, the symbolic relating of the present to the mythical event in the rite or to the abstract category in science, makes the new appear as something predetermined which therefore is really the old.<sup>40</sup>

This passage sums up their work concisely, and perhaps it is not so different than Marcuse's. Both see a cyclical motion at work, in which repressive societies unleash liberating forces that in turn create new modes of repression, spurred on by the fear of slipping back into the uncertainty of nature, the fear from which myth first arose. Also, both admit that the attained level of development could allow for real liberation if not for the fact that repression, over and above the amount

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<sup>40</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp20-21

required for the maintenance of material needs, retains its grip, as both the totalizing logic of scientific rationality, and the surplus repression which harnesses the instinctual drives under late capitalism. The industrial era appears as the most free, when in fact it is the exact opposite. It is egalitarian in the sense that its uniformity—its internal logic which Juliette might appreciate—is able to harmonize all instinctual drives with the interests of the whole; the worker is free in that he or she can ‘freely’ participate in the administered society as a self-directed actor ‘freely’ choosing the tyranny of the marketplace. In the end, as domination is fully depersonalized, veiled by the social organization of production itself, its hierarchy achieves its most universal, most mythical form.

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