

**RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM IN MODERNITY : A
SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SELECT
WRITINGS OF THE CRITICAL THEORISTS**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled **RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM IN MODERNITY : A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SELECT WRITINGS OF THE CRITICAL THEORISTS** submitted by **AMITES MUKHOPADHYAY** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University and is his original work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation and consideration.

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CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation our concern is to examine and analyse some of the discontents of modernity as reflected in the select writings of the critical theorists. The writings that we will try to analyse are : Dialectic of Enlightenment of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Eros and Civilization and One-Dimensional Man of Herbert Marcuse and The Theory of Communicative Action Vols. I and II of Jürgen Habermas. For obvious constraints of time and space, the focus of this paper has been kept limited to two important themes underlying the project of modernity, namely rationality and freedom. And the critique of these two aspects of modernity constitutes one of the important dimensions of the analyses of the critical theorists.

However, before we move on to the detailed discussion of this critical perspective developed by the critical theorists, we need to know what modernity is, what place rationality and freedom occupy in it. For this purpose, we have divided the introductory chapter into two sections. Section I will deal with rationality and freedom in modernity and section II will identify some of the discontents of modernity and discuss, in a nut shell, the select writings

that we have chosen to analyse the critical perspective developed by the critical theorists on rationality and freedom in modernity.

Section I

1.I. CONCEPTUALISING MODERNITY

In our attempt to understand modernity as a notion in the realm of social sciences, we will try to conceive of it at two levels: i) modernity as a specific socio-historical condition resulting from certain social processes over a considerable period of time in history; and ii) modernity as constituting a body of knowledge on the basis of the ideas and theories of the thinkers who sought to conceptualise and understand modernity.

1.I(1). Conceptualising Modernity As A Specific Socio-Historical Condition.

Modernity is conceptualised as a process unleashing secularisation, innovation, economic growth, equality, democracy and justice. The gradual break-up of the Holy Roman Empire, the separation of politics from religion, the decline in the concept of absolutist ruler and the rise of constitutionalism in England held out the possibility of a new age in history. The Industrial Revolution in England and subsequently in Europe, the French Revolution of 1789

were some of the events triggering off the process of modernisation¹ of society.

A close look at these events shows that there is an element of rationality implicit in these processes. The disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire triggered off the process of secularisation of political sphere and its development according to its own logic. The movement for constitutionalism and representative democracy in England (which was later to spread to other countries of Europe) was to break the myth of the divine right of the monarch and base political order on the sound principles of people's participation. The Industrial Revolution and capitalism stood for a rational organization of the spheres of production, distribution and exchange so as not to leave anything to chance or caprice.

The three catch words-liberty, equality, and fraternity-of the French Revolution constituted a break with traditional social set up in so far as the revolution held out

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1. Modernity is a specific socio-historical condition and a body of knowledge, while modernisation refers to the processual aspect of modernity. Even at the risk of oversimplification we can say that modernisation as a process carries out the tasks of modernity as a body of knowledge. However, this difference is purely analytical. In this disertation we are not concerned with analytical difference. Therefore, both the terms may be used here interchangeably.

the possibility of a free society in which individuals would have equal opportunities for the development of their rational and moral faculties and where everyone would be treated at par with the other.

Thus, modernity as a specific socio-historical condition and modernisation as a social process are closely linked to the increasing differentiation and rationalization of social spheres.

Modernity as a particular mode of experiencing social reality was sought to be conceptualised and understood by the philosophers and social thinkers right from its emanation from the European Enlightenment. This conceptualisation is absolutely necessary for the comprehensive development of any knowledge system. No knowledge comes out ex-nihilo. Therefore, modernity as constituting a body of knowledge must have had its roots into the lived experience of those who tried to understand these socio-historical processes and reflect on them. In this connection, Harold J.Laski's view is worth mentioning:

By 1600 we may say definitely that men are living and working in a new moral world. The sources that have gone to its making are various indeed. But what permeates them all is the sense of a new wealth at hand for the seeking. What has been born of that new wealth is an attitude of criti-

cism to tradition... .It is hardly an exaggeration to say that, already in the sixteenth century, there are laid down those general features which in the eighteenth century formed the outlook of Voltaire and Adam Smith, of Hume and Diderot and Kant. Mankind is consciously engaged in a new human adventure in which it resents as fetters the characteristics of the old.²

Such contextualisation of knowledge system is important for the purpose of this dissertation. The discontents of modernity that the critical theorists were trying to explore and critique were also directly rooted into their experience with modern societies in 1930s and 40s (we will discuss this issue in the second section of this chapter).

Such new way of thinking, understanding, reflecting enable us to understand modernity as a theoretical discourse. 'This new way of thinking about society appeared shortly before certain very changes began in the ways in which western societies were organized-symbolized by the American and French revolutions on the one hand, and the Agrarian and Industrial revolutions on the other.'³

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2. Horold J.Laski, The Rise of European Liberalism, Unwin Books, London, 1962, p., 54.
 3. P.Hamilton, 'The Enlightenment and the Birth of Social Sciences,' in Stuart. Hall, and Bram Gieben(ed.), Formations of modernity, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, p., 19.

1.I.(2) Modernity As A Body Of Knowledge: Conceptualising Rationality and Freedom.

The origin of modernity as an intellectual discourse can be traced back to the European Enlightenment its belief in reason, freedom and progress. The main theme of the Enlightenment thought revolved around the view that the rational faculty of individual makes him skeptical and, therefore, free. Rationality of individual makes him aware of the limitations of his tradition and convictions and this awareness makes him free of the irrationalities of tradition and regressive forces of the mythical past.

Francis Bacon who was closely associated with this Enlightenment tradition clearly stated the Enlightenment's attitude towards the rational faculty of individuals.

Truth is not to be sought in the good fortune of any particular conjecture of time, which is uncertain, but in the light of nature and experience, which is eternal.⁴

Thus, Bacon's statement contributed to the progress of the Enlightenment thought. The Enlightenment's ambitious

4. F.Bacon, 'On The Interpretation of Nature and the Empire of Man', in J.E. Curtis and J.W. Petras(ed), The Sociology of Knowledge, Gerald Duckworth, London, 1970, p.,93.

programme was, as Kant put it, to effect the emergence of human beings from their self-imposed tutelage to unreason. The "idols" that had beset humans' minds since the dawn of human history were to be stripped away and replaced with the pure light of reason.⁵

The Enlightenment thinkers sharply revolted against tradition, superstitions which permeated human mind and thought for ages. Such revolt would definitely mean freeing human mind from those irrationalities of the past. Therefore, rationality and freedom constituted two most important dimensions of the Enlightenment thought. Rational faculty of human beings, it was believed, would lead to their emancipation. By emancipation they implied moral, intellectual emancipation of individuals.

G.W.F.Hegel was closely associated with the Enlightenment tradition. Reason occupied a central place in Hegel's philosophy. For Hegel, Enlightenment is pure insight which transcends all limited perspectives and tries to grasp humanity in its essentiality.

It [Enlightenment] knows belief to be opposed to insight, opposed to reason and truth. Just as,

5. S.J.Hekman, Hermeneutics and the Sociology of Knowledge, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1986, pp., 4-5.

for it, belief is in general a tissue of superstitious prejudices and errors...⁶

The importance of reason in Hegel had also been acknowledged by Herbert Marcuse - "Reason is the sovereign of the world", - This according to Hegel, is a hypothesis and the only hypothesis in the philosophy of history'.⁷ Therefore, freedom, in Hegel, is directly linked to the progressive development of rational and authentic knowledge.

Such an attitude on the part of the Enlightenment thinkers had an obvious impact on the development of science. Rational and authentic knowledge were equated with scientific knowledge. Only scientific knowledge can render the irrationalities of tradition, prejudice, individual predilections open to criticism. Therefore, the growth of the rational faculty of human beings was believed to be rooted into the development of scientific and objective knowledge. It was believed that only scientific knowledge could contribute to the emancipation of human beings.

6. G.W.F.Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind, Translated with an Introduction and Notes by J. B. Baillie, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1971, p., 561.

7. H.Marcuse, 'Reason and Revolution,' in I. Kramnick (ed.), Essays in the History of Political Thought, Prentice Hall, INC., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1969, p., 300.

Bacon, the high priest of science and scientific knowledge, relied on a natural science model for understanding society and human beings. It was considered to be 'a real model of the world in the understanding, such as it is found to be, not such as man's reason has distorted'.⁸

By 'man's reason' Bacon referred to the specificity of human experience guided by cultural tradition and history. According to the Enlightenment thinkers a scientific conception of human nature does not view human beings as historical and cultural beings. These cultural determinants were considered to be obstacles to the development of universal knowledge systems. The thinkers perceived that human rationality aided by scientific and positivist knowledge can attain freedom from the regressive forces of their culturally determined tradition.

Modernity was integrally related to this project and, therefore, contained all these features of Enlightenment. The mission of modernity has been brilliantly summed up by David Harvey:

8. Jatinder K. Bajaj, 'Francis Bacon, The First Philosopher of Modern Science: A Non-Western View,' in Ashis Nandy (ed.), Science, Hegemony and Violence, A Requiem for Modernity, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, pp., 27-28.

The scientific domination of nature promised freedom from scarcity, want and arbitrariness of natural calamity. The development of rational forms of social organization and rational mode of thought promised liberation from the irrationalities of myth, religion, superstition, release from the arbitrary use of power as well as from the dark side of our human nature. Only through such a project could the universal, eternal and immutable qualities of all of humanity be revealed.⁹

1.I.(3) Sociology and The Promise of Modernity :

Thus, a new social order was emerging, a social order where individuals would be rational and free. It was this vision of a rational and free order which had guided the thinkers like Saint Simon, Auguste Comte in understanding modernity and sociology as the new science for this society. Sociology, for Saint-Simon would be an instrument for understanding this new social order and undertaking social reconstruction. Simon never used the term sociology. Instead, he proposed a 'social physiology' which would be patterned after the principles of natural science. Only then could the understanding of society as well as the task of social reconstruction along rational lines be possible. The purpose of this science of society was to discover certain

9. D.Harvey, The Condition of Post modernity, Basil Blackwell, Cambridge, 1989, p., 12.

invariant laws of social change and of the behaviour of individuals as social beings.

All we can hope to do is to know these laws of progress-and they are knowable only through science-and, in turn, support their course, adapt to their imperatives. Other wise, we become either the blind victims of inevitable historical change or, worse, the agents of chaos and misery as we act contrary to the constitutive principles and elements of social reality.¹⁰

Comte was equally aware of these changes and realized that a scientific reorganisation of society after the French Revolution was absolutely necessary. Therefore, he insisted that a science of society was indispensable for this task. He coined the term sociology to describe this science of society.

Comte's awareness of this new age and its possibilities was clearly reflected in his 'Law of Three Stages' or philosophy of history. Comte was influenced by the Enlightenment conception of history as a movement towards a rational and free order of existence. Comte's 'Law of Three Stages' was indicative of this influence. Comte found the motive force of history in the progress of human mind from the

10. F.Hearn, Reason and Freedom in Sociological Thought, Allen and Unwin, London, 1985, p., 37 (Hearn's observation on Saint-Simon and his science of society).

theological stage through the metaphysical stage to the ^{positive} stage. Comte equated this positive stage with the advent of modernity where social experiences were no longer explicable in terms of theological or metaphysical principles, but amenable to objective and invariant laws. Therefore with the coming of the positivist or modern age human mind has become rational as it is no longer believed to be guided by the ambiguity and irrationality of the ancient regime but scientific laws and principles of the presentage. Strict adherence to scientific laws and principles would enable individuals to adopt a critical attitude to their age-old beliefs and customs and, thereby, become free of their influence.

For Comte, positivism denotes both certainty and utility, positivism, he claims, provides information useful for expanding our certainty about and in turn, our control over the course to be taken by the reconstruction of society.¹¹

This belief that modern society is a result of social evolution and it is the most rational stage can also be found in the ideas of Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim, Both of them considered social differentiation as the hallmark of modern society. By social differentiation they referred to a process whereby society gets differentiated

11. Ibid., p.,42.

into separate social spheres (political, economic legal, moral etc.), each developing according to their own logic. Needless to say, they compared modern society with the traditional social order where social spheres were undifferentiated and identities were ambiguous. They argued that a rational approach to understanding this society would lie in developing certain objective and scientific principles which would guide human interaction in different spheres.

Evolutionism was quite prominent in Spencer, for he was highly influenced by the idea of evolution in biological sciences. Therefore, he considered the advent of modern society as a shift from simple to a complex society, complexity being defined in terms of social differentiation. Accordingly, in his dichotomous construction of Military and Industrial types, the latter has been equated with modern society.

In Durkheim's dichotomous construction of Mechanical and Organic types the latter resembles the modern society. Durkheim compared segmental solidarity with the traditional segmental societies where the segments which constitute the society envelop individual identity.

... collective and social are often considered synonymous, one is inclined to believe that the

collective conscience is the total social conscience, that is, extend it to include more than the psychic life of the society, although particularly in advanced societies, it is only a very restricted part.¹²

This shift from mechanical to organic solidarity, for Durkheim, ^{takes} place through division of labour. Organic solidarity for Durkheim is an internally differentiated society where repressive law of mechanical solidarity no longer stifles the individuality and freedom of the individual.

While repressive law tends to remain diffuse within society, restitutive law creates organs which are more and more specialized.... Even in its most general part, that which pertains to civil law, it is exercised only through particular functionaries; magistrates, lawyers, etc., who have become apt in this role because of very special training.¹³

Thus, for Durkheim, division of labour contributes to the rationalization of society where by the functioning of each social sphere is based on rational and scientific principles. In this society individuals can attain greater freedom by strictly adhering to the objective and formal rules governing each sphere. It is this functional interdependence and contractual relations which make this society

12. E. Durkheim, Division of Labour in Society, The Free Press, New York, 1964, p., 80.

13. Ibid., p., 113.

organically more tight without stifling individual's freedom of movement. And Durkheim's analysis of these two types of society is consistent with his much broader understanding of the progress of civilisation. 'It has often been remarked that civilization has a tendency to become more rational and more logical. The cause is now evident. That alone is rational which is universal. What baffles understanding is the particular and the concrete.'¹⁴

This shows that his understanding of modern society might have been greatly influenced by the Enlightenment's belief in rationality, progress and freedom. As society becomes more rational, 'the collective conscience becomes less imperative, and for this very reason, it wields less restraint over the development of individual varieties.'¹⁵

Thus, it was believed that in modern society individuals would be free and rational, for their rationality lies in strict adherence to the scientifically evolved rules and principles which guide human interaction in different social spheres.

14. Ibid., p., 289.

15. Ibid., pp., 290-91.

The standards of rationality are now grounded into the principles applied in the natural sciences. As a result the standards of rationality are now believed to be universal over time and space. Access to these standards of rationality, it was believed, will enable the individual to fight against the irrationalities of tradition and usages. This would lead to the emancipation of humanity on a universal plane.

Like Comte, Durkheim was equally committed to adopting an objective approach to the study of society. Durkheim was influenced by the method of natural science in treating social phenomena as facts external to the individual and amenable to observation and classification. 'To treat phenomena as things is to treat them as data, and these constitute the point of departure of science'.¹⁶ A sociology, for Durkheim, based on objective principles would study society scientifically. Durkheim's concern with objectivity is reflected in his reaction against the psychological explanation of social processes.

We must study them [social facts] objectively as external things... .If this exteriority should

16. E. Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, The Free Press, New York, 1964, p., 27.

prove to be only apparent, the advance of science will bring disillusionment and we shall see our conception of social phenomena change, as it were, from objective to subjective.¹⁷

Thus, it was the promise of modernity, that is, the promise of a new society that had led to the development of scientific and also objective sociology. Such a conception of society or science of society was considered to be relevant to the universalistic project of modernity.

Thus, the above discussion tries to point to the fact that inherent in the project of modernity is a promise of rational and free social order. Such order will ensure the progress of science and scientific rationality. Such rationality will aid individual in fighting against his limited perspective and in embracing some of the universal principles of human existence. The benefits of science and progress would make him into a liberated being.

17. Ibid., p., 28.

Section II

The critical thinking on the notion of modernity is as old as the concept of modernity itself. This is because modernity as a specific socio-historical experience is not devoid of its negative effects. This very belief in the rational management of economic sphere, the unlimited progress of reason and science, and the continuous development of self as the embodiment of rational and authentic knowledge has certain discontents in the form of anomie, the atomised existence of the individual, the commercialisation of social relations etc. Needless to say, discontents of modernity are sought to be conceptualised and understood by the social thinkers and theorists.

Traces of such critical thinking can also be found in the writings of Karl Marx and Max Weber. Marx criticised the modern bourgeois epoch because of its irrationality of class relations and exploitative nature. However, he considered modern capitalist system as one of the transitory stages in history's advance towards a more rational order of communism. Weber analysed the advent of modernity in terms of societal rationalisation and differentiation of social spheres. However, Weber was quite pessimistic with regard to

the fate of this society. Weber saw in this process of rationalisation the dominance of purposive instrumental rationality. Such rationality, according to Weber, is inimical to freedom.

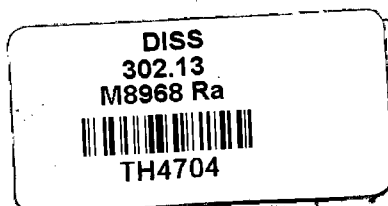
However, the discontents of modernity had been sharply captured by the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s and 40s. In their writings the concepts of rationality and freedom had come under sincere scrutiny. The rise of Fascism, Socialist Totalitarianism and the two World Wars sensitised the theorists like Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse to the unfree nature of modern society. Instead of the emergence of rational and free society, they saw the triumph of instrumental reason which stifled the individuality and freedom of the individual. By 'instrumental rationality' we mean the attainment of a practical end by the precise calculation of means. In such rationality techniques of calculation, quantification dominate. It is opposed to the autonomy of individual thought and action, and, therefore, opposed to individual freedom. Individuals are rational and free in so far they strictly adhere to the imperatives of this instrumental rationality. Therefore, 'reason' as a concept is qualitatively much denser than instrumental rationality. However, in this dissertation

'instrumental reason' and instrumental rationality' will be used inter changeably.

This dissertation is an attempt to understand and analyse the critical perspective developed on modernity by Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse - the three prominent figures of the Frankfurt School of social Research - and Jürgen Habermas, another important post - Frankfurt School personality, who has later tried to keep alive the tradition of critical social theory.

For constraints of time and space, we have tried to limit ourselves to the analysis of select writings of the critical theorists. Therefore, the writings that we have chosen are directly relevant to the issue at hand, rationality and freedom in modernity. The writings that we will consider here are: Dialectic of Enlightenment by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno; Eros and Civilization and One-Dimensional Man by Herbert Marcuse; and The Theory of Communicative Action (Vols. I and II) by Jürgen Habermas. We will try to analyse their critique of rationality and freedom in modernity as reflected in these select writings.

Our selection of critical theorist as a context for reflecting on modernity's rationality and freedom is in response to the fact that in the critical theorists we find



both the positive and negative reactions to modernity. In Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse we find a critique of instrumental rationality and unfreedom in modernity. However, in Habermas we find an attempt to rework on these notions of rationality and freedom and revive the lost potentials of the project of modernity.

We will now move on to discuss the contents of various chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter I Introduction

The introductory chapter ~~has~~ been divided into two sections. In the first section, we ~~have~~ tried to introduce modernity as a specific socio-historical experience as well as a body of knowledge. Our concern ~~has~~ been to see how rationality and freedom constitute important aspects of modernity as an intellectual discourse. The second section would give a brief account of the discontents of modernity and the social conditions giving rise to critical theory and to the nature of their critique. We ~~have~~ tried to briefly explain why we have selected critical theorist as a context for understanding rationality and freedom in modernity.

Chapter II Critical reflections of Karl Marx and Max Weber on rationality and freedom in modernity.

In this chapter we will try to briefly analyse the critical reflections of Marx and Weber on rationality and freedom in modernity. This chapter is relevant in the sense that it will serve as a background to the critical perspective developed by the critical theorists and their writings that we will deal with in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter III Totalised critique of rationality and freedom in modernity : Analysis of Dialectic of Enlightenment of Horkheimer and Adorno and Eros and Civilisation and One Dimensional Man of Herbert Marcuse.

In this chapter we will try to see how Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, the three prominent figures of the Frankfurt School, in their attempt to evolve a critique of modernity have produced totalised critique of rationality and freedom in modernity. Here we will be interested not so much in their internal differences as their similarities. This chapters will be divided into two sections. In the first section we will deal with Dialectic of Enlightenment of Horkheimer and Adorno. We will try to see how they evolved a totalised critique of instrumental rationality in

modern society and how it has destroyed the freedom of the individual. In the second section we will deal with two important writings of Marcuse, Eros and Civilization and One-Dimensional Man. The first text deals with Marcuse's experiment with Sigmund Freud to work out a critical theory of society and the second book deals with Marcuse's critical reflections on modern industrial society. We will try to see how the initial optimism of Marcuse as reflected in Eros and Civilization leads him to end on pessimistic note in One-Dimensional Man about the fate of rationality and freedom in modern society.

Chapter IV Attempts at reworking on rationality and freedom in modernity: Analysis of Habermas's The theory of Communicative Action.

In this chapter we will try to see the difference between Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse on the one hand and Habermas on the other. This difference arises from Habermas's attempt to rework on the notions of rationality and freedom in modernity. Habermas is aware of the discontents of modernisation, of 'the colonisation of life world rationality by systemic rationality'. Despite his critical awareness, he considers modernity as an incomplete project. In

this chapter we will see how he reworks on the notions of rationality and freedom in his The Theory of Communicative Action.

Chapter V Conclusion

In this chapter we will try to reflect on the nature of our discussion in the previous chapters. We will end with certain general observations on rationality and freedom in modernity.

Having given a general outline of the chapters we will now move on ^{to} the detailed discussion of the chapters (2, 3, 4, and 5).

CHAPTER - 2

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS OF KARL MARX AND MAX WEBER ON RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM IN MODERNITY

In this chapter we will try to analyse the reflections of Karl Marx and Max Weber on rationality and freedom in modernity. Our initial understanding of rationality and freedom as constituting the integral aspects of modernism and Enlightenment and the subsequent discussion of the treatment of these ideas in the critical theorists will remain incomplete, if we do not sensitise ourselves to the ideas of Marx and Weber. Marx was closely associated with the project of Enlightenment, which got reflected in his understanding of history as the movement toward greater reason and freedom. Weber analysed modernity in terms of the process of rationalisation of modern societies in Europe.

At the same time they both built up a critical perspective on the society they were experiencing. We find in Marx a strong critique of the capitalist mode of production rather than modernity as such. This critique was consistent with his conception of capitalism as one of the transitory stages in history's march towards a more rational order of

communism where the discontents of all the proceeding stages would be overcome.

Weber understood modernity in terms of societal rationalisation, but saw in this process of rationalisation the manifestation of the purposive-instrumental rationality. Such rationality, for Weber, limited freedom and stifled individual creativity.

Here we will discuss first Marx's views on rationality and freedom in modernity and then move on to Weber's understanding of rationality and freedom in modernity.

Section - I

2. I MARX'S REFLECTION ON RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM IN MODERNITY

Rationality and freedom form integral parts of Marx's interpretation of history. Frank Hearn brings out the relation between the two in Marx in the following manner :

For Marx, history is the movement toward greater reason and freedom a movement which will culminate in the rise of socialism and the later evolution of communism. The rationalization of the productive forces, Marx claims, leads in a contradic-

-
1. By the term 'rationalization of productive forces' Hearn points to Marx's analysis of the progressive technological development of the means of production. The progressive movement of history takes place only through the improvement in the forces of production. This technological development also determines the degree of freedom in each epoch so far as the position of labour as an instrument of production is concerned. For example in slavery, the slaves, who were the means of production, were tied body and soul to their masters. Due to further development in instruments of production, land became a new means of production in feudalism. This made the serfs freer than their slave counterparts, as they were tied to their lands. With the arrival of capital and market system, the mobility of capital as opposed to land as a means of production made labour power free. However, Marx argues that this process of rationalization does not stop at capitalism, Socialism which would follow capitalism would be more free and rational. The prevalence of the institution of private property in all the preceding epochs limits the benefits of technological development to a few owners of means of production (be it slave owners or feudal lords or capitalists). This has resulted in the enslavement of non-property owners (be it slaves or serfs or proletariat). Socialism would recover this lost freedom of the individual and enable man to realise his

tory and conflict-ridden fashion to a reduction in socially necessary labour time and a corresponding increase in free time. The result of this historical process is reasonable people able to safeguard their freedom against the repressive aspects of instrumental reason.²

2.1 (1) Marx's Critique of Hegel:

Marx had been influenced by Hegel's ideas. However, Marx's theoretical framework sought to replace the idealist assumptions on which such ideas were based, with materialist considerations.

Hegel assigns primacy to 'idea' as the motive force of history. He conceives of history as the progressive development of 'mind' embodying rational and authentic knowledge. This is integrally related to the Enlightenment belief that reason makes human beings free from the regressive forces of irrationality.

Reason is the conscious certainty of being all reality... . This reality, is ... through and through a universal, the pure abstraction of reality.³

...Continued...

labour as something internal to him. (This point will be discussed once again in connection with Marx's critique of capitalism and alienation).

2. F. Hearn, Reason and Freedom in Sociological Thought, p., 59.
3. G.W.F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind, pp., 273-76.

Reflecting on Hegel's idea of reason Rick Roderick argues that an extension of reason is always an extension of the area in which we can exercise responsibility, and freedom can not be extended without increasing our knowledge.⁴

This knowledge for Hegel, is true knowledge, for it is in accordance with universally valid principles of true, right and good. Therefore, knowledge in accordance with these universally valid principles of what ought to be is rational and rational knowledge enlarges the sphere of freedom.

Accordingly, in Hegel 'idea' or knowledge because it is in the form of what ought to be or in accordance with universal principles of true, right and good, acquires an independent existence. It transcends highly varied and even contending conceptions of true, good and right and attains a self-consciousness. This is the reason why Hegel conceives of history as the manifestation or self-actualisation of 'spirit' or 'idea'.

Reason is spirit, when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to the level of truth, and

4. Rick. Roderick, Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory, Macmillan, London, 1986, p., 27.

reason is consciously aware of itself and its own world, and of the world as itself.⁵

In place of Hegel's understanding of history in the realm of ideas, Marx tries to ground his conception of history in material practices of the individuals.

The production of ideas, of conceptions of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men - the language of real life In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven⁶

Thus, Marx's interpretation of history involves a critique of philosophy and its attempt to privilege ideas as independent agents of history. The real agents, for Marx, are not abstract ideas but real human beings engaged in the process of social production. This has been clearly reflected in the following statement.

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of produc-

5. G.W.F. Hegel, op.cit, p., 457.

6. K. Marx and F. Engels, The German Ideology, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, p., 42. By German Philosophy Marx here refers to the German idealist philosophy represented by E. Kant, G.W.F. Hegel etc.

tion constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.⁷

2.I (2) Marx's Concept of Social Change

Regarding the mechanism of change Marx followed the Hegelian dialectic. For Hegel change takes place through the continuous clash of opposing forces.⁸ For Hegel, the contradictions between actuality and potentiality are ideal in characters. The resolution of the contradiction between the two makes the movement of the spirit of reason possible. Marx accepts his dialectical logic but does not adhere to the belief that concrete progress takes place in the realm of ideas.

7. Karl. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, pp., 20-21.

8. Hegel has explained his dialectic in The Phenomenology of Mind. 'This dialectic [is one] which consciousness executes on itself - on its knowledge as well as on its object - in the sense that out of it the new and true object arises....' (G.W.F. Hegel, op.cit, p., 142). Cf. Hearn, op.cit., p., 60:

As the standards of reason become more completely and clearly known, new ideas, more closely approximating potentiality contradict established ideas and ultimately this contradiction is resolved when arrangements compatible with new ideas replace those justified by the old.

Marx tries to locate this progress in the concrete material practices of human beings. Individuals in quest for material existence create the forces of production and enter into certain social relations at a particular point of time in history. Concrete social progress takes place and more rational social order comes into being, when the progressive rationalisation of the productive forces render the existing relations of production obsolete. Such social transformation is carried out by a struggle⁹ between the class which tries to hold on to the old or existing relations of production and the emergent class which represents new relations consistent with technologically, developed

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9. The crux of the transformation is that in Marx dialectical logic is conceptualised in terms of a class struggle. A particular stage of the development of the productive forces and corresponding relations of production determine the nature of the society at the point of time in history. However, for Marx, concrete social change is brought about through a class struggle involving human beings. Thus, from slavery to capitalism changes have been brought about by successive class struggles. Even the shift from capitalism to socialism has to be brought about by the proletariat (the deprived lot under capitalism). This is the reason Marx argues that 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles' (Karl Marx, The Manifesto of the Communist Party, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, p., 40).

The proletariat would free the productive forces from the obstacles of private ownership and private appropriation. Socialism is the most rational stage because it would lead to the withering away of private property and irrationalities of class relationships in communism.

productive forces. Only with the emergence of new relations can the potential for greater freedom found in the more developed productive forces be realized.

Thus, Marx treats notions of reason and freedom in concrete terms, locating them in material practices of human beings. Because of this, in his interpretation of history, each successive socio-economic formation signifies a qualitative improvement over its predecessor. Therefore, history in Marx is the progressive movement toward reason and freedom, which will culminate in the emergence of communism, the most rational and most free order of existence.

2.I (3) Marx's Critique of Capitalism

The inevitability of socialism and subsequently of communism is grounded in his critique of the capitalist mode of production. Capitalism in Marx's treatment of history is a qualitative improvement over the socio-economic formations preceding it. Marx himself was aware of the revolutionising nature of the capitalist mode of production, poetically describing the bourgeois epoch in the following manner:

Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance or all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of

ancient and venerable prejudices are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into the air...¹⁰

However, the revolutionary nature of the bourgeois epoch did not blind Marx to its irrationalities of class relations and its exploitative nature. Marxist sociology is scientific not in the positivist sense of the term, for Marx never considered sense-perception as the ultimate criterion of truth. Herein lay the significance of Marx's critical theory of society. The critical nature of Marx's theory gets reflected in his critique of capitalist mode of production and irrationalities of class relations.

Accordingly, Marx developed his critical understanding of social reality to a point where the apparent rationality of capitalist society becomes a veil which masks the internal contradictions of capitalism. These contradictions become manifest as the exploitative nature of property relations sharpens. The irrationality of class relations under capitalism lead to the alienation of labour, commodification of social relationships.

10. Karl Marx, The Manifesto of the Communist Party, pp., 45-46.

Marx dwelt at length on alienation in the capitalist system to show how the dehumanizing nature of the capitalism limits the freedom of individuals. Marx's critique of capitalism mainly centres around the alienation of labour from the labourer's product and the production process.

These impersonal and objective economic laws together with division of labour separates mental from manual labour, thereby turning the wage-earner into a cog in the wheel of the capitalist scheme of things.

Alienation is produced by the institution of private property and the capitalist market system. The rationalisation of the productive forces under capitalism make labour free in the sense that the labourer is free to use his labour power. However, the existence of private property makes the wage-earner submit himself to the dictates of the capitalist. Labour power is purchased to produce goods which brought profit to the capitalist. The result is the loss of realization for the labourer in what he produced. The product of his labour confronts him as something alien to himself and this alienation accounts for his enslavement in capitalism. This has been brought out by Marx in the following manner:

the worker is related to the product of his labour as to an alien object The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence but it exists outside him, independently as something alien to him and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him.¹¹

Thus, the capitalist market transforms labour into a commodity. In the commodity form the worker loses his labour as an experience of life power. This is what Marx calls the estrangement of labour from his species character. 'Species character' implies the advantage man has over animals. The animal, produces only under the domination of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom.¹² Thus, this estrangement stands for the denial of man's freedom to realise himself as a spontaneous creative being.

This estrangement is not limited to the sphere of production only, but reflected in other aspect of social life as well. Marx argues:

An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life activity ... is the estrangement of man ... from man, ... what applies to a man's rela-

11. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, pp., 68-69.

12. Ibid., p., 74.

tion to his work, to the product of his labour and to himself, also holds true of a man's relations to the other man, and to the other man's labour and object of labour.

In fact, the proposition that man's species nature is estranged from him means that one man is estranged from the other, as each of them is from man's essential nature.¹³

Thus, underlying the rationalisation of the productive forces under capitalism is the process of proletarianisation which reveals the internally contradictory and irrational nature of capitalism. These contradictions ultimately provide the space for the rise of socialism as a negation of capitalism. Of course, the contradictions in capitalism will sharpen only after capitalism has fulfilled all the inner potentials for which it came into being.

No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.¹⁴

Marx always makes a distinction between the contradictions present in a particular mode of production that has to be studied scientifically and individual's consciousness

13. Ibid., pp., 74-75.

14. Karl. Marx, A contribution to the critique of Political Economy, p., 21.

about those contradictions and his ability to fight them out.

Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and relations of production.¹⁵

However, the shift from capitalism to socialism, argues Marx, will not take place automatically, despite the contradictions prevalent in the society. The proletariat as a conscious class will have to wage a struggle against the capitalists and capitalist property relations and sacrifice capitalism upon the revolutionary altar of socialism.

Herein, lies the practical aspect of Marx's critical theory of society. It is a praxis which sensitises us to the critique he evolves of his time and the solution he offers as an integral part of that critique.

15. Ibid., p.,21.

Section - II

WEBER'S REFLECTIONS ON RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM IN MODERNITY.

.Whereas, for Marx, alienation in modern capitalist society results from the process of commodification of social labour, for Weber, alienation of individual is closely linked to the process of rationalisation triggered off by modernity itself. Weber conceives of the advent of modernity in terms of societal rationalisation. Such process of rationalisation is sustained by the development and institutionalisation of science. The development of scientific knowledge puts theoretical knowledge to rigidly followed principles of empirical validation. The process of rationalisation is also linked to the development of the institutions of formal law based on scientific jurisprudence. The scientific temper of the age is manifest in the increasing separation of 'business'¹⁶ and 'household'¹⁷. This separation is strictly maintained in order to judge the efficiency of an individual engaged in such business in terms of rational and scientific principles and not in terms of his

16. M. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism, translated by T. Parsons, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1958 p., 21.

17. Ibid., p., 22.

psychological make-up or cultural baggage. Thus, this rationalisation is integrally connected with the capitalist economic ethic of rational management of economic sphere. Weber tried to trace this economic spirit of capitalism to the origin and development of Protestantism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Just as the development of economic rationalism is dependent on rational technique and rational law, [so] it is also determined by the ability and disposition of men to adopt certain types of practically rational conduct.¹⁸

However, for Weber, this rationalism which characterises the modern world appears in the form of technical rationality. Such rationality connects a means to an end in the best possible manner. For Weber, such instrumental rationality instead of making individuals free stifles individual freedom and creativity. Individual gets alienated from his self as well as soul.

Before we move on to the discussion of the nature of this instrumental rationality we will try to see how Weber, saw the roots of this process of rationalisation in the origin and development of the ethic of Protestantism.

18. Ibid., p., 26.

2.II.(1) The origin of the process Rationalisation

According to Weber, the Protestant ethic emerged as a reaction against the old religious order. And it emerged with a very different attitude towards life and the ethics of life. At the centre of Calvinism was the faith in an absolute God. However, Calvinism believed that salvation lay in this worldly activities. Since individuals were uncertain about their fate in the other world, the only way to realise God's kingdom on earth was through intense this worldly activities. Calvinism's commitment to this-worldly activities laid down the material foundation of capitalism. It encouraged intense economic activities, commercial profit making hitherto contested and reacted against by the older religious belief. Some of the Calvinist principles like reduced consumption, forced savings, interest on loans, renunciation of pleasure encouraged directly the growth of capitalism. In the words of Weber,

..... the religious valuation of restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly calling,, and at the same time the surest and most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith, must have been the most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion of that attitude toward life which we have here called the spirit of capitalism.¹⁹

19. Ibid., p., 172.

Following Weber we can say that the pragmatism of the Protestant ethic encouraged the economic entrepreneurship of the bourgeoisie. Inherent in this pragmatism was a rational attitude which certainly created a ground for a scientific view of the world. 'Only ascetic Protestantism', argues Weber, 'completely eliminated magic and the supernatural quest for salvation of which the highest form was intellectualist, contemplative illumination'.²⁰ Thus, Protestantism in its attempt to overcome the mythical past and all that was regressive triggered off a process of social rationalisation.

2.II.(2) Rationalisation and Institutionalisation of Purposive-instrumental Rationality.

For Weber, modernisation is essentially a process of societal rationalisation. This societal rationalisation leads to what Weber calls, 'disenchantment of the world'.²¹ This particular phrase in the Weberian sociology implies

20. N. Weber, Economy and Society, Vol. I (ed.) by G. Roth and C. Wittich, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1978, p., 630.

21. M. Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', in P. Lassman and I. Velody (ed.) with H. Martins, Max Weber's Science as a Vocation, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989, p., 13.

that this process of rationalisation renders the mythical and traditional world views obsolete. Now science would be applied to understanding and exploring nature and social processes. With the societal rationalisation nature is dispossessed of its hidden qualities. It is the age of scientific rationality, where everything is explained in terms of scientific logic. Therefore, nothing is mythical or magical, everything is transparent and amenable to science and scientific rationality.

One need no longer have recourse to magic in order to control or implore spirits, as did savage for whom such powers existed. Technology and calculation [that is, the scientific rationality] achieve that, and this more than anything else means intellectualisation.²²

By 'intellectualisation', Weber means that this rationalisation brought changes in the intellectual orientation of the individual. The growing scientisation, it was assumed, would increase the scientific knowledge of the individual.

Weber, 'designates as rationalisation every expansion of empirical knowledge, of predictive capacity, of instrumental, and organizational mastery of empirical

22. Ibid., pp., 13-14.

processes'.²³ Weber constantly refers to these principles of calculation, quantification mainly because he sees in this process of rationalisation the predominance of instrumental rationality.

For Weber, scientific rationality is instrumental in attaining certain well-defined ends or goals. These goals or ends are easily calculable, quantifiable. The choice of means to attain certain ends points to the efficiency of the individual. Therefore, ability and efficiency of the individual constitute important aspects of this rationality. This rationality is based on the premise that, 'there are in principle no mysterious, incalculable powers at work, but rather that one could in principle master everything through calculation'.²⁴

The spread of this instrumental rationality results from the institutionalisation of science in modern society. In this case Habermas' views about Weber seem worth-mentioning. '.... Weber explains', argues Habermas, 'the institutionalisation of purposive rational economic action

23. J. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. I, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p., 159.

24. M. Weber, 'Science as a Vocation,' in P. Lassman and I. Velody, op.cit., p., 13.

first by way of the Protestant vocational culture and subsequently by way of the modern legal system'.²⁵

In fact, the roots of this purposive instrumental rationality, in Weber's thesis, may be traced back to the way Protestantism emphasised on intense this worldly activities. Its belief that one must lead dispassionate and goal-oriented life might have given the rise of instrumental rationality an institutional backing.

Different social institutions have sprung up to sustain and perpetuate the growing rationalisation of society. Bureaucracy and universal legal system, according to Weber, were foremost among them. Weber sees in the modern bureaucracy the social expression of this formal rationality. Formal rationality, for Weber, implies 'the extent of quantitative calculation or accounting which is technically possible and which is actually applied'.²⁶ Formal rationality is based on the separation between the ruler and the rules, between one's personal convictions and the rules and regulations (this reminds us of the distinction that Protestantism made between household and business). The centra-

25. J. Habermas, op.cit., p., 221.

26. M. Weber, Economy and Society, p., 85.

lised and hierarchical structure of bureaucracy, according to Weber, embodies the principles of formal rationality. Its strict adherence to rules and procedural details depersonalises bureaucracy and renders it appropriate to the rationalisation process in modern society.

'Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of files, continuity, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs,'²⁷ are, according to Weber, some of the characteristics of bureaucracy. These features, 'are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration Bureaucracy offers the attitudes demanded by the external apparatus of modern culture in the most favorable combination'.²⁸

According to Weber, bureaucracy is considered to be capable of rational action in so far as it manifests the traits mentioned above. Thus, bureaucracy with its emphasis on impersonal rules encourages and institutionalises goal-oriented behaviour in society.

27. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (ed.) and translated, From Max Weber, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1948, p.,214.

28. Ibid., pp., 214-16

Bureaucracy, for Weber, functions on the basis of division of labour, professional and technical qualifications. People are rule-bound. In fact rule-bound behaviour is what characterises almost all the major institutions of modern life. Even the legal system, concerned with the administration of justice, functions on the same principles as bureaucracy. All these institutions can run successfully only when they are able to eliminate, 'from official business love, hatred and all purely personal ... and emotional elements which escape calculation'.²⁹

For Weber, the predominance of instrumental rationality (formal rationality) was the source of unfreedom in modern society. The depersonalised structures erected by the institutions of modern life cripple individual faculties. Modern society's attempt to reduce material impoverishment of individuals has actually resulted in his mental impoverishment. The increasing rationalisation has produced, 'specialists without spirit, pleasure-seeking beings without a heart - these no ones make believe that they have risen to

29. M. Weber, Economy and Society, Vol. II, (ed.) by G. Roth, and C. Wittich, University of California Press, Los Angeles 1978, p., 975.

heights never before reached in the development of the human species'.³⁰

The modern society with its modern institutions has transformed individuals into the instruments of this de-personalised structure; individuals have become rational but such rationality is devoid of any social meaning. Lassman and Velody have observed this in the following manner.

..... Weber has made it clear that the new ethos of "matter of factness" has dissolved once and for all the ideal of a living relationship between science and culture.³¹

2.II.(3). Problem of Science and Freedom in Modern Society.

Weber is very critical of the way science is pursued in modern societies. Therefore, he asks, 'what is the vocation of science within the totality of human life and what is its value?'³²

30. M. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p., 339.

31. P. Lassman and I. Velody, Max Weber on Science, Disenchantment and the Search for Meaning, in Lassman and Velody (ed.) op.cit., p., 181.

32. M. Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' in P. Lassman and I Velody (ed.) op.cit., p., 14.

Weber asks this question because he is very skeptical about the way the value or, what he calls, the 'inner vocation'³³ of science is being devalued in the academic as well as non-academic spheres.

In the modern society science is institutionalised, its results are oriented towards the systemic ends. There is a thorough going specialisation in the academic institutions. As a result science is also, 'a "vocation" conducted through specialist disciplines to serve the cause of reflection on the self and knowledge of relationships between facts, and not a gift of grace from seers and prophets dispensing sacred values and revelation.'³⁴ It is this disinterestedness which characterises the pursuit of science in modern society. Thus, science has been reduced to a dispassionate vocation. And for Weber, 'nothing is worth anything to a man, as a man, if he cannot do it with passion.'³⁵

According to Weber this kind of attitude towards science as a panacea for all social ills, has led to the spread and dominance of instrumental rationality. In the

33. Ibid., p., 8.

34. Ibid., p., 27.

35. Ibid., p., 9.

academic sphere, argues Weber, the pursuit of science has been related to researcher's achievement and promotion. The professional and administrative specialisation make the researcher get confined to a fragmented sphere of his specialisation. Similarly, in non-academic sphere technical knowledge is required for bureaucratic control of social life. For Weber, individuals have become the prisoners of this technical life. They are not free as autonomous thinking beings. The prevalence of objective laws and scientific rules have led to the eclipse of freedom of the individuals. In the following passage Weber has brilliantly captured the fate of modern society.

Not one of us who travels on trams has any idea of how trams come to move unless he is a physicist. He, [more importantly,] does not need to know anything about it. He is satisfied if he can 'count on the behaviour' of the tram; The savage knows incomparably more about his tools [he] knows how he manages to come by his daily bread.³⁶

The above passage clearly points to the atomised existence of the individual. He fails to realise himself in his vocation.

36. Ibid., p., 13.

Thus, it is the triumph of technical rationality which has deprived the individual of his inner freedom. The result is the confinement of the individual and his fragmented existence. The rationalisation of modern life, especially as manifest in organisational form in bureaucracy, brings into being the "cage" within which men are increasingly confined.³⁷

However, for Weber, the dehumanising consequences of instrumental rationality will not be overcome with the coming of the socialist societies. Here Weber differs significantly from Marx. Weber argues that socialism based on centralised planning would, in fact, require a still higher degree of formal bureaucratization than capitalism.³⁸

Thus, Weber ends on a pessimistic note about the fate of rationality and freedom in modern society. The modern society instead of making individuals rational and free has actually deprived them of both.

In this chapter we have tried to evolve a comparative analysis of the views of Marx and Weber on rationality and

37. A. Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p., 184.

38. M. Weber, . The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, translated by A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons, Free Press, New York, 1947. p., 339.

freedom in modern society. We have seen the optimism in Marx and pessimism in Weber. Marx, despite his critique of modern capitalism, could visualise a rational and free society. Weber, on the other hand, was quite pessimistic about the fate of modernity. Both of them tried to evolve a critical perspective on modern society. This critical perspective will serve as a background to our subsequent discussion of 'rationality and freedom in modernity' in the select writings of the critical theorists.

CHAPTER - 3

TOTALISED CRITIQUE OF RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM IN MODERNITY : ANALYSIS OF DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT OF HORKHEIMER AND ADORNO AND EROS AND CIVILIZATION AND ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN OF MARCUSE.

In this chapter we will try to examine the critical perspective developed by the Frankfurt school theorists on modernity. In order to delimit the scope of our enquiry we have chosen here the three representative figures of this school and their select writings. The representative figures under consideration are Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. The writings chosen for analysis are three of the seminal texts of this school: Dialectic of Enlightenment by Horkheimer and Adorno and Eros and Civilization and One-Dimensional Man by Marcuse.

Here, we will separately discuss the writings of Horkheimer and Adorno and Marcuse. For this purpose we have divided this chapter into two sections. In the first section we will discuss the writing (Dialectic of Enlightenment) of Horkheimer and Adorno. In the second section we will discuss the other two writings (Eros and Civilization and One-Dimensional Man) of Marcuse.

However, our purpose in both the sections would be to see how they have evolved a totalised critique of rationality and freedom in modernity. We will try to see how their critique of instrumental rationality and unfreedom in modern society is reflected in the writings that we have chosen. therefore, we will not be interested so much in the differences between these important figures of the Frankfurt school as their similarities.

As has already been mentioned, in the first section we will discuss Dialectic of Enlightenment. However, before we move on to the discussion of the work, we should consider, in brief, the intellectual and social background to the emergence of a critique of this kind.

Section -I

3.I. TOTALISED CRITIQUE OF RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM IN MODERNITY : ANALYSIS OF DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT OF HORKHEIMER AND ADORNO.

3.I.(1) Marxism Reinterpreted : An Intellectual Background to the Frankfurt School.

From the beginning of the twentieth century the Marxists were divided amongst themselves over the interpretation of Marxism as a theory of society. The orthodox Marxists adhered to the view that the laws of history and the contradictions of capitalism that Marx depicted would automatically generate revolution. The non-orthodox section, on the other hand, emphasised the importance of revolutionary consciousness. It was essentially a debate over the relative primacy of the objective and subjective conditions of revolution.

However, the failure of the Second International resulting in the first world war and the defeat of revolutionary upsurges in the European countries like Hungary, Italy raised certain problems with orthodox interpretation. The non-orthodox Marxists criticised the orthodox interpretation for neglecting the importance of revolutionary will and

consciousness. Such critique is clearly reflected in the writings of Antonio Gramsci and Georg Luckács. Gramsci¹ was very critical of these orthodox and deterministic trends in Marxism. He contested all attempts to reduce Marxism into a positive science.

Reflecting on Gramsci's concept of Marxism Leszek Kolakowski argues that Gramsci revised Marxism. 'Gramsci' dreamed of a Marxism that would be a kind of synthesis of

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1. The Gramscian Sociology was antipositivist, for Gramsci viewed with suspicion any mode of theorising that excludes the moments of history and specificity of consciousness.

Positivist sociology, unable to tackle the problem of the relationship between social consciousness and reality limits itself to evolution so that knowledge remains value-free. 'In reality one can "scientifically" foresee only the struggle but not the concrete moments of the struggle, which cannot but be the results of opposing forces in continuous movement which are never reducible to fixed quantities since within them quantity is continually becoming quality.' (Source: Antonio Gramsci, selections from Prison Note Books, hereafter P.N., International Publishers, New York, 1987, p., 438).

Therefore, Gramsci would frown upon any brand of Marxism which accepted principles of positivism and thereby evolved certain deterministic laws regarding the movement of history. Gramsci's Marxism was reflexive and critical. He subjected Bukharin's orthodox Marxism to a critique.

'The scientific base for a morality of historical materialism is to be looked for, in my opinion, in the affirmation that "society does not pose for itself tasks the conditions for whose resolution do not already exist." Where these conditions exist "the solution of the tasks becomes 'duty', 'will' becomes free".' (Source : Antonio Gramsci, P.N., p., 410).

humanism and the Reformation avoiding the ritual crudity of a popular world-view but preserving its appeal to the masses while acquiring the ability to solve complex cultural problems.²

Georg Luckács also emphasised the role of the proletariat in his critique of the deterministic trends in Marxism.

When the moment of transition to the 'realm of freedom' arrives this will become apparent just because the blind forces really will hurtle blindly towards the abyss, and only the conscious will of the proletariat will be able to save mankind from impending catastrophe. In other words, when the final economic crisis of capitalism develops, the fate of the revolution ... will depend on the ideological maturity of the proletariat i.e., on its class consciousness.³

Weber's analysis of rationalisation of modern life had an impact on Luckács's understanding of modern society. Luckács tried to incorporate Weber's analysis of rationalisation into Marx's critique of political economy. Luckács tried to understand rationalisation in terms of 'reifica-

2. L.Kolakowaski, Main Currents of Marxism, Vol.3, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, p., 243.

3. G.Luckács, History and Class Consciousness, translated by R. Livingstone, Merlin Press, London, 1974, p.,70.

tion'.⁴ For Luckács, reification referred to the triumph of the commodification of social relations. However, Luckács's concept of reification was mainly to overcome the weberian pessimism which posed a challenge to Marx's theory. Luckács argued that the problem of reification which had its roots in 'commodity fetishism' would disappear with the breakdown of capitalism. The breakdown of capitalism would also end the 'iron cage' of rationality.

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4. Luckács's argued- 'If we follow the path taken by labour in its development from the handicrafts via-cooperation and manufacture to machine industry we can see a continuous trend to wards greater rationalisation, the progressive elimination of the qualitative, human, individual attributes of the worker. On the one hand the process of labour is progresely broken down into abstract, rational, specialised operations so that the worker loses contact with the finished product and his work is reduced to the machanical repeation of a specialised set of actions. On the other hand, the period of time necessary for work to be accomplished (which forms the basis of rational calculation) is converted, as mechanisation and rationalisation are intensified, from a merely empirical average figure to an objectively calculable work-stint that confornts the worker as a fixed and established reality. With the modern "psychological" analysis of the work-progress (in Taylorism), this rational mechanisation extends right into the worker's "soul": even his psychological attributes are separated from his total personality and placed in opposition to it so as to facilitate their integration into specialised rational system and their reduction to statistically viable concepts.' (Source: Georg Luckacs, op.cit., p., 88).

For Luckács, this was what led to the 'reification', of the consciousness of the proletariat. However, this reification gradually decreases with the increase in the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat.

Thus, there was an intellectual climate which might have had an influence on the orientation of some of the prominent figures of the Frankfurt School of Social Research like Horkheimer, Adorno and later Marcuse.

3.I.(2) The Institute For Social Research.

Felix Weil, a sympathiser of the futile German revolution, established the first Marxist research institute at Frankfurt, in Germany in 1923. The institute was set up on the conviction that despite the failure of German Revolution a socialist revolution was still possible. The institute was affiliated to Frankfurt University in 1923 with Albert Gerlach becoming its first director. Carl Grunberg, who succeeded him was a committed Marxist and believed that Marxism as a scientific critique and a world view contained all the possibilities for a radical social transformation.

In 1930 Max Horkheimer(1895-1973) became the director and central figure of the institute. He was a psychologist and philosopher by training. His ideas were clearly reflected in a series of writings between 1926 and 1931 and published in 1934 as Dammerung (dawn and twilight). With Adorno he authored one of the seminal texts of the institute

with which we are concerned in this chapter - Dialectic of Enlightenment (in 1944). Another important work of Horkheimer is Eclipse of Reason (in 1947).

Another important figure of the institute whom we are concerned with in this chapter was Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1903-1970). Adorno joined the institute in the late twenties. he was a philosopher, musicologist and composer. He obtained his doctorate with a study of Husserl and wrote his thesis on Kierkegaard's Aesthetics. Some of the important works of Adorno are Dialectic of Enlightenment (which he wrote with Horkheimer), Negative Dialectics (translated version in 1973), philosophy of Modern Music (translated version in 1973), Against Epistemology: A Metacritique (translated version in 1982) etc.

When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, the institute could not function. Some of the prominent members went to the United States. Horkheimer and Adorno spent the war years in New York and Los Angeles and produced their major works in the United States only. So Dialectic of Enlightenment which we would try to analyse in this chapter was authored by them in the United States in 1947.

We have attempted a brief account of the institute and the biographical sketches of two of the prominent represen-

tatives of this institute, with whom are concerned. We will now briefly discuss the programme of the institute in the early thirties before we finally move on to Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of rationality and freedom in modernity as reflected in their work, Dialectic of Enlightenment.

3.I.(3). The Institute's Critical Attachment To Marxism.

Ever since its inception critical theory had been influenced by the critical spirit of Marxism. Marx's vision of a rational and free social order had helped in shaping the non-conformist spirit of the critical social theory. Reflecting on the nature of critical theory Douglas Kellner argues,

critical theory is ...rooted in 'critical activity', which is oppositional and involved in a struggle for social change and the unification of theory and practice. 'critique', in this context therefore involves criticism of oppression and exploitation and the struggle for a better society.⁵

The theorists of the Frankfurt school were highly critical of the contradictions of the capitalist economy, bourgeois society and strongly committed to a socialist

5. D.Kellner, Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989, p., 46.

society. Theorists like Horkheimer were aware of the irrationalities of capitalist class relations and the exploitative nature of capitalism.

The capitalist system in the current phase is a world-wide system of organized exploitation. Its maintenance is the condition of immeasurable suffering. This society possesses in reality the human and technical means to abolish poverty in crudest material forms... only the property system stands in the way of its realization, that is, the condition that the gigantic apparatus of human production must function in the service of small group of exploiters.⁶

However, in spite of the alliance of the Frankfurt school members with Marxism, it was never an unqualified loyalty. The memories of the abortive German Revolution and failure of revolutions despite the objective conditions available in the advanced European countries made them sensitive to the limitations of orthodox interpretation of Marxism. They began to contest the claim of the orthodox Marxists that the contradictions and inner dynamics of capitalism would automatically lead to a socialist revolution. Rick Roderick has explained the position of the critical theorists vis-a-vis orthodox Marxism and positivist science in the following manner.

6. M.Horkheimer, Dawn and Decline, (p.,46) Quoted in D.Kelner, Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity, p.,15.

The Frankfurt school beginning with Horkheimer, was concerned with the problem of what I call social rationality. They located both the theoretical errors and practical failures in the tendency, common to 'orthodox' Marxism and 'positivism', to reduce what I have called Marx's concept of social rationality to scientific-technological rationality limited to its purely instrumental functions.

Their general aversion towards positivism, bourgeois science enabled them to start reformulating Marxian theory to make it more responsive to historically specific changes and experiences in modern society. Douglas Kellner has observed this trend towards reformulation of Marxian theory within the institute in the following manner.

This [that is, the attempts at reformulation] involved going beyond crude Marxian conceptions of the relation between basic and superstructure and the developing both a Marxist social psychology and a cultural theory so as to better analyse the mediations or connections between the economic base and the realms of superstructure as well as the changed role of culture and psychology within capitalist modernity.⁸

As a result the members of the institute tried to go beyond the economic critique of capitalist system into the other areas of the modern society. Thus Max Horkheimer and

7. R. Roderick, Habermas and the Foundations of Critical theory, p., 33.

8. D. Kellner, Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity, p., 22.

Herbert Marcuse were concerned with intellectual history and philosophy; Erich Fromm tried to develop a materialist social psychology; Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin were engaged in a critique of aesthetics and popular culture.

Underlying these diverse interests was a common objective that was to evolve a critique of positivist science or any knowledge system that has developed positivist tendency.

Dominant positivist conceptions of science, according to Horkheimer, are 'unhistorical'; and 'science' is not to be privileged above philosophy and social theory, although "materialism has in common with positivism that it acknowledge as real only what is given in sense experience," ... both sense perception and cognition are subject to social conditions and historical change; thus notions of absolute intuition, whether through the senses or cognition are to be rejected.⁹

However, the defeat of labour movement in Germany, the stalinist totalitarianism and Fascism led to a sense of disillusionment among the critical theorists. Instead of a socialist revolution and the consequent movement of history to a more rational and free order, they saw the dissolution of the revolutionary forces and their integration into the dominant order of the day. The stalinist authoritarian bureaucracy was thoroughly criticised. The critical theo-

9. Ibid., p., 30

rists distanced themselves from orthodox Marxism and turned to the discontents of modernity in general. Marcuse argued, 'without freedom and happiness in the social relations of human beings, even the greatest increase in production, even the abolition of private property in the means of production remains infected with old injustice.'¹⁰

The progressive bureaucratisation, tecnocratisation and the prevalence of exchange principles dominating human relationships turned all the Enlightenment promises into a hoax. They became highly critical of the unfree nature of the modern society.

All these historical developments shattered their faith in the potentials of technology. For them, technology, instead of becoming a source of liberation, had turned out to be an instrument of domination. The triumph of instrumental rationality resulted in the reification social relations.

Adorno was concerned with the impact of this technological rationality on art and culture. Adorno realised that in a technologically controlled society, art and culture

10. H. Marcuse, 'Philosophy & Critical Theory' in Negations, translated by J. Shapiro, Penguin Books Ltd., Hammondsworth, London, 1972, p.,144-45.

ceased to be the vehicles of critical consciousness and emancipation. Gradually they began to realise the end of all potentials for a socialist revolution. The growing rationalisation of society has exhausted all the possibilities for a critical transcendence.

The above discussion points to the fact that Luckács' concept of rationalisation as reification might have had an impact on the critical theorist's especially Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of the progressive rationalisation of society. However, unlike Luckács they became pessimistic with regard to any further possibility of a social reconstruction. They saw an 'iron-cage' of rationality from which there seems to be no escape. Out of such pessimism emerged Horkheimer's and Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment. Before we move on to the analysis of the text a brief outline of the work seems necessary.

3.I.(4). A Breif Outline of Dialectic of Enlightenment.

Dialectic of Enlightenment¹¹ of Horkheimer and Adorno was first published in New York in 1944 during their exile.

11. Published in 1944. Later it was translated by John Cumming and translated version was published in 1972 in New York.

Although the book is not always coherently structured and more often than not it is a collection of fragments and notes, its importance in the intellectual development of Frankfurt school can hardly be ignored. This book deals with what became one of the central concerns of the school in the 1940s - the rise and growth of instrumental reason.

In Dialectic of Enlightenment. The root of this instrumental reason had been traced back by Horkheimer and Adorno to the Enlightenment thought and its attitude towards nature. The rational control of nature through science and technology which the Enlightenment thought had encouraged was according to Horkheimer and Adorno essentially an instrumental view of nature. Nature was viewed as an object of manipulation. Thus Enlightenment was said to have degenerated into positivism.¹² Enlightenment presented a knowledge system that was 'totalitarian'.¹³

Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the paradox of Enlightenment was that it reverted back to mythical errors in its attempt to overcome them, for instrumental view of nature was present in a very rudimentary form in myth.

12. M.Horkheimer and T.W.Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, translated by John Cumming, Allen Lane, London, 1973, p.,X

13. Ibid., p.,24.

Horkheimer and Adorno had tried to explain this paradox of Enlightenment with reference to the Homeric tale, Odyssey. Odysseus - the mythic hero also represented the modern bourgeois subject, because the instinct of self-preservation made him master nature by rational calculation. The mythic hero tried to adapt to nature by imitating it, whereas the 'subjective spirit which cancels the animation of nature can master a despiritualized nature only by imitating its rigidity and despiritualizing itself in turn.'¹⁴

In the third chapter 'Excursus II : Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality' Horkheimer and Adorno tried to show how Enlightenment's emphasis on order, calculability control, led to a totally administered society.

In chapter four Horkheimer and Adorno are concerned with the way culture industry in modern society had robbed individual of his critical consciousness. 'Culture now impresses the same stamp on everything. Films, radio, magazines makes up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part.'¹⁵

14. Ibid., p.,57.

15. Ibid., p.,120.

In the last chapter Horkheimer and Adorno criticised antisemitism and linked it to the dialectical relation between Enlightenment and domination. The book ends with a collage of observations which are a gloss on their own work.

3.I.(5). Dialectic of Enlightenment : Totalised Critique of Rationality and Freedom in Modernity.

Both Horkheimer and Adorno were sensitive to the discontents of modern society. Therefore, in their seminal work Dialectic of Enlightenment they, were concerned with discovering why mankind instead of entering into a truly human condition is sinking into a new kind of barbarism.¹⁶ They called into question the two important themes of modernity as an intellectual discourse - rationality and freedom. The alliance of reason and freedom which was based on the assumption that rationality and the progressive rationalisation of society would usher in a free society had dissolved. Under the compelling needs of capitalist society and technological civilization, rational organization of life was oriented towards achievement of certain well-defined goals. Therefore, reason was deprived of its criticality, its

16. Ibid., p., xi.

emancipatory potential, instrumentalised and reduced to a rationality, which was antagonistic to freedom.

The fallen nature of modern man can not be separated from social progress. On the one hand the growth of economic productivity furnishes the condition for a world of greater justice; on the other hand it allows the technical apparatus and the social groups which administer it a disproportionate superiority to the rest of the population. The individual is wholly devalued in relation to economic powers which at the same time press the control of society over nature to hitherto unsuspected heights.¹⁷

Thus, the domination of nature was one of the central themes which came under attack in Dialectic of Enlightenment. Horkheimer and Adorno argued that science and Enlightenment reason aimed at the domination of nature. This had been clearly reflected in Francis Bacon's ideas of Enlightenment and science. 'The program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and substitution of knowledge for fancy.'¹⁸

According to Adorno's and Horkheimer '... the Enlightenment concept refers to nature as essentially pure matter, structured according to laws and capable of being known

17. Ibid., p., xiv.

18. Ibid. pp., 3-4.

through a mathematically formulated universal science.¹⁹ Therefore, the only rational attitude that could be adopted with respect to nature was one of controlling and manipulating it.

Because of this instrumental attitude towards nature, Horkheimer and Adorno believe that Enlightenment rationality contains elements of myth. To the Enlightenment thinkers myth was essentially superstition and unconscious error and therefore Enlightenment reason was an attempt at overcoming these errors through rational acts. However, Adorno and Horkheimer in their ingenuine style show how the essential dualism between man and nature, is also found, at a rudimentary level, in myth.

For Adorno and Horkheimer inherent in myth and magic was also an instrumentalist view of nature. The basic purpose behind the magical practices was to acquire control over nature so that the ancient people be free from its frightening forces. This is the reason why Adorno and Horkheimer argued that manipulation and control of nature can be traced back to pre-modern modes of existence.

19. D. Held, Introduction to Critical Theory, Hutchinson, London, 1983, p., 152.

However, they make it clear that the modus-operandi is what distinguishes mythic view of nature from that of the Enlightenment. 'Like Science, Magic Pursues aims, but seeks to achieve them by mimesis - not by progressively distancing itself from the object.'²⁰

The Enlightenment starts with a radical disjunction between humans and nature. This is rational because it would eliminate the basic principle of myth, that is the principle of, 'anthropomorphism, the projection onto the nature of the subjective.'²¹

Mimetic modes of behaviour were acts of empathy with natural forces. There was always an attempt to evolve a communicative dialogue with nature because of its inherent powers or hidden qualities. However, in the view of Enlightenment, nature was disenchanting, dispossessed of the hidden qualities and reduced to an object. A successful relation with nature can be established not by way of communicative interaction but through distanciation and instrumental transformation. The suppression of anthropomorphic and mimetic impulses was consistent with the Enlightenment

20. M. Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, op.cit., p., 11.

21. Ibid., p., 6.

conception of subject as the embodiment of rational and authentic knowledge. Whoever resigns himself to life without any rational reference to self presentation would according to the Enlightenment - and protestantism - regress to prehistory.²²

Therefore, it is no wonder that the predominance of such rationality would affect the social life as well. Modern society experiences the rationalisation of this instinct of self-preservation which makes human beings subservient to the logic of production and exchange.

Instrumental rationality and positivistic science complement each other. In positivistic science knowledge about the object is achieved through distantiating from the object, otherwise knowledge may get vitiated by subjective factors like emotions, individual predilections etc. Such objective rationality treats individuals and their experiences as objects, amenable to classification, calculation, quantification. The rationale behind such approach is to give such diverse realities, experiences a semblance of order, homogeneity as would be appropriate to growing technocratisation and commodification in modern society.

22. Ibid., p., 29.

Bourgeois Society is ruled by equivalence. It makes the dissimilar comparable by reducing it to abstract quantities. To the Enlightenment, that which does not reduce to numbers, and ultimately to the one, becomes illusion, modern positivism writes it off as literature.²³ [Criticising this formal rationality, Horkheimer and Adorno further argued] that the absurdity of state of affairs in which the enforced power of the system over men grows with every step that takes it out of the power of nature, denounces the rationality of the rational society as obsolete.²⁴

Thus, this oppressive power of instrumental rationality suppressed the consciousness contrary to that of the established order. The critical faculty of reason which frees human beings and opens his eyes beyond the immediate established order is lost. The unfree nature of modern society results from the prevalence of this instrumental reason. Instrumental reason results in the domination and integration of all critical faculties and leads to the emergence of a totally administered society.

Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the rationalisation of the instinct of self preservation leads to the production of mass society. And mass society, for its own maintenance, evolves rules of equivalence, abstraction to protect the

23. Ibid., p.,7.

24. Ibid., pp.38-9.

established order and control deviation. The society they had on mind was the Facist. Nevertheless, such critique was also extended to capitalist societies as well as socialist totalitarian society like Russia.

For the rulers, men become material just as nature as a whole is material for society. After short intermezzo of liberalism, in which the bourgeois kept one another in check, domination appears as archaic terror in a facistically rationalized form.²⁵

Adorno and Horkheimer look back critically at the Kantian concept of pure reason. As the transcendental, supra-individual self, reason comprises the idea of a free, human social life in which men organize themselves as the universal subject and overcome the conflict between pure and empirical reason in the conscious solidarity of the whole.²⁶

However, Adorno and Horkheimer maintains that this remained a utopia. Instead, what happened in modern society was the transformation of pure reason into an abstract rationality consistent with modernity's love of system, order, hierarchy coordination. The result is totally administered society.

25. Ibid., p.87.

26. Ibid., p., 83.

... reason constitutes the court of judgement of calculation, which adjusts the world for the ends of self preservation and recognizes no function other than the preparation of object from mere sensory material in order to make it the material of subjugation. ... Everything - even the human individual, not to speak of animal, - is converted into the repeatable, replaceable process, into a mere example for the conceptual models of the system.²⁷

Adorno and Horkheimer were writing at a time when Facism was already defeated. However, the defeat of Facism, for them, does not brighten the prospect of freedom; it would not : → → argue Horkheimer and Adorno, 'lead to a movement of the avalanche.'²⁸ Dialectic of Enlightenment is not only a critique of Facism or Nazism but of the manifestation of the Enlightenment reason in the form of purposive, bureaucratic rationality. Such rationality has engulfed societies of both types, capitalist or socialist and ultimately led to the eclipse of freedom.

3.1(6) Critique of Culture Industry.

Adorno's and Horkheimer's uneasiness with the instrumentalisation of reason is reflected also in their sharp

27. Ibid., pp., 83-4.

28. Ibid., p., 221.

critique of the 'culture industry'²⁹ and the marginalisation of authentic art forms.

This is a particular field in which Adorno relentlessly contests all attempts at the instrumentalisation, standardisation of critical art forms. In Dialectic of Enlightenment they evolved a critique of the way culture was falling prey to the growing process of rationalisation and standardisation. The critical art forms are being pushed to the margin by the culture industry where modern technologies are producing cultural artefacts for the mass society. It is an industry for manufacturing identical needs and tastes thereby encouraging conformity with the logic of the administered society.

A technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself... . It has made the technology of the culture industry no more than the achievement of standardization and mass production, sacrificing whatever involved a distinction between the logic of the work and that of the social system.³⁰

The critique of culture industry developed by Adorno and Horkheimer helps to explain how consumerist ethos

29. Ibid., p., 120 (this phrase is part of the title of Chap. 4.).

30. Ibid., p., 121.

produce a well-integrated modern capitalist society and dissolves proletarian consciousness.

However, Douglas Kellner notices an ambivalence of Horkheimer and Adorno with respect to classical Marxism. He argues, "on the one hand the theory is a part of the foundation for the critical theory of society, replacing the critique of political economy which had previously been the foundation for social theories in the Marxian tradition. Yet, in other ways, the analysis of the culture industry employs Marxian arguments by stressing capitalist control of culture, the commodification and reification of culture, its ideological functions and the ways in which it integrates individuals into capitalist society."³¹

However, in response to the argument of Kellner one can say that the critical faculty of Marxist theory was never ignored by Horkheimer and Adorno. At the same time the gradual demise of the hope of proletarian revolutions sensitised them to the unfree nature of the modern society. Culture industry and totally administered society by means of manipulation of desires and creation of identical needs have homogenised dissimilar individuals, deprived them of

31. D. Kellner, Critical Theory Marxism and Modernity, pp., 131-2.

their capacity for critical transcendence. In a totally administered society individuals are no longer aware of their differences, as they have become parts of an organised whole.

Possibilities of freedom exist when there exists the possibility of a critical consciousness which can identify the discontents of the dominant mode of existence. However, the possibility of such consciousness is lost in a society marked by a 'having mode of existence'.³²

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32. Erich Fromm - another pillar of the Frankfurt School for Social Research coined this term in his masterpiece, To Have or To Be? 'Having mode of existence' refers to the acquisitive spirit of the modern industrial age sustained by 'culture industry', and the growing instrumentalisation of almost every aspect of social life.

The emergence of mass consumerist society provides freedom of choice. Fromm argued, 'Men and, increasingly, women experienced a new sense of freedom; they became the masters of their own lives....' (Source E. Fromm, To Have or To Be? Abacus, London, 1982, p., 11).

However, Fromm immediately asked the question, was it really the freedom that the enlightenment promised? 'The dream of being independent masters of our lives ended when we began awakening to the fact that we have all become cogs in the bureaucratic machine with our thoughts, feelings, and tastes manipulated by government and industry and mass communications that they control'. Source: E. Fromm, op.cit., p-12).

Thus, Fromm would agree with Adorno and Horkheimer on the absence of freedom in modern society. The dominance of technocratic rationality had led to the eclipse of 'being mode of existence', a mode of existence which, in Fromm's view, allows for the possibilities of critical transcendence.

Horkheimer and Adorno were concerned with the way the culture industry extends into the heart and soul of the people. It impoverishes individuals mentally and intellectually. This is the reason why Horkheimer and Adorno argue that Enlightenment's rationality proves to be a 'mass deception'.³³

The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises. The promissory note which, with its plots and staging, it draws an pleasure is endlessly prolonged; the promise which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory : all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached.³⁴

This is the reason why Adorno is more often than not drawn towards the credibility of authentic art forms, for they resist integration into the logic of culture industry. He sees in them a possibility for critical transcendence in the age of mechanical reproduction. Therefore, the possibility of freedom in Adorno is closely related to the autonomy of these artforms.

Often Adorno is accused of providing an elitist notion of culture. This elitist bias is claimed to have been

33. M. Horkheimer, T.W. Adorno, op.cit., p.,120 (From the chapter heading of the fourth chap.).

34. Ibid., p.,139.

reflected in his distinction between authentic art and mass culture. Adorno was very critical of modern technology and industry; he was averse to any kind of mass art. He equated mass art with a consciousness that was technologically produced and therefore reified. This was the reason why Adorno, had only contempt for indigenous forms of popular art he encountered in his exile. Eurocentric to the last, Adorno never felt any real sympathy for American, let alone more primitive forms of culture outside of the west."³⁵

In fact Adorno had serious differences with Walter Benjamin. Benjamin argued that progressive technological innovation would deprive high art of its auratic quality and politicise it. The techniques used in modern art forms would make room for progressive mass culture.

However, Adorno's general aversion to the standardisation and rationalisation of modern society made him suspicious about the possibility of a popular art. In fact, he also differed from Herbert Marcuse who at least had faith in the blues and jazz as critical art forms. This particular aspect of Adorno's ideas had thrown him open to criticism. A question arises as to whether Adorno in his attempt

35. M. Jay, Adorno, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 120.

to mount a critique of the established order ignored the relevance of mass consciousness. Martin Jay argues that it is true that Adorno ^{was} skeptical about of mass culture. However, his pessimism also comes from the way he experienced some of the negative aspects of modern society. Jay explains this ambiguity in Adorno in the following manner.

That Adorno felt especially unsympathetic towards what passed for popular culture is, however, undeniable. Indeed at times he clearly prejudged its significance, as he later admitted when he confessed his visceral reaction to the very word "jazz". But his hostility came less from the conservative mandarin conviction that the revolt of the masses had polluted the temples of culture than from his belief that the culture of the masses was wholly synthetic concoction cynically imposed on them from above. Rather than cultural chaos or anarchy, the current situation was one of tight regimentation and control.³⁶

Thus, Horkheimer and Adorno evolved a total critique of the modern society as well as of modernity as an intellectual discourse. We can say with some amount of certitude that their critique contains traces of the Weberian pessimism. Modern society, for them, presents a rational whole, from which there seems to be no escape.

36. Ibid., p., 119

Section II

TOTALISED CRITIQUE OF RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM IN MODERNITY : ANALYSIS OF MARCUSE'S EROS AND CIVILIZATION AND ONE- DIMENSIONAL MAN

In this section we will try to analyse two important works of Herbert Marcuse in order to see how he has evolved a total critique of rationality and freedom in modernity. The works that we will analyse are : Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud and One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society. Here our concern will be to show how Marcuse's initial optimism as reflected in his experiment with Freud in Eros and Civilization turns into a total critique of rationality and freedom in modernity in One-Dimensional Man. Before we move on to the analysis of the two works we will try to give a brief account of Marcuse's intellectual biography and of certain general traits of his idea as a member of the Frankfurt school of Social Research.

3.II.(1) An Outline of the Intellectual Biography of Marcuse and the General Characteristics of his Ideas.

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) belonged to the Social Democratic party in 1917-18, but left it following the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Liebknecht. He wrote his dissertation on Hegel and received his doctoral degree. He wrote a number of articles before he emigrated from Germany during Hitler's rule. He spent a year in Switzerland and then went to the United States. In New York he joined the Institute for Social Research which was shifted from Frankfurt to the United States when Hitler came to power in Germany. He worked with Horkheimer, Adorno and other important members of the Institute. During the war he served in the office of strategic services. However, he stayed in the United States even after the wars were over and, unlike Horkheimer and Adorno, did not come back to Germany. Therefore, almost all his important works were written in the United States. The two of his major works that we will analyse in this section were done by Marcuse during his stay in the United States. He taught in various Universities in the U.S.A. (Columbia, Harvard etc.) till he retired in 1970.

Some of his important works are Reason and Revolution (in 1941), Eros and Civilization (in 1955), Soviet Marxism (in 1958) and One-Dimensional Man (in 1964). He wrote a series of essays published in 1970 under the title Five Lectures : Psychoanalysis, Politics and Utopia.

Marcuse joined that Institute for social Research and was firmly committed to a critical theory of society. The experiences of 1930s and 40s made him aware of the need for a critical theory of society. He emphasised the role of reason in the development of the mental faculties of the individual. Marcuse stressed on the critical faculty of reason. Such criticality enlightens the individual and gives him autonomy of thought and action. Therefore, reason, for Marcuse has a special role in the development of social theories and understanding of social reality. Rationality without its critical fervour is reduced to mindless empiricism and deprived of its capacity to distinguish between appearance and essence. Nowhere is this view more significantly asserted than in Reason and Revolution. The life of reason appears in man's continuous struggle to comprehend what exists and to transform it in accordance with the truth

comprehended'.³⁷

Therefore, it is not surprising that such conception of rationality had to stand the test of time in the wake of Fascism, world wars, the stalinist dictatorship in Russia. The growing rationalisation of modern society, instead of encouraging autonomy of thought, was fast becoming a seat for conformist thinking. The fascist, communist and the advanced, capitalist societies of the day were all falling prey to the same grid of bureaucratisation, technocratisation. There evolved total administrative control over human relations so as not to provide room for deviations which would harm the systemic status quo. Thus, it is 'rationality without reason',³⁸ which characterises the modern societies.

37. H. Marcuse, Reason and Revolution; Routledge Kegan Paul, London, 1986, p., 10.

38. In Sociological Imagination (published in 1959) C. Wright Mills recapitulates Enlightenment project's allegiance to reason and freedom. Reason, for Enlightenment thinkers, would struggle against the chains of ancient regime and made individuals conscious of the irrationalities of the past. Only such critical consciousness could make people free thinking human beings. Freedom, for Mills is much more than doing what is found profitable or serves the immediate necessities of life.

However, Mills is saddled with the way modern society has jeopardised the values of reason and freedom. It is true that modern society makes possible the expansion of reason and freedom. However, such expansion is actually a process of rationalisation which reduces reason to an instrumental rationality. Instead of guiding human beings in determining their ends of life, it is institutionalised and used as an instrument in the efficient pursuit of certain institutionalised

Marcuse was concerned with the way instrumental rationality and the logic of totally administered society deprived individual of his true consciousness. Individuals were free in modern societies, but the limits of freedom were predetermined. Such limits are essential for a society where technological rationality reigns supreme. Technological rationality upholds a scientific attitude which relies for its sustenance on the principles of quantification calculation, standardisation. That is authentic which can be scientifically observed, calculated. Diverse and heterogeneous details have to be coordinated, standardised, homogenised so as to give them a semblance of unity. Like other members of the Frankfurt school Marcuse was also aware of the ill-effects of this process of rationalisation. He was also certain that the discontents of modern society were related in a way to the triumph of empiricism in social sciences.

...Continued...

goals. Such process of rationalisation is manifest in science, bureaucracy, and administration. This institutionalisation of reason has led to the eclipse of freedom of the individuals.

Freedom, for Mills, requires the active presence of reason to acquire the power of judgement and ability to go beyond what is immediate and apparent. 'The social task of reason is to formulate choices, to enlarge the scope of human decisions in the making of history'... freedom can not exist without an enlarged role of human reason in human affairs.' (source ; C.W. Mills, The Sociological Imagination, Oxford University Press, New York, 1959, p., 174).

Marcuse was particularly very critical of Auguste Comte's positivism. The assumption that the human sciences especially sociology could be fashioned after methods in natural sciences led Comte to perceive society as being guided by certain invariant laws. Only a rational organisation of society along these invariant principles could realise all that is universally true and rational about human nature.

Human beings and their institutions must be viewed as neutral objects which can be investigated in more or less the same way as any other scientific object. According to Marcuse such an approach as revealed in Comte would educate men to take positive attitude towards the prevailing state of affairs. Positive philosophy was going to affirm the existing order against those who asserted the need for negating it'.³⁹ Whereas positive social theory views society as a natural organism which can be studied by the methods of natural science, critical social theory views society as the product of human activity. Such society can not be studied by one single method. Values of human life are as important as facts. Therefore, any project of social reconstruction

39. H. Marcuse, op.cit, p., 327

should be animated by a much deeper understanding of social rationality and freedom.

Marcuse's reaction against positivism was also shared by the other members of the Frankfurt school. For example, in Adorno we find a similar reaction against positivism as a mode of social enquiry. For Adorno, positivist consciousness conceptualises the world as a field of objects open to manipulation. Social facts are treated as natural facts. Historical laws are given the same status as natural laws. The laws of history can not simply be equated with the laws of nature. Social laws are tied to specific modes of human organisation.

Science wishes to rid the world of the tension between the general and the particular by means of its consistent system, but the world gains its unity from inconsistency... The generality of social scientific laws is not at all that of a conceptual sphere into which the individual parts can be wholly incorporated, but rather always and essentially relates to the relationship of the general to the particular in its historical concretion.⁴⁰

Positivism's strict adherence to the natural science principles in understanding human relations, limits science's findings to a technical function. The purposive

40. T. Adorno, "Sociology and Empirical Research", in Adorno et al, Positivist Dispute in German Sociology, translated by G. Adey and D. Frisby, Heinemann, London, p., 77.

instrumental character of positivist science has been sharply captured by Adorno and Horkheimer in 'Dialectic of Enlightenment. The instrumental rationality considers only those problems which are amenable to rational decision. Ultimate goals and life experience of the individuals are irrelevant, for they are beyond the control of science and scientific rationality.

With positivism instrumental reason finds its most advanced stage of expression. But its advanced development entails moments of the severest regression. For, its programme of 'demythologizing the world' reaches a reductio ad absurdum: positivism not only condemns to irrationality the process of adjudicating between values but also the whole process of conceptual thought itself.⁴¹

The above discussion shows that Marcuse's attachment to the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research was not accidental. Marcuse was committed to a critical theory of society, for it was the most urgent need of the hour. Instead of a vibrant and free social order, there had arisen repressive processes of rationalisation and institutionalisation which ensured that nearly everyone's behaviour should become identical with everyone else's.

41. David, Held, Introduction to Critical Theory pp., 170-171.

Marcuse's critical theory of society was highly influenced by Marx's vision of a rational and free order. However, the experiences of 1930s and 40s made him aware of the limitations of Marxism. The stalinist totalitarianism in the U.S.S.R. reduced Marxism to a dogma. Marcuse, like the other members of the Institute was averse to such mechanistic interpretation of Marxism.

As a result Marcuse became engaged in the Institute's programme of reformulating Marxism as a system of knowledge. The object behind such programme of reformulation was to cleanse Marxist theory of its orthodox bias and make it more responsive to the psychological and cultural aspects of social change.

The outcome of such constructive programme was Marcuse's Eros and Civilization.

3.II(2) A brief outline of Marcuse's Eros and Civilization

Eros and Civilization (published in 1955) is Marcuse's enquiry into Freud in order to work out a critical theory of society. The book starts with the Freudian insight that the

progress of civilisation is incompatible with human freedom. Happiness, for Freud, 'is no cultural value. Happiness must be subordinated to'⁴² the imperatives of civilization or culture.

The eternal conflict between the 'reality principle'⁴³ and 'pleasure principle'⁴⁴ makes Freud believe that a non-repressive civilization is impossible.

According to Marcuse, Freud traces 'the development of the repressive mental apparatus' to two social processes. These processes are, 'ontogenetic', referring to, 'the growth of the repressed individual from early infancy to his conscious societal existence', and, 'phylogenetic', referring to, 'the growth of repressive civilization from primal horde to the fully constituted civilized state.'⁴⁵

42. H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, London, 1969, P. 23,

43. Ibid., p., 30.

44. Ibid., p., 30 (In the Freudian theory 'Pleasure Principle' refers to the activities which give individual immense, momentary pleasure. It satisfies the instinctual impulses of the individual. However 'reality principle' corresponds to the imperatives of social reality and environment. Reality Principle restricts the pleasure-seeking activities of the individual, because renunciation of pleasures is the fundamental precondition for the progress of civilisation).

45. Ibid., P.36

In the Freudian theory the development of the repressed individual takes place through a constant encounter between the 'id'⁴⁶ and 'superego'.⁴⁷ 'Id' in the Freudian theory refers to the instinctual drives of the individual and 'superego'. The external world which puts limitations on the individual. As a result of this encounter that part of 'id' which is open to this outer world develops into the 'ego'.⁴⁸ 'It is the mediator between the id and the external World.'⁴⁹ As a result of the process of socialisation 'ego' learns to accept the command of the reality principle (the external world and its imperatives).

Marcuse argues that according to Freud scarcity is what makes men labour for their existence and, therefore, renounce their instinctual pleasures. The conflict between 'reality principle' and 'pleasure principle' is reflected throughout Freud's writings. This eternal conflict makes Freud pessimistic about the possibility of a non-repressive civilisation.

46. Ibid., P., 36

47. Ibid., p., 36.

48. Ibid., p., 36.

49. Ibid., P., 41

Marcuse tries to overcome this Freudian pessimism. For Marcuse, Freud's concept of eternal scarcity is ahistorical. According to Marcuse, the nature and organization of scarcity change in each historical epoch. Marcuse argues that what Freud considered to be an eternal scarcity is actually 'the consequences of a specific organization of scarcity and of specific existential attitude enforced by this organization.'⁵⁰ By 'organisation of scarcity' Marcuse refers to the exercise of domination by some over the others. As a result the nature of 'reality principle' also changes in each historical epoch.

Marcuse introduces two concepts of 'surplus-repression'⁵¹ and 'performance principle'⁵² to understand the nature of repression in the capitalist society.

Marcuse argues that the capitalist scheme of things and the alienated labour are the expressions of this historically specific, 'reality principle' (performance principle) in capitalist society. 'Surplus repression' refers to the extra controls required by the capitalist society to sustain

50. Ibid., p., 45

51. Ibid., p., 44

52. Ibid., p. 44

itself. And, therefore, alienated labour in 'the Capitalist Society is not only the product of capitalist property relations but also a 'desexualised'⁵³ body, to be used 'as the instrument of labour'.⁵⁴

In Eros and Civilization Marcuse tries not only to overcome the Freudian pessimism but also to work out the prospect of a non-repressive order.

He sees in the Freudian concept of 'Phantasy'⁵⁵ a potential for the liberation of the individual. In the Freudian theory, argues Marcuse, 'Phantasy' contains 'the tabooed images of freedom'⁵⁶ which run counter to the established 'reality principle'. For Marcuse, art and 'Phantasy' are the potential sources of freedom. The potentiality of art lies in its ability to refuse the existing order, its repressive content.

Marcuse refers back to the Greek images of 'Narci-

53. Ibid., p., 53.

54. Ibid., p., 53.

55. Ibid., P. 119.

56. ibid., p., 119.

ssus'⁵⁷ and 'Orpheus'⁵⁸ to work out his theory of the liberation of the life instincts. 'Narcissus' stands for self-love. However, Marcuse argues that this self-love would, 'become the source... for a new libidinal cathexis of the objective world - transforming this world into a new mode of being.'⁵⁹ 'Orpheus' stands for creativity, and aesthetic aspect of the individual. Marcuse finds in them an ability ~~to contest the existing order and liberate the individual.~~ to contest the existing order and liberate the individual.

Marcuse argues that his concept of a non-repressive order is not a utopia arguing that the rapid industrial development can make the realisation of a non-repressive civilisation possible. With the help of technology 'organization scarcity' can be overcome and labour time can be reduced. Only then can leisure time be utilised for socially creative activities. Socially creative activities would transform constrained sexuality into the life instincts of the individual. In the Epilogue, Marcuse evolves a critique of Neo-Freudian Revisionism. Thus, Marcuse tries to realise

57. Ibid., P., 132 ('The images of Narcissus and Orpheus', is the title of the Chapter 8.)

58. Ibid.,

59. Ibid., p., 138

the possibility of a non-repressive civilisation which remained a utopia in Freud.

3.II.(3) Eros And Civilization : Marcuse's Optimistic View Of Society.

Eros and Civilization is Marcuse's attempt to point out the absence in Marxism of emphasis on the liberation of the individual and the psychological dimension. Marcuse was influenced strongly by Marx's vision of a free social order. However, for him, Marxism as a system of knowledge was never static. Therefore, in 'Eros and Civilization Marcuse tried to go, beyond Marx to envisage new possibilities for liberation in an era when revolutionary action and critical thinking were seriously threatened by a process of oppressive social forces and conformist ideologies'.⁶⁰

Freud's Thesis that civilization is based on the permanent subjugation of human instincts shows that the imperatives of civilisation are not consistent with the development of human instinctual energies. The reality principle, which is central to the Freudian psychology teaches individual to learn socially approved behavior and curb his in-

60. D. Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism, Macmillan, London, 1984, p., 156.

instinctual pleasures. Under the influence of the 'reality principle' individual develops his rational faculties, becoming, 'a conscious, thinking subject, geared to a rationality imposed on him from outside'.⁶¹ This rationality in the Freudian Theory implies that individuals increasingly come to terms with, 'the traumatic realisation that full and painless, gratification of his needs is impossible.'⁶² 'The methodical sacrifice of libido, its rigidly enforced deflection to socially useful activities and expressions, is culture'.⁶³

Marcuse accepts the Freudian theory of instincts, but he does not accept the Freudian pessimism that eternal conflict between pleasure and reality principles makes the realisation of a non-repressive society impossible. Marcuse historicises the Freudian theory of suppression of instincts and tries to show how the suppression of instincts takes place specifically through a process of rationalisation in modern industrial society.

61. H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, Beacon Press, Boston, P., 31

62. Ibid., p., 30

63. Ibid., p., 23

In order to understand this process, Marcuse introduces two concepts: a) 'Surplus-repression', which refers to the additional controls required by the specific historical institutions of reality principle, and b) 'Performance principle', which refers to, 'the prevailing historical form of reality principle.'⁶⁴

According to Marcuse, repression is not a consequence of an eternal condition of scarcity (as Freud envisaged) but of a specific organization of scarcity. Marcuse writes:

The prevalent scarcity has, throughout civilization (although in different modes), been organized in such a way that it has not been distributed collectively in accordance with individual needs,... .instead, the distribution of scarcity as well as the efforts of overcoming it, the mode of work, have been imposed upon individuals first by mere violence, subsequently by a more rational utilization of power. However, no matter how useful this rationality was for the progress of the whole, it remained the rationality of domination and the gradual conquest of scarcity was inextricably bound up with and shaped by the interest of domination.⁶⁵

According to Freud, scarcity results in repression and repression contributes to the progress of civilisation. However, Marcuse is of the opinion that scarcity is rooted

64. Ibid., p.44

65. Ibid., P., 45

into a particular mode of domination at a particular socio-historical epoch. By 'domination', Marcuse refers to the exercise of power, 'by a particular group or individual in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged position.'⁶⁶ Therefore, the nature of reality principle cannot be static. 'Various modes of domination... result in various historical forms of reality principle.'⁶⁷

Undoubtedly, Marcuse was influenced by Marx's critique of capitalism where the ruling class's (i.e. the capitalist class) distribution of scarcity has imposed poverty and alienated labour on the exploited working class. Although Marx was never explicitly mentioned in Eros and Civilization., the revolutionary fervour of Marxian critique helped Marcuse to radicalise the Freudian theory of repression. Marcuse argues that form of reality principle has changed with the arrival of capitalism. However, contradictions of capitalism contain all the potentials for the liberation of the individual, his life-instinct. At the same time Marcuse tries to go beyond the Marxist critique of alienated labour and draws insight from Freud to show that alienated labour, apart from being the product of capitalist class relations,

66. Ibid., p., 30.

67. Ibid., p., 45.

is also a repressed individual. The performance principle of the capitalist system puts restrictions on his life instincts and prevents gratification of instinctual drives. Thus, for Marcuse, 'alienated labour' is historically specific performance principle demanded by modern capitalist Society. And the specific organisation of scarcity results in surplus repression in capitalism.

Such surplus repression is further supported by promises of the technological society. The technological society with its faith in social engineering has limited the inner potentials of science to achieving certain systemic goals. The result is the process of rationalisation which does not take into account happiness and well-being of the individuals, but reduces them to mere objects open to manipulation. The rationality of the western society presupposes an antagonism between subject and object, reason and the passions. 'Nature was "given" to the ego as something that had to be fought, ~~conquered, and even violated~~ conquered, and even violated - such was the precondition, for self-preservation and development:'.⁶⁸

So the instrumental rationality - a new performance principle of modern society contains a concept of repressive

68. Ibid, P., 96

reason which seeks to stifle instinctual drives of the individual. The machine like regularities in industrial organizations, bureaucracies coerce individuals into conforming to the technical imperatives of the society. Such purposive rationality leads to the administration of social life through control of mass media, culture and all possible sources of creative faculties of individuals. Individuals are caught in an 'iron-cage' of instrumental rationality.

In spite of his indictment of the modern societies, Marcuse's Eros and Civilization does not end on a pessimistic note. Eros and Civilization appeared at a time when there was a growing pessimism in the intellectual circles. Marcuse was aware of the pessimistic view of history revealed in Dialectic of Enlightenment.

Still, Marcuse did not lose hope of a non-repressive civilisation in Eros and Civilization. He tries to integrate Marx's critique of political-economy of capitalism with the Freudian theories of repression to work out the possibility of a non-repressive society. Douglas Kellner articulates this fact very clearly.

Although Marx is not mentioned once in Eros and Civilization. The book can be seen as an attempt to use Freud's theory to carry through a Marxian critique of capitalism and a transvaluation of values which could be used in a project of social

reconstruction.. ..rather than using standard Marxian categories of exploitation, he used the concepts of 'surplus repression and performance principle to [serve] as concepts critical of capitalist society. Yet, Marcuse also goes beyond orthodox Marxism and uses Freud... to add a psychological and a cultural dimension to radical social theory that is missing in orthodox Marxism.⁶⁹

Happiness is a concept integrally related to Marcuse's concept of a free society. A true individual is happy, because his happiness consists in being free from the worries of the repressive society. A truly rational society is one which contributes to the happiness of the individual in a non-repressive manner. Therefore, in Eros and Civilization Marcuse attempts to work out a new reality principle, which is non-repressive and will keep his notion of freedom alive. The roots of this new reality principle for Marcuse, should be located in the images of 'Phantasy'⁷⁰ and art.

Marcuse accepts Freud's argument that phantasy is a mental activity free from domination by the reality principle. 'Phantasy', for Marcuse, 'continues to speak the language of the pleasure principle, of freedom from repression,

69. D.Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and Crisis of Marxism, P.164

70. H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, P., 119

of uninhibited desire and gratification'⁷¹

Art is the vehicle of the, 'Great Refusal', which, 'protests against unnecessary repression, the struggle for the ultimate form of freedom - "to live without anxiety".'⁷² It is interesting to note that Marcuse like Horkheimer and Adorno found in authentic art the potential for liberation. Art, for Marcuse, is, 'the highest products of consciousness ... The artistic imagination shapes the "unconscious memory" of the liberation that failed, of the promise that was betrayed.'⁷³

Marcuse cites the examples of Narcissus and Orpheus as the symbolic bearers of this new reality principle Narcissus, for Marcuse, symbolises a non-repressive sublimation, diffusion of sexuality or eros through out one's activities. This is certainly not auto-eroticism, an 'egoistic withdrawal from reality'.⁷⁴ It symbolises ego's union with the nature. 'Orpheus', on the other hand, symbolises a non-repressive creativity. Such creativity would channelise eros in a non-repressive direction. 'Orpheus' argues Marcuse, 'is

71. Ibid., p., 120

72. ibid., p., 125.

73. ibid, pp., 119-21.

74. ibid., p., 138

the archetype of the poet as liberator and creator 'In his person, art, freedom and culture are eternally combined'.⁷⁵

Both these images contain the 'germ of a different reality principle'.⁷⁶ They strike a balance between freedom and happiness on the one hand and cultural imperatives on the other. They are images of the 'Great Refusal'. 'The refusal aims at liberation - at the reunion of what has become separated.'⁷⁷

This new reality principle, for Marcuse, is not utopian. Such principle is possible in a modern civilisation where technological development has reached its zenith. Only rationally organised industrial society can solve the problem of scarcity. Such society would ensure satisfaction of the needs and happiness for all. This happiness, for Marcuse, 'would be without toil - that is, without the rule of alienated labour over human existence'.⁷⁸

75. Ibid., p. 138

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., p., 126

Thus, Marcuse argues that the reduction of labour time is a solution to the problem of 'surplus repression'. This is possible only in an advanced civilisation where technology has come to play an important role. In Eros and Civilization Marcuse still believes in the emancipatory role that technology can play in ushering in a non-repressive civilisation.

In an advanced civilisation, only a small portion of 'instinctual energy' would be diverted into 'necessary labour'.⁷⁹ As a result free time would be spent on fulfilling human needs. 'Eros, the life instincts, would be released to an unprecedented degree'.⁸⁰

The non-repressive civilisation would resolve the conflict between reason and sensuousness. For Marcuse, in a non-repressive civilisation, 'reason is sensuous and sensuousness rational'.⁸¹

Thus, for Marcuse, a freedom is possible only when a free order, 'is founded on and sustained by the free grati-

79. Ibid., p.127.

80. Ibid., pp., 127-28.

81. Ibid., p., 148.

fication of the individuals'.⁸²

Art is the carrier of this freedom, for art, 'in representing the order of sensuousness, invokes a tabooed logic - the logic of gratification as against that of repression.'⁸³

Marcuse is optimistic about a non-repressive civilisation. He argues that in non-repressive civilisation social necessary labour time would be reduced, for society would no longer be guided by scarcity but plentitude. This reduction of labour time and increase of leisure time will lead to the, 'transformation of the libido : from sexuality constrained under genital supremacy to eroticisation of the entire personality.'⁸⁴

Thus Marcuse's Eros and Civilization holds out the possibility of a truly rational and free civilisation. In such a civilisation rationality would conform to the demands of happiness. Only in a non-repressive order can individual attain his happiness.

82. Ibid., p.155.

83. Ibid., pp., 150-51.

84. Ibid., p., 164.

Reflecting on Marcuse's works Peter link argues that happiness' constitutes one of the fundamental aspects of Marcuse's conception of a good society. Lind writes :

When Marcuse explicitly states that when he understands man to be a "rational organism", he means "one that has the potentiality of freely determining and shaping his own existence, directed by the process of knowledge and with regard to his worldly happiness".⁸⁵

Thus, Marcuse in Eros and Civilization' was confident about the possibility of a truly rational and free social order.

3. II(4) A Brief Outline of Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man

In One-Dimensional Man⁸⁶ Marcuse attempts to evolve a critique of the advanced industrial society. This critique was the product of his experience with the American society during his stay in the United States.

Marcuse was thoroughly disillusioned with the way the modern societies were falling prey to the processes of technocratisation and bureaucratisation. For Marcuse, it is

85. P. Lind, Marcuse and Freedom, Groom Helm, London, Sydney, 1985, p. 161.

86. The book was first published in 1964 by Beacon Press, Boston. First paperback edition was published in 1966.

an 'One-dimensional society'. The first section of the book is entitled One-Dimensional Society where Marcuse discusses how technologically governed society has robbed individual of his creative dimension. The second section entitled One-Dimensional Thought deals with the one-dimensionality of the positivist philosophy or positivism.

Marcuse is concerned with the way the modern technologically advanced society has made inroads into every conceivable area of human life. No room is left for individual to become creative or critical. 'Technical progress creates forms of life which appear to reconcile the forces opposing the system and refute all protest in the name of the historical prospects of freedom from toil and domination'.⁸⁷

The One-Dimensional society, for Marcuse, contributes to the triumph of social control. However, 'new forms'⁸⁸ of social control are no longer accompanied by sheer force. The society exercises control over individuals because it has assured individuals of material prosperity, it has initiated individuals into the dominant consumerist ethos. 'A comfort-

87. H. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press, Boston, 1972, p.,xii.

88. Ibid., p.,1.

able, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization,--. Indeed what could be more rational than the suppression of individuality in the mechanization of socially necessary but painful performances.⁸⁹

The result is the loss of critical awareness and the end of all dialogue. It is democracy but choices are predetermined by the rules of 'welfare and warfare state'.⁹⁰ Such society where people are used to a reasonably comfortable life, has been able to contain all prospects for social change. Under such condition the possibility of a revolutionary proletariat is unimaginable.

The technologically governed society has made inroads into the private space of the individuals. Art culture, music are all evaluated in terms of their exchange-value. The artistic consciousness has become instrumental in producing modern gadgets. Higher culture becomes part of the material culture. In this transformation, it loses the greater part of its truth.⁹¹

89. Ibid., p., 1.

90. Ibid., p., 19.

91. Ibid., p., 58.

For Marcuse, the modern industrial society has prioritised that dimension of individual which is quantifiable, observable, and appropriate for the reproduction of the society. Marcuse attributes this one-dimensionality to the 'triumph of positive thinking'.⁹²

Marcuse argues that this One-Dimensional society with its emphasis on science and technology is sustained by positivism in social sciences. The result is functional approach to all social problems. The necessity of a particular idea or thought is judged in terms of its contribution to the systemic statusquo. The rise of scientific rationality has pushed all other forms of rationality to the margin. Therefore, the findings of science have been applied in achieving technical coordination. As a result individuals do not matter.

Society reproduced itself in a growing technical ensemble of things and relations which included the technical utilization of the man⁹³

Under these circumstances, a quest for meaning or essence becomes absolutely meaningless. Marcuse is pessimis-

92. Ibid., p., 170 ['The triumph of Positive Thinking : One-Dimensional Philosophy'. is the title of the chapter.].

93. Ibid., p., 146.

tic about the possibility of any social change let alone revolution and remains pessimistic throughout the book. Only at the end of the book he turns to those who are at the fringes and not assimilated by the one-dimensional society. These 'outcastes' and outsiders' can hit 'the system from without The fact that they start refusing to play the game may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period.'⁹⁴

3.II.(5) From Eros and Civilization to One-Dimensional Man : Critique of Rationality and Freedom in Modern Industrial Society.

In One-Dimensional man Marcuse is utterly pessimistic. He sees that individuals instead of being the conscious agents of society have become the instruments of the technologically - governed society. Langdon Winner in a different context reflects on this problem. He argues that technologically coordinated society is inimical to freedom of the individual. Therefore, according to Winner, the critique that Marcuse and other writers on technological society evolve of technological rationality and its consequences is quite sensitive and insightful. He argues

94. Ibid., pp., 256-57.

The self-confidence of the modernizers is merely a guise concealing a strict obedience to the momentum of events. Under present conditions men are not at all masters of technological change; they are its prisoners The shout of freedom, D. H. Lawrence noted long ago, "is the rattling of chains, always was".⁹⁵

When we move from Eros and Civilization to One-Dimensional Man we find a different picture. The optimism of Eros and Civilization is lost with the more stringent application of instrumental rationality to every conceivable aspect of human life in modern society. Therefore, One-Dimensional Man starts with a closed society, 'a society without opposition.'⁹⁶ 'The political needs of society become individual needs and aspirations, their satisfaction promotes business and the commonweal, and the whole appears to be the very embodiment of Reason.'⁹⁷

'And yet this society', argues Marcuse, 'is irrational as a whole'.⁹⁸ The society has diluted all forms of opposition - opposition which is central to the creative space in man's psyche from which he can mount a critique of the

95. L. Winner, Autonomous Technology, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1977, p.,55.

96. H. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, p., ix.

97. Ibid., p., ix.

98. Ibid., p., ix.

established order and speak of its transcendent possibilities. For Marcuse, the power of reason and freedom, which enables individual to take part in 'Great-Refusal'⁹⁹ - the quality to refuse to accept the status quo, are seriously undermined in the modern societies. The One-Dimensional society marks the triumph of social control.

Marcuse delvs into the way the advanced industrial society has perfected new, deceptively insidious and immeasurably effective forms of social control. Control, argues Marcuse, does not only refer to a 'terroristic ~~political~~ political coordination of society, but also a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests".¹⁰⁰

The result is the creation of 'false needs'.¹⁰¹ By 'false needs', Marcuse means that the technological whole manufactures not just products but also needs. The triumph of instrumental rationality lies in its ability to suffocate 'those needs which demand liberation - liberation also form that which is tolerable, rewarding, and comfortable'.¹⁰²

99. Ibid., p., 63.

100. Ibid., p., 3.

101. Ibid., p., 4.

102. Ibid., p., 7.

To be sure, the technical structure and efficacy of the productive and destructive apparatus has been a major instrumentality for subjecting the population to the established social division of labour throughout the modern period. But in the contemporary period, the technological controls appear to be the very embodiment of Reason for the benefit of all social groups and interests - to such an extent that all contradiction seems irrational and all counteraction is impossible.¹⁰³

The apparent rationality of the social set up is reinforced and perpetuated by commodity production and continuous showering of goods and services on the people. Consumerism, advertising, mass culture, all serve as instruments of this process of rationalisation. standardisation of needs and desires of individuals is the aim of the technologically dominated society. For, standardisation can render all that is qualitatively different calculable, quantifiable and amenable to the 'technological rationality'.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the choices given to the people are not to enhance their power of judgment but to make them subservient to the process of rationalisation and homogenisation.

Under these circumstances society relies on the creation of needs and desires to blunt the critical faculty of the individual. False needs, for Marcuse, are not the felt

103. Ibid., p.,9.

104. Ibid., p., xvi.

needs of the individual, rather they are manufactured and 'superimposed' on the individuals. Such superimposition of needs and desires is absolutely necessary to create a sense of satisfaction among individuals. Such momentary pleasure firmly ties the individuals to the rationality of the system, blinding them to the possibility of the other dimension, the dimension of what they can be. In an important passage Marcuse writes :

The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life ... and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative changes.¹⁰⁵

In an one dimensional society, critical thinking, spontaneity of action which, 'by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its quantitative dimension'.¹⁰⁶

In One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse's views about the fate of the so called process of rationalisation in modern socie-

105. Ibid., p.,12.

106. Ibid., p.,12.

ty echo the critical reflections of Adorno and Horkheimer in Dialectic of Enlightenment. Marcuse's critique of consumerism, mass culture false needs remind us of the critique that Adorno and Horkheimer evolve of 'culture industry' in modern society and the resultant reification of consciousness. Marcuse's reflection on culture industry can be grasped in the following passage :

If mass communications blend together harmoniously and often unnoticeably art, politics, religion and philosophy with commercials, they bring these realms of culture to their common denominator - the commodity form. The music of the soul is also the music of salesmanship. Exchange value, not truth value counts. On its centres the rationality of the statusquo, and all alien rationality is bent to it.¹⁰⁷

However, unlike Adorno, Marcuse was not totally against the mass appropriation of the cultural and artistic realms. In fact he found in some of the popular art forms like jazz, blues the potentials for a radical consciousness. For Marcuse, 'what is happening now is not the deterioration of higher culture into mass culture but refutation of this culture by reality'.¹⁰⁸ However, despite these differences one can say Marcuse shares with Adorno and Horkheimer a

107. Ibid., p., 57.

108. Ibid., p., 56.

particular conception of art which they have called 'authentic art'. And this conception of art remained an integral part of the ideas, of almost all the prominent figures of the Frankfurt school.

Such conception of art, for Marcuse, 'contains the rationality of negation. In its advanced positions, it is the Great Refusal - The protest against that which is,¹⁰⁹ Marcuse's hope with regard to the emancipatory potentials of art and aesthetic education as revealed in Eros and Civilization appears to be thoroughly shattered in One-Dimensional Man.

The crucial dimension of Marcuse's concept of art is "alienation" kept alive in art's ability to distinguish between appearance and essence, to promote an 'unhappy consciousness'.¹¹⁰ Such unhappy consciousness produces a non-conformist utopia and speaks the language contrary to the language of the established order.

However, Marcuse is shocked at the way the technological society has integrated the other dimension of art. His faith in the emancipatory potential of technology that it

109. Ibid., p., 63.

110. Ibid., p., 61.

would free men from the haunting fear of scarcity and insecurity appears to be dashed in the wake of this crude manifestation of the technological rationality. The enormous growth of culture industry has turned the society into a homogeneous whole, where everybody's taste has become same as everyone else's. Marcuses argues :

Today's novel feature is the flattening out of the antagonism between culture and social reality through the obliteration of the oppositional, alien, and transcendent elements in the higher culture by virtue of which it constituted another dimension of reality Artistic alienation succumbs, together with other mode of negation, to the process of technological rationality¹¹¹.

This integration and dilution of the transcendental elements of artistic experience is executed and, more importantly, perpetuated by the, 'conquest of unhappy consciousness'.¹¹² The transcendental elements of the 'Great Refusal', 'cannot be blocked without a compensation which seems more satisfying than the refusal'.¹¹³ Therefore such society relies on the bombardment of audience with images advertisements, goods and services which reproduce and legitimise the present way of life.

111. Ibid., pp., 57-65.

112. Ibid., p., 56.

113. Ibid., p., 71.

Affluence and continued satisfaction of synthetic needs create an artificial reality. That fits in well with the demands of 'pleasure principle'.

Sex is integrated into work, and public relations, and this is made more susceptible to (controlled) satisfaction... The range of socially permissible and desirable satisfaction is greatly enlarged, but through this satisfaction, the Pleasure Principle is deprived... of the claims which are irreconcilable with the established society. Pleasure, thus, adjusted generates submission.¹¹⁴

The unhappy consciousness which keeps alive the contradiction between the pleasure and reality principles has been rendered inconsequential by the technological and synthetic present. Therefore, the Freudian repression of instinctual energies in which Marcuse found the possibility of a critical transcendence is deprived of its power of protest. The one-dimensional society is 'a rational universe',¹¹⁵ where everything seems rational and to fail in their places, because material comfort 'generates submission and weakens the rationality of protest'.¹¹⁶

114. Ibid., p. 75.

115. Ibid., p., 71.

116. Ibid., p., 75.

Under this situation, desublimation of sexuality gives rise to desublimation of art. As a result the absorbent power of society depletes the artistic dimension by assimilating its oppositional contents. Thus man's adaptation to this society is total, freedom under this condition becomes purposive and instrumental. Freedom no longer consists in exercising control over one's goals and values of life, it loses its power of judgement between good and bad and more importantly, between good and attractive. Material comfort and affluence have turned individuals into 'cheerful robots'.¹¹⁷

In Marcuse's view the dominance of technological rationality and its capacity to conquer unhappy consciousness

117. 'Cheerful Robots' is a term used by C. Wright Mills (in the Sociological Imagination, p., 171) to describe the fate of modern man in the advanced industrial societies. Mills argues that the Enlightenment thinkers' faith in the assumed alliance between reason and freedom is totally shattered in the modern industrial society. 'It is not too much to say that in the extreme development the chance to reason of most men is destroyed, as rationality increases and its focus, its control, is removed from the individual to big-scale organization. There is then rationality without reason' (C. W. Mills, op.cit., p., 170). In this technical society man is reduced to a bio-technical complex, who receives the benefits of technological achievement, but at the cost of his rational faculty. Men have become, 'cheerful robots', who can attain goals, think impersonally, and quantify everything. But they can not reflect upon, comprehend and speak the language contrary to that of the established order.

signal the end of all revolutionary consciousness. The material comfort and rise in wages have resulted in the gradual but the steady integration of the proletariat. 'Unification of opposites',¹¹⁸ as Marcuse would call it, is the basic feature of modern industrialised society. On the socio-economic plane it has been achieved by continuous and deliberate process of assimilation of the blue and white collar population due to the aggregate decline in physical labour through the continuous extension of mechanised labour, and this has resulted in, 'the social and cultural integration of the labouring classes with the capitalist society'.¹¹⁹ As a result the negative position of the working class based on the belief that revolutionary consciousness would develop as the contradictions of capitalism sharpen is weakened. It no longer represents 'the living contradiction to the established society'.¹²⁰

Paul Mattick argues that although Marcuse is too pessimistic about the foreseeable future, this pessimism is historically grounded.

118. *Ibid.*, p., 19.

119. *Ibid.*, p., 29.

120. *Ibid.*, p., 24.

Practically and ideologically, the second world war and its aftermath led to an almost total eclipse of the working class socialism the absence of any effective opposition to the capitalist system presupposes the system's ability to steadily improve the living conditions of the labouring population Marcuse bases his pessimism on what appears to him to be capitalism's newly gained ability to solve economic problems by political means.¹²¹

However Marcuse argues that the profoundly manipulated union between the inner-most needs of individuals and the prolific commodities of productive apparatus has not solved the problem of alienation. What it has diluted is the prospect of a radical politics arising out of such alienation. It is the radical consciousness which has been conquered. Men have been reduced to slaves, for slavery is determined "neither by obedience, nor by hardness of labour, but by the status of being an instrument and the reduction of man to the state of a thing".¹²²

This apparently rational society has led to the closure of the political universe. It is this unification of opposites which has created a closed political universe, where no dialogue is possible between the opposites.

121. Paul. Mattick, Critique of Marcuse, Merlin press, London, 1972, pp., 11-12.

122. Ibid., pp., 32-33.

The 'welfare - warfare state',¹²³ is the specific form in which political integration takes place. On the one hand it raises 'the standard of administered living',¹²⁴ and mobilises citizens against enemy on the other. The quest of one dimensional society for self preservation 'turns crime against humanity into a rational enterprise'.¹²⁵

According to Marcuse the growing technocratisation and bureaucratisation of society may be related to the triumph of positivism in social sciences. The triumph of positivism has led to 'operationalism in the physical' and 'behaviorism in the social sciences'.¹²⁶

Marcuse is very critical of this trend because 'operationalism' and 'behaviourism' emphasise on the mathematisation of experience. Concrete experience is significant only if it is functional from the perspective of the system. That which is operational is rational. This certainly affects the development of language. Language of experience must be consistent with the functional imperatives of the system. Thus, according to Marcuse, it is the 'language of total

123. Ibid., p., 48.

124. Ibid., p., 48.

125. Ibid., p., 52.

126. Ibid., p., 12.

administration,¹²⁷ Language loses its power to speak the language other than that of the system. Language is deprived of its multiple structures of meaning and essence.

The "thing identified with its function" is more real than the thing distinguished from its function, and the linguistic expression of this identification creates a basic vocabulary and syntax which stand in the way of differentiation, separation, and distinction... the functionalized abridged and unified language is the language of one-dimensional thought.¹²⁸

As a result one-dimensional society becomes one in which no dialogue is possible, people are deprived of their discursive freedom.

As a result, freedom of the individual becomes a mere sham. Individuals are free because they are to serve as the instruments of this system. The critical awareness is lost in the absence of dialogue.

Marcuse distinguishes between the 'formal logic'¹²⁹ and the 'dialectical logic' to separate One-dimensional from two-dimensional thought. 'Dialectical logic', for Marcuse, cannot be formal because it always distinguishes between

127. Ibid., p., 85.

128. Ibid., pp., 94-5.

129. Ibid., p., 136.

appearance and essence. The formal logic is mainly based on the operationability of concepts.

In this formal logic, thought is indifferent towards its objects. Whether they are mental or physical, whether they pertain to society or to nature, they become subject to same general laws of organization, calculation but they do so as fungible signs or symbols in abstraction from their particular "substance". This general quality (quantitative quality) is the precondition of law and order - - the price of universal control.¹³⁰

Marcuse argues that there is no denying the fact that this logic governs the technological society. It is the triumph of technological rationality to which the 'dialectical logic' has submitted itself.

As a result the formal logic becomes the 'logic of domination'.¹³¹ Therefore, the possibility of a dialogue which language holds out is eclipsed in the wake of functionalism in language. Language, becomes a declaration to be accepted - it repels demonstration, qualification, negation of its codified and declared meaning.¹³²

130. Ibid., p., 136.

131. Ibid., p., 144.

132. Ibid., p., 87.

For Marcuse, the dominance of the technological or instrumental rationality is not typical only of the capitalist societies but of all modern societies. He finds that the socialist societies are not free from the influence of the instrumental rationality. Marcuse argues that the official Soviet ideology operates on the premise that it has achieved a truly rational society. Therefore, the maintenance of this rational society is only a matter of administering things. As a result ideology has become an instrument of domination in the hands of the administrators. Through the means of mass communication, they transmit the objectives of the administration and the underlying population responds with the expected behaviour'.¹³³

3.II.(6) The Prospect of Freedom in One-Dimensional Man

Marcuse is utterly pessimistic in One-Dimensional Man. The gradual demise of the hope of a proletarian revolution makes him lose all hope. His vision of a truly rational society is thoroughly shattered.

133. H. Marcuse, Soviet Marxism, Columbia University Press, New York, 1961, p., 76.

Therefore, he is quite ambiguous to the possibility of freedom of the individual. Marcuse finds in the protest of the 'outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races',¹³⁴ a possibility of a revolution. They might change the system from without, because they are not properly integrated by the society. This lack of integration might give them revolutionary courage. However, Marcuse makes it very clear that, 'their opposition is revolutionary' but, 'their consciousness is not'.¹³⁵

However, Marcuse is not confident about the prospect of this protest. 'The economic and technical capabilities of the established societies are sufficiently vast to allow for adjustments and concessions to the underdog, and their armed forces sufficiently trained and equipped to take care of emergency situations'.¹³⁶ The prevailing tenor of One-Dimensional Man is its overreaching pessimism, so much so that Marcuse warns, '.... not even a catastrophe will bring about the change'.¹³⁷

134. H. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, p., 256.

135. Ibid., p., 256.

136. Ibid., p., 257.

137. Ibid., p., XV.

In this chapter we have tried to see how Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse in their attempt to build up a critical perspective on rationality and freedom in modernity, have ultimately evolved a totalised critique of instrumental rationality and freedom in modern societies. Thus in Dialectic of Enlightenment Horkheimer and Adorno have called into question the enlightenment thinkers' emphasis on the emancipatory potentials of rationality and freedom. Their critique of instrumental rationality has led them to become totally pessimistic about the positive aspects of modernity.

Douglas Kellner argues that Dialectic of Enlightenment, ends on a rather gloomy note with a series of visions of catastrophe, followed by reflections on human stupidity which refrain from pointing to any positive hopes for a way out of the current impasse of western Civilization.¹³⁸

In Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man we find the same pessimism. In fact the optimism of Eros and civiliz[s]ation is lost in One-Dimensional Man. Marcuse seems to have been influenced by the Weberian analysis of modernity. For Weber, the iron-cage of instrumental rationality stifles all the

138. D. Kellner, Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity, p., 99,

liberating potentials of modernity. Paul Connerton has noticed this Weberian influence on Marcuse.

Weber had been the first to suggest that capitalism, far from perishing from its internal contradictions, becomes ever more solidified as the technical efficiency within the system of production extends to all spheres of society Marcuse not only accepts Weber's diagnosis; he even intensifies it.¹³⁹

Thus, a question arises as to whether it would be prudent to call modernity, a lost project. In order to find an answer to this question we would move on to the next chapter where we would try to deal with Jürgen Habermas's attempt to save the 'colonisation of life-world' and rescue the project of modernity.

139. Paul. Connerton, The Tragedy of Enlightenment, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p., 87.

CHAPTER 4

ATTEMPTS AT REWORKING ON RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM IN MODERNITY: ANALYSIS OF HABERMAS'S THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

The critique of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse sensitises us to the nature of rationality and freedom in modern society. Such critique calls into question the promise of Enlightenment - the promise of rational and free society where critical faculty of reason would contest all that is irrational and inimical to freedom. However, despite being sensitive to such critique, one is inclined to ponder about a few questions that are still left unasked. Is the alliance between rationality and freedom as envisaged by the Enlightenment thinkers only instrumental? Does modernity mean a process of rationalisation in society where systemic needs are prioritised over the ends of individuals existence? Does modernity mean only administration, order, control?

While considering these questions one cannot help enquiring into the ideas of Jürgen Habermas, his attempt to rework on the notions of rationality and freedom in modernity.

ty. Modernity, for Habermas in 'an Unfinished project.'¹ Therefore, his theoretical schema is an attempt to realise the project's unrealised potentials. Jurgen Habermas (1929-) is one of the most important critical theorists in recent times. he became interested in radical politics and student movements in the late 1950s. However, by the late 60s he became critical of the student movements. Initially he taught at Heidelberg and took up a chair in 1964 in philosophy and sociology at the University of Frankfurt. He left the post in 1971 and moved to the Max Planck Institute in Star Berg, West Germany, Where he is currently working. Habermas had been highly influenced by the critical thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno. And his experience with the developments of late capitalism led him to remould critical theories of Frankfurt School. Some of the Important works of Habermas are, Legitimation Crisis, (in 1975), Theory and Practice (in 1974), Towards a Rational Society (in 1971), The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (in 1987). However, it is not possible to consider the entire corpus of Haberman's work in this chapter. Therefore, we have limited ourselves to one of

1. 'Modernity - an unfinished project' was the title of a speech that Habermas gave in 1980 on accepting the Adorno Prize. However the term used in the text of this chapter has been taken from the preface to the Philosophical Discourse of Modernity by Jurgen Habermas (Source: J. Harbermas, The philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987).

his most recent and comprehensive works, The Theory of Communicative Action Vols. I and II. We have chosen to analyse Habermas's theory of communicative action because it is relevant to the issue at hand and it is the most comprehensive account of modernity in its all possible dimensions.

Since The Theory of communicative Action is, rather complex, it would be difficult to explicate all his ideas in details. Therefore, our reading of the book will be restricted to the problem we are dealing with and the course of argument followed in the previous chapters.

4.1. A Brief Outline of The Theory of Communicative Action.

In the two volumes of The Theory of Communicative Action,² Habermas develops his theory of Communicative action as a mode of understanding social reality. By communicative action Habermas refers to, the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations [whether by verbal or by extra-verbal means]. The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in

2. The Theory of Communicative Action was published in 1981. The translation of this book by Thomas McCarthy was published in 1984 by Beacon Press.

order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement.³ However, this emphasis on language as a mode of communication in Habermas's social theory does not mean reliance on grammatical perfection. Communicative action refers to the speakers' ability to reflect on the 'objective, social or subjective world's⁴ and arrive at an understanding regarding their reflections on those worlds. They relativize their utterances against the possibility that their validity will be contested by other actors.⁵

Therefore, the rationality of communicative action is not merely instrumental rationality but the strength of a consensus arrived at through the practice of argumentation as the ultimate 'court of appeal'⁶ and unconstrained by, 'the direct or strategic use of force.'⁷

The ability to reflect on and distinguish between the social, the external and internal nature is what, according to Habermas, distinguishes between mythical and modern world views. In the section 2 of chapter I Habermas distinguishes

3. J. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action vol. I, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p., 86.

4. Ibid., p.99.

5. Ibid., p.98.

6. Ibid., 17.

7. Ibid., p.18.

between the modern and the mythical ways of understanding the world.

Habermas tries to understand his theory of communicative action in the context of the process of rationalisation in modern society. With the growing rationalisation of society, the life world which, 'is formed from more or less diffuse... background convictions',⁸ begins to get questioned in a situation of communicative interaction. This is what Habermas calls 'rationalisation of life world'.⁹ In his understanding of 'rationalisation of life world' Habermas has been influenced by Weber's analysis of modernisation as societal rationalisation. However, Habermas criticises Weber for limiting this societal rationalization to the manifestation of instrumental rationality. Habermas argues that 'Weber analyses the process of disenchantment in the history of religion, which is said to have fulfilled the necessary internal conditions for the appearance of Occidental Rationalism, in doing so he employs a complex but largely unclarified concept of rationality.'¹⁰

8. Ibid., p. 70.

9. Ibid., p.43.

10. ibid., p.143.

Weber's concept of instrumental rationality influenced the ideas of the theorists of Frankfurt school namely Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. As a result they all became pessimistic about the fate of modernity. Habermas argues: 'The foreword to Dialectic of Enlightenment clearly explains, they had given up the hope of being able to redeem the promise of early critical theory.'¹¹

Habermas, contests such pessimism and argues, 'that a change of paradigm to the theory of communication makes it possible to return to the undertaking that was interrupted with the critique of instrumental reason.'¹²

The second volume of The Theory of Communicative Action is Habermas's reconstruction of the critical theory of society through critique of Functionalist reason. Here Habermas criticises Talcott Parsons' and Niklas Luhmann's system theories for prioritising the functional imperatives of social system over the needs of the social action of the lifeworld. Habermas here points to the famous 'AGIL Scheme' in Parsons. In this scheme 'cultural reproduction' and 'socialisation', 'which constitute the important components

11. Ibid., p.386.

12. Ibid., p.386.

of the lifeworld, are hidden under "pattern maintenance".¹³

As a result, lifeworld is not related in a positive way to the systemic needs. It has been reduced to one of the subsystems to be coordinated in terms of functional needs. However, despite his critique of functionalist reason and the discontents of modern society, Habermas is not pessimistic. Neither does he entertain any hope of a socialist revolution because polarisation of class interests is no longer the characteristic of advanced capitalist society. Instead, Habermas sees the prospect of freedom in the social movements which have become significant in the recent years. He cites anti-nuclear, environmental, limits to growth as examples of these new social movements (we will discuss this issue in the last sub-section of this chapter). For Habermas, a solution to this problem of the technocratisation of life world lies in the degree to which life world retains its dialogical freedom and engage in a constant dialogue with the system.

13. J. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, p., 241.

4.2. Rationality and Freedom in the Context of Communicative Action and Their Relation with Modernity:

Habermas's theory of communicative action is based on his distinction between two types of relationality - cognitive - instrumental and rationally inherent in communicative understanding. Habermas argues:

If we start from the non communicative employment of knowledge in teleological action, we make a prior decision for the concept of cognitive instrumental rationality that has, through empiricism deeply marked the self-understanding of the modern era. It carries with it connotations of successful self-maintenance made possible by informed disposition over and intelligent adaptation to, conditions of a contingent environment. On the other hand, if we start from the communicative employment of propositional knowledge in assertions, we make a prior decision for a wider concept of rationality connected with ancient conceptions of logos.¹⁴

The above argument clearly shows Habermas's sensitivity to some of the discontents of modernity. Modernity in so far so it is taken to be a process of rationalisation has contributed to the predominance of instrumental rationality. Such rationality has resulted in the end of freedom and self-determination.

14. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, vol.I, p., 10.

However, Habermas has tremendous faith in modernity and its resultant rationalisation of world views. This is quite clear from the way he distinguishes between the mythical and modern world views in the second section of the first chapter of The Theory of Communicative Action Volume I. We will be discussing subsequently in the course of our discussion of communicative action. Modernity, for Habermas is an incomplete project and rationalisation process triggered off by modernity is an emancipatory force. Instead, what deserves consideration and scrutiny is the subject centred¹⁵ reason

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15. The distinction that Habermas makes between instrumental rationality and communicative rationality is also as integral aspect of his later work, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Here Habermas argues that modernity, which has emanated from the western Enlightenment and the process of social rationalisation is an emancipatory force. In The Theory of Communicative Action which we will analyse in this chapter he systematically analyses this process of rationalisation. In The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity he delivers twelve polemical lectures on various discourses of modernity. However, his main concern is to answer the various questions posed by the totalised critique of this process of rationalisation in the names of 'negative dialectics', 'genealogy', 'deconstruction' by understanding this process of rationalisation not in a subject - centered paradigm but in a inter-subjective centred paradigm. Here we will not discuss these various positions that Habermas criticised, for this discussion is outside the scope of this paper. Here we will try to point to the importance of communicative action in Habermas.

~Fundamental to the paradigm of mutual understanding is, rather, the performative attitude of participants in interaction, who coordinate their plans for action by coming to an understanding about something in the world... who ever has been trained in this system (of communicative interaction) has learned how in the per

of modern social through.

Subject-centred reason conceives of the subject as the embodiment of authentic knowledge. It, 'stands over against a world of objects to which it has two basic relations: representation and action. Accordingly, the type of rationality associated with this model is the cognitive - instrumental',¹⁶ that is, rationality of manipulating the world of objects external to the subject.

Against this Habermas directs our attention to a more comprehensive and broader context of social interaction.

The communicative model of action does not equate action with communication... Concepts of social action are distinguished, however, according to

...Continued...

formative attitude, to take up and to transform into one another, the perspectives of the first, second, and third persons.

Now this attitude of participants [argues Habermas] in linguistically mediated interaction makes possible a different relationship of the subject to itself from the sort of objectifying attitude that an observer assumes [in a subject-centred paradigm] toward entities in the external world. (Source: J.Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp., 296-97).

In this communicative-centered paradigm 'ego' cannot afford to take an instrumental attitude to the external world and 'others', as he, 'stands within an interpersonal relationship that allows him to relate to himself as a participant in an interaction from the perspective of alter.' (Source: J.Habermas, op.cit., p., 297).

16. T.M Carthy, in 'Translator's Introduction' to J.Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol., I and II, p., XI

how they specify the coordination among the goal - directed actions of different participants: as the interlacing of egocentric calculations of utility; as a socially integrating agreement about values and norms instilled through cultural tradition and socialisation;... or as reaching understanding in the sense of a cooperative process of interpretation... The interpretive accomplishments on which cooperative processes are based represent the mechanism for coordinating action; communicative action is not exhausted by the act of reaching understanding in an interpretive manner.¹⁷

This shift from the paradigm of consciousness to the paradigm of language is made by Habermas to overcome the problems with subject-centered reason. The problems arise out of the paradigm of consciousness's attempt to ground reason in an ego-centric actor, as a result of which reason is reduced to a monologue. In communicative action the emphasis is shifted from the cognitive-instrumental rationality to dialogical rationality. Here rationality is grounded in the ability of the actors to evolve dialogue with each other, and the extent to which they are able to employ modes of argumentation to support their claims. The strength of an argument is measured in a given context by the soundness of reasons... whether or not an argument is able to convince the participants in a discourse, that is,

17. J. Haberman, The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol.I., p., 101.

to motivate them to accept the validity claims¹⁸ in question.¹⁹

Thus, it's the strength of an argument and not, 'the direct or strategic use of force', or 'dogmatic assertions',²⁰ which preserves the freedom of the individuals or participants. Habermas emphasises on the discursive freedom of the individuals and communicative rationality,

18. 'Inherent in the 'validity claims' that the actors raise with their utterances is the rationality of the communicative action. These validity claims are mutually recognised by the actors engaged in communicative interaction. These are the standards against which the each actor's utterance is validated. 'The concept of communicative action presupposes language as the medium for a kind of reaching understanding, in the course of which participants, through relating to a world, reciprocally raise validity^{claims} that can be accepted or contested' (J. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. I, p., 99). Every utterance of an actor, for Habermas, must raise atleast three 'validity claims'.

(1) 'That statement made is true (or that the existential presuppositions of the propositional content mentioned are in fact satisfied).

(2) That the speech act is right with respect to the existing normative context (or that the normative context that is supposed to satisfy is itself legitimate); and

(3) that the manifest intention of the speaker is meant as it is expressed' (J. Habermas op.cit., p. 99).

The awareness of these 'validity claims' sensitises an actor to the view points of other actors in a situation of communicative interaction and, thereby, arrive at a 'rationally motivated' understanding.

19. J.Habermas, op.cit., p., 18.

20. ibid., p., 18.

therefore, remains central to his understanding of discursive freedom.

The relation between his theory of communicative action and the rationalisation process is reflected in the way he distinguishes between modern and mythical ways of understanding of the world. For Habermas, the mythic world view fails to distinguish the social world, the external world and internal nature.

From Durkheim to Levi-Strauss, anthropologists have repeatedly pointed out the peculiar confusion between nature and culture... To be sure, the confusion of nature and culture by no means signifies only a conceptual blending of the objective and social worlds, but also a deficient differentiation between language and world; that is between speech as the medium of communication and that about which understanding can be reached in linguistic communication.²¹

In contrast, these differentiations are characteristic of the modern world view. Therefore, modern world view is rational. At this juncture a question arises: in what way the standards of rationality which define the modern way of understanding the world raise a claim to universality. Habermas tends to answer this question through a discussion of Jean Piaget's evolutionary concept of learning and Max Weber's concept of modernisation as societal rationalisa-

21. Ibid., pp., 48-49.

tion. (will deal with Weber's viewpoint in the next section).

Habermas discusses Piaget's ideas in order to link the changes in worldviews to the growth of knowledge. 'The universalist position forces one to the assumption that rationalisation of worldviews takes place through learning processes.'²² Piaget's theory of decentralisation implies that the gradual cognitive development of the individual leads to 'the decentration of an egocentric understanding of the world'.²³ Here decentration refers to the ability of the child to demarcate, 'the objective and social worlds from the subjective world.'²⁴

Habermas finds in this view a potentiality for conceiving his concept of communicative rationality in terms of growing rationalisation of world views. With the growing rationalisation of world views and the differentiation between external nature, society and internal nature, there also occurs a gradual decentration of one's subjective position. And communicative action plays an important role in this respect. Now knowledge about the world is achieved

22. Ibid., pp., 66-67.

23. Ibid., p., 69.

24. Ibid., p., 69.

through the practice of argumentation whereby subjective position²⁵ of an actor is judged from 'the perspective of speakers and hearers themselves. It is the actors themselves who seek consensus and measure it against truth, rightness and sincerity, that is, against the "fit" or "misfit" between speech act, on the one hand and the three worlds [that is, objective, social and subjective worlds] to which the actor takes up relation with his utterance, on the other'.²⁶

Thus, it is the strength of argumentation and the presence of validity claim against which the subjective view point of the actors can be criticised, which enable them to, 'Cooperatively and reflectively negotiate situation definitions capable of inter subjective recognition.'²⁷ Thus communicative action corresponds to the growing rationalisation of the world. And this rationalisation is conceptualized in terms of the ability of the actors to reflect on the differentiated world views which are conspicuous by their absence in the mythical world.

25. By subjective position is meant the position of an actor expressed through speech acts.

26. ibid., pp., 99.100.

27. R. Roderick, Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory, p., 119.

This differentiation of world views leads to, what Habermas calls, 'The rationalization of lifeworld'²⁸ 'Lifeworld' in Habermas's theory serves as a background for the subjective claims of the individual. Because the subjective experience is rooted into a cultural tradition, the linguistic expression made to project this subjective view is not open to criticism in a premodern social set up. 'To the degree that the lifeworld of a social group is interpreted through a mythical world view, the burden of interpretation is removed from the individual member, as well as the chance for him to bring about an agreement open to criticism'.²⁹ As a result the agreement reached is 'normatively ascribed agreement'.³⁰

However, with the rationalisation of society and decentration of world view, 'the normatively ascribed agreement' is subjected to critical assessment in a situation of communicative interaction. This implies that the tradition is 'stripped of its dogmatism'³¹ and it allows its members to critically reflect on the tradition.

28. J. Habermas, op.cit., p., 70.

29. Ibid., p., 71.

30. Ibid., p., 70.

31. Ibid., p., 71.

The cultural tradition must make available formal concepts for objective, social, and subjective worlds; it must permit differentiated validity claims (propositional truth, normative rightness, subjective truthfulness) and stimulate corresponding differentiation of basic attitudes (objectivating, norm-conformative and expressive). symbolic expressions can then be produced on a formal level at which they are systematically connected with reasons and accessible to objective assessment.³²

Implicit in this process of the rationalisation of life world is Habermas's concept of freedom. He did not separately discuss the concept of freedom in his The Theory of Communicative Action. However, the growing rationalisation of society and the gradual decentering of world view actually enlarge the arena of discursive freedom whereby the actors transcend their limited perspectives ^{to} arrive at a consensus.

So far we were busy with Habermas's theory of communicative action. We have tried to see how he has conceptualised rationality and freedom in modernity and attempted to build his theory of communicative action. However, this shift in theoretical orientation has come from his critique of some of the existing approaches to the problem of rationality and freedom in modernity. Here we will try to discuss Habermas's critique of Weber's understanding of rationality

32. Ibid., p., 71.

and freedom in modernity and how it influenced the views of Hoekheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. We will also discuss Habermas's critique of functionalist reason.

4.3 Critique of Weber's and the Frankfurt School Theorists' Perspective on Rationality and Freedom in Modernity.

Habermas's understanding of the transition from traditional to modern society is highly influenced by Max Weber's analysis of modernity in terms of the rationalisation of society. This is because Weber, according to Habermas, 'took up the rationality theme in a scientific context that had already discharged the mortgages from philosophy of history and nineteenth-century evolutionism encumbered by it.'³³ 'Weber sees cultural rationalization in modern science and technology, in autonomous art, and in a religiously anchored ethic guided by principles.'³⁴ Such rationalisation, for Habermas, opens up the possibility for rationally motivated ^{agreement} (as opposed to normatively ascribed agreement of the pre-

33. Ibid., p., 145.

34. Ibid., p., 159. For Further discussion of Weber's theory of modernity see the section on Weber in Chapter 2.

modern social set up) and keeps alive the discursive freedom of the individuals.

For Habermas, however, Weber's error is to conceive the function, scope and goal of reason too narrowly.³⁵

Even though Weber analyses the advent of modernity in terms of the progressive rationalisation of social spheres (science and technology autonomous art and rational conduct of life guided by religions principles), he allows himself to be guided by the restricted idea of purposive-instrumental rationality'.³⁶

The spread of purposive rationality in all spheres of life strips the disenchanted world of its ethical meaning and allows calculative pursuit of interests to reign supreme.

From the above argument it is clear that Habermas contests such narrow concept of rationalisation in Weber, Albercht Wellmer, is also aware of this ambiguity in Weber and tries to explain this in the following manner:

35. Rick Roderick, *op.cit.*, p., 123.

36. J. Habermas, *op.cit.*, p., 143

The basic reason why Weber can not really disconnect his formal conception of rationality and his analysis of modern European process of rationalization from a more emphatic Enlightenment concept of reason is that for him the emergence of modern science, and modern law as well as the emergence of secularized systems of instrumental or strategic action and the destruction of 'objective' meaning systems.. . . . is internally related to what he has called the disenchantment of the world.³⁷

Weber's pessimism, for Habermas, was reflected in the writings of the neo-Marxist writers of the Frankfurt school. 'Neo-Marxist philosophers, have tried to integrate some of Weber's insights into a revised Marxian framework'.³⁸ In their analysis they were highly influenced by Weber's analysis of rationalisation as the manifestation of the purposive-instrumental rationality. As a result they tended to evolve critique of modernity. Following Luckács' they viewed, 'rationalisation as reification',³⁹ which instead of contributing to the freedom of the individual, has actually

37. Albrecht Wellmer, 'Reason, Utopia, and Enlightenment,' in Richard J. Bernstein (ed.). Habermas and Modernity Polity Press, Cambridge, 1985, p., 42.

38. Albrecht Welmer, op.cit., p., 43.

39. In the Third Chapter of this dissertation we have discussed Luckács's concept of 'reification' and how it had influenced the critique of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse.

reduced individuals to mere objects of manipulation. Habermas argues,

Horkheimer and Adorno and later Marcuse interpret Marx in this Weberian perspective... The Dialectic of Enlightenment removes the ambivalence that Weber still entertained in relation to rationalization processes, and it abruptly reverses Marx's positive assessment. Science and technology for Marx an unambiguously emancipatory potential - themselves become the medium of social repression.⁴⁰

Our discussion of Dialectic of Enlightenment of Horkheimer and Adorno shows their concern with the progressive penetration of instrumental rationality into almost every sphere of social life. The critique of purposive instrumental rationality seems to be the only focal point which has guided their analyses of art, industry, culture and social relations. As a result 'this subjectivization of reason morality and art became irrational.'⁴¹ For the writers of Dialectic of Enlightenment the triumph of this purposive rationality in modern age has deprived 'authentic art' and morality of their authenticity.

40. J. Habermas, op. cit., p., 144.

41. Ibid., p., 346. Habermas uses the term 'subjectivization of reason' to show that purposive instrumental rationality is a subject centered rationality whereby an actor, endowed with scientific knowledge, calculatively applies certain means for the pursuit of his interests.

Marcuse expresses similar views in his One-Dimensional Man. In fact Marcuse's ideas in One-Dimensional Man are similar to those expressed by Horkheimer and Adorno in Dialectic of Enlightenment. This triumph of 'technological rationality' has robbed man of his critical faculty of reason and of his other dimension, the dimension of what he can be.

Habermas attempts to overcome the limitations of the concept of rationalisation. '... I am not interested in which of these positions (those of Marx, Weber, Horkheimer and Adorno) might be in the right; I am interested in the theoretical weaknesses they share. On the one hand, Marx, Weber, Horkheimer and Adorno, identify societal rationalization with the expansion of instrumental... rationality of action; on the other hand, they all have a vague notion of an encompassing societal rationality -- whether in the concept of an association of free producers, in ... an ethically rational conduct of life, or in the idea of fraternal relations with a resurrected nature...'⁴²

All of them tried to understand societal rationalization in a subject centered paradigm as a result of which

42. Ibid., p., 144.

instrumental rationality appears to them to be the only manifestation of this process of rationalisation. Habermas criticises Marx for making the same mistake. The paradigm that Marx adopted for analysis is production paradigm. However, the productive paradigm for Habermas, remains a subject-centred paradigm in which labour as a subject acts upon the nature to produce the means of his existence.

As a result of their concern with the spread of instrumental rationality they did not take into account the fact that societal rationalisation also contains within itself social differentiation. Against this, Habermas's concept of communicative rationality is essentially intersubjective. The discursive freedom that Habermas talks about can be preserved only if the power of dialogue is kept alive in each of these social spheres, ^{now} differentiated. In opposition to Dialectic of Enlightenment standpoint, Habermas argues that the discontents of modernity are rooted not in rationalisation as such but in the failure to develop and institutionalise in a balanced way all the different dimensions of reason opened up by the modern understanding of the

world'.⁴³

Habermas identifies 3 complexes of rationality that have resulted from the differentiation of social spheres : 'cognitive instrumental, moral-practical, and aesthetic-practical'.⁴⁴

If we start from the view that modern structures of consciousness condense to the three complexes of rationality... Then we can think of the structurally possible rationalization of society as a combination of the corresponding ideas [from the domains of science technology, law and morality art and eroticism] with interests and their embodiment in correspondingly differentiated orders of life. This... model would enable us to state the necessary conditions for a non-selective pattern of rationalization. The three cultural value spheres have to be connected with corresponding action systems in such a way that the production and transmission of knowledge that specialized according to validity claims is secured; The cognitive potential developed by expert cultures has, in turn, to be passed on to the communicative practice of everyday life and to be made fruitful for social action systems.⁴⁵

This passage is clearly indicative of Habermas's position, his emphasis on the importance of communicative action. The pessimism of the critical theorists, for Habermas, can be overcome only if (1) There is shift from monological

43. Thomas McCarthy, 'Reflections on Rationalization in the theory of communicative Action' in Richard J. Bernstein (ed.) Habermas and Modernity, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1985, p., 176.

44. Ibid., p., 178.

45. J. Habermas, op.cit., pp., 239-240.

concept of action to communicative action and life world, and (2) there is an attempt to join life world to system.

So far we have dealt with the development of the first idea in Habermas now will turn to the second important aspect of his critique.

4.4 Lifeworld, System and the Colonization of the Life World

Habermas defines lifeworld in terms of its reflexive nature and communicative ability. The societal rationalisation leads, for Habermas, to the rationalisation of these two capacities of life world. Thus, life world in Habermas's theory is not culture-specific tradition engaged in soliloquy. For Habermas life world becomes rationalised when it acquires the ability to transcend its limited perspective and can throw its own convictions open to criticism in a situation of communicative interaction. With the rationalisation of world and differentiation of social spheres, life world enjoys the discursive freedom to reflect critically on those differentiated social spheres.

Habermas distinguishes his concept of lifeworld from social system. Social system, the way it has been conceived,

in the wake of capitalist rationalisation follows the functional imperatives. As a result the rationality which has played an important role in controlling the systemic imperatives is purposive instrumental. Two important determinants of such systemic coordination are money and power corresponding to the economic and political subsystems. Habermas writes very clearly :

The transfer of action coordination from language over to steering media means an uncoupling of interaction from life world context. Media such as money and power... encode a purposive rational attitude toward calculable amounts of value... exert generalized, strategic influence on the decisions of other participants while bypassing processes of consensus oriented communication.⁴⁶

For Habermas, 'uncoupling of life world' refers to the failure on the part of the system to incorporate the discursive logic of the life world into its systemic logic. In Habermas's view it is absolutely vital because it is not possible for these steering media (money, power) to 'uncouple interaction from the life world context of shared cultural knowledge, valid norms, and accountable motivations, because they have to make use of the resources of consensus formation in language'.⁴⁷

46. Ibid., p., 183

47. Ibid., p., 183.

In the absence of this interrelation between the life world and system the, 'mediatization of the lifeworld',⁴⁸ has resulted in the, 'colonization'⁴⁹ of the life world.

Habermas tries to find the root of this problem in the system theory developed by Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann.

Parsons, according to Habermas does not distinguish between action and system. This is because Parsons, 'distinguishes between the actor as an abstract placeholder and the action system; the latter does not act but functions'.⁵⁰

Thus, the rationalised lifeworld of the actor is not given any importance by Parsons. This is because he conceives modernisation as structural differentiation and not as the rationalisation of the life world.

Parsons failed to develop a concept of society from the action perspective; as a result, he can not describe the rationalization of the life world and the increasing complexity of system as separate, interacting processes that often run counter to one another.⁵¹

48. Ibid., p., 196

49. Ibid., p., 196

50. Ibid., p., 235.

51. Ibid., p., 284.

Luhmann carries the development of systems theory to its logical extreme. Luhmann describes action as, 'a system by virtue of its internal analytical structure'.⁵² The system perspective adopted by Luhmann enables him to see system as guiding and coordinating action of the individuals for the purposes of systemic integration. As a result he ignores the possibility that the action framework being rooted into the life world might run counter to the logic of the system. Habermas argues:

I see the methodological weakness of ... functionalism precisely in the fact that it formulates its basic concepts as if that process, whose beginnings Weber perceived, had already been concluded -- as if a total bureaucratization had dehumanized society as a whole, consolidated it into a system torn from its roots in a communicatively structured life world, and demoted the life world to the status of one subsystem among many. For Adorno, this "administered world" was a vision of extreme horror; for Luhmann it has become a trivial presupposition.⁵³

Habermas was sensitive to the critique evolved by Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, However, he tried to overcome a serious limitation of their analyses. Influenced by the Weberian critique, they remained fixated on the model

52. Ibid., p., 235.

53. Ibid., p., 312.

of purposive instrumental rationality and, ..., did not expand the critique of instrumental reason into a critique of functionalist reason.⁵⁴

At this juncture a question arises as to what happens to the fate of the freedom of the life world in Habermas's theory. In the event of the colonisation of the life world the discursive freedom of the life world, its ability to rationalise its structure through communicative interaction gets lost. It is here that Habermas tries to revive the tradition of the critical theory and engage in the politics of critical consciousness.

In order to understand the colonisation process, Habermas turns to Marx's 'thesis of internal colonization'.⁵⁵ For Marx, labour as a human activity is rooted in the life world of the labourer. Internal colonisation is a process by which the irrationality of capitalist class relations reduces labour to a commodity and exploits it. It is this monetised labour power which is appropriated as a commodity and alienated from the life context of producers, that Marx calls "abstract-labour".⁵⁶

54. Ibid., p., 334.

55. Ibid., p., 332.

56. Ibid., p., 335.

Habermas maintains that Marx's labour - centred paradigm is not adequate to comprehend this process of colonisation in its entirety. It is not simply the colonisation of the life world of labour by the capitalist class relations, but colonisation of life world by the systemic rationality. 'Marx's error stems in the end from dialectically clamping together system and life world in a way that does not allow for a sufficiently sharp ^{separation} between the level of system differentiation attained in modern period and the class - specific forms in which it has been institutionalized'.⁵⁷

Furthermore, strict reliance on Marx's model of class conflict is not possible. In an advanced capitalism strict adherence to such a model would blind us to, 'the realities of a developed capitalism based on the pacification of class conflict through welfare - state measures'.⁵⁸ According to Habermas this is another weakness which the Frankfurt School thinkers suffered from.

In contrast to this, Habermas's model of communicative interaction enables him to locate the solution in the endless dialogue between the system and the life world. Haber-

57. Ibid., p., 340.

58. Ibid., p., 334.

mas's identification of the three complexes of rationality (cognitive - instrumental, moral - practical and aesthetic - practical) arising out of the process of societal rationalisation clearly shows that instrumental rationality is one of the important aspects of this rationalisation process. Therefore, emphasising life world rationality to the exclusion of the systemic rationality is not possible. This is reflected in the following argument of Habermas.

From the mere fact that system integration and social integration become largely decoupled, we can not yet infer linear dependencies in one or the other direction. Both are conceivable : The institutions that anchor steering mechanisms like money and power in the life world might channel either the influence of the life world on formally organized domains of action or, conversely, the influence of the system on communicatively structured context of action. In one case they would function as the institutional framework that subordinated system maintenance to the normative restrictions of the lifeworld, in the other case as the basis that subordinated the lifeworld to the systemic constraints of material reproduction.⁵⁹

4.5 New Social Movements and the Possibility of Freedom:

Habermas tries to locate freedom, more specifically the freedom of dialogue in the new social movements which he has

59. Ibid., pp. , 275-76

discussed in the last chapter of The Theory of Communicative Action (Volume 2).

The nature of social conflict in advanced capitalist societies has changed in the last ten to twenty years. Conflict no longer centers on distribution, it is no longer channeled through official parties... rather these new conflicts arise in areas of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation;... are carried out in subinstitutional or at least extra parliamentary forms of protest. It is not primarily a question of compensations... but of protecting... endangered ways of life.. the new conflicts do not flare up around problems of distribution but around questions concerning the grammar forms of life.⁶⁰

The movements that Habermas has on his mind are ecology, antinuclear movement, the feminist movement, cultural protest movements etc. Habermas finds in these movements a possibility of constant negotiations between the life world and the system. The success of these movements, which depends to a large extent on the power of dialogue, will free the lifeworld of its bondage in rationalised modern society. The rationality of communicative action can result only from free and internally rationalised life world.

Thus, Habermas through his theory of communicative action has tried to overcome critical theory's pessimism in 1940's, 50s and 60s and keep alive the prospect for a criti-

60. Ibid., p., 392

cal theory of society. Anthony Giddens reflecting on Habermas's theory of communicative action has raised a very significant question as to whether Habermas's theory of communicative action envisages, 'Reason without revolution?'⁶¹ Probably Giddens has tried to point to the absence in Habermas of the emphasis on revolutionary consciousness which makes the movement of history to a more rational and free order of existence possible. The critical theorists like Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse attached great importance to a concept of reason which is not only radical but revolutionary. For them, a rational society could come only through a revolution. Habermas's critical theory of society, on the other hand, does not envisage a total revolution. In Habermas's theory critical consciousness can arise out of communicative interaction, of the possibility of a dialogue not only between individuals but also between the life world and the system. Habermas has already explained why a proletarian revolution is not possible in late capitalism. That is why he finds in the new social movements the possibility of this dialogue between life - world and system.

61. A. Giddens, Social Theory and Modern Sociology, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987, p.225 (This phrase is part of the title of chapter 10).

Thus, Habermas tries to ground reason in the communicative interaction of the individuals. This communicative reason, for Habermas, is not revolutionary, but critical. It is this criticality of communicative interaction which enables life world to attain its freedom. Giddens has captured the crux of Habermas's critical theory in the following manner.

The tasks of critical theory today, Habermas concludes, have to be integrated with this appraisal of the institutional form of, and the tensions within, late capitalism... the new conflicts and associated social movements, derive from problems that can only be resolved through a reconquest of the life - world by communicative reason and by concomitant transmutations in the normative order of daily life.⁶²

change would come from the communicative power of the life world as well as from the constant interaction between life world and system.

62. Ibid., pp, 241-42.

CHAPTER-5

CONCLUSION

At the end of this fairly long essay we are now in a position to reflect on what we have already discussed. Our main concern in this dissertation was to critically understand 'rationality' and 'freedom' in modernity. And to critically understand this we have tried to look into those select writings of the critical theorists in which they have evolved a critique of rationality and freedom in modernity. We have also tried to see how this critical perspective developed by the critical theorists has been influenced by the critical reflections of Marx and Weber on rationality and freedom in modernity.

The theorists of the Frankfurt school like Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse during the formative period of the institute were highly influenced by the Marxist vision of a socialist society. The optimism and freedom inherent in Marx's understanding of history influenced the intellectual orientation of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse. However, in Dialectic of Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno became pessimistic and resigned. From the critique of capitalism Dialectic of Enlightenment turned to the critique of modernity in general. Horkheimer and Adorno tacitly embraced the Weberian pessimism that the increasing rationalisation of modern life is antagonistic to freedom. It is true that the

critique of Horkheimer and Adorno sensitises us to the negative effects of the instrumental rationality in modern society. At the same time one can say that Horkheimer and Adorno in their attempt to evolve a critique of instrumental rationality adopted a negative view about the rationalisation process in general.

Marcuse in One-Dimensional Man evolved a similar critique of this process of rationalisation. The prospects of critical theory as revealed in Eros and Civilization disappeared in One-Dimensional Man. The technological rationality became the object of critique in One-Dimensional Man. A close look at the works of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse clearly show traces of the Weberian pessimism. Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man is after all individuals trapped in an 'iron-cage' of rationality themselves.

Thus, all of them evolved a totalised critique of rationality and freedom in modernity. For them there seems to be no escape. Tom Bottomore, is also of the opinion that the similarity between Weber and the Frankfurt school 'is to be found in the bleak pessimism'¹ that is characteristic of their understanding of modern society. 'If Weber was, in Mommsen's words, "a liberal in despair", then the thinkers of the Frankfurt school, or at any rate Marcuse, can per-

1. T. Bottomore, The Frankfurt School, Tavistock Publication and Ellis Horwood Ltd., New York, 1984, p. 37.

haps be described as "radicals in despair".²

Perhaps it is this desperation that led them to see the end of all possibilities in modernity. Modernity, for them, is administration, order, control and surveillance.

Such notion of modernity is also reflected in their critique of culture industry and eclipse of authentic art. Needless to say Horkheimer's, Adorno's and Marcuse's critique of culture industry open our eyes to the problems of rationalisation in modern society. However, their conception of authentic art as the last refuge in a totally administered society prevented them from exploring other possibilities within the society for generating a critical awareness.

Technology, for Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse is a new instrument of domination. They had become staunch critics of modern technological rationality, so much so that the purpose of critical theory is lost. The problem lies in the fact that in their analysis the critique of instrumental rationality has become the critique of modernity in general. They have failed to see the unrealised potentials of modernity as a project.

In Habermas, we find an attempt to overcome this pessimism. In his theory of communicative action Habermas tries to work out a theory of society which is not revolutionary but critical. Habermas is not oblivious of the negative

2. Ibid., p.,37

aspects of modernity, especially the rise and growth of instrumental rationality. However, for Habermas, instrumental rationality does not solely determine the modern world views. Therefore, he criticises Weber and Frankfurt school theorists for solely concentrating on instrumental rationality.

In the flush of overreaction Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse ignored the importance of communicative rationality inherent in the process of societal rationalisation. Habermas's emphasis on this dialogical rationality shows that he is committed to a critical theory of society which is responsive to the changing social reality.

For Habermas, it is not longer plausible to think in terms of a proletarian revolution when the polarisation of class interests is no longer the characteristic feature of the late capitalism. The theorists of the Frankfurt school were, aware of these changes in the late capitalist society, but they could not come to terms with them. As a result their critique of capitalism turned into a totalised critique of modernity.

Habermas does not evolve a total critique of rationality and freedom in modernity. Instead, he tries to understand the process of societal rationalisation characteristic of modern world view. He argues that only the communicative interaction based on a rational understanding of the world can prevent the colonisation of the life world. Therefore,

he argues in favour of a constant dialogue between the life world and system. And he finds in the new social movements the possibility for a dialogue of this sort.

Habermas's communicative rationality contains an element of pragmatism. Habermas has adopted a pragmatic attitude to the problem of social reconstruction. For him, the prospect of social reconstruction no longer lies in a total revolution, but in a new social arrangement where critical consciousness can constantly be kept alive in a situation of communicative interaction.

There is no denying the fact that this dissertation has its own limitations. This limitation arises out of the fact that ^{it deals} with the select writings of the critical theorists. Because of the constraints of time and space it could not go beyond those writings. The ideas and views of Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas are not confined to the writings that we have tried to analyse.

Any fruitful work on modernity remains incomplete, if it does not take into account the emergence of the debate known as postmodernism. Postmodernism's claim that the Enlightenment has lost its potential and today we live in a postmodern world has posed a serious challenge to modernism as an intellectual discourse. In fact our understanding of Habermas remains limited if we do not take into account his reaction against postmodernism.

However, the present work has a limited perspective and therefore, it could not take care of all these dimension of modernity.

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