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Erziehung: the critical theory of education and counter-education

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The Sage Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory

Chapter 60: Erziehung

1. The Foundations of Critical Theory and the Critical Theory of Education

The main texts associated with the foundation of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, 1977; Horkheimer, 1993a; Horkheimer, 2002a; Marcuse, 2009) develop a distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘critical’ theory via a conception of research that seeks to transform the established understanding of modern scholarly activity, the relationships between academic disciplines and their associated methodologies, and between academic knowledge and contemporary society. In this sense, critical theory originates as a critique *of theory*, in the sense of the activity of scholarship and research that informs and, with respect to higher education, is considered integral to, modern systems of education.

Central to Horkheimer’s (1993a: 190-1) understanding of critical theory is its difference from a traditional conception of theory which, particularly in ‘Anglo-Saxon universities’ from the modern period onwards, conceives of the scholarly production of knowledge according to a model of the natural sciences that reflects the dominance of industrial production techniques within modern society. In this sense, scholarship is part of humanity’s productive powers, for the ‘application of all intellectual and physical means for the mastery of nature’ rests upon the ‘knowledge of man and nature which is stored up in the sciences and in historical experience’ (Horkheimer, 2002b: 3; 2002a: 213, 226). When intellectual production becomes reified as something eternal and natural, however, it leads traditional theory to become unreflective of its own historical and social foundations (Horkheimer, 2002a: 194, 191). Horkheimer and others establish the project of the Institute for Social Research as a critical theory, that is, first and foremost, *materialist* and *dialectical*, in the sense of rejecting the idealist illusion that the cognitive capacities alone are sufficient to grasp, let alone transform, ‘the totality of the real’ (Adorno, 1977: 120, 128; cf. Horkheimer, 2002a: 244) and of rejecting the empirical facts of positivistic scientific research as something ‘finished ...indestructible and static’ (Adorno, 1977: 126).

A number of broad implications for a critical conception of scholarship follow: research must renounce its *systematic* intention (Adorno, 1977: 127, 120), call traditional disciplinary boundaries into question by becoming *inter-* or *transdisciplinary* (Horkheimer, 1993a: 1; Adorno, 1977: 130; cf. Osborne, 2011: 15), and foster a *social* mode of practice, in the sense

of undertaking ‘permanent collaboration ...in common’ with others (Horkheimer, 1993a: 9-10) and also overcoming the division of labour that detaches academic research from wider society and social life processes (Horkheimer, 2002a: 198, 221-224). Renouncing pretensions to disinterestedness, critical theory must speak of what its research means for human and social life beyond the narrow sphere of academic scholarship, concerning itself with human happiness and its realization through the transformation of society (Marcuse, 2009: 100).

These early texts from the 1930s have less to say, however, about the dissemination of such knowledge through the formal activities of teaching and publication and their connection to pedagogical issues of learning and study. In his reflections concerning the ‘transmission of critical theory,’ Horkheimer (2002a: 240-1) merely cautions that it is never guaranteed any future ‘community of transmitters,’ for this is only assured through an ongoing ‘concern for social transformation ...aroused ever anew by prevailing injustice.’ When he does indicate the role of the Institute in supplementing the ‘educational mission’ of the university by fulfilling its teaching responsibilities, there is only the briefest mention given to traditional forms of scholarly dissemination through lectures and seminars (Horkheimer, 1993a: 14).

Where these early texts do critically reflect upon education not merely in the sense of the scholarly production of knowledge but a broader sense of dissemination and socialization, they tend to focus not on formal education or pedagogical techniques but what, from a Freudian-Marxist perspective informed by Erich Fromm, is considered the more significant psycho-social moulding of character that takes place in early childhood within the family. For Fromm (2005) and Horkheimer (2002c: 109), the patriarchal structure of the bourgeois family was crucial to the spirit of capitalist societies to the extent that, regardless of a lack of social standing, the father’s powerful socio-economic authority within the family provided a ‘paternal education’ that accustomed the child to obedience and discretion. This psychological organization of the child into the authority-oriented character placed fundamental limitations on the capacity for critical thought and resistance within formal education, which therefore tends to be disregarded in these early texts. If modern and contemporary education is understood in terms of a fundamental relationship between research *and* teaching, then, much of the first two decades of critical theory therefore cannot be said to provide a critical theory *of education* per se.

2. Late Capitalism and the Education Industry

From the post-war period onward, the first and later second generations of the Frankfurt School became increasingly concerned with diagnosing the transformations within capitalist societies that characterized the new spirit of what they described as late or advanced capitalism. A number of characteristics are significant in this context: the changed natures of the market following the rise of state and welfare-state forms of capitalism, of labour with the rise of technological automation, and of the family following the decline of the family wage and the decreasing role of primary socialization. Together, they reflect anxieties regarding economic productivity that lead to the unprecedented expansion and development of mass systems of schooling, further and higher education in the twentieth century, accompanied by the qualitative transformation and what many perceive as the impoverishment of learning, teaching and scholarship itself.

The modern period of European history, Franz Leopold Neumann's (1936: 28) work suggests, can be characterized by the defeat of liberalism in terms of the shift from a competitive market economy into a monopolistic one and a liberal state into a mass-democratic one. Neumann's (1942: 324-5) analysis of these conditions for the rise of National Socialism points in particular to how the party was required to organize the renewal of its power through the exertion of state machinery, such that schools and universities became subject to increasing control. This control can also be elaborated more generally through his investigations of the bureaucratizing effects of monopoly capitalism upon social institutions and the insidious way this transforms intellectuals into functionaries of the status quo (Neumann, 1953: 932-934).

The increasing necessity for centralized organization, administration and political mediation to stabilize commodity exchange has seen the reciprocal interlocking of civil society and state within a state-regulated capitalism, Habermas (1991; 1976, 55-57) argues, which gives rise to a public sector responsible for the state-subsidized production of 'collective commodities' of the material and immaterial infrastructure upon which the private sector belongs. This enables, for example, an increase in relative surplus value by heightening the productivity of labour for capital through the development of the technical forces of production (most obviously, for example, public systems of transport and communication).

As industrial work in general became disconnected from the direct exploitation of natural elements through the interposition of intermediating technical instruments, so the need for

natural human qualities such as physical strength diminished and the importance of widespread educational and training processes increased (Offe, 1976: 23). Friedrich Pollock (1957: 70-1; 204-6) believed automation lead to the ‘very real danger of technological [mass] unemployment’ and so the necessity of increasing the average level of intelligence of future workers by radically improving and changing educational facilities from childhood onward. Such education would need to focus in particular on providing a good knowledge of mathematics and science, as well as more specialized training to overcome a shortage of engineers and technicians, but it would also be necessary, given the great sense of responsibility required to operate within and identify with automated workplaces, to teach people how “to get more out of life and to be better citizens” (1957: 205-6).

For Fromm, Horkheimer and Adorno, the authoritarianism of ‘paternal education’ within earlier capitalism was connected, as we have seen, to the father’s centrality as the principle wage-earner and his dependence on his son for the continuation of his active role in society, a gender order centred on the normative ideal of the family wage (Fraser, 1994). Although the majority of children are compelled, under these conditions, to identify with reality and so submit to the identity of reason and domination, the child who takes what he or she has been taught more seriously than the father himself does rebels against the irrationalism concealed in this domination and attempts to live up to the truths of these ideals, resisting the demand to conform (Horkheimer, 1947: 112-4, 234). As Adorno (2005a: 186) later adds, this process of internalization of and painful detachment from the ego-ideal of the father figure – necessary for maturity – must be re-enacted a second time with the figure of the teacher.

In Fromm’s analysis, however, the ‘development of the state capitalist order entails a structural change in the bourgeois nuclear family,’ as the male loses the economic and patriarchal authority he had previously possessed (Honneth, 1987: 354-5). This has led to the diminishing significance of primary socialization of the child, away from the narrow continuation of the parents’ life and, through increasing secondary socialization, towards ‘the broader one of producing successful individuals who can stand up for themselves in the contemporary battle of life’ (Horkheimer, 1974: 11). These changes weakened the sharper separation between private and public spheres that had been demarcated by distinct figures of social authority and had enabled the traditional bourgeois family to preserve a time and space within childhood of pre-capitalist processes of cultivation and socialization unmediated by

the competitive principles of the market (Horkheimer, 2002c: 114-5, 124; Adorno, 2009: 153-4; Adorno, 1993: 25).

With the decline of informal education and the rise of public education, every child becomes enclosed from an early age within a system of institutions that constitute ‘the most sensitive instruments of social control’ (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 149). From the mid-twentieth century onward, this is paralleled by the spread of so-called progressive pedagogical practices that, along with declining social status and power of the teaching profession, simultaneously weaken the authority figure of the educator (Adorno, 2005a). Adorno (2005a: 188) confesses to a being a reactionary towards new ideas in education, in which ‘strictness is being replaced by a toleration and readiness to help’ (Horkheimer 1974: 11). Just as the culture industry piously claims to be guided by its consumers while, through its advertising and editing techniques, secretly drills its required responses into them in such a way it does the listening for the listener, so seemingly progressive elements within the education industry may be similarly said to perform the thinking for thinker or the learning for the learner.

Key to all these changes, Claus Offe (1973) writes, is the increasing need to increase productivity through the use of bureaucratic workers and civil servants of the welfare state. As an increasing proportion of capital is invested in fixed infrastructural costs such as technology, the attendant fall of that invested in human labour leads to what Marx called the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, in line with principle that human labour is productive of the value of commodities. Late capitalism responds to this economic situation by attempting to increase the productivity of labour. For example, even where the control of education under National Socialism in the 1930s and 1940s explicitly pursued abhorrent cultural and racial aims, Neumann (1942: 350) points out, in private it emphasized its true aim of promoting education for work: to take ‘leadership of all from earliest childhood to the oldest man, not for social purposes – and I must emphasize this once more – but from the point of view of productivity.’

Kluge and Negt (2014: 185-6) argue that although capital follows a path of increasing abstraction towards a dead system of accumulated labour, it cannot pursue this without dirtying its hands with the living. Not even late capitalism, with all the technological forces of automation at its disposal, ‘would have any use for individuals whose behaviour is reduced to mere reactions’ and so it is increasingly required to turn ‘human consciousness and

contexts of living into its most important raw material' (2014: 178-9). As Offe (1984: 94-100) explains, state power is increasingly required to 'politically regulate who is and who is not a wage-labourer' on the labour market and to transform dispossessed labour power into the commodity form inherent to "active" wage-labour through education. In particular, 'the teacher expends a kind of labour power which, without itself being a commodity, may have the purpose of educating labour which is a commodity' (Offe, 1973: 109-110). This is also made possible, Habermas (1976: 55-57) argues, through the 'governmental organization of the educational system, which raises the productivity of human labour through qualification,' an example of state investment in 'reflexive labour,' 'labour applied to itself with the aim of increasing the productivity of labour.' This labour which is 'not productive in the sense of the direct production of surplus value' but indirectly productive of surplus value to the extent it 'systematically alters conditions under which the surplus value can be appropriated from productive labour.' With this 'systematically managed expansion of the system of continuing education,' for example, academic labour shifts from being 'a collective natural commodity' to being 'internalized in the economy cycle' as 'a component of the production process itself, for 'the state (or private enterprise) now expands capital to purchase the indirectly productive labour power of scientists, engineers, teachers, etc. and to transform the products of their labour into cost-cutting commodities'.

As a consequence of these changes, as Adorno and Horkheimer (1997: xv) make clear, although formal education had once been a privilege that rested upon the exploitation and suffering of a social division of labour (since the wealth appropriated from the production of commodities in the factory paid for the private education and the privileged triumphs of culture), in late capitalism it is the melting-down and selling-off of cultural values themselves as commodities – by the culture and, we could now add, education industries – that generates the capital to purchase new factory and office space for expanded exploitation. The tendency to abolish educational privilege through systems of public education, Adorno and Horkheimer (1997: 160) therefore conclude, 'does not open for the masses the spheres from which they were formally excluded, but, given existing social conditions, contributes directly to the decay of education and the progress of barbaric meaninglessness'.

The inward assimilation of historical culture via the personal and unique cultivation of the individual, which had been the traditional domain of enlightenment *Bildung*, now gives way to the technicized modes of sensibility and behaviour exemplified by instrumental reason,

including schematized and depersonalized methods of instruction, which increasingly rely on technological aids (Horkheimer, 1974: 13, 143). Lacking the enlightenment moment of self-reflection, the process of socialization connected to *Bildung* loses its association with human reason and freedom and takes on a rigidified necessity once attributed to nature itself (Adorno, 1993: 17-18). Since this crisis cannot be entirely explained by the inadequacies of the educational systems and their teaching methods, pedagogical reforms alone are not sufficient and may even exacerbate this crisis (Adorno, 1993: 15).

3. Mimetic and Rational Education

The effects of these changes are felt only gradually and often in a more complex or contradictory way within the cultural and especially educational spheres, however. As the possibility of broader social and political transformation receded, their writings focused upon preserving those residues of social life that resisted economic subsumption and, especially within the context of the de-nazification of German institutions, came to place increased expectation on the potential for bourgeois educational forms to change the psychological conditions that permitted the worst excesses of fascism to prevail (Adorno, 2005b: 192-194).

Horkheimer (1947: 114-5) insists that one specific psychological mechanism is particularly crucial to learning in ‘those early and all but unconscious stages of personal development that determine the individual’s eventual character’: the ‘mimetic impulse of the child’ in which ‘the whole body is an organ of mimetic expression.’ While it is impossible to conceive of a system of education that could fully do away with the coercive psychological mechanisms of reward and punishment associated with paternal education, he nonetheless envisages the possibility of eliminating this coercion from the later stages of education (Horkheimer, 2002c: 109-111): ‘Cultural progress as a whole, as well as individual education, i.e. the phylogenetic and ontogenetic processes of civilization, consist largely in converting mimetic into rational attitudes.’ Phylogenetically, this occurs through the transvaluation of these mimetic impulses, first through religion and then critical reasoning; ontogenetically, through rational education. This transformation of the mimetic impulses into conscious adaptation eventually permits a form of ‘domination’ over external objects that Horkheimer had earlier associated with the ‘mastery of nature’ through scientific knowledge. The mimetic impulse is never fully overcome, though, and ‘lies in wait, ready to break out as a destructive force’ whenever the rational fulfilment of human potentiality – the promise of happiness – is curtailed (Horkheimer, 1947: 117).

The antagonistic social dimensions inherent to education therefore connect individual socialization within the family to the more general tensions of cultivation that Freud had explored in *Civilization and its Discontents*, developed in terms of the mastery of nature by Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the enlightened mastery of nature, upon which the progressive and scientific development of civilization depends, originates through a form of mimetic adaptation, an intimate bond of sympathy, similitude or relatedness with things that represents the first attempts to control and manipulate nature. Enlightenment regresses to myth at the point where enlightened thought ceases to be a means of social emancipation through the mastery of nature and instead becomes a form of domination over the social itself. This occurs in part because enlightened thought forgets or represses its own dialectical entwinement with, and emergence from, nature through the same mimetic impulse it seeks to overcome (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 11). Consequently, enlightened thought must accommodate critical reflection on this element, which Adorno will later develop in terms of non-identity thinking: the ‘remembrance of nature in the subject’ by virtue of which it maintains itself as enlightened thought (1997: 49, 41).

A ‘rational education’ would, Horkheimer (1978: 170, 197-8, 223) writes, permit the possibility of sublimating aggressive tendencies into the more productive outlets of work and knowledge by enabling the capacity for a more critical understanding of wider social causes implicated in individual success or failure. The liberal traits of bourgeois culture which must not only be preserved but extended to all are therefore those that sought to teach each person ‘individual self-consciousness, to educate them to the insight that thoughts dwell in everyone, that its dignity imparts itself to all’ and that freedom is the freedom to develop one’s individual abilities in the context of scientific and technological production, which society needs in its struggle with nature.

Youth ‘must be educated so that it is critical in the face of demagoguery,’ acquires ‘the categories with which to distinguish demagoguery from a truly rational politics’ and becomes sensitive enough to any and all persecution that ‘something in them should rebel when any individual is not treated as a rational being’ (Horkheimer, 1974: 118). Similarly, Neumann (1964: 294-5) is clear that ‘if we wish to prevent a demagogue from using anxiety and apathy’ to control society, teachers, students and other ‘citizens of the university’ must

‘suppress our arrogance, inertia, and our revulsion from the alleged dirt of day-to-day politics’ and undertake ‘responsible educational and political activity’ aiming at the humanization of politics and the elimination of anxiety. The concept of freedom involves, Neumann (1964: 203; 1953: 211-215) writes, ‘the self-determination of man [*sic*], who must have the possibility of unfolding his potentialities’ in terms not just of a negative and juridical freedom from constraint but also a positive and rational freedom stemming from the ‘knowledge of external nature, knowledge of human nature, and knowledge of the historical process,’ as well as the volitional freedom to realize this knowledge. These two concepts of freedom are mutually connected, Neumann (1964: 213-5) insists, since the former is politically necessary for the latter to flourish and since the latter promotes a rational organization of society such that individuals can be politically free. Intellectuals must therefore organize against the bureaucratic tendencies within research activity, defending the principle of academic freedom and struggling for the creation of co-operative communities of research.

In Adorno’s (1993) later writing, this cultivation of intellectual freedom is reconnected with Kant’s understanding of enlightenment as the release from self-incurred immaturity [*Unmündigkeit*]. To the extent the education of every individual in political, social and moral awareness fosters the autonomous powers of reflection and self-determination, it is the only foundation of a democratic maturity capable of ensuring the principle of Auschwitz never recurs (Adorno, 2005b). The ‘only real concrete form of maturity would consist of those few people who are of a mind to do so working with all their energies towards making education an education for protest and for resistance ...for “knocking things down” (Adorno, 1993: 30-31). This is particularly necessary to supplement the deficiencies of the primary school system in rural environments, where television programs and mobile education groups might also be required (Adorno, 2005b: 196). This critical theory of education demands ‘the self-reflection of thinking ...a thinking against itself’ and so ‘education toward critical self-reflection,’ which must include ‘critical reflection on pseudo-education [*Halbbildung*], for which culture is essential’ (Adorno, 1973: 365; 2005b: 193; 1993, 31).

Although Adorno’s thought develops the idea of a mimetic remembrance of unreconciled nature further, to the extent this experience remains restricted to aesthetic experience it is largely excluded from Adorno’s reflection on rational cultivation through education. In their preoccupation with preserving or retrieving the bourgeois forms of ‘rational’ education

inherited from the liberalism of the enlightenment, Horkheimer, Fromm, Pollock Neumann and Adorno therefore have a tendency, despite the sophistication of their thought in many other respects, to undialectically oppose the mimetic and rational elements of education and so perform their own repression of its mimetic aspect. This manifests itself in the self-avowed conservatism of their educational attitudes, which can provide a strident criticism of the ongoing deformations of education capitalism only at the expense of an attendant critique of the liberalism of bourgeois education and consequently of a more dialectical consideration of its disintegration under late capitalism.

4. Intersubjectivity: Communication and Recognition

Subsequent generations of Frankfurt School critical theory, rejecting the Marxist philosophy of history that supposedly ‘trapped’ Horkheimer, Adorno and others within the domain of social labour and so restricted their vision of social emancipation to the rapidly diminishing action of the proletariat, argued that the idea of universal reconciliation with nature, according to which the first generation often sought to ‘outdo’ a process of expanding reification, must be fundamentally rethought (Honneth, 1979: 46; 1993a: xvii-xviii; 2007: 65). In particular, the attempt to develop the idea of reconciliation within the framework of the philosophy of consciousness lead Adorno to ‘the surrender of all cognitive competence’ from the domain of science to that of art and artistic production, placing modern art on an equal footing with critical theory in a way that reveals ‘the embarrassment into which critique falls due to the loss of innocence of its consciousness as science,’ as Horkheimer had initially conceived it (Habermas, 1984: 384; 1973: 241).

Nonetheless, for Habermas (1984: 389-90), Honneth (1979: 46-57) and others (Benhabib, 1986: 189-190), the hoped for resurrection of a dominated nature through the appeal to a non-rational or non-conceptual mimetic capacity usefully suggests the possibility of a ‘relation between persons in which the one accommodates to the other, identifies with the other, empathizes with the other’ and consequently spheres beyond that of art, ‘in which the mimetic capacity gains objective shape.’ For Habermas (1984: 382-3), the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* abandoned the more direct path of recognizing, from the ‘inner logics of different complexes of rationality ...a unity of rationality beneath the husk of an everyday practice that has been simultaneously rationalized and reified,’ and so anticipating a domain of the social – mutual understanding as the promise of communication free from domination – that remained ‘foreign to the tradition of critical theory’ (Honneth 1993a, xii). Here, the

idea of reconciliation takes up the idea of maturity – autonomy and responsibility within the rational domain of communication – in such a way that it not only abandons the metaphysical promise of a reconciliation with nature but is predicated upon the continued scientific and technological mastery of nature necessary for human survival (Habermas, 2000a: 195-6).

This theory of communicative action therefore presents one path to take ‘under historical circumstances that prohibit the thought of revolution’ (Habermas, 2000b: 216, 226-7; 1984: 391-2). Eschewing the attendant theory of crisis that justifies the possibility and necessity of revolution, Habermas’s (1984: 45, 67-9) materialism generalizes Piaget’s concept of a decentration of the egocentric understanding of the world – the stages of cognitive development characterized in terms of structurally described levels of learning – to provide a social evolutionary perspective upon a world-historical process of rationalization of worldviews and lifeworlds. For Seyla Benhabib (1986: 210-12), this is the attempt, after Adorno, to conceive the non-identity of the subject not in terms of an aesthetic ideal but a moral and political one. Benhabib (1986: 214-5) adds that this solution signifies “self-actualization” in the Hegelian sense of *Bildung*, as an ‘educational process in which the capacity for reflection and autonomy are developed’ in such a way that the empirical individual is transcended, and a transsubjective subject is implied in ‘the cumulative logic of the historical process.’ Honneth (1995a: 154-5) similarly sees historical materialism transformed, under Habermas, into a ‘theory ...of the educational process that has taken place in the course of the human species’ history.’

To the extent that the terrain of action, as a site of social struggle, becomes reconceived by the second generation of Frankfurt School critical theory in terms of communication or recognition, their work returns to the origins of critical theory within the context of a theory of intellectual *transmission* that had been largely passed over in favour of a program of intellectual *research*. Thus Honneth (2007: 67) understands Habermas’s (1984: 8) theory of communicative action as recovering ‘the categorial means necessary for a revival of Horkheimer’s ideas of social critique,’ promoting transdisciplinarity not only between the disciplines of research but also between teaching and research (‘developers of new pedagogical methods ...should go back to the philosophical presuppositions of different fields of study themselves’).

In Habermas's (1971: 304-312) early writing the distinct educational and cultural implications of Horkheimer's original conception of a critical theory are developed by exposing the cognitive interests that traditional theory had concealed. Habermas (1970: 100-1; 53-4) comes to understand the changed constellation of late capitalism in terms of the predominance of the technical cognitive interests of the empirical-analytical sciences ('control over objectified processes') without the concomitant practical and emancipatory interests of the historical-hermeneutical sciences, from which the former has estranged itself. What remains significant for Habermas (1970: 38, 75, 85-7) is not the retreat from science through the attempt to conceive some alternative relationship with nature, since this technical cognitive interest corresponds to, and cannot be separate from, the logic of purposive-rational action of work itself. Rather, what must be countered is the attendant depoliticization of the public sphere, as the interaction of reciprocal relationships between subjects under intersubjectively comprehensible and binding norms, which therefore excludes from public discussion all practical questions concerning scientific and technical control. Understood in this context, what Habermas (1989: 118) proposes with the 'material critique of science and scholarship' is less the rehumanization of nature, in the sense of universal reconciliation, as the rehumanization of scholarship. The idea of the university must ultimately be based on a scholarship of knowledge directed towards public education and communication: to 'transmit, interpret and develop the cultural tradition of society, influencing the self-understanding of the general public through interpretations provided by the social sciences and humanities' (Habermas, 1970: 4).

In this, Habermas (1991: 1-4, 159-60) seeks to recover and repoliticize a bourgeois public sphere that had originally evolved from the world of letters, expanded to promote the enlightened values of critical reasoning through the daily presses, but whose social foundations have 'for about a century... been caught up in a process of decomposition' and so become replaced by the 'pseudo-public or sham-private world of culture consumption.' With the modern transformation of the liberal constitutional into a social-welfare state, publicity becomes extended to all organizations acting in state-related fashion, including media-controlled subsystems of the economy, with the result that '[t]he same economic situation that pressured the masses into participating in the public sphere in the political realm denied them the level of education that would have enabled them to participate in the mode and on the level of bourgeois readers of journals' (Habermas, 1991: 231-2; 168). Or, whereas once 'you had to pay for books, theatre, concert, and museum, but not for the conversation

about what you had read, heard, and seen,' today 'the conversation itself is administered' and 'formalized' via 'professional dialogues from the podium, panel discussions, and round table shows ...it assumes commodity form even at "conferences" where anyone can "participate"' (1991: 163-6).

An attendant colonization of public education occurs through the juridification of schooling, whereby norms and contexts for coordinating action based on mutual understanding become remodelled on the basis of legal principles transposed from the private law of the state (Habermas 1984: 356-8). As a consequence, 'decision-making procedures' that once treated those involved in the pedagogical process as having the mature capacity to 'represent their own interests and to regular their affairs themselves' become bureaucratically administered on behalf of those subjects as legal rights that penetrate 'deep into the teaching and learning process' (1984: 371-2). This process produces an abstraction from all particular pedagogic needs and interests that ultimately endangers the freedom and initiative of the teacher, while permitting the integration of education into the system of social labour, in terms of increasing productivity at the expense of cutting its 'ties to the political, public realm' (1984: 371; 1970, 5-8).

In his critical development of Habermas' position, Honneth (1993a: xvii-xviii; 1981: 119-120; 2007: 70-71) seeks to explain social development not according to an evolutionary logic of rationalization but a 'dynamic of social struggle located within social interactions.' A 'communication paradigm conceived not in terms of a theory of language, but in terms of a theory of recognition,' Honneth (2007, 71-2; 1; 1995b, 146) argues, 'can ultimately close the theoretical gap left by Habermas in his further development of Horkheimer's program.' One way in which social relations of recognition have been improved, Honneth (2014, 241-3) claims, is through comprehensive educational reforms. Although the political discourse of modernity frequently addressed the theme of public education, contemporary philosophy has neglected this insight into the intrinsic association between democratic politics and democratic education: that state-administered education is necessary for students to develop the reflective habits required to participate in democratic procedures. Honneth insists that a reinvigorated program of democratic education is therefore required, premised on the confidence that it is possible and necessary for state education to guide rational deliberation, infuse democratic values and goals and enable social recognition, promoting the individual

self-respect and self-esteem that permits future citizens to act with self-confidence in the public sphere.

As Nancy Fraser (2013: 169; Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 1-4, 28-30) and Seyla Benhabib (2002: 69-70) point out, however, the struggle for recognition must also address the way social institutes constitute 'institutionalized patterns of cultural value' that prevent parity of participation in social life, and so, insists, must concern itself with redistribution as well, since struggles 'for recognition can be addressed by changing our cultural patterns of interpretation, communication, and representation' in ways that 'have distributive consequences,' particularly with regard to schooling. Both Fraser (2003: 81-2) and Benhabib (2002: 101-2) focus on the banning of the hijab within public education systems in France and the need to take affirmative steps to ensure the right of minority groups to fully participate without requiring assimilation or exacerbating subordination. Simultaneously, however, schools 'in democratic society have the special responsibility to prepare the young for citizenship ...the capacity to engage others about how they will live together,' and 'any educational system that denies the exposure of children to the most advanced forms of knowledge and inquiry' may, out of 'respect for a minority community's quest to preserve its ways of life,' unjustifiably deny the equal right to develop moral and intellectual faculties as a full human being but also limit the social mobility of the young (Benhabib 2006: 101; 2002: 47-8). Although controversies over the hijab generated 'genuine public discourse in the French public sphere,' the young women involved were not asked to justify 'their actions with "good reasons in the public sphere"' and so what Benhabib (2006: 105-7) understands as their attempt to resignify the meaning of wearing the hijab from one of private religious observance to politicized cultural defiance within the public sphere itself was overlooked and a genuine opportunity for social learning passed over.

To the extent that, through intersubjective theories of communicative action and recognition, the second and third generations of the Frankfurt School deepen the theoretical resources for conceptualizing and justifying both the scholarly production of knowledge and the conditions of its communication within the public sphere, their work can be seen as moving beyond the first generation in response to changed socio-economic conditions, in a way that nonetheless extends and historically generalizes what has been suggested is a problematically undialectical distinction between mimetic (unfree) and rational (free) education. In order to recover and reconstruct the outlines of an alternative critical theory of education from those

more peripheral figures of the Institute, we might retrace the course of intellectual development just described by beginning with Honneth's (1993a: 280-1; 2007: 74-5) criticism of the turn taken by critical theory in developing an account of intersubjectivity directly exclusively at rules of communication to the detriment of analysis of the bodily and physical dimensions of social action, including those involved in labour.

In his early writings, Honneth sought to reconnect the concept of social labour back to a Marxist account of social emancipation by developing a critical understanding of work, in which the workers' subversive efforts to gain control over the work revealed and justified the desire for autonomy over their activity. As Honneth (1995b: 16) makes clear, this draws on Marx's early understanding of work not only in relation to economic growth or productivity but also from the position of practical self-development associated with *Bildung*. Here, social labour involves a formative, socializing and conscious learning process unrecognizable to Habermas, 'in which working subjects become aware of the fact that their capabilities and needs go far beyond the possibilities permitted by the given social structure' and so 'the educational potential of work' becomes the practical 'foundation of a theory of social revolution' (1995b: 16, 23-5, 45-47).

Although Honneth later develops this position into the more familiar Hegelian critique of the organization of labour on the basis of the need for social integration and recognition already discussed, this early attempt to reconceptualize labour in terms of the production not only of objective goods but also subjective learning processes provides a starting point for revising Honneth's interpretation of Benjamin, in a way that will connect the latter more closely with the work of Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt. According to Honneth (1993b: 85-6) and Habermas (2000b), what 'Benjamin in his early years had in mind ...can, for all its metaphysical accentuation, indeed be rationally reconstructed,' pointing to a form of experience in which 'reality appears as a field of reference for intersubjective, lived experiences ...tied to an ability peculiar to human species.' Benjamin's mimetic theory of language, Habermas (2000b: 214-6) claims, 'is correct in supposing that the oldest semantic stratum is that of expression ...one form of the animal instincts that is manifested in expressive movements' and so 'the as-yet-uninterrupted connection of the human organism with surrounding nature.'

Honneth (2009: 115-6) elaborates this position in relation to that communicative sphere which Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* identifies as 'forms of social agreement that arise without any use of violence.' This accords with Honneth's (1993: 94) more general attempt to recode Benjamin's idea of "messianic power" as a 'symbolic restitution' and recognition of the 'moral integrity' of the victims of the past. Yet Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* also suggests an alternative domain of everyday experience in which a divine force is said to actualize itself in present practice: the sphere of education. For a 'divine violence', Benjamin writes, 'is not only attested to by religious tradition but also found in present-day life in... *educative violence*, which in its perfected form stands outside the law.' Yet, to the extent that Honneth (2009: 123-5), like Habermas, seeks to rationally redevelop Benjamin's account of language as sphere of action free from coercion or violence, he is forced to reject such a conception of education as a 'terroristic,' 'theocratic' and 'pathological' justification of corporal punishment, one that reflects elements of the immature Benjamin's involvement in the German Youth Movement and its program for anti-bourgeois educational reform.

5. Counter-Education

Walter Benjamin's concept of an educative violence provides the guiding thread, in this final section, to develop an alternative critical theory of counter-education, conjoining the thought of Walter Benjamin, whose writings on education have until recently tended to be overlooked in the Anglophone reception of his work, with that of Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, whose body of literary, theoretical and visual work remains the most interesting and, again in the Anglophone sphere at least, perhaps most neglected aspect of the Frankfurt School. The overlapping philosophical and educational concerns of these theorists can be attributed to their involvement in and experiences of the student movements of the 1910s and 1960s.

The educative violence that Benjamin associates with a paradoxically nonviolent form of divine violence is postulated from the existence of an anarchic, law-annihilating human violence (as a disruptive or interruptive expression of pure means without coercive end). Although it remains entirely speculative in the essay, this concept of educative violence could be developed in accordance with a contemporary allusion to the pedagogic gaze of the parent as a form of nonviolent control (Benjamin, 1999a: 284-5):

The growing child must be conscious not just of the vigilance of the paternal eye but of what can ensue when the eye brightens or clouds over. This nonviolent control ...has

more influence on the child in essential matters than anything else (more than corporal punishment and above all more than the much-vaunted power of example).

Benjamin makes clear that this pedagogic gaze is not merely contemplative but practical, effecting changes in both the object observed and the observing subject. If it therefore becomes an interpersonal medium of mutual transformation between generations, it is nonetheless predicated on the assertion by the educator of a form of nonviolent control, or what Benjamin (1999a: 487) in *One-Way Street* describes as a mastery not of the young but of the relationship between generations:

But who would trust a flogging-master [*Prügelmeister*] who proclaimed the mastery [*Beherrschung*] of children by adults to be the purpose of education? Is not education, above all, the indispensable ordering of the relationship between generations and therefore mastery (if we are to use this term) of that relationship and not of children?'

The problematically violent mastery of students as the object of education is exemplified not only in the corporal punishment of authoritarian education, for Benjamin (2016: 196-8) but also in the 'new pedagogy, the fun-loving reformism' of progressive bourgeois schooling, which treats children, like commodity-producing European societies toward the rest of the world, as if primitively eager consumers of its own edifying cultural junk. This is also true of the 'antiproletarian education for proletarians' provided by the bourgeoisie and the 'pseudorevolutionary educational idealism' of certain strands of Marxist education (Benjamin 1999b: 274).

This idea could be developed in a more contemporary direction in the context of Marcuse's (1965: 95-137) claims concerning forms of 'educational dictatorship' in which 'violence and suppression are promulgated, practiced, and defended' and 'the people subjected to these governments are educated to sustain such practices as necessary for the preservation of the status quo.' The practice of a passive form of tolerance within a framework determined by the authorities and a society defined by institutionalized inequality, ultimately serves the continuation of such oppression. The defence of freedom of speech that tolerates all points of view equally and treats even the most misinformed opinion with the same respect others results in a '*neutralization* of opposites, a neutralization, however, which takes place on the firm grounds of the structural limitation of tolerance and within a preformed mentality.'

Marcuse also sees abstract tolerance manifested within systems of education that understand the self-actualization of the child only in terms of permissiveness without any conception of a liberating kind of repression often necessary to transform psychic elements that permit self-identity, and so ‘encourages non-conformity and letting-go in ways which leave the real engines of repression in the society entirely intact.’

Marcuse (1965) therefore speaks of the necessary ‘withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements which promote aggressive policies, armament, chauvinism, discrimination on the grounds of race and religion, or which oppose the extension of public services’ and the need to connect political programs of education with organization within communities. ‘Today, education which counteracts the professional training for effective performance for the Establishment – counter-education,’ he writes (2001), ‘is the indispensable weapon of political radicalization.’

Marcuse’s concept of counter-education was significant for the development of Angela Davis’ (1998: 316-7) own attempt to link education and liberation in the context of the political and social struggles of the black community. In her earlier writings, she explores how this moment exemplified in the emancipation from slavery of the African-American social reformers Frederick Douglass, although Davis (2012: 194-7) is later critical of the way in which this early work relied on an ‘implicitly masculinist notion of freedom’ from the Kantian, Hegelian and Marxist philosophy she had learnt from the critical theory of Marcuse and Adorno, and which served to exclude women from enjoying the full benefits of freedom.

Her later work (20012: 194-7) drew more fully on Afro-American and Feminist studies to link the philosophical understanding of freedom with histories of black political struggle and ‘new ways of producing knowledge and transforming social relations’. While continuing to demand the elimination of institutional racism that excluded black students from higher education, Davis (1990: 180-1, 222-4) draws attention, for example, to the way in which sexuality could be used to deny the freedom of working-class black women, to how the academy cannot be the only site of political struggle against racism, sexism and homophobia, nor black women students and teachers the only groups that must be defended from attacks intended to deny their freedom, and how access to higher learning is conditioned by wider economic levels of impoverishment that cannot be addressed through educational solutions alone (Davis, 1990: 222-3).

Davis' attentiveness to how the subject of education and their subjective awareness of bodily and material dimensions of 'race', gender, sex, sexuality and class might produce not only of new kinds of knowledge but also new social relations resonates with Benjamin's demand to rethink the relation between teaching and research. Benjamin (2011: 205) insists on the creative function of the student body as a 'great transformer' of scholarly methods within the university, to the extent that teaching is 'capable of adapting to new strata of students in such a way that a rearrangement of the subject matter would give rise to entirely new forms of knowledge.' Indeed, the sterility of academic research is attributed to the failure of its pedagogical task of turning teaching into a fruitful activity (Benjamin, 1999b: 459-461). For certain traditional subjects, then, it has become necessary to entirely re-examine the presumed association between teaching and research upon which academic activity is founded, and instead of looking 'to research to lead a revival in teaching ...strive with a certain intransigence for an – albeit very indirect – improvement in research to emerge from the teaching' (Benjamin, 1999b: 419-20).

One model for such a practice can be found in Benjamin's own experiments with radio broadcasting in the late 1920 and early 1930s. Although radio's civic education programs largely borrowed the existing forms of scholarly dissemination with minor concession to popularity, radio's potential to address unlimited numbers simultaneously in their own homes required a complete rearrangement of the material in line with the interests and questions of the masses. This interplay 'not only mobilizes knowledge in the direction of the public, but mobilizes the public in the direction of knowledge,' transforming the substance of knowledge in a way that impacts on the pursuit of knowledge itself (Benjamin, 2014: 370)

These claims could be contextualized in relation to Negt and Kluge's (1993: 147) call for the production of a proletarian *counterpublic* sphere: for 'television, this is a matter of a stronger emphasis on educational programming ...in the case of universities, it is one of developing a public media cartel indigenous to higher education; in the case of the unions, an intensification of the unions' own professional training and adult education programs.' Since the public sphere as it currently exists has been constituted as a bourgeois public sphere that excludes the experience of workers, Negt and Kluge (1993: 55-6, xlviii, 2-11) claim that their 'political motive is to uncouple the investigation of the public sphere ...from its naturally rooted context ...in the formal characteristics of communication' and reject the idea it might

be 'interpreted' or even 'salvaged' through 'reference to the emphatic concept of a public sphere of the early bourgeoisie,' modelled on a republic of scholars.

For Fraser (1991: 57-60), the specific form in which Habermas elaborated the concept of the public sphere required 'some critical interrogation and reconstruction,' not only because Habermas idealizes the concept of the public sphere by overlooking the way it has been constituted by significant exclusions, especially along gender, 'race' and class lines, but also because he 'fails to examine other, nonliberal, nonbourgeois competing public spheres.'

Kluge and Negt (1993: 30) argue that the production of a public sphere 'in whose production process the historical movement of dead and living labour allows itself to be converted into experience' is only possible within the framework of a 'proletarian public sphere' in which the workers can appropriate such an experience because they have already organized some of it themselves. This proletarian public sphere must develop within the historical fissures – 'the rifts, marginal cases, isolated initiatives' – of the concrete constellations of social forces that make up the bourgeois public sphere (Kluge & Negt, 1993: xliii) and so 'does not stand for the working class but for oppressed relationships, for things and interests, which are not expressed ... a process of igniting solidarity among people who might otherwise have very different ideas... (Krause, 2006).

In their own writing, Kluge and Negt (2014: 106-7) offer a similar example of a primary school classroom where a teacher moves between children working in different groups, in which a form of self-regulated learning has been authorized that brings about 'invisible forms of order.' They insist that 'it is not self-regulation in itself, but the form in which it has been authorized that brings about order', pointing to the necessity of the teacher's authorization – or pedagogic mastery of the relationship – for the forms of student self-regulation that rests on both their 'own knowledge and their concomitant recognition of what the others are doing.' This order could not have been produced by the 'violent command' or regimentation of a traffic policemen, they also argue, 'because he would know nothing of the rules of right-of-way and waiting that are in play,' and would only direct children's interests toward the imitation of adult political organization.

Negt's (1975: 29; trans. Zeuner 2013: 215) attention to learning processes similarly focus on the educational value of the exemplary for enabling 'learners ... to translate, analytical-scientific information into concrete and intelligible, non-scientific forms of language and

thought, which in terms of their political and sociological substance can motivate for social action'. Such orientational or concrete thinking aims at the development of societal competencies by encouraging learners to uncover the relations between 'the interest of the learning subjects and the objective world' These societal competencies provide an alternative to vocational skills that education for productivity insists upon, permitting learners to understand existing relations within social life and initiate necessary reframing processes to rethink them. In contradistinction to Kant, the enlightenment is 'not about the emergences from immaturity in and of itself' as 'primarily a solitary subjective labour,' a transition that occurs at a single point through the power of autonomous, critical thought and speech. Rather, it is something that only emerges 'collectively and as a side effect of multiple instances of paying and receiving attention' (1993: 382-4).

In contrast to progressive engagement through small seminars, Negt speaks of the pedagogic function of large lectures, as situations in which 'public thinking' – the gradual formation of ideas while speaking – can be performed that induces 'unburdened listening' to take place in which learners think for themselves in a condition of anonymity without the pressure 'to not only look intelligent but also to say intelligent things' (Krause, 2006: 9-10). To the extent this pedagogical relationship involves a 'tender force,' its basis is – in contrast to the Kantian formulation of enlightenment reason – not autonomy but collective insubordination, and its role is to violate inertia, throw into confusion, and dislodge individual motives (Negt & Kluge, 1993: 284-). Negt also teaches using 'combinations ... in order to create friction,' bringing texts from antiquity into relation with everyday examples from the present; quoting texts in a foreign language and not immediately appending the translation in order, like Pestalozzi, to develop a sense of the otherness or alienness of the world; resisting the impatience of universal comprehensibility that only couples what can be rationally understood with what can be rationally understood so as to teach the important pedagogic principle of learning something with the senses so as to understand it later (Krause, 2006: 9).

As Habermas and others have already noted, the 'logic of capital drives it to attempt to appropriate the full productivity of labour' by developing certain qualities of labour power through the control of preschool and school socialization. What Adorno and Horkheimer characterized as the culture industry can now be conceived as the 'preindustrial phase of the consciousness industry' (Kluge & Negt, 2014: 157-8), including programming, advertising, publicity campaigns, traditional and new media, as well as other contexts of communication

and learning, which now seeks direct access to the private sphere of individual perception, cognition and experience in order to pre-organize and valorize the raw material of workers' consciousness in the interests of capital (Negt & Kluge, 1993: xlvii). This also means capital continues to stand in contradiction to living labour in a situation whose instability may still contain a revolutionary explosion.

In providing a 'political economy of labour power,' Kluge and Negt (1981: 108, 135-6; 2014: n15, 7, 35) therefore focus on labour capacities as 'autonomously protected reserves of labour power' within the libidinal economy of living bodies; reserves which, unknown to consciousness, contain new forms of self-regulation and direction that constitute 'countercapital'. Seeking to determine the contradiction between capital and labour anew from the side of living labour rather than, as Marx had done, capital, Kluge and Negt's work therefore provides a powerful inversion of theories of human capital that have sought to transform education in the pursuit of economic productivity. Benjamin (1917: C 94-95; 1929: 272-3) insisted that the great error underlying bourgeois education was the tacit belief that children need us more than we need them; with regard to the educational labour, the same learning subjects might instead be seen as 'helpers, avengers, liberators' (Benjamin, 1929: 273).

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