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The Consumer Dystopia: Hegelian-Marxist Thought and Late-Stage Capitalism
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Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Sally Bayford.

Introduction

In a 1991 essay entitled *The Antinomies of Postmodernity*, Frederic Jameson wrote that it 'seems easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; and perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imagination.'[1] This thesis contends that it is indeed a weakness in imagination that precludes individuals - and society at large - from envisioning radically different alternatives to the status quo of late-stage capitalist society. We live in a time of 'capitalist realism' in which the dominating quality present within the current age severely hampers imagination and praxis alike, utopian potential is limited, and mankind is subsumed - perhaps even happily - into the apparatus of technological modernity.

Few experience 'fruitful' alienation under such conditions. This thesis seeks to compare and analyse the thought of four key science fiction authors (Aldous Huxley, Yevgeny Zamyatin, Philip K. Dick, and Franz Kafka) with the social, economic, and cultural theory of the Frankfurt School. This work seeks to build on the output of those such as Frederic Jameson and Carl Freedman, who have drawn together shared critiques of science fiction authors and critical theorists in the past. It brings together four separate works of science fiction, spanning a transformative period of capital and its effects, with a full range of Frankfurt School thinkers operating from the early twentieth century to the present day. Nobody has yet undertaken a full-scale analysis of the similarities of thought between these two schools of thought, creating a clear comparative analysis between these specific writers and thinkers, tying this in with the context of late-stage capitalism - this work aims to fill that gap. In doing so, it seeks to argue that, for most

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[1] Jameson, F (1994) *The Antinomies of Postmodernity* (Columbia University Press: New York) p.50

of these thinkers, the economic and cultural apparatus at use within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is oppressive enough that utopian possibilities become increasingly unlikely as humanity is subjected to a 'consumer dystopia.'

Dystopian works of fiction demonstrate a critical analysis of the society in which their author lives, exaggerating certain facets and trends of those societies to highlight their characteristics. To the extent that these traits and trends are found elsewhere, dystopian works retain relevance and power for readerships in times and places other than the author's original land. The dystopian fiction of the 20th century, often focused on the mid-to-late stage of capitalism, can accordingly transcend its age through its application to our hyper-technical, mechanised, consumerist society.

The ethical and political issues addressed by these authors of dystopian literature (and the light they shed on contemporary society) are remarkably similar to discussions that have characterised the Frankfurt School of critical theory. I seek to connect these two critiques together, to showcase the synergies that exist between the various writings produced by the Frankfurt School on the one hand and the authors of these works of literature on the other. The Frankfurt School sheds a new light on these works of literature, drawing out the similarity of their critiques of contemporary consumer society in a way that nobody else has drawn attention to.

This thesis is made up of six chapters. In the **Theory Chapter**, I give an overview of the theory utilised within this thesis, paying particular attention to the Hegelian-Marxist influence of the Frankfurt School. In the **Literature Review**, I look at those who have undertaken similar forms of research before, such as Carl Freedman, Darko Suvin, and Tom Moylan, and how my research builds upon (and differs from) their output. In **Chapter One**, I look at Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and compare its critique of happiness, pleasure, and hedonism with that of the

Frankfurt School. In the **Second Chapter**, I look at Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* and how it shares a critique of 'dead', 'ossified' society under capitalist conditions with the Left-Hegelian influenced Frankfurt School - and how both strands are concerned that the end of history may truly be upon us. In the **Third Chapter**, I look at Philip K. Dick's *Ubik,* bringing together its critique of consumerism with Adorno's theory of the Culture Industry. **Chapter Four** concludes with Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* as a literary representation of severe alienation, and contains particular emphasis on the alienating quality of technological modernity. Each chapter brings together a particular element of Frankfurt School thought integral to the School and increasingly prevalent under late-stage capitalism: compounded together, these diminish utopian possibilities whilst ostensibly increasing the standard of living for most through material goods and increased leisure. Late-stage capitalism intended to create a utopia for the consumer. Rather, these thinkers believe, it created something akin to a *consumer dystopia.*

Theory

Introduction

Multiple academics argue that the true source of Critical Theory is the intellectual tradition of 1840s Germany.[2] It was within this historical context that the successors of Hegel applied his framework to the social and political trends of Germany, a country at the time undergoing a rapid industrialised revolution. The most notable of Hegel's successors at this time was Karl Marx, who would eventually reject the more metaphysical elements of Hegelianism. This thought would, in time, be superseded by a more scientific – even positivistic philosophical approach.[3] By the end of the 19th century, social theory in general had largely ceased to be 'negative' or 'critical' in the sense we are most concerned with. Fleeing from Germany and confronted with capitalist excess in America and the tyranny of the Soviet Union, it would be the Frankfurt School thinkers (and their immediate predecessors or influences) who recovered the Hegelian roots of Marx's thought.

George Steiner argued that Marxist 'aesthetic critique' had generally proceeded along two entirely distinct lines: the first, heavily derived from Lenin's writing and codified by the Soviet Union, found merit in works that supported the state (or its aims) and came about due to Lenin's demand for partisan literature (*Tendenzliteratur*). This would ultimately create the 'sterile orthodoxy' of literary formalism and socialist realism that would come to influence the dystopian work of Yevgeny Zamyatin, a writer whose work on the subject we shall look at in a later chapter. The second line of Marxist aesthetic critique followed Engels rather than Lenin, and

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[2] See George Lichtheim, The Origins of Socialism (New York, 1969), and Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study (New York and London, 1961)

[3] See Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* , rev. ed. (New York, 1960),

valued art 'less by the political intentions of its creator than by its inherent social significance.'[4] This line of approach that influenced the 'post-Marxist' Critical Theorists.

The thinkers within the Frankfurt School shared some thought with Lenin, however – perhaps the most significant of which was their fear of proletariat inaction. If Marx was correct in his understanding of how revolution came about, then why were the workers so obedient or docile towards their economic masters? Was it possible that capitalism might not be as immediately off-putting as Marx had anticipated? Could it in fact, rather than lead to declining starvation wages for the proletariat, instead offer the workers something more alluring, and enticing than factory labour and its resulting lifestyle? Furthermore, could it be that capitalism was able to exert control not just of the educational system, police force, or army – not even just its factories, infrastructure, and prison system - but the human imagination itself? If that could be true, then the realms of consciousness and culture – even ideology itself – were important areas of political analysis. For members of the Frankfurt School, a potent mixture of technological modernity and late-stage consumer capitalism exerted near-total control over society. 'There is a widely held belief,' wrote Pierre Francastel in 1956, 'that the most momentous event of our times is the machine's sudden and absolute ascendency over the conditions of human existence.'[5] For Adorno, the false connection between the organisation of the world and the individuals within it 'amounts to the affirmation of the relations of production, for whose beneficiaries we seek today almost as vainly as for the proletariats, who have become all but invisible.' By the mid-twentieth century, the system had 'now become independent, even of those who are in control.'[6] Such a situation, the School believed, was near-impossible to escape.

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[4] George Steiner, "Marxism and the Literary Critic," *Language and Silence* (New York, 1967).
[5] Francastel, P (2000) Art and Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Zone Books: New York), pp.29-30.
[6] Adorno, T (2003) 'Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?' in *Can One Live after Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader* (Stanford University Press: Stanford), pp.124-5

Capitalism, they believed, had diminished the imagination of all those were subjected to it – the army of workers, the masses of bourgeois society, the diminishing aristocrats – all were suffering the manipulation of their desires, needs, beliefs, and attitudes. As their imagination had been constricted and limited by political, social, economic, and cultural domination, so too had their ability to envision change for themselves and for society at large.

For the members of the Frankfurt School, 'positivism' allowed this stranglehold on the imagination of individuals and society at large. Positivism appears plausible – even the only plausible option – because it is both the way society thinks and also a philosophical formulation on how *to* think. The enlightenment was the beginning of a society based on positivist principles – and created a struggle between the positivist intellectual theories of history and the negative, critical, or 'dialectical' forms of historic thought. [7] Positivism, some of those in the Hegelian tradition argued, was atomising. Positivism is a belief that reality can be fully understood and depicted by facts. In contrast, the dialectical approach popularised and inspired by Hegelian thought rejects these ideas. Adorno saw the Hegelian tradition as rejecting the view that all knowledge could be born from the sense perception of the individual. Linguistic looseness and a lack of formal definition for many philosophical aspects of dialectics was not accidental, but purposeful. For Adorno, this too is a defining feature of Hegel's work, who he – controversially -- reads as rejecting the idea that linguistic clarity is a philosophical virtue.[8] Indeed, Hegel embraced the contradictory in philosophy - this was highly influential within continental philosophy at large and the Frankfurt School in particular that it is essential to reject positivist, atomist thinking in order to appreciate the critical, negative, or dialectic.

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[7] Marcuse, H (1941) *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Oxford University Press: Oxford) pp. 323-9

[8] Adorno, T (1976) *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (ed.) (Harper & Row: New York) pp. 51-4, 72-3

Those considering Marx and Hegel to be the sole influences of Critical Theory would be mistaken. Jon Simons argues that it is Kant's critical philosophy that is perhaps the most convincing starting point for the inspiration of critical theorists.[9] Nevertheless, one of the major criticisms of Kant within critical theory is found within Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's seminal *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. To Kant, enlightened reason would free humanity from mythology and immediacy, instead allowing society to organise themselves through what Simons calls 'rational scientific and technical control of natural forces ordered in a society of free individuals.'[10] Adorno and Horkheimer criticised the view - rather than freeing men from irrational, mythological thought, they believed that the enlightenment had instead brought men into a world governed by a new kind of mythology – a positivist one.[11] Furthermore, without the moral instructions of organised religion (or even myth), enlightenment thinkers could not sufficiently demonstrate that reason required morality at all. For Adorno and Horkheimer, enlightenment thinking had unleashed an instrumental reason that, combined with capitalist economics and modern technology, had gone further than mere exploitation and had ultimately led to the holocaust.[12] Rationalism 'is the rationale of domination itself.'[13]

Adorno believed that thinkers such as Nietzsche and de Sade, rather than bastardising enlightenment thinking, instead represented its natural conclusion. Without religious or mythical morality, what was left? de Sade's vile acts and cruel tracts were a tribute to the logical conclusion of a world governed by positivist thinking, the gas chambers of Auschwitz a natural conclusion to a philosophy based on reason. Within enlightened, positivistic thinking, Adorno believed,

[9] Simons, J (2002) *From Kant to Levi-Strauss: The Background to Contemporary Critical Theory* Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh p. 17, 31
[10] *Ibid.* p.34
[11] Adorno and Horkheimer (2016) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso: London) pp.27-28
[12] Adorno, T (1973) *Negative Dialectics* (Routledge: London), p.362.
[13] Adorno and Horkheimer (2016) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso: London) p.121

people are reduced to mere instrumentalised objects – whether sacrificed on the altar of masochistic sexuality, as per de Sade, or the economy, as Marx suggests. Instrumental reason is the ideological underpinning and justification of de Sade's vile rape and the cruelties of Victorian workhouses. The pursuit of pleasure has been reduced to a mere mechanised and inhumane attempt to gain the immediate gratification of the individual, and has lost its spiritual and social element and connection to the pursuit of the eudaimonic life for the individual and for society *en masse*. The exploitation of de Sade's virginal victim was a premonition of the factory's exploitation of its worker.[14] But as rationalism, pleasure, technology, and economic domination increased, this exploitation and estrangement was to extend to individuals of every race, class, and political disposition.

The utopian element of Critical Theory is a cause for debate: whilst many Critical Theorists were intensely pessimistic, academics have argued that critical theory, from first conception, had a clear interest in social justice.[15] Critical theory is one of the few modern methods that maintains a basic tension through dialectical thinking. Its objective is to foster a capacity for the utopian through a reflection of the dystopian. Through this one might find a way to understand and critique a world that encourages one-dimensional, atomised, and positivistic thinking in order to de-alienate themselves – todays fruitlessly alienated *can* become tomorrow's fruit*fully* alienated. The key problem lies in how difficult it is to produce such eventualities. In their 1964 conversation, Adorno and Bloch refer – almost in passing - to science fiction as one of the last remaining repositories of the concept of utopia.[16]

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[14] Connell, M.F., in Simons p. 138

[15] Bronner, S.E (1994) *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists* (London: Routledge) p. 5

[16] Bloch, E and Adorno T (1964) "Possibilities of Utopia Today"
(Radio-Debate, Südwestrundfunk,) (transcript accessed here:
https://blogs.law.columbia.edu/utopia1313/files/2023/03/Ernst_Bloch_and_Theodor_W_Adorno_Possibi.pdf)

Kant's idea of 'perpetual peace' was used by him as a 'utopian standard of harmony with which to confront the conflicts of the present as well as the "temporary" suspension of violence', a method that thinkers such as Jameson and Moylan undertook. Within this we aim to do the same with the dystopian.

Critical theory had a rejection of closed philosophical systems at its very core. The works they produced themselves carefully rejected making positive, systematic philosophical statements. A significant critique of the Frankfurt School from those outside of it was that it failed to provide a viable alternative for the societies it critiqued. These criticisms in many ways miss the point of Critical Theory, which, as its name implies, was less a manifesto for how society *should* be governed and more dialectical dialogue, oftentimes contradictory or cyclical, applied to social phenomena so that it could be *understood*.

The Influence of Hegel and Marx

The domain of Hegel's critique is vast: philosophical and political, it also contains a clear emphasis on the cultural and aesthetic, a trait that would be mirrored in its Frankfurt School descendants. Hegel extends his critique consciousness' alienation into a critique of alienation in contemporary society, in which the kinship and cooperation contained within traditional community has rapidly been lost in the context of rapid industrialisation. Freedom – the realisation of Spirit – is the true goal of Hegelian thought and could be attained only by the reconciliation of consciousness to itself and becoming aware of its role in the history of human activity. The state was necessary for social harmony, which could not be achieved without its guidance and supervision. Hegel's method of critique was dialectical, relating seemingly contradictory parts of a totality, to be understood teleologically, according to the end towards

which world history develops. Hegel's manner of critique is explicitly historical, finding an underlying logic within human history according to which history moves onwards.[17]

Marx's realm of critique, in contrast, was primarily socio-economic and political – though it also contained a philosophical dimension in his critique of Hegelian idealism. Whilst Hegel envisioned consciousness as determining social being, Marx's historical materialism reversed this idea. Marx's critique was of course heavily concerned with alienation: the alienation of workers from the products of their labour, the separation of mental and manual labour, the system of wage labour, exploitation and the extraction of surplus value, commodification of products and labour, bourgeois individualism, all of which fell under the remit of capitalism. This critique of capitalism also differentiates Marx from other socialists who did not believe that a revolutionary process was required to bring about the destruction of capitalism, such as utopian socialists and social democrats.[18]

Hegel's interconnected contradictions resolve individual spheres of experience by marrying them together in a synthesis greater than the sum of its parts. It is Hegel's *Geist* (Spirit, or Mind) that links these disparate moments of historical existence together: 'past experience is the already acquired property of universal Spirit which constitutes the Substance of the individual.'[19]
As each synthesis emerges as the third act of a historical trinity of sorts, it in turn becomes the first stage of the next synthesis – the end result is 'a full circle as the whole movement completes itself in a final shape of consciousness capable of expressing all the moments without contradiction.' As Hegel writes, 'The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter; similarly, when the fruit appears, the

[17] Hegel, GWF (1956) *The Philosophy of History* (Dover Publications: New York)
[18] Simons pp. 7-8
[19] Connell, M. in Simons p. 35

blossom is shown up in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit now emerges as the truth of it instead.'[20]

Marx remained in agreement with Hegel in regard to the social devastation brought on by emergent capitalist society, but opened up the closed Hegelian system of history with the notion of a dialectical progression through history based not on humanity achieving self-consciousness, but of a class struggle. For Simon Tormey, 'Hegel is crucial to any notion of humankind as produced through its own historical activity. From Feuerbach and Marx to Lukacs, Sartre and the Frankfurt School, Left Hegelian thought reconfigures spirit as social labour. Ideas are reflections of economic and social relations rather than vice versa'.[21]

One of the stronger influences of Hegelian thought was his view of human society as self-reflexive – that is, the beliefs and attitudes that mankind within the society hold about their fellow man and society at large are an integral part of society, and create a *reality*. If everyone in a society believes that people are fundamentally cruel or selfish, that belief is reflective (and self-affirming) and society becomes cruel and selfish. The Frankfurt School therefore sought to ask themselves how they could break mankind out of their self-limiting beliefs, and came to the conclusion that critical theory was the most effective methodology to break the chains.[22]

People existing within modern capitalist society are therefore encouraged in a systematic way to have the wrong conceptual attitude towards the world and society at large so that their attitude might stifle their own reality (and possibilities of action). One notable example of this is the widely accepted belief that there is no real alternative to the present way of doing things.

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[20] Hegel, G.W.F. (1997), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p.53
[21] Tormey in Simons, p. 54
[22] Raymond Geuss in Cambridge p. 118

Zizek summarised Jameson thusly: 'It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.' Encouraging people to have an objectifying attitude towards their own beliefs and potentials stifles vision and revolutionary action, instead creating a conformist society that is further encouraged into passivity through a debilitating material comfort under the capitalist system that soothes away negative thinking with material consumption.[23]

Within the positivist system, work assumes primacy over freedom (or self-recognition). The work people engage in is fundamentally alienating, as it continually and increasingly divorces them from nature, labour, and their fellow man. The ability to abolish alienation is dependent on being able to introduce dialectical or negative thought.[24] It would be Lukács and the Frankfurt School who saw the exercise of instrumental rationality as synonymous with an exercise in alienation. For Stephen Bronner, this was the point at which 'critical theory shifts from Marx to Hegel'.[25]

And so we reach the justification for the Frankfurt School's rejection of ideology: ideology is no longer the master *justifying* his position but is now the *slave* justifying that same position that keeps him enslaved – even forgetting arguments against his enslavement or embracing his servitude entirely. The slave – entirely oppressed – *could* call the enslaving ideology into question: but first they must realise that their freedom is unavailable within his present alienated circumstances.[26]

Marx gave new life to the thought he derived from Hegel. Marx did not identify alienation with the inability of consciousness to recognise itself through analysis of human

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[23] Geuss in Cambridge p. 121
[24] Bronner p. 25
[25] Bronner p. 26
[26] Adorno and Horkheimer (2016) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso: London) p.128

history, but instead as 'manifested not only in the result, but in the act of production, within the producing activity, itself.'[27] For Marx, 'As in religion, man is governed by the products of his brain, so in capitalistic production, he is governed by the products of his own hand.'[28]

Lukács, a devout Marxist, adopted many of Marx's critiques. He built upon Marx's insights on commodity fetishism in order to develop his concept of reification, arguing that capitalist relations of production and exchange did not just alienate people from themselves and their labour, but from their very humanity: reducing them to *things*. The subject who must become conscious of themselves as the agent of human historical development is the proletariat, who at the same time operates as the exploited object of the capitalist system. For Martin Jay, this identification of emancipation 'with the reconciliation of subject and object,' is not solely Hegelian, but 'also reflects the moral problem left over from Kant.'[29]

At odds with prevailing (positivist) Soviet thought at the time, Lukács adopted a notably Hegelian interpretation of Marx. Lukacs' domain would expand from philosophy to include literary criticism, influencing theorists such as Jameson. The Hegelian-Marxists took Lenin's idea that 'intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid materialism' to heart. *History and Class Consciousness* may not have been the first work that linked Hegel with Marx, but it was, for Martin Jay, the 'charter document of Hegelian Marxism,' that had 'almost single-handedly succeeded in raising [Marxism] to a respectable place in European intellectual life.'[30]

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[27] Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, p.110
[28] Marx, *Capital*, p.621
[29] Stuart Sim in Simons, pp.113-4
[30] Martin Jay (1984) *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (University of California Press: Berkeley,) pp.84, 102

As Weber wrote, the modernising process was intent on 'disenchanting the world.' Lukács expanded on this: the material expression of this disenchantment was reification. Marx argued that the commodity is an object abstracted from the human labour and social relationships that went into its creation – as we do not see the creation of the object in the shop, it becomes imbued seemingly 'magical' qualities that distort its use value. The more advanced an economy becomes, the more the worker is removed from their labour, the more abstract production becomes and the more fetishistic the character of commodities. Under these conditions, commodities 'enchant' us; workers are convinced that purchasing commodities will comfort them from the realities of capitalist alienation and the object becomes more important – maybe even near-devotional. Shoes were originally made to protect feet, but now trainers are symbols of prosperity, alignment to sports figures, an opportunity to improve one's social status. Marx's analysis of the commodity is highly influential within the field of Critical Theory, influencing Lukács' theory of reification, and the work of the Frankfurt School, whose analysis of contemporary capitalistic culture was strongly influenced by Marx's analysis of commodities.[31] It is highly influential within this thesis too.

Recent Influence

Walter Benjamin's Marxist-Kantian point of view was heavily influential to the younger Adorno, who once wrote to Benjamin slavishly calling himself 'the advocate of your own intentions.'[32] Benjamin, like Lukács, was himself inspired by Weber's idea of disenchantment, and focused heavily upon the subject of art. Increasingly, the conditions for art's production were scientific, technological, and created a secular attitude that eradicates the quality of awe that the individual

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[31] Tormey in Simons p. 60
[32] Rosen, M, *Benjamin, Adorno, and the Decline of the Aura* (Accessed here: https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/michaelrosen/files/benjamin_adorno_and_the_decline_of_the_aura.pdf)

can achieve when interacting with art. Benjamin is careful to stress that this does not mean that the mythical element is eliminated, however – on the contrary, the technological ability to detach the object from its traditional and enchanting qualities creates new possibilities for propaganda. Benjamin saw a potential in this – just as technology makes it possible for new forms of manipulation to emerge, the loss of aura also has the potential to open up the way for a 'heightened presence of mind' - the potential of negative, or dialectical, thinking.[33] Rosen argues that Benjamin's chief concern is ultimately Kantian, despite his mystical leanings. Benjamin wishes to analyse 'the distinctiveness of certain kinds of experience' that a scientifically oriented, disenchanted culture dismisses – or perhaps never even notices. This was of particular influence to Max Horkheimer.[34]

'If,' Horkheimer wrote, 'by enlightenment and intellectual progress we mean the freeing of man from superstitious belief in evil forces, in demons and fairies, in blind fate— in short, the emancipation from fear— then denunciation of what is currently called reason is the greatest service reason can render.'[35] Together with Adorno, Horkheimer criticised the increasing domination of the human and natural world through rationalised control and administrative reason, which together prevents life from being lived in an ethical or meaningful way. This thought will be of particular importance to us in our fourth substantive chapter: Kafka and Alienation.

Within the *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Adorno and Horkheimer take ethical inspiration from Kant, but differ from him in their understanding of the effects of the enlightenment. Adorno and Horkheimer do not believe (as Kant does) that a rational epistemology will beget a moral

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[33] Benjamin, W (2008) *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Penguin: London) p.51
[34] Rosen in *Cambridge*, p. 44
[35] Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* p.46

and rational behaviour by mature subjects. Rather, Adorno and Horkheimer consider the enlightenment to be a dialectical process, with the antinomies identified by Kant as the social contradictions at work in a society based on enlightened principles.[36]

The richness of Adorno and Horkheimer's work owes much to their philosophical influences and the vast range of thinkers they attempt to bring together, from Lukacs to Hegel to Marx to Freud. As a result, they become some of the richest thinkers of the Critical Theory tradition. They believed – firmly and fundamentally - that Enlightenment rationality stunted the reflexive component of thought and language, thereby inescapably aiding the creation of a totalitarian society.[37]

Rosen argues that, while many Marxists post- Lukács wished to plug the gap of Marxist theory with Hegel, 'no-one […] including Lukács himself' followed this strategy with greater consistency than Adorno.[38] To Bronner, Adorno was 'perhaps the most dazzling of them all'. His range was vast. Musicologist and composer, philosopher and sociologist, connoisseur of Hegelian-Marxism, literature enthusiast, aesthetician, Adorno was arguably the very incarnation of the interdisciplinary nature of the Frankfurt School.[39] Nonetheless, Adorno was no unthinking acolyte of either Hegel or Marx. Whilst for Hegel, 'The Truth is the whole', for Adorno, 'The whole is the false.' Adorno, for Connell, believed that totalitarianism was brought about 'by an irrational expansion of administration,' and that 'a free humanity would be free from dialectics, not bound to it.'[40]

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[36] Adorno and Horkheimer (2016) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso: London) p.130
[37] Adorno and Horkheimer (2016) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso: London) p.123
[38] Rosen in Cambridge, p. 54
[39] Bronner, *Critical Theory* p. 137
[40] Connell in Simons, pp.45-6

Bronner believed that Adorno did not envision a world free from no illusion, but rather that illusion would serve a *purpose* – whether utopian or dystopian. Through exposing 'the inverted truth of an inverted world,' illusion gave 'negative dialectics' its critical core.[41] For Adorno, it was not 'ideology in itself,' which was untrue, 'but its pretension to correspond to reality.'[42] It is this 'inversion' which therefore becomes integral to Adorno's 'immanent criticism.' It is only *outside* of reification that it becomes possible for an individual to engage in the defetishisation of reality. For Adorno, Art can contain and utilise the subjectivity rapidly disappearing from human society - and thus may also contain the quality of transcendence. [43] It is for this reason that Adorno can assert that the creation of artwork stands as a 'counterpart to the expanding reproduction of capital in society.'[44] Through analysis of artwork or literature, which can exist out of the realm of fetishisation, we can reconcile our alienated selves through understanding our alienation or reification. This is achieved only through critical reflexivity, which remains the sole path to uncovering the 'untruth' of society and the manner in which self-consciousness is repressed. For Adorno, a continued commitment to immanent criticism was essential.[45] The historical process, he believed, had rid us of freedom, whilst instrumental reason has severely diminished subjectivity. Through this, the objective of negative dialectics comes to light: artwork must inspire new possibilities so that, 'in the age of the individual's liquidation, the question of individuality [can] be raised anew.'[46] Art rejects the positivistic 'pure immanence' in favour of transcendence. Every 'genuine' artwork, according to Adorno, 'exposes something which is lacking' and produces a 'tremor.'[47] Art can allow the individuated person to become aware of his or her repressed subjectivity. For Adorno, art must 'hurt,' pleasure is anti-ethical to

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[41] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* p.150

[42] Theodor Adorno, "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft," in Prismen (Frankfurt, 1955), 27.

[43] Bronner, *Critical Theory* p.141

[44] Adorno, T (2013) *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretl Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. C. Lenhardt (Bloomsbury Academic: London), pp.30–31

[45] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp.5, 138.

[46] Adorno, *Minima Moralia* , p.129.

[47] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* , p.346.

transcendence, and 'entertainment and art are antithetical to each other.'[48] Adorno draws a clear link between this form of art and literature and the possibility to negate present enslavement. This kind of art represented 'freedom,' whilst 'empirical life,' represented 'repression.'[49] If art becomes 'buried in the pantheon of consumer culture,' its ability to convey *truth* (and its resulting potential for realising freedom) becomes minimised. Philosophy prevents art from slipping into 'the abyss of relativity.' A 'metaphysical' reflection on the work saves it from a 'purely historical interpretation.'[50]

Through their examination of the 'culture industry' (a term first found within the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and later expanded on in Adorno's work of the same name), Adorno and Horkheimer seek to explore the effects of the commodity form upon culture and upon society. Adorno and Horkheimer recognised the Benjamin-esque potential of the media in advanced industrial society to create new forms of propaganda – its potentially negative effects on the political and social consciousness as being no less damaging than Marx's 'material level of culture.'

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* argues that, rather than being opposed to mythology and superstition, the enlightenment is utterly entwined with them. Rather than worshipping gods of old, we instead replace them with scientism and positivism, all the while losing the mythological respect for nature and moral instruction. Germany's swift collapse into a bloody, technocratic and fascistic state belied the relationship of technical progress with political and moral regression, and Adorno and Horkheimer take enlightened reason as a form of 'rationalised self-deception' that is complicit – or even encouraging - of outcomes it supposedly abhors.[51] It is not

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[48] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* , 346.
[49] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* , 207
[50] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* , 128
[51] Connell in Simons, p. 138

just the outside natural world that the enlightenment dominates, nor the political and technical

realm, but eventually humanity's own inner nature.

The doctrine of 'false needs' that Critical Theory was to develop represented a clear

departure from Orthodox Marxism. Marx himself displayed a 'fully positive' attitude towards the

development of human needs – whilst he developed a complex theory of different types of

needs, he has no category of a 'false need' - rather, since the main reason for the demise of

capitalism was its inability to satisfy human needs, the more developed those needs became, the

closer capitalism came to destruction.[52] The Institut's notion of eudaimonic freedom similarly

went well beyond traditional Marxist conceptions of happiness. Horkheimer discusses a link

between (a false) utopia and consumption: in a letter to Lowenthal, Horkheimer wrote that:

We cannot blame people that they are more interested in the sphere of privacy and

consumption rather than [in] production. This trait contains a Utopian element; in Utopia

production does not play a decisive part. It is the land of milk and honey. I think it is of deep

significance that art and poetry have always shown an affinity to consumption.[53]

Marcuse would later develop a theory of 'repressive sublimation',[54] in which modern

culture provided a pseudo-liberation. Adorno would explain that the phrase 'culture industry'

had been chosen by Horkheimer specifically because of its anti-populist connotations.[55] The

Frankfurt School disliked mass culture not because it was democratic, but because it represented

a *false* democracy and therefore a *false* liberation – rather than being based on 'true' culture, the

culture industry was ideological, administering a nonspontaneous, reified, and imposed culture

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[52] See Heller, A (1974) *The Theory of Need in Marx* (Allison & Busby: London).
[53] Quoted in Jay, p.183
[54] Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* , p.ix.
[55] Adorno, T (1967) "Resumé über Kulturindustrie," *Ohne Leitbild* (Frankfurt), p.60.

on the masses. Even the most radical or negative pieces of art and literature were given a 'one-dimensional' façade under the 'stylised barbarism'[56] of mass culture and consumption. The Frankfurt School came to believe that the culture industry enslaved men more effectively than the more obvious and crude methods of domination that preceded it. Furthermore, it created a false harmony and peace – somehow crueller than the obvious clash between social conditions that could prompt revolutionary change. Instead of anger at their alienation, workers would become so alienated as to be passive and accepting. As Adorno wrote in *Negative Dialectics:*

'Subjects are free […] insofar as they are conscious of themselves and identical with themselves; and then again are not free in such an identity insofar as they remain under and perpetuate the constraint of that identity. As nonidentical and diffuse natures they are not free, and yet, as such, they are free because their overpowering stirrings – for the non-identity of the subject with itself is nothing but that – rid them of identity's constraining character.'[57]

Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse all considered mass culture to be a false consciousness that pacified the masses, offering them a fraudulent peace. Combining enlightenment rationality with mass deception, the constraint of 'identifying thought' no longer allows any way of 'escape' for the nonidentical, any 'possibility of resistance,' or any 'room to move' - in short, mass culture was critically reducing freedom.[58]

Workers might think that their consumption of the products of culture industry take place in their spare time, but this free time is not genuine leisure, as it operates as a form of necessary recuperation so that we are ready for another day's labour. The fact that the content is

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[56] The term was originally Nietzsche's. It is quoted in Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam, 1947), p. 153.
[57] *Negative Dialectics*, p.299
[58] *Dialectic of Enlightenment* pp.112-3

infantile, escapist, distracting, unchallenging is intentional: the worker needs something that is soothing and easy to digest rather than a disturbing or unpalatable product of autonomous art.[59]

Philosophy of History

For all of its talk of Kantian-Hegelian Marxist influences, culture industry, and anti-ideology, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a text fundamentally opposed to the 'barbarity' of Nazi Germany, seeking to explain the regime and its horrors by situating it within a wider philosophical background. Julian Roberts argues that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* main underlying theme is that of alienation. Man is alienated from the natural world through a positivist, scientific enlightenment ideology, committing violence against the natural world and themselves, trapped in occupations that further alienate them, placated by culture that further enslaves them, creating products that nobody needs so that they might buy products that they do not need, trapped in perpetual conflict with one another. They are cut off from a truly eudaimonic life and prevented from ever fulfilling themselves or their ideas and creativity are stifled. They are told (and believe themselves to be) liberated, yet have swapped the slavery of feudal society for the slavery of capitalist society. Their alienation is self-consuming: the more they struggle to maintain their artificial hell, the more they are beset by problems engendered by the struggle itself. Alienation is not a symptom of something wrong in the world, but a fault that will lead to the implosion of the entire system.[60]

We are separated from our genuine reality not just through alienating standards of living, but also by a perpetual existential anxiety that our culture promulgates: we spend so much time worrying about the future and maintaining our way of living that we are unable to enjoy the only

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[59] Connoll in Simons, p.141
[60] Roberts, J in Cambridge, pp.59-60

material reality we have: the here and now.[61] A reconciliation of the alienated self to the reality of the here and now – *hit et nunc* – is the method of grasping our genuine material reality – not by striving for a continually 'better' life, as late-capitalist society would have it. Adorno and Horkheimer explore the theme of how domination affects personal identity in their two excursions on the Odyssey and de Sade. Both de Sade and Nietzsche call for a moral 'hardness' of sorts. They reject emotions that do not aid rationally positivistic goals: why cry over spilt milk? Why feel guilt over the murder of a family that wished to usurp you? But to Adorno and Horkheimer, it is *precisely* the remorse over cruel damage done to others that characterises true morality - especially so if it is of no rational, beneficial usage. The "dark thinkers" of the enlightenment – Machiavelli, Hobbes, Nietzsche, et. al[62] – rid themselves of natural morality and replace it with an alienated morality that revolves around rationalised, enlightened thinking and power. After true morality has successfully been argued away by the instrumental logic that replaces it, true, unalienated morality becomes arbitrary, a perhaps endearing yet illogical curiosity left to a certain few. The only axiomatic principle is self-preservation, the only way to live is in comfort.[63]

Attempts to dominate nature mean that we remove ourselves from participation in nature and therefore become our own victims. What Adorno and Horkheimer call 'absolute realism,' concludes as fascism: it is 'a special case of the paranoid illusion which depopulates nature and eventually the peoples themselves.'[64]

Joel Whitebrook writes that, to Adorno and Horkheimer, there is no way to break out of the 'dialectic of enlightenment' from within – it requires a 'utopian rupture' to derail its endless

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[61] Roberts in Cambridge, p.61
[62] *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.71
[63] Roberts in Cambridge, p.65
[64] *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.159

advance of cruelty and alienation. Whilst Adorno and Horkheimer believed that 'a vision of redemption' was required to rupture the all-encompassing false reality of the world, some believed that the two were arguably opposed to 'the actual pursuit of utopian politics.' For Whitebrook, this was a 'theoretical impasse from which they would never escape.'[65]

Similarly, Simone Chambers has argued that the Critical Theory of Horkheimer and Adorno is largely considered to have no actionable politics or praxis. This argument has three elements. Firstly, the authors were scornful of party politics and did not tend to voice their opinions on current events. Secondly, they were focused more on the realms of art and culture than political action. Thirdly, their diagnosis of society was so pessimistic that it seems futile to break out of. Other members of the Frankfurt School, such as Marcuse, Habermas, and Honneth, have tried to rectify what has been called a 'political deficit' within the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Whilst this is a noble endeavour, some of this criticism is misguided. Firstly, it ignores the role of negative thinking in casting off the shackles of one-dimensional mass cultured society. Secondly, the authors believed that social theory should inspire a new manner of understanding that rejected positivist thinking. Adorno and Horkheimer were more concerned with a diagnosis of society's ills than active, party-political solutions to them – the parties, after all, were often blinded by such positivistic, totalising thought! Critical theory diagnoses what is and how it 'ought' to be. Chambers argues that it neither suggests how one might get from the former to the latter, nor does not claim to do so. [66]

Horkheimer is explicit that, whilst he has chosen theory over praxis, 'Philosophies that look exclusively to an inner process for eventual liberation end as empty ideologies […] Hellenistic concentration on pure inwardness allowed society to become a jungle of power

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[65] Whitebrook in Cambridge, p.80
[66] Simon Chambers in Cambridge, p.219

interests destructive of all the material conditions prerequisite for the security of the inner principle.'[67] Chambers points out that Socrates claimed that he was 'one of the few Athenians (not to say the only one) who has attempted the true art of politics,' despite the philosopher never seeking public office or democratic politics. The early Frankfurt School theorists hark back to a theory that prioritises truth, nature, humanity, the restoration of the soul through a form of Socratic interrogation. As Chambers writes, 'Horkheimer and Adorno think that personal rectitude and moral criticism based on what truth can be grasped under the conditions of late capitalism is the only authentic politics available to them'.[68] Adorno and Horkheimer's explicit intention is to teach 'the good life'[69] - even to those who are barely interested (or capable) of listening.[70]

Marcuse asks similar questions, and for the first part of his career practiced the same form of 'engaged withdrawal', before a renaissance in the 1960s that led to him becoming the darling of the New Left and its revolutionary activism. *One-Dimensional Man* is the work of a man appalled by the success to which instrumental reason has ascended in contemporary society. Late-stage capitalism and technological modernity have succeeded in creating a consumer society made up of individuals with such perverted needs and misguided notions of happiness that they are near-incapable of a critical attitude towards the world that dominates and reduces them. Revolutionary ideas and attitudes become severely diminished under these conditions. Marcuse is interested in how mankind can liberate themselves from the mastery of the machine, the domination of society, and the false needs of late-stage capitalism.[71] Marcuse is somewhat pessimistic, as things stand: 'Dialectical theory is not refuted, but it cannot offer the remedy [...] It defines the historical possibilities, even necessities; but their realization can only be in the

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[67] Horkheimer, M (1974) *Eclipse of Reason* (Continuum Press: New York) p.184
[68] Chambers in Cambridge, p.223
[69] *Minima Moralia* p.15
[70] Chambers, Cambridge p.223
[71] Marcuse, H (1964) *One-Dimensional Man* (Beacon Press: Boston) p.251

practice which responds to the theory, and, at present, the practice gives no such response.'[72] The book ends on a bleak tone: 'The critical theory of society possesses no concepts which could bridge the gap between the present and its future; holding no promise and showing no success, it remains negative. Thus it wants to remain loyal to those who, without hope, have given and give their life to the Great Refusal.' This 'Great Refusal' is a rejection of life in late-stage capitalism, and all the false needs and real horrors it contains. to be drawn into the life of late capitalism. Todd Gitlin's memoirs discuss the paradoxical inspiration he and his peers took from this ostensibly pessimistic work:

> We were drawn to books that seemed to reveal the magnitude of what we were up against, to explain our helplessness. Probably the most compelling was Herbert Marcuse's One Dimensional Man, with its stark Hegelian dirge for the Marxist dream of an insurgent proletariat […] Gradually its reputation swelled among the New Left for its magisterial account of a society that, Marcuse argued, had lost the very ability to think or speak opposition, and whose working class was neutered by material goods and technology. Some unimaginable radical break, some "Great Refusal," was apparently impossible but deeply necessary. Impossible and necessary: that is how we felt about our task.[73]

How influential was the idea of negative dialectics within the Frankfurt School? Hauke Brunkhorst argues that, of all Critical Theorists, only Adorno 'persistently pursued' the negative dialectic. Benjamin fell back on monotheistic theology, and Horkheimer 'practically gives up and contents himself with a negative philosophy of history in decline.' The true black sheep of the school, however, is Marcuse, who would develop and hold on to the idea of politically

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[72] *One-Dimensional Man*, p.253

[73] Gitlin, T (1993) *The Sixties: Years of Hope/Days of Rage* (Bantam: London) p.281

revolutionary praxis.[74] We see a great difference between Adorno and Marcuse in how they envision a better society coming about: Adorno, more pessimistic, uses utopian and dystopian visions to contrast reality with so that it might be improved. Marcuse would eventually become more drawn to practical actions. The later Marcuse, in *Eros and Civilisation,* attempted to prove that a 'non-repressive' society could be feasible.[75] Indeed, Marcuse was to become one of the more optimistic members of the Frankfurt School in regard to technological advancements – it could, in theory, provide the opportunity for revolution and resulting freedom. Even at his most optimistic, Marcuse believed that society had a long way to go. But freedom, liberation, truth – all were *possible.* The student radicals of his day may not have been the vanguard of a new society, but they contained a seed of truth, that, carefully tended, could one day bear much fruit.

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[74] Brunkhorst in Cambridge, p.262
[75] *Eros and Civilisation,* p.35

Literature Review

As a pervasive mixture of alienation, stagnation, consumption, and a superficial form of happiness permeates through our society, it generates a growing wave of dystopian fictions influenced by the world in which the authors find themselves in. This growing wave has in turn generated an academic critique of the works themselves. Published studies in the last few decades have looked at many different forms of science fiction, from classic literary dystopias such as Orwell's *1984* to the flux of 90s sci-fi cinema. Among the more notable recent studies are Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky,* a sophisticated study of genre theory regarding utopian and dystopian works, and Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future,* a stunning study of science fiction that interrogates the development of utopia and the function of utopian thinking. Within this literature review I will analyse both, especially in relation to Darko Suvin's highly influential *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction.* Numerous essay collections, which broadly conform to the style of analysing one book per chapter, have also been published in recent decades. I have selected some that utilise my theoretical framework - some also analyse some of the texts or themes that I have selected. Generally though, there are very few studies which are dedicated to analysing certain works of literature through the lens of distinct themes, each of which correlate to an aspect of society and contribute to a greater critique of mass-consumer society. This study attempts to add to a developing body of literature by presenting a detailed and relatively comprehensive study on four literary works of science fiction that I associate with four respective symptoms of mass-consumer society: *The Metamorphosis* with alienation, *We* with a stagnant, ossified end of history, *Brave New World* with a superficial form of happiness, and *Ubik* with consumption. By drawing out the correlation between the work and the broader theme at play in society, we come to a fuller understanding of them in synthesis within the contemporary society we live in.

There is a very large quantity of academic literature that discusses and critiques critical theory. Within this broad field of research, I am solely interested in the writers that look at *dystopian literature* through the framework of critical theory. Whilst some thinkers, such as Jon Simons, take a broader view of what is included within the field of critical theory, I take a narrower interpretation of the term, including only thinkers within (or closely influenced by/associated with) the Frankfurt School. Within this literature review I will specifically target the thinkers who look at dystopian literature through the lens of critical theory, of whom share a research interest in either the four themes of my research (happiness, alienation, consumption, and the end of history) or those of whom look at the particular works of literature I wish to analyse (*We, Brave New World, Ubik,* and *The Metamorphosis).*

By utilising this criteria to select my literature, I have found six significant thinkers to review as the foundation for my own research topic. These thinkers are: M. Keith Booker; Carl Freedman; Frederic Jameson; Tom Moylan; Darko Suvin and Philip E. Wegner. M. Keith Booker looks at both *We* and *Brave New World,* yet looks at both through a more liberal interpretation of what (or who) constitutes critical theory. Freedman – briefly – discusses Kafka and analyses Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* in his *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, Wegner has mass-consumption in society as a particular focus and a chapter of his *Imaginary Communities* analyses Zamyatin's *We* as a 'possible world' in comparison with Le Guin's *The Dispossessed.* In slight contrast stand Jameson, Moylan, and Suvin as a different category of thinkers, highly influential within the field and with a greater focus on genre theory and the function of utopian thinking, though Jameson takes a deep interest in Philip K. Dick and crafts a detailed analysis of his work.

By looking at the four themes of my research (alienation, happiness, consumption, and the end of history) I aim to essentially come to a fuller understanding how they each build upon one another to create a dystopia of consumption within the contemporary society we live in. The

Frankfurt School has been used to analyse some of these books and some of these themes, but I see a gap in the literature to bring about a convincing argument of how these four themes, found in these four texts, relate to our society. Essentially, in this thesis, I will defend the link between these four themes as found in these four texts in contemporary society, using the theoretical framework of the Frankfurt School to analyse the four works of science fiction so that I may pull out critiques of our mass-consumer society.

Science fiction and Critical theory have overlapping methods, aims, and outcomes. Both seek to critique the society of late-capitalism, identifying elements of it which combine to 'fruitlessly' alienate man - from nature, his labour, goodness, his fellow man, or God. By presenting back to the reader their condition of fruitless alienation, the author seeks to make them aware of their own alienation and transform them into those, like the author, who are fruitfully alienated - that is, alienated from their own alienation. What critical theorists attempt to do through non-fiction, science-fiction writers attempt through fiction.

Both science-fiction and critical theory are similarly linked in that neither offer practical alternatives to the way life is actually lived in the actual, increasingly alienated world. There is no obvious praxis offered in response to the modern condition - rather, authors within both fields attempt to make those who are currently fruitlessly alienated aware of their condition, transforming them into critical beings with the freshly opened potential of imagining possibilities contrary to the norms of a fruitlessly alienated world.

In this thesis I have focussed on four works of science fiction that have been paired with four different themes that exemplify the critiques of modernity held by the Frankfurt School. These are: 1) superficial happiness, 2) the end of history 3) mass consumption, and 4) alienation. Huxley's *Brave New World* illustrates the grotesque effects of superficial and pleasure-based

'happiness'. Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* is a truly excellent example of a society removed from possibilities, which I will use to further my analysis of a totally ossified society and the end of critique (and thus history) within it. Philip K. Dick's *Ubik* offers a standard-bearer critique of mass consumption in a deadened society. Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is an exceptional portrayal of man's total alienation – though not necessarily (or entirely) represented by the most obvious suspect. Whilst all four of these works contain representations (and the shared criticisms) of the four key themes, I have paired together the Frankfurt School theme and that work of literature which best exemplifies the specific theme that I am focussing on in each particular chapter.

Some may consider these authors and works to have already been satisfactorily analysed and evaluated comprehensively. I believe that I have something new to add to the literature. Science fiction reflects the critiques of critical theory as critical theory illuminates the (sometimes hidden) depths of science fiction. Both use dystopian imagery to critique the contemporary society we find ourselves in, one made up of totalising mass consumption, an empty form of happiness that sedates the mind and does nothing for the soul, and, if we are not careful, leads to a totally reified and one-dimensional society in which man loses the ability to even conceive subverting the status quo.

Perhaps the work which most explicitly links science fiction with critical theory is Carl Freedman's 2000 work *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*. In contrast to more conservative interpretations of which thinkers constitute critical theory, Freedman takes a more liberal interpretation of the term, including non-Frankfurt School thinkers such as Lacan and Foucault in his understanding. M. Keith Booker takes the same broad understanding of the term in his *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature*. Whilst neither go as far as thinkers such as Jon Simons, who takes critical theory to include 'Marxism and post-Marxism, semiotics and discourse analysis, structuralism and poststructuralism, ideology critique of all varieties, deconstruction, feminism,

queer theory, psychoanalysis, postcolonialism'[76] in addition to the Frankfurt School and its descendants, Freedman defines critical theory as dialectical thought which 'can take nothing less than the totality of the human world or social field for its object'. To Freedman, critical theory shows us 'that things are not what they seem to be *and* that things need not eternally be as they are.'[77] Perhaps this definition is why his qualification for who is a critical theorist is more inclusive than that of others.

The thinkers also differ on their definitions for science fiction. Freedman notes that 'no definitional consensus exists' for the term.[78] His own definition encapsulates a wide range of works which are not traditionally thought of as science fiction, such Dante's *Inferno* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Freedman argues that Dante and Milton's work shares much of the literary values for which readers turn to science fiction: namely an effort to 'take the reader far beyond the boundaries of his or her own mundane environment, into strange, awe-inspiring realms thought to be in fact unknown, or at least largely unknown, but not in principle unknowable.'[79] This is a largely complimentary view to that of Darko Suvin's definition of science fiction: that it is a genre 'whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment.' In contrast to Freedman, Suvin suggests that estrangement 'differentiates science fiction from the 'realistic' literary mainstream, while cognition differentiates it from myth, the folk tale, and fantasy.'[80] Freedman takes this further by including works that Suvin would discount as an estranged, but 'uncognitive' myth or fantasy.[81] Suvin's understanding of science fiction *rests upon the dialectic of estrangement and cognition* and is an unparalleled influence upon the field of study. In

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[76] Simons, J (2002) *From Kant to Levi-Strauss: The Background to Contemporary Critical Theory* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh) p.1
[77] Freedman, C (2000) *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Wesleyan University Press: London) p.8
[78] *Ibid.* p. 13
[79] *Ibid.* p. 15
[80] Suvin, D (1979) *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (Yale University Press: New Haven), pp.7-8
[81] *Ibid.* p. 20

simpler terms, estrangement involves 'the creation of an alternative fictional world that, by refusing to take our mundane environment for granted, implicitly or explicitly performs an estranging critical interrogation of the latter', whilst cognition allows 'the science-fictional text to account rationally for its imagined world and for the connections as well as the disconnections of the latter to our own empirical world'. Too much of the latter and the fiction is realistic, cognitively aware of 'its imaginings but performs no estrangement', too much of the former and the result is fantasy, which estranges in 'an irrationalist, theoretically illegitimate way.'[82] Wegner also takes great inspiration from this dialectic of estrangement, though describes the reader reading science fiction as 'confronting […] the shock of the new' and takes inspiration from this in his work, in which he states his aim is to 'recapture' the 'energy and excitement' of reading science fiction in order to 'begin again to think of the possibilities of the new.'[83] Jameson holds a similar view to this, but associates it ultimately with utopianism over science fiction.[84] Whilst Jameson takes this and focuses primarily on utopianism, I, whilst starting with similar assumptions/views will instead look at dystopian works. Jameson takes Suvin's cognitive estrangement to emphasise 'the commitment of the SF text to scientific reason'.[85] To these thinkers, it is the relationship in science fiction to the alienated other – whether android, man, or monster – which define it (in contrast to fantasy).[86] Jameson differs from Suvin by equating religion with fantasy.[87] Moylan adds to the lineage of Jameson and Suvin, developing the idea that it is developed in an 'iconic textual register' wherein the work's fuller meaning is available 'only by way of bits of information accumulating down the pages-must be learned, and further imagined, before the plot and characters of the discrete register

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[82] *Critical Theory and Science Fiction,* pp.16-17

[83] Wegner, P. E (2002) *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (University of California: Berkely) p. xix

[84] Jameson F (2005) *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (Verso: London) p.xii

[85] *Ibid.* p.63

[86] *Ibid.* p.64

[87] *Ibid.* pp.64-5

can make any sense.'[88] Science fiction forces the reader to step outside their own world. It holds the possibility to (fruitfully) alienate them from their (fruitless) alienation. This possibility is the key to my thesis.

As Moylan writes, science fiction 'delivers the present to its readers by working within a realist: mode that is defamiliarized yet dynamic.'[89] To Suvin, influentially, 'the attitude of estrangement – used by Brecht in a different way, within a still predominantly 'realistic' context – has grown into the *formal framework* of the genre.'[90] Wegner carries on this tradition of critique, understanding that Suvin, who drew upon Brecht and the Russian Formalists, was highly influential in developing his cognitive estrangement - 'the power of the form lies in its ability to "estrange" or momentarily distance its audience from the norms and values of their particular social worlds, thereby enabling them to experience that reality in its most fundamental aspects as a contingent, artificial, and most, importantly, a deeply malleable human construct.'[91]

Also influenced by Suvin's concept of cognitive estrangement is Freedman's view of the relationship between critical theory and science fiction, which is taken further than most of the literature as he considers the two to have a *wholly entwined relationship*, sharing even the same defining qualities: historical mutability; material reductability; and utopian possibility. Freedman therefore comes to the argument that – out of any of the genres – it is science fiction that is the 'one most devoted to the historical concreteness and rigorous self-reflectiveness of critical theory'.[92]
Whilst my research focuses on reading certain works of science fiction in light of critical theory so that I might be able to perform critically-informed readings of a set number of texts and then extrapolate a critique of contemporary society from these readings, Freedman instead chooses to

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[88] Moylan, T (2000) *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Westview Press: Colorado) pp.24-25

[89] *Ibid.* p. 27

[90] Suvin, D (Dec 1972) "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre", *College English,* Vol. 34, No. 3, p.375

[91] Suvin, D "Science Fiction and Utopian Fiction," p.35. Additionally, see his discussion in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (Yale University Press: New Haven), pp.37–62

[92] Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction,* p.xvi

'articulate certain *structural* affinities between the two terms' and illustrate that the relationship between the two is not coincidental but 'fundamental',[93] whilst Suvin, Jameson, and Moylan primarily choose to focus on the theory of the genre.

Suvin, Jameson, and Moylan are all part of a literary tradition of science fiction analysis that is firmly rooted in the work of György Lukács, sharing a joint understanding of the genre as being borne of Lukács historical novel. Jameson writes that the genre 'picks up where the critical labour of the historical novel left off.'[94] Moylan builds heavily upon the works of Lukács and Suvin when he writes that science fiction, whether through direct extrapolation or analogous re-creation, 'is intimately concerned with history itself' [95] and that the act of reading science fiction means that 'history [...] is seldom far away',[96] Jameson considers the genre 'a new fictive form tool up the vocation of historical knowledge.'[97] I aim to build upon this: whilst history could be warped to suit the needs of the establishment, the 'fictive form' that replaced the historic novel (science fiction) is much harder to utilise as such: its entire basis rests upon critique.

The influence of Lukács' historic novel upon the genre, combined with broad academic consensus on it defined by its 'cognitive estrangement' are entwined and both very powerful movements within the field. Freedman writes that science fiction as a genre 'engages the whole Hegelian and post-Hegelian problematic of historicity by projecting (even if implicitly, as in Frankenstein) a future significantly different from the empirical present while also in concrete continuity with it' … 'We may conclude, them that science fiction and the novel of historical realism both involve a Lukacsian dialectic of historical identity and historical difference, and are

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[93] *Ibid.* p.23

[94] Moylan, T (2000) *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Westview Press: Colorado) p.27

[95] *Ibid.*

[96] *Ibid.* p.25

[97] *Ibid.* p.27

both produced from much the same historical matrix.' Both forms were arguably invented in the period when 'historicity itself' was first apprehended at the close of the Napoleonic era.[98]

Wegner believes that 'cultures of modernity' as critiqued in this trend, are 'marked by universalist aspirations'.[99] I agree with this but wish to build upon it - cultures of modernity may have universalist aspirations, but that is taken to another extent with cultures of *post*modernity – they aim to take over the *world entire* (*BNW*), and, even if they have failed, they alienate entirely (*Metamorphosis)* those they have within their grip – even mind (*We*), and even look to other planets to colonise (such as in the works of Dick).

Whilst each of the six main authors I have chosen to review are relevant to the topic (by looking at either themes or works that match mine), only a few of these authors look at the exact texts that I aim to. Jameson and Freedman at Dick (the latter briefly touches on Kafka), Wegner, Moylan, and Booker at *We* - Booker also analysing B*rave New World*. Whilst *Brave New World* and *We* in particular have been looked at by other thinkers, none have brought them together with the other texts, themes, and aims that I have, establishing the originality of my thesis. Some talk about themes but not texts, other texts but not themes, but none whatsoever talk about all in the cohesive way that I plan to. Each of these choices are deeply influential works upon their times, critiquing its worst effects and contributing to cultural debates both then and now, as the symptoms they dissected have continued (or worsened). Furthermore, as well as being deeply influential both in the genre and, as it follows, in society itself, the dialectical outcome of reading such works (which vary in terms of content and yet all contribute to negative thinking) gives the reader the potential to transform their understanding of the society they live in and how they might act within it. As

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[98] Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction,* p.50
[99] Wegner, P. E (2002) *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (University of California: Berkely) p.1

Wegner writes, 'By inserting something heretofore unknown in the world —an original conception, figure, or what one of More's contemporaries called a "speaking picture"—the narrative utopia generates the cognitive space around which new kinds of lived experiences and theoretical perceptions form. Thus, understanding the past work of narrative utopias has real consequences for how we live and perceive modernity in the new millennium.'[100]

Moylan discusses *We* briefly in his *Scraps of the Untainted Sky,* focusing largely on themes of surveillance and counter-subversion (brainwashing) of the protagonist, D-503. In contrast, Wegner dedicates an entire chapter of his *Imaginary Communities* to *We,* instead focusing on the 'horizon of possibility' found within it ('horizons of possibility' are the central thematic focus of his *Imaginary Community,* informing his analysis of the texts). To Wegner, the borders of the nation-state within the text 'now mark a possible horizon of modern history itself'[101] - like other thinkers within the field, he considers the text to have the seed of potential in the dialectical change of history. Wegner spends a great portion of his analysis in critiquing what he sees as sedimented reading habits that have shaped the idea of *We* as an anti-utopia, which he sees as denying the fundamental imagining of a better tomorrow within the text, denying its vision of a transformed future.[102] This is a much different analysis of the text than the one I hope to complete: I do not wish to focus on its correct classification as a critical utopia as Moylan and Wegner do, but instead to look at the links we can draw out between it and contemporary society through analysis of its philosophy of history. Drawing this into a broader critique of mass-consumer society through the relation of its main theme of 'the end of history' to a linking of it to a wider range of themes of happiness, consumption, and alienation found within other science fiction texts has never been undertaken by other writers.

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[100] *Ibid.* p.xx
[101] *Ibid.* p.xxiv
[102] *Ibid.* pp.147-8

M. Keith Booker has a firmly different focus to Moylan: interpreting *We* to be 'centrally informed by a fear of the dehumanizing potential of technology.'[103] A great source of Booker's analysis for *We* comes from a focus on the technology within it: to him, it is primarily reflecting the confrontation between the contemporary science of the 1920s and the old mysticism of Russia.[104] Whilst science has revolutionary potential, to Zamyatin it had become a contribution to ossification instead at this time.[105] Whilst I find the justification for this confrontation convincing, I aim to instead put forward an argument that our contemporary society is increasingly symptomatic of Zamyatin's end of history through a one-dimensional culture. Looking greatly at sexual and religious themes within the text, Booker associates the philosophical thought of Zamyatin primarily with Foucault, in whom he sees it 'directly reflected.'[106] Whilst imperfectly reflected within them, I instead see it as being an ideal text to be analysed through the theoretical lens of the Frankfurt School thinkers - and others with a Hegelian heritage. Brooker sees Zamyatin's philosophy of history as scientific, a 'revolution-based model of scientific history' to be precise.[107] I find this unconvincing - Zamyatin may appreciate the revolutionary potential of scientific breakthrough, but science is a means to a revolutionary end rather than an end/guiding principle in itself – it is one of many contributions to revolution and heresy, sometimes useful, sometimes working in opposition. His method is not scientific but uses science to further its voyage forward.

Both Jameson and Freedman take a broad look at the writing of Philip K. Dick, with Jameson in particular aiming to justify a greater literary reputation for Dick and put forward the

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[103] Booker, M. K (1994) *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* (Greenwood Press: Westport) p.26
[104] *Ibid.* p.28
[105] *Ibid.* p.30
[106] *Ibid.* p.41
[107] *Ibid.*

argument for him as 'the Shakespeare of science fiction',[108] widely (and mistakenly) considered inferior in the usual literary canon. My aim for Dick is to look much more closely at his 1969 *Ubik* so that I might extrapolate from it his critiques of consumption in society and relate them back to my overall thesis. Jameson does look at Dick's *Ubik,* but does so fleetingly. Freedman also looks at the works of Philip K. Dick in quite a broad manner, with one chapter of his work dedicated to three major Dick works. *Ubik* receives a few pages of analysis, which takes a great inspiration from Bakhtin's *heteroglossia* in his understanding of *Ubik,* in play with 'alien and alienation' within the text.[109] Jameson also sees a dialectic theme running throughout Dick's work - one of 'familiarity and strangeness' - or 'alien and alienation'.[110] Dick is often overlooked as a great within the genre of science fiction, or alternatively suffers from writing too many books for anyone to focus upon just one in a study of his work, which can be found in Freedman's analysis. I aim to focus singularly upon *Ubik* and its grappling with the themes of consumption (and how they tie in with alienation, loneliness, and bureaucracy in a dying world) as I do so.

Booker looks at *Brave New World* as the 'classic bourgeois dystopia,'[111] a label I find very convincing. As with his analysis of Zamyatin's *We,* Booker's analysis of the text focuses largely upon its classification within the genre and a reading of the religious aspects within the book, functioning largely as a character study of John the Savage, rather than an analysis of the society at large and how it correlates to both Huxley's contemporary society and that of the 21st century. Booker fails to associate the one-dimensional society to thinkers such as Marcuse and his *One-Dimensional Man,* a firm influence upon my reading of the text and not the focus of Booker's study (partially thanks to his wider interpretation of critical theory).

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[108] Jameson, F (May 1982) "Futurist Visions That Tell Us About Right Now", *In These Times,* 6, no 23 5-11, p. 17
[109] Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, p. 41
[110] Jameson F (2005) *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, (Verso: London) p.39
[111] Booker, M. K (1994) *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* (Greenwood Press: Westport), p.48

Whilst Booker is ultimately the writer who comes closest to the texts and themes that I wish to investigate, I have demonstrated how our textual analyses and broader aims differ. Similarly, whilst the four texts I have chosen to look at are largely very famous and subject to great attention both within the field of literary and philosophical studies, we still see that there is a gap in the literature for to extrapolate an individual theme from each which synthesis together in a greater critique of contemporary, mass-consumer society.

Aldous Huxley and Happiness

Synopsis

First published in 1932, *Brave New World* portrays a society manufactured entirely in an artificial manner, with the aim of this engineering being to produce happiness, material prosperity, and the eradication of poverty and suffering. In this thesis, I investigate the links between precisely these aspects of life in a 'mass-consumer society' through the lens of dystopian fiction and the Frankfurt School, making *Brave New World* an ideal subject for investigation. The works of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse are highlighted in the following sections as being of particular relevance.

Set in the year 632 'After Ford', *Brave New World* introduces itself to us through the World State's motto found hanging above the entrance to a fertilisation compound: 'COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY.' Evoking Bertrand de Jouvenel's claim that 'there is tyranny in the womb of every utopia'[112] this is a state in which a caste system is carefully maintained through artificial embryonic genetic manipulation, which, in tandem with social conditioning from birth, aims to make the citizens of the state 'good and happy members of society[113] Bernard Marx is a member of the Alpha-plus class who works at The Bureau of Stability, and suffers terribly as a non-conformant within the social system. Marx is an unintentional non-conformant – at least to begin with – due to his failure to conform through his own physical inferiority to others within his class. He has internalised and accepted the state line on Alpha superiority and has developed an intense self-loathing through failing to meet its standards of physical perfection. Through this

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[112] de Jouvenel, Bertrand (1957) *Sovereignty: An Enquiry into the Political Good* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)
[113] Huxley, A (2006) *Brave New World Revisited* (London: Harper Perennial Classics) p.5

discomfort with the status quo, we develop an understanding of the political and social organisation of the World State, and the sense that whilst it is comforting and stabilising for those who are sufficiently conformant, it alienates those who are not.

Marx takes Lenina Crowne, a sexually attractive and sufficiently indoctrinated acquaintance, to a 'Savage Reservation' in New Mexico (one of the natural areas unmolested by the World State), and in doing so glimpses the reality of a life that represents freedom, in sharp contrast with the World State's focus on happiness. Within this reservation, Marx and Crowne encounter Linda, an aged, haggard former fellow citizen of the World State who was forced into remaining in the reservation after becoming pregnant during a trip much like the one that Marx and Crowne had undertaken. Her now-adult son John, able to speak only in grand, Shakespearian terms after being raised in the wilderness with but the two books Linda had on her person (one of which being *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*) wishes to travel to London and witness the world represented by Marx and Crowne. Returning to London with Crowne, Linda, and John, Bernard Marx finds himself a celebrity of sorts, evoking a Victorian anthropologist showcasing 'savagery' to the 'sophisticated' home country.

John, now a celebrity of sorts, is disgusted by the 'brave new world' in which he finds himself in. Linda slips into a quick death, addicted to soma, a happiness-inducing drug. John attempts to violently remove soma from the lower-castes to 'free' them, but the police arrive to pacify the crowd by drugging them into happiness. Brought to the Mustapha Mond, the World Controller, Marx is forced into exile for being a disrupting force in Mond's social cohesion project. John is not allowed to leave, and retreats into his own form of exile, removed from his fellow citizens and harshly ascetic. A celebrity-cum-freakshow until the end, John's hard, monastic form of living is gawped at by tourists. When Lenina appears, John attacks her in a rage, and the crowd descends into an orgy. John hangs himself in shame and self-loathing.

Happiness and Utopia

It is surely natural that feelings of happiness should be thoroughly linked with utopian visions. On the most basic logic, if a utopian vision is that of a better society, and happiness is a better feeling, then should the latter not be a result of the former? Are they not entirely intertwined? Robert Owen wrote that "man is born with a desire to obtain happiness, which desire is the primary cause for all his actions."[114] Similarly, Isaiah Berlin argued that "the belief in the possibility (or probability) of happiness as the product of rational organization […] is the heart of all utopias."[115] Barbara Goodwin notes that utopians generally insist upon a thematic connection between 'knowledge, truth and happiness'.[116] To Goodwin, utopia is 'necessarily harmonious' with 'secondary characteristics such as social cohesion and stability deriving from the dominant value, harmony', and that happiness is 'the permanent goal of utopia'.[117]

In this framework, the views of someone like George Kateb – which can appear extreme when removed from the context of contemporary happiness theory – seem quite logical within the tradition of utopian thought: utopian society is one in which "human wants are satisfied to the fullest degree possible, a society in which all avoidable pain is eliminated and pleasure is maximised." It is within utopia that "the utilitarian principle will finally prevail."[118] Kateb, builds upon the thought of Goodwin when he writes that utopian life is defined by "the largest number of pleasurable sensations".[119] It is hedonistic, aided by "technical and scientific ingenuity" with a "regime of guilt, self-hatred and perverse asceticism" eradicated in the face of pleasure. When these disappear, utopia will finally be free to "dedicate itself to the science of the pursuit of pleasure in dead earnest."[120]

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[114] Owen R, *A New View of Society* https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/owen/ch03.htm Accessed 13th June 2021
[115] Berlin, I (1969) *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p.60
[116] Goodwin, B (1978) *Social Science & Utopia* (Hassocks: Harvester), p.162
[117] *ibid.* p.202
[118] Kateb, G (1965) 'Utopia and the Good Life,' in Frank E. Manuel ed., *Utopias and Utopian Thought: A Timely Appraisal* (Boston: Beacon Press), p.242
[119] *ibid.*
[120] *ibid.*

Given its material prosperity and the clear happiness of the majority of its citizenry, *Brave New World* can (and has) been read as a utopian work[121] - or, more often, in the words of Peter C. Herman, as a work in which utopia and dystopia 'continually alternate,'[122] braiding 'together the positive and the negative'.[123] Huxley himself wrote the work in an explicit criticism of scientific utopianism. Huxley's work is a dynamic piece of literature, and so should not be classified as an 'anti-utopia', a type of text that has a static quality to it, wherein characters undergo little or no change and the plot does not progress in a dynamic manner (an example of a 'static' work of utopian literature would be St. Thomas More's *Utopia*). The static quality of this sort of work is usually characterised by it containing no history – and therefore no possibility of change in their ideal society. In contrast, the only static quality involved in a text such as *Brave New World* represents a static *society* rather than literary genre – a static society is one which celebrates and protecting the status quo "and the satisfactions that it delivers to its beneficiaries"[124] and therefore focuses on preserving society as it is. A static society does not allow for critique, nor does it allow for change.[125] Its philosophy can be compared to that of Mustapha Mond – the world we exist in cannot and should not be improved upon, and attempts to imagine an improved or changed version of it – or a society beyond it – is a heresy that should not be tolerated, (in Mond's case, lest it capture the imagination of a docile populace). It does not necessarily follow from this that the author of the work does not allow for the possibility of change in his (personal) 'ideal world'. Rather, by drawing attention to the fact that the society of *Brave New World* does not value change – but rather actively

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[121] See Peter C. Herman, *More, Huxley, Eggers, and the Utopian/Dystopian Tradition* Renaissance and Reformation, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Summer 2018) p.178, 183-4, 193; Michael L. J. Apuzzo, 'Brave New World: Reaching for Utopia' *Neurosurgery*, Volume 46, Issue 5 (May 2000) p.1033; Nic Panagopoulos, *Brave New World and the Scientific Dictatorship: Utopia or Dystopia?* Comparatismi (2016)

[122] See Peter C. Herman, *More, Huxley, Eggers, and the Utopian/Dystopian Tradition* Renaissance and Reformation, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Summer 2018) p.176. Laurence Davis has also argued that the categories of utopian and dystopian fiction are always to some degree overlapping (see *At Play in the Fields of Our Ford: Utopian Dystopianism in Atwood, Huxley, and Zamyatin*); Iva Bajić *Significance of the Utopian Oasis in Aldous Huxley's Dystopian Brave New World and George Orwell's 1984* (2014) p.35; Paul Smethurst 'O brave new world that has no poets in it' in David Garrett Izzo and Kim Kirkpatrick eds. *Huxley's* Brave New World: *Essays* (London: MacFarland & company, 2008), p.98

[123] Herman, C. P. (2018) "More, Huxley, Eggers, and the Utopian/Dystopian Tradition" *Renaissance and Reformation,* Vol. 41, No. 3, p.185

[124] *ibid.* p.131

[125] Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* pp.122-132

represses it – Huxley indicates to his readers that he thinks that change is a good thing, allowing it to undermine repressive social stability and to encourage freedom. This almost-revolutionary impulse finds it bedfellow in that of the Frankfurt School.

It does not necessarily follow that an author cautioning against one particular form of utopia – or utopian thought - is cautioning against utopianism as a whole. Huxley's personal belief in a 'Final End' with its union with the "Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or Brahmin'[126] suggests that he does not attempt to discredit all forms of utopia, but perhaps instead one in particular: the 'scientific utopia' advocated by the later H. G. Wells. In May of 1931, Huxley wrote that he was in the process of writing 'a novel about the future – on the horror of the Wellsian Utopia and a revolt against it.'[127] Huxley was consciously undertaking a book very much in this dystopian vein, telling his father in a letter dated 24 August 1931 that he has finished a 'novel about the Future, showing the appallingness (at any rate, by our standards) of Utopia.'[128] The work that Huxley chose for his epigraph was a quote from Nicolas Berdiaeff: 'Utopias seem to be much more achievable than we formerly believed them to be. Now we find ourselves presented with another alarming question: how do we prevent utopias from coming into existence? [...] Utopias are possible. Life tends towards the formation of utopias. Perhaps a new century will begin, a century in which intellectuals and the privileged will dream of ways to eliminate utopias and return to a non-utopic society less "perfect" and more free.' It is one of the works' many indications of an attempt to warn against the embrace of a scientific utopia. Indeed, a significant number of Huxley's works seem to indicate his dislike of (or distrust towards) the major phases in utopian literature.[129] In the historic context, wherein many looked to utopian visions - including those involving higher levels of happiness and consumption - Huxley's attempts to satirise this made

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[126] Huxley, A (2006) *Brave New World Revisited* (Harper Perennial Classics: London)
[127] *Ibid.* p.41
[128] Huxley, A (1969) *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, ed. Grover Smith (Harper & Row: New York) p.351
[129] Matter, W.W (1975) "The Utopian Tradition and Aldous Huxley" *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 2, No. 2, p.146

him a target for criticism. In Granville Hicks' 1932 review for the novel, he questioned the value of the work's philosophical questions: 'With war in Asia, bankruptcy in Europe and starvation everywhere, what do you suppose Aldous Huxley is now worrying about? […] He is worrying about the unpleasantness of life in the utopia.'[130] The prospect of attaining mass comfort and stability held an obvious allure for the millions of unemployed. Would not mass consumerism raise standards of living, provide more higher wages, and greater happiness? Parodying these effects seemed like a cruel joke to some.

Happiness: The Benthamite View

One significant similarity between Huxley and the Frankfurt School is their shared critique of 'low' utilitarian views on happiness. Within this section, I will first discuss the contemporary happiness literature, then critique its assumptions and conclusions, before bringing in similar critiques of such thinking from Huxley and the Frankfurt School. I seek to highlight and join together the rejection of modern, low-utilitarian, Benthamite happiness that both demonstrate, joining together Huxley's 'high utilitarian' rejection of Benthamite pleasure principles with Adorno and Marcuse's rejection of utilitarianism entire, and their shared belief in freedom as the highest goal.

For thinkers such as George Kateb and Richard Layard, happiness is a subjective mental state, dependent on whether one *feels* happy or not. The *feeling* of such is the ultimate determinator in whether one is *actually* happy or not. Others differentiate, using external criteria to ascertain that whether someone is mistaken in whether they are happy or not. Mill does so in his dichotomy of happiness vs. contentment when he states that "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."[131] Benthamite notions of

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[130] Quoted in Meyer, S (1981) *The Five Dollar Day: Labor Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company 1908-1921,* (State University of New York Press: Albany) p.219

[131] Mill, J.S. (2002) *Utilitarianism* (Hackett Publishing Company: Indiana) p.26

happiness, which tend towards the former view, are firmly rejected by both Huxley and the Frankfurt School thinkers. Marcuse wrote an explicit rebuttal to this view, believing that individuals integrated into a one-dimensionalised society "cannot be judges of their own happiness" as "they have been prevented from knowing their true interest. Thus it is possible for them to designate their condition as happy and, without external compulsion, embrace the system that oppresses them."[132]

As has already been noted, the association of feelings of happiness with utopian visions is entirely natural. The associated aim of thinkers such as Kateb – to produce a world that maximises pleasure and minimises pain – can however result in versions of society that cannot function in a manner that is anything other than dystopian. When Kateb defines utopian life as 'the largest number of pleasurable sensations', he raises the prospect of a population kept in thrall by hedonism in the manner of a man addicted to chemicals designed to stimulate reward circuitry in his brain.[133] A man kept sedated on a chemical drip in this framework – aided by 'technical and scientific ingenuity' from the 'science of the pursuit of pleasure in dead earnest' – does not seem anything other than dystopian. Yet the principles that could lead to such an outcome are not confined to theoretical academic discourse, but have entered mainstream or popular political discourse. Richard Layard, current programme director of the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, takes this view in his book *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*. It is this popular, intoxicating utopian vision of Benthamite-inspired utilitarian philosophy that makes Layard such an important thinker for this section. He represents a way of thinking about happiness that is pleasure-based, justified internally, and hedonistic which *both* the Frankfurt School and Huxley criticise. We will explore this line of thinking and its parallels to the philosophy of *Brave New World* within this section, before moving on to the manner in which the Frankfurt

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[132] Marcuse, H (1989) *Negations* (Free Association Books: London) p.143
[133] *ibid.*

School reject this view, before drawing attention to the fact that a very similar critique can be found within Huxley's writings.

To Layard, what makes us feel good can be illustrated by examples such as "sex, food, love, and friendship" – in contrast stand "fire, dehydration, poison, ostracism."[134] If one *feels* happy, one is. There is no external criteria that could claim that could refute this claim of happiness. This clearly evokes the situation within *Brave New World* – when the Savage and Mond debate one another, they represent a eudemonic vision and a pleasure-based happiness respectively.

A concept of happiness fixed upon feelings of pleasure often draws parallels to the lotus-easters of the *Odyssey*. Odysseus's crewmates that opt to eat the lotuses suffer (or, arguably, enjoy) 'oblivion' and 'the surrender of will.'[135] They remove themselves from the progress of their journey, and from their fellow man: "All who ate the lotus, sweeter than honey, thought no more of reporting to us, or of returning."[136] Layard himself asks if the Greatest Happiness principle is an invitation to a life of eating lotuses.[137] If, Layard argues, a lifetime of sitting and eating lotuses would a) make the population happy, and b) be achievable, then allowing it to occur would be a positive outcome, though people are "unlikely to be happy eating lotuses for long", naturally desiring challenge and goals that can be accomplished.[138]

Layard discusses how genetic dispositions towards happiness can be rectified by an environment which conditions happiness, using examples that strike a comparison between lab rats and children.[139] *Brave New World* takes this to the extreme: every aspect of improving the child is taken to the highest extreme – women no longer may even birth children, who are conceived in

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[134] Layard, R (2011) *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (Penguin: London) p.24
[135] Adorno, T & Horkheimer, M (1997) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso: London) p.62
[136] Homer (1996) *The Odyssey* (Penguin: London) 9.94ff
[137] Layard, *Happiness,* p.114
[138] *ibid.*
[139] *ibid* p.60

laboratories and indoctrinated through extreme conditioning. Both explicit and implicit suggestions that the tools found to maintain stability and happiness within *Brave New World* are recognisably similar to ones found in our society can be found within Layard's work.

Interestingly, Layard pre-empts comparisons with *Brave New World*, but only insofar as soma, which he compares to anaesthesia, or a harmless version of heroin: "people take soma to make themselves feel better. This idea was meant to sound revolting and threatening. […] But most drugs we have found so far can have bad side effects. If someone finds a happiness drug without side effects, I have no doubt that most of us will sometimes use it."[140] Layard does not anticipate that his vision of a happiness-dominated society does not simply run the risk of introducing a 'harmless' drug with no (apparent) side effects, but rather results in the World State itself, with the drug a mere contributory tool to keep control of a docile people. Furthermore, by his own logic, why would only 'most' use it 'sometimes'? If happiness is what society should be based around (and humanity's total goal), then why would people *not* take it, let alone less than nearly constantly? It is worth noting that addicts are not always functional. This drug would probably kill the society that invented and proliferated it, as it would divorce chemical reward structures from the actions taken to maintain it.

Martin E.P. Seligman, a rival happiness theorist who has also written popular books for the general reader, disagrees with Layard and presents his argument in a way that evokes the Frankfurt School, even if they are not mentioned by name. "Authentic happiness theory" is "inadequate"', "inextricably bound up with being in a cheerful mood"[141] and "**one-dimensional**" [emphasis mine]. In contrast, Seligman puts forth a "well-being theory" that he argues is multi-

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[140] *ibid* p. 144
[141] Seligman, M (2011) *Flourish: A New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being and How to Achieve Them* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing: New York) p.13

dimensional, "plural in method as well as in substance",[142] made up of five elements: "positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishment."[143] Unlike happiness, this "cannot exist in [one's] own head" but is rather "a combination of feeling good as well as actually having meaning, good relationships and accomplishment."[144] Whilst Seligman is not concerned with the link between utopians and happiness theorists, his work critiques them nonetheless. The key difference that Seligman sees between his theory and that of the happiness theorists is that "of real moment." Herein Seligman brings out the individualist or egocentric nature of the theory: "Happiness theory claims that the way we make choices is to estimate how much happiness will ensue and then we take the course that maximises future happiness. Maximising happiness is the final common path of individual choice."[145] Seligman notes that, whilst pleasure is a useful subjective measure, public policy/governance aimed at maximising it evokes the World State simply drugging the population into euphoria.

Derek Bok also recognises the real-world popularity of the one-dimensional understanding of happiness, noting that "psychologists and economists in growing numbers" have attempted to measure happiness "by the simple device of asking people directly how pleasant or disagreeable they find particular activities throughout their day."[146] Since 1970, he posits, research into happiness has become a "boom industry" with conferences, journals, shelves of popular books and articles abounding.[147] The word itself encompasses "many shades of feeling and emotion", but it tends to be used to refer to "one's immediate feelings and impressions" - in contrast with

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[142] *ibid.* p.25
[143] *ibid.* p.16
[144] *ibid* p.25
[145] *ibid.* p.25
[146] Bok, D (2010) *The Politics of Happiness: What Government Can Learn from the New Research on Well-Being* (Princeton University Press: Princeton) p.5
[147] *ibid.* p.9

"wellbeing", which "connotes a more cognitive appraisal of one's life as a whole"[148] One can be happy on krokodil as it rots the flesh into abscesses. One cannot be said to be well.

Bok raises an interesting and point pertinent to our understanding of *Brave New World* and our own society: a happiness based on false premises is no real happiness. Bok develops a thought experiment concerning a woman who believes herself to be happy (though by his own logic Bok might instead mean 'fulfilled') "because she feels that she has a secure, well-paying job with a bright future and a husband who loves her". Let us then imagine that we are aware of something she is not: she is to lose her job and the sanctity of her marriage. Is this woman therefore truly happy? Bok suggests that "a happiness built on false perceptions of reality is simply not worth having."[149] Bok himself notes a link with *Brave New World*, which he considers to be "another cautionary note" on the idea of making happiness a "legitimate goal of public policy": happiness may be a 'legitimate goal of public policy' but "not every form of pleasure is desirable, nor is every means of achieving universal happiness acceptable".[150] Like Bok's allegorical woman, the citizens of the World State achieve a happiness borne of false perceptions.

A result in happiness is therefore not a good indication of whether something is moral. As Amartya Sen understands, someone in a very unfortunate position can feel happy with their lot, finding pleasure in small mercies. A single-minded concern with happiness would lead to unsettling results. A cruel marriage should not be excused because a spouse may find some joy in raising a child. Other values beside happiness must be held, 'regardless of their effect of the feelings of those affected.'[151] As Sen puts it: "The hopeless beggar, the precarious landless labourer, the dominated housewife, the hardened unemployed or the over-exhausted coolie may all take

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[148] *ibid.*
[149] *ibid.* pp.41-2
[150] *ibid.* pp.49-50
[151] *ibid.* pp.55-56

pleasures in small mercies, and manage to suppress intense suffering for the necessity of continuing survival, but it would be ethically deeply mistaken to attach a correspondingly small value to the loss of their well-being because of this survival strategy." [152] This argument: that a society which records a high level of happiness – especially that borne of pleasure – is not necessarily a morally just society, complements that of Marcuse and Adorno well, though the Frankfurt School thinkers take this further: it is explicitly not a just society – it is an entirely corrupted one.

Bok, like Layard, sees little resemblance between the World State and the United States in the near future, writing that "the mindless hedonism in his dystopia is not at all similar to the happiness described by contemporary researchers."[153] before contradicting himself: "Nor does the government pose the greatest threat of tranquilizing the public with superficial pleasures. The nearest approximation *to Brave New World* in America today is not the product of official policies but arises from the overuse of Prozac and other anti-depressants prescribed by private doctors and from the flourishing trade in drugs that persists in spite of government efforts to suppress it. If anything else threatens to lull Americans into passivity, it is products of the market such as television, iPods and computer games rather than the policies of the state."[154]

The Layardian, low-utilitarian view of happiness is criticised by both the Frankfurt School and Huxley. In neither case does the criticism involve rejecting the idea or ideal of 'happiness' outright: rather, both parties offer a different understanding of what 'happiness' (properly understood) involves: a rejection of 'low' happiness in favour of 'true/real/authentic/happiness' with a focus on the development of the soul.

Frankfurt School and Happiness

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[152] Sen, A (1991) *On Ethics & Economics* (Wiley-Blackwell: Hoboken) pp.45-46
[153] Bok, *Happiness* p.50
[154] *ibid.*

The Frankfurt School were extremely critical of the hedonistic, Benthamite views of happiness that they saw permeate late-stage capitalist society, believing that it neutralised revolutionary potential and the desire for freedom. Instead, 'happiness' for the School was inseparable from *freedom* – a freedom that liberated humanity from consumerism, allowing the individual to flourish and develop as an individual, able to self-determine one's own needs and wants rather than to be subject to the 'false', bourgeois needs forcibly imposed by others. The type of happiness valued by the School may also be referred to as 'well-being' or eudaimonia to differentiate it from the more contemporary understanding. Freedom was wholly entwined with the ability to critique. An inability to critique, therefore, could never allow for 'true' human happiness, only the false misdirection of pleasure-based happiness.

Marcuse, inspired by Hegel, wrote that 'True felicity, the fulfilment of individuals' highest potentialities […] cannot consist in what is commonly called happiness, but must be sought in the world of the soul and the mind.'[155] Hegel, who, together with Marx and Kant, was at the forefront of intellectual inspiration for the Frankfurt School, viewed pleasure-based happiness as a preventative agency against history moving forward and the ending of alienation. For Hegel, history was 'not the soil in which happiness grows. The periods of happiness in it are the blank pages of history.'[156] To Kant, '…[157].' Building upon the German idealist view of freedom as the highest possible good, Marcuse argues that with hedonistic pleasure 'the demand for the freedom of the individual is extended into the realm of the material conditions of life. Insofar as the materialistic protest of hedonism preserves an otherwise proscribed element of human liberation, it is linked with the interest of critical theory.[158] Hedonism's falsehood has 'preserved the demand

[155] 'Marcuse, *Negations* p.121
[156] Hegel, G.W.F. (1975) *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History* trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge) pp.78-79.
[157] Kant, I (1987) *Critique of Judgement*, trans. by J. H. Bernard (Hackett Publishing: London) p.52
[158] *Negations* p.121

for happiness against every idealisation of unhappiness.[159]   Marcuse takes inspiration from Plato, considering hedonistic, individual pleasures to destroy the 'just order of the soul' and to 'prevent the individual from attaining his true potentialities.[160][161] However, it is the community wherein 'the heavens and the earth, gods and men are bound together'[162]what the wants and pleasures of the individual are.[163] Marcuse believes that, in contrast with Platonic and Aristotelian ethics, modern ethics have abandoned their responsibility for human potentialities and flourishing due, in part, to their communities pursuing pleasure/happiness principle over a more Greek notion of well-being. Modern concepts of happiness are characterised by base gratification, of 'mere enjoyment and therefore of inferiority.' True freedom, however, can coexist with social unfreedom and unhappiness. Here a clear line can be drawn between Marcuse and Huxley's John the Savage: both believe that it is superior and beneficial to be free and unhappy than a *de facto* slave neutralised through pleasure. For Adorno, pleasure is fleeing 'from the last remaining thought of resistance'; the liberation promised by hedonism [164]'freedom from thought and negation.'[165] It is precisely this freedom that the inhabitants of the World State find themselves enslaved to.

Marcuse takes inspiration from Lukács' theory of reification in *History and Class Consciousness*. Truly, the worst way to exist is to be a Thing – it is 'the pure form of servitude.[166]   If one is kept reified – *thinglike* – by the easy pleasure of immediate satisfaction, it does not negate the fact that one *is* thinglike: dehumanised by hedonism. In a 1968 essay, Marcuse reflects on the significance of critiquing this form of happiness to the School: 'By identifying happiness with pleasure, they were demanding that man's sensual and sensuous potentialities and needs, too,

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[159] *ibid.* p.130
[160] *ibid.* p.131
[161] Plato (2004) *Gorgias*, trans. Walter Hamilton (Penguin Classics: London) 508a
[162] *ibid.*
[163] *ibid.* p.134

[165] *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* p.144
[166] *One-Dimensional Man*, p.36

should find satisfaction – that in them, too, man should enjoy his existence without sinning against his essence, without guilt and shame. In the principle of hedonism, in an abstract and undeveloped form, the demand for the freedom of the individual is extended into the realm of the material conditions of life. Insofar as the materialistic protest of hedonism preserves an otherwise proscribed element of human liberation, it is linked with the interest of critical theory.[167] He takes a Platonic view of pleasure, in that it cannot be 'the good' as it is an enjoyment 'too empty to be happiness.[168]

Similarly, the Frankfurt School does not wholly reject the concept of happiness, but rather the implication that it involves some plenitude of feeling or bodily experience or individual satisfaction. In the spring of 1969, shortly before his death, Adorno wrote that 'the happiness that dawns in the eye of the thinking person' was 'the happiness of humanity.' Marcuse labelled the unconditioned freedom of the person as the 'highest good' but argued that it is only an abstract concept in reality, impeded by the 'unfreedom and unhappiness' of society, thereby becoming separated from happiness, with the latter taking on the character 'of irrational, bodily gratification, of mere enjoyment and therefore of inferiority'.[169] Indeed, the School's viewpoint is based on the German idealist view of freedom as the highest possible good. As Kant wrote, '[...]reason can never be persuaded that the existence of a man who merely lives for enjoyment [...] has a worth in itself [...] Only through what he does without reference to enjoyment, in full freedom and independently of what nature can procure for him passively, does he give an absolute worth to his being, as the existence of a person; and happiness, with the whole abundance of its pleasures, is far from being an unconditioned good.'[170]

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[167] *Negations*, p.121
[168] *ibid* p.130
[169] *Negations* p.134
[170] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p.52

In 1955, Adorno wrote an essay on bourgeois opera in which he offers some comments on the emancipatory promise of the enlightenment: 'in the late modern era,' Adorno explains, the enlightenment has 'betrayed its true promise' and reduced the world to an 'iron cage.' There is a great risk that 'we will come to think of freedom as a world transcendent or metaphysical ideal that stands absolutely opposed to present darkness. On this interpretation, our world is a closed prison, and freedom appears as its total negation. Freedom has grown so improbable that we think of it as a wholly transcendent norm, an ought that starkly contradicts the is.'[171] In the embers of the enlightenment, freedom is obstructed to the point of seeming impossible: if man cannot be truly free then he cannot be truly happy. An artificial, hedonistic happiness - that obstructs freedom further – is all that remains. Indeed, true happiness cannot rely on a hedonism which enslaves, it *requires* freedom: 'Happiness, as the fulfilment of all potentialities of the individual, presupposes freedom: at root, it is freedom.'[172] In a happiness which is bound by pleasure rather than emancipated by freedom, the individual is thus 'alienated from himself'.[173] The individual is therefore 'necessarily debased' if his happiness is focused upon pleasure.[174] In Adorno's words, 'we may not know what absolute good is […] but what the inhuman is we know very well indeed.'[175]

For both Huxley and the Frankfurt School, a severance in the link between pleasure and happiness is necessary for humankind to achieve freedom, and for society to progress teleologically. For the Frankfurt School, the principle of hedonism prevents human liberation[176]. For Huxley, it prevents the discovery of a more metaphysical Final End.

[171] Taken from Peter E. Gordon's talk *A Precarious Happiness: Adorno on Negativity and Normativity,* presented at Harvard University on 15th March 2021. Available here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7e24h8PYNUs&list=LL&index=11&t=2606s
[172] *Negations*, p.135
[173] Kant, I (1997) *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. By Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge) pp.125 and 129.
[174] *Negations,* p.135
[175] Adorno, T (2002) *Problems of Moral Philosophy* (Stanford University Press: California) p.261
[176] *Negations* p.121

Huxley and Happiness

Brought before Mustapha Mond, the urbane and sophisticated supreme controller of this section of the World State, Huxley allows the philosophical vision (and critique) within *Brave New World* to shine. A select few dissidents are given the right to exile themselves away in foreign, windswept lands – a reward, according to Mond, as they are now inhabited by those individuals who failed to fit in to the social model of the World State, who he considers to be "the most interesting people in the world".[177] Mond outlines his utilitarian arguments for the caste system, social control of the state, and the pleasure-based methods used to reach this to John, who represents the human element of freedom that stands in incompatible contrast to Mond's static happiness-based society.

> "But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness, I want sin."
>
> "In fact," said Mustapha Mond, "you're claiming the right to be unhappy."
>
> "All right then," said the Savage defiantly, "I'm claiming the right to be unhappy."[178]

Huxley's views on the 'low', hedonistic form of happiness are indicated in John's dismissal of it as a 'sort of false, lying happiness'[179] and in Bernard Marx's imploration of Lenina to be free, to which she responds that she doesn't know what he means: 'I am free,' she responds, 'Free to have the most wonderful time.'[180]

In later life, Huxley would refer to himself as a 'High Utilitarian': not rejecting the concept of happiness entirely, but rather the idea that it involves – or revolves around – sensual pleasure. Huxley's form of utilitarianism was much closer to that of J.S. Mill than Bentham and his followers: Mill's principle rejected limiting freedom simply for paternalistic reasons.[181] The happiness that

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[177] *Brave New World,* p.220
[178] *Ibid.* p. 224
[179] *Ibid.* p.163
[180] *Ibid* p.61
[181] Mill, J.S. (1985) *On Liberty* (Penguin Classics: London) p.95

Brave New World promotes is a very 'low' happiness, one which Mill would firmly reject as a possible justification for the eradication of freedom.[182] Indeed, to Mill, there can be no true happiness without freedom: 'The principle of utility does not mean that any given pleasure, as music, for instance, or any given exemption from pain, as for example health, is to be looked upon as means to a collective something called happiness, and to be desired only on that account. They are desired and desirable in and for themselves; besides being means, they are a part of the end.'[183] For both Huxley and Mill, freedom was the ultimate ideal. The Frankfurt School came to this conclusion too – albeit through very different, Marxist means.

Consumer Society

Marcuse's critique of consumerism in *One-Dimensional Man* deals primarily with the nature of consumerism and its effects upon individuals and society as a whole. The society of 1960s America Marcuse was critiquing was one of excessive consumption, wherein (he argued) an 'advanced industrial society' stifled 'multidimensional' living through the creation of 'false needs' which absorbed individuals into a sprawling, 'one-dimensional' universe wherein they attempt to buy their own happiness, and in doing so lose their multidimensional qualities and are become 'unfree'. This has clear parallels with the society Huxley portrays in *Brave New World.* As Huxley parodies and critiques 1930s America, and Marcuse lambasts 1960s America, we may extrapolate from these certain trends that, rather than diminishing over time, have instead intensified. Mass production (and the resulting mass consumerism) have only escalated. Adorno argued in a letter to Walter Benjamin that art, once capable of both refining and revolutionising, now bears 'the

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[182] *ibid.* pp.95 and 97.
[183] *ibid.* p.44

stigmata of capitalism', both high art and industrially produced consumer art being 'torn halves of an integral freedom, to which, however, they do not add up.'[184]

Adorno wrote that 'If the Utopia of art were actualised, art would come to an end.'[185] Art – especially mass-produced art – has the power to make us its subjects.[186] In contrast with Kant, Adorno argues, the categorical imperative of the culture industry has little to do with freedom. Instead, it enforces a total conformity to a hazy standard. It is the power of the culture industry that conformity to it has 'replaced consciousness.'[187]

The 'Culture Industry' shares Huxley's critique of the Fordist, late-stage capitalist, alienating spectre of consumerism that *Brave New World* is concerned with, yet focuses particularly upon art and culture within this realm. The effect of this mass-culture consumerist art is, according to Adorno, that of an 'anti-enlightenment'. If enlightenment is, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, the 'technical domination of nature', the culture industry invokes mass deception and 'is turned into a means for fettering consciousness'. It therefore 'impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves.'[188] The degradation of art mirrors a degradation of the individual: a mass-consumer, culture industry society is one that is not compatible with human dignity. The individual of the world state (or of contemporary America) is aware that he is subject to something of so little worth so as to erode him: he 'welcomes the trash of the culture industry with outstretched arms – half aware that it is trash.'[189] To Adorno, the role of art in modernity can be represented by Odysseus' encounter with the sirens. Their song promises a 'happiness though relief from the relentless striving that is the meaning of the future under the aegis of the drive for self-preservation.'[190] The price, however, is death: the enchantment of hedonism is the antithesis to life.

[184] Ernst Bloch et al. (1997) *Aesthetics and Politics*, translated and edited by Rodney Taylor, (NLB: London) p.123
[185] Adorno, T (2013) *Aesthetic Theory* (Bloomsbury: London) p.47
[186] Adorno, A (1991) *The Culture Industry* (Routledge Classics: London) p.99
[187] *ibid.* p.104
[188] *ibid.* p.106
[189] *ibid.* p.126
[190] Bernstein, J.M (1991) introduction to *The Culture Industry* (Routledge Classics: London) p.7

Excess consumption is a clear theme found within both Huxley's dystopia and the work of the Frankfurt School. Huxley's attitude towards consumerism was greatly scornful, and *Brave New World* was to illustrate a clear departure from the scientist and pleasure-seeking principles that Benthamite philosophy favoured, presenting greater comfort and wealth as degrading – even dehumanising. The total supremacy of consumption within the World State was illustrated most notably through its portrayal of the quasi-religion 'Fordism'. The monotheistic, Abrahamic religions – which so often involves a focus on suffering and death-to-self – are replaced by the World State's two gods: 'Our Ford and Our Freud.' Whilst the former acted as a pioneer for production and consumption on a mass scale, the latter justified the release of guilt, inadvertently paving the way for a society built on pleasure.[191] The name 'Ford' replaces the usage of 'Lord' in common lexicon, the measurement of years is based upon the introduction of the Model T to the market: a deified Ford makes of automated production of consumer goods a near-god, with consumption its form of worship. This parodic repositioning of the role of consumption – and in the view of the low-utilitarian, accordingly happiness – to the place occupied by spirituality mimics the work of bureaucrats and management consultants in 1940s America, who felt the ideal worker 'needed to be as strong as an ox and as stupid as one.'[192] 'In a period such as ours when only a comparatively few individuals seem to be given to religion,' Charles Sheeler wrote, 'our factories are our substitutes for religious expression.'[193] Eugene McCarraher argued that 'Fordism' was both a mode of production and of state formation: the standardisation of products, mechanisation of production, the development of managerialism as a career and study, high wages to ensure the

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[191] McMahon, D (2006) *Happiness: A History* (Grove Press: New York) p.451

[192] Peller, S (2008) 'Laboring for a *Brave New World:* Our Ford and the Epsilons' in David Garrett Izzo and Kim Kirkpatrick eds. *Huxley's* Brave New World: *Essays* (MacFarland & company: London) p.65

[193] McCarraher, E (2019) *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism Became the Religion of Modernity* (Belknap Press: Cambridge, MA) p.362

consumption of mass-produced commodities. Fordism was the professional and economic result of Roosevelt's New Deal, the 'political alignment of government agencies, organized labor, and sectors of corporate capital; and the 'military-industrial complex.'[194] Thus, to McCarraher, the Fordist state is interchangeable with the New Deal State that awaited Huxley, and both 'attempted to temper class conflict, stabilize the business cycle, and promote economic growth, relying primarily on the stimulation of consumption through fiscal policy and military spending.[195] Not content with the production of goods and the formation of the state, this brave new world takes Ford's innovation of the assembly line and applies it to its own citizens, standardising them as consumable products, reified into objects that exist to serve the state. It is therefore understandable for the citizens of the World State to deify Ford - he is responsible for inspiring its creation, the material conditions of human existence, and the manufacturing of humanity itself. If the current world controllers create humans themselves, it is Ford who sparked an idea on how they might be assembled more effectively.

The critique of consumerism found within Huxley's work inspired the thought of critical theorists like Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno, and certain strands can be found in both. Both Huxley and the critical theorists rebelled against the idea of mankind being dominated by a mass-produced consumer society, and worried that mankind too could become a commodity – reified to the point of becoming inhuman.

The effects of introducing John and his mother, two people outside of the world, well-connected to nature, uncorrupted by the warm, comforting 'unfreedom' of the World State to its grasp are devastating. Through this we can read an allegory of Linda and John representing, respectively, the effects of a society built upon extreme positivist principles upon a) someone who has forgone it, and b) someone who has never experienced it. Linda, considered repulsive and near-beastly, was raised within the boundaries of the World State and has adopted many of its

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[194] *ibid.* p.364
[195]*ibid*

foundational assumptions: a passionate revert, she pursues the comfort her home state offers and gorges herself on soma, the soothing, happiness-inducing drug prescribed to maintain an easy, unmoving, pleasure-seeking citizenry evocative of the Lotus-Eaters in *The Odyssey*. Still, she is rejected by her compatriots. John, who is raised wholly within the 'savage' boundaries of the external lands, is still physically beautiful, and therefore, unlike his mother, welcomed on the basis of aesthetic principles. He rejects the World State philosophically and yet is courted by it. His mother embraces the philosophy of the World State and is rejected by it - ruined and alienated from herself, nature, and her fellow man. Her death is a release, aided by a continual soma-induced disconnection from reality. The World State seeks to disconnect its citizens from reality, through propagating a distracting and comforting pleasure that strips away their desire to seek change.

The death of his mother – John never forgoes the most intimate of bonds between people, even in a world which attempts to strip him of them, and loves his mother with Shakespearian intensity – sends him deeper into a rejection of this new world, becoming physically violent towards those attempting to seduce him (whether literally, in the case of Lenina, or metaphorically, in the case of the conditioning programmes that interrupt his mother's death to desensitise children to mortality).

Huxley's value of 'high utilitarianism' in careful opposition to 'low utilitarianism' echoes Adorno's categorisation of 'low and high culture', represented also in Huxley's clear prioritisation of the 'high culture' of Shakespearean works in contrast with the 'low culture' of the 'feelies'. Like the feelies of *Brave New World*, which elicit from an adult audience the gurgling delight of a baby distracted by a puppet, the movies of the modern era both create and cater to an infantilised populace. They are 'regression manufactured on an industrial scale.'[196] Those who attend the cinema do not do so because they are ultimately in control of what they see, but because they are

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[196] Adorno, T (1991) *The Culture Industry* (Routledge Classics: London) p.178

having their tastes shapes and dictated to them from above. The culture industry is imposed from above, not 'the art of the consumer but rather the projection of the will of those in control onto their victims.'[197] Movies are made to titivate, to salivate, to sell, to 'promise […] but never deliver.'[198] Marcuse notes children singing advertising jingles in the schoolyard rather than songs or hymns. Children and adults alike within *Brave New World* are encouraged to frequently regurgitate advertising slogans and catchy marketing songs.

Consumption within the World State dominates the free time of its citizens, a concept that has expanded in an unprecedented manner in the modern age, and is likely to expand further thanks to automation and the pursuit of pleasure. Adorno writes that 'one could not avoid the suspicion that 'free time' is tending toward its own opposite, becoming a parody of itself. Thus unfreedom is gradually annexing 'free time', and the majority of unfree people are as unaware of this process as they are of the unfreedom itself.'[199] There is clearly a parallel between the 'subjugated free time'[200] that Adorno describes and the carefully-manipulated encouragement of pursuits within *Brave New World:*

"We condition the masses to hate the country," concluded the Director in the Brave New World. "But simultaneously we condition them to love all country sports. At the same time, we see to it that all country sports shall entail the use of elaborate apparatus. So that they consume manufactured articles as well as transport. Hence those electric shocks." Both within the World State and our own, free time is 'nothing more than a shadowy continuation of labour.'[201]

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197 *ibid.*
198 *ibid.* p.186
199 *ibid.,* p.188
200 *ibid.* p.190
201 *ibid.*

Consumption in *Brave New World* is total and all-encompassing. This reflected Huxley's horror at the mass consumption and mass vulgarity on display during a recent visit to the USA during the time of its writing, a reaction with mirrored those of the Frankfurt School upon arriving in America. Huxley wrote to a fellow traveller in America he wished his correspondent could have seen California: 'materially, the nearest approach to Utopia yet seen on our planet.'[202] It is apparent when reading Brave New World that Huxley's opinion that 'the future of America is the future of our world' is on display: the World State, with its skyscrapers, its boundless economy, its domination of culture, its cult of youth, its fashionable clothes, its loose morals, its drugs, its wailing saxophones was in part largely intended as a satire of American culture and consumption.

Adorno concurred. When writing on the arrival of immigrants into early twentieth century America, he notes that 'the interests of self-preservation were stronger than those of preserving the self'[203] - the individual migrant was subsumed into the capitalist system: forced to 'radicate himself as an autonomous being if he hopes to achieve anything or be accepted as an employee of the super-trust into which life has been condensed.'[204] In doing so, they became increasingly thing-like, a commodity in themselves, essentially subhuman.

The mass production of *Brave New World* is not a receptive, equal exchange wherein the state provides distractions, experiences and products to a civilian body who requests them. Rather, they were the sort of 'false needs' created to subdue thought and behaviour that the Frankfurt School were concerned with. 'The culture industry,' Adorno writes, 'piously claims to be guided by its customers and to supply them with what they ask for. But while assiduously dismissing any thought of its own autonomy and proclaiming its victims its judges, it outdoes, in its veiled

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[202] *Brave New World* p.xix
[203] Adorno, T (1981) *Prisms* (The MIT Press: Cambridge) p.97
[204] *ibid.* p.98

autocracy, all the excesses of autonomous art. The culture industry does not so much adapt to the reactions of its customers as it counterfeits them.'[205]

It is 'geared to mimic regression,' - to infantilise and one-dimensionalise its audience and consumers, poisoning reality with 'synthetic daydreams' that operate as a refuge from the pains and horrors of the world.' Everything within the World State aims to stabilise and subdue through hedonistic pleasure. The 'culture industry' that Adorno speaks of has is pertinent both for today's society and that of which Huxley is parodying. 'Culture' has become commodified, both high and low ready to purchase, digest, and be consumed in turn by. This is illustrated by the total comfort and pleasure of consumption in *Brave New World*. For Adorno, the 'culture industry' is just one aspect of a consumer society. Within it, culture itself has become 'commodified.' The 'low' culture of movies is taken to the extreme of Brave New World's feelies, wherein an infantile, subhuman citizenry are absorbed ever more in indoctrinating products which entrap them ever further into Plato's cave: yet instead of being held there merely by moving images, other senses are utilised to keep them placid and entranced. The result of this utilisation of high and low culture being reconciled is 'such that conformity has replaced consciousness.'[206]

When Mustapha Mond, Resident World Controller of Western Europe, is questioned on the degradation of man under the pleasure-focused society, he asks: 'degrade him from what position? As a happy, hard-working, goods-consuming citizen he's perfect. Of course, if you choose some other standard than ours, then perhaps you might say he was degraded.' The citizens of the consumer society (whether contemporary America or the utopian imagination of the World State) become reified. The people of the World State are immensely so. They live to consume, and they themselves are mass-produced objects, instruments for which to create an end they were

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[205] Adorno, *Minima Moralia* p.213
[206] Adorno, *The Culture Industry* p. 104

served. The inhabitants of the World State are wholly unable to overcome their class type, and were literally bred to inhabit it. As Adorno writes: 'the point of departure seems to be the perception of the universal similarity of everything mass-produced, things as well as human beings [...] as children of society in the literal sense, men no longer exist in dialectical opposition to society but rather are identical.[207] With his New World, Huxley illustrated reification.

One of the notable aspects of consumerism in *Brave New World* is that it has progressed from being the dominant conditioner of totalitarianism to simply being an aid. The war was won long before men, women, and lab-grown children begin to pick up their first lipstick or watch their first feelie. Consumption is a tool used to keep people happy and in their place – but eugenics, the literal rather than metaphorical conditioning – has superseded it. During the time of Huxley and Adorno's lives, slums within cities were conditioned to hold the undesirable peoples and classes – in contemporary society we see the consumerism that disgusted Adorno, Huxley and Marcuse ramped up beyond anything they could have seen - workers in the Global South are paid a pittance. In America in 1965 the ratio of chief executives' to workers' pay was 20:1. Today it is 312:1.[208] The World State has made this largely obsolete as a tool of conditioning by depriving lower-caste embryos of oxygen, by torturing them as infants, and by hypnotising them as children. Still, consumption has won, and is inescapably everywhere within society. The ladies within Brave New World converse only as consumers – a commodity Bechdel test can be undertaken wherein women never have a conversation that does not revolve around men, sex, or material goods.

Mustapha Mond, Controller of the World State, readily admits that 'Mass production demanded the shift [to a focus on happiness and comfort]. Universal happiness keeps the wheels steadily turning; truth and beauty can't.' Much like in the culture industry that Adorno writes of,

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[207] *Prisms* p.94
[208] Sacks, J (2019) *Morality: Why We Need It and How To Find It* (Hodder & Stoughton: London) p.33

or the one-dimensional society that Marcuse focuses on, the mass-consumer World State conditions its citizens to find happiness in the consumption of mass-produced goods, therefore ensuring its own survival.

One-Dimensional Society

The Frankfurt School on One-Dimensional Man

In his prospectus for *One-Dimensional Man,* Marcuse writes that the chief characteristic of advanced industrial society is 'the repression of all values, aspirations, and ideas which cannot be defined in terms of the operations and attitudes validated by the prevailing forms of rationality.' The effects of such a phenomenon involve the complete erosion of all 'genuinely radical critique' and '[209].' Marcuse's argument within the work is that a 'totally administered,' advanced industrial society has produced a new height of conformity through the creation of false needs and wants to the population. Within this 'technological society,' individuals are integrated into a homogonous mass, reducing human freedom and individuality as both thought and behaviour become more docile and conforming. One-dimensional thought is in stark contrast to a dialectical way of thinking, which may *negate* existing thought and behaviour, imagining new potentials for human flourishing. To Marcuse, the price that one pays for comfortable, stability is the renouncement of being an individual, to exist outside of the one-ness of society, to be *free.*

Whilst Marcuse would consider the society of the World State to be 'one-dimensional' and almost impossible to break from, one must acknowledge that in real life, as with *Brave New World,* one or two aberrant individuals would exist regardless of social and genetic conditioning. In many ways, the most powerful symbol of the World State's pleasure-based absolute control over its subjects is not that absolutely none are capable of critique, but that the sole few who are (and *do*

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[209] Marcuse, H (no date) prospectus for *One Dimensional Man*, Beacon Press archives, found in Kellner's introduction to *Brave New World.*

critique) are easily neutralised. As they are sent away, their negative critiques, their anger, their desire for some form of revolution against the state – are also removed. When John, the last free man on earth, succumbs to the pervasive attitude of pleasure and sexually attacks Lenina, he hangs himself in horror the next day. The totality of the World State is apparent: its domination of culture, labour, relationships, sexual attitudes, nature, leisure, and even the creation of humans themselves are organised entirely by the state, and with the intention of maximising pleasure and minimising dissent.

Its citizens are incapable of imagining another reality, unless it is presented as a metaphorical 'freak show' in which a liberal, materially wealthy class may gawk and laugh at a repulsive Other: even alternatives to the World State are designed to consolidate its allure. Rather than the free, intellectually-stimulating world of Iceland or the Falklands, with their intellectual exiled communities, the reserves that the World State allows its citizens to visit are presented almost as zoos, with 'civilised' citizens visiting an almost Disneyfied nature reserve to stay at as if it were a resort, marvelling, laughing, and gasping. No real alternative may be presented to them.

The World State, therefore, analysed through the lens of Marcuse, is the One-Dimensional Society *par excellence* – a society with a control of breadth that spans worldwide, coupled with a depth of control that goes down to DNA. Each aspect of control is focused upon *pleasure* and the eradication of dissent. Why would one object to a society which provides such comfort, such quality, and such prosperity?

A one-dimensionalising society eradicates challenge and simplifies pleasure, creating a happy, docile citizenry. In *Brave New World,* Huxley emphasises the ultimate goal of this process: stability. "Bokanovsky's process," the Director tells his charges, "is one of the major instruments

of social stability";[210] "the planetary motto" is "community, identity, stability";[211] the Controller states that there is "no civilization without stability"";[212] and explicitly refers to stability as "the primal and the ultimate need".[213] The action even takes place "in this year of stability, A. F. 632"[214] The one-dimensionalising aspects of the World State are what *permit* it to be stable.

Adorno wrote in his conclusion to *Minima Moralia* that the task of criticism was to 'displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its *rifts and crevices* as indignent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light.'[215] Both Huxley and the Frankfurt School share the view that a society which does not allow for criticism remains as false as the happiness it uses to achieve this stability. The ultimate effect of this conditioning is that the citizens of the World State resign themselves to their one-dimensional lives, without even being aware that they are resigned. Thus order - that 'primal, ultimate need' - [216]

For Adorno, 'No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb.'[217] Whilst Adorno looked to the end of history and saw Auschwitz, Marcuse in contrast could envision a stagnant, ossified society dominated by mass production and consumption, materially wealthy and impoverished in freedom, entirely reified and alienated.

Huxley and One-Dimensional Society

Dana Sawyer's *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* views Huxley's interest in the reification or alienation of man as being inspired by his friend D.H. Lawrence, who saw 'men that sit in front of

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[210] *Brave New World* p.18
[211] *ibid.*
[212] *ibid* p.47
[213] *ibid* p.48
[214] *ibid* p.16
[215] *Minima Moralia* p.238
[216] *Prisms* p.100
[217] Adorno, T (1981) *Negative Dialectics* (Bloomsbury: London) p.320

machines, among spinning wheels, in an apothesis of wheels,' as want to 'become machines themselves.'[218] Huxley's disgust with Henry Ford is well documented, but one of the 'Fordisms' which most infuriated Huxley was the idea that the arts of intellectual endeavour were unnecessary and wasteful. Ford's infamous remark that history was 'more or less bunk' prompted Huxley to write that 'the saint of the new dispensation has no choice but to hate history. And not history only. If he is logical he must hate literature, philosophy, pure science, the arts - all the mental activities that distract mankind from an acquisitive interest in objects.'[219]

In 1964, Marcuse was of the opinion that the private sphere had been invaded and reduced by technological advancements.[220] Mass production and consumption lay their claim to the entire individual, and the psychology previously confined to the factory has been unleashed upon society as a whole. Introspection, critique, multidimensional thinking had all stagnated and ossified into mimesis: man no longer identified with society as a whole, rather connecting to fellow individuals - he is only able to connect to them as much as they are as reified as he is. This phenomenon is brought to its extreme in *Brave New World* – members of respective classes are unable to functionally interact with those outside of their own, other than through their capabilities to serve the World State and consume. As Douglas Kellner writes, 'as more and more are able to access these items and this way of life, it ceases to be an ideology and instead becomes a way of life – *the* way of life.'[221] The inhabitants of *Brave New World* are so one-dimensional in their thinking that alternative ways of life - even the most primal, natural aspects of human life - are now horrifying, or even physically repulsive to them. They cannot see a reason to leave, nor to embrace their instincts for parenthood, nor to live differently in any kind of way.[222] Using technical progress and mass culture as its instrument, 'unfreedom' is perpetuated and strengthened by providing the

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[218] Sawyer, D (2002) *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (Crossroad Publishing: London) p.58
[219] Huxley, A (1950) *Music at Night and Other Essays* (Penguin: London) p.131
[220] Kellner, D (2006) Introduction to *One Dimensional Man* (Routledge Classics: London) p.12
[221] *ibid.* p.13
[222] *ibid.*

unfree man a 'greater standard of living', comfort, and happiness.[223] As such, they are slaves, but they are ignorant of such a fact, and happy in their servitude. They are a clear example of Bok's 'happy slave' dilemma.

Huxley shares his views the necessity for contemplation and critique in *The Perennial Philosophy,* writing that 'a society is good to the extent that it renders contemplation possible for its members; and that the existence of at least a minority of contemplatives is necessary for the wellbeing of any society.'[224] Huxley explains that 'a man's duty, how he ought to live, what he ought to believe and what he ought to do about his beliefs – these things are conditioned by his essential nature, his constitution and temperament.'[225] This individuality – the multiplicities of temperaments available across the spectrum – are stripped from him within the World State and modern consumer culture alike.

According to Perroux, the citizens of *Brave New World* are slaves because slavery is determined 'neither by obedience nor by hardness of labour but by the status of being a mere instrument, and the reduction of man to the state of a thing.'[226] Huxley wrote in his *Brave New World: Revisited* '"Free as a bird," we say, and envy the winged creatures for their power of unrestricted movement in all the three dimensions. But, alas, we forget the dodo. Any bird that has learned how to grub up a good living without being compelled to use its wings will soon renounce the privilege of flight and remain forever grounded. Something analogous is true of human beings. If the bread is supplied regularly and copiously three times a day, many of them will be perfectly content to live by bread alone -- or at least by bread and circuses alone. "In the end," says the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's parable, "in the end they will lay their freedom at

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[223] *ibid.* p.35
[224] Huxley, A (2004) *The Perennial Philosophy* (Harper Perennial Classics: London) p.194
[225] *ibid* p.153
[226] Perroux, F as quoted in Marcuse, H (2006) *One-Dimensional Man* (Routledge Classics: London) p.35

our feet and say to us, 'make us your slaves, but feed us.'[227] Marcuse builds on this when he argues that this is the purest form of servitude, amounting to little more than to exist 'as an instrument, as a thing. And this mode of existence is not abrogated if the thing is animated and chooses its material and intellectual food, if it does not feel its being-a-thing.'[228] The citizens of the World State choose to carry on their life as it is (regardless of how much 'choice' one might argue they have) does not make them any less –thing-like, any less reified. So it is too with one-dimensional man choosing to operate within the happy confines of the consumer society. The citizens of the *Brave New World's* perspectives have 'passed into an ideology which conceals the fact that there is life no longer.'[229]

Philosophy of History

The Frankfurt School on History

It is in the 19th century that utopian thought turns 'historical,' and when utopia is located by some thinkers at and as 'the end of history.' This prefigures the idea of 'communism' as a utopia at the end of history that some commentators find in Marx. Adorno & Horkheimer were deeply critical of this view: the society that they saw as the end of history is very far from being a utopia. When we look at the etymology of 'nostalgia', we see that it is made up of 'nostos' (a place that one has left and yet still belongs to, thus longing for) and 'algia' (the pain of that longing). 'Utopia' or 'eutopia' (the pun presented by St. Thomas More) consists of a prefix that offers an antithesis to suffering. Its root, 'topos', is simply 'place', freed from desire (which it fulfils) rather than bound by it, like a 'home' of nostalgic longing.[230] This longing is a good illustration of Adorno's rare

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[227] Huxley, A (2006) *Brave New World Revisited* (Harper Perennial Classics: London) p.
[228] *One-Dimensional Man* p.54
[229] *Minima Moralia* p.15
[230] Chrostowska, S.D. (2013) "Thought Woken By Memory: Adorno's Circuitous Path to Utopia" *New German Critique*, No. 118, Special Issue on Adorno (Winter 2013) p.17

utopian thought, which yearns for a time that can no longer be. The idea of 'returning home' is central to the *Odyssey*, discussed both by Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* and also Hegel, who in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* characterises world history as it is connected to the history of human civilisation, as 'the Odyssey of Spirit.' Just as the worker is alienated from his self, longing to return to the place he cannot be, John, trapped inside the bleak superficiality of the World State longs to return home - a desire that will never be realised. Indeed, John represents a heroic impulse that *cannot be allowed* to be realised. In contrast are the citizens of the World State, alienated entirely from their humanity, unable to either long for the past or see a better future. They are totally satisfied with bodily gratification, with, as Marcuse puts it, 'mere enjoyment and therefore mere inferiority.'

Odysseus's crewmates that opt to eat the lotuses suffer (or, arguably, enjoy) 'oblivion' and 'the surrender of will.'[231] They remove themselves from the progress of their journey, and of history at large: 'All who ate the lotus, sweeter than honey, thought no more of reporting to us, or of returning.[232] Adorno and Horkheimer compared this state of being to that of a narcotic drug addict – it is evocative of the Savage's mother, Linda, who cannot be roused from her hypnotised oblivion after happily retreating to a soma-induced unreality. To Adorno and Horkheimer, this is a happiness fit only for animals, a 'mere illusion of happiness, a dull vegetation, as meagre as an animal's bare existence, and at best only the absence of the awareness of misfortune.'[233] This is what both Plato and Mill would call 'pig philosophy.' This condition is a 'stage' in their developmental journey, their 'returning home.' Adorno and Horkheimer note that this state of being is not an addition to life, but rather a subtraction of all things that can lead to self-realisation. Aware of the danger of such a state, and intent on refusing to succumb to the pleasure of the

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[231] *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.62
[232] Homer (1996) *The Odyssey* (Penguin: London) 9.94ff
[233] *Dialectic of Enlightenment* pp.62-3

abyss, Odysseus has no part in this: he 'forced them, weeping, back to the ships, dragged them into the capacious vessels and bound them beneath the benches.'[234]

The motifs of Marcuse and Adorno continue: much like the lotus-eaters, Circe's wild animals no longer suffer for higher pleasures, but instead live sedate and happy. They are 'mountain wolves and long-maned lions which she herself rendered harmless with potent drugs. They did not attack the men but stood on their hind legs, as if fawning upon them, wagging their tails like dogs who surround their master when he leaves the table, because he always brings tasty morsels with him.'[235] Rather than being given the honour of becoming 'sacred creatures of the wilderness,' they are reduced to 'unclean domestic animals – swine.'[236] So too are the citizens of the World State similarly degraded, stripped of their freedom in order to become reified, placid, and addicted to pleasure, anaesthetised from all pain, both they and their society are ossified and one-dimensional. S.D. Chrostowska notes, 'in the end, it is the animal, the in- or subhuman, that emerges as keeper of perpetual peace.'[237] Mill's critique of 'pig philosophy' is once again pertinent. The 'false' happiness of the society built upon consumption begets a false peace. Indeed, 'The change in the relations of production themselves depends largely on what takes place in the 'sphere of consumption', the mere reflection of production and the caricature of true life: in the consciousness and unconsciousness of individuals.'[238] Adorno wrote that if the 'appearance of life' from which 'the sphere of consumption itself defends [...] then the monstrosity of absolute production will triumph.'[239] The consumer society, the static society (in Huxley and Marcuse, both are entwined) both provide merely the appearance of life – in reality, life is stunted, absorbed into

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[234] *The Odyssey* 9.98ff
[235] *ibid.* .212ff
[236] *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.71
[237] Chrostowska, S.D. (2013) "Thought Woken By Memory: Adorno's Circuitous Path to Utopia" *New German Critique*, No. 118, Special Issue on Adorno (Winter 2013) p.110
[238] *Minima Moralia* p.15
[239] *ibid* p. 15

the half-life of consumption or curbed in the production of false desires and one-dimensional, inhuman behaviour.

Huxley on History

In *The Doors of Perception,* writing of his experience on mescaline, Huxley notes that he became transfixed in a sort of rapture by a piece of cloth, marvelling at its revealed beauty, unable to move or to bear to be taken from his rapture. "This is how one ought to see, how things really are," he wrote. And yet, 'if one always saw like this, one would never want to do anything else. Just looking, just being the divine Not-self of flower, of book, of chair, of flannel. That would be enough.' Huxley's blissful experience of a heightened state of being gave him much more pleasure and immediate satisfaction than existing in pure reality. But reality necessarily involves others. By existing in his heightened state, Huxley noted that he became entirely selfish: 'what about other people? What about human relations? […] How could one reconcile this timeless bliss of seeing as one ought to see with the temporal duties of doing what one ought to do and feeling as one ought to feel? "One ought to be able," I said, "to see these trousers as infinitely important and human beings as still more infinitely important." But this was impossible. The ecstasy of self-indulgent pleasure did not allow for 'the necessary concerns of human existence,' certainly not those involving other people. Huxley considered this state of being almost subhuman, referring to himself within it not as a person but as a 'Notself', with all human concerns suddenly irrelevant. Like the lotus-eaters of *The Odyssey* who had no thought of returning, Huxley 'longed to be left alone with Eternity in a flower.'[240] This supreme distraction, this self-centred bliss pacifies just as the soma and consumption within his 1932 work do. The Odyssean, pleasure-based bliss pacifies and apathises those it corrupts. The world becomes soulless, and as it loses its soul, in Huxley's

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[240] Huxley, A (1956) *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* (Penguin: London) p.10

vision as in Adorno's and Marcuse's, there is no evolution towards the Final End of consciousness, or dialectical progress. Both share the view that these teleological ends are much more important than sensual satisfaction.

Theodor Adorno's Essay on *Brave New World*

Classical utopianism, from Plato down to More, is based on the idea of a 'transcendent critique' which pays no attention to history, or to the principle of change. It is associated with the form of 'static utopia' previously discussed, which the Frankfurt School are certainly critical of, as Marx was. The Marxist criticism of transcendent critique is that it is ahistorical, rooted not in existing society but in a heavenly world beyond. The Marxist tradition instead favour the idea of 'immanent critique' which involves the idea that a particular society contains within itself the seeds or germs of a better world in the future, which is and will be in some sense an historical product, more practical and realistic, historical and sociological than classical utopianism. It starts with existing society, and understands that it can evolves and change over time to move towards a better world that can be realised. Marcuse, always more optimistic than Adorno, believed this to be a historically and sociologically grounded form of utopianism. *Eros and Civilisation* set out his vision of liberation, and even the totalising mediocrity described in *One-Dimensional Society* could not negate a belief that freedom could be achieved *despite* the effects of one-dimensional thought and behaviour that he saw as prevalent in technological-industrial society.[241] Marcuse believed that a potential of utopian liberation was *real*, and his thought was therefore, in the words of his biographer, "animated by a utopian vision that life could be as it is in art and dreams if only a revolution would take place that would eliminate its repressive features."[242]

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[241] Marcuse, H (1974) *Eros and Civilisation* (Beacon: New York)
[242] Kellner p.xxxiv

Immanent critique is associated with the notion of teleology, derived from Aristotle via Hegel, rooting critique in history and denying that there are any absolute, supra-historical standards for evaluating social states of affairs, of the kind usually associated with Platonism, the natural law tradition and one form of utopianism. Axel Honneth puts it thusly: 'only those principles or ideals which have already taken some form in the present social order can serve as a valid basis for social critique.'[243] Hegel wished to differentiate his method of critique from the dogmatic method, within which he saw as corrupting our ability to assert essences: 'What we asserted to be its essence would be not so much its truth but rather just our knowledge of it. The essence or criterion would lie within ourselves, and that which was to be compared with it and about which a decision would be reached through this comparison would not necessarily have to recognize the validity of such a standard.'[244] Hegel's immanent model of critique instead argued that we are able to critique society by drawing on its own standards: 'Consequently, we do not need to import criteria, or to make use of our own bright ideas and thoughts during the course of the inquiry; it is precisely when we leave these aside that we succeed in contemplating the matter in hand as it is in and for itself.'[245] Adorno's form of dialectical critique reconciles this idealist model of immanent critique with Marx's materialist understanding of it.[246] Dialectical criticism can exist neither wholly within society, nor wholly outside of it. It is 'in the world but not of it', so to speak - the dialectical critic of culture, in Adorno's own words, 'must both participate in culture and not participate. Only then does he do justice to his object and to himself.'[247]

Transcendent critique positions itself outside of society in order to critique the appearances of ideology within by revealing their historical genesis. As Bernstein notes, the validity immanent

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[243] Honneth, A (2001) 'Reconstructive Social Critique with a Genealogical Reservation: On the Idea of Critique in the Frankfurt School' in *Graduate Faculty Philosophy* Journal 22.2, pp. 311, p. 6

[244] Hegel, G.W.F. (1977) *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford University Press: Oxford) p.53

[245] *ibid* p.54

[246] O'Connor, B (2012) *Adorno* (Routledge: London) p.48

[247] *Prisms,* p.33

critique 'depends upon the epistemological self-righteousness of the critic, allowing him to distinguish between subjective and objective interests, and to separate the real evolutionary trends of society from its apparent history.'[248] 'The more one-dimensional society becomes the more critique must pay attention to the internal structure and relatively autonomous logic of cultural objects. This transcendent critique fails to do; its critical position outside society is as fictitious as the most abstract utopias.'[249] Adorno goes further, comparing the 'domination' of transcendent critique to a form of 'barbarism'.[250]

The Frankfurt School read Huxley's work, which they referenced over a period of many years. In 1964, Adorno alluded to Bernard Marx in a lecture: 'where there seems to be an optimum of freedom, people don't even reach it. To sit down, to reflect, to make decisions: with these activities one would fall behind, one would become a weirdo like the loner in Huxley's *Brave New World*.'[251] Anyone in BNW who finds themselves reflecting, becoming weird has to be neutralised or eliminated: 'The greater a man's talents, the greater his power to lead astray […] Unorthodoxy threatens more than the life of a mere individual; it strikes at Society itself.'[252] Many of Adorno's works make use of a novelistic character in order to state a factual development in history with regard to personal freedom. There is a link between Huxley's and Adorno's views on the individual in history.[253]

Angela Holzer draws a parallel between Huxley's novel and Adorno's reference to it: in both, the socially aberrant outsider is the only figure that deserves to be called 'individual' by

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[248] Bernstein, J.M. (1991) introduction to *The Culture Industry* (Routledge Classics: London) p.18
[249] *ibid.*
[250] *Prisms,* p.33
[251] Quoted in Holzer, A (2008) "To Reflect, to Sit Down: The *Hinzutretende* and Huxleyan Characters in Adorno and Horkheimer's Philosophy" in Izzo, D.G. and Kirkpatrick K eds. *Huxley's Brave New World: Essays* (MacFarland & company: London) p.118
[252] *Brave New World* p.148
[253] Holzer p.118

reaching the consciousness of independent thinking within themselves.[254] In Adorno's words, what the outsiders of the World State, separated by reason for becoming outsiders, success, attractiveness, and ability shared 'was the knowledge that they were individuals.'[255]

In 1994, Robert Baker undertook an assessment of the connection between Huxley and Horkheimer and Adorno by examining the Marquis de Sade. 'Adorno,' he wrote, 'was unfamiliar with Huxley's other writings, where the basis for Huxley's critique of contemporary culture was developed and refined, and where he would have discovered Huxley proceeding along lines of inquiry at times strikingly similar to those of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.'[256] Baker's assumption that Adorno was unfamiliar with Huxley's other writings is incorrect. Adorno was aware of Huxley's other writings – in a 1936 letter to Benjamin, Adorno mentioned *Eyeless in Gaza*. Holzer brings to attention him reading Huxley in 1937, and accrediting Huxley with having 'foretold the productive instrumentalisation of human hierarchy in terms of consumption'[257] in 1944. Soon after, he complimented Huxley on having predicted 'death conditioning.' David Garrett Izzo argued that Horkheimer and Adorno agree with Huxley 'more than Orwell' with their essays - particularly 'Culture Industry' – which was 'influenced by numerous examples of Huxley's writing.'[258]

Yet whilst there are clear similarities between Marcuse, Huxley, and Adorno's critiques of consumption, progress, and pleasure, along with numerous examples of Adorno and Horkheimer reading (and being influenced by Huxley), Adorno was somewhat derisive of Huxley's most famous work. Adorno's misreading of *Brave New World* shows that dystopias are not always unambiguous in their message. Adorno's reading of the text is surprising: for Adorno, *Brave New*

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[254] *Ibid.*

[255] *Brave New World* p.60

[256] Baker, R (1994) "The Nightmare of the Frankfurt School: The Marquis de Sade and the Problem of Modernity in Aldous Huxley's Dystopian Narrative" in *Now More Than Ever: Proceedings of the Aldous Huxley Centenary Symposium Muenster 1994,* edited by Bernfried Nugel (Peter Lang: Frankfurt) p.246

[257] Holzer p.121

[258] Izzo, D.G (2008) 'Introduction' in "To Reflect, to Sit Down: The *Hinzutretende* and Huxleyan Characters in Adorno and Horkheimer's Philosophy" in Izzo, D.G. and Kirkpatrick K eds. *Huxley's Brave New World: Essays* (MacFarland & company: London) p.5

World was simply a 'fantasy of the future with a rudimentary plot.'[259] Adorno interpreted Huxley's intentions on a reasonably superficial level, taking *Brave New World* as 'the utopia whose realisation is foreseeable in the light of technology,[260] rather than a damning subversion of that. At times, Adorno shows a fundamental misunderstanding of Huxley's epistemological position. He takes notable offence with what he sees as *Brave New World's* 'positive core': the 'indeterminable, abstract […] goal somewhere beyond' which 'strengthens the reified situation Huxley cannot tolerate: the neutralisation of a culture cut off from the material process of production.'[261] Adorno argues that whilst Huxley criticises the spirit of positivism, he 'confines itself to shocks, while remaining immersed in the immediacy of experience and merely registering social illusions as facts,' thus revealing *himself* to be a positivist.[262] This criticism of Huxley as a positivist is questionable: Huxley's aforementioned criticism of scientific utopianism and its relationship with literature are very far from those which are usually associated with positivism. Rather, they are actually far closer to those which are usually associated with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. Even Huxley's attitude towards metaphysics, the *bête noire* of positivism, is a constructive one: the mystical leanings on display in his later work point to an affinity with metaphysics,[263] rather than to the kind of scientistic critique of metaphysics that we find in the writings of positivists such as Saint-Simon and Comte. Yet Adorno maintains that Huxley takes a positivist stance and writes the book with a 'coldness [...] deeply embedded in [his] conceptual framework' - he is full of 'fictitious concern' for the horrors that a realised utopia may inflict upon the world, yet in doing so he fails to realise the true horror: the far more urgent issue that in contemporary society, utopia is prevented from being realised by mankind's inability to critique. Yet this is well-displayed in *Brave New World,* which purposefully silences the critic and in doing so prevents history from moving onwards**.** Rather, as

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[259] *ibid.* p.98
[260] Berdyaev, N as quoted in the introduction to *Brave New World* (London: Vintage, 2014) p.xxxviv
[261] *Prisms* p.112
[262] *ibid.* p.114
[263] *The Perennial Philosophy* p.52

previously evidenced, Huxley uses *Brave New World* to satirise the kind of scientific utopia that was advocated by the later H. G. Wells.

Despite Adorno's questionable reading of *Brave New World,* in the works of Huxley and the Frankfurt School alike, a society which focuses on a pursuit of hedonistic happiness has lost its way, is caught outside of the teleological process, living in a perpetual present, with mankind able to have no knowledge of the past or imaginings of the future – like Huxley in an intoxicated stupor or Odysseus and his crew, who desire to 'return home', they grapple with the intoxications of pleasure and desire and the numbing, false peace that it provides.

Conclusion

After a brief synopsis of the text, I have discussed *Brave New World* through six sections of exegesis, using the theoretical framework of the Frankfurt School We have discussed the links between happiness and utopia that theorists have made, and how the contemporary inclination towards 'Benthamite' happiness is rejected by both. After discussing the theme of 'consumerism' within *Brave New World,* we looked at how some of the most significant works within the School are concerned with excessive consumption and its effects upon society and its citizens. We have discussed the pertinence of Marcuse's theory of 'one-dimensional society' in *Brave New World.* In the Philosophy of History section, we brought together the previous themes, noting that in both Huxley's work (as well as that of the Frankfurt School), an emphasis on consumerism helps develop a one-dimensional society which in turn fails to encourage an ability to develop critique, instead distracting through a 'false happiness' and giving society a 'static' quality which creates a 'false peace'. In the final section, we evaluated Adorno's comments on Huxley and his work. There is strong evidence for a shared critique of many elements of late-capitalist society in the works of both Aldous Huxley and the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. For both, late-capitalist society

is deformed, alienating, and technology-driven. It is one-dimensional, maintained by false happiness, and plagued by constant consumption. It is not utopian, and cannot result in true freedom, or happiness. By demonstrating a parallel between excess consumption and a focus on hedonistic happiness, and applying the critiques of the former developed by Huxley and certain thinkers of the Frankfurt School, I draw these elements together to suggest that our contemporary society increasingly resembles a one-dimensionalised world put forth in the works of Adorno, Marcuse, and Huxley. If, for Socrates, 'the unexamined life is not worth living,' we must question the value of life when the ability to examine it is eroded by the hedonistic comfort that supposedly elevates it.

Zamyatin and the Ossification of History

Introduction

Yevgeny Zamyatin's philosophical and literary writings demonstrate a thinker who is intimately concerned with rationalist, scientific thought and its influence upon society and critical thinking, believing it to stifle free thought, and with it, alternative possibilities. Zamyatin is clear in his belief that society progresses through unorthodox, or 'heretical' thought, and that the absence of this causes society to ossify and become victim to 'entropy'. I argue that this firm justification and motivations for critique bear much similarity with the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, and that both share a form of utopianism that is not immediately obvious. Within this chapter, I will first look at the synopsis of Zamyatin's *We*, before situating it within the context of 'Early Zamyatin', before moving on to discuss 'Zamyatin's Early Influences' (with subsections within discussing Hegel's influence upon him, and his unorthodox interpretation of Hegel). The subsection 'Zamyatin and Utopia' will analyse Zamyatin's concept and critique of utopianism in his writings, before we arrive at 'Zamyatin's Own Philosophy: Entropy and Energy', 'Zamyatin and Morality', and reach our final conclusions with 'Zamyatin and the Frankfurt School'. This chapter sits as one of four major chapters that make up the body of my thesis, demonstrating the thematic similarities between the Hegelian-Marxist thought of the Frankfurt School and that of science fiction.

Synopsis

The plot of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* is revealed through the diary entries of the quasi-protagonist, D-503, through which both he and the audience witness the contradictions present within the authoritarian, communal form of government under the stewardship of One State. The stability and order of One State's wholly managed 'utopia' has not yet stamped out every human

impulse or instinct, despite the daily mechanised routine modelled on the Scientific Management methods of F. W. Taylor.[264] The inhabitants of the State wear matching uniforms and answer to numbers, rather than names. They inhabit glass buildings, offices, and living quarters to ensure that virtually every move can be tracked, and their lives are regulated by a strict communal timetable, which dictates the collective actions and movements of the city's inhabitants. The supreme commander of this state is known as the Benefactor, and his powerful 'Guardians' ensure conformity to the state's requirements.

As an engineer engaged in building the Integral, a vast spaceship tasked with exporting the ideology of the One State to other planets, D-503's understanding of (and compliance with) the philosophical and mathematical truths of the State is necessary, and the diary begins as an exercise in extolling the social, mathematical, and progressive virtues of the One State. Through D-503's expositional diary entries, the reader becomes familiar with the official justifications for the suppression of freedom, emotion, and individuality ("the ancient Christians knew that We is from God and I from the devil"). A desire to escape the collective utopia, to act in an individual manner, to feel emotion or the slightest awareness of self is considered a psychiatric disorder at best, or treasonous crime at worst.

D-503's first brush with such a diseased mind comes from I-330, a heretical inhabitant of the State who rejects its assumptions, teachings, and requirements. Her passionate iconoclastic spirit inspires wild, disconcerting emotions in D-503, who is simultaneously repulsed and entranced by such an *individual*. He begins to recognise desires, impulses, and elements of his personality deemed 'defective' that subsequently begin to break through as a wild and increasingly

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[264] That communist and capitalist societies alike have taken inspiration from this is notable – the Soviet Union's adoption of these methods created a particular disgust in Zamyatin. For further information, see Richard Stites' (1989) *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford University Press: Oxford) pp. 146-149. As previously discussed, in *Brave New World* Aldous Huxley presents Taylorism from a capitalist standpoint as a major influence upon the Ford motor factories in his counterpart to the One State.

dominant elements of his character. From this point, D-503's diary entries become a confessional of sorts, in which he agonises over his tortured sexual attraction, rejection of Euclidean logic, and development of a soul. Whilst at first he sees these elements of his character as completely new developments, he now believes them to have *always existed* within himself – albeit deeply buried, subordinated to the dictates of logic, stability, and reason. He joins the revolutionary movement of the Mephi, transfixed by his newfound imagination and the opening of his ideological boundaries, but finds awareness and freedom to be ultimately unbearable and so allows himself to undergo a state-sponsored lobotomy to rid himself of imagination (and, implicitly within this removal of imagining possibilities, to be able to critique). He betrays I-330, who dies a Christlike death, tortured in front of a crowd, a martyr to freedom.

At the end of the novel, D-503, now a revert to the orthodoxy of the One State, is convinced that reason will triumph against the forces of uncivilised freedom. Additional walls to the outside world are erected, and dissidents executed or lobotomised into unthinking acceptance. Calculations are in place to demonstrate that infinity (and with it, infinite possibility) cannot exist. The Integral will no longer fly freely, off course, but is poised to continue her original mission of proselytising this reason to other, finite, worlds. Surely then, infinity will be vanquished, unless the universe stretches on forever, which the state's mathematicians insist it cannot. Rather than Bogdanov's socialist utopia on Mars, Zamyatin posits an unstoppable domination of cruelty that spans worlds entire. D-503's final diary entry is a declaration of faith in reason and rationality: "I hope we shall win. More than that, I am certain we shall win. Because reason must win."[265] Zamyatin does not seem to reject rationality or 'reason' outright, but, like Marcuse, only a certain way of thinking about them.

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[265] Yevgeny Zamyatin (1993) *We* (Penguin Classics: London) p.215

Early Zamyatin

An engineer by trade (albeit one with long secondments forced upon him by the tsarist regime for revolutionary activities),[266] Zamyatin was immensely interested in interrogating enlightenment principles, rationalism, and the concepts of scientific facts and progress. These interrogations feature prominently in his work, and yet receive little attention from commentators. They were to contribute to his eventual exile from the Soviet Union in 1931: unlike a considerable number of his revolutionary peers, Zamyatin did not accept the totality or inevitability of the post-revolutionary Soviet regime and did not consider the foundation of a Communist state to be the 'end goal' of revolution. Indeed, in the words of D.J. Richards, Zamyatin's Bolshevik activities were not borne of any firm political alignment, but from a lifelong need for excitement, 'allied with a natural rebelliousness.'[267] The consequences from the 1917 revolution would become the major resulting influence on Zamyatin's philosophical beliefs – and the literary works he used as vehicles to demonstrate them - which subsequently reflected the shortcomings, hypocrisy, and significance of the Revolution in Zamyatin's eyes.

In both theory and praxis, Zamyatin prioritised the act of revolution itself (whether manifesting intellectually or societally) above any devotion to Marxist-Leninist ideals, which he almost entirely lacked. When he believed the 1917 revolution to have turned on its people, assumed complete power, and betrayed its original spirit, Zamyatin found he held no loyalty to it whatsoever. Indeed, the Soviet Union felt no loyalty to him – Zamyatin's belief in the importance of the writer's unconscious spirit upon his work was denounced in 1931 as 'false and pernicious bourgeois ideology' by the Soviet state.[268] He would subsequently request permission for exile from the USSR in order to continue his writing abroad - a request that was granted by virtue of the new

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[266] Richards, D.J (1962) *Zamyatin: A Soviet Heretic* (Bowes & Bowes: London) p.9

[267] Richards, *Zamyatin,* p.8

[268] Shane, A (1970) in Yevgeny Zamyatin's *A Soviet Heretic – Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London) p. xiii

leader's shaky pre-consolidation of power in the early 1930s; had he remained in the Soviet Union, Zamyatin would undoubtably have found himself victim to one of Stalin's later purges. Zamyatin would reference his ostracism and exile from Soviet Russia in declaring himself 'A Soviet Heretic' – one comparable to Nietzsche's Anti-Christ. Indeed, the theme of heresy found as a cornerstone of Zamyatin's work was a powerful marriage of various critical traditions, which he sought to absorb into his own work, whilst incorporating scientific themes to greater critique what he saw as rationalist, ossifying, or entropic forces within society.

Zamyatin's Intellectual Influences

Zamyatin's revolutionary, dialectical impulse is immediately evident – but its categorisation is certainly not. The pathology of Zamyatin's influence has been traced through many paths by many thinkers: is he best classified as an Anarchist, Postmodernist, Hegelian, Marxist, Nietzschean, Heraclitan, or some unholy mixture of all? D.J. Richards vaguely refers to Zamyatin's *Weltanschauung* as being born of 'Hegelian or Marxist dialects' and 'Dostoevsky's championing of the irrational'.[269] The author's most significant ideological break from Marxist-Leninist dogma stemmed from his embrace (and their rejection) of Hegelianism. The influence of Hegel upon Zamyatin is of deep significance to his work, from his early literary theory to the underlying philosophical assumptions of his novels and essays. Zamyatin thought that the dialectic could be used in tandem with the *ir*rational as the ultimate source and guarantee of man's freedom and individuality.[270] Delivered at the People's University of Lebedyan on 8th September, 1918, Zamyatin's lecture, entitled "Contemporary Russian Literature", sought to analyse the style of his contemporaries through a historical application of Hegel's dialectical process, a form of literary criticism of the Neorealist literary movement that he named 'Synthesism.' This idea – of synthesis

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[269] Richards, *Zamyatin,* p.15
[270] *Ibid.*

– was rooted in his concept of Hegelian dialectics and would run throughout his work. In his essay *Tomorrow* the author expands upon his viewpoint of the movement of history through the prism of the Hegelian dialectic (though Hegel never used these precise terms, Zamyatin aligns the 'thesis' with yesterday, the antithesis with today, and synthesis with tomorrow).

This was neither a complete, nor nuanced understanding of Hegel, but one that aligned itself firmly with the so-called 'Left-Hegelian' tradition, one of two broad interpretations of Hegelian thought. Both are almost diametrically opposed to one another, and it is testament to the breadth and depth of Hegel's philosophical works that both interpretations find a basis for justification in the primary texts. Classified generally by the terms 'Left Hegelianism' and 'Right Hegelianism',[5] the former is associated with his dialectical *method,* the latter with his conservative *conclusions.* As Tony Burns notes, Hegelians of both Left and Right sympathies generally find themselves in agreement that Hegel's own understanding of his philosophy was a 'celebration of the German political and social status quo' of his era, though the latter consider this to be a positive, whilst the former reject the conservative nature of this conclusion, considering the solution to this problem to be found within Hegel's own philosophy: more specifically, his belief in the principle of dialectics, which could be put to critical, radical, or even revolutionary use. Thus, Hegelianism could arguably unite both Marxists and Anarchists in their own critique of itself.[271] The depth of influence that Zamyatin's understanding of Hegelian thought impacted his own work cannot be overstated. In his essay *Tomorrow,* which would mirror Hegel's *Phenomenology* ("The bud disappears when the blossom breaks through, and we might say that the former is refuted by the latter; in the same way when the fruit comes, the blossom may be explained to be a false form of the plant's existence, for the fruit appears as its true nature in place of the blossom...")[272] Zamyatin wrote that "Every today is at the same time both a cradle and a shroud: a shroud for yesterday, a

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[271] Burns, T (2008) *Political Theory, Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature* (Lexington: Plymouth) p.60
[272] *Phenomenology of Spirit* p.15

cradle for tomorrow [...] Today is doomed to die — because yesterday died, and because tomorrow will be born."[273]

This eternal concept of change, unconcerned with satisfaction or complacency – even peace itself – is also expanded on in the same essay, in which Zamyatin prescribes the 'heretic' who operates through 'eternal dissatisfaction' as the key to dialectical progress. This form of critique is, in fact,

"...the only pledge of eternal movement forward, eternal creation. He who has found his ideal today is, like Lot's wife, already turned into a pillar of salt, has already sunk into the earth and does not move ahead. The world is kept alive only by heretics: the heretic Christ, the heretic Copernicus, the heretic Tolstoy. Our symbol of faith is heresy: tomorrow is inevitably heresy to today, which has turned into a pillar of salt, and to yesterday, which has scattered to dust. Today denies yesterday, but is a denial of denial tomorrow. This is the constant dialectic path which in a grandiose parabola sweeps the world into infinity. Yesterday, the thesis; today, the antithesis; and tomorrow, the synthesis."[274]

I think there is an abundant amount of support in Zamyatin's essays and literature that demonstrate a firm root in the thought of Hegel – but it is a root that is entwined equally firmly with other thinkers: the ever-revolutionary and virulently anti-dogmatic Zamyatin could never be bound strictly to one prescriptive interpretation of history and society, but is instead better suited as being considered part of one tradition of thought. In many ways, Zamyatin viewed Hegel through his own heretical prism, bastardising the well-rounded interpretation of Hegel that Burns refers to as the 'Centrist' understanding, and instead focusing exclusively upon his revolutionary,

[273] Zamyatin, Y (1970) *A Soviet Heretic – Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London) p.48
[274] *Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin*, p.51

dialectical process, which itself is warped to suit Zamyatin's own reading. This obsessively select focus on *change* was married by Hegel to a number of other thinkers, each a prophet of critique and transformation. Henri Lefebvre's description of Marx is better suited to Zamyatin the heretic: 'More Hegelian than Hegel, and yet profoundly anti-Hegelian – that is how the initial approach of [his] thought may be defined.'[275] Zamyatin's interpretation insofar as he is a novelist, theorist, and political activist, is a reading of Hegel which has deeply radical political, historical, and sociological implications. It is therefore a reading which offers a critical theory of society that has strong similarities with those associated with the Hegelian-Marxist Frankfurt School and the thinkers associated with it – in particular, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Zamyatin's own use (and critique of) Hegel is very aligned with Frankfurt School thought – both in how it is deeply radical and revolutionary, whilst also deeply critical of established philosophical and social thought, trends, and accepted truths.

Zamyatin and Utopia

If one aspect linked the seemingly-disparate thinkers that inspired Zamyatin, it was their shared rebellion against the utopian thought that arguably originated with Plato, who, in the eyes of H.G. Wells, underpins all utopian visions. A critique of the philosophical underpinnings on utopian thought can be found within Wells' essay *Scepticism of the Instrument*, which contains a critique of literary utopias which rests on the observation that they are generally envisioned by their authors as being 'perfect' and therefore unimprovable – and owes a great deal to Nietzsche. As a result, they are therefore 'static': frozen in time, unable to be improved upon and no longer utopian if they were to be disturbed from the placid, immovable nature of perfection. These writers imagine a world which is not – and fundamentally *cannot be* – subject to change.[276] It is an image

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[275] Lefebvre, H (2020) *Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, or, The Realm of Shadows* (Verso: London) p.97
[276] Wells, H.G. (2006) *A Modern Utopia* (Penguin: London) p.322

(and an ideology) that its critics view as stagnant and rationalist, seeing the world in an easily-dividable manner in terms of the political and ethical, "black and white, yes and no". It is fundamentally in opposition to the Pre-Socratic, Heraclitan theory that everything is some form of change or flux at all moments. Opponents argue that it is incapable of fundamental ethical critique, for it accepts basic tenets of the universe, of society, of day-to-day life that are not necessarily true. For Zamyatin - as for Wells, Nietzsche, Heraclitus, and Dostoevsky – change is essential to life. In its absence, only an unnatural form of ossification, entropy, and death can emerge. Without thinking that enables us to experience visions outside of this, we are condemned to only be able to conceive of the banal, the one-dimensional, and the entropic. At the beginning of *A Modern Utopia*, Wells foreshadows the mathematical thought that Zamyatin would come to infuse within *We*: the consequence of such black and white thinking means that those with Platonic understandings 'do not understand how much there is that cannot be presented at all in that way,' and 'cannot count beyond two'.[277] Such a Euclidean theme is found in the work of Descartes and Dostoevsky, Arendt's *Truth and Politics*, and Orwell's *1984*. The heretical is often associated with the romantic, with the rejection of enlightened reason. Lord Byron once wrote to his future wife that 'I know that two and two make four—& should be glad to prove it, too, if I could—though I must say if, by any sort of process, I could convert 2 & 2 into five, it would give me much greater pleasure.'[278] Indeed, both of these viewpoints strongly influenced Zamyatin's thought and literature. If a Platonic view of utopia would lead to a static, 'perfect' society, then change should be paramount. If society cannot comprehend alternatives outside of accepted reason, then it requires heretics to philosophise and innovate. Zamyatin's solution to both was, once again, the Hegelian dialectic – or at least, his interpretation of it.

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[277] *Ibid.*, p.310

[278] Byron, G (1974) quoted in *Byron's Letters and Journals, Volume III: 'alas! the Love of Women, ' 1813-1814*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, (Belknap Press: London) p.159

We contains a firm parodic critique of 20ᵗʰ century time and motion studies, designed to extract every iota of human deviation from the worker, disgust at which he shares with fellow science fiction writers and the Frankfurt School alike.[279] 'Every morning, with six-wheeled precision, at the same hour and at the same moment, we – millions of us – get up as one […] And, fused into a single million-handed body, at the same second, designated by the Table, we lift our spoons to our mouths.'[280] This is not the only example of satirising Taylorism that Zamyatin shows, nor the Platonic form of utopia. In Plato's Republic, such highly-organised and communal eating and socialising, always under a watchful gaze and firm direction of the state, is recommended for the security and moral standing of the city. In *Women in the City*, Aristophanes satirises Plato's Republic when writing that 'Each court and arcade of the law shall be made / A banqueting hall for the citizens.'

In classical visions of utopia (and their parodies) extreme steps are undertaken in order to eradicate vitality and spontaneity in favour of strictly planned, synchronised communal acts of behaviour - communal yet isolating. Brett Cooke notes that one of the characteristics of dystopian regimes is that they are 'personalised' to a significant degree, typically associated with one particular personality in marked contrast to the 'relatively impersonal governance exercised in utopian visions,'[281] which exist to eradicate the self in favour of the many. The citizens are dehumanised to the point of being referred to by numbers – a tactic which doubles as reflecting the Euclidean ideal of the state's logic and thinking. Much like Marcuse, Zamyatin felt that modern society was in a desperate state, with the forces of Entropy particularly strong in the post-enlightenment age. New, unorthodox forms of dogmatic regime were organising the social, professional, and political life of the individual. Experts were instructed to monitor the most effective way of utilising the

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[279] See first chapter reference
[280] Zamyatin, *We*, p.12
[281] Cooke, B (2002) *Human Nature in Utopia: Zamyatin's We,* (Northwestern University Press: Illinois), p.43

workforce down to individual seconds, heinous actions were undertaken in the name of GDP and scientific experimentation, and the individual was being subsumed into one large, unified, one-dimensional mass.[282] For some, this was brought on by openly authoritarian regimes, for others, through pleasure-based methodology. The 'rational' scientific utopia was looming, and Zamyatin saw only Entropy and cruelty.[283]

Even the Stalin-esque figure of the Benefactor, in sharp contrast to Huxley's World Controller, is wholly reified: "I saw only His huge, cast-iron hands upon His knees. These hands seemed to weigh down even Him, bending His knees. Slowly He moved His fingers. The face was somewhere high up, in a haze, and it seemed that His voice did not thunder, did not deafen me, was like an ordinary human voice only because it came to me from such a height."[284] He is spoken of as if he were a statue, a relic imbued with power rather than a person imbued with life. The embalmed, artificially uncorrupted corpse of Lenin displayed by the Bolsheviks and the deification of the Benefactor are the antithesis of Zamyatin's idealisation of everything vital and new.

Whilst it would be easy to imagine that the philosophical debates that inform Zamyatin's thinking are confined to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in tracing the genealogy of Zamyatin's thought, Burns argues that one must understand and appreciate the disagreement between the Pre-Socratic thinkers Heraclitus and Parmenides. Readers may be most familiar with the latter through Plato's *Parmenides*, in which Socrates as a young man is depicted in conversation with the elder philosopher. In the popular imagination, Parmenides is (rightly) the presocratic philosopher of permanence and unity, contending that change is illusory and that permanence and unity run throughout all. In contrast, Heraclitus is posited as accepting that reality is made up of

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[282] See Herbert Marcuse (2006) *One Dimensional Man*, (Routledge Classics: London)
[283] Richards, *Zamyatin* p.20
[284] *We*, p.212

constant change and variation, and that the natural fluxes and changes we see around us represent not an illusory mask, but the core truth of reality. It is unto this picture that thinkers have mapped Hegel,[285] though different interpretations between Left Hegelians and Right Hegelians abound (unsurprisingly, given his many ambiguities). Some have even interpreted Hegel being closer to the thought of Parmenides and attaching no importance whatsoever to the concept of change.[286] It is much easier (and much more correct) to classify Zamyatin as a follower of Heraclitus, with his belief in change and Revolution against the forces of ossification and Entropy. But it is not necessarily that simple: for Zamyatin, universal, unrelenting change comes about through *choice* – it is not a guaranteed, natural action. The majority of mankind is unaware that this choice even exists, let alone undertaking the decision to choose it. Change is not incidental, but an action to be purposefully and intentionally undertaken – to be denied this knowledge is to cut oneself off from the opportunity to change and to ossify. Even of those who have that opportunity, few will take it and use it – a very enlightened few.

Much like Heraclitus, Zamyatin is a more sophisticated thinker than his critics sometimes present him as being. Yes, the world (ever-turning) is kept alive through the heretics – but Zamyatin is concerned that fewer and fewer heretics exist in the world (much like the post-Enlightenment thinkers, according to Adorno and Horkheimer). It is not true that Zamyatin was less concerned with metaphysical reality than he was with human behaviours: Zamyatin makes constant references to the natural world and natural science alike, as well as to the homology which exists between it and the social world, attaching great significance to the notions of 'energy' and 'entropy' which he takes from Julius von Mayer's study of thermodynamics. I believe that there is clear evidence to support the argument that he was interested in (and concerned about) both, and

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[285] *Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature*, pp.66-7
[286] See Tony Burns' *Metaphysics and politics in Aristotle and Hegel* and *The Purloined Hegel: semiology in the thought of Saussure and Derrida.*

that he thought the same principles could apply to both (or in our attempt to understand both). and this behaviour is emancipatory, but it is intentionally chosen. This form of thinking is very similar to that of the Frankfurt School. Certain thinkers present both Heraclitus and Zamyatin as reasonably clear-cut ideologies that easily map onto one another. But, as pointed out by Wheelwright, Heraclitus is a philosopher whose philosophy can be contradictory, even paradoxical, at points: he the philosophy of Heraclitus is 'too subtle, manifold, and shifting to be defined in such static terms.'[287] Is this not evocative of Zamyatin? His interpretation of Hegel may be somewhat one-dimensional, but his *use* of this interpretation stretches on infinitely.

If we can summarise Zamyatin's thought thus far, it is found in the process of *Becoming*: constant revolutionary change, induced and advanced through critique of everything static, authoritarian, or generally accepted as true. According to Heraclitus, it is change – the process and principle of Becoming – that is the only truth, the only principle of reality which matters and which we can grasp. Commentators opposed to the conservative reading of Hegel reject the fundamentally Platonic reading in favour of a contrary view that Hegel is concerned primarily – if not exclusively – with the principle of Becoming at the expense of Being.[288]

Zamyatin's Own Philosophy: Entropy and Energy

This manifesto of Becoming was to be infused with Zamyatin's own interests in scientific reasoning. His twin symbolic concepts of 'entropy' and 'energy' were first developed in his 1922 biography of Julius von Mayer, the father of modern thermodynamic theory, in which he was struck by the similarities between Mayer's thermodynamic concept of entropy ('the tendency of

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[287] Wheelwright, P (1959) *Heraclitus* (Princeton: New Jersey) p.103
[288] See G.K. Browning's *Plato and Hegel: Two Modes of Philosophizing about Politics* and M.B. Foster's *The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel*. For different interpretations of Heraclitus' flux theory, see Burns' *Hegel's Interpretation of the Philosophy of Heraclitus: Some Observations*.

the universe's energy toward rest — toward death') and his own conception of human society as reflected in *The Islanders* (1918) and *The North* (1922) which warned against the human tendency towards spiritual death and entropy. In Zamyatin's word, much as in the biblical word, to be lukewarm was to be cast aside from the Living and True. Everything 'old' was in direct opposition to everything 'new' – this 'eternal struggle' is not limited to the mere epochs of history, but of the natural world, too, which also rests on newness and radical thinking and heresy. 'Today' comes with its own ossifications – just as mankind believed himself to be at the apex of knowledge five hundred or five thousand years ago, today's man (incorrectly) believes himself to have 'mastered, determined, [or] generally recognized' everything worth mastering, determining, or recognising – his knowledge is falsely considered to be 'incontestable and infallible'. This is an incorrect way of looking at society for both Zamyatin and the Frankfurt School:

> "…this belief in their own infallibility sometimes makes the representatives of "today's" science a conservative element, retarding the never-ending movement of science forward… Even now, when science has adopted the correct view that everything which seems infallible is infallible only relatively, is infallible only today--even now traces of former reverence before dogma occasionally crop up. […] And the world lives only through its heretics, through those who reject the seemingly unshakeable and infallible today. Only the heretics discover new horizons in science, in art, in social life; only the heretics, rejecting today in the name of tomorrow, are the eternal ferment of life and ensure life's unending movement forward."

From this genesis came Zamyatin's deep and lasting interest in the concepts of Entropy, heresy, and revolution that would come to define his philosophy and literature. Zamyatin would later develop this through his essay and literature alike: it is most known as the central thesis in *We*, in which 1-330 states that 'There are two powers in the world — entropy and energy. One leads to

blissful rest, to a happy equilibrium; the other — to the destruction of equilibrium; to a tormentingly end- less movement.' In October 1923, Zamyatin drew together his scientific, political, and philosophical thinking in an essay entitled *On Literature, Revolution, Entropy, and Other Matters*, removing the distinction between human life, a Hegelian form of Spirit, and the social sciences and philosophy - which, in the words of Alex Shane, 'essentially removed the distinction between organic and inorganic chemistry.'[289] To this heady mixture, he added his socio-philosophic concept of perpetual change and revolution to the physical and biological sciences that he viewed as being desperately in need of said revolution.

'Revolution is everywhere, in everything. It is infinite. There is no final revolution, no final number. The social revolution is only one of an infinite number of numbers: the law of revolution is not a social law, but an immeasurably greater one. It is a cosmic, universal law — like the laws of the conservation of energy and of the dissipation of energy.'

Within *We*, it is the heretic 1-330 who best embodies the struggle between revolution and entropy (and the struggle against the meaningless, dull equilibrium of the two):

'There are two forces in the world---entropy and energy. One leads to blissful tranquillity, to happy equilibrium; the other leads to the destruction of that equilibrium, to an agonizingly-endless movement. Entropy--that is what our, or rather--your ancestors, the Christians, worshipped as god...'[290]

Zamyatin's I-330 – the true hero of *We* – personifies this form of Energy, representing the aliveness of what Zamyatin refers to as the Living-living in comparison to the unknowing,

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[289] Shane, A (1962) in D.J. Richards, *Zamyatin: A Soviet Heretic* (Bowes & Bowes: London) pp.xvi-xvii
[290] *We*, p.99

unthinking, uncritical masses - or the weak D-503, who glimpses the Truth and shies away from it in horror. Alex Shane illustrates how important spontaneous, living change is to Zamyatin: an individual is most 'truly alive and free' when they are acting or thinking spontaneously, 'inspired by his total unique personality, unrestrained by the demands of reason, uncoerced by imposed values and beliefs.' These moments of pure freedom represent 'an almost mystic insight into the nature of reality.'[291] Shane's reading of Zamyatin is a touch too extreme here, however – Zamyatin demonstrates a respect for (and engagement with) reason: he does not reject reason or logic entire, but the stunted, accepted wisdom of a form of reason most closely associated with 'scientism'.

Zamyatin and Morality

Zamyatin's writings are often posited as being in total opposition to utopian thought: whether represented through a static, traditional utopia, or even through the idea that society could be improved upon at all. Often interpreted as a thinker unconcerned with morality, Zamyatin's desire to mix Nietzsche with the Leftist interpretation of Hegel is obvious in his writings: 'If there were anything fixed in nature' Zamyatin wrote, 'if there were truths, all [of] this would, of course, be wrong. But fortunately, all truths are erroneous. This is the very essence of the dialectical process: today's truths become errors tomorrow; there is no final number.' The only truth, according to Zamyatin, is 'for the strong alone'. These 'strong' are not necessarily physically or intellectually superior to others, but instead consist of a radical who are still able to retain a human instinct for another potential. They stand in contrast with those who need a 'finite universe' or a 'last number', a clearly-defined universe with a clearly-defined and fixed way to understand it. In the thought of Adorno, these people have lost the concept of the negative. In the words of Nietzsche, they require 'the crutches of certainty.'[292] I-330 retains her human instinct in a world

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[291] Shane in Richards, *Zamyatin,* p.xv
[292] *Essays,* pp.110-11

which attempts to strip her of it: she requires no false, safe concept the world and how it may be understood:

> "Name me the final number, the highest, the greatest."
>
> "But that's absurd! If the number of numbers is infinite, how can there be a final number?"
>
> "Then how can you speak of a final revolution? There is no final one. Revolutions are infinite."

It is this rejection of 'the final revolution' (and the corresponding final society) which severs Zamyatin from the fullness of Hegel – at least in one reading of Hegel's views: he firmly rejects the view that it is possible (or right) for a final, perfect, unimprovable endpoint of history to exist, namely what Hegel refers to as "absolute knowledge."[293] Rather, Zamyatin casts aside the aforementioned, conservative aspects of Hegelian thought and focuses exclusively on the process rather than the end-point, much like Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. Progress can be made - but a progress which results in a fixed, static end-goal of history is no progress at all. Each scientific discovery replaces another, and is an improvement, but one to be replaced and improved upon in turn. This view is prevalent within *We*:

> "Oh, and they were right, they were a thousand times right. They made only one mistake: Afterward, they got the notion that they were the final number—something that doesn't exist in nature. Their mistake was the mistake of Galileo. He was right that the earth revolves around the sun, but he didn't know that the entire solar system revolves around yet another centre..."[294]

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[293] *Phenomenology,* pp.479-93
[294] *Essays,* p.170

Debate as to whether Zamyatin holds a morality of any kind tends to be sceptical. There is plenty of evidence to suggest not. According to Burns, Zamyatin displays clear nihilistic tendencies, fails to hold a firm political ideology, and is not committed to the pursuit of definite goals or 'ends.' Burns associates Zamyatin most closely with a form of anarchism 'identical with [the] moral nihilism'[295] of Stirner or Nietzsche - a reading I disagree with: these ideologies are concerned primarily (or, in the case of the latter, almost exclusively) with the self. In contrast, Zamyatin demonstrates a concept of change that results in a better society at large – the unshackling of the self from an ossifying society is to be extended more widely with time, to liberate a wider percentage of humanity (and society at large) from the chains of one-dimensional thinking. In this thread, Alex Shane reads Zamyatin as a form of moral humanist, in contrast with the (more prevalent) view of Zamyatin the nihilist.[296] This form of anarchism is one which Burns differentiates from the clear political ideology of anarchism, which is defined as 'a certain way of looking at the world associated with a definite conceptual vocabulary'.[297] These anarchists cannot be classed as nihilistic by virtue of having a form of morality. They have 'a vision of an ideal society, or at least of what they consider to be a better or morally superior society'. Politically speaking, therefore, they are committed to certain moral values, and they are committed to the pursuit of definite goals or "ends", a value which makes them closer to the utopian thinkers and writers than to the critical. Burns posits a third category of anarchism, which Zamyatin can, in my view, be better placed into. Anarchists of this kind reject the former two categories based upon moral grounds, rejecting both the nihilism of the former and the ethical consequentialism of the second. They therefore reject the idea that the end might justify means *and* the idea that anarchism is an ideology, rather than a way of living. These anarchists 'profess to have no political objectives, goals, or ends at all', are not concerned with the future and the possibilities that it contains, but rather

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[295] *Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature,* p.218
[296] Barratt, A (1984) 'Revolution as Collusion: The Heretic and the Slave in Zamyatin's *My'*, *The Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 62, No. 3, p.353
[297] *Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature,* p.218

the present and how it ought to be lived presently. Indeed, they claim that ethics and politics simply do not matter, but that only means do – in other words, only Becoming. They do not believe that human life has an end goal, or end state. The end does not matter, only the process of travelling. But is this view not somewhat concerned with morality, despite their protests? In the words of Burns, 'the outlook associated with this form of anarchism is a moral one: which contains "a view of human nature according to which man is by nature a "moral being" or an "ethical animal"; and it also, therefore, possesses at least some (what might be referred to as a formal rather than substantive) understanding of what sort of conduct this commitment to living an "ethical life" requires.'[298]

Like Philip Wegner and Alex Shane, I reject the idea of Zamyatin the nihilist. Wegner is of the opinion that in *We* Zamyatin's criticism is not aimed at the general concept of utopia, but instead specifically targets the 'liberal utopia.'[299] Wegner suggests that this had the aim of 'opening up the possibility of an alternative path along which a different kind of reorganization of society might be accomplished,'[300] in which utopia along liberal lines is rejected. For Wegner, *We* may not be a classical utopian work, but it is not a dystopian (in the sense of being an 'anti-utopian') either. Rather, *We* can be better understood as a 'critical dystopia'.[301] Contained within it is an implicitly superior vision of an alternative society and way of living. The critique contained within its portrayal of society is targeted at the static quality of a 'utopia' that thus reveals itself as anything but; he is not opposed to the idea that society can be better, improved upon – and he knows what a vision of that improved society and way of living would look like. This implicitly contains a moral and ethical ideal, even if that ideal is the ideal of constant change. Zamyatin may be read as holding some form of a utopian vision himself, if only implicitly coded into his philosophical yearnings

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[298] *Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature*, p.219
[299] Wegner, P (2002) *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (University of California Press: Oakland) p.196
[300] *Ibid.*
[301] See chapter two of my thesis for a lengthy discussion of different classifications of utopia and dystopia.

and ideals. For Zamyatin did have ideals, and did have ideas on how society should - and could - be improved. Zamyatin's society cannot ever reach a True and perfect Endpoint, but it does implicitly hold the key to what cannot be improved upon: constant change in the name of progress. To end this dialectic is assuredly dystopian, but to live *within* its process is utopian.

Against this reading, Burns' view is that *We* is the anti-utopian work of a morally-nihilistic anarchist who has no vision of a better, or morally superior society. Burns uses Ernst Fischer's characterisation of Wilson in his categorisation of Zamyatin the Nihilist: According to Fischer, Wilson 'calls upon his fellow-artist to refuse to commit himself to anything, to free himself from the 'curse' of all social obligations and try to dedicate himself solely to the redemption of his own existential 'I.'' In this manner, Wilson maintains, a 'new antihumanist epoch' is to be ushered in.[302] This view clearly owes much to Nietzsche, but I believe that the writings of Zamyatin resembles that of the Frankfurt School much more clearly: neither antihumanist but rather deeply concerned with life and the redemption (of sorts) for humanity against the forces of entropic reason.

For Brett Cooke, it is 'reason' which is the faculty of mind 'most closely associated with utopia […] Social utopia, if not as well the very notion of social engineering, is typically put forth of the embodiment of reason.'[303] This is too broad: I wish to distinguish between 'general' utopia and 'scientific utopianism'. From the ancient world to the enlightenment, utopian works such as *The Republic*, Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and HG Wells' *Modern Utopia* all call for extended inquiries into science and mathematics. This is not a thought that is consigned to the history books – any glance at the best seller or 'smart thinking' bookshelves in the high street will reveal a plethora of books written by public intellectuals who call for a greater focus on the rational, mathematical (by which they mean Euclidean), and scientific world, from Steven Pinker to Sam Harris and Malcolm Gladwell. Cooke notes that 'fictional utopias often strive to shape, standardise, and

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[302] Fischer, E (1970) *The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach* (Penguin: Harmondsworth) p.96
[303] *Human Nature in Utopia,* p.62

sometimes improve their physical stock, usually by means of programs that amount to eugenics.'[304]

This form of thinking is no longer distinct within literary utopias, but, in the post-Enlightenment world, increasingly seen as the ideal form realistic politics. From the advent of the neo-rationalist handwaving of eugenics measures, to the current statistics in Scandinavian countries for children born with Down Syndrome, this form of rationalised eugenics seems to becoming more prevalent within our political systems. *We* does not critique a bureaucratic society, nor an oligarchic one, but instead a world that has totally absorbed a very specific (and misguided) form reason which seems ever-more logical. Indeed, alternatives to 'reason' are rarely presented, for virtue of being, by definition, *unreasonable*. It is this form of heretical unreason that Zamyatin advocates for: the imagined alternative ways of living, the exploration of imagination, spanning across fields from the political to the mathematical, imbibing human society with *life*. Zamyatin is not opposed to reason in itself – but only the limited reason of accepted wisdom and scientism. As George Cantor writes, 'the essence of mathematics is freedom.'[305] D-503's first true exploration of non-Euclidean geometry occurs when, disturbed by I-330's transgressions, that he believes that although the lines on his two-dimensional paper are parallel, "in another world" - and drops his train of thought lest it lead to the evident conclusion: that in another world, these lines could intersect.[306]

Many commentators have made it quite clear that they view the One State as the embodiment of rationality and the Mephi as being opposed to rationality, following the premise that, as Robert Louis Jackson says, 'man is essentially an irrational being'[307] Suvin disagrees with this one-sided reading of Zamyatin the irrationalist, instead positing that Zamyatin's writing does not opposes rationality itself but the 'limited rationalism' of the One State. This reading aligns Zamyatin's attitude towards the rational in line with his concept of dialectical thought, neither wholly rejecting

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[304] *Ibid.* p.142
[305] Quoted in Kline, M (1967) *Mathematics for Liberal Arts* (Addison-Wesley: Reading, Mass) p.474
[306] *We,* p.60
[307] Jackson, R.L (1958) *Dostevskij's Underground Man in Russian Literature* (Mouton: The Hague) Hague p.151

(or embracing) one nor the other, but instead regarding reason and irrationality as a thesis and antithesis that should (and will) be synthesised together in the superior society and man.[308]

To most commentators, the change that Zamyatin values is not valued because he believes it to represent 'progress' in the sense of moral improvement or a morally superior form of society, considering the idea of societal morality to be in opposition to life. In the words of Burns, "if a utopian society is something which is morally desirable, and if a literary utopia is considered to be a work of literature which recommends such a morally desirable state of affairs to its readers, then in Zamyatin's view these things too are profoundly antilife."[309] But the act of change *itself,* to Zamyatin, is intrinsically good. Zamyatin rejects a static, perfect form of utopia. This does not necessarily mean that he rejects utopian possibilities or processes, but rather 'utopia' as this has traditionally been understood. His attitude is formulated well within one of his earlier essays, entitled *Scythians*, in the opening to which, 'a solitary, savage horseman—a Scythian—gallops across the green steppe, hair streaming in the wind. Where is he galloping? Nowhere. What for? For no reason. He gallops simply because he is a Scythian, because he has become one with his horse, because he is a centaur, and *the dearest things to him are freedom, solitude [and] the wide expanse of the steppe.*'[310] [italics my own] To Zamyatin, the Scythian's nomadic life of freedom galloping across the Central Asian steppe is of insurmountable importance.

Within this scene, the Scythian ostensibly holds no ethical or moral views or considerations. But implicit within the text is the understanding that he holds the nomadic freedom of his life – and the rejection of more traditional methods of living - to be impossible to improve upon. Towards the end of *We*, following a revolutionary uprising that occurs by the Mephi, during which I-330 seizes control of the Integral, she notes 'how wonderful it is to fly, not knowing

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[308] Suvin, D (1971) 'The Utopian Tradition of Russian Science Fiction', *Modern Language Review*, Vol. 66, No. 1, p.149
[309] *Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature,* p.227
[310] *Essays,* p. 22

where— to fly—no matter where, to fly without knowing one's destination, or even caring what that destination is.'[311] This is, according to Burns, 'a powerful metaphor for the expression of Zamyatin's […] critique of utopianism in politics'[312] but to David Bell, it represents a form of 'nomadic' utopianism.[313] For Zamyatin, even the mere 'odor' of settled existence, of 'cabbage soup,'[314] is intolerable to the Scythian. Instead, '[h]e is alive only in the wild, free gallop, only in the open steppe.' For the author, freedom – freedom from, but also freedom to – is the highest possible form of Living. To infringe upon this, or allow it to settle, to ossify, is an entropic death. There is no utopian end point of Being, but there is a utopian notion of Becoming.

And yet Zamyatin's Scythian is evidently an isolated, solitary individual. This is a vision of an ideal 'individual', but less so a vision of an ideal society. By this logic, all social duties and obligations are inimical to freedom. In this sense, Zamyatin is far closer to Habermas' category of a 'Black Writer' than Adorno and Horkheimer.

Zamyatin and the Frankfurt School

Nevertheless, a clear resemblance to this form of opposition to utopianism is found in the theory of Adorno and Horkheimer, who looked to the end of history and found only Auschwitz,[315] and ascribe instead a revolutionary, Left Hegelian dialectical form of critique. A clear comparison can be made between Zamyatin's thought and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory: both do, arguably hold moral positions and ideas of the world, despite some protestations, and these views are both in turn rooted in critique to prevent the ossification of society and the

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[311] *We,* p.200
[312] *Political Theory, Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature* p.8
[313] Bell, David (2013) *Towards a Nomadic Utopianism: Gilles Deleuze and the Good place that is No Place.* PhD thesis, University of Nottingham
[314] *Essays* p.21
[315] See both Adorno, T & Horkheimer, M (2007) , *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford University Press: Stanford,), and Adorno, T (1981) *Prisms* (MIT Press: Cambridge) p.26

resulting totalitarianism they ascribe to such ossification (or 'One-Dimensionality', in the words of Marcuse). One recent commentator sympathetic to an unorthodox, Hegelian-Marxist reading of science fiction writers is Carl Freedman, who believes that both Critical Theory and science fiction are defined by the shared qualities of 'historical mutability, material reductability, and utopian possibility.'[316] Zamyatin is perhaps one of the authors most similar to the rigorously critical notion of what Adorno calls 'negative dialectics.'[317]

Evident most openly in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and the opening essay 'Cultural Criticism and Society' in Adorno's *Prisms* is that the Frankfurt School's critique of modernity is 'an implacable self-critique […] Critical theory, to use a currently fashionable term, is unswervingly oppositional.'[318] It is this paradoxical self-and-societal critique that runs most unswervingly through their work and that of Zamyatin's. D-503 fails because his manner of critique is allowed to ossify, I-330, who is killed, is ultimately triumphant in her death, rebellious of the status quo of the state until her end. Neither Zamyatin nor Critical Theory take any less than the totality of the human spirit or social landscape for their objects and yet consider this to operate 'as a historical process, constantly in material flux'. Both conceptualise their own methodology as being 'deeply involved' in the flux rather than 'as a passive intellectual instrument by means of which an unproblematic (as-if-Cartesian) subject extracts absolute knowledge from pregiven objects' and believe that 'by dissolving the reified static categories of the ideological status quo, critical theory constantly shows that things are not what they seem to be and that things need not eternally be as they are.'[319]

Furthermore, in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that enlightenment thinking aims at *containing* all thought, and therefore prevents criticism outside of

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[316] *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* p. xvi
[317] *Negative Dialectics* p.34
[318] *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, p.8
[319] *Ibid.*

its own boundaries of thinking. The enlightenment therefore stunts immanent critique and prevents different attitudes towards, or forms of, knowledge. It includes methods of not only positivism but also empiricism; over time it focuses on only what can be directly sensed, quantifiable, systematised in Euclidean mathematical concepts.[320] The transcendent critique of classical utopianism is anathema to both Zamyatin and the Frankfurt School, but they are not wholly aligned on immanent critique, either – associated as it is with Hegelian—Marxist teleological thinking. Both, however, come startlingly similar conclusions about the cause of its prevention. So too is the solution: deep forms of dialectical critique (entwining transcendental and immanent), allowing for other, unorthodox forms of thinking, which prevent ossification and decay of sociological, cultural, historical, political, and *human* decay. As Adorno writes, "non-Euclidean geometry" and the "various logical worlds of science fiction" in which "our own universe is reduplicated at a historical level" are ways of opening up other forms of possibility.[321] Freedman and Suvin both associate science fiction in general as a genre with close structural affinities to Critical Theory, with the latter opining that the genre is defined or determined 'by the dialectic between estrangement and cognition'.[322] Suvin's use of the term 'estrangement' refers to the creation of an alternative fictional world that implicitly or explicitly performs a critical interrogation of our own. The critical character of that interrogation involves the use of 'cognition', which enables the fictional, imagined world, in the words of Freedman, 'account rationally for its imagined world and for the connections as well as the disconnections of the latter to our own empirical world'.[323] If, therefore, the dialectic is cut to mere cognition, the result is a realistic depiction which involves no estrangement. If the dialectic is cut to mere estrangement, then the result is an irrationalist imagination which bears little resemblance to reality and therefore fails to legitimately critique.[324]

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[320] *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

[321] Adorno, T (1981) *Prisms* (MIT Press: Cambridge) p.11

[322] *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* pp.7-8

[323] *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, pp.16-17

[324] *Ibid.*

It is clear that Zamyatin's ultimate value is freedom, but it is less clear as to whether that is a moral value – one can be a Stirner-ite egoist and still prioritise freedom. A moral understanding arguably entails a concern with others, rather than strictly the self. Zamyatin is concerned with changing (and improving) multiple aspects of society: he wishes to liberate not just himself but the fields of science and history, philosophy and literature, not solely because change in itself is good but because it represents a clear and distinct improvement for humanity. Zamyatin is not a nihilist: he is not ambivalent about others, but instead just practical in his outlook for their chances of personal liberation. According to Isaiah Berlin, the positive sense of the word 'liberty' derives 'from the desire on the part of the individual to be his own master'. This is an element of Zamyatin's desire – but, crucially, not the entirety of it. Zamyatin, like Nietzsche, resents and rejects that his life might be directed by external, entropic forces, but he sees them as denying life to both the individual, the intellectual status of society, and life for the masses.

Ultimately, Zamyatin's *We* is not utopian in the political-economic sense, but in the hermeneutic one.[325] Bell reads Zamyatin's writings as evoking Berardi's call to highlight 'the infinity of the present': a utopianism not driven by imagining a better future, but by creating a better present.[326] Suvin argues that 'Zamyatin thought of himself as a utopian paradoxically more revolutionary than the latter-day Bolsheviks.'[327] Richards interprets Zamyatin as a thinker whose ultimate allegiance was to Berlin's 'positive freedom, the freedom to be true to oneself, to express one's own unique personality,' which he saw as 'the highest good in individual life'.[328] I would go further: manifesting this freedom, and extending it further and further in society so that the highest percentage of humanity possible may live such a free life, unburdened from dogma and

[325] Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, pp.63-4
[326] David Bell, *Towards a Nomadic Utopianism*, p.9
[327] Suvin, *Metamorphoses,* p.256
[328] Richards, *Zamyatin,* p.18

ossification, is Zamyatin's ultimate goal. It is through the manifestation of critical art that allows the individual to attempt to fight the force of entropy, much like how every piece of genuine artwork, according to Adorno, 'exposes something which is lacking.'[329] Indeed, Zamyatin's ideal revolution was not violent,[330] but concerned with the individual's interior life so that they might go out and evangelise – or revolutionise – the world with love and freedom. This freedom currently manifests itself in individuals, but can, through a dialectical process, begin to assert itself more widely.

Within *We,* eight hundred years of mass conditioning and governmental control are not enough to rid humankind of its innate humanity. Sexuality, the seduction of the Mata Hari-esque I-330, the allure of the natural world, the atavistic hairiness of D-503's arms, the body language with which D-503 can communicate with the outsiders. Zamyatin was ultimately of the belief that mankind could never be wholly conditioned.[331] In Zamyatin's thought, this does not mean that mankind cannot be complicit in his own subjugation: more often than not, he is: external forces (whether pleasure or fear-based) would be wholly ineffective if not welcomes by the average individual's desire for security, safety, and comfort. If, over the centuries, man had freed himself: first from nature, and then from traditional authorities, he still within him held the innate urge for said security and passivity. Once hunger had controlled his life – then the Church – but the negative freedom Zamyatin diagnosed man as being controlled by had not developed into a freedom *to*, but rather stunted even the thought of positive freedom. To Zamyatin, the capacity to dream of a positive freedom was possessed by few, and the psychological torture resulting in a sublimated man with little authority to ensure conformity and structure has been psychologically onerous at best, freeing him from traditional bonds and adrift with neither freedom nor meaning. Most,

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[329] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* p.346
[330] Alex Shane, in Richards' *Zamyatin,* p.xv
[331] Richards, *Zamyatin,* p.66

according to Zamyatin, are not modern-day Zarathustras, and cannot bear to look into the abyss. Alone, adrift, and insignificant, the modern man is much more likely to slip into new, comforting bonds to assuage his fear of the terror of the unknown and allow him to slip back into comforting and comfortable lost security. All of this renders Zamyatin's form of utopia – unorthodox as it is – as a process, rather than a place.

The society present in *We* is a dystopian one, but the utopian possibility rests in the ability for even the most stringent follower of its mechanised, regimented, controlled society to begin to dream, to love, to open his mind to other possibilities. The loss of this ability is the total collapse of any possibility of a greater world. Tony Burns reads Zamyatin as a thinker who does not believe in progress, who enjoys change for change's sake and sees no resulting moral benefits from such change. But it is the process of change itself that is moral to Zamyatin, allowing individual man (and, hopefully, eventually those around him) to achieve the greatest freedom, by unshackling him from the one-dimensionalising forces of entropic thought and action. It is the process of critique, and the resulting dialectical progress, which keeps the world turning. There will be no end goal for Zamyatin, no static utopian society at the end of history, but rather continual, revolutionary, energetic change in the name of perpetual revolution. It is the change itself – the process – which is utopian in Zamyatin's thought and works. It is the ability, in the words of I-330, to 'fly without destination, without knowing where one is going' which makes life *life*. To ossify this – to prevent critique, to accept only scientific truths and wisdom through a select prism of rationalist thought, and allow it to guide the makeup of society, its laws, its governance, its ethics, is to Zamyatin, much as the Frankfurt School dystopian. Adorno sees Auschwitz as the end teleological result of rationalist wisdom. Zamyatin sees the One State. Both prescribe extraordinarily similar solutions.

Philip K. Dick and the Culture Industry

Introduction

'Am I to blame if hallucinations and visions are alive and have names and permanent residences?'

-Karl Klaus

Philip K. Dick's literary output demonstrates a thinker who is intimately concerned with the effects of commodification upon both individual man and society at large, and sensitive readings of his literary output may detect a significant level of similarity between his thought and that of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. I argue within this chapter that Dick's critique of culture bears a particular resemblance to that of the Frankfurt School (especially Adorno's concept of the 'culture industry'), that both share significant themes and traits, and that both are generally (and incorrectly) understood to be pessimistic in their outlook towards new possibilities and alternative futures. This chapter makes up the third major chapter of my thesis. Within it, I will give a broad overview of the history of consumerism (from the Old Testament to Marx), before discussing the Frankfurt School's concept of the culture industry, their relationship to Freud and his concept of the 'fatherless society', and their general reputations of intellectual superiority and pessimism. I will then introduce Philip K. Dick and his work, his similarities of critique with Adorno's 'culture industry', his critique of commodity fetishism, his work's often overlooked relationship to Freud, his understanding of the reified individual and their relation to the robotic androids, and his frequently misattributed pessimism.

Marx and Hegel on consumerism

Whilst largely unorthodox Marxists, the Frankfurt School were largely influenced by Marx's critique of commodity fetishism, developing this theory under Lukacs into his theory of 'reification' and Adorno into the 'culture industry'. The latter especially was informed by Marx's political-economic critique, Hegel's theory of the dialectic, and Freud's theory of instinct. Within this conceptual framework, Adorno attempted to account for and analyse the standardisation and homogenisation of contemporary culture, and with it, the standardisation and homogenisation of individuals. The culture industry, like Cleopatra, makes hungry where she most satisfies.

Notably, Adorno's idea of a 'consumer society' is a relatively new concept. Even Karl Marx is not a theorist of this very specific form of capitalism in this very particular phase of its historical development. Material prosperity, the levelling out of the working and middle classes, a high material standard of living, a focus on luxuries rather than basic necessities, mass advertising, hierarchy, status, and lifestyle politics are all features of this phenomenon of 'consumer society'.

Adorno managed to borrow from (and find parallels between) Hegel, Marx, and Freud in order to understand 'the production, ideology, content, and reception of cultural commodities' without ever adopting orthodox Marxist, Hegelian, or Freudian positions. Marcuse, unlike Adorno, endeavoured to integrate psychoanalysis and Hegelian-Marxism, whilst Adorno simply enjoyed the fruits of both without seeking to formally or systematically attempt to reconcile the two.[332] Adorno in fact believed that the two were incompatible under late-stage capitalism, which had 'torn apart' the individual and socio-economic order.[333] For Adorno, the task of critical theory is to understand the nature of this divorce. As Martin Jay writes, 'Adorno insisted on the ideological dangers of

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[332] Cook, D (1996) *The Culture Industry Revisited: Theodor W. Adorno on Mass Culture* (Rowman & Littlefield: Oxford) p.1

[333] Adorno, T (1967) 'Sociology and Psychology,' trans. Irving N. Wohlfarth, *New Left Review* 46, p.69

overcoming in thought what was still split in reality, the antagonism between universal and particular.'[334] Jurgen Habermas misunderstood Adorno's views on the relationship between the individual and society, arguing that the Freudo-Marxism of the early Frankfurt School theorists 'could conceptually integrate psychology and sociology only through the mechanism of internalisation.'[335] Instead , the early Frankfurt School maintained that the integration of the individual into the system was possible precisely *because* their individual psychology was already partially shaped by the capitalist system - were they not, they would be far less seduced by its logic and offers of pleasure. As Deborah Cook notes, this uneasy relationship 'has a history in the vicissitudes of socio-economic domination (through exploitation and repression) which explain why resistance has so often failed to take place'.[336] Capitalist developments have affected the individual psyche so significantly that they have regressed from individual subject 'to the state of mere social object'.[337] By convincing the masses that culture can be commodified and ingested *en masse* for individual, hedonistic gain rather than societal or individual benefit, the culture industry has tried to prevent individuals from becoming conscious of themselves as subjects.[338] The concept of an industrial enslavement of the masses via culture was prevalent and consistent within Adorno's thought. His critique of the culture industry began in 1932 with the essay *On the Social Situation of Music* and ended only with his death in 1969. The work on the culture industry would be further developed Frankfurt School thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm, and influence conservative cultural critics such as Christopher Lasch, and can be found in contemporary thinkers such as Mark Fisher. As the prevalence of the culture industry grows, so too does the relevancy of Adorno's thought – both as a diagnostic critique, and as a framework of alternative possibilities.

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[334] Jay, M (1984) *Adorno* (Fontana: London) p.87
[335] Quoted in Cook, *The Culture Industry Revisited* p.27
[336] Cook, *Culture Industry Revisited,* p.4
[337] Adorno, *Minima Moralia* p.150
[338] Adorno, T (1970) 'Society', trans. Frederic Jameson, *Salmagundi III*, no.10-11, p.152

The Culture Industry

What is the culture industry?

We must be careful not to confuse consumerism and consumer society with the idea of the 'culture industry.' These are closely related concepts, but they are not the same thing. The idea of culture as a commodity is just one aspect of the idea of a consumer society. The 'commodification' of things is expanded further and further, becoming so overwhelming that it begins to encompass the world of culture, the higher realm of the 'spiritual,' and natural material or basic human needs. As such, this supposedly 'higher' realm too becomes standardised, homogenised, subject to dull uniformity or conformity in a 'mass society.' Adorno connects this to the issue of a move from 'high culture' (which contain the arts and are enjoyed by the few) to 'low culture' (which satiates base appetites through television, cinema, the mass media, and is enjoyed by many). Thus, culture has become an industry – at all levels, it has become commodified. The distinction between 'high art' – or 'superior' forms of culture and cultural production – and 'low art' or forms of cultural production – has virtually disappeared. Secretaries of State entertain their voting public by ingesting mammal anus or testicle on television, spiritual needs are mocked on the radio, and arias soundtrack adverts for 4x4s. Advertising is a crucial vehicle for the culture industry.

According to Adorno, whilst the culture industry might claim otherwise, it has not appeared organically, nor naturally arisen as a desire from those who consume its wares. Instead, the masses suffer it as an intentional imposition from above.[339] In contrast to 20th century managerial slogans, the customer is not 'always right', is never 'king' – but instead exist as a victim, subject rather than object.[340] Such a victim is, however, complicit in their own slavery - and not

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[339] Adorno, T, (1991) *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (Routledge: London,) p.110
[340] *ibid* p.99

unknowingly. He welcomes the culture industry and its many effects - anxiety, overwork, material benefit but spiritual corruption - with open arms, 'half aware that it is trash'[341] and failing to care enough to reject it. Indeed, the ideology of the culture industry is not compatible with dignity. The culture industry does not organically create art which the working class (or even the upper class) may enjoy and benefit from - both classes and art are nullifying and amalgamating into one large, bureaucratic middle class - and the culture industry it consumes and is entranced by is wilfully projected on to it.[342] The view that the culture industry is imposed from above (and embraced half-knowingly) is a one consistent throughout Adorno's works. 'Pious' claims by the culture industry to be guided by its customers and providing them with what they explicitly desire are false, it is instead a 'veiled autocracy': the culture industry is not supplying its customers out of benevolence, does 'not so much adapt to the reactions of its customers as it counterfeits them'.[343] The culture industry manipulates and intoxicates its own victims out of their ability to oppose its control. It is explicitly geared to 'mimic regression' on a societal scale.[344] Its enchantment turns to intoxication, it leaves its customers in a stupor, yet always desperate for more: the culture industry, like Cleopatra, makes hungry where she most satisfies. To consume is to exist inside a 'synthetic daydream' - the wares of the industry are 'vehicles of refuge from everyday life.'[345] So dominating is the sphere of consumption (no longer limited to just a sphere but society entire) that, according to Adorno, 'each statement, each piece of news, each thought has been pre-formed' by the centres of its power.[346] Today, 'needs' are 'mediated and petrified by the market' which wishes to exert increasing control, and it does not allow for anything to be 'thought, written, done or made that transcends a condition which maintains its power largely through the needs of its victims.'[347]

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[341] *ibid* p.126
[342] *ibid* p.185
[343] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.213
[344] *ibid* p.214
[345] *ibid*
[346] *ibid* p.116
[347] Adorno, *Prisms* p.110

The exchange principle functions as one of two extra-psychic factors in helping to explain the subsumption of the individual into the socio-economic mass order. As Cook writes, individuals are now as 'fungible as any of the commodities they produce or purchase. Their relations both to themselves and to others now fall under the sway of the abstract identity of the exchange principle.' Adorno may have adopted Marx's analysis of the commodity form, but also followed Lukacs' extension of this analysis, which applied it to areas of social and cultural life formerly resistant to capitalist modes of production in which 'abstract labour' is sold as a commodity. In other words, individual people now measure their worth not in achievements, utility, or relationship to God, as they might have done in the near-recent past, but instead in terms of the commodities they buy and the role they play within the bureaucratic and technocratic system - both of which have fundamentally affected interpersonal relations and the concept of the self. Customers now exist as 'economic subjects' who no longer 'relate to one another at all immediately' but frequently at the 'dictates of the exchange-value.'[348] Humans themselves (and their resulting relationships) become increasingly alienated and reified as individuals are stripped of their humanity and reduced to being 'agents and bearers of exchange values.'[349] One of Adorno's bleakest passages comes from his rumination on the Lukascian idea of the effects of reification:

'Only when the process that begins with the metamorphosis of labour-power into a commodity has permeated men through and through and objectified each of their impulses as formally commensurable variations of the exchange relationship, is it possible for life to reproduce itself under the prevailing relations of production. Its consummate organisation demands the coordination of people that are dead.'[350]

[348] Adorno, *Sociology and Psychology* p.74
[349] Adorno, *Society*, p.148-9
[350] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.229

Where Adorno would speak of 'death', Debord would say 'asleep' - but their meanings are the same. To be 'dead' is to be 'without life'. For these men, human beings locked into the social relations of contemporary capitalist society are fundamentally 'lifeless'. They are regarded as and treated by others – and even think of themselves – as passive objects, rather than as active subjects. Orlando Patterson's theory of 'social death' is relevant here. Despite the non-literal enslavement of the subjects, they exist as 'the living who are dead.'[351]

Those imbibing the pseudo-culture are made to feel as if they are the chosen few, the elect, receiving a great gift and benefit whilst (actually) manipulated and imposed upon. The pseudo-cultured person 'counts himself among the saved; among the damned is everything which might call his reign - and everything connected with it - into question.'[352] The consumer derives from the culture industry the mistaken feeling of being part of an in-group *determining* culture rather than having it *imposed* upon them.

The 'aesthetic dimension' of the Frankfurt School is important here: Adorno believes that the individual should be able to freely and creatively express their own individual imagination in relation to a certain subject matter, with the intention to create – not a commodity to be bought and sold – but a work of beauty, something created for its own sake, the artistic value of which cannot (and should not) be expressed in monetary terms. Similarly, Dick is interested in the issue of what makes an individual artefact 'individual' or 'authentic' rather than a mass-produced object – this theme permeates *Do Androids Dream?* And *The Man in the High Castle*. Adorno and Dick are both interested in the notion of standardisation, homogeneity, and machine-produced goods instead of artefacts crafted by talented tradesmen. Both believe the producer of 'high' art and culture to be a unique, creative individual – both da Vinci and his Mona Lisa are, in their own

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[351] Patterson, O (2018) *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* Harvard University Press: Boston
[352] Adorno, T (1993) 'Theory of Pseudo-Culture', trans. Deborah Cook *Telos* 95 p.35

ways, masterpieces. That someone could mass produce prints of this work does not make them (or the replica print) similarly brilliant: the former represents the peak of the creative individual, the latter the trough of 'low' cultural artefacts that the market is all too happy to supply.

Adorno's discussion of a widespread, dominating commodified culture may have been rooted in Marx's analysis of the commodity form, but was developed much further than Marx when he maintained that the commodity form had warped and perverted society to a realm that far exceeded economics alone. According to Marx, the commodity is an 'external object,' and one that 'satisfies human needs of whatever kind.' But it makes no difference whether these needs come from the stomach or imagination, and 'nor does it matter how the thing satisfies man's need, whether directly as a means of subsistence, i.e. an object of consumption, or indirectly as a means of production.'[353] Objects have an appropriate use-value when they satisfy human needs that are either innate or come about through the product of human labour. When, as a commodity, its value lies in exchange, it 'changes into a thing that transcends sensuousness.'[354] A footnote of Marx's *Critique of the Political Economy* remarked that Aristotle had criticised exchange-value as an improper and secondary use of objects.[355] In contrast to Marx, the early Frankfurt School claimed that this secondary value had come to supersede the object's 'proper and primary' use-value. Cultural goods are now 'governed [...] by the principle of their realisation as value.' It is the cultural sphere which has suffered most egregiously in the last half-century: the 'profit motive' is transferred 'naked on to cultural forms.'[356] The culture industry is quite open about the fact that its commodities are often produced with the struct and sole aim of making a profit, and that the success of the product hinges almost entirely on the profit it produces. In 1959, Adorno reiterated

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[353] Marx, K (1992) *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* trans. Ben Fowkes (Penguin Classics: London) p.28
[354] *ibid.*
[355] Marx, K (1970) *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S.W. Ryazanskaya (International Publishers: New York) p.27n
[356] Adorno, T (1975) 'Culture Industry Reconsidered,' trans. Anson G. Rabinbach, *New German Critique* 6 p.13

that 'the venerable profit motives of culture have overgrown the whole culture like a fungus.'[357] Marx had maintained that commodities were obliged to 'stand the test as use-values before they can be realised as values.'[358] He failed to appreciate that the value of cultural goods would come to be determined primarily by their exchange-values. For Adorno, 'pure use-value, whose illusion the cultural goods must preserve in completely capitalist society, must be replaced by pure exchange-value, which precisely in its capacity as exchange-value deceptively takes over the function of use-value.'[359] This has an intoxicating effect on the act of consuming. As Adorno writes: 'The woman who has money with which to buy is intoxicated by the act of buying [...] the auto religion makes all men brothers in the sacramental moments with the words: 'That is a Rolls Royce'.'[360] Indeed, consumers derive an almost erotic form of enjoyment from exchange-value. Wolfgang Haug provides some expansion on this in his discussion of the role of branding in consumption: the consumer may be 'less interested in the actual use to be derived from a product's physical properties' than they are entranced with its non-physical qualities, a name or branding connotes 'all the aesthetic, visual, and verbal communications contained in the styling of a commodity.'[361] A label which a consumer buys 'serves as advertisement for both the consumer's income level and his or her 'discerning' sense of what is in fashion and what is not', according to Cook. It is not intended to be used purely for its functional purpose, but instead to 'signal the consumer's social, economic, and cultural status.'[362] So intoxicating are labels and branding that multiple clothing retailers will style and brand their clothing in order to emulate the branding of the higher-placed fashion house. High Street monolith River Island sells clothing to the masses through creating disposable clothing that contributes to the short-lived life cycle of fast fashion, but it also sells

[357] Adorno, *Pseudo-Culture*, p.28

[358] Marx, *Capital* p.179

[359] Adorno, T (1978) 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening' trans. Maurice Goldbloom. *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, pp.270-99 Edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. (Urizen Books: New York) p.279

[360] *ibid.*

[361] Haug, W.F. (1986) *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society*, trans. Robert Bock, (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis) p.25

[362] Cook, *Culture Industry Revisited* p.30

clothing to the masses precisely because, with their lettering, logos, and tweed, they emulate the Chanel style of jackets and bags too expensive for the average consumer to imbibe, but made more intoxicating for being so unattainable. It is no longer good enough to have 'enough' - it is not even good enough to be wealthy enough to afford surplus. Signalling the discerning eye and social status of the consumer:

The consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the Toscanini concert. He has literally 'made' the success which he reifies and accepts as an objective criterion, without recognising himself in it. But he has not 'made' it by liking the concert, but rather by buying the ticket.[363]

Adorno reiterated this idea when he wrote that 'culture is redacted to the identifying marks of social immanence and integration; it becomes something exchangeable, something usable.'[364] Although he approaches it from a postmodern, rather than Marxist standpoint, Jean Baudrillard is a fellow proponent of the domination of exchange-value above use as indications of high social status:

The apparent passivity of long hours of viewing [...] prefers [...] to present itself as pleasure, interest, "free" distraction, spontaneous choice. But this alleged pleasure is a challenge to the profound charge of cultural inferiority which dauntless will never be formulated (or only secretly in ritual recriminations: 'They bore us with their stuff!' or 'It's always the same!' - simulacra revealing by default superior cultural processes: judgement, selection, etc.')[365]

[363] Adorno, *On the Fetish Character*, pp.278-9

[364] Adorno, *Pseudo-Culture*, p.33

[365] Baudrillard, J (1972) *Pour une Critique de l'Economie politique du Signe* Gallimard:Paris trans. Deborah Cook p.47
Further reading on commodities indicating social ranking can be found within Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge)

Although the phrase 'culture industry' itself is singular, it is not intended to imply that all sectors of cultural production share the same processes of production. Instead, it refers to 'the standardisation of the thing itself'.[366] This is discussed at length by Adorno and Horkheimer within their *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* as noted and assembled by Bill Ryan: 'Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part'; 'Under monopoly all mass culture is identical…'; 'the achievement of standardisation and mass production…'; 'the ruthless unity in the culture industry…' etc.[367] Pseudo-individuality is rife – a simulation of individuality in an increasingly standardised world: Adorno dismisses the Hollywood starlet 'whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality.'[368] Products of a reified culture reveal a 'predominance of effect, the obvious touch, and the technical detail over the work itself.'[369] The Frankfurt School knew that Kant had expected individuals to perform the task of relating concepts to objects, but that the culture industry instead took control of the schematising for their consumers.[370] Increasingly formulaic methods of production produced no great works of literature or beautiful films, but bestsellers and blockbusters.[371] Whilst bourgeois society at one point had developed the individual through its technology (even, at times, in opposition to 'the will of its leaders'), 'every advance in individuation [...] took place at the expense of the individuality in whose name it occurred.'[372] The secret mechanism in the soul that Kant argued would prepare direct intuitions 'in such a way that they could be fitted into the system of pure reason' had been discovered: as a result there is no longer anything left for the consumer to classify.[373]

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[366] Cook, *Culture Industry Revisited*, p.41

[367] Ryan, B (1992) *Making Capital from Culture: The Corporate Form of Capitalist Cultural Production* (De Gruyter: New York, 1992) pp.145-6

[368] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.154

[369] *ibid* p.125

[370] *ibid* p.130

[371] *ibid*

[372] *ibid* p.155

[373] *Ibid* pp.124-5

Commodity fetishism is a perversion of the object, but also a perversion (or negation) of the subject. The subject, to Adorno, is active, acting and creating freely, in control of their own destiny. In contrast, the culture industry's pervasive impact on the individual psyche is scarring and distorting, a lobotomy of sorts, an intangible wound that does not reveal pain but instead numbs and agitates – creating a world of 'objects'. The reanimation of superego introjects to both 'solicit and repress the instincts' in the pursuit of encouraging them to align and conform to the goals of interests of the socio-economic order - by this metric, in Adorno's view, the culture industry is comparable to the Nazis.[374]

It is important to note that Adorno's use and interpretation of Freud was fundamentally heuristic and critical. Indeed, Adorno was sceptical to the point of mockery on occasion - in *Minima Moralia*, he wrote the tongue-in-cheek aphorism 'in psychoanalysis, nothing is true except the exaggerations.'[375] Adorno appreciated Freudian theory's ability to explain certain societal phenomena such as the means of control utilised by the culture industry (and its resulting effects upon society and individual/collective consciousness), but used the same criticism against it that has consistently been used against him: that of overgeneralisation.[376] Adorno was notably sanguine about his own tendency towards over-generalisation: but considered both theories to have found empirical confirmation all too often.[377] By the mid-twentieth century, narcissism was becoming an increasingly-recognised social disorder, 'to our time as hysteria was to Freud's,' according to Hienz Kohut: 'Just as the investigation of the hysteric led Freud to a critique of the sexual repressiveness of Victorian society, so the study of narcissism leads to the pathogenic core of ours.'[378]

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[374] Cook, *Culture Industry Revisited* p.2
[375] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.49
[376] Cook, *Culture Industry Revisited* p.23
[377] *ibid.*
[378] Whitebook, J (1985) 'Reason and Happiness: Some Psychoanalytic Themes in Critical Theory' *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard Bernstein (The MIT Press; Cambridge) p.151

The Fatherless Society

The Frankfurt School's views on how economic factors shaped individual psychology was represented in their thesis of the fatherless society. In the zenith of bourgeois society, paternalistic and classically liberal, it was the father (of both the house of society at large - use Hobbes' quote in Wollstonecraft slides) who influenced and dominated his children. The values, norms, languages and views that his children imbibed from him and internalised themselves reflected his individual socio-economic interests, determined by corporations and the state. As dominant economic powers changed and monopolised, increasingly collaborating with the state, the bourgeois father of classical liberalism was displaced and undermined. As Russell Jacoby writes, 'the individual of 'classic' psychoanalysis managed to eke an existence out of the relatively underdeveloped market [...] with the centralization and synchronisation of the market, the individual lost its relatively independent and private sources of sustenance.'[379] Some have accused Adorno of a misty-eyed sentimentalism towards vintage paternalism, but Adorno is descriptive rather than prescriptive - the absence of such former methods of control and manipulation have instead ushered in domination through newer, more total conduits. As Adorno and Horkheimer noted in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 'when the big industrial interests incessantly eliminate the economic basis for moral decision' by subsuming and eradicating the individual subject, 'reflective thought must also die out'. The absence of responsibility by the individual father is 'replaced by his contribution to the apparatus' leaving 'no object left for the conscience.'[380] According to Adorno and Horkheimer, old moral assumptions therefore remain, though the logic (and impetus) for maintaining them does not.

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[379] Jacoby, R (1975) *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing* (Boston: Beacon Press) p.38
[380] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.198

The new developments in capital have also eradicated the traditional class structure that such a system propagated. Adorno argues in his 1942 essay *Reflexionen zur Klassen-theorie* that there is no longer a clear divide between bourgeois and proletariat: rather, a new ruling elite (combining the interests of business monopolies with the interests of the state) ensure that the once-obvious ruling class of royalty and titans have since 'disappeared behind the concentration of capital'. This monopoly capital has since become an 'institution; which subsumes the individual by abstracting from its distinctive qualities'.[381] The reification which results from this domination of monopolising control of both economy and state has made class relations more opaque and muddied, hard to distinguish, a growing middle class of both exploited and intoxicated. Indeed, one of the most significant changes to Marx's analysis of class according to the early Frankfurt School is that the exploited can no longer 'experience themselves as a class'.[382] Neither bourgeoisie nor proletariat are distinct and therefore in clear opposition to one another, both have been amalgamated into an amorphous mass of former individuals dominated by an obscene mixture of capital and political organisation. Indeed, it is this new 'abstract' character of contemporary domination which indicates the transition from the earlier stages of capitalism described by Marx and Engels to what we might call late-stage capitalist society.[383]

The loss of traditional forms of domination has resulted in the loss of a certain (and necessary) form of rebellion. The moral, economic, and familial power that the father once wielded inspired some form of rebellion from their flock - in the words of Deborah Cook, parents were figures 'who were both emulated and resisted'.[384] By contrast, in late-stage capitalist society, his children neither absorb his morals and standards nor feel the need to rebel against them. For

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[381] Adorno, T 'Reflexionen zur Klassentheorie' *Soziologische Schriften I*, pp.373-91 trans. Deborah Cook *Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag* p.380

[382] *Ibid.* p.377

[383] Adorno, T (1987) 'Late Capitalism or Industrial Society,' trans. Fred van Gelder, *Modern German Sociology* eds. V. Meja, D. Misgeld, and N. Stehr, (Columbia University Press: New York) pp.232-47

[384] Cook, *Culture Industry Revisited* p.7

Adorno, the 'forces of opposition' have therefore ceased to exist.[385] Such a decline in rebellion can be dangerous - Adorno attributes the rise of Nazism to the paralysis in an oppositional force resulting from economic changes of capitalist society.

For the Frankfurt School and Philip K. Dick alike (as we shall shortly explore), enlightenment philosophy may have made man more logical, but it is a false, misleading form of logic. The necessary logic - critical and rational thought - has been undermined on a mass scale by the culture industry, which seeks to implement irrational drives and desires, and creates a 'regression to illogical judgement' as 'stereotypes replace individual categories.'[386] The absence of the father's traditional role in society allows this to foster much more efficiently than if he existed as an individual, the home existing as a barrier of sorts between child and norms of society en masse. Christopher Lasch noted in his *Haven in a Heartless World* that, for critical theorists, the 'sanctity of the home is a sham in a world dominated by giant corporations and the apparatus of mass production.'[387] The combination of the loss of fatherly authority within the household and the economic changes in society resulting in near-universal reification prepared the way for both Nazi Germany and the culture industry alike. The idea that the superego and id play a larger role in the psyche of an individual who had been warped by capitalistic exploitation was of great influence to Christopher Lasch. Within *The Culture of Narcissism*, he argued rearing a child had become the role of 'surrogate parents responsible not to the family but to the state, to private industry, or to their own codes of professional ethics' - these surrogate parents were made up of 'the advertising industry, the mass media, the health and welfare services, and other agencies of mass tuition'.[388] Adorno believed Freud to have predicted this turn in his 1921 essay *Group Psychology and the Analysis of Ego*: 'according to Freud,' Adorno wrote, 'the problem of mass

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[385] Adorno, *Minima Moralia* p.23
[386] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic* p.201
[387] Lasch, C (1979) *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectations* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York) p.xxiii
[388] *ibid.* pp.267-68

psychology is closely related to the new type of psychological affliction so characteristic of the era which for socio-economic reasons witnesses the decline of the individual and his subsequent weakness.' [389] The 'new type of psychological affliction' was narcissism. Despite Cook's best efforts, Adorno had an undeniable influence on cultural conservative theorists. Whilst Lasch thought that the moral codes of these socialisation agencies do not necessarily mean their moral codes serve as introjects in the superego, the early Frankfurt School believed that fascist leaders and conglomerates instead reanimated the image of the lost paternalistic leader/father, their values and norms thus imbibed within the superego.[390] Whilst Lasch yearned for the return of the father, the early Frankfurt School were largely happy at his loss - but simply not at his replacement.[391]

The Frankfurt School's Reputation

Intellectual superiority

Critics have accused the early Frankfurt School (and Adorno in particular) of adopting either a conservative or snobbish attitude toward the working class. Adorno harboured a notable elitist streak, often misrepresented or over-emphasised. Salvador Giner's *Mass Society*, for example, accused Adorno (and critical theory in general) of utilising the term 'mass' as a scathing epithet for the 'lower' class,[392] characterised by its appetite for the more vulgar and allegedly more 'common' aspects of the culture industry. Indeed, multiple commentators have argued that Adorno's view of high and low culture reveals a barely-hidden sense of superiority – whilst *they* were able to appreciate the former, most were only able to enjoy the latter. Giner writes that, rather than being

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[389] Adorno, T (1978) 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening' trans. Maurice Goldbloom. *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, Edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. (Urizen Books: New York) p.120
[390] Adorno and Horkheimer, *DofE*, p.198
[391] Adorno, *Minima Moralia* p.22
[392] Giner, S (1976) *Mass Society* (Martin Robertson & Company: London) p.143

a supposed 'intellectual left', critical theorists in fact succumb to an aristocratic and elitist view of culture, with an 'immense' and 'often unrecognised debt' to conservative popular culture from Arnold to Eliot.[393] Such a view is misguided. Adorno is clear from early writings (and consistent thereafter) that those he labels 'the masses' include both workers and the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, whilst the masses are an amalgamation of both exploited and exploitative classes, it is not a homogenous group and the label does not replace a Marxist notion of class, but expands upon it as it evolves under the more fully developed late-capitalist system. Indeed, just as economic exploitation continues, so too does class. Within *Society*, Adorno wrote that 'the difference between the classes grows objectively with the increasing concentration of capital'.[394] As Cook notes, Adorno's mass society 'is the historical outgrowth and continuation of class society.' Within this new evolutionary stage of class, the exploitation and domination by 'abstract' politico-economic-bureaucratic forces have become 'far more ubiquitous than they were in Marx's time.'[395] Adorno's diagnosis of the exploited mass class is not scathing but mournful; there are now so few left immune from the overwhelming domination of the culture industry that mankind has been sold (and welcomed) a 'pseudo-culture' that is, in Adorno's words, 'spirit overcome by fetishism of commodities.'[396]

Pessimism

Adorno's legendary pessimism – at human agency under late stage capitalism, the emancipatory potential of the working class, the political slide to fascism, the reduction of 'high' culture - is also greatly overstated and misrepresented by commentators. Habermas characterised Adorno and Horkheimer as 'Black Writers' of the enlightenment, believing that they could not escape

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[393] *ibid* p.250
[394] Adorno, *Society* p.150
[395] Cook, *Culture Industry Revisited*, p.12-3
[396] Adorno, *Pseudo-Culture,* p.28

nihilism.[397] In *Prisms*, Adorno wrote that one day 'it will be readily apparent that men do not need the trash provided them by the culture industry or the miserable high-quality goods proffered by the more substantial industries [...] once scarcity has disappeared, the relationship of need to satisfaction will change.'[398]

Whilst Marcuse shared Lukacs' view that increased reification would serve as a precondition for revolution, the contradictions within the system becoming so untenable so as to promote revolutionary praxis, Adorno did not. The proletariat (or, at least, what is left of them under this shadowy new blending of the classes) would be unable to penetrate what Cook calls the 'reality of dominion', and what Lefebvre called 'the realm of shadows', offering little hope of radical change. Such a viewpoint is why Adorno and Horkheimer are generally considered so much more pessimistic than their later counterparts. For the early Frankfurt School, amalgamous mass society was the latest iteration of Marx's class-based society of early capitalism. With late-stage capitalism, 'the division of society into exploiters and exploited not only continues to exist but gains in force and strength.'[399] The exploited class, however, is now made up both of those once counted as bourgeoisie and proletariat: the new politico-economic-bureaucratic elite 'oppresses both those who support it and the worker with the same police threat, imposes on them the same function and the same need, and thus makes it virtually impossible for workers to see through the class relation.'[400]

Most commentators find Adorno to be one of the most pessimistic of critical theorists, a notoriously pessimistic field. In support of this, there is a consensus that Adorno believes the ability to resist the culture industry (and the totalising effects of late-stage capitalism) has been

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[397] Habermas, J (1990) The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (MIT Press: Cambridge)
[398] Theodor Adorno (1983) *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber (MIT Press: Cambridge) p.110
[399] Adorno, *Klassen-theorie*, p.377
[400] *ibid* p.380

entirely eroded. Joe Whitebrook has argued that Adorno's use of Freud's thoughts on id psychology allowed him to 'demonstrate the depth of psychological consequences of social oppression in a way that was unique in Marxism,' it also prevented him 'from conceiving the condition of the possibility of a free society.'[401] Whilst Whitebook over-emphasises Adorno's belief in the potential of overthrowing the mass culture, Adorno is certainly more sceptical than his later counterparts (in particular, Marcuse) of the chances of an 'eschatological rupture' occurring that would allow a break from the prevailing modes of repression and exploitation.[402] At times, Adorno is startlingly hopeful. From his earliest essays, Adorno argued that the culture industry would cease to wield power (and therefore diminish to the point of no longer existing) in a society which satisfied true needs – and did not stoke false ones. A more rational, robust, and un-alienated individual in full possession of true human instincts would not seek, desire, or need the false commodities the culture industry can impart on weaker groups. If 'production were forthwith unconditionally and unrestrainedly reorganised of the satisfaction of needs - even and especially for those needs produced by capitalism - needs themselves would be transformed decisively.'[403] Should the true drives of the individual be brought to the foreground and provided for, a radically different social order would emerge from the economic. It is the individual who matters, who holds the spark of resistive force, who may, in the words of Cook, reveal 'the fundamental antagonisms between ungratified drives and the socio-economic order of late capitalism'.[404] Adorno's economic theory is focused around the emancipatory - and Adorno believed that despite the totalising effects, psychologically-robust individuals can and do live and exist under late-stage capitalism - warped and moulded to varying degrees, but still intrinsically essentially human and un-alienated in comparison to their fellow men. These individuals hold the potential to conceive

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[401] Whitebook, *Reason and Happiness,* p.144

[402] Jay, (1996) *The Dialectical Imagination* (University of California Press: California) p.107

[403] Adorno, *Prisms* p.80

[404] Cook, *Culture Industry Revisited*, p.26

of a radically different economic order (and therefore a radically different form of social relations).[405]

Axel Honneth has criticised some of the early Frankfurt School thinkers - most notably Adorno - for portraying the consumer within the culture industry as a 'helpless victim of an all-pervasive media reality.'[406] Adorno thought that there could be some instinctual resistance to the culture industry, but did not limit resistance to the merely instinctual. Adorno believed that individuals could become consciously aware of the methods and effects of the culture industry, the preconditions for which already exist. Because the ideology of the culture industry is incredibly weak, the hold it exacts on its consumers, whilst near-total, can be shaken. Adorno was strongly critical of the idea that individuals living under late-stage capitalism were blind, malleable objects with no real method of resistance to an indefeasible system.[407] Indeed, Axel Honneth notes (whilst considering it 'unusually strange') that Adorno concedes 'the possibility that the messages [of the culture industry] could simply reverberate against the walls of an everyday world sceptical toward the pseudo-reality of the media.'[408]

Whilst the power that the culture industry exerts over its consumers should not be underestimated, it should not be overestimated, either: it does not succeed completely in controlling the consciousness of those under its thrall. Adorno is notorious for his pessimism, a flawed interpretation of his excessive pessimism has been incredibly influential upon the general and academic understanding of him as a man and thinker, and has led commentators such as Honneth to overlook the multiple instances in which Adorno writes enthusiastically that those under the culture industry are not necessarily helpless pawns, subject to its every whim and total

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[405] *ibid.*

[406] Honneth, A (1991) *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory* trans. Kenneth Barnes (The MIT Press: Cambridge) p.78

[407] Cook, *Culture Industry Revisited*, p.67

[408] Honneth, *Critique of Power* p.80

domination. Adorno and Horkheimer note that even the average viewer can see through the lures of advertising: 'the triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.'[409] There are 'symptoms of a doubled consciousness'[410] that can float naturally (or be forced) to the foreground: 'what the culture industry presents people with in their free time [...] is indeed consumed and accepted, but with a kind of reservation…'[411] This idea of a 'doubled consciousness' finds a sympathetic thinker in Jean Baudrillard, who contends that belief in the culture industry is similar to belief in myth: 'one believes in them and one does not believe in them.' It is a belief that is 'always enigmatic.' [412]

Whilst necessarily correcting some generally-accepted myths, Cook's insistence of Adorno as a borderline optimistic thinker is *too* generous. Adorno argues that the 'more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own.' He expresses fear that reification 'is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely.'[413] Cook fails to consider the possibility that Adorno could both think that humans retain subversive potential currently, but that in the future they may well not? As the individual mind is more and more absorbed by the domination of the culture industry, humans may well slowly and subtly lose their ability to rebel, lose even their half-understanding that what they desire is false, lose all contradictions and antagonisms between themselves and the society in which they live, ending up in a state of perfect domination.

Whilst there exists a potential for man to remove himself from the dominating sphere of consumption before it reifies society completely in both Adorno, Fromm, and Marcuse's works,

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[409] Adorno and Horkheimer, *DofE,* p.167

[410] Adorno, T (1991) 'Free Time,' trans. Gordon Finlayson and Nicholas Walker, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* ed. J.M. Bernstein (Routledge: London) p.169

[411] *ibid* p.170

[412] Baudrillard, J (1994) *Simulacra and Simulation* trans. Sheila Faria, (Glaser University of Michigan Press: New York) p.124

[413] Adorno, *Prisms* p.34

there are those too far gone. 'The totally reified man,' Adorno writes, 'is one who has been blinded to himself.'[414] The passivity and lifelessness that the Frankfurt School witness in modernity is brought out in Adorno and Horkheimer's discussion of *The Odyssey* in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. For Adorno and Horkheimer, much like Odysseus and his crew, humanity drifting and has lost its way, its sense of direction, its control of its own destiny. It is now in the malevolent grip of forces which reduce it to mere passivity and inactivity. Most will be unable to break free.

5. Philip K. Dick

Thus far we have looked at the history of consumerism, the Frankfurt School's concept of the culture industry and their relationship to Freud, alongside their alleged snobbishness and pessimism. We will now turn to one of the greatest and most popular of Science Fiction writers, a hazily non-Marxist (at times, even anti-Marxist) writer, who nonetheless, shares a startlingly similar critique of consumerism to the FS. Istvan Csicsery-Roney Jr believed that the subculture of SF was unalienated, was 'authentic', and 'uncorrupted by the refined techniques of consciousness-manipulation with which the cultural spheres of late capitalism and communism had become identified.'[415] No-one represented this better than Philip K. Dick.

The literature on Philip K. Dick can be divided into three broad strands. The first is one that has been described as a period of 'beatification' that existed roughly between the years of 1975 and 1988. As his reputation in the later years of his life rose with his readership, discussion (and idealisation) of Dick reached a fevered tempo. Philip K. Dick would live eventually to see himself absorbed into the culture industry. That the popularity of the *Blade Runner* movie has overtaken

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[414] *Ibid.* p.113

[415] Csicsery-Ronay jr. I (1992) 'Pilgrims in Pandemonium: Philip K. Dick and the Critics' in *On Philip K. Dick: 40 Articles from Science-Fiction Studies* eds. Mullen, R.D., Csicsery-Ronay jr. I, Evans, A.E and Hollinger, V (Terre Haute: Indiana) p.vi

that of the book it was based on, that it deviates from the text so thoroughly, and that even the title is more recognisable, means that the image has overtaken the reality in the minds of the masses. Csicsert-Romay jr has credited these developments as creating a 'hyper-Dick', changing him from a writer and thinker into a 'phenomenon' to be consumed himself.[416] Dick not only lived to see himself absorbed into the culture industry, but also saw himself succumb to another aspect of Marxist cultural critique: that of paranoia: A notable crisis within PKD scholarship occurred in the 1991 edition of *Science Fiction Studies*, which had published an account of Dick's denunciation of contemporary science fiction writers and theorists (most notably Peter Fitting, Frederic Jameson, and Stanislaw Lem) to the FBI.[417] Darko Suvin once wrote that PKD's work had been 'intimately influenced' by the 'greatest processes of the American collective [...] psychology in these last 20 years.'[418] That Dick was acutely aware, responding to, and writing in the face of collective social neuroses and the erosion of the individual is obvious. But it went further: Dick as an individual struggled with significant mental health crises and neuroses. Dick serves as both an individual example of the excesses of an alienating force upon society and also as a diagnosis of such upon society itself. Indeed, PKD would frequently insert himself within his text as a character (such as Horselover Fat in *VALIS*), simultaneously self-hating and aggrandising. [419]

Like the early Frankfurt School, Dick was also preoccupied by an interest in a turn to fascism that he saw apparent in mid-late century America. The burgeoning capitalist expansion, monopolisation of culture, and sublimation of the individual was evocative of 1930s Germany, affecting what Suvin calls both social classes of 'big speculators and small shopkeepers'.[420] In *The Man in the High Castle*, German fascism is replaced with that of contemporary America. Dick's work

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[416] *ibid* p.xv
[417] Philmus, R. M (1991) 'The Two Faces of Philip K. Dick' *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 91-103
[418] Suvin, D (1975) 'The Opus: Artifice as Refuge and World View' *Science Fiction Studies*, 2 p.112
[419] Paul Sammon's *The making of Blade Runner* quotes Dick as claiming to have been offered 400k to suppress the novel and allow it to be replaced by the screenplay of the film, but Dick's biographers tend to cast doubt upon some of his wilder, later claims. Dick was a pathological liar, and the claim is widely disputed.
[420] Suvin, *The Opus* p.114

held a blatant disgust at aggression - which is primarily associated with authority and commercialism.[421] Totalitarian rulers in the Dick canon *can* be distinct from capitalistic conglomerate rulers, but the two are often entwined. Within Dick's work, we find both the authoritarianism of *The Man in the High Castle* and the consumption of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* lead to the respective destruction of history and planetary reality itself. If, for the Frankfurt School, technological progress within late-stage capitalism had led to Auschwitz, for Dick they had produced the atomic bomb.[422]

Dick and the Culture Industry

But if there was one area of interest that Dick most resembled the Frankfurt School, it was in his attitude to the burgeoning transformation of consumerism into the culture industry. Carlo Pagetti believes Dick's model for his universe (and the focus of his critique) is 20th century America, with its scientific models, and manipulation of mass information centres controlled by a bureaucratic authority. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* the post-apocalyptic, mechanised society alienates its inhabitants to the extent to which they can be confused with actual simulacra.[423] Darko Suvin notes that the interplanetary industrial baron in *Three Stigmata* who peddles false solutions to artificial needs to 'enslave the masses' represents three signs of 'demonic artificiality': prosthetic eyeballs, hands, and teeth him to 'understand', 'manipulate', and 'ingest' his victims - he is travelling towards a goal of 'universal market domination', and has been rendered inhuman in his quest - 'a miraculous organiser of production wasted through absence of rational distribution who turned Alien on a power trip'.[424] Palmer Eldritch has superseded religion in the eyes of the

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[421] *Ibid.*

[422] Warrick, P.S (1980) 'The Encounter of Taoism and Fascism in The Man in the High Castle' *Science Fiction Studies 21*, Vol. 7, No. 2, p.190

[423] Pagetti, C (1975) 'Dick and Meta-SF' *Science Fiction Studies* 5

[424] Suvin, *Opus* p.112

people. If John Lennon once indicated that the Beatles were the first aspect of the culture industry to displace God, ("we're bigger than Jesus") Palmer Eldritch's super (or supra)-conglomerative hold on the masses can *tangibly deliver more.* 'GOD PROMISES ETERNAL LIFE,' he states. 'WE CAN DELIVER IT.' Rather than delivering any kind of freedom or redemption, however, it delivers a falsehood, 'activating the bestial or alien inhumanity within man.'[425] The eldritch force is so dominating that it quite literally falsifies reality, forcing characters to confront their own reality perceptions: when he is eventually literally absorbed *inside* other characters, the conflict is shifted 'into their psyches.' Can they trust who (or what) they see?[426] According to Suvin, Eldritch itself is therefore the 'allegorical representative of neo-capitalism', bearer of an 'evil, negative trinity of alienation, blurred reality, and despair.'[427] Across Dick's works, the culture industry reduced religion, connection, artistic individuality and even *emotion* to 'low' culture that could be bought and sold.

That there should be a socialist interpretation of Dick has roots in the existing literature. Suvin notes a near-Marxist interpretation of Dick, whose heroes 'are most often the new individual craftsmen' with a 'direct and personalised relationship to creative productivity' that stands in opposition to standardised mass-produced goods.'[428] Such sympathies are even evocative of the pre-Raphaelite arts and crafts movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Even in his earliest work, Dick attempts to overthrow the shackles of modernity, such as in his 1953 short story *Piper in the Woods,* in which young military men eschew their traditional jobs and submission to authority in favour of a connection to nature and pursuit of knowledge connected to the universe.[429] Rather than Odysseus' worried reaction to his men's fixation with the lotuses at the expense of the militaristic virtue they must instead achieve, Dick's military men are made more

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[425] *Ibid.*
[426] *Ibid.*
[427] *Ibid.*
[428] *Ibid.*
[429] Dick, P.K *Piper in the Woods:* available here: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/32832/32832-h/32832-h.htm

virtuous by lying amongst the greenery. Indeed, rather than the virtue being found in being 'dragged back'[430] it is instead closer to St. John of the Cross' heavenly interpretation of 'lying amongst the lilies'.[431] Dick's clear rejection of authority, bureaucracy, and consumption even leads to evidence of what Suvin calls 'a populist or indeed New Left tendency to distrust rational intelligence'[432] corrupted and contaminated by its connection to 'the cult of the Technocrat... run by and for those oriented around verbal knowledge.'[433]

Within *Ubik,* everything life-defining and necessary for flourishment (health, food, life) is mangled into consumable bites of jangly advertisements 'parodying the unholy capitalist alliance of science, commercialism, and religious blasphemy.'[434]Each chapter of the work opens with a kitschy advertising jingle which has little to nothing to explicitly do with the text.

If money worries have you in the cellar, go visit the lady at Ubik Savings & Loan. She'll take the frets out of your debts. Suppose, for example, you borrow fifty-nine poscreds on an interest-only loan. Let's see, that adds up to-

- *Ubik* p.93

Dick and Commodity Fetishism

'Is it still necessary to state that not technology, not technique, not the machine are the engineers of repression, but the presence in them, of the masters who determine their number, their life span, their power, their place in life, and the need for them? Is it still necessary to repeat

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[430] *The Odyssey*
[431] St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul,* (available here:
https://www.carmelitemonks.org/Vocation/DarkNight-StJohnoftheCross.pdf)
[432] Suvin, *Opus*, p.115
[433] *Ibid.*
[434] *Ibid.*

that science and technology are the great vehicles of liberation, and that it is only their use and restriction in the repressive society which makes them into vehicles of domination?'

 - Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation

Peter Fitting notes that Ubik is a 'universal equivalent' that functions as Marx's exchange-value which can 'represent or replace any other commodity'. It is the *ultimate* exchange-value (it can represent beer, or loans, or clothes) and yet simultaneously falsifies the use-value, creating imaginary needs in the consumer that only it can sate.[435] Despite this clear critique, *Ubik* is not solely a critique of commodification (of man, good, and universe) but also a critique of the a priori methods of knowledge that traditionally inform scientific thinking through what Dick considers to be a misplaced (or fraudulent) assumption that it is an objective and empirical principle.[436] Dick consistently emphasises (from *The Clans of the Alphane Moon* and in *Maze of Death*) that universal laws cannot ever be entirely or wholly accurately understood by the subjective individual; that what is commonly understood to be 'reality' is indeed beyond human knowledge - the closest we can get to is a imagined construct which may be 'undermined at any time.'[437] Dick's rejection of a priori knowledge and scientism is in firm sympathy with the critiques of the Frankfurt School.

Within *Ubik,* Ella Runciter leaves half-life to be 'reborn' through a 'new womb'. Whilst this process involves the dissolution of her personality, it does not *leave* her less than human: it strips away the false to create a renaissance, or rebirth: rather than becoming something singular, prescriptive, designed, or specific, she is instead opened up into new potentials and possibilities. She is becoming what humanity is destined for when not eroded through an entropic system that

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[435] Fitting, P (1975) '"Ubik": The Deconstruction of Bourgeois SF' *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1 p.53
[436] *Ibid.*
[437] Fitting*, Deconstruction* p.54

promises flourishing only through exchange-value: her individual potential is revolutionary, and as she embraces it, society's potential to be revolutionised increases in turn.

Dick's personal paranoia comes to the foreground in the numerous instances of betrayal throughout his work, but the greatest duplicity comes from the *objects,* rather than the humans, who surround Dick's protagonists (who are all too often a pastiche of the man himself). Seemingly static objects are often not what they appear, instead imbued with a sense of the magical, and animals are indistinguishable from mechanised counterparts. The robotic sheep in *Do Androids Dream* is almost impossible to distinguish from its living counterpart, and so too is the mechanised humanoid from the alienated barely-individual.[438] Commodities quite literally take on lives of their own, often speaking back to, patronising, or cajoling the humans who own or operate them. Dick himself once wrote that the ultimate paranoia comes 'not when everyone is against you,' but when every*thing* is instead. Rather than a man's boss revealed to have been acting against him, it was a greater betrayal to realise that his phone was instead - the betrayal came not simply from a duplicitous turn in human relationships (which one might always half-expect as an element of human psychology) but of an object created *for* man betraying him in the most hostile sense. This explains why the enslaved androids in *Do Androids Dream* are 'retired' in such a hostile manner, hunted throughout a cold, uncaring city and brutalised in front of ambivalent crowds.[439] Dick imbuing objects with wills and personalities of their own, is, even unknowingly, an idea rooted in historical materialism. The opening of *Das Kapital* is an intricate analysis of commodity-fetishism - defined as the process in which 'the definite social relation between men themselves [...] assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things.'[440] Some of Marx's metaphors used

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[438] Aldiss, B (1975) 'Dick's Maledictory Web: About and Around Martian Time Slip' *Science Fiction Studies* 5

[439] Freedman (1984) 'Towards a Theory of Paranoia: The Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick' *Science Fiction* Studies 32 p.15

[440] Marx, *Capital* p.165

to explain how products of human labour appear to be 'endowed with a life of their own' have a profoundly Dickian air:

'The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, with relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will.'[441]

Since *Das Kapital*, commodity-fetishism has become an important category of critique for Marxist cultural theorists, and has been built upon by those influenced (even indirectly) by it - such as Lukács' reification, or Sartre's counter-finality. Freedman notes that Philip K. Dick's chosen term for the quasi-living objects ('paranoia') appears to not be related to Marxism, but 'drawn from the different science of psychoanalysis'. But it is precisely this blend of psychoanalysis and Marxist cultural critique that creates the critical theory of the Frankfurt School.[442]

Further examples are found throughout Dick's bibliography, from 1957's nefarious house-help in Eye in the Sky, 1964's assassinating television in The Penultimate Truth (1964), *Ubik*'s argumentative and entitled doorframe, all the way to 1976's murderous factory in Deus Irae. It is rare for objects to be what they appear. It is rarer still for them to even be used as they should - an interesting, sci-fi interpretation of the loss of use-value. Objects have become so humanoid

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[441] *ibid*
[442] Freedman, *Paranoia* pp.15-6

(and humans so objectified) that the two end up sharing a disturbing number of similarities: goods can even resemble quintessentially human archetypes such as the femme fatale or kindly father.[443]

Ubik in particular is a work completely saturated with commodities that wield a life of their own. Doors will threaten to sue and coffee pots request recompense for their labour. Robots collect human debts and homeostatic newspapers will read personalised news bits to the owner for a set fee, an Alexa of their time. Joe Chip suffers from telephones and televisions which prioritise their own agency above that of their owners. One of the clearest indications that all is not well within the *Ubik* universe is that the form money takes ('the universal equivalent of all exchange-values') begins to alter. When time is reversed, it is indicated through the regression of technological commodities, such as the television set regresses into a radio from the distant past. Technological innovation even means that the dead cannot rest, but exist in a form of 'half-life': the most basic and fundamental elements of life are blurred to the point in which life and death are indistinguishable. Of course, all is overshadowed by Ubik itself, the 'ultimate and universal' commodity and 'the symbol of the ubiquity of the commodity structure.' Ubik enters the frame as a simple spray in an aerosol can and is slowly morphed into the mystery of the universe itself - Yahweh's message to Moses through the burning brush is bastardised and overshadowed by the world completely in tune with only the commodity: 'I am Ubik. Before the universe was, I am .... I am. I shall always be.'[444] So prevalent is the effect of commodity-fetishism in *Ubik* that Freedman writes that not only takes a nightmarish turn but also the comical: in whatever form it takes it is always in a fundamentally estranging manner: its world is one 'in which virtually everything is in one way or another commodified.' George Slusser disagrees with this interpretation of Dick's understanding of commodity fetishism however, writing that 'the object or event we encounter in

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[443] *Ibid.*
[444] Dick, *Ubik* p.75

Dick is a genuinely non-symbolic, non-historical thing,' that is not alienated but simply *alien*.[445] This seems to be a relatively one-dimensional reading of Dick's work: the author's rejection of authority, consumption, and terrifying paranoia on both a societal and individual scale imbued his work for decades. Kongrosian is tortured in *The Simulacra* by formerly lifeless objects becoming endowed with life and embedding themselves into his body and being: 'Something terrible's happening to me… I can no longer keep myself and my environment separate: do you comprehend how that feels? It's awful."… "'I absorbed it,' he reflects. 'Now it's me"..'[446]

In *Now Wait For Last Year* (1966), Katherine Sweetscent witnesses the latter part of this dynamic:

> They were losing, she realised, their animation, their… working souls… As her powers of psychological projection deteriorated...the objects had lost their heritage of the familiar; by degrees they became cold, remote and hostile....

Dick and Freud

Freud's concept of paranoia and its focus on the other is evocative of Rousseau's theory of amour propre. In his essay *On Narcissism*, Freud explicitly links paranoia with the formation of speculative systems which Carl Freedman expands on by suggesting that 'the commodity as bearer of value-both the basic economic 'cell' of capitalism and a mystifying signifier-is the ultimate object of paranoid hermeneutic by the historical subjects of bourgeois society.'[447] In PKD's work, commodities are not just alive in a metaphorical sense, but are even able to participate in intricate conversations and sexual intercourse with humans. Multiple authors in the science fiction tradition

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[445] Slusser, G (1988) 'History, Historicity, Story' *Science Fiction Studies* 15 p.212
[446] Dick, P.K. (2002) *The Simulacra* (Random House Vintage Books: London) pp.201-2
[447] Freedman, *Paranoia,* p.18

have utilised different terms to describe similar aspects of the same phenomenon: from the negative utopias of H.G. Wells and the intergalactic imperialism of *The War of the Worlds*, to the sophisticated work of Ursula K. Le Guin. Freedman notes, however, that if Philip K. Dick is (as some have claimed) the greatest of all SF authors – 'the Shakespeare of science fiction,'[448] as Fredric Jameson has called him – perhaps due to the magnificence of his lost, dazed, alienated characters – human and non-human - 'caught in the web of commodities and conspiracies'. None of his books display a more fully developed understanding of paranoia, late-stage capitalism, and Marxist cultural critiques than *Ubik*.[449] Philip K. Dick once described the 'grand theme' of his work to be the question 'who is human and who only appears (masquerades) as human?'[450] It is this question that represents the most excellent critiques of science fiction and cultural critique alike.

Nevertheless, for Dick, paranoia is just one element of a concern regarding the decline of general mental health. A core theme in PKD's writing is the idea of a 'sick society,' in which 'mental illness,' which was formerly only a minority affliction, has now become the norm. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* Dick associates freedom with an ability to emote, feel, empathise, or to develop affective relationships with others in the manner in which healthy, well individuals do in what Fromm calls the 'sane society.' The 'Penfield Mood Organ' artificially stimulates and affects emotional states, and humanity responds much more organically to animals than fellow human beings – even when the animal in question is an android. Something, PKD believes, has gone badly wrong in humanity's emotional regulation – and ability.

Reification and Robots

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[448] Jameson, F (2007) *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (Verso: London) p.281
[449] Freedman, *Paranoia* p.20
[450] PKD comment on 'Second Variety', 1976

For the inhabitants of 2019 Los Angeles, androids are 'things' - or at least are regarded as and treated as such. They are objectified in the most literal sense, hence the continual references to their slavery: those who own them consider them to be no more than objects, the major plot development revolves around androids rebelling as if they are Spartacan acolytes, undertaking revolt in order to gain self-determination and freedom. They too are not content to be mere *things*. Are Roy Batty and his followers not seeking to take control of their own destinies, to be freed from the shackles of slavery and subject to the whims of owners and masters, whose cruelty reveals themselves to be closer to the unfeeling automatons than the robots they dominate and despise? They wish to be human in the sense of having the ability to self-govern. They wish to be subject, rather than object.

Dick shares the same concerns of reification and alienation, of individuals becoming subhuman, of the loss of the individual in the miasma of advertisements and products, of the loss of the artisan in the face of the Darwinian struggle of capitalism as Marcuse or Horkheimer - he expresses them in more fantastic terms, but only barely so.

Oftentimes within Dick's writings, the reified, unethical, de-individualised, alienated, and therefore inhuman person is quite literally an android, an artificial simulation of humanity whom the author imbues with a sense of humanity nonetheless. Of course, such non-humans are often still more individualised than the fully reified humans in Dick's work. Dick's viewpoint, described by Suvin as being 'halfway between Rousseau and Marx,' is one in which there is an 'authentic core identical with humanity in Homo sapiens, from which men and women have to be alienated by civilisational pressures in order to behave in an unauthentic, dehumanised way, so that there is

always an inner resistance to such pressures in anybody who simply follows his or her human(e) instinct of treating people as ends, not means.'[451]

Within *Do Androids Dream*, human, animal, machine and product are all entwined - empathy is both the traditional key to differentiating them - and also an increasingly outdated mode of doing so. Humans increasingly lack enough empathy that they require artificial spiritual and empathetic experiences created by the Mercer/empathy box. The mechanisation and reification of the entropic, post-apocalyptic world has reduced empathy and the boundaries between the newest developments of droid and humanity are becoming increasingly blurred. Peter Fitting reads that the androids are presented in a way that is clearly meant to evoke an understanding of them as 'evil and inhuman'[452] and their desire to become human explains both why they attempt to escape to earth and also why they are given a planned obsolescence that will ensure they are obsolete within four years. Individual droids (and the droids are often presented as individuals) collect family photographs in order to construct an image of a human life[453] and philosophically reflect upon their non-human state. Roy, the most developed of androids and a veritable ubermensch of their race, is the one who most reflects on his 'incomplete' humanity[454] - he is also the one who most manages to overcome his lack of humanity, displaying a quality to Deckard most rare in the post-apocalyptic Earth: that of mercy. In contrast, Mercer, the font of all emotions and empathy within the book, tells Deckard that he must hunt down and eradicate the androids: 'what you are doing must be done,'; 'Go and do your task, even though you know it's wrong [...] you will be required to do wrong no matter where you go. It is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity.'[455] Within *Blade Runner*, Roy's final, philosophical monologue reflects that it is 'quite

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[451] Suvin, *Opus,* p.115

[452] Fitting P (1987) 'Futurecop: The Neutralization of Revolt in Blade Runner' *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 14, No. 3 p.342

[453] *Ibid.*

[454] *Ibid.*

[455] Dick, P.K (2007) *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Gollancz: London) pp.145, 118-9

an experience to live in fear' - that fear is 'what it is to be a slave.' Whilst the replicants are enslaved through their fear, humans are enslaved through their comfort. Humans may be equal parts repulsed and seduced by androids (sometimes literally) but androids are repulsed and seduced in turn - both are locked in a desperate struggle to escape their *thing-ness*.

To Fitting, the robot has 'long been understood as [the human's] symbolic alter ego,' and represents a liberation 'from toil and drudgery and from human frailty and imperfection' as well as 'an increasing awareness of our diminished status in the technological society we have built.'[456] Recent years have brought developments in the relationship between robotics and transhumanism - Fitting expands on the former, but fails to make a link to the latter. Some have interpreted them - or at least a portion of them that we can steal for ourselves - as a glimpse of a liberated, post-human future. They represent a transcendence not of the soul, or of society, but of human limitations. They are not a transcendence of spirit but of matter.

Fitting writes that the long, lingering, and detailed shots of the rebellious, enslaved androids being 'retired' suggests that the film 'legitimises the use of violence in defence of the status quo' – an argument I profoundly disagree with when witnessing the film's clear (and quite radical) sympathy to the enslaved androids. Whilst Fitting maintains that the original book considers the replicants to be evil creatures, John Huntington appreciates the shifting attitude of the text: at one moment we can 'be led to see the androids as anti-social, pathological creatures preying on society', at another 'to see them as pathetic victims exploited by society,' but then again at a later time to see them again as, quite simply, 'cruel killers'. Indeed, this moral richness means that 'by moving without mediation from one moral perspective to the other, the novel gives the feeling of moral three-dimensionality, of depth.'[457] At times they spark with individual life, at other

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[456] Fitting, *Futurecop* p.345
[457] Huntington, J (1988) 'Philip K. Dick: Authenticity and Insincerity' *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 15, No. 2 p.153

times they seem half-dead, alienated, communal. Much do the humans. As Christopher Palmer notes, in PKD's works, 'entropic degradation is associated with becoming merged, becoming unified.'[458]

Dick's Pessimism

We have previously analysed the commonly-held viewpoint that the early Frankfurt School represent the most pessimistic of theorists, a reading I find generally unchallenged and without nuance. Is the same true of Dick? PKD was a critical writer until the end, never assigning a positive outcome but instead a negative, dialectical process. Stanislaw Lem judged him to be 'perfidious' in the sense of being profoundly ambiguous in his conclusions, and believes Dick 'strikes no balances and explains nothing 'scientifically,' but rather just confounds things.'[459] Nevertheless, much like the Frankfurt School, Dick was clear in his critiques, if not his proposed solution. Society may have developed in terms of the goods and needs it could offer and satisfy, but the height of civilisation and culture was a monstrous, repulsive creature.

Certain theorists and science fiction writers alike are wont to become alarmed at the rapid progress of industrial civilisation. Thinkers such as Jacques Ellul and Ted Kaczynski (the former a dialectical thinker, the latter an advocate of somewhat controversial praxis) advocate for an eradication of all artificiality - a luddite-lite interpretation of the march of science and technology. Such anarcho-primitivist yearnings are absent in the thought of both PKD and the Frankfurt School. Dick's novels are set in worlds in which some have argued there can be no hope of returning to a primitive or more natural state,[460] and the same thought is true of the FS. To suggest

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[458] Palmer, C (1991) 'Postmodernism and the Birth of the Author in VALIS' *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 18 No. 3
[459] Lem, S (1975) 'Philip K. Dick: A Visionary among the Charlatans' *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1
[460] *Ibid.*

a complete, primitivist revolution against modernity would be dangerously utopian - rather, the natural has been so subsumed by the artificial as to be an established fact of life. But is this now a permanent state of society? Stanislaw Lem believes that 'there can no longer be any talk of return to nature or of turning away from the "artificial," since the fusion of the "natural" with the "artificial" has long since become an accomplished fact,'[461] but this is a more pessimistic view than either warrant. For Lem, the idea of returning to nature in any true sense is an 'impossibility' within Dick's thought, and leads him to the 'pessimistic conclusion' that 'looking far into the future becomes such a fulfilment of dreams of power over matter as converts the ideal of progress into a monstrous caricature.'[462] But this isn't entirely correct - Dick retains too much hope to be a pure pessimist.

Dick is often classified as a postmodern thinker, but this also isn't entirely true: his work has a dialectical character which distinguishes it. Scott Durham states that 'one cannot overstress the dialectical character of Dick's work,' it is Dick's re-evaluation of the relationship between subject and object, and the 'correlative convergence of the aesthetic and the everyday into "one-dimensionality,"' implies neither the absorption of the subject of negation into a totalising system (such as in Marcuse and Baudrillard), 'nor as the triumph of that subject with the emergence of an absolutely sovereign desire, as in the Lyotard of Economie Libidinale,' but as both, in turn, ever-spiralling, 'each being a moment of a single contradictory dynamic immanent to the experience of the everyday itself.'[463]

Even the Taoism of *The Man in the High Castle* has a startling similarity to the dialectic: the concept of yin and yang (and that all events of history and life are constituted by their interplay) is

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[461] *Ibid.*

[462] *Ibid.*

[463] Durham, S (1988) 'From the Death of the Subject to a Theology of Late Capitalism' *Science Fiction Studies* 15 176

played somewhat dialectically by Dick. Yin represents the negative: mysterious, wet, yielding, passive. In contrast, Yang is the positive principle: active, hard, warm, bright.[464] The two are entwined in a dialectical process of negation. Reality, according to Taoist principles, consists of a pair of opposites incessantly interacting in an eternal process; it is dynamic, rather than static. According to Fritjof Capra the endpoint of this 'is an ordered nature rather than chaos. In point of process, there is contradiction as well as harmony, and in point of reality, there is unity in multiplicity. The apparent dualism and pluralism are, in each case, a dynamic monism *through the dialectic.*'[465] [emphasis mine] The opposite to all is static, one-dimensional, ossified. 'The complementary view of reality encompassed in the yin-yang doctrine reminds one of the notion of complementarity essential to the way modern physicists talk about nature. Niles Nohr, who introduced the notion of complementarity, was aware of its parallel with Chinese thought.[466] Fitting seems to believe that the 'metaphysical solution' is rejected by Dick,[467] though Dick's writing is near-overflowing with tributes to the unknowable divine. Dick, like Adorno, has a strain of optimism within his writing largely overlooked by those who unfairly consider him a pessimist. Whilst Dick's work seems to suggest that there is 'no final answer [...] to the question of what reality is', or that it can be known by mere humanity, the endings of Dick's novels are rarely pessimistic.[468]

Within Dick's works, distinguishing between false visions and reality becomes increasingly impossible - much like the author's own experiences. It does not matter whether the intoxicating and repulsive visions come about through goods, technology, chemical manipulation, or surgical operation: reality is split, and the character will suffer increasingly for it.[469] Nonetheless, Dick is

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[464] Warrick, *Taoism*
[465] Capra, F (1975) *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*, (Shambhala: Berkeley) p.245
[466] *Ibid.* p.160
[467] Fitting, *Deconstruction* p.53
[468] *Ibid.*
[469] Lem, *Visionary* p.55

certainly not a nihilist. All three texts central to the plot and themes of *The Man in the High Castle* [*I Ching, Grasshopper, Book of Ecclesiastes*] are united by their shared view of a universe 'incessantly transforming itself' a world in which 'defining statements are outdated almost as soon as they are uttered because reversals negate meanings.'[470] Dick demonstrates a startling level of optimism - in every book, there is a human who knows that redemption will come:

'He lives: he can be found-usually-in the novel somewhere, at the center of the stage or at the very edge. In some novels he merely lurks. He is implicit. But I believe in him completely. He is the friend who ultimately comes... and in time. Basically, he is found at the heart of human life itself. He is, in fact, the heart of human life. He is the most alive of all. Where the chattering, bickering, sweating, planning, worrying, scheming center of life holds sway-well, I have faith that he is there and will show himself, countering the process of entropy, of decay, that more and more undermines the universe itself. Stars are snuffed out, planets die into darkness and cold; but there in the marketplace of some small moon, he is busy formulating a plan for action-action against the black counter-force, the Palmer Eldritch figure in all his horrid manifestations.'[471]

Philip K. Dick was a writer haunted by demons that he saw manifest both in his mind and society at large. Rebelling against an increasingly commodified culture (and the resulting de-humanisation of mankind), Dick shared a startling number of similarities in thought and theme with the Frankfurt School: a shared Freudian inheritance, a disgust at the rampant, near-fascistic consumerism of late-stage capitalist societies, a somewhat undeserved reputation for pessimism, and a belief that alternate possibilities could be ignited within those who suffered at the hands of

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[470] Warrick, *Taoism* p.81
[471] Gillespie, B (1975) 'Mad, Mad Worlds: Seven Novels of Philip K. Dick,' *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd*, ed. Bruce Gillespie, (Carlton: Victoria) p.45

everything commodified, unified, and stunted through a dialectical form of thinking and living. In the eyes of both, hope is not yet lost.

Chapter Four - Kafka and Alienation

Kafka

Franz Kafka's own name has, in the English language, become synonymous with oppressive, nightmarish scenarios. The deep sense of melancholy and estrangement present within Kafka's writing were a mirror of the author's internal state. Maurice Blanchot once wrote that 'In all literature, the narratives of Kafka are among the blackest, among those most riveted to an absolute disaster.'[472] The 'air' of melancholy contained within is, in reality, a melancholy so severe as to permeate every contour of Kafka's life and work.

Franz Kafka had been born into a middle-class Jewish family in 1883, Bohemia. The final seven years of Kafka's life was characterised by dotted spells in sanatoriums, dying in a Viennese sanatorium at the age of forty from tuberculosis. He had suffered from body dysmorphia, romantic, literary, and sexual shame, and an acute sense of loneliness. He requested that a friend burn everything he had written, even that which had been published. The wish was not carried out.

'Beauty plus pity,' Vladimir Nabokov thought, were 'the closest we can get to a definition of art.'[473] Kafka's writing held little more.

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[472] Blanchot, M (1976) 'Reading Kafka' James Rolleston (ed) Twentieth *Century Interpretations of The Trial* (Prentice-Hall Inc, New Jersey) p.19.

[473] Nabokov, V (1982) 'Lecture on "The Metamorphosis" in *Lectures on Literature* (Harcourt: London)

Kafka as a writer of science fiction

To what extent can Kafka adequately be described as a science fiction writer? Carl Freedman is of the opinion that whilst Kafka's output is not generally considered to be a 'predominantly science-fictional work,' there is 'no question' that a strong science-fictional element operates within it.[474] The science-fictional character of loneliness, alienation, and strongly unnerving and unnatural elements of Kafka's writing - with its queer, sickening inconsistencies, nightmarish technological developments, and critique of the disturbing nature of modernity is sometimes overlooked in academic and mainstream audiences due to the clear literary quality of the work - critics have long exhibited a reluctance to classify high-quality literature within such a 'pulpy' genre. According to F.C. Valk, Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is 'perhaps the most enigmatic and challenging work of Kafka's oeuvre, on account of its extraordinary simultaneous realism and fantasy.'[475] In contrast, Vladimir Nabokov was unpersuaded by those who labelled *The Metamorphosis* 'mere' fantasy: 'From my point of view, any outstanding work of art is a fantasy insofar as it reflects the unique world of a unique individual,' he argued, 'But when people call these three stories fantasies, they merely imply that the stories depart in their subject matter from what is commonly called reality.'[476]

Kafka's personal writings demonstrate an individual interested in transcending the world. His interest in occultism and theosophy led to a meeting with Rudolf Steiner in which he praised a lecture on 'Occult Physiology' as allowing 'mystical immersion in the self, as well as the reverse, the lifting of oneself out of one's own consciousness.'[477] During the meeting, as described in Kafka's diary in the spring of 1911, the young author worked himself into a bitter frenzy at the

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[474] Freedman, C (2002) *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Wesleyan University Press: Connecticut) p.84
[475] Valk, F.C (2015) *Exclusion and renewal: identity and Jewishness in Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and David Vogel's Married Life* Doctoral Thesis, Universiteit Leiden
[476] Nabokov, V (1982) *Lecture*
[477] Kafka, F (2023) *Diaries* trans. Ross Benjamin (Schocken Books: London)

tension he felt between the dutiful, miserable salaried labour he undertook, and the desire to devote himself to a life producing art:

This confusion lies in the following: My happiness, my abilities and any possibility of being in some way useful have always resided in the literary realm.[478]

Even 'leaving aside my family circumstances,' Kafka believed that he still could not dedicate himself to literary pursuits - the pay was too uncertain, and moreover 'my health and my character also hinder me from devoting myself to what is in the most favorable case an uncertain life.' His straddling of two worlds - the repressed and the free 'could never tolerate each other,' or 'permit a shared happiness.' Even the slightest happiness gained from one role became 'a great unhappiness in the other. If I have written something good one evening, I am aflame the next day in the office and can accomplish nothing.' The mildest dedication to one similarly resulted in the neglect of the other, and whilst he was able to 'outwardly live up to my duties [...] every unfulfilled inner duty turns into an unhappiness that never leaves me.[479]

Kafka's great personal struggle with alienation - and his desire to transcend it - reveals itself further in his writing and the trials and tribulations of his protagonists. In *The Metamorphosis,* Gregor Samsa - thinking, caring, anxious - all elements of Kafka's own soul - finds that his new bodily form alienates him from the job he loathes, the family he adores, the life he once lived, and, eventually, humanity itself. In *The Trial,* Josef K. attempts to use logic, reason, and decency in order to understand (and thwart) his unjustified criminal conviction. The fact that he is convicted of a crime he does not even know the name of matters little: the irrationality and bureaucracy of the world he inhabits are operating as they are meant to: they crush and break him.

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[478] Kafka, *Diaries*
[479] Kafka, *Diaries*

For Kafka, the truth-seeker is despised and ruined by the bureaucratic, cold, cruel world. Rationality has become a near-religious truth, and like religious truth, ossified into something that it is not. The victim of a random and uncontrollable event (such as Gregor) and the victim of a dispassionate and controlled event (such as Josef) are united in their alienation from a cold and cruel system that runs from the highest echelons of society, through the police and court systems, down to the family, workplace, and finally, to the interior life of the individual themself.

In one letter, Kafka wrote of his belief that 'the office is not a stupid institution; it belongs more to the realm of the fantastic than of the stupid.'[480] Such an opinion reflects a profundity of understanding that has evaded most. Not only was bureaucracy cripplingly isolating, reducing man to an almost subhuman category in a fascistic political system governed by rationalism and legalism - it was profound, and could produce great (and provoking) works of art.

Kafka has been described as harbouring a 'near-psychotic feeling of isolation.'[481] Peter Heller describes him as a man who: 'is an alienated part of an alienated minority, a Czech German Jew, estranged from the Czech and German communities of Prague and almost equally from assimilated Jewry who are themselves alienated from their Jewish tradition-a man alienated also from his daily work, his responsible and conscientiously performed job in the Worker's Insurance Company of the Kingdom of Bohemia, and consequently, perhaps, all the more eligible to experience and express the pervasive alienation of the individual in the declining phases of Capitalism, or in modern bureaucratic mass societies generally.'[482]

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[480]Found in Wolf, D (2020) 'Kafka and the Machine' *The Article*
[481]Heller, P (1974) 'On Not Understanding Kafka' *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 3
[482] *Ibid.*

Kafka himself wrote: 'I write differently from the way I speak, speak differently from the way I think, think differently from the way I ought to think, and so on and down into deepest darkness,' a state of affairs that led to Peter Heller comparing Kafka to a 'talking onion,' containing 'voices, layer upon layer, each contradicting the next.'[483]

The Metamorphosis

As such, the work that this chapter is most concerned with is *The Metamorphosis*. Gregor Samsa's alienation is total. The alienation he suffers as a human is pernicious - and recognisable to many. Samsa is estranged from his working conditions and labour, the warmth and love of his family, and from society at large - though most of this becomes more acutely painful to him following his transformation.

Upon finding him metamorphosed, some of Gregor's first remarks relate to how hideous his professional career is. His job as a travelling salesman - taken to support his family - is 'exhausting,' not to mention 'much more irritating than doing actual business in the office.'[484] It contains 'the trouble of constant travelling, of worrying about train connections, the bed, and irregular meals, casual acquaintances that are always new and never become intimate friends.'[485] He can neither forge nor maintain relationships with those outside of his home - an apartment he infrequently inhabits. He suppresses his desire to leave for healthier, more enjoyable work: he must maintain this job in order to pay off his family's debt. 'If I didn't have to hold my hand because of my parents I'd have given notice a long time ago,' Gregor thinks. 'Once I've saved enough money to pay back my parents' debt to him - that should take another five or six years - I'll do it without

[483] Heller, P (1974) *On Not Understanding Kafka*
[484] Kafka (2020) *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories* trans. Michael Hoffman (Penguin Classics: New York)
[485] Kafka *The Metamorphosis*

fail. I'll cut myself completely loose then.'[486] It is only due to a debt entrapment that our protagonist cannot leave the shackles of a miserable, soulless job - and it is not even *his* debt. His unalienated love from his parents keeps him in a robotic, meaningless, estranged state, personally and professionally. The Samsa parents are 'Flaubertian philistines, people interested only in the material side of life and vulgarians in their taste.'[487] They are a precedent class of those who Adorno cast with imbibing 'low culture'.

On the 26th August, 1911, Kafka wrote that the evening before his father had been so 'stricken with worry' about the shop that he had 'thereby awakened illness': 'A wet cloth on his heart, nausea, shortness of breath, sighing while walking back and forth. My mother in her fear finds new consolation. He has always been so energetic, he has always gotten over everything and now—I say that the misery with the shop could last only another ¼ year, then everything should be all right. [...] My poor mother wants to go to the landlord tomorrow to beg.'

His love for his family justifies and redeems the misery of his occupation. As the tale progresses, this becomes less justifiable. The Samsa family begin to clear their son's rooms of all valuables and belongings, believing that he no longer has any need of such possessions. At first, Gregor accedes to their plan - before changing his mind. 'Did he really want his warm room, so comfortably fitted with old family furniture, to be turned into a naked den in which he would certainly be able to crawl unhampered in all directions but at the price of shedding simultaneously all the recollection of his human background?' Desperate to cling to his humanity, he decides that 'nothing should be taken out of his room; everything must stay as it was.'[488]

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[486]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*
[487]Nabokov, V (1982) *Lecture*
[488]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*

Gregor finds himself a somewhat pathetic figure, rendered more pathetic by the grotesque heartlessness of his family and associates. For Nabokov, 'The beauty of Kafka's [...] private nightmares is that [his] central human characters belong to the same private fantastic world as the inhuman characters around them, but the central one tries to get out of that world, to cast off the mask, to transcend the cloak or the carapace.'[489] Indeed, in Kafka's works, 'the absurd central character belongs to the absurd world around him but, pathetically and tragically, attempts to struggle out of it into the world of humans—and dies in despair.'

His father, near destitute, is only too happy for the son to take on the burdens of his debts, and has since retired from work. His mother, ill with asthma - similarly to Kafka's own - frets over the father to the detriment of the son, and his sister Grete is too young to work. It is Gregor who has shouldered financial responsibility for the family and the staff that he hires for them: one cook, and one maid.

Gregor spends very few nights in his family's apartment. The genus of his terrible fate occurs on one of those rare nights that he spends in the family's apartment in between business trips.

"What has happened to me?" he thought. It was no dream....

Gregor's eyes turned next to the window—one could hear rain drops beating on the tin of the windowsill's outer edge and the dull weather made him quite melancholy.[490]

Gregor is not unaware of the great burden of his job: "'*Ach Gott,* he thought, what an exhausting

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[489] Nabokov, V (1982) *Lecture*

[490] Nabokov's notes: "A regular beetle has no eyelids and cannot close its eyes—a beetle with human eyes. [...] In the original German there is a wonderful flowing rhythm here in this dreamy sequence of sentences. He his half-awake—he realises his plight without surprise, with a childish acceptance of it, and at the same time he still clings to human memories, human experience. The metamorphosis is not quite complete as yet.

job I've picked on! Traveling about day in, day out. Many more anxieties on the road than in the office, the plague of worrying about train connections, the bad and irregular meals, casual acquaintances never to be seen again, never to become intimate friends. The hell with it all![491]"

Nabokov notes that Gregor's 'tremendous convex belly divided into segments [and] hard rounded back,' suggest that the form he has transformed into is suggestive of wings. 'Curiously enough, Gregor the beetle never found out that he had wings under the hard covering of his back. (This is a very nice observation on my part to be treasured all your lives. Some Gregors, some Joes and Janes, do not know that they have wings.)' Kafka, like his creation, never quite appreciated - or discovered - his wings.

Paul L. Landsberg suggests in *The Kafka Problem* that the change Gregor suffers is not quite as startling in some respects as the audience might think. 'When we go to bed in unfamiliar surroundings, we are apt to have a moment of bewilderment upon awakening, a sudden sense of unreality, and this experience must occur over and over again in the life of a commercial traveler, a manner of living that renders impossible any sense of continuity.'

Samsa's own isolation, sense of strangeness, estrangement, and complex relationship with reality mirror his creator, and generally characterise artists, brilliant individuals, madmen, and heretics. Samsa's family and acquaintances are mediocrities bemused by - or scornful of - genius. This is the relationship of Kafka to those who surrounded him.

The parasitic nature of Gregor's family reduces him much more than his beetle-hood does. The hard shell does not protect him from malnourishment and attack, he is as frail and sickly as

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[491]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*

any man who would have suffered such mistreatment. They, rather than he, are the parasitic vermin, destroying him internally and externally.

Gregor attempts to get out of bed, an ordeal in which 'man plans but beetle acts.'[492] As Gregor falls out of bed, he attempts to maintain a number of conversations with those who have taken to the surrounding rooms. He has locked the door - for which he is grateful - and bit by bit those surrounding him realise that something is wrong with him - that he is not simply late. The head clerk of Gregor's company has set himself up in Gregor's home office as he attempts to discover why Gregor has not shown up at work. The speed to which he is monitored makes Gregor even more feverish than the metamorphosis. He hears his sister begin to cry as she realises that her brother is in danger of losing his job - he cannot get up to unlock the door, and as he attempts to reason with those outside, his voice becomes more and more slurred and indistinguishable to them.

One of Gregor Samsa's more tragic qualities is that he does not even react in a self-pitying way - he is so used to being an instrument to his family's security and comfort that he does not even think to expect pity, nor to feel pity for himself. He simply panics that his true state may be discovered, that he might lose his job, that his family might think badly of him. Grete and the maid depart in order to find a doctor and a locksmith.

Gregor manages - with great difficulty - to unlock the door, and those assembled within the apartment (his parents and the clerk) catch their first sight of his new form. The clerk is struck with horror, and the mother devastated, but it is Gregor's father who reacts violently: 'His father knotted his fist with a fierce expression on his face as if he meant to knock Gregor back into his

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[492]Nabokov, V (1982) *Lecture*

room, then looked uncertainly round the living room, covered his eyes with his hands and wept till his great chest heaved.'

Gregor's first reaction is to calm the clerk in the hope of retaining his job.

"Well," said Gregor, knowing perfectly that he was the only one who had retained any composure, "I'll put my clothes on at once, pack up my samples and start off. Will you only let me go? You see, sir, I'm not obstinate, and I'm willing to work; travelling is a hard life, but I couldn't live without it.

Gregor's coleopteran body is beaten back into his bedroom by his enraged father. Gregor attempts to eat milk and bread, but the mammal food is repulsive to his new digestive system and tastebuds. His leg has been damaged from his father's abuse and hangs limply. Despite the new heights of their disgust for him, Gregor is satisfied for having provided - through terrible personal expense - for his family: "What a quiet life our family has been leading,' said Gregor to himself, and as he sat there motionless staring into the darkness he felt great pride in the fact that he had been able to provide such a life for his parents and sister in such a fine flat.' Gregor's sister seems to justify her brother's particular devotion to her. She comes to retrieve the basin of milk - ensuring that she does not touch it directly, but instead with the aid of a cloth - and replaces it with a selection of rotten fruit, sour cheese, old bones etc. Even so, Gregor's 'saint' is arguably his most demanding parasite. Grete's slow, careful turn of the key in the lock of Gregor's bedroom-cum-prison operates as a warning that he should hide his presence from her, and so he complies, retreating away from a young women who represents all that is pure and good to him, but is actually a malevolent force punishing him for something he holds no control over.

Despite this coldness, it is *Grete* who cares for her brother, Grete who dares tread upon his

floor, Grete who prays for him, who feeds him, who attempts to learn how she can make him most comfortable. The parents resent, the cook begs to leave (a request which is granted upon the condition that she tells no-one of what has occurred). Grete cares for her brother in secrecy, whilst her parents are asleep, or resting, or sent out on a task. Gregor does not think that they want him to starve, per se, but it is clear that they cannot bring themselves to consider what sustaining him must entail - nor whether they actually want to.

Gregor hears - with his delicate little ears - his father speak of the family's financial situation. Rather than face ruin in the event of their son's immobilisation and resulting retreat from the workplace, it transpires that the family can muddle through based on two calculations. The first, his father reveals, is that he has deceived his son. A small, secret few investments - hidden from creditors - had survived his bankruptcy half a decade prior: the dividends of which had made them into a neat little figure. To this news, Gregor rejoices. Rather than consider it a betrayal of the father - after all, Gregor had hitherto been working in misery in order to repay his creditors - he is only grateful that his family will not suffer financially. His father - bourgeois philistine that he is - believes that this sum should be kept for a rainy day, the question arises of how the family can maintain an income. Gregor (who has worked to save enough money to send his sister to the conservatoire) learns that they are considering sending Grete off to work, and becomes 'hot with shame and grief.'[493]

Gregor exerts great effort to crawl over to the windowsill in order to feel 'some recollection of the sense of freedom that looking out of a window always used to give him.'[494] For Nabokov, 'Gregor, or Kafka, seems to think that Gregor's urge to approach the window was a recollection of human experience. Actually, it is a typical insect reaction to light: one finds all sorts of dusty

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[493]Kafka *The Metamorphosis* p. 76
[494]*Ibid.*

bugs near windowpanes, a moth on its back, a lame daddy longlegs, poor insects cobwebbed in a corner, a buzzing fly still trying to conquer the glass pane.' His sister's repulsion with increases as she realises that he has betrayed her - forcing her into work thanks to his grotesque physical transformation. Grete 'does not understand that Gregor has retained a human heart, human sensitivity, a human sense of decorum, of shame, of humility and pathetic pride.' She 'does not bother to conceal her disgust at the awful smell in his den. Neither does she conceal her feelings when she actually sees him.' To spare Grete the sight of him, Gregor spends four hours arranging a sheet on his back so that he might be hidden. 'Gregor even fancied that he caught a thankful glance from her eye when he lifted the sheet carefully a very little with his head to see how she was taking the new arrangement.' It is interesting to note that Gregor's kindness and decency are not impeded by his new, inhuman form - his fundamental humanity transcends the alienated worker and the alien body. His less obviously alienated family in fact demonstrates a greater depravity of the soul, coldness crushing their humanity. Gregor demonstrates 'constant preoccupation with the needs of others', attempting to shield them from the torture of witnessing his own deformity (and the social stigma that the deformity entails - even the staff might think badly of them).

Two months pass since Gregor's metamorphosis before his mother can bear to enter his room, and she does so only to help clear his furniture from it. Gregor considers it a kindness: he has taken to crawling up the walls and across the ceiling, the height of pleasure that his insect-self can possibly attain. They have come to clear the furniture so that he may have more room to enjoy, and so that the trail of mucus he leaves behind does not imprint itself on that same furniture. He hides himself wholly from her view. When she questions whether removing the furniture implies that she believes that her son will never recover from his situation - 'Doesn't it look as if we were showing him, by taking away his furniture, that we have given up hope of his ever getting better and are just leaving him coldly to himself? I think it would be best to keep his room exactly as it has always been, so that when he comes back to us he will find everything unchanged and be able

all the more easily to forget what has happened in between.' His busybody sister takes it upon herself - as the resident expert on this new Gregorian form - to insist that the furniture be taken away.

Gregor panics at the thought of his mother and sister removing one of the few objects within the room that Gregor had taken great satisfaction in crafting, and rushes over to cover the frame with his body, incapable of verbal communication. As his mother faints at the sight of him, his sister admonishes him from emerging from behind the settee.[495] As Father Samsa arrives home, his son is able to make out his new starched uniform, his combed hair, and his new quiet pride. Indeed, his father now appears to have gained a job as a bank messenger, and the strength that comes with such an officious position. Resentment has been empowered and transformed into brutality. The crafted object that Gregor had taken pride in contemplatively creating brought him a justified and humble pride - his father's badly-paid, salaried job instead instils a chauvinistic pride. Far from the weak, resentful man he until recently was, Gregor's father now begins to beat his son with the apples he has to hand in the room. One apple grazes his boy, but another 'landed right on his back and sank in; Gregor wanted to drag himself forward, as if this startling, incredible pain could be left behind him; but he felt as if nailed to the spot and flattened himself out in a complete derangement of all his senses.'[496]

Gregor's mother and sister begin working as a seamstress and a salesgirl, Grete learning shorthand and French in her evenings in order to better herself. The strength that Gregor's father has found in his new employment begins to wane, and he reverts once again into personal and professional weakness. He keeps his uniform on in the house, infusing it with a kind of power that it does not hold. He sleeps fully dressed in it, 'as if he were ready for service at any moment and

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[495]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*
[496]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*

even here only at the beck and call of his superior.' Because of this, the uniform - 'which was not brand new to start with,' - starts to appear unclean and crumpled, 'and Gregor often spent whole evenings gazing at the many greasy spots on the garment, gleaming with gold buttons always in a high state of polish, in which the old man sat sleeping in extreme discomfort and yet quite peacefully.[497] This uniform does not just represent a job and stability to the elder Samsa, but power, respectability, and control. He does not wish to relinquish these, even as they begin once again to elude him.

The Samsa family dismisses their servant girl- a small luxury for the petite bourgeoisie in 1912 Prague that they have had to forsake in favour of a cheaper (and less valuable) servant. They begin to sell belongings, but struggle most of all to bring themselves to move from their large apartment.[498] Consciously or not, they cannot relinquish *all* minor luxuries that their life heretofore afforded them. 'The family,' according to Nabokov, 'is completely egotistic and has no more strength left after fulfilling its daily obligations.'[499]

Gregor, who has not been physically human for some time now, is losing more and more of his human memories and experiences. Nevertheless, he still wishes above all to be dutiful towards his family. The sister begins to neglect her cleaning duties, leading to a grotesque abode for her grotesque spectacle of a brother, and her mother eventually douses the place with buckets of water to carry away the dust and grime. In the following scene, the common new servant employed by the Samsa family appears to be completely undisturbed by the monstrous son they harbour. 'Come along, then, you old dung beetle,' she says to him as she enters his room.

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[497]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*
[498]*Ibid.*
[499]Nabokov, V (1982) *Lecture*

Nevertheless, she is not in charge of his care, and Gregor begins to starve - as his family attempt to avoid the same fate. They take in lodgers, who bring about, in a 'mechanical' manner, all manner of furniture and furnishings and needless fripperies into the apartment. Gregor's mother and sister rush and hurry around them in their own home, relieved when they find nothing wrong with the food and do not complain about the accommodation. They are reduced to servants in their own home. Gregor, locked away, suffers from extreme hunger and a festering wound. He yearns for the legs of his great, severe father, which have crushed him, and for the teeth that these men use to bite into their great, warm meals as he listens on hungrily. Grete performs on the fiddle for those same lodgers. Kafka believed music to hold a 'stupefying, numbing, animallike quality.'[500] 'Was Gregor,' Kafka writes, 'an animal to be so affected by music?' Samsa had previously derided such numbing pleasures, but in this scene, reduced to a subhuman category, he succumbs to its tantalising pleasure. Evidence of his degradation is not limited to the food and material conditions he craves, but his seduction by this sound. He has become entranced by low culture, which now presents itself to him as 'the unknown nourishment he craved.'[501]

Lured by this basic, seductive sound, Gregor risks his family's comfort and security by heading towards the room from which the sound is emerging: feeling 'hardly any surprise at his growing lack of consideration for the others.' And yet, by now, Gregor's 'indifference to everything' now means that 'no shame deterred him from advancing a little over the spotless floor of the living room.'[502] 'He felt as if the way were opening before him to the unknown nourishment he craved.'[503] He deliriously dreams of spending time with his sister, revealing to her his plans to send her to the conservatoire, of feeling gratitude from her. Instead, the inevitable tragedy occurs. The boarders glance upon the creature, and leave the property furiously - and without settling their

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[500]Nabokov, V (1982) *Lecture*
[501]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*
[502] Kafka *The Metamorphosis*
[503] Kafka *The Metamorphosis*

bill. Thus Grete seeks vengeance. 'We must try to get rid of it,' Grete hisses to her father. 'It will be the death of both of you, I can see that coming. When one has to work as hard as we do, all of us, one can't stand this continual torment at home on top of it.'[504] The mechanical lodgers, the mechanical sister. All are in pursuit of little more than lifestyle, social currency, and money. All are therefore reduced to mere machines. 'You must just try to get rid of the idea that this is Gregor,' she tells her father. 'The fact that we've believed it for so long is the root of all our trouble. But how can it be Gregor? If this were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that human beings can't live with such a creature and he'd have gone away on his own accord. Then we wouldn't have any brother, but we'd be able to go on living and keep his memory in honor. As it is, this creature persecutes us, drives away our lodgers, obviously wants the whole apartment to himself and would have us all sleep in the gutter.'[505]

First Gregor disappears as a man, and now as a beetle. Locked away in his room by Grete, he finds himself wasting away physically in beetle form just as he had once wasted away spiritually as a man. For the first time since his father's attack, the now rotting apple impaled into his skin now felt barely noticeable. Gregor finds that he himself can barely move, can barely feel, and thinks only of his family 'with tenderness and love.' He remains in a 'state of vacant and peaceful meditation' until 'The first broadening of light in the world outside the window entered his consciousness once more. Then his head sank to the floor of its own accord and from his nostrils came the last faint flicker of his breath.'[506] The relief that Gregor's family feel upon his death is immense. For Nabokov, Gregor is revealed to be 'a human being in an insect's disguise,' whilst 'his family are insects disguised as people.'[507]

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[504]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*
[505]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*
[506]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*
[507]Nabokov, V (1982) *Lecture*

In the final scene of the final book, the family are buoyed, vibrant, and happy once more. Life, it seems, represents opportunity and hope once again. Mr and Mrs Samsa fire the cheap old charwoman they once needed to hire, and the trio leave the apartment together and go to visit the lush, open countryside.[508] Travelling by trolley, the happy, fresh new (reimagined) family discuss their plans for the future, mainly concerned with future employment opportunities, how they might improve their living standards by moving to an easier-run apartment, and their daughter's prospects of marriage. This bourgeois philistinism is too much for Nabokov: 'The soul has died with Gregor; the healthy young animal takes over. The parasites have fattened themselves on Gregor.'[509]

Kafka and theory

Charles Neider had a Freudian interpretation of *The Metamorphosis,* which he believed to be primarily based upon Kafka's own, difficult relationship with his father and his resulting inescapable sense of guilt. Children are represented by vermin, and Samsa's representation of a bug demonstrates his worthlessness before his father. Nabokov 'rejects this nonsense,' Kafka, he contends, was highly critical of Freudian ideas as base, rough approximations that could not do justice to the true, nuanced picture of events. Nevertheless, there is some merit in this understanding, rudimentary as it may be. Kafka did indeed suffer a difficult, strained relationship with a father that affected his happiness greatly in childhood and adulthood, and led to a compunction to toil away at a miserable office job in order to keep the family afloat. Freud may not have been 'the greatest literary influence' on Kafka, but there is some obvious merit in the idea that Kafka may be interpreted through a somewhat Freudian lens.

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[508]Kafka *The Metamorphosis*
[509]Nabokov, V (1982) *Lecture*

At the outset of the story, Gregor Samsa asks: 'what has happened to me?,' a question he finds not satisfactorily answered. This question permeates the entire text - but it also haunts modern life. We do not have to search far in *The Metamorphosis* in order to find parallels in today's age. Technology has removed us from social relationships and human contact much as Samsa's existential transformation has. Fear, anxiety, and disappointment at the state of one's own life is rising considerably. Corporations and manufacturers ostensibly tend to customers as Gregor's family did to him, but similarly abuse and demean instead. Much like the technology addict who cannot bear to pull themselves away from the television or the mobile phone, disgusted at what they are and yet falsely sated by it, Gregor wishes to reject the false care and base needs that his transformation has brought, and finds that he cannot - leading to an even greater depth of self-loathing. Gregor Samsa dies from a mixture of shame, abuse, neglect, and starvation. His actual needs - as a human and as a creature - had not been met for a very long time. Nevertheless, he kept yearning. Gregor is a saintly figure who can see the good - perhaps only the good - in those around him. Whilst he is repulsed by what he is, he desires to change himself in order to best satisfy the needs of the mass around him. He is fundamentally - and fruitlessly - alienated.

Can alienation be overcome?

Alienation is not unique to the modern world - though it may well be exacerbated to a new precedent because of it. Some form of alienation has been present in the literature and philosophy of man since literature and philosophy have existed. It is Job who wonders why he is alienated by the God he serves, Plato who understood that philosophy is borne of confusion, Dante - a 'paradigm of alienation',[510] in the words of Kaufmann, who damns his peers (and society) to the rings of his styled hell. 'If alienation', Kaufmann asks, 'is associated [...] more with being artistically

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[510]Ashcroft, C. (2024) *Catastrophic Technology in Cold War Political Thought*, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, p.36

out of touch with one's time [, then] who among Dante's contemporaries could have fathomed his work? And how many people since his time?'[511]

Many great thinkers of the nineteenth century - across the philosophical, artistic, theological, and scientific fields - sought triumph over the unbearable state of alienation that many of them found themselves in. Hegel, Kant, Schopenhauer, Spinoza and Leibniz all sought - with varying degrees of success - to do so. Schopenhauer's efforts to complete the system of German Idealism and reconcile (and defeat) alienation rested in a renunciation of the world so extreme that to follow it to its logical conclusion the reader would wonder why Schopenhauer did not starve himself to death. Twentieth century radicals such as Theodore Kaczynski believe that man was less alienated in a pre-industrial society. Some believe this difference in alienation to be significant - or that individuals were not alienated at all. Both beliefs belie a fundamental misunderstanding: some form of alienation will always be present. Perhaps it is more appropriate to reflect on the different kinds of alienation, and whether capitalism exacerbates one or the other.

As Walter Kaufmann writes, the assumption that all forms of alienation arise from one core cause is naive 'regardless of whether this is blamed on economic causes or not,' as is the temptation 'to think that the person who is liberated from that will no longer suffer any alienation. On the contrary, creativity and originality require non-conformity, and the more profoundly he is bound to become alienated from society.'[512] A different economic situation would certainly not correct all alienation - it is too vast and varied a spectre - but non-conformity will de-alienate a man to the best of his abilities.

Kaufmann believed that the term 'alienation' has been used 'so indiscriminately that it is

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[511]Kaufmann, W (1980) 'The Inevitability of Alienation' *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, T. 18, No. 52, p.36
[512]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.37

far from clear who is supposed to be alienated: the minority who reads Kafka or Euripides with understanding, the faddists who consider Edward Albee and Andy Warhol great, or the vast majority that reads the Reader's Digest. If the last group, what are we to say of the overwhelming majority of Rembrandt's and Mozart's contemporaries who never as much as heard of them? Who is more alienated - a writer in America who in 1970 still does not have a television set, or rather those who spend their leisure time watching television? The non-conformist is alienated from society, but those who conform are alienated from themselves.'[513] Kaufmann reveals his belief that art and literature are capable of 'fruitfully' alienating the individual, whilst much of society (including base forms of art and literature) lead to a fruitless or destructive alienation.

It is precisely this conformity - this definition of oneself through the passive absorption of society's trends and norms - and the resulting alienation, one-dimensionalisation of the individual into the mass - that I am concerned with.

The nature of late-stage capitalism in the age of technological modernity means that everyone is in consequence alienated (in a wide range of ways - from nature, God, goodness, labour, potential, creativity, to name but a few). Those who are aware of this alienated state can be considered 'fruitfully alienated' - that is, alienated from their own alienation. By contrast, those who are unaware of the alienated state in which they live are 'fruitlessly' alienated. They may be superficially happy, but they are not capable of true flourishing, individuality, or the capacity to live a fully meaningful life.

The continuing refinements of late-stage capitalism serve to narrow the nature of man's work, education, entertainment, leisure, and family life, further exacerbating the one-dimensionality of man in the technological age. Through television, pop culture, 'low' culture, society becomes increasingly 'fruitlessly' alienated. Even those who are aware of their own alienation - and therefore 'fruitfully' alienated - suffer in

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[513]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.37

consequence due to this self-awareness. Walter Benjamin, alienated from his society, ends his life. Kafka, alienated from his time, is driven mad. Our authors, whether science fiction writers or German critical theorists, seek to liberate the fruitlessly alienated reader through their writing, thus giving them the *potential* to be fruit*fully* alienated. This critical self-awareness can, therefore, be a form of martyrdom: in seeking to evangelise the reader's own alienation to himself, the author consigns himself to a life of isolated estrangement, in pursuit of a thankless task recognised by few.

Kaufman is correct in his belief that 'it is naive to assume that all forms of alienation issue from one root form - whether that is blamed on economic causes or not - and to think that the person who is liberated from that will no longer suffer from any alienation.'[514] Indeed, a different economic system would certainly not eradicate alienation as a whole - it is too vast - but non-conformity to the norms of the world will de-alienate a man to the best of his abilities. Indeed, 'creativity and originality require non-conformity; and the more profoundly he is bound to become alienated from society.'[515] Alienation can therefore be overcome - at least to some degree - by the individual's embrace of his own individuality. Kafka's awareness of this presented itself as a dichotomy between stability, security, and profound, fruitless alienation, or the freedom, self-expression, and uncertainty of artistic work. Life circumstances, he believed, kept him enthralled to capitalist exploitation. Technology compounded it.

We have mentioned those who believe that men were less alienated in a pre-industrial society: some have even committed atrocities in the name of a return to pre-industrialism.[516] A glimpse into the literature and philosophy of the past reveals elements of alienation to be perpetual, even if the causes and effects vary. Rousseau and Robespierre sought to direct the French public back to a more natural - and stringently moral - form of life in order to eradicate the alienation of

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[514]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.37
[515]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.37
[516]Fleming, S (2022) 'The Unabomber and the origins of anti-tech radicalism', Journal of Political Ideologies, 27:2, 207-225

the masses under the excesses of the First and Second Estates. It is of no doubt that men such as Theodore Kaczynski suffered much from living specifically in an industrial world (and would have therefore been much happier freed from it), but is this true for the entirety of mankind, or for them specifically? Jacques Ellul, a Christian dialectician, notably believed that industrialisation alienated man more than secularisation ever could - though Adorno and Horkheimer's writing reveals no nostalgia for a pre-technological past.'[517]

Walter Kaufmann is critical of those who are of the opinion that the world has never been more alienated. Surely the multitude of examples throughout history demonstrate that alienation is a perpetual part of the human condition? But there are two forms of alienation - the fruitful and the fruitless - and in contemporary society the former is at its weakest and the latest at its strongest. Alienation is certainly not *unique* to this time or economic situation, but it is *extremely* exacerbated by it.

Rather than economic conditions, Kaufmann believes *education* as being the primary cause of alienation (or a range of phenomena often lumped together under that term).[518] Paradoxically, education at its best alienates individuals in a *fruitful* manner, showing individuals 'how the familiar is not comprehended and how what had seemed clear is really quite strange.' For Kaufmann, 'if alienation is much more widespread now than it used to be, this is in large measure because more people receive more education than formerly.'[519]

Kaufmann also credits the explosion in population numbers as leading to a form of alienation-via-disillusionment: if 'every American boy today has only a fraction of the chance to

[517]Delanty, G and Harris, N, 'Critical theory and the question of technology: The Frankfurt School revisited' *Thesis Eleven* 166:1 (2021), 90

[518]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.38

[519]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.38

become president of his country that every American boy had 100 years ago,' he is more likely to be alienated from common dreams - and also the work needed in order to achieve them. [520] Grandiose as this form of disillusionment might sound, more and more opportunities are becoming out of reach for more and more people. In Britain alone, the commercialisation of education under the Blair government (with the express objective of getting 50% of British children into university) led to an explosion of the university sector, the normalisation of higher education, and the decrease in opportunities for those both with and without a university education - pushing more students into postgraduate degrees in order to signify the education and status previously afforded by an undergraduate degree. All of this contributes to a general air of malaise, and an increasing number of youth (and beyond) becoming more isolated, dispirited, and alienated.

Education therefore has the opportunity to inspire both fruitless and fruitful estrangement. 'The trouble,' Kaufmann writes, 'is that one does not know in advance when estrangement will prove to be fruitful.'[521] Indeed, it is dependent as much on the individual themselves as to what they experience - two individuals given the same education, family background, and future prospects may well find themselves with entirely different experiences of alienation and estrangement. Similarly, one boy offered a much 'better' education may very well find himself as fruit*lessly* alienated as dozens upon dozens of their less-privileged peers. Perhaps only one or two children in each year group will instead find themselves fruitfully estranged through these same experiences. Even fruitful alienation may not appear to bear much fruit: those deeply estranged from society are often just as liable to self-destruction as they are to creativity - see Dick, Zamyatin, Wittgenstein, Socrates, Benjamin, Schopenhauer, and Weil - amongst others. Perhaps no philosopher better exemplified this than Nietzsche (driven mad by his own rejection of morality, 'reduced' to fitfully protecting a horse with Dostoevskian 'meek eyes' from its beating on the

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[520]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.39
[521]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.41

street); perhaps no author better exemplified this than Kafka (committed to asylums, near-anorexic with self-loathing, requesting that all of his work be burnt upon his death). In the words of Walter Kaufmann, '[Kafka] was and felt deeply alienated without realising how fruitful his condition was.'[522] Kafka did not believe that he could overcome his own alienation: but he failed to see the truth of what that estrangement signified.

The Abrahamic religions - most notably Christianity, and to a lesser extent Judaism - attempted to intentionally foster this very form of estrangement in its followers, albeit for reasons related to purification of the soul instead of artistic brilliance. 'Take up your cross and follow Me,' announced Christ to those who wished to adhere to his teaching. 'For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?'[523] This instruction was an attempt to engender a radical form of moral resistance to the world, to differ personal behaviour from the actions and requirements of the state (render unto Caesar…), and to bring about a death to the very self. Prophets throughout the Old Testament and New were not just estranged from the excesses of Babylon or Rome, nor from the political leadership of Israel or Judah, but *often from those they lived along and wished to save*. Sigmund Freud wrote in his *Selbstdarstellung* that a Jew soon becomes acquainted with 'the lot of standing among the opposition and being placed under a ban by the 'compact majority'.[524] Jews, he therefore thought, were inclined towards a certain independence of judgement.[525] Even amongst the avowedly Christian or Jewish nations, few actually strive for - let alone attain - such profound (and fruitful) alienation from culture, community, economy, and self.

In the words of Adorno, 'All humans, deep down, whether they admit this or not, know

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[522]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.41
[523]Matthew 16:24-26 ESV
[524]Freud, *Selbstdarstellung*, 1925
[525]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.42

[...] it could be different.'[526] The discomfort of living in an alienating society is the price of fruitful alienation - a red mark bestowed upon a small number capable of attaining this uninviting prize. The creativity and horror arising from such alienation is not a comfort. That is not, however, to say that it is a negative state in which to live - instead, it should be positively encouraged. 'Whoever would try to protect the young from alienation has despaired of man,' Walter Kaufmann believed.[527] 'It would be more in keeping with the spirit of the prophets, Confucius, and Socrates to say instead: Life without estrangement is scarcely worth living; what matters is to increase men's capacity to cope with alienation.'

All are dehumanised under the current economic conditions - across all class levels, racial lines, income brackets, and prospects. Only a select few are alienated to a fruitful end. It is not necessarily a condition that brings happiness. But, for both Kafka and the Frankfurt School, mankind's ability to attain this state becomes increasingly difficult with the inescapable rise of technology.

Technology and Alienation

Kathleen League notes the effect of the supposedly 'utopian' technological developments upon the Dene Inuit tribe in Yellowknife. Jerry Mander, a former advertising executive, travelled out in order to interview a tribal representative on the effects of the introduction of television.[528] The tribe's spokesperson described the lack of 'effective, quick means of communication' amongst the Dene, who are often separated by hundreds of miles, much of it traversed only by aeroplanes

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[526]Ernst Bloch, quoted in League (2010) *Adorno, Radical Negativity, and Cultural Critique* p.xvi
[527]Kaufmann, *The Inevitability of Alienation*, p.42
[528]League, Kathleen (2010) *Adorno, Radical Negativity, and Cultural Critique: Utopia in the Map of the World* (Lexington Books: Maryland)

and dog teams.[529] Not only did the introduction of television to the area result in people becoming rapidly more placid, they began to show a lack of interest in their own history and language, subsumed into American 'aspirational' entertainment - which glamorised money and violence.'People are sitting in their log houses, alongside frozen lakes with dog teams tied up outside, watching a bunch of white people in Dallas standing around their swimming pools, drinking martinis, and plotting to destroy each other or steal from each other, or to get their friends' wives into bed,' she said. 'Then after that they see a show that is about a man turning into a machine.'

These were behaviours and values that were 'poisonous to life' around Yellowknife, whose traditions necessarily revolve around 'Cooperation, sharing, and nonmaterialism [...] TV always seems to present values opposite to those.'[530]

In Dene communities in the mid-nineties, the majority of households were multi-generational spaces in which ten might live in a one or two-bedroom house. This presented a particular difficulty in shielding children from sexual violence portrayed in U.S. dramas: 'The TV is going all the time and the little kids and the old people and everyone are all sitting there together and watching it. Now they'll all be seeing men beating up naked women. It's so crazy and awful. Nobody ever told us that all this would be coming in with television.' For the Dene, it was comparable to 'some kind of invasion from outer space or something. First it was the government, then those oil companies, and now it's TV.'[531] The communities, remote and ignored as they were, were simply some of the last to succumb to the incessant march of the alienating quality of media technology. Their experiences were much like those predicted by Kafka and critiqued by the

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[529]Mander, J (1996) *In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations* (Sierra Club Books: San Francisco) p.295
[530]*Ibid,* p.295
[531]Mander (1996) In the Absence of the Sacred p.297

Frankfurt School. By the time they realised the effect that it had upon their own community, no-one cared. Anti-technological thought was, at best, *passé*. There was nothing to be done. Don Ihde described an 'emergent theme of much midtwentieth-century philosophy' as characterised by an 'autonomous technology, that is, a runaway technology that exceeds, "Frankenstein-like," its inventor's controls.'[532]

Technology is essential in understanding the concerns of the Frankfurt School for humanity and the society in which they live. In their *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Adorno and Horkheimer make a clear distinction between the 'phase of mass culture' that succeeded and supplanted the 'late liberal' stage. Indeed, for the Frankfurt School, liberal theory exists only as an 'apologia for existing circumstances.'[533] Modern technology is catastrophic even to the philosophies that have served primarily to corrupt. Technology is, therefore, a deeply political concept, and cannot be understood (or managed) as the neutral force proponents claim it is.[534] Jerry Weinberger believed that those who saw technology as a contributing, rather than fundamental problem, managed 'to miss its obvious character as a horizon within which every other problem comes to light.' For him, 'the possibilities of technology constitute not just any modern world view; they refract our experience of any possible world, whether it be past, present, or in the future. It is impossible to conceive of modernity without reflecting on technology.'[535]

The technological world, Caroline Ashcroft believes, is 'one that has subsumed all other possible political, social, or cultural worlds in modernity, that which is produced or enabled by technology and the technological process.' Whilst in some senses this world could be understood

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[532]Ihde, D (2010) *Heidegger's Technology: Postphenomenological Perspectives* (New York: Fordham University Press, pp.19-20

[533]Adorno and Horkheimer (2016) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso: London) p.134

[534]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought,* p.5

[535]Weinberger, J (1988) 'Liberal Democracy and the Problem of Technology,' in *Democratic Theory and Technological Society* ed. Richard B. Day, Ronald Beiner and Joseph Masciulli (Routledge: Oxford) p.126.

as peculiarly 'neutral' - absent of 'critique, dissent, or plurality - the qualities which enable politics or political freedom for theorists', it is, also, a totalising society due to this lack of critique and due to the domination of nature - and therefore of mankind.[536] Technology changes the way in which we perceive and understand the world - opening the world up and also diminishing the spectre of thought that it contains. Sheldon Wolin believed that 'the brute facts of the twentieth century - totalitarianism, racism, death camps, cultural barbarism, and the celebration of military aggression - made it no longer possible for [the Frankfurt School] to believe in the inevitably of progress or the neutral character of modern technology.'[537] Marcuse argued that Marx was wrong to stress:

the essentially 'neutral' character of technology [...] that modern machinery is susceptible to capitalist as well a socialist utilisation. This amounts to saying that mature capitalism and socialism have the same technical base, and that the historical decision as to how this base is to be used is a political decision.[538]

The Frankfurt School rejected claims of technology's neutrality entirely. Marcuse believed that, with technological rationalism, the worker's day 'would remain a day of unfreedom, rational but not free.'[539]

Nabokov noted Kafka's proclivity to 'draw his terms from the language of law and science,' which gave them 'a kind of ironic precision, with no intrusion of the author's private sentiments.'[540]

Technology is distinct from science, but closely entwined. Stanley Aronowitz wrote that 'investigators of science remain tied to the concept of science as a distinct knowledge sphere and

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[536]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.9
[537]Wolin, S (2016) *Fugitive Democracy* (Princeton University Press: Princeton) p.218
[538] Quoted in Ashcroft, p.116
[539]Quoted in Ashcroft, p.116
[540]Nabokov, V (1982) *Lecture*

have barely touched its relation to technology.' The only group who sought to adequately understand this link between the two was the Critical Theorists.[541] It was they who understood technology as a rationalising, totalising force, they who saw through the 'neutrality' of technological progress and into the decline of freedom that it engendered. In his *One Dimensional Man,* Marcuse wrote that 'In the face of the totalitarian features of this society, the traditional notion of the "neutrality" of technology can no longer be maintained.'[542] Enlightenment 'reason' had gradually become the nexus of oppression and suppression, it 'requires the self-alienation of the individuals who must model their body and soul according to the technical apparatus.'[543] In Galileo's 'mathematisation of nature, nature itself idealised on the model of the new mathematics,' and as a result 'thought is reified as an autonomous, automatic process, aping the machine it has itself produced, so that it can finally be replaced by the machine.'[544] Science as a whole - and technology within - are both incredibly dangerous creatures.

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Adorno and Horkheimer discuss the 'scientific attitude' with its belief that 'knowledge, which is power, knows no obstacles,' and that 'Technology is the essence of this knowledge.'[545] For the Frankfurt School, the rise of modern technology was bound with the rise of totalitarian societies, whether fascist Germany or communist Russia. For Ashcroft, the Cold War moved the Frankfurt School's fear of totalitarianism beyond 'specific national threats,' becoming instead 'a universal threat posed by modernity itself.'[546] As such, many Frankfurt School thinkers were disdainful of the classic Cold War dichotomies between 'us and them', security and danger, prosperity and totalitarianism, progress and repression. Marcuse maintained that there existed 'an essential link between the two conflicting systems [...] the technical-economic basis

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[541]Aronowitz, S (1988) *Science as Power: Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society* (Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis) pp.6-7

[542]Marcuse, H (1964) *One Dimensional Man* (Beacon: Boston) p.xvi

[543] Quoted in in Ashcroft, p.52.

[544] Quoted in Ashcroft, p.65.

[545]Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.38

[546]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought,* p.17

common to both [...] as the mainstream of social organisation in all spheres of life.'[547] Rather than the world being split into opposing spheres dominated by the capitalist west or Marxist-Leninist east, technology had superseded both in order to become an global, all-encompassing threat - those who were still preoccupied with the traditional binary had missed a crucial development in modernity. The two poles of the Cold War were more united by the inescapability - the totalitarianism - of technology than they were separated by ideology. The threat of totalitarianism was now 'a threat posed by modernity itself.'[548]

Caroline Ashcroft suggests that modernity 'possesses a systemic tendency to self-destruction.'[549] In many ways, the fears of the Frankfurt School (and many science fiction authors) are that it instead possesses a tendency to ossify - and falsely, fraudulently elongate the passage of world history, abruptly and severely limited opportunities for revolutionary action. Modernity, characterised, aided, and abetted by technology is self-protected and insulated from the destruction it causes, whilst destructive to the soul and wellbeing of the individual. Revolution is increasingly unlikely to come, because a) life is too pleasurable and wasteful, and contradictions struggle to emerge or inspire anger in an ambivalent heart, and b) because time *does not march on.*

In the early stages of his career, Max Horkheimer held a somewhat optimistic view of technological development inspired by Marx's thought. By 1942, his view of technology had shifted dramatically. In *The End of Reason,* Horkeimer argued that whilst the Enlightenment sought to promote rationality as the key principle to better society and man, the concept contained defects that 'vitiate it essentially.'[550] Reason had not led to a classless society in any positive (or beneficial) sense, but had instead resulted in a capitalist economy, a multiplicity of frivolous wants and a

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[547]Marcuse, H (1958) *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London) p.6.
[548]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.17
[549]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.17
[550]Horkheimer, *The End of Reason*

decline of dissent - perhaps even the ability to dissent. Bureaucracy increased. Technology increased. Domination increased. Man's individuality reduced. Progress, therefore, 'threatens to nullify the very goal it is supposed to realise - the idea of man.'[551] Rather than the hopeful position Horkheimer held two decades prior - that, in the words of Wolf Schäfer, 'classless society will unleash the powers of science and technology and achieve complete human mastery of history,'[552] technology was instead revealed to be the master of history, nature - and man. Reason was revealed as no more - and no less - than the 'instrument of the all-inclusive economic apparatus.'[553] Horkheimer had become suitably pessimistic enough about technological and logical domination to bear much fruit with Adorno. The latter's work on the Culture Industry complemented Horkheimer's own critique of modernity. The propagandistic nature of the culture industry promotes false needs that mask the dehumanisation process that humanity is undergoing. For Adorno, all technology is equal in its ability to dehumanise and dominate - 'Automobiles, bombs and movies' are what drive society.[554] As Ashcroft understands, 'all technology is a unitary or unifying mechanism [...] the culture industry and its technologies are merely an outgrowth of the technologies of the production sphere.'[555] For Adorno, 'the ruthless unity in the culture industry is evidence of what will happen in politics.'[556] Indeed, the culture industry will spread this 'ruthless unity' further, as the 'whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry.'[557] The elimination of negation was an endless 'un-life'. Adorno's reflections on technology and the modernity that it protected had grown from his views on the Holocaust: 'Genocide is the absolute integration. It is on its way wherever men are levelled off – "polished off," as the German military called it – until one exterminates them literally, as deviations from the concept of their total nullity.'

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[551] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic* p.30

[552] Schafer in Ashcroft, p.36 ref lv

[553] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic* p.30

[554] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic* pp.121-122

[555] Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.37

[556] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic* p.123

[557] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic* p.126

For Adorno, 'Auschwitz confirmed the philosopher of pure identity as death.'[558] For the Frankfurt School and Franz Kafka, technological power might proceed from the economic, but it is able to dominate to an even greater degree than economic power alone.[559] Inspired by Hegel, Adorno's writing on 'rational science', contained his thoughts on how 'the unity of reification, that is, of a false - in Hegel's terms, abstract - objectivity external to the thing itself, and a naivete that confuses facts and figures, the plaster cast of the world, with its foundation.'[560] Reason therefore 'became autonomous and developed into an apparatus [...] thinking also became the prey of reification.'[561] The reification previously discussed in chapters that focus on pleasure and happiness is also imposed upon man and nature through cultural and technological domination.

When Adorno had first arrived in America, he had worked at the Rockefeller-funded Radio Research Project, a project undertaken to explore the effects of mass media on society - during which he commented upon its damaging and 'standardising' effects. This period led to a great intellectual awakening for Adorno, who saw technology, rationalism, and capitalism as permeating culture and society to a catastrophic degree, culminating in totalitarian political control. In the words of Martin Jay, 'technical standardization leads to centralized administration.'[562] This train of thought was a clear line of separation from Leninist forms of Marxist aesthetic criticism, and their 'general indifference' to technology.[563] For Horkheimer, technology did not work through 'concepts and images [but] the exploitation of others' work, and capital […] What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men.'[564] The Frankfurt School therefore saw a strong connection between technology, science, reason, domination,

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[558] Adorno, T (1973) *Negative Dialectics* (Routledge: London) p.362
[559] Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.37
[560] Quoted in Ashcroft, p.72
[561] Quoted in Ashcroft, p.72
[562] Jay, M (1996) *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*, (University of California Press: Oakland) p.193.
[563] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p.193.
[564] Quoted in Ashcroft, p.67-8.

culture, and capitalism - all of which were perfectly packaged together in modernity.

Optimism

Horkheimer believed that one of Marx's most significant shortcomings rested in his suggestion that 'consciousness would become free once men mastered material conditions; to imagine that peace among the classes would 'also be peace among men and with nature.'[565] Rather than engendering a technological utopia, technology was bringing about previously unknown levels of alienation across humanity - it had instead created a technological *dystopia*. The Christian dialectician Jacques Ellul agreed with this assessment, believing that whilst modernity appeared to be a dream-like technological paradise, it was in fact 'the unqualified triumph of technical rationalism.' The 'supposedly revolutionary imagination' had in fact produced 'an idea that is as antirevolutionary as anything could possibly be.'[566]

It was Marcuse who was the most optimistic of the Frankfurt School in regards to technology, believing that the oppression of technology could hypothetically be overcome by radical outsiders seeking to overthrow the suppressive modern technological system. Nevertheless, he was just as horrified by the oppressive quality of technology as his peers in the School. In the 1940s, Marcuse expanded on Horkheimer's belief in how the rationality of technology had become more and more oppressive: 'The facts directing man's thought and action are not those of nature [...] Rather are they those of the machine process, which itself appears as the embodiment of rationality and expediency.'[567] Indeed, rationality was becoming so self-serving so as to exist at the expense of everything else: the post-Enlightenment values that had been derived from rationality

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[565]Max Horkheimer (1978) *Dawn and Decline - Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1969* (Seabury Press: Oxford) p.156
[566] Ellul, J (1978) *The Betrayal of the West* (Seabury: Oxford) p.151
[567]Marcuse, H 'Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,' Studies in Philosophy and Social Science 9 (1941), 418.

were good only 'for the functioning of the apparatus - and for that alone.'[568] Later, Marcuse

explicitly stated that technology was a fundamentally totalitarian force.[569] 'The failure of humanism

seems to be due to over-development rather than backwardsness,' he believed.[570] Marcuse

nevertheless managed to maintain a stronger faith in the possibility of revolutionary change under

technological modernity than his more pessimistic colleagues, reconciling the Frankfurt School

belief that modernity worked to repress the dialectic with the belief that outsider groups could

nevertheless still be able to implement revolutionary change. Marx had been 'too optimistic and

idealistic,' Marcuse believed, but a more guarded form of optimism was still warranted.[571] By the

1960s, Marcuse was an icon to optimistic young radicals. 'Marcuse's gloom about the demise of

revolutionary opposition is dispelled,' Douglas Kellner writes of this time, and Marcuse's writings

'glow with revolutionary optimism.'[572] Whilst the New Left radicals were not, for Marcuse, true

revolutionaries, their movement held a seed of potential for sparking further revolutionary

possibilities. Fred Alford believes that Marcuse came to the conclusion that 'the basic structure of

science is historically relative. A revolutionary change in social relations could bring with it a

revolutionary new science as well.'[573] Freedom - despite the odds - remained possible.

Still, one of Marcuse's most piercing critiques of technology rested in his belief that it led

to a 'denaturing' of reality - even if that denaturing process has taken place through 'man's own

practices.'[574] Nature is dominated and reshaped by technological progress, as is mankind. Dana

Villa argues that Marcuse was 'absolutely convinced that the domination of nature through

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[568]Marcuse, H 'Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,' Studies in Philosophy and Social Science 9 (1941), 422

[569]Marcuse, H (1964) One Dimensional Man (Beacon: Boston) p.xvi

[570]Marcuse, H (1965) 'Socialist Humanism,' in *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium* ed. Erich Fromm (Doubleday: New York) p.112

[571]Marcuse, H (1965) 'Socialist Humanism,' in *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium* ed. Erich Fromm (Doubleday: New York) p.112

[572]Kellner, D (1984) *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (MacMillan: London), p.285.

[573] Alford, F (1985) *Science and the Revenge of Nature: Marcuse and Habermas* (University Presses of Florida: Florida), p.3

[574]Quoted in Ashcroft, p.73

technology is inextricably linked to the domination of man, which therefore affects man's understanding and experience of the world and society in which he lives.'[575] There no longer exists 'concrete experience,' Marcuse writes, 'but administrative practice organised by technology. Such an evolution reflects the transformation of the natural world into a technical world.'[576] Technology has therefore replaced ontology, oppressing and overthrowing nature and reality as it subsumes man's experience and understanding of the world in which he lives, becoming more and more totalising. Proponents of the Enlightenment may have believed that they were bringing about a world that prioritised human freedom, independence of thought, and liberation from domination, but scientific reason quickly stymied this - and technology compounded the domination further. 'With the victory of technology,' Horkheimer wrote, '[man's] autonomy regresses, negates itself. What is under way in the bourgeois era will be completed in the automated world.'[577] Horkheimer expanded on this thought in his *Eclipse of Reason:* 'It seems that even as technical knowledge expands the horizon of man's thought and activity, his autonomy as an individual, his ability to resist the growing apparatus of mass manipulation, his power of imagination, his independent judgement, appear to be reduced. Advance in technical facilities for enlightenment is accompanied by a process of dehumanisation. As Caroline Ashcroft explains, whilst technology is not the sole contributing factor to the increasing oppression and reification of humanity, it is 'increasingly the form that all dominations become centred in and realised through: the economic domination of modern societies, the rationalisation (thus de-rationalisation) of individuals, and the mastery of nature. Its evolution to full automation only entrenches this fact.[578] Horkheimer verbalises a concept that will become important to Marcuse: that whilst technology has the ability to overturn domination and be used for the liberation of the alienated, it has instead been utilised by

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[575]Villa, *Public Freedom* p.162
[576] Marcuse, M 'World without a Logos,' *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 20 (January 1964), p.25
[577] Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline* p.229
[578]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, pp.78-9

'destructive force.'[579]

Technology, even to the most sympathetic or hopeful of the Frankfurt School, can be brutalising. In essays across 1966 and 1967, Marcuse argued that technology created a more aggressive state of being, corrupting man into greater levels of brutality due to the 'mechanical, electrical, or nuclear energy of "things" rather than the instinctual energy of a human being,' causing individual humanity to be 'super-sublimated.'[580]

Robot and Machine

Thus far we have discussed the Frankfurt School's belief that Enlightenment reason, science, and technology have all worked together to dominate and oppress the progress of history, the potential of man, dissent, and even natural ontology, mediating man's experience of the world around him. But what of man's innate humanity? Horkheimer argued that, under modernity, 'awareness of the self as an autonomous individual with his own soul is giving way to the corporate mentality.'[581] This 'corporate' individual possesses 'only enough spontaneity to launch himself onto the path prescribed for him,' - a path which allows for increasingly little dissent, individuality, or flourishing.[582] This is precisely the path that Gregor Samsa has taken, and that Kafka believed himself to have suffered.

Gregor Samsa lives a life of alienation perfectly suited to analysis of the Frankfurt School. Unlike most of the alienated, however, Samsa's chasms of loneliness inspire a form of fruitful

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[579] Horkheimer, M (2012) 'The Concept of Man,' in *Critique of Instrumental Reason* (Verso: London), p.28.
[580] Marcuse, H (1988) 'Aggressiveness in Advanced Industrial Society' in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Free Association: London) p.263
[581] Horkheimer, M (2012) 'Threats to Freedom,' in *Critique of Instrumental Reason* (Verso: London), p.157.
[582] Horkheimer, *The Concept of Man* p.4.

alienation within. Prior to his transformation, he has been bullied, cajoled, and demeaned into something less than human, and then into something more obviously sub-human - but a soft heart remains, a love remains, an individual remains, buried deep as it is underneath the hide of a beast. He is contrasted with the cold automatons that surround him: the clerks he works for, the family who despise and betray him, the lodgers who live for comfort and profit. For the Frankfurt School, modernity washes away the interior life of the individual until only 'technological expertise, presence of mind, pleasure in the mastery of machinery, the need to be part of and to agree with the majority or some group [...] whose regulations replace individual judgement' remain.[583] As such, humanity becomes ever more machine-like in the manner in which it learns, understands, feels, and functions. Günther Anders argued that 'Machines possess a will to power,' and that 'the expansionist urge of the machines is insatiable.'[584] All of this contributes to a lack of dissent, originality, and freedom. As man loses his individuality, so too does society, which becomes increasingly bureaucratised and totalitarian. The use of technology therefore intrinsically increases violence, but it further removes individuals from guilt or restraint by 'the fact that aggression and destruction are carried out by a thing,' which 'impairs the satisfaction of the aggressive instinct, and this frustration prompts repetition and escalation of aggression [...] The result is brutalisation on a massive scale.'[585]

For Marcuse, domination occurs 'not through but as technology.'[586] The technology that has given humanity more 'power' over nature reduces humanity's power over their own nature, subsuming them into automatons themselves directed by technology. Adorno and Horkheimer warn proponents and users of technology of this, suggesting that they are unwitting victims of its domination: 'Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they

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[583]*Ibid.* p.12
[584]Quoted in Ashcroft, p.104
[585]Marcuse, H (1967) 'The Inner Logic of American Policy in Vietnam' in *Teach-Ins, USA: Reports, Opinions, Documents*, ed. Louis Menashe and Ronald Radosh (Praeger: New York) pp.65-66
[586]Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man,* p.158

exercise their power.' [587] 'At the present level,' John Diebold argued, 'human physical power is replaced by machine power. At the higher level, the monitoring and control tasks now humanly performed will be done by machines.'[588] The more power relinquished to machines, the more modernity dominates man, and the more inescapable that domination becomes. Unlike the utopian socialists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Marcuse argued that the time freed up by automated technology would lead to deeper social domination. Rather than carpenters able to go home and read Goethe, the working class instead became subsumed into an increasingly large middle-class preoccupied with bourgeois pursuits that serve the capitalist economy.

For Adorno, the prevailing relations of production make it 'possible for life to reproduce itself,' as a form of 'coordination of people that are dead.'[589][590] Far from granting opportunities to overcome alienation, life becomes increasingly - even totally - subjugated to domination. Humanity becomes increasingly dehumanised, according to Ashcroft, as 'technology forms a second, false world.'[591] 'The transformation of tool to machine,' is, for the Frankfurt School, catastrophic. For them and Kafka alike, the transformation also infuses the 'master' of technology - he is transformed from human, to machine, to tool. The possibility for revolution, for freedom, for emancipation from the mechanised world decreases as technology progresses. 'There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even passively take part,' Mario Savio said at Berkeley in the Autumn of 1964, 'and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop.' How, ask Kafka, Adorno, and Marcuse, can this be done, when mankind is reduced to mere instrument himself? 'If someone uses an instrument, such as pliers, he does not serve the pliers,' Günther Anders wrote. 'On the contrary: he dominates

[587]Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic,* p.9
[588]Diebold, J (1983) *Automation* (American Management Associations: New York) p.158
[589]Adorno, T (2020) *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (Verso: London) p.229
[590]Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.229
[591]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.131

them, because he uses them for the purpose of his work.'[592] In modernity, technology has developed to such an extent that it is the governor of itself - the captain of its 'soul'. 'As pieces of this world of machines,' Anders argues, 'we humans are in the best cases proletarians. But most probably we are something worse than that'.

John Diebold's 1952 work *Automation* was first to popularise the term. Within it, he argued that technology would form 'a new chapter' in man's 'organisation and mechanisation of the forces of nature.' 'To a great extent,' he concluded, 'man's function is the tending of machines.'[593] Across increasing geographical, cultural, and class spheres, technology was beginning to intrude upon - and shape - man's activity, understanding, and organisation. Indeed, automation is of critical importance, particularly in regard to the sphere of production and labour.[594] Modernity has brought about technology which automates production, making technology not a tool in and of itself but rather a semi-autonomous entity operating as a veritable exploiter. Individuals subject to this semi-autonomous technology no longer operate as producers but as consumers, and therefore increasingly alienated through the eradication of purpose and fulfilment in their labour and the development of ever-increasing false 'needs'.[595] They are alienated from ability to (and potential meaning in) produce, and reduced to an item themselves. The entwinement of labour and technology - particularly automated technology - is damning and alienating.

Art and Salary

Kafka's final story wrestled with the relationship between the tortured artist and their commitment to ordinary, mundane labour. *Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk* is a tale about a

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[592]Anders quoted in Ashcroft, p.118
[593] Diebold, *Automation,* p.65
[594]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.115
[595]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.116

member of the community infamous for her ability to sing. As all gather to hear her, she begins to sing in a voice revealed to be quivering, reedy - ordinary. Josephine is revealed to be, quite simply, someone who makes 'a ceremonial performance out of doing the usual thing.'[596] Rather than finding themselves disappointed, much of the audience finds themselves surprisingly transfixed by this unlikely, mediocre entertainment made exquisitely special precisely through the importance affixed to the art by the singer. Nevertheless, Josephine pushes her luck: she has always insisted that her art excuses herself from the rat race of daily labour. Her fellow mice are a 'race of workers,' and even their children participate in the 'struggle for existence.' Josephine acts the part of a *prima donna,* fainting, limping, attracting pity for her campaign to retire from daily labour. 'Like other ills,' General Richard Taylor once wrote of the sickly Alexander Stephens, 'feeble health has its compensations, especially for those who unite restless vanity and ambition to a feminine desire for sympathy.'[597] Josephine is not shy about her own 'feminine' desire for sympathy. She is alienated from the norms of her time - fruitfully alienated, she might argue - just like her creator. Kafka himself wrestled with his artistic output and his labours, working assiduously in a number of jobs that did not allow for flourishment. A tension existed for Kafka, who felt torn between the duty and financial need of his job as a lawyer for the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute and his true calling as an artist. For Kafka, the former drained him of the effort needed to pursue the latter to any suitable depth.[598] He believed himself to be 'made of literature [...] nothing else,'[599] and found the monotonous torture of the 9-5 unbearable in its totalising effects. His very awareness of this phenomenon puts him in the camp of 'fruitful estrangement' that Kaufmann describes. Kafka's private diaries reveal an individual escaping into a dream-world and read as a kind of palimpsest

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[596]Kafka, F *Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk* (accessed here: https://german.rutgers.edu/docman-lister/events/424-kafka-josefine-the-singer-or-the-mouse-folk/file)
[597]Taylor, R (1998) *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (Electronically published by Academic Affairs Library: University of North Carolina) p.31
[598]Tyson, C (2023) 'Quiet Quitting: Franz Kafka's work-life imbalance' *BOOKFORUM* (accessed 25/06/23) https://www.bookforum.com/print/3001/franz-kafka-s-work-life-imbalance-25210?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email
[599]Kafka *Diaries*

of estrangement, often fictional, disturbing, or unnervingly dull ('Germany has declared war on Russia.—Swimming school in the afternoon.')[600] A notable theme throughout is described by Charlie Tyson as an 'unrelenting howl of self-reproach.'[601] He bemoans how he spends his days in the office, and his nights producing literature: two professions that 'could never tolerate each other.' He laments his own laziness, his lack of productivity in writing, his bitterness at the day job he feels he is forced to suffer, the illnesses, histrionics, and financial difficulties his family face. One productive night writing leaves him exhausted the next morning in his office, able to accomplish little. The great efforts required by his literary output cause physical suffering. He believed that he lived only 'a horrible double life from which insanity is probably the only way out.' He could not simply dip between roles; the artistic realm required 'a lostness in [the author] out of which it is difficult to step into the air of the ordinary day.[602] Much of his attitude towards writing indicates that it is a violent chore to wrest words onto the page: one day he resolves to 'jump into my novella even if it should cut up my face,' in another he asks how to 'free myself and free [my imaginative world] without being torn to pieces.' He is limited by the weakness of his own body, a body 'pulled out of a junk room.' He cannot escape 'the feeling that by being alive he blocks his own way,' but 'from this obstruction he then in turn derives the proof that he is alive.'[603]

Kafka's work as an insurance analyst gave him a 'tragic meta-perspective' of the technological advancements of his age.[604] His experiences working on workplace injury cases - coupled with knowledge of the working conditions at his family's factory - offered a wide understanding of the more abrupt and obvious effects of modernity. That it took him further from the art that he wishes to create provided him with an understanding of the more insidious and

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[600]Kafka *Diaries*,
[601]Tyson, C (2023) *Quiet Quitting*
[602]Kafka *Diaries*
[603]Kafka *Diaries*
[604]Baumer, J.E (2011) *Kafka's turn to technology: Intersections of modern science and literature in the works of Franz Kafka* (Purdue University Doctorate of Philosophy) p.4

nebulous effects upon the psyche and soul. In his 1907 annual report, Kafka noted over six million Kronen-worth of claims that had been filed over the five previous years, arguing that they could have been prevented or mitigated by better conditions for the worker.[605]

In another short story entitled *The Burrow,* Kafka imagines a rodent-like creature who uses their own head to batter and compound the earth into a burrow home. 'I was glad when the blood came,' the rodent says, 'for that was a proof that the walls were beginning to harden.'[606] His reward for self-torture is the creation of a refuge in which he is 'entirely isolated, self-sufficient, and safe from the predatory world.'[607] Alas, it is no refuge. The creature realises that the constant alterations he is making to his idyll have instead turned it into a great misery - perhaps even a trap that makes him sitting prey. He lives in constant fear that another animal may encroach upon this hide. He spoils his own creation through restless paranoia. He is alienated even from his own sanctity. His idyll is slowly transformed into a nightmare.

In the Penal Colony, another of Kafka's stories published within his lifetime, revolves around the lengthy description of an execution machine by the colony's present officer to a visitor. An intricate, complex piece of machinery, it is designed to slowly bleed the prisoner to death by carving punitive messages of moral instruction upon their body. The officer is immensely enthused by such an invention, and spends the majority of the story enthusiastically detailing how the machine operates, belying the feigned, studiedly neutral front.[608] The prisoner awaiting execution wears 'an expression of such dog-like resignation that it looked as if one could set him free to roam around the slopes and would only have to whistle at the start of the execution for him to return.'[609] The

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[605]Baumer, J.E (2011) *Kafka's turn to technology: Intersections of modern science and literature in the works of Franz Kafka* (Purdue University Doctorate of Philosophy) p.4
[606]Kafka, F *The Burrow* (accessed here: https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/campuspress.yale.edu/dist/1/2391/files/2018/12/Kafka-The-Burrow-1jcjgv3.pdf)
[607]Tyson, C (2023) *Quiet Quitting*
[608] Kafka, F *In the Penal Colony* (accessed here: http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/~raha/793CA_web/PenalColony.pdf)
[609]Kafka, *The Penal Colony*

narrator discovers, to his surprise, that the intended victim has not been subject to a trial, nor suspected of anything more than snapping at a superior who woke him from a nap. The officer happily informs him that he himself presides as judge: 'Guilt is always beyond a doubt [...] I had the man chained up. It was all very simple. If I had first summoned the man and interrogated him, the result would have been confusion. He would have lied, and if I had been successful in refuting his lies, he would have replaced them with new lies, and so forth. But now I have him, and I won't release him again.' He proceeds to explain, at great length and with obvious delight, precisely what will happen to the prisoner. The visitor is of the opinion that whilst the commander is ostensibly enthused by the moral lesson that the punishment will impart, in reality he 'is in thrall to the technical mastery represented by the machine itself,' as shown by his lengthy, 'loving' descriptions of its elaborate design.[610] Technology has here numbed and masked basic human morality and empathy, allowing the commander to hide sado-masochistic pleasure behind the 'objective neutrality' of the machine, whilst actually entranced by it. Efficiency, rationality, and logic all govern the alienated man. It is only the individual estranged from technological alienation who can realise this and feel horror at its use. Even the prisoner doomed to a horrific fate is numbly resigned. The officer reminisces on the golden age of the machine, before the colony's new commander allowed it to degrade. Not only were the staff enthralled by this spectacle, but the public, too: 'They all came merely to watch… The whole society — and every high official had to attend — arranged itself around the machine. The machine was freshly cleaned and glowed… And then the execution began! No discordant note disturbed the work of the machine…'[611] The story ends with the sacrificial self-offering of the officer, who with an almost erotic devotion to the machine decides to die at its 'hand'. He has become not just subject of the machine, but slave.

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[610] Wolf, D (2020) 'Kafka and the Machine' *The Article* (accessed here: https://www.thearticle.com/kafka-and-the-machine)

[611] Kafka, *The Penal Colony*

So many elements of modernity work together to create a relentlessly disconcerting and uncomfortable method of being that is fundamentally at odds with human flourishing and *life*. An odd feeling of discomfort with the world around oneself is not unique to the contemporary era, but modernity increases it - and technology magnifies it.

Technology or capitalism?

For the Frankfurt School, which, out of technology and capitalism, is most destructive? And is this a view shared by Kafka? It is evident that the Frankfurt School, 'unlike much of later Marxist theory [...] did not see technology as simply reducible to capitalism,' but instead 'identified technology as having its own dynamics.'[612] Because for Marcuse, control - rather than ownership of production - 'enables domination,' Caroline Ashcroft argues that 'capitalism alone (as a system of private property) does not [therefore] explain production dynamics today.'[613] Whilst capitalism 'may still arguably be more important as an explanatory factor' in Marcuse's work, 'technology enables the extension of control over society even in conditions of plenty, and thus enables a continuing, indeed worsening condition of domination.'[614] Even Marcuse, the most sympathetic of the Frankfurt School to Marx's views on technology, is at odds with it.

Franz Kafka once came upon George Grosz's drawing of a fat, besuited man representing Capitalism incarnate sat upon a throne of money belonging to the poor. For Kafka, this representation was true only to a certain extent - yes, the wealthy man ruled over the poor within the framework of the capitalist system. But the wealthy man 'was not the system itself. He too carried chains.' Capitalism, to Kafka, enslaved the wealthy and prosperous as much as it enslaved

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[612]Delanty and Harris, *The Frankfurt School Revisited* p.90
[613]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.117
[614]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.117

the proletariat: 'Everyone and everything is dependent, everyone in chains. Capitalism is a state of the world and the mind.'[615] The alienation within the capitalist system choked and alienated the wealthiest and the poorest, those who laboured and those who profited from such labour. The technology supposed to alleviate this suffering instead compounded it, spiralling out of control of mankind and absorbing more and more of his life and livelihood. Family relations were increasingly poisonous due to the pressures of labour and technology, and work stunted the creative individual, depriving him of the ability to flourish and see other potential avenues for humanity.

Instrumentalization

An inescapable theme of Kafka's life and works is the alienation of the creative individual under the pressures of bureaucratic, 'meaningless' labour.

Rather than free men from the shackles of pre (or early) industrial labour, modern technology has turned the methods of production further against mankind, who once operated it, and is now subsumed by it. Potential, 'revolutionary' futures become harder to see and work towards: Marcuse sees totalitarianism as spreading across late-stage capitalist society 'wherever the interests of domination prevail; upon productivity, arresting and diverting its potentialities.'[616] The sort of working day envisioned by utopian socialists becomes an ever-more distant dream under the torment of modernity: 'mechanisation and rationalisation generated structures of standardised conformity and precise submission to the machine [...] rather than autonomy and spontaneity.'[617]

Man is reduced to a mere instrument. Whilst, according to Adorno and Horkheimer,

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[615]Quoted in Heller, P *On Not Understanding Kafka*
[616]Marcuse, H (2023) *Eros and Civilisation* (Routledge Classics: London) p.93
[617]Marcuse, H, *Eros and Civilisation*, p.84

'apparatus provides for him as never before,' he 'disappears before the apparatus which he serves.'[618] The opportunity for fruitless alienation is extraordinarily high. The opportunity for fruitful alienation is much slimmer. The opportunity for overcoming such a system is miniscule. 'The system,' Adorno wrote in one essay, 'has now become independent, even for those who are in control.'[619] Those residing within 'the sphere of consumption,' have become 'appendages of the machinery.'[620]

Instrumentalization of mankind has now become so endemic as to arguably make them robotic. Humanity underwent a colossal programme of civilisation in order to separate man from beast - now it must do the same in order to rescue them from the fate of machines. Reduction of consumption - of needless, false, fleeting things - is essential. As Caroline Ashcroft writes, 'In a world where technological production has the capacity to provide for all, thus freeing the energies of the individual, those individuals can be distracted by the production of new needs.'[621] This creation of 'needs' enables greater domination of humanity. Marcuse describes this as a 'technostructure of exploitation,' characterised by 'the growing productivity of labour constantly augmenting the health of commodities and services; the intensified meaningless work and performances required for producing, buying, and selling these goods and services; and the scientific control of consciousness and instincts,' best summarised as 'domination through steered satisfaction and steered aggression.'[622] The method of domination has shifted through the development of new (and ever increasing) 'needs'. People now have 'innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all the same sort and keep them occupied and divert their attention

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[618]Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic,* pp.xiv-xv
[619]Adorno, T (2003) 'Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?' in *Can One Live after Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader* (Stanford University Press: Stanford) pp.124-5
[620]Adorno, T (2006) 'Progress or Regression,' in *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964-65* (Polity Press: Cambridge) pp.5-6
[621]Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.124
[622]Marcuse, H (1970) 'Marxism and the New Humanity: An Unfinished Revolution,' in *Marxism and Radical Religion: Essays Toward a Revolutionary Humanism*, ed. John C. Raines and Thomas Dean (Temple University Press: Philadelphia) p.6

from the real issue - which is the awareness that they could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfactions.'[623] Through the perceived luxury (and real distraction) of the goods and experiences that fulfil these needs, 'the technological veil covers the brute presence and the operation of the class interest in the merchandise.'[624] It is not technology alone, but its entwinement with capitalism that creates this incredible new totalising form of domination - with 'servitude and toil' masked by the 'happiness and fun available' through it.[625] The old class distinctions are masked by this reality, wherein the factory worker and the factory owner share 'counterrevolutionary' needs and ideals.[626] The approval that Gregor Samsa craves from his family, boss, and servants is now amplified dramatically - modern technology (and social media) have now expanded the amount of distant, unsympathetic eyes and hearts by millions. Some remove themselves from this state. Most will not - or *can*not.

Alienated Labour and Leisure

Automation has flattened labour and leisure into increasingly resembling each other. 'Amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work,' Adorno and Horkheimer argued. Mechanisation has 'such power over a man's leisure and happiness, and so profoundly determines the manufacture of amusement goods that his experiences are inevitably after-images of the work process itself.'[627]

People recognise themselves not through the result of their labour or their relationship with others, but instead through commodities, they 'find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set,

[623]Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p.100
[624]Marcuse, H (1991) *An Essay on Liberation* (Beacon Press: Boston) p.14
[625]Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, p.14
[626]Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, p.14
[627]Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic*, p.137

split-level home, kitchen equipment.'[628] Yet whilst this ostensibly 'makes the very notion of alienation questionable,' Marcuse notes, instead they are subject to only 'a more progressive stage of alienation [...], the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms.'[629]

In previous chapters, we have discussed the effects of reification upon man. As production has progressed from handmade goods to factory goods, rationalism, efficiency, and alienation have increased. Mechanised industry, in the words of Stephen Sheehan, 'makes of [individuals] isolated abstract atoms whose work no longer brings them together directly and organically; it becomes mediated to an increasing extent exclusively by the abstract laws of the mechanism which imprisons them.'[630] Workers are not only not masters of their physical and mental selves, but are increasingly losing ownership and autonomy over their own souls. The Frankfurt School, in contrast to Lukács, do not see this as an extension of capitalism, but as a distinct and unique development of technology. 'Only in the medium of technology,' writes Marcuse, 'man and nature become fungible objects of organisation [...] Technology has become the great vehicle of reification – reification in its most mature and effective form.'[631] Automation is no less than 'a change in the character of the basic productive forces.'[632] Adorno agrees with this - even the capacity to *think* is sacrificed at the altar of the machine: 'Thinking objectifies itself to become an automatic, self-activating process; an impersonation of the machine that it produces itself so that ultimately the machine can replace it.'[633] Modern technology works *with* and *for* capitalism, but is a distinct contributing factor to the extreme permeation of alienation upon society. Kafka himself was very sensitive to this: his protagonists are both buffeted and supported by photographs, telephones,

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[628]Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man,* p.9
[629]Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*
[630]Sheehan, S (2005) 'The Nature of Technology: Changing Concepts of Technology in the Early Twentieth Century,' *Icon* 11, pp.1-2
[631]Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man,* p.169
[632]Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man,* p.169
[633]Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.25

automobiles, elevators, and aeroplanes. Kafka's characters struggle with the combination of their alienated work and their newly-alienated leisure, both impacted by a world of new gadgetry and machinery - even at the dawn of the twentieth century, Kafka had already began to engage with the effects and troubles that modern, mechanised technology had brought upon the individual - long before his peers had, and long before most were aware of the ramifications of such developments.[634]

Feenberg interprets Marcuse as a 'utopian thinker,' who 'conceives of a redeemed technological rationality in a liberated society, much as Plato, at the end of the Gorgias, imagines a reformed rhetoric that would serve good ends.'[635] Technology can be repurposed towards good, de-alienating, life-affirming ends through the reversal of false 'neutralisation' - in which technology's neutrality can be freed from substantive rationality.[636] For Marcuse, modern technology is not *innately* dominating and repressive, but is made so by becoming 'part and parcel of the people's own existence, own "actualization."'[637] Productive technologies actually increase the possibility' 'of letting the realm of freedom appear within the realm of necessity – in labour and not only beyond labour.'[638] Indeed, 'the development of the productive forces beyond their capitalist organisation suggests the possibility of freedom within the realm of necessity.'[639] Marcuse's belief that technology increases alienation does not stop him from believing that it could genuinely begin to help free people: 'Progressive alienation increases the potential of freedom: the more external to the individual the necessary labour becomes, the less does it involve him in the realm of necessity.'[640] Kafka's own life (and depictions) of lone, fruitfully estranged individuals

[634] Baumer, J.E (2011) *Kafka's turn to technology: Intersections of modern science and literature in the works of Franz Kafka* (Purdue University Doctorate of Philosophy)
[635] Feenberg, A (2005) *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History*, (Routledge: New York) p.88
[636] Feenberg, *Catastrophe and Redemption,* p.88-89
[637] Marcuse, *Liberation,* p.14
[638] Herbert Marcuse (1970) 'The End of Utopia' in *Five Lectures* (Beacon: Boston), p.63.
[639] Marcuse, *Liberation,* pp. 20-21
[640] Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation,* p.222

rejecting one-dimensionalised societies and attempting to escape or withdraw are illustrations of this: though, crucially, for Kafka no such escape can be found.

If Adorno is pessimistic of this happening, and Kafka despairing of its chances, Marcuse is sceptical.[641] 'Once the productive apparatus, under repressive direction, has grown into an apparatus of ubiquitous controls,' he writes, 'the chances of a humanistic reconstruction are very poor.'[642]

A crucial effect of the Culture Industry, for Adorno, is that society will not overcome itself, but must be overcome by those subjected to it - an increasingly difficult feat, as we have discussed in previous chapters. Martin Jay argues that the Frankfurt School's analysis differed significantly from traditional Marxist analysis through 'its refusal to reduce cultural phenomena to an ideological reflex of class interests.'[643] Instead, the influence of technology - and its own 'interests' - were of focus. Jay noted Adorno's critique of 'the deleterious effects of radio by pointing to its stimulus to standardisation. Although relating this to the permeation of the exchange ethic of capitalism, [Adorno] also saw a connection with technological rationality itself.'[644] For Martin Jay, it was this critique of mass culture that was the most impactful thing to come out of the Institute. Mass society, technology, and the culture industry have collaborated together to erase the individual and his private life, corrupting and erasing the sphere of privacy in the home and outside of it. For Adorno and Horkheimer, this has been replaced with 'absolute solitude, the violent turning inward on the self, whose whole being consists in the mastery of material and in the monotonous rhythm of work, is the spectre which outlines the existence of man in the modern world.'[645] Nothing could better describe the crippling solitude of Kafka and his estranged, lonely, characters. Adorno and

[641] Ashcroft, *Catastrophic Thought*, p.132
[642] Marcuse, *Socialist Humanism,* p.115
[643] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination,* p.178
[644] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination,* p.193
[645] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic,* pp.153-4

Horkheimer speak of how an increasingly one-dimensional culture eradicates the privacy and individuality of a human being. In modernity, 'everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type.'[646] Culture's domination over man may not be a new development in the history of mankind - Adorno and Horkheimer explicitly speak of Tocqueville's critique of culture as an inspiration - but the *depth* to which it exerts domination is.[647] 'Progress,' they write, 'literally keeps men apart.'[648]

For Dana Villa, Marcuse not only expands on Adorno and Horkheimer, but in fact 'consummates and codifies the dystopian potentials set forth in Dialectic of Enlightenment.'[649] Whilst he is ostensibly optimistic about the possibility of freedom, it is incredibly difficult - and exceptionally unlikely - that this could occur. The changes that would have to be undertaken in society are too grand to do, the average consumer fruitlessly alienated rather than fruitfully alienated and prepared to revolt. The private sphere - or at least the little that exists - offers a chance of seclusion from the prevailing culture industry and technological dominion - but few are able to grasp it. Adorno and Horkheimer see technology not just as a crushing form of domination, but also of a potential conduit for the return of fascism: 'in the enigmatic readiness of the technologically educated masses to fall under the sway of any despotism [...] the weakness of the modern theoretical faculty is apparent.'[650] The state is tempted into seizing the political power of technology - a technology that is innately dominating, standardising, centralising: all of which, for the Frankfurt School, bends towards fascism.[651] As thought, belief, and behaviour become standardised and 'neutral', as the private sphere is reduced and controlled, as the people have

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[646]Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic,* p.123
[647]Villa, D (2008) *Public Freedom* (Princeton University Press: Princeton) p.156
[648]Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic,* pp.221-222
[649]Villa, *Public Freedom* p.161
[650]Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic*, p.xiii.
[651]Brantlinger, P (1983) *Bread and Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay* (Cornell University Press: New York) pp.242-3

become a blob and not a set of individuals, as their desires are shaped, as dissent is repressed and then forgotten, mankind becomes increasingly unaware of its domination.

Our world is certainly not an exact replica of those found within Kafka's writings, nor did he make any claims that it would be. Rather, we see in our contemporary society a clear echo of the Kafkaesque, the unnatural needs and appetites, the steep and unnerving bureaucratisation, the suspicion, the false objectivity, the alienation and reification of humanity, the political and technological fascism, the loss of dignity, the observation, the totality of machine presence - all brought about through technological advancement. All of these fears and critiques held within Kafka's body of work are present with that of the Frankfurt School. Indeed, Milan Kundera wrote an essay praising Kafka as holding a prescient understanding of how technology would beget totalitarianism in the private and public sphere, long before this came to pass: 'Kafka made no prophecies [...] He did not know that his seeing was also a fore-seeing. He did not intend to unmask a social system. He shed light on the mechanisms he knew from private and microsocial human practice, not suspecting that later developments would put those mechanisms into action on the great stage of History.'[652]

For Kafka, only art and death represented a freedom from the numbing, unnerving, alienating quality of technological modernity - the consumer dystopia.

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[652]Kundera, here: https://www.thearticle.com/kafka-and-the-machine

Conclusion

For centuries, science fiction writers have addressed the ethical and political issues of their day through works of dystopian literature. This thesis has taken four such authors – Aldous Huxley, Yevgeny Zamyatin, Philip K. Dick, and Franz Kafka – and compared their comments and critiques to those made, quite independently, by the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. It argues that science fiction and critical theory are both attempting the same task: to make the alienated reader aware of his own alienation, therefore transforming his fruitless alienation within the world into a fruit*ful* alienation estranged from it. Over four major chapters, I have connected these two forms of critique, bringing together synergies that exist between the writings of the members of the Frankfurt School and authors of dystopian literature. Indeed, dystopian fiction is an outlet for a condition of 'fruitful alienation' that brings into focus for the reader the social ill of technological modernity, thus *potentially* wrenching them from a 'fruitlessly' alienated state within it. Through this, this thesis has developed a concept that I have called the 'consumer dystopia' - a stage of capitalism in which utopian potentials are cut off through an ossification of history, Greek notions of happiness are replaced with pleasure, consumer society becomes inescapably oppressive, and mankind is alienated through nearly all elements of technological modernity.

Science fiction and critical theory both have their critiques of modernity - I have here aimed to bring the two together, demonstrate (and investigate) links between them, set out the context and explain some of the central claims of these authors, and tried to show the way in which their ideas of technology, culture, happiness, utopia, the development of history, and economics, whilst not identical, overlap in important and significant ways, and together comprise an important mode of thinking about politics and society in the contemporary era.

Whilst some of the thinkers that we have discussed (such as Kafka and Dick, or Fromm and Zamyatin) do not share some fundamental premises in philosophy or politics, their understanding of hedonistic pleasure, utopian change, consumerism, and alienation overlap and connect to one another in remarkably similar and interesting ways. Contributing to these shared critiques are the various intellectual, personal and political influences that have been outlined throughout: the intellectual influences, personal experiences, and professional resentments, that existed for the members of the Frankfurt School and science fiction authors alike, alongside the dramatic developments across capitalist society in the late nineteenth to early twenty-first centuries. During the mid-twentieth century, none of these thinkers saw either the 'liberated' West or the 'utopian' Soviet Union as the solution to oppression - rather, these were both totalitarian spheres of dominance over mankind. These thinkers often expressed politically unpopular viewpoints (even within their peer groups) and could find no easy answer to the difficulty of engendering human flourishing in modern society. Each were positively - that is, fruitfully - alienated, yet few felt, realised, or ostensibly benefitted from this. The liberation of mankind was a remarkably difficult problem for all: if so few were alienated in a beneficial manner, the chances of overcoming were incredibly slim – and waned further as the dominating qualities of economic, political, and technological spheres increased throughout the decades. That each of these individuals were exemplary cases of 'fruitful' estrangement is an argument for highlighting their thought and works. Nevertheless, such 'fruit' was often distasteful: Philip K. Dick struggled for years with severe effects of ill mental health that destroyed personal and professional relationships; Adorno found himself denounced by the students he sought to aid; Kafka ended up in central European sanatoriums; Fromm was derided for his sentimental views. The life of the fruitfully estranged and the fruitlessly estranged are both sad: where the former often implodes, the latter simply rots.

In Chapter One, we looked at happiness and eudaimonia through the eyes of the Frankfurt School and Aldous Huxley, with special attention to Huxley and Adorno's shared hostility towards

'low utilitarianism.' In Chapter Two, we looked at the 'heretical' Hegelianism of Yevgeny Zamyatin and his similarities in thought with Herbert Marcuse on the development and stagnation of history. In Chapter Three, we looked at Philip K. Dick's criticism of consumerism and its synergies with Adorno's theory of the Culture Industry, arguing that both share significant themes and traits, and that both are generally (and incorrectly) understood to be pessimistic in their outlook towards new possibilities and alternative futures. In Chapter Four, we discussed Kafka, his intellectual (and personal) relationship with alienation, and how they compare with those found in the writing of the Frankfurt School. Both hostile to the capitalist system, neither had a one-note critique of it - rather, they saw capitalism as a system that kept all classes of man in chains. It was technological modernity that exacerbated the worst excesses of capitalism, severely impeding chances of freedom and shackling men to the misery of paid labour both within and outside of the working day.

For all of the comfort and pleasure that modernity affords the average consumer in the West, it strips far more away from their soul. With the global reach of capitalism and technology, more and more will find themselves deeply estranged: dominated and manipulated by the world and goods they covet. Art and theory can go some way in rectifying this – it is better for an individual to become estranged from the world around them than from their very selves. Always, throughout history – but especially in the present conditions – we must be *in* the world, but not *of* it.

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