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The Actuality of Critical Theory in the Netherlands, 1931-1994

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation reconstructs the intellectual and political reception of Critical Theory, as first developed in Germany by the "Frankfurt School" at the Institute of Social Research and subsequently reformulated by Jürgen Habermas, in the Netherlands from the mid to late twentieth century. Although some studies have acknowledged the role played by Critical Theory in reshaping particular academic disciplines in the Netherlands, while others have mentioned the popularity of figures such as Herbert Marcuse during the upheavals of the 1960s, this study shows how Critical Theory was appropriated more widely to challenge the technocratic directions taken by the project of *vernieuwing* (renewal or modernization) after World War II. During the sweeping transformations of Dutch society in the postwar period, the demands for greater democratization—of the universities, of the political parties under the system of "pillarization," and of society more broadly—were frequently made using the intellectual resources of Critical Theory. In turn, the development of a progressive, "posttraditional" society in the Netherlands, which appeared to reach its apex in the 1970s, suggested to a number of intellectuals that Habermas's more sanguine "theory of communicative action" best conceptualized the democratic achievements of modern society and the continuing prospects for the "rationalization of the lifeworld," through which injustices and social pathologies could be exposed to the scrutiny of critical reason. Critical Theory, then, had an "actuality" that went well beyond academia and had continuing "relevance"—another meaning of the Dutch *actualiteit* or German *Aktualität*—for understanding the past and future rationalization of society.

There was, moreover, another sense in which Dutch thinkers interpreted the actuality of Critical Theory. In the transnational process of reception, ideas and theories are inevitably shaped by the contexts in which they are taken up. This study begins with the Dutch social democrat Andries Sternheim, who worked at the Institute's office in Geneva in the 1930s, and shows how tensions arose over the more speculative philosophical premises of *Kritische Theorie*, as formulated in director Max Horkheimer's key 1937 essay "Traditional and Critical Theory." These tensions prefigured the later emphases and inflections given to Critical Theory by its intellectual supporters (and detractors) in the Netherlands and reflected, I argue, a "discourse of actuality" with which Habermas's thought had greater resonance. Although some Dutch intellectuals gravitated towards the earlier arguments of Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, which identified the roots of modern pathologies of social domination in the widespread

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expansion of "enlightened thought" into forms of "instrumental reason," these claims were seen by many as overly pessimistic and speculative, particularly in comparison to Habermas's thought. Habermas argued that Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of the "dialectic of enlightenment" had obscured a different form of rationality, made possible only by the rationalization of the lifeworld, namely "communicative rationality," which had its basis not in the arguably metaphysical, "emphatic" concept of reason to which Horkheimer and Adorno appealed, but rather in the immanent practices of everyday, intersubjective communication. Although Habermas insisted that the telos of mutual understanding, toward which non-strategic communicative practices were oriented, remained a counterfactual ideal, many of his adherents went beyond Habermas in ascribing an empirical actuality to the idea of communicative rationality. Furthermore, even as Habermas's theory was challenged in the course of the "modernism/postmodernism" debates of the 1980s, Dutch scholars frequently interpreted "poststructuralist" thought in ways that broadened the concept of rationality, rather than pitting one side against the other, as the leading German and French antagonists often did.

By putting the ideas of Critical Theory into historical and comparative relief, this reception history goes beyond strictly philosophical studies of the relative validity of the Frankfurt School and Habermas's competing forms of thought. The Dutch example offers a particularly revealing view into the "actuality" of what Habermas called "the unfinished project of modernity," as well as its potential limitations. In concluding, however, I follow other scholars of early Critical Theory in arguing that Adorno's thought in particular may have its own pressing actuality, even as its philosophical premises are considered outdated in the wake of the "linguistic turn." Against the historical developments of the last decades of the twentieth century—not least in the Netherlands—we might yet have something to learn from Adorno's thought, even in its most apocalyptic and utopian exaggerations.

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Abbreviations

AI	*Arbeid en interaktie*	Labor and interaction (M. Korthals and H. Kunneman)
ANDB	Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantwerkersbond	General Dutch Diamond Cutters Union
ASVA	Algemene Studenten Vereniging Amsterdam	General Students Association of Amsterdam
CDA	Christen-Democratisch Appèl	Christian Democratic Appeal
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CPN	Communistische Partij Nederland	Communist Party of the Netherlands
D'66	Democraten 1966	Democrats 1966
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei	Free Democratic Party
IISG	Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis	International Institute for Social History
IvAO	Instituut voor Arbeidersontwikkeling	Institute for Workers' Development
IVV	Internationaal Verbond van Vakverenigingen	International Federation of Trade Unions
KEN(ml)	Kommunistische Eenheidsbeweging Nederland (marxisties-leninisties)	Communist Unity Movement of the Netherlands (Marxist-Leninist)
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands	Communist Party of Germany
KPN/ML	Kommunistische Partij Nederland/Marxsties Leninisties	Communist Party of the Netherlands/Marxist-Leninist
LTS		"Leisure in the Totalitarian State" (A. Sternheim)

MFH	"Het marxisme en de filosofie van Habermas"	"The Marxism and Philosophy of Habermas" (L. Nauta)
MT	*Theologie im pianissimo: Zur Aktualität der Denkfiguren Adornos und Levinas'*	*Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas* (H. de Vries)
NAS	Nationaal Arbeiders-Secretariaat	National Workers Secretariat
PPR	Politieke Partij Radikalen	Political Party of Radicals
PSP	Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij	Pacifist-Socialist Party
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid	Social Democratic Party
RAF	Rote Armee Fraktion	Red Army Faction
SDAP	Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij	Social Democratic Workers Party
SDB	Sociaal Democratisch Bond	Social Democratic League
SDS	Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund	German Socialist Students League
SNS	*Het socialisme in zijn nieuwste schakeeringen*	Socialism in its newest varieties (A. Sternheim)
SP	Socialistiese Partij or Socialistische Partij	Socialist Party
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	Social Democratic Party of Germany
Studien	*Studien über Authorität und Familie*	Studies on Authority and the Family (M. Horkheimer, ed.)
SUA	Socialistische Uitgeverij Amsterdam	Socialist Press of Amsterdam
SUN	Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen	Socialist Press of Nijmegen
SVB	Studentenvakbeweging	National Students Union

TSI	"Technik und Wissenschaft als 'Ideologie'"	"Technology and Science as 'Ideology'" (J. Habermas)
VDS	Verband Deutscher Studentenschaften	Union of German Students
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy
WKT	Werkgroep Kritische Theorie	Critical Theory Workgroup
WT	*De waarheidstrechter*	The truth funnel (H. Kunneman)
Zeitschrift	*Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*	Journal of social research
ZPF	"Zum Problem der Freizeitgestaltung"	On the problem of the organization of leisure time (A. Sternheim)

Introduction

Where speculation ends—in real life—there real, positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men. Empty talk about consciousness ceases, and real knowledge has to take its place. When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of activity loses its medium of existence.[1]

—Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (1845-1846)

Philosophers have merely interpreted the world; the point, however, is to change it.[2]

—Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" (1845)

Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed. The summary judgment that it had merely interpreted the world, that resignation in the face of reality had crippled it in itself, becomes a defeatism of reason after the attempt to change the world miscarried…. Perhaps it was an inadequate interpretation which promised that it would be put into practice.[3]

—Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966)

Between Marx's farewell to philosophy and Adorno's melancholy return to it in the form of ruthless self-criticism[4] lie the ruins of modern progress: the unparalleled destruction of two world wars; global forms of imperial, economic, and environmental domination; and, as History's supposedly dialectical *Aufhebung* (sublation), a Communist experiment whose vanguardist leap from theory to praxis swiftly degenerated into mass starvation and political repression. The "German ideology" of mere speculation, or the philosophy of Idealism, had indeed been sublated into a kind of "positive science," in the form of a dogmatic Dialectical Materialism, but not under the conditions that Marx had imagined. Nearly a century after Marx, in his own "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Walter Benjamin introduced the famous image of the Angel of History, conceived from Paul Klee's painting "Angelus Novus," through which he described progress as "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage" as we hurtle forward violently toward a future to which our backs are turned.[5] Invoked by supporters and detractors to illustrate the Frankfurt School's diagnosis of the modern age, Benjamin's image has become a metonymy for a pessimism that was absolutized and elevated to an art, of which Adorno would clearly seem to be the greatest virtuoso.

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[1] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "From *The German Ideology*, Volume One," in *The Portable Marx,* ed. Eugene Kamenka (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1983), 170.

[2] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *The Portable Marx,* 158.

[3] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 3.

[4] As Adorno continued: "Having broken its pledge to be as one with reality or at the point of realization, philosophy is obliged ruthlessly to criticize itself" (ibid., 3).

[5] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 257-58.

Yet neither Benjamin nor Adorno subscribed to a straightforward *Verfallsgeschichte* or history of decline in which total catastrophe was the inevitable telos. For Benjamin, history was also pregnant with the possibility of redemptive, messianic interruption; Adorno departed from the more overtly theological resonances of his friend's messianism, but retained an analogous utopian insistence upon the possibility of a sudden shift from history's previous trajectory of progressive domination.[6] The task of critical thought was a matter of pursuing unflinchingly the regressive core of domination and suffering lying under the surface of progressive history, so as to make a break from domination possible. As Adorno put it, "Only he who knows the most recent as the same will serve what is different."[7] If philosophy, in the wake of this pile of wreckage, sought to grasp the conditions of its historical failure of self-realization without succumbing to "a defeatism of reason," then "speculation," as thinking that resists and exceeds the mere facts of existence or the progressive narrative of history, could not simply be returned to, as if reason were unmarked by the history in which it was complicit. Rather, philosophy would need be salvaged from out of the ruins of reason's fateful history as the medium of domination. "The wholly enlightened earth," Max Horkheimer and Adorno famously wrote at the beginning of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, "is radiant with triumphant calamity";[8] but theirs was also an inquiry directed against the "positivist" myth that whatever has been, must continue to remain so: "Critical thought, which does not call a halt before progress itself, requires us to take up the cause of the remnants of freedom, of tendencies toward real humanity, even though they seem powerless in the face of the great historical trend."[9]

For it is of course not just philosophy, but the world too that "lives on" after modern history's catastrophes, compelling Reason to reflect upon its instrumentalization under modernity while upholding the future possibility of reconciling the real and the rational. Confronted with an imperfectly de-Nazified Germany and a global Cold War atmosphere in which a regression to irrationalism remained an imminent possibility, Critical Theory and its leading representatives in both its "first generation," especially Max Horkheimer, Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, or the "Frankfurt School," and the "second generation," above all Jürgen Habermas, sought in divergent ways to salvage new forms of reason and to foster the social impulses of "emancipatory" enlightenment. Despite philosophy's historically inadequate interpretation of itself as the promise of reason that could be actualized immanently and without remainder, Critical Theory held fast to the promise that the historical fate of *Vernunft* (reason) in the disfigured form of "instrumental reason" had not exhausted its full possibility.

Where could this promise of reason still be located in the aftermath of the Holocaust, in which, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, enlightenment's "principle of identity," the foundation of conceptual thought that violently "makes dissimilar things comparable,"[10] had culminated in the rationally administered sacrifice of millions of victims? For both generations of Critical Theorists, reason nonetheless remained a crucial bulwark against the forces of manifest unreason. This had direct implications for intellectual practice: the institutionalization of democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany—not just in the procedural terms of elections,

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[6] Martin Jay, *Adorno* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 107-108.

[7] Quoted in ibid., 108.

[8] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1.

[9] Horkheimer and Adorno, "Preface to the New Edition (1969)," in ibid., xi.

[10] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 4.

but in terms of subjectively-felt political identities and sentiments—was central to preventing new manifestations of irrationalism, and both Horkheimer and Adorno on the one hand, and Habermas, who was Adorno's *Assistant* at the Institute of Social Research from 1956-1959 and filled Horkheimer's chair in 1964, on the other, dedicated their energies as public intellectuals to this task. But despite their general intellectual and political commonalities, their assessments of postwar democratic societies were drastically different, in ways that would become increasingly evident as Habermas matured as a towering intellectual in his own right. These differences were undoubtedly generational, as well as dispositional, and coalesce around this central concept, reason.

For Horkheimer and Adorno, reason (*Vernunft*) had been "eclipsed," to use Horkheimer's phrase; as rationality grew in ever-expanding systems and bodies of knowledge, which they expansively defined as "enlightenment," it had become historically uncoupled from any reflection upon its own ends. Instead, it became instrumentalized, degenerating into its own form of irrationality as a means for social control and domination. Despite their democratic convictions, Horkheimer and Adorno had scarce confidence in the rational capacities of individuals living in postwar societies. This was due not to an elitist contempt for the masses, but because of their conviction that the logic of exchange—the principle of bourgeois society—had everywhere produced forms of manipulation that stunted the capacity for individual reflection. The new stability of postwar Europe, buffered by the material gains of the *Wirtschaftswunder* or "economic miracle" of the 1950s, created an atmosphere of overpowering integration, thus depriving individuals of any substantive autonomy, or, still less, a truly democratic determination of rational and just socio-political arrangements.

The young Habermas too was an incisive critic of this "bisected rationalism," which, under the philosophical dominance of "positivism"—the Frankfurt School's derisive name for the widespread scientific outlook exemplified in the 1960s by Karl Popper's "critical rationalism"—excluded the desired ends of human society as meaningful topics for reflection, and thus, he argued, accepting *a priori* the existing conditions of society.[11] But according to the mature Habermas, his predecessors had taken a fateful wrong turn in their "totalizing" critique of enlightenment as instrumental reason. Drawing on an incredible range of intellectual traditions, he sought to distinguish positive forms of non-instrumental, "communicative reason" that were made possible precisely through the rationalization of modern societies. These forms, moreover, could be located in the everyday practice of communication among common inhabitants of a given "lifeworld," a concept he appropriated from the phenomenological tradition. Through their uncritical acceptance of the more troubling consequences of the sociologist Max Weber's theory of rationalization, namely, tendencies towards standardization, bureaucratization, and the logic of calculability, Horkheimer and Adorno were necessarily blinded to the beneficial by-products of the increasing complexity of modern societies. Cultural modernization betokened not only the growth of the "administered society," but also the formation of autonomous, rationalized "spheres of validity," such as law, morality, and art, each developing its own logic and expert culture. The historical path of modernization may well have produced structures of domination, but modernity itself was less an "iron cage" than an "unfinished project." Although nothing guaranteed this project's completion, even approximately, its conditions of possibility fortunately rested on the inextinguishable resource of intersubjective communication. Even though

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[11] Jürgen Habermas, "A Positivistically Bisected Rationalism," in Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London: Heinemann, 1976), 198-225.

communicative reason was often distorted in practice, the resources for the actualization of reason—as an imperfect, asymptotic set of social "learning processes"—could be located in language use itself. This was of course Habermas's "linguistic turn" within Critical Theory, of which more will be said below; the decisive point here is that for Habermas, the theorist need not, indeed could not, any longer aim to salvage reason through transcendent critique—however mediated by praxis—but rather could contribute to the process of enlightenment by clarifying or "rationally reconstructing" the activities already at work in the intersubjective communication of everyday speech. Despite history's wrong turns, then, reason as a counterfactual ideal could be located immanently in the same processes and structures of rationalization that had previously facilitated domination; the task of critical thought was to develop an analytic that was sophisticated enough to differentiate between positive and negative developments, and grounded not in the theorist's autonomous reflections, but through the clarification of intersubjective, discursively-raised validity claims. By these measures, postwar societies, despite their defects, evidenced genuine potential for the democratic, rational critique and resolution of their social pathologies.

The Question of Actuality

The terms of this briefly outlined intellectual relationship are widely familiar among scholars; moreover, the question of the relationship of these two forms of Critical Theory continues to frame theoretical and political debates to this day, as "third generation" Critical Theorists such as Axel Honneth continue to build upon and critically refine Habermas's theoretical innovations. Given that Habermas's "theory of communicative action" understands itself, and is interpreted by its adherents, as having replaced historically the theory of the Frankfurt School—not least because of its responsiveness to post-industrial forms of capitalism and the political formation of the welfare state, whose developments continued after the deaths of the first generation—the question can be raised: what is the actuality, or efficacy and contemporary import, of these forms of Critical Theory for understanding and assessing the social and political formations of postwar Western Europe? What limitations and possibilities for social transformation are obscured and illuminated with these respective theoretical lenses?

The unusual locution of "actuality" has been chosen for several reasons as the guiding concept of this study. It links both an historical objective—an understanding of the impact of the reception and development of Critical Theory in Dutch history—and a theoretical objective—an exploration of the fundamental tension I have just outlined, namely, the question of reason and socio-political critique as addressed by first- and second-generation Critical Theory. First, the significance of this reception for the political critique and transformation of Dutch society in the course of the second half of the twentieth century has been generally overlooked among historians of the Netherlands. By tracing this reception, we shall see that Critical Theory was a significant impulse for both intellectuals and social movements that challenged the technocratic political consensus of social and political elites following World War II and radically transformed Dutch society in later decades. Furthermore, frequent exchanges between Dutch and German scholars serve to illustrate the increasingly transnational dimension of European intellectual life; not unlike the United States, the Netherlands became an important hub for the reception and circulation of different intellectual traditions. Thus, Critical Theory in the Netherlands had a social and political actuality beyond the pages of academic books and

journals, offering an intriguing case of the roles of intellectuals and ideas in a comparative, historical context.

Second, in order to link this historical objective to the study's theoretical objective, I will focus more specifically on the forms of Dutch thought themselves and reconstruct what I will call a "discourse of actuality" (*actualiteit*, *werkelijkheid*, or in German, *Aktualität*) that has conditioned the process of the reception of Critical Theory, giving particular emphases to certain ideas and figures. I will argue that an anti-speculative sensibility and criterion of *empirical* actualization subtly shaped the registers in which different forms of Critical Theory were felt. Specifically, while Horkheimer, Adorno, and especially Marcuse were read in circles of critical intellectuals and students in the 1960s, in the 1970s, an elective affinity emerged between progressive developments in Dutch society and politics and Habermas's conception of social rationalization that appeared to render classical Critical Theory obsolete; simultaneously, the making of a rational society appeared to be less an ambiguous *possibility* within modernity than an imminently realizable actuality. The discourse of actuality, I will argue, produced both analytical advantages and blind spots for a critical theory of society; moreover, it continued to structure critical Dutch thought as it engaged with other intellectual currents emanating from France under the label of "poststructuralism."

Third, returning to the tension between the early Frankfurt School and Habermas, this study will contribute to continuing efforts to reassess Habermas's verdict on classical Critical Theory's limitations, especially its supposed lack of political actuality. Significantly, *actualiteit* can also be rendered into English as topicality, timeliness, or relevance. The English phrase "in actuality" makes clear the concept's potential antagonism to our point of departure, "speculation," as suggested by Marx's departure from philosophy to "real life"; both Marx and Habermas argued that critical reflection risks being eluded by reality if it relies on a position of transcendent critique, rather than grounding itself in worldly immanence.[12] To be sure, the Frankfurt School was equally critical of the notion of pure transcendence embodied in German Idealism, favoring instead a mode of "immanent critique," yet for them, transcendence was also a dialectical moment in reason's movement beyond the existing society. This dialectic of transcendence and immanence requires much more explanation, but here the following passage from Adorno's "Open Letter to Max Horkheimer" in 1965 should suffice to illustrate the crucially utopian element of their thought. After crediting Horkheimer with teaching him to "appreciate the gravity of negativity in an undiluted form," Adorno conjectured that in return, "you [Horkheimer] have learned from me that without the transcendent element of utopia, utopia or even the truth of the slightest sentence would not exist."[13]

As we shall see below, the Frankfurt School's "emphatic" concept of reason was for Habermas thoroughly untenable, for it implicitly criticized society from a position that it could not itself theoretically justify; in the hands of Horkheimer and Adorno, critical thought became "ensnared" in a solipsistic "philosophy of consciousness," such that

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[12] "Transcendent" should not of course be confused with "transcendental," that is, constituting universal conditions of possibility, as in the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception that makes the subject's experience possible. Habermas's early theory through *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968) relied on "quasi-transcendental," anthropological presuppositions to ground a notion of an immanent human cognitive interest in emancipation, though he soon abandoned these claims.

[13] Letter reprinted in Detlev Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 358.

the contours of the concept of reason are in danger of becoming blurred. On the one hand, the theory [the critique of instrumental reason] takes on the features of a rather traditional "contemplation" that renounces its relations to practice; at the same time, it cedes to art the competence to represent a reason that is now appealed to only indirectly.[14]

As he summarized in his later critique of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the book "does not do justice to the rational content of cultural modernity that was captured in bourgeois ideals (and also instrumentalized along with them)."[15] By contrast, Habermas argued, for all its undeniable faults, it is here in this modernity, and nowhere else, that reason's resources can be found; and while Habermas of course did not turn to the kind of "positive science" invoked by Marx against philosophy, he opposed Horkheimer and Adorno's critique precisely for its speculative flight from the realm of actuality.

Habermas's judgment of the early Frankfurt School, however, has become a matter of intense debate. The work of Adorno in particular, many scholars have recently argued, may speak to the contemporary historical moment in surprising ways. But rather than add yet one more treatment to this expansive theoretical literature, this study will also put the tension between the positions of Adorno and Habermas into historical and comparative relief, not just within the context of German history but particularly in tracing the movement of their ideas across national contexts. In a particular European moment, as the Dutch example perhaps above all illustrates, the promise of communicative reason appeared to be, to a considerable extent, redeemable; the distorting social effects that had hitherto blocked free communication seemed ready to yield to the "forceless force of the better argument." Despite the fact that 1968 turned out not to be a revolutionary moment—as both Adorno and Habermas warned their rebellious students—the Netherlands in the 1970s had an atmosphere of unprecedented openness and possibility and saw widespread forms of social democratization, with the general absence of left-wing desperation and violence that culminated in Germany with the Rote Armee Fraktion. To completely write off these progressive improvements as mere illusion, as radical leftist critics impatient with all reform are wont to do,[16] could mean to forgo the means of preventing the most egregious forms of injustice, and the Dutch example, I argue, suggests that "reformism" need not always be an epithet. However, as in Germany, this moment in the Netherlands was later eclipsed by the "no-nonsense" conservative-liberal political and economic restoration in the 1980s and by a series of social and cultural implosions at the turn of the twenty-first century that

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[14] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 366.

[15] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 113.

[16] Continuing a venerable tradition of political accusation, Slavoj Žižek criticizes the Frankfurt School for their wariness towards revolution and instead celebrates the vanguardist, decisionist elements of Lenin's October Revolution, dismissing the "old liberal babble of the 'totalitarian' potentials of radical emancipatory politics." His salvaging of Leninism and call for a revolutionary deed that can only be justified retrospectively might give any student of twentieth-century history pause: "Are we still able to imagine ourselves a historical moment when terms like 'revisionist traitor' were not yet parts of the Stalinist mantra, but expressed an authentic engaged insight?" Conversely, his dismissive remark about Horkheimer and Adorno's "radical 'aura'" masking their "underlying solidarity with the Western liberal democracy" might serve inadvertently as a corroboration of their commitment to the historical achievements of formal, "bourgeois" democracy, which some Habermasians have overlooked. Slavoj Žižek, "From *History and Class Consciousness* to *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*…and Back," *New German Critique* 81 (Fall 2000): 112-14, 123.

have drawn considerable international attention, including from Habermas. Even if the legal, political, and social achievements of modernity ought to be preserved, the surprising historical trajectories of the progressive impulse suggest that the utopian, speculative, even exaggerated moment of thought defended by Adorno remains crucial for thinking beyond the limits of the reigning neoliberal consensus,[17] which seems to be capable of absorbing any and all critique while advancing the basic socio-economic trend at an ever-accelerating pace. To be sure, Habermas has been a consistent critic of triumphalist capitalism, but numerous critics have pointed to the considerable slippage between his politics and the critical dimension of his theory:

> [Habermas] is comparable to Hegel not only because of his enormous, positive, intellectual achievement, but also because of his tendencies, in tension with the best impulses of his theory, to identify the rational with an ethically deficient actual, to separate realism from utopia, to develop contradictions demanding a more radical, genuinely universalistic social theory, and to counsel reformism and/or resignation before a deeply corrupt, pathological status quo rather than its transformation and overcoming. Even the recent book in philosophy of law, *Between Facts and Norms* [1992], is comparable to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*…in its tendency to legitimize a bad actual.[18]

While the identification of Habermas with Hegel is a bit exaggerated, Adorno's thought, by contrast, constitutes a constant, demanding vigilance against all premature reconciliations of the real and the rational, which threatens to absorb even the most critical consciousness—even though, I will argue, Adorno was not in practice as pessimistic about the benefits of "reformism" as his writings often suggested. "Progress" had to be understood in dialectical terms, for within enlightened thought, which "puts progress toward humanity in people's own hands and thereby concretizes the idea of progress as one to be realized, lurks the conformist confirmation of what merely exists."[19] This study, then, is conceived as an historical investigation with a theoretical intent: the actuality of Critical Theory in the Netherlands and the Dutch discourse on actuality serve to illustrate the analytical insights of Habermas's theory of communicative action, but also point to the latent fecundity or actuality of Adorno's critical thought.

In order to outline the question of Adorno's actuality, it is necessary to explicate this concept in further detail. Like the Dutch *actualiteit*, the German *Aktualität*, which can already be found in Adorno's 1931 inaugural lecture at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in Frankfurt, "The Actuality of Philosophy," hosts a productive "polyvalence" or multiplicity of meaning. As Max Pensky notes, the translation of *Aktualität* as actuality "helps to preserve the dialectical meanings of the term: actuality means, on the one hand, being in fashion or "up-to-date"; to be sure, Critical Theory and especially Adorno have become academically fashionable during the past several decades.[20] On the other hand,

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[17] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

[18] James L. Marsh, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" in *Perspectives on Habermas*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2000), 565. See also William E. Scheuerman, "Between Radicalism and Resignation: Democratic Theory in Habermas's *Between Facts and Norms*," in *Habermas: A Critical Reader*, ed. Peter Dews (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 153-77.

[19] Theodor W. Adorno, "Progress," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 146.

[20] Max Pensky, "Editor's Introduction: Adorno's Actuality," in *The Actuality of Adorno: Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern*, ed. Max Pensky (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 1.

actuality denotes a kind of practical affinity between an element of an intellectual legacy and a self-reflective contemporary situation; an affinity that resists or ignores what is intellectual fashionable and instead wants to capture an aspect of a culture's authentic expression of what it needs.[21]

In this sense, the actuality of a body or mode of thought would correspond, in some way, to an "objective need"; that thought would respond to the inadequacy of the present as an articulation of its underlying antagonisms. Understood dialectically, then, the concept "actuality" preserves a productive tension between the critical purchase that a theory might still possess versus its influence or empirical significance within a given social field—that is, its "relevance." How this objective need could be determined, or whether such a need even exists in an "objective" sense, is of course hardly a clear matter. But as Pensky suggests, the dialectical concept of actuality, by sustaining the tension between the fashionable, dominant interpretation of culture or society and the thought which points immanently to the present's insufficiency, allows us to pose the question that is "in the spirit in which Adorno described his own critical appropriation of Hegel: the question is what the present means in the face of Adorno."[22] Writing against the present's tendency to offer "appreciations" of the past and arrogant evaluations of dead thinkers' lasting philosophical contributions, Adorno asked instead

> whether perhaps the reason one imagines one has attained since Hegel's absolute reason has not in fact long since regressed behind the latter and accommodated to what merely exists, when Hegelian reason tried to set the burden of existence in motion through the reason that obtains even in what exists.[23]

This way of questioning the meaning of the present, I will argue, is instructive for examining the tensions between Adorno and Habermas on the fundamental issue of the transition from a substantive, emphatic concept of reason to a formal, procedural, communicative form of reason. Is Habermas's concept of reason at risk of accommodation to the present, despite his "radical reformist" impulses? By rejecting the emphatic concept of reason in favor of a reason that, even as a *counterfactual* ideal, is strictly immanent to intersubjective communication, does his theory of communicative action not risk limiting itself to "actually existing" reason, which—as Habermas himself suggests with the thesis of the "colonization of the lifeworld"—suffers from overwhelming distortion? Even if we grant communicative reason some of the counterfactual power ascribed to it by Habermas, would a discourse theory of truth, ethics, and democracy be adequate to the task of diagnosing and remedying the full range of pathologies of modern rationalization? The actuality of Habermasian thought in the Netherlands provides an instructive illustration of both the promise and the potential limits of this position, which conceives of truth pragmatically as discursive validity, and for which "posttraditional" societies and subjective identities provide the rationalistic preconditions. In the wake of contemporary Dutch history, the

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 2. In opposition to Benedetto Croce's question at the beginning of the twentieth century of what is living and what is dead in the philosophy of Hegel, Adorno began the first of his three studies of Hegel by reversing the terms and asking what the present means in the face of Hegel. Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 1.

[23] Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies,* 1.

stability of these achievements is again open to question; the mechanisms of cultural manipulation dismissed by Habermas as exaggerations appear to have facilitated new forms of the irrationalism and hatred of the "non-identical" diagnosed by Horkheimer and Adorno's thesis of the dialectic of enlightenment.

Finally, the relatively minimal impact of classical Critical Theory in the Netherlands points in negative fashion to what is surely the most paradoxical meaning of the question of its actuality. In a series of recent essays, the American Adorno scholar and translator Robert Hullot-Kentor reconceptualizes this dialectical concept of actuality, flatly rejecting the question of Adorno's "relevance" for us.[24] Putting a disturbing twist on the second meaning of actuality noted by Pensky, namely the expression of a contemporary need, Hullot-Kentor diagnoses our increasing inability to grasp the problems that Adorno's thought addresses with the greatest urgency, even as his thought becomes more academically fashionable. What he plausibly takes to be Adorno's central philosophical-historical concern—"barbarism," or the persistence of the primitive within modern progress itself—is shown to have lost its resonance for us; but barbarism is simultaneously the most pressing of issues, as what defines the essence of our historical moment. In other words, what truly defines our era is not the asymptotic expansion of communicative rationality, but a barbarism that was never truly mastered. Hullot-Kentor's speculative explanation for this paradox is that our deafness to this barbarism today is itself a symptom of barbarism, because barbarism "de-differentiates" itself, hiding in plain view, and threatens to drag even the most critical consciousness into itself through mechanisms of fear and self-preservation. He troublingly diagnoses our contemporary "enlightened false consciousness,"[25] our collective self-deceit: "Adorno's work is no less urgent to us, than, as we acknowledge it, we must dismiss it. We are those people who are unable to know what we know."[26] This "what we know," or contemporary barbarism, consists partially in the lingering political potential for totalitarianism, but more centrally in our at best faltering gestures towards conservation in the face of imminent environmental catastrophe. Citing recent scientific prognoses that predict tremendous human suffering from increasingly frequent natural disasters and mass biological extinction over the course of the present century, he writes:

> More than a half century after the publication of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, we know ourselves the addressee of Adorno's work in a way that we could hardly have realized a decade ago. *For the interregnum of the post-war years is over*. We are experiencing a return of the great fear, as if it never ended—and perhaps it never did. We are, without a doubt, the occupants of the most catastrophic moment in the whole of human history, in all of natural history, and we cannot get our wits about us.… What is being decided right now for all surviving generations including our own, is the exact sum total of the irreversible remainder, the unalterable "How it might have been." By every indication we are going ahead with the irreparable calamity.[27]

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[24] Robert Hullot-Kentor, "Praxis, theory, and the unmakeable: An interview with Robert Hullot-Kentor," interview by Chris Mansour, *Platypus Review* 33 (March 2011): 1, accessed March 28, 2011, http://platypus1917.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Mansour-RHK-Interview-final.pdf.

[25] Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 5.

[26] Robert Hullot-Kentor, "What barbarism is?" in *Culture Industry Today*, ed. Fabio Akcelrud Durão (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), 25.

[27] Ibid., 24. Emphasis added.

To frame the question of Adorno and Critical Theory's actuality in this way, as the consciousness of barbaric reality that eludes us but demands our attention most urgently, is to inquire into how we have failed to find what we know but are unable to know. For Adorno's concepts "remain actual exclusively as memorials to the effort to differentiate the vanishment of differentiation—the actual loss of reality—which is the preeminent sense of our own moment."[28] We cannot, Hullot-Kentor emphasizes, simply revive Adorno's concepts for the present; in this respect his claim seems opposed to intellectual history's task of preserving or retrieving critical concepts from the past that have fallen out of fashion.[29] But Hullot-Kentor's claim opens up an intriguing possibility for inquiry into the reception and non-reception of Adorno's work: by tracing historically the non-actualization of these concepts, their failure to register their own urgency—which, despite Hullot-Kentor's somewhat apocalyptic tone, is nothing less than the urgency of our calamitous *reality* as it is understood by the contemporary natural sciences[30]—this study aims to reveal and, one hopes, salvage something from this loss of insight, or insight never achieved. Put less speculatively, I will argue that the very weakness of Adorno's reception in the Netherlands and the comparatively widespread reception of Habermas, when examined against the historical background of a social evolution which seemed to actualize communicative rationality but shows its own signs of miscarriage, serves to illustrate and concretize the conviction of many scholars of Critical Theory that Habermas's theory of communicative action represents simultaneously an advance in philosophical and sociological rigor and a step back in terms of truly diagnosing the society we have inherited since the generation of the Frankfurt School. It thus puts into historical relief the intuitive sense that something truly urgent has been lost through Habermas's reconstruction of Critical Theory, expressed by Hullot-Kentor in a glowing but ultimately caustic review of Habermas's recent collection of philosophical essays:

> [W]hile Habermas more than deserves his due, the development of his argumentative architectonic, in which Horkheimer, for instance, is made to sound like Quine, comes at tremendous price. The closeness to experience in the works of Scheler, Simmel, Bloch, Benjamin, and Adorno has fully vanished. The claim of philosophy to make reality, in its most individual aspect, break in on the mind as the only alternative to barbarism (H. D. Lewis) has been consumed by a sociology that might have been invented in a pharmaceutical institution…. [E]ven as communicative philosophy insists paragraph by paragraph that it is fully *up-to-date*, having cleared with Rorty and the rest of the

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[28] Ibid., 34.

[29] Martin Jay, "European Intellectual History and the Specter of Multiculturalism," in *Cultural Semantics: Keywords of Our Time* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 33.

[30] Habermas, to be sure, has been a trenchant observer of the issues surrounding the environment and economic growth, though he always kept a certain distance from the German Green Party. Indeed, within the theory of communicative action itself, environmentalism constituted an important example of non-traditional resistance groups or "new social movements" that could provide resistance to social pathologies resulting from "the colonization of the lifeworld," including both objectively challenging, global issues of sustainability and subjectively experienced "developments that noticeably affect the organic foundations of the lifeworld." Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* vol. 2, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 394. Nonetheless, following a number of critics, I will argue that Habermas's important public interventions on these and similar societal issues cohere uneasily with his social and political theory's "inadequately critical assessment of 'real-existing' capitalist democracy." Scheuerman, "Between Radicalism and Resignation," 155.

competition the hurdle of the linguistic turn, Habermas has ambitiously surrendered the capacity for reflection.[31]

Why the Netherlands?

Although this historical project has an explicitly theoretical impetus, I also intend to make a substantive contribution to modern Dutch history, whose broader significance is perhaps not self-evident. By contrast to the Dutch Republic of the "Golden Age" of the seventeenth century, the history of modern Netherlands has received relatively little interest among non-Dutch scholars, with the partial exceptions of political scientists interested in the Dutch form of "consociational democracy" studied influentially by Arend Lijphart,[32] and increasingly, of historians of colonialism and decolonialization. This marginal status of modern Dutch history is equally true within the subdiscipline of intellectual history, and for much the same reason: whereas the Low Countries were hotbeds for the production, publication, and circulation of radical thought in the early Enlightenment,[33] one looks in vain for a modern thinker of the stature of Germany's, France's, or Britain's leading lights.

It is the fate of the Netherlands under Nazi occupation that brings Dutch history into a more prominent spotlight, for the tragic reason that approximately 73% of Jews in the Netherlands were deported to Nazi concentration and extermination camps, the highest percentage in Western Europe.[34] The reasons for this are of course complex and cannot be discussed here, but the problematic forms of "mastering the past" (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) later touched off a generational confrontation that somewhat resembles the German Federal Republic in the 1960s, with the obvious difference of Germany's fundamental culpability for the Holocaust, and conversely, the Dutch legacies of slavery and of the violence of the Netherlands's attempt to quell the Indonesian Revolution after World War II. More recently, however, it is the rapid modernization of Dutch society and the development of a permissive society and liberal welfare state in the postwar period that has drawn wider historical attention, as has the apparent failure of multiculturalism in the wake of the assassinations of the anti-Islam politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004.[35] As a lens for examining the history of postwar Western Europe, the Netherlands provides both a singular and comparative "example,"[36]

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[31] Robert Hullot-Kentor, Review of *Truth and Justification*, by Jürgen Habermas, *Contemporary Sociology* 34, no. 6 (2006): 683-84. Emphasis added.

[32] Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968).

[33] See especially Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), part II.

[34] Jeroen Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance: Dutch Clandestine Literature during the Nazi Occupation* (Rochester: Camden House, 2010), 6.

[35] See for example Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

[36] In their introduction to the "critical reader" that accompanied the Dutch Pavilion at the 52nd International Art Exhibition—La Biennale di Venezia in 2007, Rosi Braidotti, Charles Esche, and Maria Hlavajova quote Giorgio Agamben's explanation of the analytical function of *the example*: "It is one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and holds for all. On the one hand, every example is treated in effect as a real and particular case; but on the other, it remains understood that it cannot serve in its particularity. Neither particular nor universal, the example is a singular object that presents itself as such, that *shows* its singularity." The authors apply this notion to the Netherlands as an example of European nation-states' and citizens' anxious responses in the face

one that is both relatively unique and indicative of wider developments of interest to historians of Europe. Each chapter will thus situate the events and movements of Dutch history within the broader contexts of Europe and assess their comparative significance, including for instance the history of Dutch Marxism and social democracy, the countercultural movements of the 1950s and 1960s, the New Left, the new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, and the backlash against the Left in the 1980s and early 1990s, concluding with the return to power of the Social Democrats in the *Paarse kabinetten* or Purple cabinets led by Wim Kok beginning in 1994.

As a contribution to European intellectual history, this study similarly opens new comparative ground by venturing into unfamiliar historical ground, as few extensive treatments of the period exist. Intriguingly, the scarcity of substantive accounts of modern Dutch intellectual history reflects a long-standing native anxiety about the absence of robust and creative philosophical traditions, an anxiety that continues today.[37] But as the historian of philosophy Michiel Wielema has shown, this negative self-view of Dutch philosophy has emerged from a long tradition of history of philosophy that has often relied on dubious explanations of national character. These historians have blamed the lack of originality

> on the Dutch '*koopmansgeest*' [merchant's spirit or sensibility] that was directed solely towards the acquisition of material goods. Others placed the blame on such national 'virtues' as soberness, healthy rationality, bourgeoisness, and piety towards the unknown. Many also felt that Dutch philosophical production stood largely in service of religious or theological goals and was therefore unable to reach the status of a self-standing science. Above all, the Netherlands is taken to be really too small to become intellectually great: the historical role of the Netherlands was, especially after the Golden Age, too insignificant to provide a climate that would be favorable for major intellectual achievements.[38]

According to the late nineteenth-century Leiden philosopher J. P. N. Land, Dutch thought was so dependent on foreign influences that an intellectual history "would have little to record beyond a long series of infiltrations of foreign thought into the science, theology and literature of the Northern Netherlands. Its one great name would be that of Spinoza; and him we can scarcely consider a fair representative of the native habit of thinking."[39] The Belgian scholar Lucien Brulez went so far as to condemn the "intellectual impotence of the Dutchman" in his 1926 study *Holländische Philosophie*.[40] Nonetheless, Wielema concedes, Brulez made some important observations, especially on the fact that philosophy in the Netherlands has been marked by a strongly international character ever since the Dutch Republic. The great historian Johan

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of non-European immigration, suggesting that the Dutch case is both unique and indicative of broader European tendencies. Thus, while not representative in any comprehensive manner, the example of the Netherlands can serve to illuminate wider constellations through its own particularities. Rosi Braidotti, Charles Esche, and Maria Hlavajova, "The Netherlands, for example," in *Citizens and Subjects: The Netherlands, for example*, ed. Rosi Braidotti, Charles Esche, and Maria Hlavajova (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, and Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2007), 20.

[37] On this anxiety, see Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[38] M. R. Wielema, "De geschiedschrijving van de Nederlandse wijsbegeerte: Problemen en perspectieven," *Tijdschrift voor filosofie* (1994): 527.

[39] J. P. N. Land, "Philosophy in the Dutch Universities," *Mind* 3 (1878): 87-104. Quoted in ibid., 533-34.

[40] Quoted in Wielema, "De geschiedschrijving van de nederlandse wijsbegeerte," 535.

Huizinga, writing under the threat of National Socialism, reconceptualized this internationalism as a virtue, arguing that the autonomy of the Dutch language had allowed the Netherlands to keep a certain independence from German "civilizing" projects. "We have opened the windows of our house, and have let the sea and land winds to blow freely. The passing centuries have made us familiar with the French, English, and German spirit."[41] In the same historical climate, Ferdinand Sassen began pioneering research on Dutch philosophy, giving a similarly positive spin to putative Dutch virtues such as introversion, circumspection, independence, and "a sense for the concrete."[42]

While the supposed traits of Dutch thinking discussed here are of course cultural constructs, they indicate two broad themes around which critical discourses have arisen: the concrete, anti-speculative sensibility, which we have already discussed, and international openness to foreign intellectual traditions. Taken together, these dimensions point to the comparative historical interest facilitated by the reception history of Critical Theory in the Netherlands. These comparative possibilities, in turn, require an analytical perspective oriented towards the transnational movement of ideas in addition to theoretical exegesis.

Traveling Theory

This study draws from and contributes to recent "transnational" approaches to the transmission of ideas and their social and political effects. These approaches have the advantage of horizontalizing our perspective beyond the traditional limitations of the nation-state, which has been shown to be inadequate for recognizing the international dimensions and flows of people and ideas, above all in the years surrounding 1968.[43] Books were copied and translated; but more immediately, young people traveled, with Amsterdam becoming an early destination for European youth to partake in the festive scenes of the countercultural Provos and, significantly, to mingle with each other, followed by Berlin, Paris, and Prague.[44] The extent to which cultural integration was a motivating force and source of political slogans for traveling European youth suggests that, especially since the 1960s, cultural transmission must be understood less as literal movement from isolated points of origin to distant destinations than as overlapping, interactive contexts of cultural and intellectual production. The reception of Critical Theory in the Netherlands conforms to this pattern beginning in the late 1960s, as Dutch intellectuals traveled to Germany and vice versa. Habermas communicated in varying degrees with several of the protagonists of this study, participated in conferences dedicated to his work, and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Utrecht.

On the other hand, this turn away from the ideas and activities of a few prominent intellectuals and activists influential in 1968, such as Marcuse, Rudi Dutschke, and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and towards these countercultural networks seems to have somewhat obscured the critical content of their views, instead functionalizing them or reducing them to markers of

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[41] Johan Huizinga, *De Nederlandse natie: Vijf opstellen* (Haarlem: Willink, 1960), 159-60. Quoted in ibid., 538.

[42] Ibid., 539.

[43] A comprehensive view of the state of this literature can be found in the two-part forum on "The International 1968" in the *American Historical Review* 114, no. 1 (February 2009): 42-135, and 114, no. 2 (April 2009): 329-404.

[44] Richard Ivan Jobs, "Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 2009): 382-83.

generational identity. For example, while providing a serviceable summary of Marcuse's most famous theses, the historian Jeremy Suri suggests that Marcuse's (admittedly problematic) romanticization of "Third World" revolutionary movements as world-historical forces of liberation constituted "a culturally emotive image of rebellion, now given powerful intellectual legitimacy by the philosophical language of the Frankfurt School. Most protesters did not read Marcuse closely, if at all, but he became an international *advertiser* for romantic ideas of liberation through sex and violence."[45] This assessment is perhaps correct as far as some of the protestors go, but it declines to take seriously the ideas of Critical Theory that did spark a critical impulse among legions of young students, however mistaken they sometimes were in their interpretations of the texts and of the historical situation. While building on the significant historical advances of transnational approaches to contemporary European history, then, intellectual history must still insist upon the irreducibility of these ideas to their originary contexts and resist psychologistic explanations such as youthful romanticism—Marcuse's intellectual maturity, not to mention his age, go unmentioned here, as does the decidedly non-revolutionary climate in which books like *Eros and Civilization* (1955) were written. Instead, one must preserve the theoretical specificity of the ideas of Critical Theory, for which national contexts were indeed of decisive importance. As a further consequence, an intellectual reception history will need to reconstruct these national contexts and assess the dynamics and effects of exchange as ideas cross national and cultural boundaries, whose subtleties are undoubtedly more complex than the feelings of collectivity experienced by traveling youth.

In a classic essay, Edward W. Said provides a template for studying such instances of "traveling theory." He helpfully outlines a series of common elements in the reception of ideas into new contexts: first, the context in which a theory emerges; second, its movement into a new context; third, the conditions of acceptance and resistance that make the reception of a foreign theory possible; and finally, how the received ideas, now transformed through the process of reception, are further transformed by their position and subsequent use in the new context. This schema seems fairly straightforward, but what is distinctive about his account of these stages is that in the process of the theory's transformation in the last stage, we can gain a deepened historical perspective on the original theory's multiple, immanent possibilities. An historical approach allows us to ask of a theory:

> What happens to it when, in different circumstances and for new, perhaps no less convincing reasons, it is used again and, in still more different circumstance, again? What can this tell us about theory itself—its limits, its possibilities, its inherent problems—and what can it suggest to us about the relationship between theory and criticism on the one hand, and society and culture on the other?[46]

To explore these questions, Said provides a brief outline of Georg Lukács's theory of reification, conceived by Lukács as the revolutionary force, the "theoretical antithesis to capitalism,"[47] and its reception in the scholarly work of his Romanian-French disciple Lucien Goldmann. Goldmann's application of Lukács's theory in his historical study of the relationship between

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[45] Jeremy Suri, "The Rise and Fall of an International Counterculture," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 1 (February 2009): 59. Emphasis added.

[46] Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1982): 45-46.

[47] Ibid., 50.

consciousness and economic and political life in the writings of Pascal and Racine severely limits the possibilities that Lukács believed to be inherent in class consciousness, its "insurrectionary role,"[48] and transforms the theory into a "tragic vision" articulated by these privileged 17th-century French writers. Rather than attribute this change to ahistorical issues of inevitable misreading and intertextuality, as Said's deconstructionist interlocutors at the time were wont to do, Said emphasizes the change in historical context that helped to determine the contours of this transfer of ideas between revolutionary Hungary in 1919 and Paris after World War II. Said stresses that this conditioning was not a deterministic result of the difference in historical contexts, but rather that "'Budapest' and 'Paris' are irreducibly first conditions, and they provide limits and apply pressures, to which each writer, given his own gifts, predilections, and interests, responds."[49] But whereas some critics might see this shift in the theory of reification from Lukács to Goldmann as a kind of "degradation" or academic taming, Said develops the argument further by examining in turn Raymond Williams's subsequent reception and critique of both Lukács and Goldmann, whose later writings display a tendency towards conceptual repetition that rigidifies and becomes unresponsive to the world it wishes to grasp.

Said therefore couples the practice of "borrowing" theory, in order to make sense of the world's unreflected immediacy, with what he calls a "critical consciousness" that resists theory's *a priori* and potentially totalizing relationship to new contexts. This critical consciousness takes a spatialized form,

> a sort of measuring faculty for locating or situating theory, and this means that theory has to be grasped in the place and (of course) the time out of which it emerges as a part of that time, working in and for it, responding to it; then, consequently, that first place can be measured against subsequent places where the theory turns up for use.[50]

The concept of traveling theory not only suggests the importance of following the transfer of ideas, an idea that has since become commonplace in the practice of cultural history; it allows for the further, implicitly dialectical insight into how the original theory becomes further mediated and determined through what Hans-Georg Gadamer, under different premises, calls its *Wirkungsgeschichte* or "history of effects."[51] Said concludes his essay with a call to pair immanent theoretical reflection with this mode of critical consciousness in order to keep theory "responsive to history": "To measure the distance between theory then and now, there and here; to record the encounter of theory with resistances to it; to move skeptically yet investigatively in the broader political world…."[52] These tasks will animate the following historical investigation,

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[48] Ibid., 51-52.

[49] Ibid., 53-54.

[50] Ibid., 59.

[51] A dialectical approach, however, must be distinguished from hermeneutics insofar as the latter presupposes the possibility of creating, through dialogic encounters of interpretation, a continuity of meaning within a cultural tradition. For Adorno, such meaning can no longer be assumed, especially after Auschwitz, but prior to it as well: "Even prior to Auschwitz it was an affirmative lie, given historical experience, to ascribe any positive meaning to existence in the face of historical experience." Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, newly trans., ed., and intr. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[52] Said, "Traveling Theory," 67. Interestingly, when he later revisited this essay, Said turned to Adorno and Frantz Fanon's "transgressive" appropriations of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, which illustrate that intellectual receptions are not simply uses at "a belated second degree" but rather suggest "the possibility of actively

thus both defending the indispensability of autonomous theoretical reflection and bringing theory's historical travels to bear upon itself.

Overview of Chapters

The first chapter, "Andries Sternheim, Dutch Marxism, and the Turn from Interdisciplinary Materialism to Critical Theory," briefly traces the history of the Dutch Marxist tradition and the tensions that emerged in the early twentieth century between the Second International-style revisionism of the Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij (Social democratic workers' party, SDAP) and the more aggressive, but politically marginalized, Marxism of such figures as Henriëtte Roland Holst and the Council Communists Anton Pannekoek and Herman Gorter. We will then turn to a largely forgotten figure in the history of the Frankfurt School, Andries Sternheim (b. 1890), the only Dutch scholar to work at the original Institute of Social Research (at its Geneva office) in the 1930s. A Jewish diamond worker in Amsterdam, he became a trade unionist and SDAP leader while training himself in the field of political economy. As a party intellectual in the 1920s, he criticized the excesses of the Russian Revolution and became an advocate of "cultural socialism," which held that the leisure time provided by the newly-won eight-hour workday had created historically the opportunity for the holistic development of the worker. Max Horkheimer hired him in 1931 for his international knowledge of the workers' movement and organizational skill, and in addition to directing the Geneva office, following Friedrich Pollock's departure for New York, he wrote numerous book reviews for the Institute's house organ, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (Journal of social research). He contributed to the Institute's first major collaborative study, the *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Studies on authority and the family, 1936), but challenged the heavy reliance on the categories of psychoanalysis in the work's theoretical essays, written by Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse. As revealed in his correspondence with Horkheimer, these disagreements over the relationship between theory and empirical research crystallized in 1937, when he criticized the philosophical direction taken in the formation of *Kritische Theorie* in the late 1930s, as articulated in Horheimer and Marcuse's key 1937 essays in the *Zeitschrift*. Although Sternheim was tragically killed in Auschwitz, his career provides an instructive first example of the Dutch wariness toward Critical Theory's more speculative and utopian dimensions in favor of more concrete, practical reforms.

As hopes on the Left for a "third way" between capitalism and communism immediately after the war were quickly overshadowed by the oppositions of the nascent Cold War, a political consensus emerged that aimed to transcend ideological conflict through rationalized planning, in which the universities and the natural and social sciences played a crucial role. During the early postwar years of rebuilding and modernization, Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was published in 1947 by the German exile press Querido Verlag in Amsterdam. Although the impact of the Frankfurt School's work was limited at first, its concerns about the restorative claims of postwar culture resonated with Dutch artists and intellectuals. The "silent revolution" among these groups in the 1950s prefigured the rapid changes of the 1960s and the critique of postwar Dutch society by oppositional parties and the countercultural activities of the Provos in Amsterdam, which became an international inspiration. Critical Theory played an

different locales, sites, situations for theory, without facile universalism or overgeneral totalizing." Edward Said, "Traveling Theory Reconsidered," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 451-52.

increasingly important role during the rapid changes of the 1960s, particularly in two contexts: the student movement and the rise of the *Nieuw Links* (New Left) within the SDAP's successor, the Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA). In the second chapter, "Planning for Freedom: Postwar Protest, the New Left, and the Challenge of Science," I argue that Critical Theory provided, first, a diagnosis of the role played by intellectuals and the sciences (*wetenschappen*) in the emerging capitalist welfare state system, and second, an alternative conception of knowledge that justified the demand for a democratic discussion of the social values being served by public policy. Critical Theory thus had its first major impact in the Netherlands through the Positivist Dispute (*Positivismusstreit*), the publicized debates carried out over several years in the early 1960s between Adorno and Habermas on the one hand and Karl Popper and Hans Albert on the other on the question of value neutrality in sociology and the broader social sciences. In particular, Habermas's more pointed attack on the "decisionistic" dimension of value neutrality[53] offered a critical pathway for younger Dutch students and scholars to challenge the dominant academic traditions in philosophy and sociology. Dutch students followed the German model of alternative, "critical universities," demanded reforms to the administrative structures and curricula, and observed closely the unfolding conflict between the Critical Theorists and the German student movement. Critical Theory's diagnosis of the technocratic elite consensus also provided the ammunition for the younger Social Democrats to challenge the older party establishment and achieve significant positions of power by the end of the 1960s, setting the stage for the 1970s, the highpoint of progressive *maakbaarheid* or "makeability."

In the "long 1970s," a political dynamic emerged in the Netherlands in which the "new social movements" (feminism, environmentalism, gay rights, etc.) successfully pressured the government to pass far-reaching reforms; even as leftist intellectuals maintained oppositional and sometimes libertarian positions, the possibility of actualizing a truly rational society appeared, to some, to be within reach. After showing how Critical Theory revolutionized the traditional disciplines of sociology and philosophy in the Netherlands, the third chapter, "Politics in a Rational Key: Habermas and the Actuality of Reason in the Long 1970s" examines how these extra-parliamentary groups were conceptualized in Habermasian terms, at least by scholarly observers. A national association of scholars called the Werkgroep Kritische Theorie (Critical Theory workgroup) became a locus for the reception of Habermas, particularly in the philosophy of social science, and brought his insights into the field of applied ethics, eventually including topics such as genetics and social work. For the Werkgroep's co-founders, Michiel Korthals and Harry Kunneman, Habermas's "reconstruction" of historical materialism overcame the scientistic limitations of Marxism, particularly its problematic normative foundations. By introducing the dual concepts of "labor" and "interaction"—the nascent form of his mature theory of communicative action—Habermas showed how rationality had become institutionalized in the form of "learning process" in modern societies. In this reception, I argue that the "elective affinity" between Habermas's thought and the social and political developments in the Netherlands, in which the new social movements appeared to act as the bearers of these rational learning processes, sometimes led to an underestimation of his theory's counterfactual quality, and thus to an overestimation of the "actuality of reason." This same judgment about the rationality of modern societies, however, led the philosopher Lolle Nauta to criticize Habermas for being still too reliant on the speculative assumptions of Hegelian dialectics, which had little

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[53] Jürgen Habermas, "The Analytical Theory of Science and Dialectics: A Postscript to the Controversy Between Popper and Adorno," in Adorno et al., *The Positivist Dispute*, 131-62.

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to offer to the "concrete" tasks of social-democratic reform. The procedural emphasis on communication and discourse, he argued further, had led some forms of applied philosophy, such as business ethics, to serve much the same function in legitimizing the status quo as sociology had done in the postwar planning of the 1950s.

Finally, new patterns of thought emerged in the 1980s as Critical Theory was challenged by the ideas of French poststructuralism, discussed in the fourth chapter, "Among the Quarreling Gods: The Dutch Dialogue between Critical Theory and Poststructuralism." Younger philosophers, particularly those around the new journal *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* (Crisis: Journal for philosophy), founded in 1980, looked first to figures such as Louis Althusser and then to Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, and especially Michel Foucault, as resources for challenging what they viewed as the stuffy, consensus-oriented character of Dutch philosophy. In the course of the modernism/postmodernism debates, as they came to be known in the 1980s, Habermas's conception of the progress of modernization and the universality of reason were sharply attacked. But whereas the French and German intellectual traditions were generally assumed to be incommensurable within their respective countries—notwithstanding the centrality of Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, among others, in the development of "French theory"—a philosophical ethics of dialogue was at work, as Dutch scholars sought to bring the traditions together in a more productive tension, even as anxiety over the predominance of "imported" thought persisted.[54] Harry Kunneman began to incorporate Foucault's insights in order to understand—at the level of actuality—Habermas's thesis of the "colonization of the lifeworld," but became increasingly disenchanted with the idea of communicative rationality, for it seemed to exclude the "existential" dimensions of the lives of individual, empirical subjects. The philosopher of religion Hent de Vries developed a distinctive philosophical project of "minimal theology" through deconstructive readings of Habermas, poststructuralist thought, and early Critical Theory, an exemplary instance of the Dutch approach to "actualizing" competing forms of rationality and their critiques, rather than opposing them to each other abstractly.

The conclusion offers a review of the vicissitudes and telos of the discourse of actuality that I have reconstructed through this reception history. It examines the development of what might be called an emergent Dutch critical theory since the mid-1990s, *empirische filosofie* (empirical philosophy), which sought to ground philosophy "immanently" in everyday practices while maintaining philosophy's "counterfactual" power. Although promising in its analytical focus on the "micrological" level of social and "textual" practices, I argue that the explicit turn to immanence and actuality risks sacrificing the transcendent moment of thought preserved in early Critical Theory. Finally, I examine the implications of this collapse of the "dialectic of transcendence and immanence" for contemporary critical thought, arguing that the preservation of this dialectic is crucial for avoiding the pitfalls of both reformist and revolutionary politics that claim to find their foundations in actuality, while maintaining for critical thought the best of both modes of politics.

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[54] On the contradictions of the concept of national philosophies, see Martin Jay, "Can There Be National Philosophies in a Transnational World?" in *Essays from the Edge: Parerga and Paralipomena* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 162-76.

Chapter One

Andries Sternheim, Dutch Marxism, and the Turn from Interdisciplinary Materialism to Critical Theory

It is difficult, in these times, to write about society and people, and about the future, ideals, and reality. For we know not whether it is evening or morning, nor whether we perceive the dawn of a new day or the last, flickering light of a world going under.[1]

—Andries Sternheim, *Het socialisme in zijn nieuwste schakeeringen* (1922)

…The thrust towards a rational society, which admittedly seems to exist today only in the realms of fantasy, is really innate in every man.[2]

—Max Horkheimer, Postscript to "Traditional and Critical Theory" (1937)

I believe unconditionally, despite all theories that claim the reverse, in the progress of mankind. I see in the development of human society, despite declines and regression, a tendency that points ever higher. I believe in the better individual, just as I believe in a better community. "Believe" is not in fact correctly put, because it could give the impression that it only expresses a wish, a desire. No, I mean, on the basis of the findings secured by sociological science, that here too one can speak of systematicity, and that we need not despair.[3]

—Andries Sternheim, journal entry, in hiding in Heemstede (1943)

Following the Institute of Social Research's departure from Europe in the course of the 1930s, several of its former associates, most prominently Walter Benjamin, were trapped in the vise of fascism.[4] Karl Landauer, a founder of the Frankfurt Psychoanalytical Institute who had been pivotal in introducing psychoanalysis to the Institute of Social Research, was captured by the Gestapo in Amsterdam and died in Bergen-Belsen in 1945.[5] One year prior, another, largely forgotten figure was captured by the Sicherheitsdienst in Heemstede, transported via Amsterdam

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[1] Andries Sternheim, *Het socialisme in zijn nieuwste schakeeringen* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1922), 1.

[2] Max Horkheimer, "Postscript," trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Continuum, 1986), 251.

[3] Andries Sternheim, "Balling in eigen land: Kroniek van belevenissen en overpeinzingen" (unpublished manuscript, Joods Historisch Museum, Amsterdam, 1943), 100.

[4] Paul Ludwig Landsberg was also unable to escape, while Karl August Wittfogel and Paul Massing spent time in concentration camps. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 290.

[5] Horkheimer underwent psychoanalysis with Landauer in 1928, primarily for educational rather than therapeutic reasons (ibid., 87-88). On Landauer's role in introducing psychoanalysis, see also John Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 191.

to the transit camp of Westerbork, and then murdered in Auschwitz upon his arrival: Andries Sternheim.

Despite contributing numerous articles to the major socialist journals in the Netherlands, such as *De Socialistische Gids* (The socialist guide), and to the political program of the Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij (SDAP, the major precursor to the post-WWII social-democratic Partij van de Arbeid, or PvdA) in the interwar period, Sternheim is almost equally unknown in the history of Dutch socialism. Sternheim's intellectual biographer, Bertus Mulder, notes that this was due both to limited personal knowledge about Sternheim and his family and to his "broad, international orientation"—precisely what led Horkheimer to select him as head of the Institute's Geneva office in 1931.[6] In this capacity, Sternheim facilitated the synthesizing of research on the international labor movement and the organization of the Institute's research projects, as well as pursuing his deep interest in the sociology of leisure time under capitalism, for which he was to produce a handbook under the Institute's auspices in the late 1930s, provisionally entitled "Die Moderne Freizeitgestaltung" (The modern organization of leisure time). Sternheim's reluctant departure from the Institute during the fateful events of the late 1930s and early 1940s, however, brought these plans to naught.

Although much of Sternheim's writings, letters, and historical documents have gone missing, his correspondence with Horkheimer provides a revealing window into the reception of Critical Theory from a Dutch perspective at its crucial moment of transformation from Horkheimer's original program of interdisciplinary materialism. This program for a critical theory of society, which Horkheimer began formulating around 1925 and testing empirically upon assuming the directorship of the Institute in 1931,[7] sought to build upon and refine Marx's materialist analysis through an interdisciplinary approach to the historical and contemporary dynamics of capitalist society. During the 1930s, the collaborative research projects of the Institute, especially the *Studien über Authorität und Familie* (Studies on authority and the family, 1936) provided far-reaching insights into contemporary society that helped the inner core of the Institute—Horkheimer, Friedrich Pollock, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and Leo Löwenthal— revise and refine its theoretical reflections in its journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (Journal of social research, hereafter the *Zeitschrift*). With the publication of two key essays in the *Zeitschrift* in 1937, however—Horkheimer's "Traditional and Critical Theory" and Marcuse's "Philosophy and Critical Theory"—the Institute's inner circle significantly shifted its outlook and program. Sternheim's critique of this shift in a letter to Horkheimer in 1937 constitutes an early defense of the original program of interdisciplinary materialism that

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[6] A. J. (Bertus) Mulder, *Andries Sternheim: Een Nederlandse vakbondsman in de Frankfurter Schule* (Zeist: Kerckebosch bv, 1991), 7.

[7] Abromeit shows that in contrast to historical treatments of the Frankfurt School that begin in 1931 with Horkheimer's appointment to the directorship, such as Helmut Dubiel's study [*Theory and Politics: Studies in the Development of Critical Theory*, trans. Benjamin Gregg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985)], Horkheimer's nascent, early Critical Theory emerged in the mid-1920s in conjunction with the gradual departure from his early interests in Gestalt psychology and Hans Cornelius's neo-Kantian philosophy. An important implication of this periodization is to emphasize Horkheimer's genuine and wide-ranging interests in the most advanced knowledge of the natural and social sciences and his commitment to both historical and contemporary empirical research. Well before the Institute's emigration to the United States, therefore, the program of interdisciplinary materialism attempted to integrate theoretical reflection with American methodologies of empirical social science.

anticipates Habermas's later gestures of returning to and updating the original critical theory of society.[8]

This chapter will retrace some of the familiar contours of the history of the Institute described by other accounts, in relation to the Geneva office, as well as the less familiar paths opened by Mulder's exhaustive study of Sternheim, focusing especially on Sternheim's disagreement with Horkheimer and his early critique of Critical Theory.[9] In contrast to Mulder, however, I will argue that Sternheim's rejection of the speculative dimension of Horkheimer and Marcuse's key 1937 essays constitutes a revealing, if not entirely representative, instance of the anti-utopian discourse of actuality that would frame much of the Dutch reception of Critical Theory following World War II. First, however, we must reconstruct the historical context in which Sternheim developed as an intellectual: the debates over Marxism in the burgeoning movement of Dutch socialism in the early twentieth century.

The Making of Dutch Marxism: Utopianism, Anarchism, Reformism

Because of its proximity to Germany, Dutch socialism had a lengthy and intertwined history with Marxism, which incidentally went as far back as Marx himself, who had a Dutch maternal uncle named Lion Philips, with whom he maintained a lengthy correspondence.[10] As the "capitalist model nation of the seventeenth century," the Netherlands also figured prominently in Marx and Engels's historical understanding of capitalism.[11] Lacking coal and the mineral resources necessary for the development of heavy industry, however, the Dutch economy remained largely agricultural and commercial until the late nineteenth century; the traditions of bourgeois economic paternalism, moreover, channeled through pillarized institutions, delayed the development of a proletarian movement relative to Germany.[12] A nascent movement of socialist and trade union groups gradually coalesced in the 1860s and 1870s, and a few Dutch figures were visible within the First International. The economic depression of the 1880s, followed by the rapid industrial expansion of the 1890s, produced a

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[8] See especially Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* vol. 2, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 378-83. As Abromeit suggests, however, the extent of Habermas's commitment to this program is debatable. Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer*, 430.

[9] Because Mulder's book remains untranslated from the Dutch, his effort to salvage the figure of Sternheim has gone unnoticed, nor has it generated any sustained interest in the Netherlands. Two shorter treatments of Sternheim in English (cited below), the first jointly written by Mulder and the philosopher Lolle Nauta, and the second by the sociologist Theo Beckers, seem to have met the same fate. Although my evaluation of Sternheim's critique of the turn to Critical Theory ultimately goes against the grain of Mulder's view, I am indebted to the painstaking labors of his admiring portrait of this tragic figure.

[10] Jan Gielkens, *'Was ik maar weer in Bommel': Karl Marx en zijn Nederlandse verwanten: Een familiegeschiedenis in documenten* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1997).

[11] Marcel van der Linden, "Marx und Engels, der niederländische Marxismus und 'die kapitalische Musternation des 17. Jahrhunderts,'" and Piet Lourens and Jan Lucassen, "Marx als Historiker der niederländischen Republik," in *Die Rezeption der Marxschen Theorie in den Niederlanden*, ed. Marcel van der Linden (Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, 1992), 9-46 and 430-54.

[12] John Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek and the Socialism of Workers' Self-Emancipation, 1873-1960* (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic; Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 1989), 1-2.

more prosperous and more assertive workers' movement.[13] In 1881, Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis founded the first Dutch Socialist Party, the Sociaal Democratisch Bond (Social Democratic League, SDB), managing to become a parliamentary representative for the province of Friesland in 1888.[14] Domela Nieuwenhuis earned Engels's admiration for his self-published articles on *Das Kapital*, but by the time of the Second International's 1889 Paris Congress, his increasingly virulent anarchism and anti-parliamentarism, exacerbated by his party's electoral loss in 1891, alienated him from the German SPD. By 1897, he would abandon the party he had founded, the SDB, which dissolved into the militant Nationaal Arbeiders-Secretariaat (National Workers Secretariat, or NAS), a syndicalist trade union federation that attempted industrial "actions" before World War I but remained a marginal presence.

In the meantime, a group of Marxists led by Frank van der Goes and Pieter Jelles Troelstra, who disliked the syndicalist direction taken by the SDB under Domela Nieuwenhuis, were expelled at the Congress of Groningen in 1893 and formed their own party, the Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij (Social Democratic Workers Party, or SDAP) in 1894.[15] The SDAP had to compete for members with the NAS, particularly in the industrial cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, but Troelstra and van der Goes won the crucial support of Henri Polak, the leader of the Amsterdam-based Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantwerkersbond (General Dutch Diamond Cutters Union, or ANDB), the biggest union in the country.[16] Van der Goes modeled the party's program after the German SPD's Erfurt Program of 1891, and it was recognized as part of the Second International in 1897.[17] The party remained riddled with squabbles, however, between the Marxist and reformist wings, which would eventually produce a "schism" of political orientations and an antagonistic break between socialists and communists.[18] Troelstra positioned himself in the center, though his socialism was an inconsistent mix of revolutionary rhetoric and pragmatic parliamentary reform.

The left wing of the SDAP had its roots in the *Tachtiger* (1880ers) movement, whose literary journal, *De Nieuwe Gids* (The new guide), founded in 1885, featured modernist prose and a romantic critique of Dutch society under the new pressures of industrialization. Though founded by young liberal intellectuals, the economic crisis of the late 1880s produced a split between those of a more mystical, individualistic bent, and those who turned to Marxism, the latter including Henriëtte Roland Holst and the famous poet Herman Gorter, who came to embody socialism in the eyes of many Dutch workers.[19] By way of Spinoza's *Ethics*, which Gorter would translate in 1895, and his cousin van der Goes's introduction of Marx and Kautsky's writings, Gorter turned his back on the impressionistic, "sensitivist" poetry he had written as a leading light of the *Tachtigers*. He took up instead a defined political outlook, integrating socialist themes and a more structured form into his poetry beginning around 1891.[20]

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[13] J. C. H. Blom, "The Netherlands since 1830," in *History of the Low Countries*, ed. J. C. H. Blom and E. Lamberts, trans. James C. Kennedy (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999), 404-406.

[14] Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek*, 2.

[15] Ibid., 4.

[16] Ibid., 33, 4.

[17] Ibid., 4.

[18] For a German comparison, see Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955).

[19] Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek*, 30.

[20] Jan Bank and Maarten van Buuren, eds., *1900: The Age of Bourgeois Culture*, vol. 3 of *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 423.

Roland Holst met Gorter in 1893 as a "young admirer" and combined her Marxist convictions with the idealistic socialism of her other hero, the English utopian William Morris.[21] Together with the astronomer Anton Pannekoek, Gorter's unlikely collaborator for some thirty years, Roland Holst and Gorter sustained a Marxist critique of the SDAP's reformist inclinations through van der Goes's *De Nieuwe Tijd* (The new times), a cousin of the German SPD's *Neue Zeit* that was funded independently from the SDAP.[22] These tensions were heightened by a wave of mass strikes in 1903, culminating in a failed general strike in April, as well as the 1905 Russian Revolution, leading to a series of polemics between Troelstra and the Marxist theoreticians.

Although initially wary of dividing the socialist movement, the figures around Pannekoek, who spent the years from 1906 to World War I in SPD circles in Germany, grew increasingly frustrated with the SDAP. Despite his early ties to Karl Kautsky, Pannekoek became an ally of Rosa Luxemburg and a critic of both the SPD and Lenin. As a teacher in SPD schools in Berlin and Bremen, Pannekoek emphasized education as a supplement to the experience of class struggle and a cultural spur to the formation of proletarian consciousness; contra Lenin, the party's role was not to act as the vanguard of the proletariat in advance of its achieved level of class consciousness, but rather to create this consciousness organically through the "spiritual science" of Marxism.[23] This insistence upon the genuine development of proletarian consciousness anticipated his mature model of council communism as a democratic alternative to Leninism. While in Germany, he also remained in contact with the theoretical circle around the journal *De Tribune* (The tribune), which also sought to push the SDAP to the left from within, but was expelled and formed a rival socialist party in 1909, the Sociaal Democratische Partij (Social Democratic Party), the precursor to the Communistische Partij Nederland (Communist Party of the Netherlands, or CPN).[24]

Although a detailed exploration of this "Dutch School" of Marxist theoreticians lies beyond the scope of this study,[25] their attitude towards the socialist movement in the Netherlands highlights a peculiar tension between the assessment of, and expectations for, the actualization of a proletarian revolution. On the one hand,

> Roland Holst, Gorter, Pannekoek, [Willem] Van Ravensteijn, and [Pieter] Wiedijk all tended to regard the Netherlands as an industrial[ly] retarded, *petit-bourgeois*, mercantile polity, lacking a strong and vigorous industrial working class movement and burdened with a small social democratic movement which inclined toward *klein burger* [sic] reformism.[26]

Indeed, it was precisely this feeling that had prompted Pannekoek to leave the Netherlands for Berlin in 1906; as Kautsky's neighbor, and later as Lenin's, and subsequently Luxemburg's ally,

[21] Ibid., 428-29.

[22] Erik Hansen, "Marxists and Society: The Emergence of Marxian Social Theory in the Netherlands, 1894-1914," *Journal of European Studies* 6 (1976): 264.

[23] Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek*, 65.

[24] Hansen, "Marxists and Society," 272.

[25] Pannekoek remained active until his death in 1960 and experienced something of a renaissance during the 1960s in the Netherlands, but this proved to be rather short-lived. See, for example, Cajo Brendel, *Anton Pannekoek: Theoretikus van het socialisme* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij Nederland, 1970).

[26] Hansen, "Marxists and Society," 272.

this brought him into the epicenter of the socialist movement.[27] After returning to the Netherlands, Pannekoek and his fellow communists retained limited geographical pockets of influence, especially parts of Amsterdam, Gorter's Bussum, and Pannekoek's Leiden, lacking support from the Comintern after their break with Lenin in 1920-1921 over the question of party centralism.[28] Following Troelstra's famous 1917 "mistake,"[29] in which he proclaimed a new socialist age, only to discover that the masses had chosen loyalty to Queen Wilhelmina rather than revolution, the SDAP, for its part, continued its revisionist course, focusing on practical reforms within the capitalist system.[30] But even the more moderate socialist organizations struggled to form a mass movement because of competition from Catholic and Protestant workers' associations, which generally sought compromise and harmony among economic classes and social groups, in keeping with the model of pillarization.[31]

On the other hand, despite their political setbacks domestically, Dutch Marxists' belief in the spontaneous formation of a revolutionary workers' movement remained deeply ingrained: "Marxist theoreticians in the Netherlands placed greater stress upon actual preparation for revolutionary action than was generally true elsewhere in Europe…. The revolutionary expectations of the Dutch school had a powerful chiliastic thrust…."[32] To be sure, these expectations were based in part on their observations of the German *Räte* (councils) following World War I—prior to their being crushed by the new authorities of the Weimar Republic, including the SPD—yet the ideal of the democratic transformation of "socialist man" through the decentralized, conscious activity of the workers' councils seemed to remain an immanent possibility. Indeed, as Gorter and Roland Holst became increasingly isolated from socialist and then communist party politics, their eschatological visions of a socialist future to come became even more impassioned.[33]

Yet despite the political differences between the Marxist theoreticians and the SDAP, they both shared similar underlying visions of socialism's positive effect on the "spiritual development" of the workers. Although Pannekoek remained opposed to any revisionism that rejected revolutionary tactics in favor of an appeal to ethics, his commitment to education as a crucial mode for fostering workers' class consciousness was in fact similar to the forms of what Sternheim would call "cultural socialism" that dominated the SDAP and the mainstream Dutch trade unions in the early twentieth century. Even if merely ethical critiques of capitalism were inadequate, the class struggle, in Pannekoek's view, produced a Marxist, "materialistic interpretation of ethics," one which emphasized the necessity of proletarian solidarity beyond narrow self-interest.[34] Solidarity would develop immanently from within the workers' activity but could also be catalyzed through education. Although the party did have a role to play in connecting fragmented pockets of class consciousness with each other, it was of decisive importance to Pannekoek that the workers themselves were both the source and location of the advancement of this consciousness. Unlike Lukács, for whom the intellectual vanguard was

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[27] Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek*, 43.

[28] Ibid., 148-49.

[29] Blom, "The Netherlands since 1830," 422.

[30] Bank and van Buuren, *1900: The Age of Bourgeois Culture*, 435.

[31] Blom, "The Netherlands since 1830," 408-409.

[32] Hansen, "Marxists and Society," 262.

[33] Bank and van Buuren, *1900: The Age of Bourgeois Culture*, 435-36.

[34] Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek*, 71.

required to step beyond the historically-achieved level of class consciousness in the name of the proletariat as the subject-object of history,[35] Pannekoek located the actualization of class consciousness in the empirical workers themselves: "These crude, tattered, uneducated, and despised proletarians, they are in reality the bearers of a higher culture."[36] By cultivating this proletarian culture, the proletariat could challenge the hegemony of the ruling capitalist minority.[37] Despite the difference in political tactics, this goal coincided with the SDAP's worker-education programs, and ultimately with the firm belief in the capacity for the enlightenment of the proletariat and the actuality of socialism. It was into this shared set of assumptions and educational experiences that Andries Sternheim was immersed—assumptions and experiences, as we shall see, that would determine the course of his work with the Institute of Social Research and his ultimate break with the first articulations of classical Critical Theory in 1937.

Andries Sternheim: Trade Unionist and Intellectual

Born in Amsterdam in 1890 to an ambitious, lower-middle-class Jewish family, Sternheim began a diamond-cutting apprenticeship in 1904 and joined the ANDB a year later at the age of fifteen. With a predominantly Jewish membership, this was the country's first and most important trade union, which won a contract battle for an eight-hour workday in 1909.[38] With this victory, the ANDB, under the direction of Henri Polak, began a sustained campaign of "edifying" cultural education for its membership, in which the young Sternheim was steeped.[39] The combination of personal ambition and sense of responsibility to his family, on the one hand, and social inferiority, on the other, gave his early interest in the "social question" both a "concrete content" and a broad, idealistic bent; he was initially drawn not to Marxism but rather to the *Tachtiger* movement and its aesthetic idealism (*schoonheidsopvattingen*),[40] though his own abilities appear to have always tended toward social science, rather than poetry.

Passing his final examination at the Amsterdam diamond firm Lam and Co. in December 1908, Sternheim finished his apprenticeship and became a full-fledged member of the ANDB. He also joined the SDAP in 1909 and began training himself in political economy and statistics in 1910 through the union's educational programs.[41] The ANDB, seeking to improve the strength of their industry and the lives of their workers, maintained an evening school, lecture series, a library, and a youth-oriented magazine; Sternheim's education was thus part of a curriculum designed by the union's Commission for Social Work.[42] Despite the ANDB and SDAP's successes, Polak continued to push for increased cooperation with the international workers'

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[35] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971).

[36] Quoted in Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek*, 58.

[37] Gerber interprets Pannekoek's ideas as anticipating Antonio Gramsci's theory of a proletarian cultural counter-hegemony. Ibid., 57-58.

[38] Theo Beckers, "Andries Sternheim and the study of leisure in the early critical theory," *Leisure Studies* 9 (1990): 198.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 19.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 20-21.

movement, a left-wing orientation shared by Sternheim, who became his "student par excellence."[43] During this period, Sternheim and his close friends avidly discussed Roland Holst, Gorter, and van der Goes's writings. Although the Netherlands managed to preserve its neutrality during World War I, the government felt sufficiently threatened that the Dutch army was mobilized throughout the war in order to guard the borders defensively.[44] The SDAP leadership's quick support for the "national interest" and vote in favor of mobilization credits radicalized younger party members, such as Sternheim, who viewed the war as imperialist.[45] In 1916, Sternheim became party leader of "District III" in Amsterdam, but his organizational activities were soon eclipsed by his work as a socialist intellectual. His first articles were written about the war's effects on the socialist movement and the question of imperialism.[46]

From the left wing of the SDAP, Sternheim increasingly departed from the economic determinism of the dominant Kautskyan tradition, emphasizing the need for conscious action on the part of the workers' movement in the class struggle.[47] But he also rejected Leninist vanguardism in favor of a democratic approach to fostering class consciousness, particularly as a more complete picture of the Russian Revolution emerged. In *Volkerenbond en wereldvrede* (The League of Nations and world peace, 1920), he contested Lenin's rejection of Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations as a "capitalist alliance" and proposed instead that the workers' movement attempt to influence it from within.[48] For Sternheim, the question of the League of Nations crystallized the "important question, in no sense answered uniformly within our party: democracy or dictatorship."[49] The Bolshevik movement provided for him a frightening example of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," which he recognized as being in fact the force of a minority within the proletariat against the majority: "Who can account for the number of Russian socialists who simply failed to go along seamlessly with Bolshevik rule and were cleared out of the way by these fanatics of power?"[50] Thus Sternheim, as a committed democrat, was averse to the fascination with Leninism that so captivated other European Marxists observing developments to the east.

By contrast, Sternheim held democratic organizational structures to be the *sine qua non* of true socialism. A political movement that claimed to act in the workers' "objective interests" without legitimacy based on their conscious participation was, in his view, a betrayal of socialist principles, one that would ultimately backfire. In Western Europe, moreover, the working class's growing political influence after the war appeared to indicate a fundamental shift in the relationship between capital and labor, such that a violent revolution was unnecessary. "Each concession that is won," he claimed,

> signifies simultaneously a gradual disappearance of the specific character of the capitalist form of society. Capitalism will not last much longer, and when one thinks of socialism

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[43] Ibid., 22-23.

[44] Blom, "The Netherlands since 1830," 421.

[45] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 32-33. On the Netherlands's defensive mobilization, see also Hubert P. van Tuyll van Serooskerken, *The Netherlands and World War I: Espionage, Diplomacy and Survival* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2001).

[46] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 38-39.

[47] Ibid., 49.

[48] Andries Sternheim, *Volkerenbond en wereldvrede* (Amsterdam: Ontwikkeling, 1920).

[49] Ibid., 92.

[50] Ibid., 96.

as the offshoot of capitalism, then this view compels the recognition that capitalist society is increasingly permeated with socialist ideas.[51]

Sternheim's hope, therefore, was that this gradual permeation would in turn reinforce the growing consciousness of the working class and accelerate the momentum of reformism. This permeation, however, was not merely an economic or political issue. In concluding his case in favor of the League of Nations, Sternheim again referred critically to the Russian Revolution in order to introduce a new theme that would continue to shape his work in the future: social democracy was not only a matter of class consciousness and economic transformation, but of moral and psychological development. As he asserted,

> The struggle for socialism is not only a social, but also a psychological and moral process. This process can be promoted through the civilizing influence of the party and the modern workers' movement, but it cannot be forced. This normal process of growth is rather undermined, as in Russia, in the case that the leadership of the state is not based on the moral consciousness of the masses, but rather maintained through violence alone.[52]

In this respect, Sternheim took Roland Holst to task for her view that the revolutionary violence that had brought the Bolsheviks power would subsequently evolve into a socialist moral awareness, in which the proletariat would learn "to honor all human life as holy."[53] Not only had this not been born out in practice in Russia, nor in the soviet republics of Munich or Hungary; this type of political romanticism in fact endangered the conditions for lasting peace, which in Sternheim's view was both the precondition for and realization of socialism. The actuality of the socialist movement had little room for such political naiveté and flights of fancy: "Insofar as there are a small number of impractical, idealistic dreamers in the socialist movement, who in their passionate desire for a better world order seek to tread a path to the land of the future with a mere wave of the hand, they will give scarce relief to the movement."[54] Only an organized, democratic movement for peace and socialist morality could produce this desired end.

When *Volkerenhond en wereldvrede* was published in 1920, Sternheim also became head of the library and documentation center of the Internationaal Verbond van Vakverenigingen (International Federation of Trade Unions, or IVV), then based in Amsterdam, and editorial and research director of its journal, *Die Internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung* (The international trade union movement), known as the *Revue* and published in many European languages. This further deepened his international outlook and a broad understanding of the labor movement, as evidenced in his next book. In *Het socialisme in zijn nieuwste schakeeringen* (Socialism in its newest varieties, 1922), he surveyed the contemporary developments of socialist movements throughout Europe in the aftermath of World War I, which had precipitated not only catastrophic death and destruction, but the moral ruin of the workers, as manifested in mass alcoholism, prostitution, and petty criminality.[55] But the war had also given a new impetus to socialist

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[51] Ibid., 97.

[52] Ibid., 99.

[53] Henriëtte Roland Holst-van der Schalk, *De revolutionaire massa-aktie* (Rotterdam: W. L. & J. Brusse's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1918), 109.

[54] Sternheim, *Volkerenbond en wereldvrede*, 100.

[55] Sternheim, *Socialisme*, 3-5. Hereafter cited as *SNS* in the text.

principles: "Socialism has been shaken awake from the drowsy sleep into which it had sunk" (*SNS*, 6). The diversity of aims and tactics, however, reflected both the uncertainty of the social order and the national differences engendered by the Treaty of Versailles (1919). Sternheim therefore sought to identify the various tendencies of contemporary socialism and situate them in their national contexts while demonstrating their underling unity, in "their profound aversion to contemporary society" (*SNS*, 8).

Of course, this common aversion entailed precious little agreement on strategies for society's transformation. Yet there was one clear dividing line; here Sternheim introduced a concept that continued where his critique of Leninism had left off: "constructive socialism." With the exception of Russia, he argued, in most European countries, constructive socialism had emerged "as a consequence of a practical, well-thought-out reformist politics, a striving for *actuality* [*metterdaad*] and without overly heated clashes, to raise the present society based on private interest out of the morass, and to push it in the direction of socialism" (*SNS*, 15). According to Sternheim, the making of a classless society through constructive socialism still entailed concrete, economic changes, including the socialization of the means of production. However, this meant not just the replacement of the old capitalist managers with new socialist managers, as was evident in early Soviet economic practice, but the democratization of the workplace itself, or "industrial democracy," based on the co-participation (*medezeggenschap*) of the workers in company decisions (*SNS*, 25). Here Sternheim gave some credence to the communist critique of parliamentary democracy, which, absent corresponding forms of industrial co-participation, remained only the "semblance" of democracy (*een democratie van den schijn*).[56] The *Räte* in Germany were a promising example of *medezeggenschap* in action, with skilled professionals working together with workers for the reconstruction of society. But while the *Räte* proved to be short-lived, British "guild socialism," and more importantly, the growth of trade unionism, carried the spirit of constructive socialism on a mass scale: the unions formed "the schools in which millions become shaped into socially-conscious beings" (*SNS*, 46).

In a separate chapter, Sternheim returned to the Bolshevik "variety" of socialism and the Russian Revolution. 1917 was undeniably a world-event, one that, he admitted, he had initially observed with awe, until the "tragic reality" of its violence became clear (*SNS*, 57-58). In characteristic form, he differentiated the specific national conditions that had produced this surprising deviation from orthodox Marxist theory—the emergence of communism in "backwards" Russia rather than Germany—while emphasizing the complexity of and lack of clarity about the conditions within which the different streams of socialism operated in Europe. The settlement of Versailles had left national hatreds that split the workers' movement internationally; these complexities were compounded by the dramatic socio-economic events of the day (*SNS*, 91). Yet, as he wrote in the final chapter, all of these varieties of contemporary socialism embodied a singular wish: "by means of economic transformation, to give the riches of culture back to all humanity" (*SNS*, 92). Here Sternheim introduced a second new concept, closely related to "constructive socialism," namely "cultural socialism." In terms that anticipated the Belgian socialist Hendrik de Man's *On the Psychology of Socialism* (1926),[57] Sternheim

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[56] Sternheim, *SNS*, 26-27. Emphasis in original.

[57] De Man taught social psychology at the University of Frankfurt beginning in 1929 and shared the Institute's interest in challenging the economic determinism of orthodox Marxism, though his arguably irrationalist tendencies put him at odds with the Frankfurt School (and Sternheim). Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 87. For a recent reappraisal that takes de Man seriously as an intellectual despite his later involvement with fascism, see Dick Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger: Studies in Spokespersonship* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

argued that the cultivation of a socialist mentality could no longer be considered a result of changes in the economic structure, but rather their precondition. He defined cultural socialism as "the striving towards man's *psychological transformation*, in the sense that his *social* feelings are cultivated to the utmost."[58] In the place of socialist or communist party dominance, this dimension gave a new urgency to the role of artists and intellectuals, who were now compelled by the issues of the day to address social, economic, and political questions. Sternheim called on both groups to channel their work against the individualism of contemporary society and in "service of all humanity" by emphasizing the common interests of intellectual and physical labor (*SNS*, 100). Despite the uncertain conditions produced by the war, therefore, the opportunity was ripe for workers and their allies in the professions to create the moral and cultural shift that would bring socialism into actuality.

Because he himself had made this transition from practical to intellectual work, Sternheim was confident about the new possibilities for this type of cultural socialism in Europe. His own experience under the influence of Polak likely shaped his more positive expectations about the enlightenment of the working class. Through education and worker participation, proletarian consciousness would develop organically, just as Pannekoek believed: "the struggle for democracy was a struggle for rationalism. In Sternheim's eyes, science, the dissemination of knowledge, consciousness, and democracy are closely entwined."[59] Although he had begun *Het socialisme in zijn nieuwste schakeeringen* on a note of uncertainty, with the ambiguous image of *Dämmerung*, he sided optimistically with "dawn" rather than "decline." Sternheim concluded, based on his survey of the contemporary evidence and his own experience, that the workers' movement was now positioned to wage this struggle with unprecedented success.

The rapidly shifting economic and political conditions of Europe in the 1920s, however, presented unexpected challenges for the realization of this vision. As mentioned previously, the SDAP and other socialist organizations such as the Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen competed for membership with confessional workers' associations. By the mid-1920s, the Dutch labor movement was on the defensive politically, so part of Sternheim's work was directed towards coordinating with Christian labor groups to promote the principle of *medezeggenschap* in the political process under a national campaign led by Troelstra.[60] Although the political prospects of the labor movement both domestically and internationally appeared increasingly bleak to Sternheim in this period, his convictions about the transformational quality of socialist education and political activity on the cultural and psychological level of the individual worker were only strengthened.[61] His was always a forward-looking socialism: writing, for example, on technology and the rationalization of the forces of production, he rejected calls for a return to a supposedly benign pre-modern age, pointing out that technology improved workers' living conditions and created new industries such as electronics, even as older industries became more automated.[62] This was not a pessimistic interpretation of capitalism's innovative survival mechanisms but rather a genuine confidence in the workers' opportunities within the economy of the future.

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[58] Sternheim, *SNS*, 92. Emphasis in original.

[59] Beckers, "Andries Sternheim," 198.

[60] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 69.

[61] Ibid., 75.

[62] Ibid., 122-23.

Although Sternheim's rise within the Dutch social-democratic movement would be cut short, the scholarly, journalistic, and organizational activities he conducted in the 1920s were formative for his later work. His editorial work for the *Revue* and the IVV's international yearbooks served as preparation for the kinds of research he would organize for the Institute of Social Research.[63] He also wrote on a weekly basis for the Dutch press on international issues, writing critically, for example, about the use of forced labor under the colonial administration of Indonesia.[64] In 1930, he was selected to be a local vice president of the Instituut voor Arbeidersontwikkeling (Institute for Workers' Development, IvAO) in Amsterdam.[65] Sternheim had therefore become a relatively prominent figure in the major domestic and international labor organizations of the 1920s. But when the IVV office was moved to Berlin and he was passed over for a promotion, he sought new work.[66] By then he was over forty years of age, and his intellectual and political proclivities were well established when he set out for Geneva with his wife and their two sons.

Sternheim and the Institute of Social Research

In April 1931, Sternheim explained his new position within the Institute of Social Research in an interview with *Het Volk*, the SDAP's newspaper:

> Luckily the leaders [of the Institute] understand that science is a living thing. Thus they came up with the notion [*denkbeeld*] to connect someone to the Institute who knows the worker's life from very close by and from personal experience, but simultaneously has a scientific background, which puts him in the position to conduct studies of the societal terrain. The leaders believe that have found this person in me.[67]

He was therefore fully aware of the social and educational distance between himself and his new colleagues, as well as the distinctive knowledge and expertise he would be able to contribute. Moreover, Sternheim's dissimilar social background led him to perceive the non-materialization of the workers' class consciousness in a different light, and ultimately, the rise of fascism as well. This would lead to sharp divergences in the interpretation of the empirical studies conducted by the Institute during Sternheim's tenure. The half-decade at the Institute's Geneva office, however, was particularly productive for Sternheim and introduced him to a more sophisticated theoretical approach to sociological research, most especially in the form of psychoanalysis. The Institute's departure from the Kautskyan, economistic base/superstructure model aligned, at least on a general level, with Sternheim's cultural socialism and his interest in the psychological life of the workers, though Sternheim tended to draw less pessimistic conclusions than those that followed from psychoanalytic theory, whose tenets he never accepted fully.

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[63] Bertus Mulder and Lolle Nauta, "Working Class and Proletariat: On the relation of Andries Sternheim to the Frankfurt School," *Praxis International* 9, no. 4 (1990): 435.

[64] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 104-105.

[65] Ibid., 125.

[66] Beckers, "Andries Sternheim," 199.

[67] Quoted in Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 133.

In his inaugural lecture as director of the Institute, Horkheimer articulated the central task of the researcher under interdisciplinary materialism as

> to do what all true researchers have always done: namely, to pursue their larger philosophical questions on the basis of the most precise scientific methods, to revise and refine their questions in the course of their substantive work, and to develop new methods without losing sight of the larger context.[68]

As Wolfgang Bonß has indicated, in subverting traditional base/superstructure model of orthodox Marxism, interdisciplinary materialism replaced economics with psychology as the fundamental, organizing discipline through which cultural research into other "objectivities," such as Löwenthal's work on literature, and later, Adorno's work on music, was to be connected to social analysis.[69] Giving relative primacy to the superstructure, wrote Horkheimer, allowed concrete research into the psychological mechanisms that determined the functioning of society. As he framed the tasks of contemporary inquiry: "which connections can be demonstrated between the economic role of a specific social group in a specific era in specific countries, the transformation of the psychic structure of its individual members, and the ideas and institutions as a whole that influence them and that they created?"[70] Already, Horkheimer pointed to American methods of social research using survey questionnaires, which helped to maintain a dynamic and concrete relationship between research and social reality, and to corroborate or correct findings from other research. Doing this would necessitate work with research specialists from diverse fields, thus "appropriating for scientific purposes the insights of men of affairs."[71] The Geneva office, then, aimed to synthesize and evaluate existing and contemporary research and the unpublished archival deposits of the International Labor Organization, which could then be integrated into the broader research program of interdisciplinary materialism.[72]

Prior to Sternheim's arrival in Geneva and Horkheimer's official appointment to the directorship, in the Institute's first concrete application of its innovative fusion of Marxist theory, psychoanalysis, and empirical research,[73] Erich Fromm directed a study in 1929-1930 using questionnaires to test the underlying political attitudes of blue- and white-collar German workers.[74] The unpublished study,[75] which addressed the widespread question among Marxist intellectuals in the 1920s as to why a revolutionary proletariat had failed to materialize, was also

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[68] Max Horkheimer, "The Present Situation of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research," in *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*, trans. G. Frederick Hunter, Matthew S. Kramer, and John Torpey (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 9-10.

[69] Wolfgang Bonß, "The Program of Interdisciplinary Research and the Beginnings of Critical Theory," in *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives*, ed. Seyla Benhabib, Wolfgang Bonß, and John McCole (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 113.

[70] Horkheimer, "The Present Situation of Social Philosophy," 12.

[71] Ibid., 13.

[72] Ibid., 13-14.

[73] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 116.

[74] For a careful treatment of Fromm and Horkheimer's respective contributions to the project, see Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer*, 212-25.

[75] A manuscript was eventually edited by Wolfgang Bonss and published in 1980. Erich Fromm, *The Working Class in Weimar Germany*, ed. Wolfgang Bonss, trans. Barbara Weinberger (Warwickshire: Berg Publishers Ltd., 1984).

meant to gauge the potential consequences of a Nazi victory in practical terms.[76] The study found that even left-wing voters exhibited latently the same authoritarian psychological tendencies as the bourgeoisie and Nazi sympathizers, and that only a minority would likely resist National Socialist power.[77] As early as 1929, therefore, Fromm and Horkheimer foresaw the possible need to flee Germany and even Europe.[78] The day after the Reichstag elections of September 14, 1930, in which the National Socialists won 107 seats, Horkheimer, Friedrich Pollock, and Leo Löwenthal met with the Institute's co-founder and financier Felix Weil to obtain funds for moving the Institute.[79] Thus, the Institute transferred its general funds to the Netherlands,[80] and the new branch was set up in Geneva with the name Société Internationale de Recherches Sociales, a symbol of its broadly European outlook.[81] Pollock knew Albert Thomas, the director of the International Labor Organization in Geneva, who supported the idea of cooperating with the new branch,[82] and someone from his office recommended Sternheim to join the Institute as an assistant.[83]

Horkheimer, therefore, set up the auxiliary office in 1931 with two purposes in mind. First, it was to be an escape route for the Institute's members in the face of rising fascism. As Löwenthal described, this purpose was to remain secret, such that the University of Frankfurt was led believe, through Horkheimer and Pollock's regular visits, that the branch was an institute in its own right.[84] In February 1933, following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the Nazis shut down the Institute, and Horkheimer, Pollock, Löwenthal, Fromm, and Marcuse all left Frankfurt for Geneva.[85] Branches were also strategically formed in Paris and London, in case fascism spread to Switzerland—a prudent move, even though fascism did not ultimately take root there.[86] In February 1933, Horkheimer and Pollock became co-presidents of a twenty-one member board, as the new administrative center of the International Society of Social Research.[87]

Second, by working with the International Labor Organization, the Institute could gather and synthesize empirical research on the labor movement.[88] This dimension of the Geneva branch, and therefore Sternheim's contribution to the Institute, have arguably been

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[76] Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer*, 212.

[77] Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Adorno: A Biography*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Malden, MA and Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 174-75.

[78] Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer*, 195. As Abromeit further notes, Pollock was more skeptical regarding this urgency.

[79] Leo Löwenthal, "The Institute of Social Research," interview with Helmut Dubiel, trans. David Berger, in *An Unmastered Past: The Autobiographical Reflections of Leo Löwenthal*, ed. Martin Jay (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 53-54.

[80] Müller-Doohm, *Adorno,* 174.

[81] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 30.

[82] Löwenthal, "The Institute of Social Research," 54.

[83] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 37.

[84] Löwenthal, "The Institute of Social Research," 54.

[85] Müller-Doohm, *Adorno*, 178.

[86] Löwenthal, "The Institute of Social Research," 56. As early as May 1933, Henryk Grossmann wrote to Paul Mattick in the United States warning that "fascism also makes great progress in Switzerland and new dangers threaten our Institut there as well." Quoted in Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 37.

[87] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 30.

[88] Beckers, "Andries Sternheim," 199.

underestimated.[89] As Löwenthal wrote in a 1984 letter, for example, "Mr. Sternheim was a valuable employee who did good administrative service in our office in Geneva. We liked him and respected him. On the other hand, he was not part of our intellectual philosophy or orientation."[90] Yet Mulder points out that in his instructions for the organization of the Horkheimer Archive, Horkheimer listed Sternheim under a secondary column of "close associates" (*engere Mitarbeiter*) from Frankfurt and Geneva, along with Hans Mayer, Hans Brill, Paul Honingsheim, Karl Grünberg, and Gerhard Meyer, suggesting a greater degree of importance.[91]

In the early 1930s, in any case, Horkheimer's somewhat more direct sense of affinity for the lives of the workers led to a congenial bond with Sternheim and his family.[92] Horkheimer called him an "upright, hard-working man,"[93] and one might speculate that despite their different socio-economic backgrounds, a certain like-mindedness existed between Sternheim and Horkheimer, insofar as their initial pursuits of higher education were practically oriented toward a scientific understanding of the present, rather than towards purely philosophical or theoretical interests. Horkheimer had not attended the elite academic *Gymnasium* and had left the *Realgymnasium* at age fifteen to learn his father's trade of textile manufacturing. He, along with Pollock, only decided to pass the *Abitur* exam and pursue a university education near the end of World War I, out of an intellectual desire to understand the chaotic forces that had resulted in the war on the basis of the most advanced scientific research, rather than any interest in an academic career.[94] Although the ultimate success of the Institute's original program is debatable, Horkheimer genuinely sought to develop a critical theory of society that would be coordinated with the most advanced empirical techniques in the individual sciences.[95]

Towards this empirical end, Sternheim's main tasks were administrative, especially after Pollock moved to the United States in 1934 and Sternheim became the director of the Geneva office. Following Horkheimer and Pollock's departure, Sternheim continued to write for Dutch publications and promoted the Institute's activities to prominent figures in the Netherlands, acting as the Institute's ambassador to trade unions and other research institutes in Europe.[96] He also wrote regularly in the *Zeitschrift*'s extensive review section, particularly on works of labor sociology and history, and commissioned reviews from a wider network of contributors.

Sternheim's extensive knowledge of the different European workers' movements and the scholarly literature also led him to develop a new line of inquiry from his long-standing commitment to the development of "cultural socialism." His most prominent article during his

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[89] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 133.

[90] Löwenthal to Luchien Karsten and Bertus Mulder, 3 August 1984. Cited in Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 134.

[91] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 135. Mulder argues that the memory of Sternheim's later fate may have led others to downplay his importance, though this accusation may be exaggerated.

[92] Ibid. Horkheimer seems to have taken particular interest in Sternheim's older son Leonard, in whom he recognized something of his own youth (ibid., 136).

[93] Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 137.

[94] Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer*, 22, 51. The newly established J. W. Goethe University in Frankfurt had a reputation as an avant-garde university, particularly in Horkheimer's chosen major of psychology, where Gestalt psychology grasped its first foothold (ibid., 71).

[95] Ibid., 141.

[96] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 137.

association with the Institute appeared as "Zum Problem der Freizeitgestaltung" (On the problem of the organization of leisure time, 1932) in the *Zeitschrift*.[97] Sternheim's point of departure, once again, was the progressive change in social conditions achieved by working-class movements in the industrialized countries of Europe since World War I, through which the workers had become an active presence in public life (ZPF, 336). He argued that these advances produced the emergence of free time as a novel question, one that had been largely overlooked because leisure had been treated simply as the "antipode" of work, in isolation from its structural role in the larger economic process of production (ZPF, 336). Sternheim challenged this neutral assumption, demonstrating leisure time's constitutive role in the reproduction of labor power and examining its myriad uses under capitalism, Italian fascism, and socialist movements, and thus as an autonomous problem for contemporary sociological research (ZPF, 337).

By virtue of his own proletarian background, Sternheim ascribed great cultural and psychological significance to the establishment of the eight-hour workday — at least in its potential for workers' self-development. Prior to World War I, when European workers typically worked ten or more hours per day, one could not even articulate the utilization of leisure time as a problem (ZPF, 337). Labor organizations had primarily been organizations seeking political and social influence based on sheer membership numbers in order to fight for material gains, and what limited attention they gave to the sphere of culture tended toward a narrow focus on practical education and training (ZPF, 337-38). Yet the emergence of free time with the eight-hour workday did not lead automatically to an expansion of cultural initiatives for the proletariat. For many workers, a "negative motive" simply to work less pervaded; yet even of those who sought to use their newly-won leisure more productively, most had an indeterminate sense of how to do so in a manner that would truly fulfill their "spiritual" and psychological needs (ZPF, 338). Since no correlation existed between the shortening of the workday and the conscious application of leisure time, one needed to distill "the psychological preconditions for a constructive use of leisure time from its leading instances" (ZPF, 339).

This psychological inquiry, in keeping with the model of interdisciplinary materialism, required empirical attention to geographical, national, and anthropological differences in the contemporary organization of free time. Most especially, however, economic structures determined the limits of possibility for leisure time's usage:

> The possibilities for the use of leisure time are in an absolute sense unlimited, but their realization is ultimately determined through the dominant mode of production and social structure. Nowhere else than the use of leisure time is it more evident the extent to which the gratification of humans' instinctual drives and spiritual needs is already to be found partially or fully in the labor process itself, or, inasmuch as they remain unsatisfied, they must be gratified in other ways (ZPF, 339).

In materialist fashion, the various spheres of leisure culture were mediated by the economic structures underpinning them, though for Sternheim it remained an open question how leisure and labor functioned together in fulfilling workers' bodily and intellectual drives. Through a socio-psychological examination of the dominant modes of contemporary mass leisure activity,

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[97] Andries Sternheim, "Zum Problem der Freizeitgestaltung," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 1 (1932): 336-55. Hereafter cited as ZPF in the text.

drawing on empirical studies of different industrial countries, Sternheim sketched a preliminary typology of the organization of free time and outlined a trajectory for further research.

Beginning with sports, Sternheim differentiated the physiological, psychological, sociological, ideological, socio-political, and political functions performed through the dominant mass leisure activities. Sport was of particular significance in the contemporary age, for it performed multiple functions:

> Physiological, in that it forms a counterweight to unceasingly monotonous, mechanized labor; psychological, in that libidinal needs, the desire for recognition, the aggressive inclinations, and the desire for glorification are substantially released; sociological, in that it plays an important role in promoting the connection of person to person, and observed from the standpoint of social group solidarity; ideological, insofar as the activity of sport grounds an ideal (the strengthening of national power, nationalism, proletarian solidarity, etc.); socio-political, insofar as it deliberately promotes the perpetuation of the physical (and psychological) balance of employees; political, insofar as it pursues open or concealed militaristic goals (ZPF, 340).

Drawing on other contemporary studies of sports in European countries, especially France and Belgium, Sternheim showed the broad appeal of sports among workers, both in active participation and in passive interest in supporting and following particular sports teams (ZPF, 341). In countries with strong socialist organizational structures, socialist movements sought to capitalize on this interest, particularly among younger workers. Yet the example of Dopolavoro in fascist Italy showed that the passion for sports could just as easily be channeled in the interest of the state (ZPF, 343). Thus the potential impact of sports on mass political movements remained an open question.

Film, Sternheim's next topic, performed a similarly ambivalent contemporary social function and potential future through its psychological power. Although he acknowledged that one might also evaluate films on the basis of artistic value, Sternheim emphasized instead their socio-psychological role, which, for the proletariat, consisted primarily in facilitating the individual's adaptation to the existing social conditions. "For the proletariat," he wrote, "the film is the simplest and most effective means by which to forget one's actual life conditions and to imagine oneself in a different, illusionary world. The film is particularly useful as a means of mass consumption because of its continuous excitements and its emotional appeal" (ZPF, 344). Similarly, the Italian fascists were able to make use of film's powers of influence, mandating in 1926 that all movie theaters show "culturally valuable" films that promoted the state's interests among the populace (ZPF, 345). Still, this same socio-psychological power might allow workers' organizations to create and distribute culturally progressive films as a counterweight to the dominant, manipulative products of the film industry. Here Sternheim remained implicitly closer to Walter Benjamin's position in his dispute with Adorno over film's emancipatory potential.[98]

In radio, Sternheim identified many similarities with film, with a fundamental difference lying, in his view, in the more direct influence between the speaker's words and the listener's mind. Further, the radio's accessibility—most radios were owned by workers, according to research cited from the International Labor Organization—gave it wider possibilities for

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[98] However, Sternheim's reformist politics were different from Benjamin's, particularly under the sway of Bertolt Brecht, from whom Benjamin's views on revolutionary popular art derived. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 201.

influence. "Undoubtedly," he claimed, "the radio has the tendency to strengthen the family life of workers" (ZPF, 346). Its effects outside the home were less well known. More clear, however, was the function of the post-World War I popularity of *Kleingärtnerei* or home gardening. Sternheim located its appeal in a variety of motives ranging from generating supplemental food and income to calm relaxation, but he also found at a deeper level a desire for a "return to nature" (ZPF, 347). Relatedly, in the aftermath of the war, gardening organizations aimed to "pacify" social and international tensions. Underneath these diverse inspirations, however, Sternheim insisted, "we can also identify a petty bourgeois motive: To everyone their own little patch of land, to everyone their own property!" (ZPF, 348). In the narrow confines into which capitalist society channeled the instincts, the possessive desire for one's own home represented the greatest possible wish. Finally, Sternheim considered the role of public lectures, theater, magazines and newspapers, books, and institutions geared towards workers' personal development (ZPF, 351). In all of these forms of leisure, Sternheim devoted close attention to their mass-psychological potential while illustrating the convergences and divergences of the organization of free time in different countries.

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Like Fromm and other Institute members, Sternheim shared in the renewed international interest in matriarchal theory during the 1920s, and in particular Robert Briffault's *The Mothers: A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions* (1927), which Fromm reviewed in the *Zeitschrift* in 1932.[99] Through Sternheim's outreach to Briffault, then living in Paris, Fromm's review was followed by an article by Briffault himself, entitled "Family Sentiments."[100] Through a reading of the nineteenth-century Swiss matriarchal theorist and scholar Johann Jacob Bachofen, and in conjunction with the international economic crisis of the early 1930s, Fromm subsequently argued that the decline of paternal authority within the family raised the possibility of matriarchy as a kind of model for a socialist alternative to capitalism, based on motherly love rather than paternal fear.[101] Although Fromm's corresponding disillusionment with orthodox Freudianism would produce tensions with the other members of the Institute and his eventual departure in 1939, his inquiry into the psychology of the contemporary family gave rise to the Institute's first major empirical study of authority, the massive *Studien über Autorität und Familie*, published by Alcan in Paris in 1936.[102] Within Critical Theory, the family was ascribed an important position in the mediation between the individual and society, shared in different ways by both Hegel and Marx. In the introduction to the *Studien*, Horkheimer developed Marx's critique of the bourgeois family in part, showing how the instrumentality of the market had become reflected within the family structure itself, but he also maintained, as a tentative possibility, Hegel's idea of the family as a counteracting force to society's dehumanizing tendencies.[103] In practice, however, the *Studien* asserted, "Because of the decline of the 'negative,' countersocial function of the family, individuals were more directly socialized by

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[99] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 94-95.

[100] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 138.

[101] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 95-96.

[102] Max Horkheimer et al., *Studien über Autorität und Familie: Forschungsberichte aus dem Institut für Sozialforschung* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1936). Hereafter abbreviated as the *Studien*.

[103] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 124-26.

other institutions in the society."[104] Building on the American model of Robert Lynd's *Middletown* (1929), the collaborative studies aimed to connect economic and social factors to patterns of behavior in a dialectical fashion, thus revealing the changing structures of authority in contemporary society.

When work began on the project in the early 1930s, Sternheim's primary task was the organization of the empirical survey research. Sternheim proposed three target groups for surveys: one for scholars and professionals working with families; one for young adults aged fifteen to twenty-three, who would be asked about their parents' roles in their upbringing; and families struggling within unemployment. Evidently, there was some confusion between Horkheimer and Fromm on the one hand and Sternheim, Pollock, and Löwenthal, on the other, as to the specific aims of the project. In 1934, reviewing the drafts in New York, Horkheimer and Fromm discovered to their annoyance that Sternheim had focused on the family in general, rather than the specific question of authority in the family, namely, the fate of patriarchal authority under an increasingly competitive economy.[105] However, in Sternheim's work, it was the empirical that held primacy over theory, which led him to interpret the project's tentative conclusions differently.

As the questionnaire research was carried out among experts in Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, and Switzerland beginning in late 1933, Sternheim's nuanced conclusions began to conflict with Horkheimer and Fromm's psychoanalytical expectations that the decline of paternal authority would result in the growth of sadomasochistic passivity towards external authority. In Sternheim's view, the authority of the father within the family had long been on the decline.[106] Having reviewed many other studies on the sociology of the modern family, he rejected Fromm's contention that the family merely formed a "psychological agency," overdetermined by society.[107] In preparation for the *Studien*, for example, Sternheim surveyed international research on the impact of unemployment on the family in a review essay entitled "New Literature on Unemployment and the Family" (1933).[108] Sternheim noted differences among national cultures and also within individual families: the shifting dynamics caused by unemployment affected families differently, depending on their backgrounds, education, and personalities. Furthermore, in his critique of the manuscript, Sternheim challenged Fromm's indiscriminating use of psychoanalytical categories, particularly his arguments that the super-ego would likely disappear; by contrast, he insisted upon a certain measure of autonomy for the ego.[109]

More generally, Sternheim's critique of the *Studien*'s theoretical discussions reflected the widening gap between the Institute's perceptions of the rise of fascism and his own. First, Horkheimer's introduction, in Sternheim's view, was beginning to reduce liberalism to a mere pre-history of Nazism. As he commented on the initial proofs, "Here it is unclear whether one understands under 'liberalism' the entire period of the pre-totalitarian state or only the age of the

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[104] Ibid., 127.

[105] Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 138.

[106] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 139.

[107] Ibid., 143.

[108] Andries Sternheim, "Neue Literatur über Arbeitslosigkeit und Familie," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 2 (1933): 413-20.

[109] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 149.

predominance of the individual entrepreneur."[110] Indeed, Horkheimer's early work tended to overlook the important differences between liberalism and fascism.[111] Second, his pessimism about the fate of the family was "absolutized," because the family might yet foster the reproduction of social values that could challenge the society's dominant tendencies. Third, whereas Horkheimer concluded that the mass unemployed would attribute their situation to personal failure, rather than as a result of economic forces, Sternheim thought that they would recognize the similar fates of millions of others, thus gaining insight into the disparities of class-based society and laying the foundation for collective action.[112] Above all, Sternheim argued, one had to differentiate among different national political cultures, recognizing, for example, that even Russia had its own specific *Autoritätsformen*.[113] As he pointed out in a Dutch article in *Onze Gids* (Our guide), Germany's *Sonderweg* (special path), its lack of bourgeois-democratic culture, as well as the particularly tragic form of the opposition between communists and socialists, were crucial conditions that had given rise to Nazism and could not be understood as a development of capitalism. As Mulder explains,

> Whereas for the German Horkheimer the development of National Socialism was the political consequence of monopoly capitalism, the Dutch internationalist Sternheim pointed to the autonomy of the political structure vis-à-vis economic developments and to the specifically German factors in the rise of National Socialism.[114]

In countries with more democratic political cultures, these malevolent political forces would not obstruct or derail the organic development of class consciousness.

Sternheim's written contribution to the *Studien* was limited to summarizing the experts' and adolescents' surveys in the unwieldy empirical section and synopses of reports. Having gathered the bulk of the research used for the project, Sternheim was greatly influenced by the Institute's collaborative work on the *Studien*. In general, however, Sternheim was much more optimistic about the function of the modern family, whether bourgeois or proletarian: "Sternheim viewed the family as the place where children could be raised to be independent, socially-oriented individuals."[115] In fact, the three theoretical essays of the volume, by Horkheimer, Fromm, and Marcuse, were not directly based on the empirical research in the first place; the results of the questionnaires, rather, "were intended only to keep us in contact with the facts of daily life and were destined to serve primarily as material for typological conclusions."[116] Ultimately, Sternheim's objections to some of the arguments advanced in the theoretical essays went unheeded. Although the project provided the Institute with valuable experience in the organization of empirical research, it is debatable whether the integration of theoretical reflection and empirical research proposed in Horkheimer's inaugural lecture was really achieved.

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[110] Andries Sternheim, "Bemerkungen zu den neun ersten Placards Autorität und Familie," Max Horkheimer Archive, Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, J. W. Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, VI, 41:79.

[111] Abromeit refers to this as Horkheimer's "liberal-democratic political deficit." Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer*, 14.

[112] Sternheim, "Bemerkungen," 79-80.

[113] Ibid., 79.

[114] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 152.

[115] Ibid., 145.

[116] English abstract of *Studien über Autorität und Familie*, 901.

Interdisciplinary Materialism, Critical Theory, and the Study of Totalitarianism

Meanwhile, Sternheim continued to help facilitate the Institute's organizational restructuring and emigration from Europe. As early as 1935, Pollock and Horkheimer made separate visits to explore possibilities for joining its efforts to other research organizations, first with Marie Jahoda's Vienna Economic and Psychological Research Group,[117] and then the International Institute for Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam. Following the *Studien*, Sternheim's intellectual contributions to the *Zeitschrift* continued to be rather marginalized, which resulted in Sternheim publishing extensively in Dutch political journals.[118]

Nonetheless, in a December 1936 letter, Horkheimer wrote that despite his geographical isolation, Sternheim could be proud of his contribution to the Institute's preservation of the tradition of German intellectual culture (*der früher in Deutschland gepflegte philosophische und kulturwissenschaftliche Geist*) under the rise of fascism.[119] This intellectual role was reaffirmed in February 1937, when Horkheimer and Pollock wrote to propose a large, independent handbook on free time, which Pollock and Sternheim discussed in person in Geneva in April 1937.[120] Sternheim subsequently sent a preliminary report entitled "Problems in the Organization of Leisure Time," outlining the proposed chapter organization.[121] Horkheimer replied with suggestions and encouraged Sternheim to "do something for eternity" (*etwas für die Ewigkeit zu tun*).[122]

At the same time, however, Horkheimer's theoretical work, and thus the Institute's core orientation, moved in the opposite direction of Sternheim's empirically-based study of free time. It is not difficult to see how the early articulation of Critical Theory, especially in Horkheimer's programmatic essay, also fundamentally conflicted with Sternheim's political convictions. One might find a foreshadowing of Horkheimer's skepticism towards this trust in socialist *Bildung* as early as his youthful novellas, written in the 1910s, when Horkheimer worked unhappily in his father's textile factory. "Work," written in 1916, told the story of Franz Lehndorf, who sought to incite the workers in his father's factory to revolution, a decision inspired by a romance with one of his father's employees.[123] As John Abromeit explains, "Franz's call for revolution is driven by his conviction that the long hours of strenuous and monotonous work in the factory robs the workers of any possibility of developing themselves spiritually and intellectually."[124] Abromeit suggests that there may be reason to doubt Horkheimer's sincerity (channeled through Franz), for the novella's workers fail to start a revolution, precipitating a romance that ends, like many of

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[117] This came to naught when Jahoda was arrested for cooperating with the Austrian Socialists in 1936. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 169.

[118] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 159.

[119] Horkheimer to Sternheim, 17 December 1936. Horkheimer Archive, VI, 41:4.

[120] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 159-60.

[121] Andries Sternheim, "Probleme der Freizeitgestaltung," 16 April 1937. Horkheimer Archive.

[122] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 164.

[123] Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Alfred Schmidt and Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1985-1996), vol. 1. The following summary, and those of many of Horkheimer's youthful writings, can be found in Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer*, chap. 1 (here p. 32). The story was dedicated to Horkheimer's future wife, Rosa Riekher, who was his father's personal secretary.

[124] Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer*, 32.

the early Horkheimer's stories, tragically.[125] The SPD's embrace of war in 1914 would be a decisive event in his skeptical political outlook, and his reluctant experience in the military, from 1916 to 1918, during which he likely experienced anti-Semitism for the first time, further contributed to his early ambivalence towards working-class mass politics.[126] By contrast, Sternheim's positive experience within the ANDB and the broader Dutch socialist movement grounded his commitment to the idea of cultural socialism, despite the movement's setbacks in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Yet in regards to concrete, material improvement, the early Horkheimer's political critique of capitalist society, expressed most directly in the pseudonymously published *Dämmerung* (*Dawn and Decline*, 1934), was not characterized by the millenarian longings that arguably inflected his co-authored work with Adorno.[127] In fact, he criticized Ernst Bloch, whose *Spirit of Utopia* (1918) had been enormously influential for younger Marxists of his generation, precisely on this point: rather than "turn socialism into a quasi-religious undertaking" with eschatological revolutionary expectations, for socialist politics, what is "more urgent today is not that men become something different, but that their lives are improved."[128] Horkheimer's early Critical Theory thus sought to analyze the social forces—economic, political, cultural, and psychological—which thwarted the possibility for concrete individuals to flourish under capitalism.[129] Still, the Horkheimer of *Dämmerung* had little patience for social-democratic reformism that aimed only at a fairer distribution of the products of labor, rather than a reorganization of the processes of production themselves.[130] The Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany, KPD), on the other hand, whose electorate was largely underemployed or unemployed and thus more prepared to agitate for revolution, effectively eschewed theory, leading to dogmatism and authoritarian politics.[131] Again, this fatal antipathy between socialists and communists in Germany was far less pronounced in the Netherlands, sustaining Sternheim's confidence in the possibility of negotiating progressive reform.

For Horkheimer, these dilemmas led to a sense of political intractability and an alienation of theory from praxis that the present offered no means of reconciling. In his articulation of this problem in the essay "Traditional and Critical Theory," the most basic convictions of Sternheim's social-democratic reformism and his belief in the emancipatory relationship between knowledge and social progress were rejected. As Horkheimer flatly declared,

> Above all…critical theory has no material accomplishments to show for itself. The change which it seeks to bring about is not effected gradually, so that success even if slow might be steady…. Furthermore, although material improvements, originating in the increased powers of resistance of certain groups, are indirectly due to critical theory, the

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 35-37.

[127] Max Horkheimer [Heinrich Regius, pseud.], *Dämmerung: Notizen in Deutschland* (Zurich: Oprecht and Helbing, 1934). Horkheimer, to be sure, remained consistently less utopian than Adorno throughout their collaboration.

[128] Quoted in Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer*, 173.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid., 177-78.

[131] Ibid., 179-80.

groups in question are not sectors of society whose steady spread would finally bring the new society to pass.[132]

This had been the very premise of Sternheim's cultural socialism: an enlightened workers' movement, whose consciousness had been forged democratically through the organization and activity of unions and socialist organizations, would peacefully and consciously bring a socialist world into being. Moreover, because of his knowledge of these organizations continuing efforts—outside of the problematic case of Germany so worryingly examined by Fromm in 1929-1930—Sternheim still maintained this possibility in the late 1930s, even in the face of the more pervasive mass-psychological forces he and his colleagues had studied.

Consequently, Sternheim felt compelled to respond to the new direction being taken by Horkheimer in his programmatic text; as Mulder aptly puts it, Sternheim was "predestined" for this intellectual counter-position.[133] He first wrote that he found Horkheimer and Marcuse's essays "brilliant" and had become occupied in conversations about them with the literary critic Hans Mayer, then still in Geneva.[134] But in a lengthy letter to Horkheimer dated 14 December 1937, Sternheim raised two objections to Horkheimer's essay, and to Marcuse's "Philosophy and Critical Theory," which appeared in the third issue of volume six of the *Zeitschrift* (1937). Sternheim felt compelled, after reading the essays multiple times, to voice his reactions. In the two essays, Critical Theory took definitive leave from the proletariat—at least in its empirical form—while insisting, as Horkheimer put it, that "out of the obscure harmony between being and thought…there will emerge in the future age the relation between rational intention and its realization."[135] From Sternheim's perspective, this was at once too pessimistic and too utopian.

Given Sternheim's convictions about the self-development of the workers, however, his first objection to Horkheimer expressed a surprising degree of skepticism about the prevalence of rational action (*vernünftigen Handeln*) in contemporary society, or at least its correlation to the striving for a rational society (*vernünftigen Gesellschaft*). Curiously, Sternheim seemed almost to anticipate Horkheimer's nascent critique of instrumental reason and its contrast with true *Vernunft*; Sternheim's increasing concern about the present totalitarian threat perhaps weighed on him here. Second, particularly in Marcuse's work, Sternheim argued that Critical Theory had abandoned its "concreteness" by philosophically implying "that a rational society must come." This imagined future society was so far distanced from the present that it became more "an aesthetic postulate or eschatological hope than a certainty to be actualized on the basis of science." This utopianism was made worse by Marcuse's claim that happiness might be fully realized in such a society. The more sober Sternheim insisted that some amount of suffering would always remain; the intellectual's focus on this desired future, moreover, was likely to come at the expense of concrete political reforms that might reduce suffering in the present. How the gulf between the present and future society would be bridged was also unclear, given Horkheimer and Marcuse's antipathy towards reformist politics.[136]

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[132] Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," 218-19.

[133] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 172.

[134] Sternheim to Horkheimer, 25 November 1937. Horkheimer Archive, VI, 41:205.

[135] Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," 217.

[136] All quotations here are drawn from Sternheim to Horkheimer, 14 December 1937. Horkheimer Archive, VI, 41:200-201.

As Sternheim himself admitted, it is not clear that he fully understood the premises and arguments of the Critical Theory, given his lack of philosophical background. What is of greater significance here is the broader discourse of actuality embodied by Sternheim's critique, which is indicative of the patterns of reception many years later in the Netherlands. On the one hand, Sternheim uncovered some important blind spots in early Critical Theory that later theorists and scholars have developed further, most especially its failure to value sufficiently the virtues of liberal democracy—a point that would be rectified after the Frankfurt School's exile in America. As a careful observer of the rise of totalitarianism, Sternheim was far more attuned to the political stakes involved. He also had a more realistic and nuanced conception of the proletariat's historical potential as an agent of social transformation. On the other hand, his anti-utopian adherence to the empirical and his belief in the rational telos of science ran against the grain of precisely those insights that would give Critical Theory its distinctive edge.

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In the mid-1930s, Sternheim turned his interest in leisure toward its role in totalitarianism. He hoped to publish his study in the *Zeitschrift*, but it was declined by the Institute in 1936, so he later published it elsewhere in both Dutch and English. In the essay, Sternheim took up themes he had developed in his 1932 article on the organization of leisure and concentrated upon Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, seeking to understand both the role of leisure in the formation of totalitarian ideology and the totalitarian state's strategic transformation of leisure activities. Interestingly, Sternheim's article tacitly reflected on the limitations of his own cultural socialism by examining the SPD's political strategy in the Weimar Republic: "The working class wanted to be recognized as a part of the whole nation, and this recognition was to be attained by means of a more intensive cultural education of the masses."[137] The development of leisure programs in the post-World War I period by figures such as Fritz Klatt sought to differentiate leisure activities for the various occupations, social positions, and genders, in contrast to "general education" programs that sought to "neutralize" leisure time by directing it according to the interests of churches or employers (LTS 35).

Unfortunately, the totalitarian states had been able to appropriate these various programs and integrate them into the larger dynamics of totalitarianism: the Nazi organization Kraft durch Freude and the Italian Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro both monopolized youth and adult cultural education, enacting a de-differentiation of educational programs in which the state displaced both individuals and social classes as the locus of all cultural endeavors (LTS, 37). Not surprisingly, sports played a particularly central role in the new fascist leisure programs, for they embodied fully the negative tendencies that Sternheim had identified in his earlier article on leisure in the *Zeitschrift*:

> Sport is the one activity which fully corresponds to the socio-psychological structure of the totalitarian State, and which is fully made use of by the State in its own interest…. Apart from its undisputed favourable physiological effects, it is in the psychological sense one of its most powerful supports, because through it the self-assertive impulses

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[137] Andries Sternheim, "Leisure in the Totalitarian State," *The Sociological Review* 30 (1938): 30. Hereafter cited as LTS in the text.

and the desire for glory are satisfied: here the ideologies of glorifying one's own nation and the conception of a "mission" are felt most strongly (LTS, 39-40).

Following the organizational structure of his previous article, Sternheim next mentioned cinema and radio as performing similar functions under the control of the state.

Above all, leisure was organized to elide socio-economic differences and conflicts of interest so as to promote the myth of a unified nation—excluding, of course, "subversive" elements. Significantly, this was not ultimately different from the myth of liberal individualism: "Social harmony could not be better represented by a defender of Liberalism than by the protagonists of the new State" (LTS, 41). The provision of culture for the masses not only compensated for the strains of the labor process but also, on a superficial level, equalized the position of the working class as part of a unified state (LTS, 42-43). On the other hand, whereas the bourgeois family's autonomy had been gradually weakened by capitalism, free choice in the use of leisure had allowed for the maintenance of the "psychological and spiritual bonds" among family members, whereas under totalitarianism, the state appropriated the organization of leisure, threatening the coherence of the family (LTS, 43-44). The idealization of marriage for its function in the production of children was therefore a necessary compensation under totalitarianism.

Despite their shared characteristics, the leisure systems of Germany and Italy differed in some important respects, primarily as a result of their pre-totalitarian histories. In Germany, the regime effectively dissolved the centralized trade union groups and cultural organizations, appropriating the workers' movement through its own associations, whereas in Italy, the Dopolavoro was able to work alongside the existing, decentralized organizations. Both, however, worked successfully to eliminate class or individual initiative using modern forms of leisure: "The cleverness of the totalitarian systems is that by means of a refined mechanism, psychological and moral enslavement is perceived as freedom" (LTS, 48). As Sternheim bleakly concluded, "In the totalitarian State there are no longer any problems for the provision of leisure, not because they have been solved, but because they have been completely subordinated to the political aims of the State" (LTS, 48). Clearly, more than a little of the Institute's work on mass psychology had left its mark on Sternheim's analysis.

The disagreements surrounding the publication of this article were only an early step in Sternheim's separation from the Institute. Adorno visited Sternheim at the Geneva office on Horkheimer's behalf in 1937, and predictably, their sensibilities did not align well. In Mulder's view, Sternheim became a "victim" (*slachtoffer*) of Adorno's late membership in the Institute and Horkheimer's ambition to collaborate on a study of dialectics.[138] Adorno's report to Horkheimer about both Sternheim and his manuscript was unremittingly harsh; he found it unthinkable that the Institute would wager its prestige to publish Sternheim's study, which he found theoretically and intellectually stunted.[139] In September 1937, Horkheimer still spoke positively with Sternheim about the manuscript while in Paris, yet in correspondence with Pollock, his opinion seems to have been swayed by Adorno, for he too doubted that the book would come to fruition.[140] In April 1938, he wrote to say that the Institute could no longer support the project financially and had decided to focus its resources on German intellectuals; as

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[138] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 175.

[139] Ibid., 175-76.

[140] Ibid., 176.

a Dutch citizen, Sternheim would be safe in Amsterdam, in any case. Pollock informed Sternheim that the Institute could no longer support him in Geneva and that he would have to return to Amsterdam with the reduced status of *Privatwissenschaftler* or independent scholar.[141] Further tensions arose when Sternheim published his previously rejected article as "Leisure in the Totalitarian State" in the English journal *The Sociological Review* in 1938 without mentioning his affiliation with the Institute. Sternheim explained that he had omitted this because of the *Zeitschrift*'s political concerns, but corrected the omission in the Dutch version published in 1939 in *Mensch en Maatschappij*.[142] Nonetheless, the damage seems to have been done.

As the Institute's assets, personnel, and core activities were moved from Europe to New York, and as political tensions in Europe continued to rise, it became untenable to maintain the Geneva office. Less understandable, however, was the unwillingness of the Institute to fund Sternheim and his family's escape from Europe. According to Hans Mayer's recollection,[143] Horkheimer claimed that this was because Sternheim's wife was reluctant to leave Europe, but this explanation seems to be contradicted by the evidence in Sternheim's letters to Horkheimer. As he wrote in early 1939, "If my wife and I had a free choice, we would most especially like to leave Europe, in order to begin a new life with the children in another part of the world."[144] Whether Horkheimer replied to this letter is unknown, but such assistance was at any rate not forthcoming. Rather, when the Institute reduced Sternheim's financial support by fifty percent in October 1940, Sternheim wrote what would be his final letter to Horkheimer, in bitter and awkward English, to make clear the dire circumstances in which he and his family would find themselves. A halving of his salary, he wrote,

> would mean for me in [the] present circumstances the most terrible blow I ever received…. I can hardly believe that you and the other friends will not have full understanding of the present difficulties and [above] all of the uncertainty in regard to my work. I cannot believe either that you should not have full comprehension of the fact that the reduction just now would have fatal consequences for us all.[145]

Sternheim adapted as well as he could, writing for the Dutch press and establishing contact with scholars such as Willem Bonger, the historian Jan Romein, and Nicolaas Wilhelmus Posthumus, the founder of the IISG with whom he had previously sought to align the Institute.[146] He briefly found work in a government distribution office in 1939 but was dismissed by the Nazi occupation's administration in November 1940, along with all other Jewish officials.[147] Although Sternheim and his wife managed to survive four more years, including nearly a year in hiding, his worst fears came to pass in early 1944. Their two sons, Leonard and Paul, who had attempted to hide separately, would also be killed in Auschwitz.

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[141] Ibid., 174.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Mulder cites a communication from Hans Mayer dated 27 June 1985 (ibid., 179).

[144] Sternheim to Horkheimer, 24 January 1939. Horkheimer Archive, VI, 41:163.

[145] Sternheim to Horkheimer, 28 October 1940, Horkheimer Archive VI, 41:137.

[146] Mulder, *Andries Sternheim*, 182.

[147] Ibid., 183. For the details of the Sternheims' life under Nazi occupation, in hiding, and capture, see ibid., chap. 8.

Conclusion

From the outset, Sternheim's involvement the Institute of Social Research was framed by experiential differences and theoretical tensions that were productive for both, even though their intellectual paths remained divergent. It seems clear that Sternheim's contribution to the Institute's early work went beyond administrative tasks; Horkheimer took Sternheim's commentary on the empirical research seriously and expressed genuine support for the proposed leisure studies handbook. Although Adorno's critical opinion, as well as the exigencies of the Institute's move to American exile, led Horkheimer and Pollock to deprioritize Sternheim's planned work, Horkheimer's affection for Sternheim and his family was considerable, and their relationship provided at least some direct connection to the European workers' movement. One can only speculate about the traumatic effect of Sternheim's death on Horkheimer, who, as in other aspects of international affairs in the 1930s, had grossly underestimated the potential dangers of the Nazi threat beyond the German borders.

In the view of Mulder and his colleagues, Sternheim represents not only a neglected figure in the early history of the Institute, but also a kind of counterfactual example of the program of interdisciplinary materialism that was wrongly abandoned in the turn to Critical Theory. Instead of pursuing empirically the most advanced knowledge about the contemporary labor movement's possibilities and setbacks, the Institute's core had abandoned the realm of actuality for the speculative realm of theory. Because of his distinctive background in the labor movement and as a Dutch outsider, Sternheim was more optimistic about the workers' potential for enlightenment and as a political force that could transform capitalism from within, and also more insulated from the Frankfurt School's revolutionary expectations and subsequent disappointments. Although he absorbed the Frankfurt School's focus on the mass psychological effects of modern society, as in the manipulative potential of mass leisure activities, he could never accept their wholesale dismissal of the socialist reformism, for he himself was the successful product of the trade unions' educational program. In his 1937 letter to Horkheimer responding to the new formulation of *Kritische Theorie* in Horkheimer and Marcuse's *Zeitschrift* articles, Sternheim therefore articulated one of the earliest critiques of the Institute's departure from the program of interdisciplinary materialism.

As an outsider and active social democrat, Sternheim has also been compared by Mulder to Franz Neumann, who, as many scholars have noted, pointed to the empirical inaccuracies and theoretical contradictions of Pollock's state capitalism thesis, accepted by the Institute's inner core. As early as 1934, Sternheim had insisted upon the political specificity of German fascism—and thus its real difference from liberalism. For example, in a Dutch review of Wilhelm Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), Sternheim wrote, "With his comments on the rapid absorption of the civil service within fascism and [fascism's] identification with state power, Reich mistakenly regards its German manifestation as a general manifestation."[148] Although other figures at the Institute were also critical of Reich for other reasons, Sternheim's critique of the theoretical universalization of Nazism might well have applied to some of the Institute's own work. As Sternheim repeatedly argued, Germany's peculiar political history and the severity of the socialist-communist split had cast an unusually

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[148] Review of Wilhelm Reich, *Massenpsychologie des Faschismus*, by Andries Sternheim, *Mensch en Maatschappij* 10 (1934): 296.

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pessimistic light on the revolutionary promise of the German workers and their susceptibility to fascism, which the Frankfurt School interpreted in general terms. Having observed closely the rise of fascism in Italy and Hungary in the 1920s, by contrast, Sternheim was disinclined to interpret it in terms of a logical development of capitalism, giving primacy instead to political factors. To the extent that Sternheim's critique of the turn from interdisciplinary materialism to Critical Theory was grounded in a more empirically knowledgeable and nuanced understanding of the political conditions throughout Europe, it does suggest some weaknesses at the core of Critical Theory in its classical stage.

But we must also ask whether Critical Theory's misperceptions and apocalyptic exaggerations did not ultimately prove to be more incisive—whether, to paraphrase Adorno's famous remark about psychoanalysis, it is only the exaggerations in it that are true.[149] In the wake of the Holocaust, Sternheim's more optimistic belief in an immanent historical tendency towards human emancipation seems tragically misguided. In one of his journal entries (cited above), written while in hiding in Heemstede in September 1943, Sternheim, as an exemplary figure of the interwar social-democratic movement, reiterated his fundamental convictions, which remained intact despite his own terrifying experience:

> I believe unconditionally, despite all theories that claim the reverse, in the progress of mankind. I see in the development of human society, despite declines and regression, a tendency that points ever higher. I believe in the better individual, just as I believe in a better community. "Believe" is not in fact correctly put, because it could give the impression that it only expresses a wish, a desire. No, I mean, on the basis of the findings secured by sociological science, that here too one can speak of systematicity, and that we need not despair.[150]

Whether Sternheim had Critical Theory in mind in the first sentence is unclear, given the wider interwar discourse of civilizational decline and conservative *Kulturkritik*. For his former associates fortunate to have escaped the flood of barbarism in which Sternheim soon perished, however, the question would no longer be the relative opposition of scientific progress and political regression, but rather their mutual entanglement in the "dialectic of enlightenment." Sternheim's scientific confidence, from the Frankfurt School's perspective, was receiving its final blow at the very moment in which Sternheim clung to it. On the other hand, Sternheim's political reformism and cultural-socialist vision of making "a better community" would find new life after the war—albeit in cooperation with other political parties and without the hope for a post-capitalist, classless society. It is to this afterlife and the new dilemmas it raised that we shall now turn.

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[149] For a provocative defense of Adorno's mode of exaggeration, see Alexander García Düttmann, "Thinking as Gesture: A Note on *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," *New German Critique* 81 (2000): 143-52; and *Philosophy of Exaggeration*, trans. James Philips (New York and London: Continuum, 2007).

[150] Sternheim, "Balling in eigen land," 100.

Chapter Two

Planning for Freedom: Postwar Protest, the New Left, and the Challenge of Science

We might have become revolutionaries. But we will sooner see the sun rise in the west than see revolution come to the Netherlands.[1]

—Roel van Duijn, *Provo* no. 1 (1965)

Was ever such rightness joined to such foolishness?[2]

—Samuel Beckett to Theodor W. Adorno (1969)

Following the North Sea flood of 1953 (*Watersnoodramp*), in which nearly 2,000 people in the provinces of Zeeland and South Holland perished, the Dutch government's Central Planning Bureau planned and implemented the Delta Project, the massive water engineering system that would protect the landscape from future catastrophe. A project of immense scale, the system represented the pinnacle of development of centuries of water technology and remains, not unjustifiably, a matter of national pride; Dutch historians of technology have gone so far as to call the Delta Works a "great hydraulic work of art."[3] Indeed, the project's scale, along with the simultaneous standardization of dike heights throughout the country,[4] serve as a visible trophy of the Netherlands's tenuous triumph over nature, subordinated to a precise calculus of risk and human safety. Farther north, having reclaimed from nature vast areas of land that lie below sea level (polders), the Dutch would later use the Flevoland area (reclaimed from the freshwater IJsselmeer, itself closed off from the North Sea by the Afsluitdijk in 1932) as a constructed space in which to envision, plan, and create a model for a renewed postwar society. The country's imagination, and especially that of its political elite, was captured by a *Flevoland-gevoel* (feeling), a sense of confidence that society—geographically, infrastructurally, and culturally—could be developed, indeed "made" (*gemaakt*) so as to actualize and embody the country's social values and normatively orient individuals' personal development (*ontplooiing*).[5]

But if the vulnerable human relation to water has always been an important component of the Dutch moral geography,[6] there are now signs that such transgression against nature has its costs. There is currently debate over the need to re-flood certain polders for the purpose of

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[1] Roel van Duijn et al., "Inleiding tot het provocerend denken," *Provo* no. 1 (July 1965). Reprinted in Roel van Duijn and Cor Jaring, *Provo: De geschiedenis van de provotarische beweging, 1965-1967* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1985), 30.

[2] Samuel Beckett to Theodor W. Adorno, 4 February 1969, *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter* 3 (1994): 26. Quoted in Detlev Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 338.

[3] Cited in Kees Schuyt and Ed Taverne, eds., *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, vol. 4 of *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 135.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Jan Willem Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooiing: Wetenschap, politiek en de maakbare samenleving* (The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 1999), 74-75. Experts in the influential discipline of "sociography" (*sociografie*) systematically selected and instructed the new Flevoland population as a model of social engineering.

[6] See Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Vintage, 1997), chap. 1.

environmental restoration, and the Netherlands is acutely susceptible to the effects of global warming, over which it is powerless directly to control. In the late 1960s, Dutch environmentalists challenged the hubris of other government water projects,[7] as there were potentially other values at stake for which little consideration had been given.

Protection against natural disaster, however, was surely among the less contentious political issues of the decade, in which the enlightened benevolence of the elites in the Hague and the paternalism of traditional sources of authority lost their self-evidence. In fact, the organization of the Delta Project, in which a governmental commission directed teams of technological and social-scientific experts in a project of rational modernization, serves as a model for the types of projects that were implemented in virtually every sphere of postwar society, from agriculture to housing to welfare, a technocratic form of governance that would be broadly challenged. This process did not originate from a single group of elites, nor was it seamless, but this type of planning was central to the Netherlands's robust postwar attempts at *vernieuwing*—translated simultaneously as modernization, reform, and renewal. When the forces of protest were unleashed in the mid-1960s, the politics of planning was challenged by increasing numbers of Dutch students and youth, who demanded to participate in the discussions of the social ends to be served by the means of technology and the natural and social sciences. How did these demands for participation emerge, on what basis were they made, and to what degree were they met? What prospects for political, social, and cultural reform and revolution were envisioned by those in various camps on the political Left against the "end of ideology" political consensus? How did the Dutch students conceptualize the role of science and technology in Dutch society in the context of the welfare state and the Cold War, and how did they attempt to actualize alternative possibilities? This chapter will examine the diffuse role played by Critical Theory in each of these controversies and show that the diagnoses of the members of the Frankfurt School, particularly Marcuse and Habermas, were a central theoretical resource in the critique of the paternalistically planned society in the Netherlands and helped to politicize the generation of the 1960s in the areas of education and governance.

A Planner's Paradise

If the Netherlands remained one of the most traditional western European countries at the end of World War II, it was perhaps the most dramatically transformed in the 1960s. But these changes were both continuations of and reactions to social and political developments that began in the late 1940s, efforts aimed at national recovery and renewal. In fact, the massive infusion of Marshall Plan funds from the United States served as the catalyst for plans to renew the country that were already put in place during the war. As a result of the invasion of the country beginning May 10th, 1940, and the bombing of Rotterdam and other cities on May 14th, which led to the Netherlands's quick surrender on the 15th, large areas of the countryside were badly damaged, despite the Nazis intention to incorporate their Dutch "Germanic brethren" into an enlarged German Reich—or to exploit its industrial and labor capacities when this ideological goal fell flat.[8] But the result of this destruction was "a planner's paradise" after the war: the government

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[7] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare,* 136.

[8] For an account of this mostly failed attempt, see Jeroen Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance: Dutch Clandestine Literature during the Nazi Occupation* (Rochester: Camden House, 2010), esp. chap. 3.

required the services of university-trained functionaries to remake the country on physical, infrastructural, economic, and social levels.[9] The occupation, moreover, had galvanized a sense of national identity and seemed to promise a new spirit of cooperation among the culturally divided citizenry following liberation in 1945.[10] But despite calls for a breakthrough from the system of *verzuiling* or pillarization, in which each social and political group had its own independent social structures, including political parties, schools, newspapers and even soccer clubs, political power continued to be channeled through the pillars until the 1960s.[11] Party elites from across the political spectrum (with the exception of the Communist Party, which was swiftly marginalized, despite its prominence in the Dutch Resistance[12]) sought to generate and utilize knowledge using the latest methods of natural and social science within this political constellation, "cemented" by the dualism of "Marshall economics, anti-Communist politics."[13] There was a "dream of reason" that economic planning and political consensus could provide an end of ideology, eliminating social conflict in advance.[14] While continuing confessional divisions within the pillarization system prevented a truly centralized planning policy from remaking the country according to any single vision, the variety of modernizing projects organized under the Central Planning Bureau and the Central Bureau of Statistics made it possible for the period 1945-1973 to be thought of as the "years of calculation."[15]

This paternalistic, calculating impulse was among the casualties of the 1960s, but the seeds of discontent could be found soon after 1945. In looking for explanations for this change in attitude and the generational reaction to postindustrial, consumer society more generally, historians of the Netherlands have noted that some of the critical impulses that found political expression in the 1960s were linked to the criticisms of artists and intellectuals in the late 1940s and 1950s. The COBRA artists (Copenhagen—Brussels—Amsterdam) and the *Vijftiger* (1950er) poets, most prominently, had criticized the utilitarianism of mass society as it began to emerge after the war through radical experimentation in visual art, poetry, and prose. Arend Lijphart's classic study, *The Politics of Accommodation*, which argued that the "pacification democracy" of the era of pillarization (1917-1967) had quickly been changed into a "participation democracy,"[16] thus placed too much emphasis on the 1960s as a watershed decade, because critical voices could already be heard in the 1950s. Rather, that decade witnessed a "silent revolution" of intellectuals, artists, and subcultures that rejected mass society under this political system and constituted a

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[9] The phrase is borrowed from Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, chap. 5.

[10] Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance*, 4.

[11] James C. Kennedy, *Building New Babylon: Cultural Change in the Netherlands During the 1960s* (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1995), 31. Published as *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw: Nederland in de jaren zestig*, trans. Simone Kennedy-Doornbos (Amsterdam: Boom, 1997).

[12] Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance*, 195-96. Dewulf shows that not unlike Jewish survivors who returned to the Netherlands after the war, the resistance fighters were often treated with hostility because "they were an annoying reminder of the fact that the great majority of the Dutch population had done little or nothing to disrupt Nazi policy" (ibid., 195).

[13] Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 315.

[14] Ed Jonker, *De sociologische verleiding: Sociologie, sociaal-democratie en de welvaartsstaat* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1988), 11.

[15] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 21-22.

[16] Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

bridge to the protest generation of the 1960s.[17] The central experience of the Nazi occupation therefore had divergent legacies, as the technocratic ambitions of the pillarized elite began to produce resentment among those, especially the small minority of active Resistance fighters, who expected fundamental changes in Dutch society to result from the country's liberation.[18] For example, among the members of the Dutch Resistance from World War II, W. H. Nagel, a professor of criminology at the Leiden University, wrote a pair of famous books in 1953 and 1962 under his Resistance alias of J. B. Charles that sought to jar Dutch society out of its zealous drive toward modernization.[19] The first accused the Dutch of "mastering their past" through a hurried turn away from the wrongs committed by politicians and civil servants during World War II in the name of efforts toward economic recovery, while the second called for a "third way" out of the new Cold War mentality.[20] Moreover, together with the editor of the progressive Christian journal *Vrij Nederland* (Free Netherlands), Henk van Randwijk, Nagel effectively provided a rhetorical link between the emergent youth protest movements and the Resistance in the pervasive discourse of *goed en fout*, good and evil, making resistance to the existing social system a mode of proving one's moral worth.[21] It is symbolic that the prominent clandestine publisher De Bezige Bij (The Busy Bee), which Queen Wilhelmina visited after her return from British exile,[22] would become an important press for critical texts in the 1960s and 1970s.

Politically, immediately after the liberation in 1945, there had been optimism about a leftist future for the Netherlands, as the socialists and communists appeared ready to join forces, but a weak showing in the 1946 election, followed by a Cold War split between socialists and communists, effectively eliminated the political viability of a socialist transformation.[23] With the social democratic party's refounding in 1946 from the remains of the prewar Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP), in alliance with certain factions of the liberal and Christian parties, the Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA) gradually diluted its socialist position. This began with its 1947 program, *De weg naar vrijheid* (The path to freedom), which strongly embraced Karl Mannheim's notion of "planning for freedom" in *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* as a response to the spiritual crisis of the war and the threat of political extremism.[24] The influence of religious socialism for central party figures such as Willem Banning further contributed to the party's embrace of the model of guiding, elite consensus.[25] PvdA officially abandoned the doctrines of Marxism and the language of class conflict in favor of a mixed economy and strategy of pragmatic reform in its party program of 1959, the same year as the German SPD's Bad Godesberg congress. However, as with the SPD, the party's *Westbindung* or orientation to the West in the support of the European Economic Community and North Atlantic Treaty Organization disillusioned factions of the party who sought to negotiate a "third way"

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[17] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare,* 17-18; Paul Luykx and Pim Slot, eds., *Een stille revolutie? Cultuur en mentaliteit in de lange jaren fijftig* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997).

[18] See Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance*, chap. 6.

[19] Ibid., 196.

[20] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare,* 355-56.

[21] Ibid., 356.

[22] Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance*, 5.

[23] Anet Bleich and Max van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië! Linkse intellektuelen en de koude oorlog* (Amsterdam: Socialistiese Uitgeverij Amsterdam, 1978), 171.

[24] Bart Tromp, *Het social-democratisch programma: De beginselprogramma's van de SDB, SDAP en PvdA, 1878-1977* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2002), 297; Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooiing*, 46.

[25] Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooiing*, 37.

between capitalism and communism—an idea that was still taken seriously from 1946-1947[26]—particularly as the military and nuclear antagonism of the Cold War coalesced. This faction then defected from PvdA, creating a new Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij (Pacifist-socialist party, PSP) in 1957. PvdA's initial support of the Netherlands's violent attempt to maintain colonial control of Indonesia, particularly through two "police actions" in July 1947 and December 1948, had also divided the socialist pillar.[27] Out of this pacifist sub-pillar or community developed a number of countercultural impulses, most importantly, as we shall see, the Provos.

In addition to these domestic forms of cultural criticism and political discontent, the international orientation of the Dutch in general, and the protest movements in particular, was evident from the beginning of the postwar period, further undermining the traditional image of the insulated calm of the 1950s. French and increasingly English literature was both translated and read in the original in huge numbers.[28] The Dutch were attuned to the various countercultural movements that began in the 1950s, which produced, for example, an existentialist vogue: Sartre and Camus were discussed in intellectual and artistic circles, although its religious variants, such as the work of Teilhard de Chardin and Gabriel Marcel, tended to be more popular in liberal Catholic circles.[29] For those who had just experienced the war and occupation, an existentialist conception of alienation became a keyword of the decade.[30] Evidently, Adorno's *Habilitationsschrift* of 1933, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, was broadly read among existentialist writers in the early postwar period, despite Adorno's critical view of his study's subject.[31] At this point, however, the dominant sense of the primacy of society over the individual and the need for ordering (*ordening*) prevented existentialism from producing any widespread challenge to traditional norms within the pillars.[32] On the other hand, the heavily normative tradition of religiously-infused, anti-positivist philosophy would later facilitate the confident normative critique of leftist religious thinkers beginning in the early 1960s.[33] Specifically, some progressive Christian scholars, such as the Jesuit sociologist Harry Hoefnagels and the theologian and philosopher R. C. Kwant, helped to prepare an environment for the future reception of Critical Theory (in which they also participated) by introducing the

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[26] Tromp, *Het social-democratisch programma*, 300.

[27] Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance*, 206. Divisive tensions also arose within the Dutch Resistance over the issue of colonialism well before the end of World War II. See Jeroen Dewulf, "The Many Meanings of Freedom: The Debate on the Legitimacy of Colonialism in the Dutch Resistance, 1940-1949," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2011), doi:10.1353/cch.2011.0002. It has been difficult to determine the number of Indonesian deaths during the revolution, but estimates range from 45,000 to 100,000 combat deaths and 25,000 to 100,000 civilian deaths. Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 100.

[28] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 442-47.

[29] Antoine Verbij, *Tien rode jaren: Links radicalisme in Nederland, 1970-1980* (Amsterdam: Ambo, 2005), 70; Ed Simons and Lodewijk Winkeler, *Het verraad der clercken: Intellectuelen en hun rol in de ontwikkelingen van het Nederlandse katholicisme na 1945* (Baarn: Arbor, 1987), 181.

[30] Jan Willem Duyvendak, "Wijsgerig perspectief op het Ware Zelf: Een speurtocht naar de wisselende betekenis van 'Vervreemding' in de na-oorlogse Nederlandse filosofie," in *Wijsbegeerte in Nederland in de 20ste eeuw: Een bundle voor Michael Petry bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar van de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam*, ed. Ronald van Raak and Michael John Petry (Best: Damon, 1999), 79.

[31] Lolle Wiebe Nauta, "Het marxisme en de filosofie van Habermas," in *De gerealiseerde utopie en andere sociaal-filosofische stukken* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1981), 65. Nauta does not elaborate on this reception.

[32] Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooiing*, 38.

[33] Ibid., 39-40.

young Marx to the Netherlands, shifting the emphasis from political economy to subjective issues of alienation; there had been little discussion of Hegelian Marxism within the intellectual circles of the social democrats before the war.[34]

Because of the Nazi occupation, however, Germans and German *Kultur* were viewed with suspicion or outright hostility by much of the Dutch population. Prior to the war, intellectual and cultural exchanges between the Netherlands and Germany had been fairly significant, though Dutch nationalism since the 19th century used traditional German militarism and *Obrigkeit* as foils to distinguish its own traditions of neutrality and freedom.[35] With the occupation, this ambivalence towards Germany crystalized into antipathy, which remained widespread following the war. At the Rhine border crossing into Germany at Emmerich, for example, the Dutch displayed a painting from the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum featuring the following English text: "You are now leaving the civilized world."[36] That any German intellectual tradition might receive a welcome reception in the Netherlands in this period was therefore unlikely, or still less, to be sought out directly at the source. When the Dutch-born philosopher Willem van Reijen (b. 1938), for example, decided to move from the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) to the University of Freiburg in the early 1960s to continue his studies, his parents vehemently opposed this highly unusual trajectory.[37]

Yet against this political background—and in many areas, the material background of economic scarcity and the physical destruction of the German war and occupation—the Frankfurt School, with its commitment to the universalism of the European Enlightenment, represented precisely the hope of Dutch intellectuals for a German intelligentsia that was not compromised by the tragedy of Nazism and German particularism.[38] Frederik van Gelder suggests that even earlier than in Germany, the Dutch recognized in Adorno the voice of the Jewish Holocaust survivor, particularly in the reception of his writings and lectures on "Education after Auschwitz" and "The Meaning of Working Through the Past"[39] These interventions surely had a major impact in the Federal Republic as well, but were perhaps received with less resistance in the Netherlands because they reflected harshly on the German people's attempt to do away swiftly with the horrific consequences of their support of the Nazi regime.

For some of the intellectuals of the immediate postwar generation, however, the insights of the Frankfurt School helped to explain not only the roots of Nazism but pointed beyond Germany to the continued latent potential of authoritarianism in Europe. As the philosopher Lolle Nauta—whose Jewish school teacher had suddenly disappeared at the hands of the authorities during the occupation—later recalled, his professors at the University of Groningen (including, presumably, his mentor, the German-Jewish philosophical anthropologist Helmuth

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[34] Ger Harmsen, "Marx-Rezeption in der niederländischen Sozialdemokratie (1918-1983)," in *Die Rezeption der Marxschen Theorie in den Niederlanden*, ed. Marcel van der Linden (Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, 1992), 422, 400.

[35] Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance*, 152-53. For a comprehensive treatment of Germany's transition "from enemy to ally," see Friso Wielenga, *Van vijand tot bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1999).

[36] Frederik van Gelder, "Adorno—Werk und Wirkung. Zum 100. Geburtstag," 8, unpublished manuscript, 2003, accessed May 13, 2011, http://www.amsterdam-adorno.net/twa_gelderland.html.

[37] Willem van Reijen, interview by author, Utrecht, the Netherlands, January 10, 2008.

[38] Van Gelder, "Adorno," 8.

[39] Ibid., 9.

Plessner, who was acquainted with the members of the Institute of Social Research) continued to warn against the threat of fascism even after 1945. This threat helps to explain the otherwise unexpected

> popularity of difficult [*haast onleesbare*] Frankfurt philosophers such as Adorno, Marcuse, and Horkheimer. They were read by my generation with a shock of recognition. Finally, the enemy [fascism] was called by its true name. Their cultural philosophy – *Dialektik der Aufklärung* – traced its historical roots; their social theory, which described capitalist exploitation and reification, interpreted its power; and their depth psychology – *The Authoritarian Personality* – explained its adherents. What more could we want? Compared with this, the analytical philosophers made a meager impression. I had not yet discovered that the logical positivists in Vienna and Berlin were active antifascists.[40]

Nauta's recollection is revealing, not only because it foreshadows his own subsequent misgivings about Critical Theory and its political actuality, but also because he links this critique of fascism to the student movement of the 1960s, with which he identified: "What had only convinced us in theory was here put into practice. Everything that had failed to prevent the rise of National Socialism at the time was now scrutinized with extremely critical eyes. The term 'fascism' was stretched fantastically."[41] Thus, Critical Theory was one of numerous currents circulating in the 1950s and 1960s in the Netherlands that pulled at the threads of the political consensus by linking, however problematically, Nazism with postwar, latent authoritarianism. Crucially, the intellectual and ethical tradition embodied by the figures of the Frankfurt School helped to reorient certain circles within the Dutch independent Left to the intellectual and political developments in West Germany. This reorientation, in turn, including a contested but modestly successful defense of German language education,[42] would allow for close attention to West German developments in the 1960s. The fact that Horkheimer and Adorno's classic *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was published in Amsterdam by the German exile press Querido in 1947 likely reinforced Dutch readers' sense of affinity to the tradition of Critical Theory in their own critical examination of postwar society. In the course of the 1960s, this examination took on an increasingly transnational form.

Homo Ludens and the Beginnings of Protest

There were, by contrast to the cultural and artistic movements of the 1950s, new dimensions of the protests of the mid to late 1960s, which had a distinctly playful sensibility in the Netherlands. The country changed rapidly throughout the decade, especially Amsterdam, which became known as the "playpen of Europe"[43] for its bohemian counterculture and toleration

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[40] Lolle Nauta, *Ik denk niet na: Kwesties en pretenties in de filosofie* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2002), 91-92.

[41] Ibid., 92.

[42] Dutch publishers of German-exile literature and supportive writers and critics such as Nico Rost, a Dachau survivor, helped to sustain a Dutch market for German literature and language during and after the war. On the other hand, Gerrit Bolkenstein, the Minister of Education, planned (unsuccessfully) to abolish German classes at Dutch schools in 1947, and enrollment in these classes dropped signficantly. Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance*, 29, 190.

[43] Kennedy, *Building New Babylon*, 219.

of drugs, homosexuality, and the sex industries. Deconfessionalization and rising prosperity allowed many Dutch, above all youth, to depart from the traditional channels of personal development, although the swiftly declining heritage of religion often functioned as a catalyst for politicization rather than an obstacle.[44] Moreover, as the historian James Kennedy argues, these radical transformations were in fact unleashed through the previous elite's own desire *in de tijd te zijn*, or to be with the times, especially by accommodating rather than suppressing the gestures of protest of the youth, who were rightly suspicious of the former's handling of society during war. Because the middle-class leaders in no small part agreed with the diagnosis that Dutch society in the 1950s was too *kleinburgerlijk*, or petty-bourgeois, the "revolt of Homo Ludens" was mainstreamed and to a considerable extent politically defused.[45] As we shall see, this political dynamic between external pressure and government concessions would be a crucial legacy of the period in the following decade.

The most famous agents of cultural change were the Provos (from the French *provocateur*), who grew out of anarchist and pacifist movements from the 1950s and played a central role in shifting the attitudes of Dutch youth who participated in their "happenings" in Amsterdam or followed their activities in the media.[46] Placing itself in the tradition of Dutch anarchism founded by the former Marxist Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, "Provo" emerged from the radical and disciplined Pacifist-Socialist youth groups of the 1950s.[47] As elsewhere in Europe, social democracy's shift away from Marxism to support for a mixed economy and the old Left's generational indifference or hostility to youth countercultural independence cost the allegiance of many in the socialist pillar, to which the Provo movement represented an exciting and liberating alternative.

In the Provos' view, their countrymen, including especially the working classes, had become mesmerized by consumer society, described in ways not dissimilar from the Frankfurt School's diagnosis but in less sober discourse.[48] In their loosely articulated ideology of nonviolent anarchism, the proletariat and bourgeoisie were to be replaced with a *provotariat*, composed of independent countercultural groups, in opposition to the rest of the populace, the *klootjesvolk*—literally, "people with little balls," an insult to which the Amsterdam police did not take kindly.[49] They drew inspiration from the artist Constant Nieuwenhuis's celebration of *homo ludens*, or man the player, originally conceived by the historian Johan Huizinga. Constant (known simply by his first name) created "New Babylon," an architectural and theoretical project spanning the mid-1950s to the early 1970s that envisioned humans exercising their creativity and desires within spontaneously altered social environments. The Provos accordingly attempted to implement playful solutions for the problems of urban life, such as painting bicycles white for free use throughout the city. White, as their favored color, was meant to signify a kind of natural

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[44] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 70.

[45] Ibid., 218-19. "Homo Ludens in Revolt" is the title of Kennedy's chapter on Dutch counterculture. *Homo Ludens*, or "man the player," was advocated by the historian Johan Huizinga as an alternative to *Homo Sapiens* (man the knower) and *Homo Faber* (man the maker) to characterize meaningful human experience. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

[46] Niek Pas, "Subcultural Movements: The Provos," in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977,* ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 13.

[47] Niek Pas, *Imaazje! De verbeelding van Provo (1965-1967)* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2003), 51, 37.

[48] Van Duijn, "Inleiding tot het provocerend denken," in van Duijn and Jaring, 29.

[49] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 53.

innocence and personal and social indeterminancy, but of course their *modus operandi*, provocation, aimed to irritate and confront the existing order through spectacle.[50] Unlike Guy Debord's Situationist International, with which Constant himself had broken in 1960, the Provos relished in the possibilities for spectacle in modern society, while mobilizing those possibilities against society's political and cultural norms. Supported by student onlookers bearing the mantle of antifascism,[51] their most daring political act was to set off smoke bombs on March 10, 1966 during the wedding procession of Princess Beatrix to the German Claus von Amsberg, a former Hitler Youth member and Wehrmacht soldier, among a crowd of thousands. Directly after, they proudly gave interviews on national television.[52] This act garnered sympathy from even some elected officials. The Provos became something of an international media sensation; their lack of theoretical focus was compensated for by their savvy utilization of media attention to broaden their audience.[53] Bernhard de Vries even managed to win election to the Amsterdam municipal council in June 1966. However, suffering from internal divisions, they would disband in 1967 after only two years.[54]

Nurtured by the "climate of mild insanity"[55] already evident in Amsterdam since 1960, the Provo movement soon inspired new Provo groups elsewhere in Europe and in the United States. Thus, despite van Duijn's pessimism about the non-revolutionary domestic situation mentioned above, in the international context of the 1960s, the Netherlands and other small "lands between" such as Belgium and Switzerland were places where "certain catalytic or symbolic developments of great importance…were found earlier and/or in more unadulterated fashion."[56] Indeed, the Provo movement drew not only supportive letters and media attention from abroad, but also thousands of travelers who came to observe their antics and interact with each other, helping to form a transnational sense of generational solidarity.[57] Youth pilgrimages to Amsterdam from Paris and Strasbourg seemed to have threatened a kind of "contagion" to the

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[50] Indeed, despite the apparent technocratic optimism behind the vision of New Babylon, Constant also served as a mentor for the Provos' confrontational sensibility, insofar as human aggressiveness and even violence were visible correlates to the future triumph of cybernetics and technology he envisioned. As Mark Wrigley demonstrates in his analysis of the gradual appearance of human figures in the artistic project, Constant's future was one of human vulnerability and violence, as depicted with blotchy stains of red in 1968. This is corroborated by Constant's unpublished manuscripts, in which he wrote, "man's aggressivity does not disappear with the satisfaction of his immediate material needs." Cited in Mark Wrigley, *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* (Rotterdam: Witte de With, center for contemporary art / 010 Publishers, 1998), 68-70.

[51] Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance*, 212.

[52] Pas, "Subcultural Movements: The Provos," 17-18. Interestingly, the Institute of Social Research initiated a study of the German population's reaction to the wedding as a manifestion of the Culture Industry's "ideology of personalization," but the study was never published or evaluated. See Theodor W. Adorno, "Free Time," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 174-75, 365-66n12.

[53] Pas, "Subcultural Movements: The Provos," 18.

[54] Kennedy, *Building New Babylon*, 247-51.

[55] Pas, *Imaazje!*, 90.

[56] Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 22.

[57] Richard Ivan Jobs, "Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 2009): 382-83.

French establishment, by which young French people might themselves become Provos.[58] Berlin, Paris, and then Prague would soon replace Amsterdam as the loci of mass youth travel, but at the height of 1968, on May 23, as France attempted to bar him from returning to the country from Berlin, Daniel Cohn-Bendit arrived in Amsterdam with members of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (German Socialist Students League, SDS) and spoke at the University of Amsterdam to large and rowdy crowds, prompting building occupations.[59] Thus, through the initial transnational spectacle of Provo, the Netherlands became directly and indirectly connected to subsequent protest groups and activities.

Although the Provos are easy to dismiss as media-exhibitionists, their playful activities reflected deeply-felt concerns that resonated with many young people, such as the serious environmental and social problems that could result from mass consumerism, urban congestion, atomic weapons, and the military-industrial complex.[60] The technocratic forms of governance that had dominated postwar society, moreover, were increasingly recognized as problematic. As questions of culture and lifestyle began to take on a political significance, youth protest centered around calls for the "democratization" of society. Van Duijn's retrospective claim that Provo paved the way for later extra-parliamentary groups and oppositional political factions is thus not entirely without justification.[61] Arguing against Niek Pas, Gerd-Rainer Horn suggests that "the significance of Provo was precisely that it constituted the spiritual and organizational bridge— that missing link—between the countercultural and openly political phase of the 1960s."[62] Whatever the intentions of the different political parties in their attempts to modernize Dutch society, including those on the left, the structures of decision-making among the elites of the different pillars were seen as unresponsive. The demand for egalitarian participation equally drove the new D'66 party (Democrats 1966, from the liberal-democratic Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie [People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, VVD]), the New Left within the PvdA, and the national Students' Union, the Studentenvakbeweging (or SVB).

What has yet to be fully studied in this shift is the politicizing effect that the question of the natural and social sciences' role in society had. For those students who remained active in academics alongside their work as activists, *wetenschap* (science)[63] offered both opportunities and threats to human emancipation. Picking up a long-standing theme in the Marxist tradition, modern production techniques could mean an end to material scarcity and thus the potential replacement of *homo laborans* with *homo ludens*, but had also come to serve as tools of domination. The emergence of the welfare state, implemented with American financial and ideological support, was designed to provide a level of material security that would neutralize the

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[58] George Belmont and Evelyne Sullerot, "Le mouvement 'Provo' gange la France," *Arts et Loisirs*, July 6-12, 1966, 8. Quoted in Richard Ivan Jobs, "Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 2009): 383.

[59] Jobs, "Youth Movements," 385.

[60] Van Duijn and Jaring, *Provo*, 7.

[61] Ibid., 8. One might, however, doubt the claim on the book's dust jacket that Provo was "one of the most important Dutch contributions to modern world history." Ruud Koopmans, "Van provo tot RARA: Golfbewegingen in het politieke protest in Nederland," in *Tussen verbeelding en macht: 25 jaar nieuwe sociale bewegingen in Nederland*, ed. Jan Willem Duyvendak et al. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Sua, 1992), 59.

[62] Horn, *The Spirit of '68*, 41-42.

[63] Unfortunately, *wetenschap* holds the same ambiguity as the German *Wissenschaft*; it is more general than the English "science," which means especially natural science, but inadequately defined as "scholarship" or "knowledge." For simplicity, I have rendered *wetenschap* as "science" throughout except where noted, but this broader signification should be kept in mind.

appeal of Communist ideology in the new context of the Cold War, and its construction was unusually successful in the Netherlands. Sociology and other academic disciplines were thus deliberately used to maintain a system of capitalist stability, and according to the students needed to be fundamentally restructured in order to function as a democratizing force. At a crucial moment in the late 1960s, Critical Theory offered a substantial number of Dutch students a diagnosis of the depoliticizing system of compensations constituted by the welfare state and provided an essential tool for channeling science in a more progressive and less technocratic direction. Its impact was greatest in two spheres: higher education and the rise of the New Left.

Student Protest, Critical Theory, and the Social Function of Science

Along with the *pleinen* or squares in Amsterdam and other cities, the universities were the primary loci of social protest, discussion, and experimentation. The Dutch universities had been traditional and elitist institutions, organized into fraternity-like *corpora* until the early 1960s. There were small groups of socialist and communist students who began to challenge these structures in the 1950s, but they remained isolated enclaves until the 1960s,[64] when the demand for higher education exploded. Taking inspiration from politically engaged French students who protested the Algerian war, Jan Bank of the Catholic student movement at the University of Amsterdam introduced the model of the student union.[65] Soon thereafter, the Students Union (SVB) was founded in 1963 by A. A. "Ton" Regtien at the Catholic University of Nijmegen and other grant-dependent students as a national movement, modeling its syndicalist ideas on the French students' 1946 Chartre de Grenoble.[66] Students, in this model, were defined as "intellectual workers," whose working conditions were exploitative and antidemocratic, and the student movement's original concerns centered on the immediate material conditions of university education.[67] Thus, Regtien criticized the social dominance of the *corpora* and the challenges faced by middle-class students who had to work alongside their studies. December 1963 witnessed the first demonstrations at various Dutch universities and coordinated student advocacy at the ministry of education at The Hague.[68] This phase of the student movement culminated with Regtien's "Democratic Manifesto" of 1964 demanding improved conditions at the universities.[69]

The politicization of the General Students Association of Amsterdam (Algemene Studenten Vereniging Amsterdam, ASVA), the social-democratic student union Politeia (which, like the German SDS, opposed the national party), and similar organizations accelerated from 1965 onward, beginning with the Vietnam Teach-in. Through this issue, the student movement broadened its concerns from the students' own material conditions toward more general political questions, especially international conflicts and Third World resistance movements, to which

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[64] Bleich and van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië!*, 175.

[65] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 48.

[66] Kennedy, *Building New Babylon*, 319-20. For "La Chartre de Grenoble," see Jean-Pierre Worms, "The French Student Movement," *Comparative Education Review* 10, no. 2 (June 1966): 362-63.

[67] Hugo Kijne, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Studenten Beweging, 1963-1973* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1978), 41.

[68] Louis Vos et al., *Studentenprotest in de jaren zestig: De stoute jaren* (Tielt: Uitgeverij Lannoo, 1988), 71.

[69] Ibid., 41.

many were sympathetic, particularly in light of the Netherlands's own colonial history and Indonesia's war of independence.[70] Indeed, the students were polarized primarily by viewing political conflicts elsewhere in the world through the media, including Vietnam, Algeria, South Africa, and soon in other European cities.[71] Moreover, these student organizations became testing grounds for debate and forums for political schooling.[72] Soon domestic events provided opportunities for political debate. A revolt by Amsterdam construction workers over issues of pay in June 1966 was supported by the middle-class students, suggesting to Regtien that a coalition of workers and students was possible.[73] This politicization of the students in turn raised questions about the social and political functions of the universities themselves, which took initial form in the SVB's "Syndicalist Manifesto" of September 1967.

As the conflicts leading up to May 1968 escalated, students and young people throughout Europe traveled to the centers of activity, culminating in Paris, and the significance of the events reverberated clearly in the Netherlands. As the prominent author Cees Noteboom wrote from Paris in the newspaper *De Volkskrant* at the time,

> It's happening here, it's happening in New York, in Berlin, in Belgrade. It's not something to wave away or lazily deny. Nor is it something that will spread easily or be cause for alarm…. I cannot determine what its meaning will be, but it is the definitive end of an era…. Things cannot stay the way they were.[74]

When the students abroad faced repression, for example following the Springer Press's attack on the SDS in Germany, Dutch students demonstrated in solidarity, as did their peers in other major cities.[75] As there was no revolutionary counterpart to Paris in the Netherlands in 1968, Noteboom's minimalist predictions were quite prescient. After the quieting of Provo activities, the main arena of student activism was the conflict over university reform, particularly in response to the Dutch Academic Council's "Maris Report" of 1968, a proposal to restructure the universities with stricter management and economic efficiency.[76] A. Maris, chairman of the reform commission, sought to strip faculty of their autonomy and put decision-making power in the hands of professional managers who would report to the minister of education, prompting student outcry.[77]

Initially, the authorities were able to dismiss complaints against the Maris Report as "little Parisian games,"[78] and indeed, the fizzling of the Provo movement and dearth of mass activity in the Netherlands at the zenith of May 1968 produced a sense that the transformative

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[70] Antoinette Geelhoed and Bob Reinalda, "Over studenten, hoogleraren en de 'take off' van de Nederlandse politicologie," in *Uit de zevende: Vijftig jaar politieke en sociaal-culturele wetenschappen aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam*, ed. Anne Gevers (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1998), 61.

[71] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 50.

[72] Ibid., 50-51.

[73] Ibid., 56.

[74] Reprinted two decades later in *De Volkskrant*, April 30, 1988. Quoted in Vos et al., *Studentenprotest in de jaren zestig*, 52.

[75] Vos et al., *Studentenprotest in de jaren zestig*, 136.

[76] Ibid., 139.

[77] Hans Righart, *De eindeloze jaren zestig: Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict* (Amsterdam and Antwerp: Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers, 1995), 257.

[78] Vos et al., *Studentenprotest in de jaren zestig*, 139.

moment had been missed: "While in Paris a war was fought at the barricades, twenty million Frenchmen went on strike against the regime, and president De Gaulle appeared to have fled just like Louis XVI, it remained markedly silent in the Netherlands."[79] But the following year, Dutch students, beginning at the relatively quiet University of Tilburg, brought their experiences and perceptions of external protests home and demanded direct student participation in the organization and administration of the universities.[80] The School of Economics in Tilburg was occupied from April 28 to May 7, 1969, and renamed the "Karl Marx Universiteit"[81] by the students, as had the J. W. Goethe University of Frankfurt.[82] Under pressure, the administration gave the students the right to "co-decision making" (*medebeslissingsrecht*) and inspired students throughout the country to engage in building occupations. Most significantly, the administrative Maagdenhuis of the University of Amsterdam was occupied from May 12-21, 1969, and hundreds of students were arrested. Some 637 were eventually charged in a very public mass trial.[83] The trial was just as important for the public perception of the student movement, because the occupiers were harshly accused of being terrorists, an act of judicial excess that, as the prosecutor later realized, reversed public opinion in the students' favor.[84]

Other protest activities were less direct, seeking to place pedagogy in the students' own hands. So-called Critical Universities, also borrowed from the German student movement, were formed as an alternative to the organizational and pedagogical structures of the official universities and a forum for discussing ideas and texts not included in the existing curriculum. There were direct interactions between the Dutch and German students during the formation of the Critical Universities. International conferences were held in Brussels in February 1967 and again in Berlin that August to discuss the position of European students and universities. After creating the first Critical University, with attendance from Dutch students, German students from the Free University of Berlin came to the University of Amsterdam to relate their experiences and participate in the debates about its organization.[85] With cooperation from sympathetic younger professors, students organized independent lectures and discussion groups on specific philosophical, sociological, and political topics. As Hugues Boekraad and Michel van Nieuwstadt explained in 1968, the students involved politically sought to remove gaps in their theoretical knowledge that resulted from the Dutch universities' narrow curriculum:

> From the beginning, praxis was a central theme in the Critical University. But the lack of theoretical knowledge determined the function that the Critical University in Nijmegen in fact obtained: to catch up on the theoretical weaknesses, so that we would be in the position to view critically the presuppositions of the sciences. The first workgroup consisted of: the scientific-theoretical, critical social theory of the Frankfurt School that

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[79] Righart, *De eindeloze jaren zestig*, 258.

[80] Kennedy, *Building New Babylon*, 322.

[81] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 302.

[82] Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 626.

[83] Kennedy, *Building New Babylon,* 322-24. Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 302.

[84] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare,* 302-03.

[85] A. A. Regtien, "De kritische universiteit," *Te Elfder Ure* 15 (1968): 6.

was ignored by the official sociology, and the German sociologists' debate from the 1960s.[86]

Critical Theory therefore represented a potent resource for criticizing the social-scientific underpinnings of the postwar planning model, by which Boekraad and van Nieuwstadt meant its supposed value-neutrality and technocratic functionalism. Other workgroups were formed on topics such as the Marxist tradition, sexuality and society, fascism and authoritarian behavior, the sociology of literature, pedagogy, technology, and Marcuse.[87] The Critical University at Nijmegen, which also modeled itself after that of Berlin, organized itself into autonomous workgroups under a collective, representative council. The concrete reorganization of the university was here of greater focus than in the Critical University at Amsterdam, where the anti-authoritarian atmosphere of the Provo movement engendered a looser structure.[88] Politically, some of the Nijmegen students dabbled in Trotskyism, but most tended to position themselves at this point to the right of Communism and to the left of social democracy.[89]

In Amsterdam, a specific catalyst for the creation of the Critical University was the University of Amsterdam's reversal of a Fulbright lectureship that had been offered to the American literary critic Leslie Fiedler as a result of pressure from interest groups outside the university, following dubious drug charges in the United States.[90] The student association (ASVA) then invited Fiedler to the Netherlands themselves; as they asserted, the students "in this case appear to value the university as a free place of opinions more highly than the university administration."[91] But according to Regtien, this was a weak basis for action, because only a limited number of students knew of the controversy. Rather, it was necessary to focus on the crucial importance of science in society. He went so far as to note that a lack of social critique in scientific training had manifested itself in the Third Reich in the form of the military-industrial complex, and suggested that the same developments were occurring in the United States.[92] What was necessary to subvert the smooth integration of graduates into the existing system, he wrote, was to introduce curriculum that would raise as its central questions the problems of the use of science. In whose interest did science and technology serve? What were the public responsibilities of scientific experts? It is worth quoting Regtien at some length to illustrate the centrality of the question of value-neutrality in the sciences for the student movement:

> Precisely in order for scientific workers to fight against the possibility that they can be lured into being political tools, it is necessary to place permanent social critique in the learning program, in the roots of scientific training. This means in one way or another developing the capacity to be independent and critical about all possible social questions, over the possible use and misuse of the results of scientific research, to be able to think and talk…. That the student is compelled… through the curriculum itself to make a

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[86] Hugues C. Boekraad and Michel J. van Nieuwstadt, "De noodzaak van conflicten staat vast," *De Groene Amsterdammer*, March 23, 1968, 6.

[87] Ibid., 6.

[88] Vos et al., *Studentenprotest in de jaren zestig*, 118.

[89] Ibid., 115.

[90] Regtien, "De kritische universiteit," 6.

[91] K. Bostoen and G. van Westerloo, "Kritiese Universiteit: Geen instant coffee," *Student* (Nov. 1967): 3. Quoted in Geelhoed and Reinalda, "Over studenten," 62.

[92] Regtien, "De kritische universiteit," 12.

conscious social or political choice may not, to be sure, guarantee that every student will think socialistically or progressively, but will in any case reduce the possibility that he can be used as a myopic specialist [*eenogige vakidioot*] and can be bought off with some little job…. The above-all-parties-standing, value-free aura that lies like a thick mist over the Universities must vanish.[93]

Within the study groups of the Critical Universities, then, a dominant theme was how to dispel this aura of value-neutrality in the sciences, which were so clearly evidenced in the modernizing function of Dutch sociology. As sociology students began exploring the history of their discipline, Max Weber was seen as a primary villain in this context.[94] Weber had argued that the scientist inevitably made a decision about the object of study based on personal values, but once one entered that study, values had to be bracketed from influencing one's research. The "affirmative" quality of this position was clear to the Dutch students, for science then functioned according to the values of scientific experts and ultimately the government that commissioned and supported their research. The challenge, then, was the search for a theoretical ground for a form of knowledge aimed at human emancipation. Science, therefore, was not to be rejected out of hand; rather, it was to be given a critical reflexive mechanism. These issues began to be addressed by the university faculty. For example, in December 1969, the Ethical-Scientific Education Workgroup of the Academic Council sent a letter to all of the Dutch universities:

> Until only recently there was a nearly universal belief in the value-neutrality of science [*wetenschap*]. Axiomatic for many, at minimum an acceptable view for others, this understanding had its origins in the fact that science had uprooted itself from the oppressive grip of authoritarian powers, church and state. There are many indications that now science is itself felt as having developed into the authoritarian power of impersonal independence, such that "value-neutrality" contains risks for human society.[95]

In the universities, as in society as a whole, the authorities sought to be with the times—within limits, of course, that were not accepted by the student protesters.

In the short term, the chaos of the occupations in 1969 threatened to overwhelm the intellectual content of the Critical Universities—as Antoine Verbij states, "the deed suppressed the thought"[96]—but they subsequently generated unprecedented levels of intellectual interest and activity, sustaining multiple established and new left-wing publishers, including Pegasus, de Arbeiderspers, Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen (SUN), and Socialistische Uitgeverij Amsterdam (SUA). In particular, SUN, which emerged from the liberal-Catholic circle surrounding the journal *Te Elfder Ure* (At the eleventh hour), became a primary locus for the translation and diffusion of foreign theoretical texts.[97] In Amsterdam, under the leadership of Rob van Gennep, the publisher Polak and Van Gennep launched a "Critical Library," featuring titles by Che Guevara, John Kenneth Galbraith, Marcuse, Marx, Mao, and others. It also became

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[93] Ibid., 13.

[94] Harry Kunneman, interview by author, Culemborg, the Netherlands, February 25, 2008.

[95] Quoted in G. M. Hussen and B. Kee, "Kritieke beperkingen en beperkte kritiek: De discussie tussen Jürgen Habermas en Hans Albert," *Philosophia Reformata* 37, no. 4 (1972): 191.

[96] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 74.

[97] Ibid., 74-75.

a kind of house organ for the New Left, in which van Gennep was directly involved.[98] In cooperation with the legendary publisher De Bezige Bij, about 3,000 copies of a collection of Marcuse's recent political essays entitled *Violence and Freedom* were published each year from 1968-1971.[99] Many other texts were pirated and disseminated through discussion groups as part of a new "stencil culture."[100] The activities of the Critical Universities thus contributed to a vibrant political public sphere that had yet to be seen in the Netherlands.

The Frankfurt School and the Students: The View from the Netherlands

Along with Marxist social critics such as Paul Baran, André Gorz, and Ernest Mandel, the members of the Frankfurt School attracted a growing following, primarily through their role in the famous German Positivist Dispute of the early 1960s.[101] The details of the dispute will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, but the crux of the debate, initiated by the critical rationalist Karl Popper and the dialectician Adorno and further developed by their respective assistants Hans Albert and Jürgen Habermas, concerned precisely the question inaugurated by Weber: whether the methodology of the social sciences required a strict separation of facts and values, or whether these values themselves were open to and required theoretical reflection. But while the students involved in the Critical Universities overwhelmingly sided with the Critical Theorists in this debate, the discovery of the dispute occurred in conjunction with the Frankfurt School's contemporaneous conflict with the German SDS. The questions raised by the SDS, which increasingly turned into outright accusations of quietism and even reactionary repression, concerned the classic Marxist question of the relation of theory to praxis. The question of value-neutrality in the sciences, then, was quickly overshadowed by directly political questions in the increasingly tense atmosphere of the late 1960s. For much of the generation of 1968, the reception of Critical Theory was historically overdetermined by the conflict over the political actuality of theory.

Given the extraordinary mass and variety of the materials from this period collected in Wolfgang Kraushaar's three-volume *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung*,[102] it is not surprising that there is little consensus on these complex events, in which both sides seem partially blameworthy for the antagonism. However, if the elder Frankfurt School figures ultimately had some harsh things to say about the student movements in the late 1960s, one should not overlook a basic affinity they felt with the students in their opposition to technocratic society, including even the allegedly apolitical aesthete, Adorno. It is important therefore to review in some detail the basis and evolution of the conflict and the distinctive roles played by the main protagonists. Rolf Wiggershaus has suggested that Adorno was simply uninterested in

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[98] Van Gennep, who soon broke with his less radical partner Johan Polak, sought to focus the series around "political-ideological books." Van Gennep to Arend J. Voortman, 18 July 1968, Archief Van Gennep, no. 1148, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

[99] Archief Van Gennep, no. 578.

[100] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 72.

[101] Geelhoed and Reinalda, "Over studenten," 62. See Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London: Heinemann, 1976).

[102] Wolfgang Kraushaar, ed., *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung: Von der Flaschenpost zum Molotowcocktail, 1946-1995*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Rogner & Bernhard bei Zweitausendeins, 1998).

university reform[103]—indeed, Adorno, Habermas, and Ludwig von Friedeburg all rejected the most radical demands of striking Frankfurt students in December 1968 to restructure the university[104]—but in fact Adorno was fundamentally attuned to the causes of the students' intellectual dissatisfaction and held dialogues with the SDS throughout the 1960s, despite his frustrations with their increasingly hostile attacks. As he wrote in "Why Still Philosophy?" (1962),

> Science and scholarship, the medium of autonomy, has degenerated into an instrument of heteronomy…. Students experience this for themselves when they come to the university with the unconscious hope that their eyes will be opened, and instead they are put off with methodologies that ignore their actual concerns and consign them to the contingency of reviled aperçus and in fact isolate the students' original inquisitiveness and degrade it into prattle about worldviews.[105]

Moreover, even after initial points of conflict, such as Horkheimer's lecture at the America House in Frankfurt during German-American Friendship Week in May 1967, Horkheimer and Adorno sought to maintain discussions with the Frankfurt SDS, especially its antiauthoritarian faction led by Hans-Jürgen Krahl.[106] The members of this faction indeed considered themselves to be the Frankfurt School's pupils and therefore as more theoretically sophisticated than the West Berlin SDS, led by Rudi Dutschke.[107] Horkheimer did fear that criticism of the United States for the Vietnam War could degenerate into crude anti-Americanism and ultimately into anti-Semitism—fears that were not unjustified.[108] Yet Adorno partially defended Krahl and the SDS to Günter Grass even after Krahl began to agitate publicly in 1968, suggesting that despite their wrong-headed idea that the Federal Republic was a nearly direct continuation of Nazi Germany, the students' perception of West Germany's lingering authoritarian tendencies was not unfounded.[109] Thus Adorno supported the mass protests against the Emergency Laws (*Notstandsgesetze*) passed by the first Grand Coalition government (SPD and Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, [Christian Democratic Union of Germany, CDU]) on May 30, 1968, calling on IG-Metall union leader Otto Brenner to organize a general strike.[110] The crucial turning point was the occupation of the Institute of Social Research, which forced the hand of Adorno in calling on the authorities. But even after these events, in the drafted preface

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[103] Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 621.

[104] Specter, *Habermas*, 102.

[105] Theodor W. Adorno, "Why Still Philosophy?" in *Critical Models* 12, 323n16. The second sentence appeared in radio and the first published versions.

[106] Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno*, 332.

[107] Hans Kundnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz? Germany's 1968 Generation and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 27. Dutschke, a conscientious objector who fled East Germany and studied at the Free University of Berlin, left the "Subversive Action" group in 1965 to introduce an antiauthoritarian, activist faction into the SDS. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 618-19.

[108] Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno*, 334. Adorno opposed the Vietnam War but shared Horkheimer's concern for anti-Americanism, not least because they had found refuge from Nazism in the U.S. and because of the Allies' defeat of fascism. Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Adorno: A Biography*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Malden, MA and Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 451. On segments of the German radical Left's anti-Semitic tendencies, see Kundnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz?*, 89-94 and passim.

[109] Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno*, 336.

[110] Ibid., 337.

for the new edition of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in February 1969, Adorno identified the protesting youth worldwide as ciphers of the "administered world's" inability to achieve integration without violence:

> Young people at least have set out to resist the transition to the totally administered world which is not being accomplished seamlessly, but by means of dictatorships and wars. The protest movement in all the countries of the world, in both blocs as well as the Third World, testifies to the fact that wholesale integration does not necessarily proceed smoothly. If this book assists the cause of resistance to achieve a consciousness that illuminates and that prevents people from submitting to blind practice out of despair and from succumbing to collective narcissism, that would give it a genuine function.[111]

Thus for Adorno, Critical Theory was hardly opposed to protest as such, as is so often alleged, but rather to desperate, collective flailing. Even after Adorno's death in 1969, which some still attribute to the conflict with the students, Horkheimer wrote a sympathetic letter to the parents of Hans-Jürgen Krahl following his death in a car accident in January 1970.[112]

Through this ongoing dialogue, the leading representatives of the Frankfurt School did raise important issues concerning the oppositional strategy of the student movement, both in terms of its internal constitution and its external orientation to society. This began long before the tumult of the late 1960s. In a preface to a second reading of his lecture "The Meaning of Working Through the Past" before the SDS in 1962, Adorno stated cautiously that while he sought to analyze the deeper subjective and objective dimensions of continued authoritarian impulses in postwar Germany, "some suggestions for praxis nonetheless may follow, even if one does not imagine the path from insight to action to be as short as so many well-meaning people today seem to believe it to be."[113] Whether and how this path could be discerned indeed became the primary sticking point in the conflict. However, the seeds of the conflict might have been found years before, given the paradoxical relationship of theory to practice that the members of the Frankfurt School articulated in many of their postwar writings. In the introduction to his widely read 1962 collection of essays entitled *Interventions*, Adorno wrote:

> Whoever puts forward proposals easily makes himself into an accomplice. Talk of a 'we' one identifies with already implies complicity with what is wrong and the illusion that goodwill and a readiness to engage in communal action can achieve something where every will is powerless and where the identification with *hommes de bonne volonté* is a disguised form of evil. A purist attitude, however, that refrains from intervening likewise reinforces that from which it timorously recoils. Such a contradiction cannot be settled by reflection; it is the constitution of reality that dictates the contradiction.[114]

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[111] Theodor W. Adorno, from a draft preface, "Zur Neuasugabe der *Dialektik der Aufklärung*" (February 1969), in "Graeculus II: Notizen zu Philosophie und Gesellschaft, 1943-1969," in *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter* 8 (2003): 15. Quoted in Claussen, 338.

[112] Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno*, 334-35.

[113] Theodor W. Adorno, "Introduction to the Lecture 'The Meaning of Working Through the Past,'" in *Critical Models*, 308.

[114] Theodor W. Adorno, introduction to *Interventions* (1962), in *Critical Models*, 4.

Here Critical Theory's defense of the individual against collectivities, even those seemingly progressive movements that demanded sacrifices from their members in the name of a liberated future, came to the fore. Yet the Frankfurt School was not categorically opposed to political organization.[115] The essential question was how one diagnosed the historical moment, namely, whether or not the "objective conditions" for revolution or other political action were present. The historical experiences of Horkheimer and Adorno during the Weimar Republic were crucial in this regard. As Detlev Claussen, himself a student of Adorno in the late 1960s, has written,

> 1968 succeeded the warmed-up existentialism of the fifties, the 'jargon of authenticity.' It was a conformist fad disguised as left-wing radicalism. Left-wing intellectuals from the Weimar epoch who had now grown old could not escape the sense of something déjà vu with all its ambivalence.[116]

The personal example of Bertolt Brecht, moreover, whom Adorno took seriously as an artist but criticized for his easy adaptation to East Germany, his anti-intellectualism, and fetishization of violence, acted as a precursor to the pseudo-proletarian poses of the more orthodox Marxist students.[117] Their wariness towards student radicalism, therefore, reflected not conservative retrenchment against the "true" implications of their theory but an historically conditioned revulsion to action for action's sake.

Although we must therefore reject Simone Chambers's familiar claim that Horkheimer and Adorno were "aloof" from the events, she rightly suggests that Marcuse and Habermas, while both highly engaged with the student movement, were distinguished by their respective concern for tactics and strategies: Marcuse was basically supportive of the students but uninterested in practical reforms, whereas Habermas's close attention to these issues led to greater tension with the students.[118] Indeed, the most explosive and famous instance of conflict was between the students and the younger representative of Critical Theory, Habermas, whose age put him between the West German "founder generation" (born before 1900) and the 1968 generation.[119] Again, one should not overlook the shared critique of West German society and specifically the problem of technocracy, which had concerned Habermas since the beginning of the 1960s and put him in a better position than the other Critical Theorists to serve as a

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[115] Müller-Doohm, *Adorno*, 462.

[116] Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno*, 326.

[117] Ibid., 325-26. However, Adorno's continuing esteem for other figures who returned from American exile to the German Democratic Republic, such as the composer Hanns Eisler, suggests that this choice was not an absolute litmus test for Adorno, even though the constraints this move put on Eisler's art were evident. Ibid., 307-308.

[118] Simone Chambers, "The Politics of Critical Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. Fred Rush (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 228.

[119] Specter argues for the "'58er" generational designation, which Habermas himself has used. Although too young to participate directly in the Wehrmacht, the '58ers, born between about 1922 and 1932, were compelled to join the Hitler Youth and participated in supporting the anti-aircraft artillery (*Fliegenabwehrkanone*) on the Western front near the end of the war. The so-called *Flakhelfer* generation therefore experienced the legacy and exposure of the Holocaust after the Nuremberg Trials and later the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem (1961) differently than the generation born around the end of the war. The traumatic experience of 1945, Specter argues, when Habermas came to recognize his upbringing under a murderous regime, was central to Habermas's defense of and concern for legality and constitutionalism. Specter, *Habermas*, 3-8.

theoretical and practical guide to the students.[120] For Habermas, the restriction of democratic participation in public discourse was a pressing historical and contemporary problem, one that was indexed precisely through the students' rejection of the status quo: "The student protests," he said at a June 1967 conference address in Hannover, "have a compensatory function, since the control mechanisms that are built into democracy are either not working at all here, or not working properly."[121] Habermas seems to have even projected some of his own long-standing concern for Germany's commitment to constitutional democracy onto the early student movement, declaring, "The task of the student opposition was and is to compensate for the lack of theoretical perspective…the lack of radicality in the interpretation and practice of our social and democratic constitution [*sozialrechtstaatlichen und demokratische Verfassung*]."[122] Moreover, he agreed with the general critique of student conditions at the universities and the students' calls for democratization, publicly criticizing the Education Ministry's reform proposal as "decisionist"[123]—the same charge he made against Popper and Albert in the Positivist Dispute.[124]

However, whereas Habermas's critique of technocracy dovetailed closely with the students' demands for university reform, many students in the German SDS soon radicalized further and abandoned the cause of university reform as itself a palliative issue similar to the principle of codetermination (*Mitbestimmung*) in the workplace that prevented the formation of revolutionary consciousness, as evidenced in the SDS journal *Neue Kritik* and various leaflets.[125] Habermas's direct confrontation with the "actionism" of the student movement between June 1967 and February 1969 decried the sabotaging of the movement for university reform, which not only squandered opportunities for "radical reform" but also played into the hands of conservative technocrats.[126] By wildly inflating their political expectations for revolution and abandoning actualizable goals and concrete actions, the students falsely confirmed the accusations of the conservatives before a wary public.

The central issue in the professors' critique of actionism, however, was violence. Significantly, although Habermas was "astonished" by Marcuse's apparent affirmation of violence in his *Essay on Liberation*, he did not renounce violence altogether; responding to Rudi Dutschke in 1967, he declared, "There is a progressive role for violence, and the analytical distinction between progressive and reactionary violence has a real sense."[127] The key issue, however, was whether a revolutionary situation or conditions of extreme repression existed that

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[120] Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 617.

[121] Jürgen Habermas, *Bedingungen und Organisation des Widerstandes: Der Kongress in Hannover; Protokolle, Flugblätter, Resolutionen* (Berlin: Voltaire Verlag, 1967), 44. Quoted in Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 618.

[122] Jürgen Habermas, "Rede über die politische Rolle der Studentenschaft in der Bundesrepublik," in *Protestbewegung und Hochschulreform* (Fankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), 141. Quoted and translated in Specter, *Habermas*, 106. Specter convincingly argues that Habermas's political and theoretical corpus as a whole and his relationship to the student movement in particular revolve around the issue of legality.

[123] Specter, *Habermas*, 108-10.

[124] Jürgen Habermas, "The Analytical Theory of Science and Dialectics: A Postscript to the Controversy Between Popper and Adorno," in Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Positivist Dispute*, 146.

[125] Specter, *Habermas*, 110.

[126] Ibid., 113-14.

[127] Jürgen Habermas, "Reaktion auf das referat Rudi Dutschkes" (June 9, 1967), in Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule* 2:254, and "Letter to Marcuse" (May 5, 1969), Ibid., 2:323, 625. Quoted and translated in ibid., 115-16.

required violence, as perhaps the American Civil Rights movement faced. Regarding the West German situation, by contrast, Habermas answered with an emphatic no: "The only way I see to bring about conscious structural reform in a social system organized in an authoritarian welfare state is radical reformism."[128] Dutschke's June 1967 proposal for the establishment of "action centers" throughout West Germany, therefore, was a kind of "game-playing with terror" with lethal risks for potential participants that would only provoke further repression; this voluntaristic pose drew Habermas's infamous epithet of "leftist fascism."[129] Habermas would soon clarify and partially retract this statement, which was made after Dutschke had already left the conference, considering it an unfortunate choice of words. However, the attempted assassination of Dutschke in 1968 sadly appeared to confirm his concerns, which he reformulated in six theses at a Union of German Students (Verband Deutscher Studentenschaften, VDS) conference on June 1, 1968 and subsequently in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*.[130] These theses, in turn, prompted charges of treason by the more radical students and were challenged somewhat more sympathetically in a volume edited by Habermas's assistant Oskar Negt, thus widening the breach further between Habermas and the student movement.[131] Thus a pattern of accusation, misunderstanding, and escalation developed within the larger context of the international events of the late 1960s.

Many Dutch students were able to follow, either in German or in rapid translation, the conflict between the Frankfurt School and the students over the Institute's politically radical, early publications on authoritarianism from the 1930s and 1940s, which Horkheimer in particular had sought to keep buried for fear of being decontextualized and instrumentalized. This of course was precisely what happened, but Horkheimer was helpless in preventing the spread of pirated copies of the Frankfurt School's early work. These writings, such as Horkheimer's unpublished 1940 essay "The Authoritarian State," were rehabilitated by Dutschke, stripped from the specific historical context of Nazism, and shaped into a diffuse political program of antiauthoritarian revolt against contemporary institutions. The revolt against contemporary "authoritarianism," therefore, was linked by the students to the specific historical legacy of fascism identified by Adorno in his postwar writings; but through the return to the Nazi-period writings, Dutschke introduced a voluntaristic form of action that sought to produce "ego-strength" through a "permanent learning process," with students functioning as a kind of intellectual avant-garde alongside the revolutionary subjects of the Third World liberation movements.[132] The students' diagnosis of the contemporary prospects for revolution, therefore, directly opposed the assessment of their older mentors, which led them to the more radical position of Marcuse. Marcuse departed from the other figures of the older Frankfurt School in seeking to revitalize precisely those early insights from his 1930s essays in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* via the affordable and increasingly popular "edition suhrkamp" series of Suhrkamp Verlag, although he

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[128] Jürgen Habermas, "Einleitung," in *Protestbewegung und Hochschulreform*, 49. Quoted and translated in Specter, *Habermas*, 116.

[129] Habermas, "Reaktion auf das referat Rudi Dutschkes" and "Diskussionsbeitrag auf dem Kongress 'Bedingungen und Organisation des Widerstandes" (June 9, 1967), both in Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule*, 2:254, 250-51. Quoted and translated in Specter, *Habermas*, 114-15.

[130] Robert C. Holub, *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 86-94.

[131] Ibid., 94.

[132] Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "Kritische Theorie und Neue Linke," in *1968—vom Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1998), 181-82.

included additions to distinguish the different contexts of the 1930s and 1960s.[133] Within the German SDS, Marcuse was touted beginning in 1964 because his work incorporated the latest American developments into the framework of Critical Theory; *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) was translated into German 1967 and soon became an international bestseller.[134] Although Marcuse would also reject the idea of an imminent revolution in Europe, his *Randgruppentheorie* or theory of marginal groups was central to the students' self-conception and organizational strategy. This theory held that the sheer material pressure experienced by such groups, including colonial subjects, oppressed minorities, and the unemployable, forced them into revolutionary opposition to the system. While "one-dimensional society" had effectively absorbed the traditional proletariat, a substratum remained whose "opposition is revolutionary even if their consciousness is not…it is an elementary force which violates the rules of the game and, in doing so, reveals it as a rigged game."[135]

As a systematization of the Frankfurt School's critique of late capitalist society,[136] however, *One-Dimensional Man* concluded on an ambivalently pessimistic note, citing Walter Benjamin's claim that "It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us."[137] Ironically, as a critical theory of society, the work that developed in the late 1950s and 1960s emphasized, together with Horkheimer and Adorno, one-dimensional society's stabilizing and integrating capacities rather than its inherent contradictions.[138] Marcuse's account, then, could serve as inspiration for the students at this point only insofar as it galvanized their consciousness of the oppressive social and political situation.[139] As he stated in the penultimate paragraph, "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."[140] But in the following years, Marcuse seemed to promise exactly such a bridge, beginning with his essay on "Repressive Tolerance." This potentially problematic piece, as Rolf Wiggershaus aptly puts it, defended "a kind of left-wing educational dictatorship in advanced industrial societies," a new vanguard in parallel with the anti-colonial revolutionary movements given voice by Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and celebrated by Jean-Paul Sartre.[141] It can be argued here that it was not just a matter of Marcuse influencing the students, but also of Marcuse's genuine inspiration from these oppositional movements,[142] which, as we have seen, was shared in some ways by the other representatives of Critical Theory. A year after the Frankfurt SDS conference on Vietnam in 1966, Marcuse returned to Berlin as the hero of the New Left.[143]

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[133] Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno*, 305, 332.

[134] Ibid., 330.

[135] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, 2nd ed., intr. Douglas Kellner (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991 [1964]), 256.

[136] Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 609.

[137] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 257.

[138] Douglas Kellner, "Introduction to the Second Edition," in Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, xxxii.

[139] Simone Chambers, "The Politics of Critical Theory," 225. Chambers cites the memoir of the American New Left figure Todd Gitlin: "We were drawn to books that seemed to reveal the magnitude of what we were up against, to explain our helplessness.… Impossible and necessary: that is how we felt about our task." Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope and Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 246.

[140] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 257.

[141] Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 612, 611.

[142] Chambers, "The Politics of Critical Theory," 226.

[143] Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 615.

Just as in Germany, where his public support of the students had made him a heroic figure in 1966 and 1967, Marcuse's global vision linked the students' concerns to the anti-imperial struggles in a manner that captivated the Dutch students. Marcuse's analysis of the cooperation between the CIA and Michigan State University prior to the Vietnam War, presented at a large Frankfurt SDS congress in 1966,[144] provided the Dutch students with insight into the role of American universities in imperialistic military affairs and raised similar questions about the Dutch universities.[145] His critique was originally translated and reproduced at the Critical University at Nijmegen and subsequently circulated to other university cities.[146]

But by the end of the decade, this enthusiasm had clearly diminished. In a 1969 introduction to Marcuse's thought, Jan Bank sought to establish a distance between the philosopher's ideas and the students actions, raising doubts about the care with which the students had read his work. While the basis for the students' criticisms of society could certainly be found there, "The fact is that the philosopher Marcuse himself is too mild-mannered, too bourgeois, and too withdrawn to have inspired a student resistance of such large proportions as in the last year."[147] Dutch students also closely followed the debates within the SDS between Adorno's student Hans-Jürgen Krahl and Joscha Schmierer over the potential alliance between student and workers. Krahl was more optimistic and urged students to fight the class war within the universities; Schmierer thought that the only possibility for students was to renounce their privileged status and unite with the workers. Dutch students were divided in their evaluation, with Krahl being favored in Amsterdam and Schmierer in Nijmegen and Tilburg.[148]

Not surprisingly, a number of militant Dutch students criticized the elder Critical Theorists for their lack of radicalism. As the activist Eddie Korlaar later recalled, "we had quickly realized that we had no further connection with the Frankfurters (Adorno, Macuse, Habermas, Horkheimer); we had learned to unmask them as salon-Marxists and superstructure-fetishists."[149] Clearly, there were divisions between students who pursued their interests in theoretical issues and those who gave primacy to political praxis and direct action. As Korlaar further remarked, "The Frankfurters, and their followers in the student movement, had contributed the reduction of Marxism to a philosophical problematic."[150] Similarly, the manifesto of the General Student Association of Amsterdam (ASVA) declared that while Critical Theory helped to connect the direct concerns of students to the larger issues of technology and industrial society, "however much the search for a broader framework has raised the political level of the student movement, the influence of the Frankfurt School was harmful for the development and the self-conception of the opposition."[151] Dissatisfaction with the results of the student movement had produced a more radical politicization and a search for explanations for the failure of revolution. As in East Berlin, where a conference had been held on the Frankfurt School in light of Marxism—apparently attended by Ton Regtien—orthodox Marxist categories were used to

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[144] Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 614.

[145] Kijne, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Studenten Beweging*, 71.

[146] Ibid., 125n2.

[147] Jan Bank, *Kort Marcuse: Inleiding tot de denkwereld van Herbert Marcuse* (Odijk: Studio Kosmopolitiek, 1969), 12.

[148] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 87-88.

[149] Eddie Korlaar and Max van Weezel, *Wij wereldverbeteraars: Idealen, ideeën, en illusies van de lange mars, 1965 en verder* (Amsterdam: Socialistiese Uitgeverij Amsterdam, 1982), 24.

[150] Ibid., 32.

[151] *De vakbond van studenten in de strijd tegen het kapitaal: ASVA manifest* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1972), 10.

brand Critical Theory as futile, bourgeois intellectualism. At a congress on "Capitalism in the Seventies" at the School of Economics at Tilburg in September 1970, Critical Theory was labeled as the most important of the "revisionist" theories from the 1960s in a pamphlet of the Socialist Collective of Tilburg.

> By replacing class oppositions with the opposition between individual and "apparatus," critical theory remains within the bourgeois theoretical framework. Critical theory is unhistorical and non-materialist, because its analysis is not based on the fundamental economic oppositions. It ultimately remains limited to an intellectual protest and provides no proletarian element, and cannot but think about the proletariat as the "oppressed" from its elevated viewpoint. Critical Theory remains, finally, in its impotence, completely uncommitted to an organized practice.[152]

Such a view emerged in the first histories to be written of the student movement in the 1970s as well.[153] Critical Theory was viewed as a mistaken path that had led to political failure. The Nijmegen students Gabriël van den Brink and Cees Jorissen conceptualized the fracturing of the student movement in these terms in 1974:

> The students' demands quickly went further than proved possible on the basis of the existing social relations. This was not accidental: the actions were conceived as a learning process. In connection with Critical Theory, concepts such as consciousness-raising and maturity stood centrally, and a social consciousness could be developed within the experiences of the borders upon which the democratization stopped. For the majority this did not happen: they saw the result as a failure and were thrown back to a passive position. Democratization remained limited to scientific education and the university; they equivocated on their demands.[154]

Similarly, in a section of the 1972 ASVA Manifesto entitled "The Need for Independent Theory Formation," the authors presented the making of the Critical Universities under the influence of Critical Theory as a kind of misstep on the way to mass political organization. As they revealingly put it, "'Enlightenment' [*Aufklärung*] took the place of actions, which were increasingly experienced as perspectiveless."[155] The manifesto linked Marcuse's belief in the ability of the *Randgruppen* to escape the trappings of a one-dimensional society with the pseudo-political antics of the Provos in the "elitist" belief that the proletariat had been integrated into industrial society. By placing their hopes in the students—or so they were interpreted—"the Critical Theorists have ascribed the student movement with a more important role than it can have in reality."[156] It must be noted, however, that even Marcuse disappointed them by denying

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[152] Het Sosjalistiese Kollektief, Tilburg, "De Kritiese Intellektuelen en de Strijd van het Proletariaat," September 10-13, 1970, 1.

[153] Unlike later historical studies of the 1960s, Hugo Kijne's 1978 *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse studentenbeweging* spends considerable time discussing the reception of the Frankfurt School, but his negative and sometimes inaccurate account of their work seems at times too close to the orbit of these hostile students.

[154] Gabriël van den Brink and Cees Jorissen, *Over ontwikkelingen in de Nijmeegse studentenbonden: Diskussie bijdrage Vox Carolina* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1974).

[155] *ASVA manifest*, 11.

[156] Ibid., 11.

that they were to be the agents of an imminent revolution.[157] The manifesto's authors did admit that despite these "errors," the Critical Universities had succeeded in raising persistant questions about the social responsibility of the scholar or scientist (*wetenschapper*).

Other observers, however, criticized the students' understanding of Critical Theory as simplistic. In an article in the national newspaper *De Volkskrant* in January 1970, Jacques van Nieuwstadt and Bart Tromp largely defended the Frankfurt School against the German students: "The subtle ideas of the Frankfurt School are bleached of all real content when they are reduced to political slogans." This was true of their fellow Dutch students as well:

> It appears that the contemporary student opposition, surely in the Netherlands, often calls upon an incorrectly understood Critical Theory. They replace the dialectic with an un-nuanced opposition of 'good' and 'bad' [*kwaad*]. In its blind activism, this student opposition appears, in our view, to mirror a still dominant, and equally blind and un-self-critical, traditional scholarship [*wetenschapsbeoefening*].[158]

Intriguingly, by invoking the limitations of the post-Holocaust discourse of *goed en fout*, van Nieuwstadt and Tromp gave a Dutch twist to Habermas's linking of conservative technocracy and student actionism as mirror images of each other. They did acknowledge that Critical Theory's shift away from the economic analysis of capitalism and imperialism and Adorno's overly theoretical position made the students' reaction understandable. Nonetheless, it is revealing that a vocal minority of students and younger scholars recognized the legitimacy of the Critical Theorists' rejection of actionism. There was an awareness of the somewhat farcical nature of the Dutch "1968," given both the relatively short history of the protest movement and the less authoritarian response of the Dutch authorities.[159] The spectacular press coverage of the occupation of the Maagdenhuis, for example, had given the students a transgressive feeling, but it was a half-hearted measure that soon became merely reactive: as some observers commented soon after, "whereas [the occupation] began by initiating a discussion about the requirements for changing the university, from day to day, and surely from the moment when the building was hermetically sealed, the conversations become increasingly limited to: how to react to the police and the authorities."[160] On the other hand—and here the authors accurately and presciently identified the late 1960s as a turning point in Dutch society—such actions demonstrated for the participants the progressive possibility of collective action to resist "the respectability [*fatsoen*], inhumane apathy, and channeled aggression dictated by the existing order."[161] The protesters were not a revolutionary vanguard, but, as the Critical Theorists recognized, embodied the rejection of the status quo.

A more serious philosophical critique of Marcuse came from Lolle Nauta in his inaugural address as Professor of Philosophy at the University of Groningen in 1969. Born in the Frisian city of Sneek in 1929, the same year as Habermas, Nauta was a figure who bridged the so-called '45er and '68er generations. As a mentor of the New Left, he found value in the utopian

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[157] Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 622.

[158] Jacques van Nieuwstadt and Bart Tromp, "Conflict Frankfurter School en studenten-oppositie," *De Volkskrant*, January 31, 1970.

[159] See for example the translators' afterword to Reimut Reiche, *Seksualiteit en klassenstrijd*, trans. H. ten Brummelhuis et al. (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff Nederland, 1969), 185.

[160] Ibid., 197.

[161] Ibid., 198.

dimension of Marcuse's thought and rejected many of the prevailing conservative critiques of Marcuse as failing to take seriously the technological-scientific nature of industrial society.[162] However, he argued, Marcuse did not recognize that some objectification and rationalization was necessary for the development of human subjectivity. Here, Marcuse risked falling into the trap of the conservative *Kulturkritik* of his former teacher Heidegger.[163] Moreover, his concept of praxis remained too theoretical, insofar as the strategy of the "Great Refusal," the rejection of society's manipulative system of compensations, lacked concrete description. Nauta was aware of Marcuse's recent critique of the "pseudo-concreteness" of some of the German students and agreed on the continued necessity of theory alongside praxis, but he argued that Marcuse, nonetheless, implicitly took a premature unity of theory and praxis as his point of departure.[164] The idea of a collective historical subject capable of producing a new world fell short on the level of politics: "Its utopian value is greater than its factual value. Only in an effective, global society of free and autonomous people will it cease to be merely ideological."[165] But for Nauta, Critical Theory and its concepts rooted in the German Idealist tradition were not the only possible resource for a critical social philosophy: "Rather than a Critical Theory à la Marcuse we need a philosophy that can help anticipate situations in which maturity [*mondigheid*, equivalent to the German *Mündigkeit*] laboriously—step by step—is learned. Such a philosophy could just as well come from a positivistic point of departure as from the idealistic unity of theory and praxis."[166] The primary weakness of Marcuse's philosophy, Nauta argued, was its dependence on an Idealist conception of a true world as the basis for criticizing the phenomenal world.[167]

Nauta was not, however, a hostile critic, which is not surprising given his earlier allegiance to Critical Theory's diagnosis of fascism. In another article from the same year, Nauta affirmed Marcuse's theory that the *Randgruppen* might be able replace the workers as the agents of social change.[168] He also declared his preference for *Eros and Civilization* over *One-Dimensional Man*, and found convincing Marcuse's argument that modern forms of production could reduce the demands for work and liberate the sexual drive from its surplus repression under capitalism. There appeared to be signs of this possibility in the Netherlands in the late 1960s: "in the humane city, in which the play-element will win increasingly more terrain from the work-element, the erotic-sexual component will also radically change in many respects. I believe that we have already seen the signs in this regard."[169] But Nauta rejected the notion that alienation emerged automatically from technological development, and he defended the rationality exemplified by analytical and neo-positivist philosophy as the means for improving society: "The same rationality, which naturally can serve to maintain the repressive system, is in my view simultaneously our only means to eliminate this repression."[170] Indeed, Nauta rejected the despair entailed by Marcuse's view of modern society. "The doom, which according to

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[162] Lolle Nauta, *Theorie en praxis bij Marcuse* (Baarn: Het Wereldvenster, 1969), 15.

[163] Ibid., 16.

[164] Ibid., 17.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid., 17-18.

[167] Duyvendak, "Wijsgerig perspectief op het Ware Zelf," 84.

[168] Lolle Nauta, "Wat is vervreemding? Een filosofische beschouwing," in A. J. Nijk et al., *De mens in de stad van de mens: Inleidingen gehouden tijdens de Katholieke-Studentendagen 1969 in Tilburg* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Samsom, 1969), 33.

[169] Ibid., 35.

[170] Ibid., 34.

Marcuse lies over the 'welfare states' in quotation marks, can be exaggerated; he is right when he says that the majority of people are opposed to radical changes. And such changes are indeed necessary, if our historical alienation is not to increase, while the possibilities to heighten it become greater."[171] According to Nauta, Marcuse's image of social manipulation was too seamless and monolithic; it overshadowed the existing possibilities of reason to channel science and technology for social emancipation by reforming the system from within.

Habermas was also quickly moving to a high position of influence among Dutch intellectuals. B. C. van Houten formulated a common sentiment when he stated that Adorno's thought "has the dilemma of a theory that was pointed toward revolutionary praxis but despite this remains limited to theory, overlooking its transformation, through critical theory, into an instrument of virtuosic cultural critique."[172] Habermas's great virtue, van Houten explained, was to reformulate Critical Theory in light of the different historical conditions and in dialogue with analytical philosophy of science, whose anti-metaphysical character gave it a certain critical potential, despite its admittedly ideological aspects. This engagement was of crucial significance for the present. Contemporary science (*huidige wetenschap*) or scholarship's

> increasing significance as a productive power compels more and more of its practitioners [*beoefenaars*] to reflect on the social and political meaning of their work. Critical Theory must therefore direct itself primarily toward scientific practitioners. The discussion between critical and traditional theory can no longer be described as an aspect of a class conflict, but rather must be led within science itself.[173]

As Wiggershaus among others has noted, Habermas never shared Horkheimer and Adorno's hope for a human reconciliation with nature and sought instead to couple human emancipation with technological control.[174] Whereas as both the conservative technocrats and the Marcusian Left embraced a kind of technological utopianism, respectively touting the depoliticized control and "fraternal" liberation of nature, Habermas sought to differentiate deliberative rationality from these technological forms, prompting the new distinction between "work" and "interaction" that would eventually lead to the theory of communicative action.[175] In his influential essay "Technik und Wissenschaft als 'Ideologie'" ("Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" 1968), he argued that scientific rationality contained the tendency towards, but also checks upon, instrumental rationality:

> What is singular about the 'rationality' of science and technology is that it characterizes the growing potential of self-surpassing productive forces which continually threaten the institutional framework *and at the same time*, set the standard of legitimation for the

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[171] Ibid., 38.

[172] B. C. van Houten, "De kritische theorie van de maatschappij," *Te Elfder Ure* 17, no. 1 (January 1970): 44.

[173] Ibid., 45.

[174] Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 580-81.

[175] Specter, *Habermas*, 120-23.

relations of production that restrict this potential.... Neither the model of the original sin of scientific-technical progress nor that of its innocence do it justice.[176]

Indeed, while some of the more radical students pursued a directly politicized form of science—where older professors failed to address students' concerns seriously, their interests often moved from Critical Theory to more radical, orthodox forms of Marxism[177]—other Dutch students followed Habermas in seeking to redirect the aims and function of science, not escape it. If they rejected the politics of planning that had created the society in which they found themselves two decades after the war, many of them nonetheless sought to democratize the process of modernization by participating themselves.

The Specter of Dissatisfaction: University Reform and the Rise of the New Left

While the events of 1968-1969 failed to produce a complete social and political revolution, just as they had failed in more prominent European battlegrounds, a balance sheet of the struggle for the democratization of the universities in the Netherlands would generally be positive, at least in hindsight. Taking its cue from the recent violence in Paris and journalistic sympathy for the students, as well as admitting the legitimate need for reform, the de Jong cabinet led by Education Minister Gerhard Veringa passed the University Administrative Reorganization Act (Wet Universitaire Bestuurhervorming) in the fall of 1970, which granted the ambiguous concession of student participation in the governing councils of universities, though not direct democracy.[178] Although it was denounced as cowardly by student radicals and viewed as "a typical case of 'repressive tolerance,'"[179] there can be little doubt that the power relations between the professors on the one hand and the assistants (*wetenschappelijk medewerkers*), students, and staff on the other were irrevocably changed.[180] Indeed, given the limited accessibility and elite social dominance of the Dutch universities before the 1960s, the new organizational structures were a dramatic shift.[181] Experimental in its design, and lasting only until 1976, the new law nonetheless introduced a number of far-reaching institutional and administrative reforms.[182] A new form of academic disciplinary organization into *vakgroepen* or "subject groups" emerged, consisting of academic and non-academic staff and advanced students, and governed by *vakgroep* boards, in which students were often given a role in the administration of academic appointments well beyond the intent of the law. These academic groups would be reflected in the collective and problem-oriented approach to social science research and methodology that became the subject of intense debate from 1970 onward. These

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[176] Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" in *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 89. This essay will be examined more extensively in the following chapter.

[177] Geelhoed and Reinalda, "Over studenten," 67.

[178] Hans Daalder, "The Netherlands: Universities between the 'new democracy' and the 'new management,'" in *Universities, Politicians and Bureaucrats: Europe and the United States*, ed. Hans Daalder and Edward Shils (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 173.

[179] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 83.

[180] Peter van der Veer, "Woord vooraf," in *Uit de zevende*, i.

[181] Vos et al., *Studentenprotest in de jaren zestig*, 36.

[182] Daalder, "The Netherlands: Universities," 173.

changes would allow for the presuppositions and effects of science to be discussed critically, as Regtien had originally demanded in his case for the Critical Universities.

Contemporaneously with the student movement, the Dutch *Nieuw Links* (New Left) formed in the mid-1960s as an oppositional faction within the PvdA, seeking to challenge the party's "gerontocracy"[183] and mobilize youth discontent for a renewed emphasis on socialism. In fact, this generational conflict sometimes overlapped between the issues of university reform and party organization, insofar as prominent opponents of the students within the faculty, such as the political scientist Hans Daudt, were not conservatives but active PvdA functionaries.[184] The New Left, whose members had not been formatively scarred by the occupation and found the rhetoric of the Cold War unconvincing, therefore sought to give the party a revitalized socialist spirit.[185]

The *Nieuw Links* noted that despite the real improvements in wages and standards of living under the welfare state in comparison to the prewar years of depression and the Nazi occupation, growing numbers were dissatisfied with their opportunities for economic improvement and political and cultural expression. In a pamphlet entitled *Tien over Rood* (Ten points on the socialist program), which included a condensed statement of the principles and demands of the New Left, its seventy signatories claimed that because of this "specter of dissatisfaction," it was "precisely the 'bourgeoisification' [of the workers] that makes them ripe for socialism."[186] Among the youth, the national Student Union and the actions of the Provos were helping to create a political consciousness and an awareness of the limitations of consumer society.

The New Left argued that the PvdA was failing to mobilize this new youth consciousness because it had become integrated into the bureaucracy of political parties; moreover, the parties themselves were becoming blurred. As they pointed out, the classical-liberal party (VVD) was calling for "welfare for all" while the PvdA was calling for "welfare for everyone," moving the oppositions of left and right from a conflict *among* the different parties to *within* each party.[187] The oppositions, and the very locus of politics, moreover, were transcending the parties altogether, with the result being a youth politics aimed against the parliamentary system:

> The opposition of left/right is replaced by that between the ministers and the people and between expert and layman. In such a climate, all unrest and dissatisfaction is directed against the system and all representatives of the system, against all the large political parties, indeed against democracy itself.[188]

The risks for the vitality of the Social Democratic Party were readily apparent. In a revealing remark, the authors of the pamphlet noted the request of a Communist student for "'a dash of utopia'" in PvdA policy.[189] In order to mobilize this dissatisfaction for the socialist movement, the New Left called on the party to shift its focus to educational and cultural politics. It was to

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[183] The term was J. Nagel's. Quoted in Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 368.

[184] Geelhoed and Reinalda, "Over studenten," 68.

[185] Frank Zuijdam, *Tussen wens en werkelijkheid: Het debat over vrede en veiligheid binnen de PvdA in de peiode 1958-1977* (Amsterdam: Askant, 2002), 15.

[186] "Het spook van de ontevredenheid," in *Tien over Rood*, ed. Hans van den Doel and Han Lammers (Amsterdam: Polak and Van Gennep, 1966), 11.

[187] "welvaart voor allen" and "welvaart voor iedereen." Ibid., 14.

[188] Ibid., 15.

[189] Ibid., 5.

promote equal participation at all social levels and to support individual autonomy through an expansion of "culture," not restricted to the high arts, but understood as the "equal development of human possibilities."[190] Whether the party could have satisfied its young Communist informant through internal reforms along these lines is doubtful.

The *Tien over Rood* pamphlet nonetheless garnered enough interest from younger party members to prompt a response from their elders. Here, too, the criticism was revealing. Anne Vondeling, a PvdA parliamentary representative and cabinet minister, praised the basic impulse animating the New Left, especially the broadening of political issues beyond social-economic problems, but questioned whether a new vision of the future (*toekomstvisie*) had really been articulated. Taking the ten points one by one, he showed that many of the demands had been made in previous party congresses, whereas others, such as the demand for an absolute minimum program before entering negotiations with other parties in the formation of coalition cabinets, displayed a lack of knowledge of how the political process worked. Ultimately, he charged, "the New Left has no structure, such that the phenomenon is difficult to define."[191] He even suggested that its leaders were potentially using manipulation to influence the party's internal elections.

For its part, the *Nieuw Links* managed to mobilize the growth of student interest in social theory in its struggle for influence. One issue in the dispute between the New and Old Left was thus the validity and significance of radical social critique (*maatschappijkritiek*), for which Marcuse stood as the primary representative. For the old Left, still convinced of the "end of ideology," what were needed were rational solutions and compromises, not divisive, negative attacks on social structures. The immense impact of Marcuse in the Netherlands can be measured by the fact that none other than Joop den Uyl, the leading author of the 1959 PvdA program and soon to be prime minister, felt compelled to defend the parliamentarism of social democracy against Marcusian social critique in the PvdA's house organ *Socialisme en Democratie* (Socialism and democracy) in a 1970 theme issue on "socialism and new social critique." His defense did not engage Marcuse's thought at a particularly deep level, since he treated Critical Theory together with the growing popularity of the Communist Party among some students: "What the communists and Marcusians share is the total dismissal of the existing structure and the potential acceptance of violence as a means in the struggle against capitalism, or the system."[192] Den Uyl admitted that socialism's vision of a just society might seem rather distant from the modest attempts to reform the system from within, but he insisted that this was the only way to ensure rational progress.

> The image of a technocratic society, which withdraws control and participation of the people from whom it originates, has produced a vacuum that fills itself with distrust and suspicion. Where the possibility of rational control is lacking, an aggressive irrationality develops…. If socialism, with its innate preference for the rational ordering of society, wants to grasp or recover its development, then the large vacuum between administrative and technocratic action and the mass passivity of the people must be sensibly filled.[193]

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[190] "Vrijheid, Gelijkheid, Broederschap," in van den Doel and Lammers, *Tien over Rood*, 19.

[191] Anne Vondeling, "Tien over Rood: Véél gelinks maar weinig nieuws," in *Nasmaak en voorproef* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1968), 197.

[192] Joop M. den Uyl, "Socialisme en nieuwe maatschappijkritiek," in *Inzicht en uitzicht: Opstellen over economie en politiek* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 1978), 168. Originally appeared in *Socialisme en Democratie* 27, no. 11 (Dec. 1970): 555-63.

[193] Ibid., 171.

Whether PvdA could convincingly address this issue was of course debatable.

Another opponent, L. M. de Rijk, charged that extraparliamentary social critique was antithetical to rational political discussion. In many instances it was "unsound and dangerous. The theoretical contradictions from which one begins frustrate the discussions and practice, and the theory cannot in fact lead to the declared ends."[194] In other words, social critique introduced ideological concerns that disrupted the process of pragmatic negotiation. But others were more enthusiastic about social critique, arguing that both of these men were defending the mode of planning politics that had lost its credibility. G. van Benthem van den Bergh, another important party figure, argued that their critiques were plagued by "the elitist and state-centered vision of the role of social-democratic parties that was so marked in the postwar practice of the PvdA."[195] It was clear that the influence of social critics in the Netherlands had changed the nature of politics itself. As the editor of the theme issue wrote, social critique "affected all levels of decision-making in our society, mostly that which has stayed outside the sphere of influence of parliamentary democracy for a long time or to this day…. Extra-parliamentary actions from a social-critical position mark the blind spots in the vision of politicians."[196] Above all, he warned, the social visions of these critics were crucial for the vitality of the social-democratic movement: "Democratic Socialism, as it has formed itself in the last twenty years, can easily lose itself in administrative perfectionism if it loses the image of a better society."[197] As we shall see, this debate would be continued vigorously inside and outside the party in the 1970s.

The *Nieuw Links* was not nearly as potent a force as it had hoped. The demands made in *Tien over Rood* and other pamphlets sometimes contradicted each other, and its membership suffered from disunity.[198] Once some of its members achieved influential positions, such as its informal leader Han Lammers, they rejected some of the more radical members' pursuit of extra-parliamentary action and the goal of worker self-management.[199] Nonetheless, by March 1969, they managed to become the majority in the party administration, and several were able to attain leadership posts.[200] More than any other country's New Left, the *Nieuw Links* managed to rapidly secure and exercise a large influence.[201] This success helped produce two components of Dutch politics in the 1970s. First, illustrating James Kennedy's thesis that the radical shifts in Dutch society occurred because the old elites facilitated the integration of young reformers into positions of influence, many members of the New Left quickly became a significant presence in the party apparatus of the PvdA.[202] Again, this point should not be overemphasized; as we have seen, Joop den Uyl, who would lead the PvdA as prime minister in the 1973-1976 coalition, had

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[194] L. M. de Rijk, "De voorwaarden en mogelijkheden van een maatschappijkritiek," *Socialisme en Democratie* 27, no. 11 (Dec. 1970): 518.

[195] G. van Benthem van den Bergh, "Maatschappijkritiek en het proces van sociale ontwikkeling," *Socialisme en Democratie* 28, no. 2 (Feb. 1971): 98.

[196] H. A. van Stiphout, "Ten geleide," *Socialisme en Democratie* 27, no. 11 (Dec. 1970): 507.

[197] Ibid., 508.

[198] Luuk Wijmans, "De linkse stroming: Vleugelstrijd in de Nederlandse sociaal-democratie," in *Het verbleekte ideaal: De linkse kritiek op de sociaal-democratie in Nederland*, ed. B. W. Shaper and Rudolf de Jong (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1982), 54.

[199] Zuijdam, *Tussen wens en werkelijkheid*, 136.

[200] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 368.

[201] Zuijdam, *Tussen wens en werkelijkheid*, 136.

[202] Wijmans, "De linkse stroming," 54.

argued sharply against the New Left in the late 1960s. But this parliamentary shift was coupled with the birth of a second phenomenon. What drove the radical politics of the 1970s was the explosion of extra-parliamentary groups centered on specific social issues, such as nuclear power, feminism, squatting, and environmentalism. While the *Nieuw Links* failed to maintain a sustained, organized opposition within the parliamentary system, its energies were diffused among these various groups, who had abandoned the parties as realistic forces for change.[203] The relation between the progressive political consensus and the pressures of the new social movements, now funded by generous government subsidies,[204] created the dynamic political atmosphere of the 1970s, during which the den Uyl coalition passed into law many of the demands from the 1960s.[205] Thus, emphasizing the failure of revolution by the student movement of the 1960s risks overlooking the success of its political and intellectual offshoots in the 1970s.[206] Even if the New Left's engagement with Critical Theory had little concrete impact on their approach once they achieved a measure of political power, it had been central in exposing the problematic ideology governing the PvdA in its "planning for freedom," thus partly paving the way for the new social movements of the 1970s, to which we shall turn shortly.

Conclusion

As elsewhere in Europe and North America, the legacy of the 1960s in the Netherlands remains contested. The four intervening decades have provided some measure of historical distance, but the image of the 1960s continues to be mobilized politically and culturally, often as an object of ridicule (infantile protest or individualistic narcissism), or more seriously as the root of present pathologies (the birth of an oppressive political correctness). For the militant activists of the 1970s, such as Eddie Korlaar, the failure of revolution at the close of the 1960s suggested the need to abandon theory altogether in favor of direct action; some of these figures would repent for their leftist pasts in the 1990s.[207] By directing our attention to the diffuse reception of Critical Theory in this period, by contrast, we have seen how the stage was set for a generation of youth to challenge technocratic planning and the function of science in the postwar period, demand more democratic forms of participation in education and politics, and raise serious questions about the construction of the postwar welfare state. For this group, moreover, the unfolding conflict between the members of the Frankfurt School and the German student movement proved instructive for pursuing a more nuanced approach to the problem of theory and practice. As the example of Lolle Nauta shows, this scholarly reception was hardly uncritical either.

Critical Theory was not the only intellectual stimulus of the period, nor even the dominant one, but it is clear that its impact exceeded the rebellious celebrity of Marcuse, to which it has been reduced in many historical studies. For young militants, even Marcuse remained in any case too bourgeois and contemplative. But for great numbers of students and youth, Critical Theory was a crucial part of a postwar reorientation to Germany and its

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[203] Ibid., 55.

[204] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 23.

[205] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare,* 369-70.

[206] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 22.

[207] Ibid., 29.

intellectual traditions, and of their *wetenschappelijk* (scientific) and political educations. The very notion of self-critical forms of theory and knowledge was developed in the reception of the Frankfurt School's work, especially the Positivist Dispute, and resonated deeply in the disciplinary debates within sociology, philosophy, and political science, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Politics in a Rational Key: Habermas and the Actuality of Reason in the Long 1970s

The value of a theory is decided by its connection to the tasks taken in hand by the most progressive social forces in a given historical moment, and a theory is valuable not for the whole of humanity directly, but only for the group with an interest in those tasks.[1]

—Max Horkheimer, "The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy" (1934)

When the global revolution failed to occur in the late 1960s, shaken but unfaltering authorities responded, often collaboratively, by reinforcing existing social structures and restoring political stability. The 1970s, it would seem, marked the beginning of the conservative shift that culminated in the 1980s of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher: as one historian concludes, this counteraction to the political instability of the 1960s, "in part, is how political conservatism, rather than the New Left, became hegemonic in the 1970s."[2] This was true, for example, despite the initial sense of reformist possibility surrounding Willy Brandt's victory for the German SPD in 1969, which was followed by the infamous *Berufsverbot* of 1972 excluding political radicals from public employment.[3] The SPD's reliance on the classical-liberal Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP) for its coalition formation further contributed to an atmosphere of conservatism that undermined the possibility for reform, resulting in a shift known in the 1970s as the *Tendenzwende* or turn to depoliticized, private individualism that exemplified the 1980s.[4] The oppositional left parties that returned to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxies, moreover, largely failed to capitalize on the mass politicization of non-traditional issues raised by the feminist and environmental movements, as did the SPD itself.[5]

In West Germany, the sense of disappointment and deflation at the end of the 1960s coincided with the end of the conflict between the Frankfurt School and the student movement. After Adorno's death in 1969 and Hans-Jürgen Krahl's tragic accident in 1970, the ferment of activity surrounding the Institute of Social Research largely disappeared. Habermas soon left the Goethe University to take up a decade-long position as director of the Max Plank Institute for the Study of the Life-Conditions of the Scientific-Technical World in Starnberg, enticed by a large staff of fifteen researchers (*Mitarbeiter*) and freedom in directing its research program.[6] Ludwig

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[1] Max Horkheimer, "The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy," in *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*, trans. G. Frederick Hunter, Matthew S. Kramer, and John Torpey (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1993), 241.

[2] Jeremy Suri, "The Rise and Fall of an International Counterculture," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 1 (February 2009): 53.

[3] Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 166.

[4] Russell A. Berman, "Adorno's Radicalism: Two Interviews from the Sixties," *Telos* 56 (Summer 1983): 94.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Matthew G. Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 87-88.

von Friedeburg became the Hessian Minister of Culture in 1969, and younger assistants left, such as Oskar Negt, who became a professor of sociology in Hannover.[7] Interest in the older Frankfurt School dropped precipitously, seemingly in parallel with the disappointments of the following decade: "just as the hopes of the 1970s for a changed society were doomed to disappointment and ended up in the following decade in a neoconservative restoration, Adorno's philosophy, too, seems to have succumbed to what Hegel called the 'fury of destruction.'"[8] The conservatives' attempts to blame Critical Theory for the growing left-wing terrorism that culminated in the German Autumn of 1977 defined the "mood of persecution" that came to envelop Frankfurt, as Habermas later recalled.[9]

The end of the 1960s was a symbolic watershed in the Netherlands as well. A year after the Dutch events of 1969, Provo founder Roel van Duijn and student movement leader Ton Regtien met in a tense encounter reported by the weekly paper *De Nieuwe Linie (*The new line). After the disbanding of Provo in 1967, van Duijn had left Amsterdam, suffering from depression, to volunteer on an organic farm in southern Zeeland. He soon returned to the city hoping to implement a new vision of peaceful anarchy, with similarly outlandish features as found in the Provos' "white plans," but relying on less confrontational, "soft powers" (*zachte krachten*) of persuasion. Inspired by the writings of the Russian anarcho-communist Peter Kropotkin, he wrote a manifesto celebrating of the image of the "wise gnome" (*wijze kabouter*) as symbol of cooperation and harmony with nature.[10] Taking over the seat held by Provo on the Amsterdam City Council in 1969, he flooded it with proposals to turn Amsterdam into a *kabouterstad*: a city free of cars and thoroughly integrated with urban animal husbandry and organic farming. Such ideas undoubtedly tried the Council's patience, but also prompted harsh criticism from Regtien, who dismissed van Duijn's new *Kabouterbeweging* (gnome movement) as "petty-bourgeois anarchism."[11]

Dismayed by what seemed to many to be the limited concessions won by the student movement, Regtien turned to revolutionary activism and joined the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN). The 1970 exchange between van Duijn and Regtien symbolized the breakup of the mix of political and cultural impulses of protest that had grown in the second half of the 1960s, and after much of the ludic energy of the period had dissipated, many Dutch young people, especially students and young academics, followed Regtien's lead by embracing the orthodox Marxism of the CPN or of the more militant Communist Unity Movement of the Netherlands (Kommunistische Eenheidsbeweging Nederland (marxisties-leninisties), KEN(ml)).[12] Beyond these organizational channels, which were characterized by strict party

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[7] Ibid., 87-88.

[8] Rolf Tiedemann, "'Not the first philosophy, but a last one': Notes on Adorno's Thought," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), xvii.

[9] Jürgen Habermas, "A Generation Apart from Adorno (an interview)," interview by J. Früchtl, trans. James Swindal, *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 18, no. 2 (1992): 123.

[10] His experience is recounted in Roel van Duijn, "Netherlands: The Second Liberation," in "1968: Memories and Legacies of a Global Revolt," ed. Philipp Gassert and Martin Klimke, *German Historical Institute Bulletin Supplement* 6 (2009): 225-29.

[11] Antoine Verbij, *Tien rode jaren: Links radicalisme in Nederland, 1970-1980* (Amsterdam: Ambo, 2005), 162-63. The details of the van Duijn/Regtien exchange above are drawn from Verbij.

[12] Ibid., 88. In October 1971, a Maoist faction within the KEN(ml) split off and created another, even more "proletarian" party, the similarly-named Communist Party of the Netherlands/Marxist-Leninist (KPN/ML), which

centralism and considerable anti-intellectualism, Dutch radicals joined and created a plethora of Maoist, Trotskyist, and anarchist splinter groups. Many were convinced by the lingering sense of social and political upheaval that the path to revolution in the Netherlands, *pace* van Duijn's 1965 assessment, was now open, if only the enlightened and now battle-hardened intellectual vanguard could guide the Dutch proletariat to revolutionary consciousness. The northeastern provincial capital of Groningen, where Regtien had moved from Nijmegen, experienced a wave of Communist growth and appeared to his fellow students at the Rijksuniversiteit (National University) to be the epicenter of imminent revolution.[13] The cynical offers of the authorities on university reform had demonstrated to them that only total revolution would produce qualitative change. In retrospect, much of this activist-intellectual work makes for embarrassing reading; in addition to widespread enthusiasm for Mao's Cultural Revolution, the leftist press defended the Khmer Rouge as a "liberation movement" through the 1970s.[14]

More troubling than revolutionary rhetoric, however, was the attempt at revolutionary violence. It is important not to overlook the small but committed cells of Dutch activists who sought to use terrorism, or more frequently, vandalism and arson, which became more visible in the second half of the 1980s.[15] There was also considerable sympathy for the West German Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction, RAF) and a few instances of practical assistance.[16] Still, Dutch violence was negligible and belated in comparison to West Germany, which had to do with the relative tolerance of the authorities, who were somewhat more forgiving in the 1970s; the latent potential for violence was perhaps equal to that of the 1980s, but physical resistance, so long as it was not premeditated violence, tended not to be punished, but rather treated as civil disobedience and accepted as the legitimate political expression of an autonomous citizenry.[17] Significantly for the comparison of the Netherlands and West Germany in this period, then, left-wing terrorism never came to pass in any serious manner.[18] The political integration of the CPN

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renamed itself the Socialistiese Partij (SP, now spelled Socialistische Partij) in 1972 and became a stable political party.

[13] Doeko Bosscher, "Groningen herontdekt zichzelf," in *Nieuwste Tijd—Heden*, vol. 3 of *Geschiedenis van Groningen*, ed. M. G. J. Duijvendak et al. (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers/Stichting Erven A. de Jager, 2008), 320-21.

[14] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 13. For a French comparison, see Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). To be sure, it was less the actual developments in China than its "imagined successes" as an alternative to Soviet Communism that inspired this admiration: "One senses that if the Cultural Revolution did not exist, the gauchistes would have had to invent it" (ibid., 3).

[15] As Verbij points out, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Ruud Koopmans describe the problem of violence as virtually nonexistent in the 1970s in the Netherlands, but they overlook these radical Marxist and anarchist groups because of their focus on the new social movements. Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 227.

[16] Three people were imprisoned in the Netherlands for their assistance to the RAF, and many more were sympathetic, as evidenced in the leftist press. See Jacco Pekelder, *Sympathie voor de RAF: De Rote Armee Fraktion in Nederland 1970-1980* (Amsterdam: Mets and Schilt, 2007). But as Duco Hellema notes, those who supported the RAF often found themselves isolated. Duco Hellema, "Das Ende des Fortschritts: Die Niederlande und die siebziger Jahre," *Zentrum für Niederlande-Studien Jahrbuch* 18 (2007): 94.

[17] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 228.

[18] The most brutal episode was instead perpetrated by second-generation Moluccan activists protesting the Dutch reluctance to support the independence of the south Moluccan islands from Indonesia. Predominantly Christian, the Moluccans had assisted the Dutch "police actions" against the Indonesian independence movement in 1947-1948 and were promised an independent homeland. They (correctly) feared that the government's desire for good relations with the Indonesian Republic would prevent the Netherlands from keeping its promises. In 1975, several activists hijacked a train near the German border and executed the driver and two hostages before throwing

into parliamentary politics and the party's considerable presence in the student movement heavily discouraged independent initiatives, and was therefore likely a major factor in taming the potential for violence.[19] But above all, the general leftist, progressive consensus of the 1970s— Antoine Verbij's "ten red years"—greatly facilitated the growth and activities of social movements operating within the sphere of legality, both in cooperation with and in opposition to mainstream politics. Many radical activist groups adopted a "two-handed" strategy of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary efforts,[20] but the relative success of the former, combined with the relative absence of government repression, prevented the type of desperation that elsewhere encouraged violent actions from spreading. And when some revolutionary activists did decide to break ranks with their organizations, they discovered that they could still be effective political actors within legal channels.[21] The reflections of Lucien van Hoesel, a former member of the would-be terrorist group *Rode Jeugd* (Red Youth), are instructive: "One was constantly busy with fighting society. When society then reacted so liberally, there was no more point."[22]

Indeed, the Netherlands was in many ways unique in the 1970s in actualizing possibilities for progressive reform: it was arguably a "progressive paradise" and a "laboratory for civil society."[23] The roots of this period lie squarely in the late 1960s, suggesting that 1968-1970 was not really the political caesura it seemed at the time. Like Provo, van Duijn's *Kabouterbeweging* was short-lived, but it can be viewed as a precursor to and catalyst for political reform movements on issues such as the environment, militarism, and nuclear energy. The leaders of other movements, most importantly feminism and gay rights, also had their formative political experiences in the protests of the prior decade, providing the repertoires for protest on much larger scales.[24] Despite the disappointment experienced by some at the end of the 1960s, and the economic and political caesura of the 1973 oil crisis which seemed to mark the end of the postwar project of *vernieuwing*, both James Kennedy and Antoine Verbij point to the continuity between the 1960s protest movements and the following decade, which can be periodized as "the long 1970s."[25] Specifically, as was suggested at the conclusion of the previous chapter, the 1970s witnessed a productive exchange between, on the one hand, the New Left-infused PvdA under

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the bodies onto the tracks in view of national television crews. See Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 12-13. Buruma identifies this episode as the first crack in the veneer of post-1960s Dutch society: "It was not a good start to the new age of multiculturalism" (ibid., 13).

[19] Numerous participants in the CPN's activities from the period have attested to the contradiction between the party's strict organizational discipline and its calls for increased democratization of society. Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 94.

[20] Van Duijn grandiosely claims to have invented this strategy during his tenure as an Amsterdam councilman. Van Duijn, "Netherlands: The Second Liberation," 228.

[21] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 11.

[22] Quoted in Ruud Koopmans, "Van provo tot RARA: Golfbewegingen in het politieke protest in Nederland," in *Tussen verbeelding en macht: 25 jaar nieuwe sociale bewegingen in Nederland*, ed. Jan Willem Duyvendak et al. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Sua, 1992), 67.

[23] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 25-26.

[24] Saskia E. Wieringa, "Imitatie en transformatie: Een verkenning van actierepertoires en protestculturen in de lange jaren zeventig," in *Alles kon anders: Protestrepertoires in Nederland, 1965-2005*, ed. Marian van der Klein and Saskia E. Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2006), 9-18. The concept of "protest repertoires" is taken from the social movements theorist Charles Tilly, whose work dominates the Dutch historiography of the new social movements.

[25] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 18-19.

the cabinet of Joop den Uyl (1973-1977),[26] and on the other, the extra-parliamentary movements that grew out of the protests of the 1960s and became known as the new social movements. In order to understand this dynamic's distinctive characteristics vis-à-vis its neighbors France, and especially, West Germany, it is necessary to examine closely the socio-political context that made this context of progressivism possible.

Doing so will help to explain why, despite the comparatively late and mild forms of political opposition and protest in the Netherlands in 1969, progressive movements had a greater concrete impact through the 1970s than many of their Western European counterparts. In general, the pattern of elite accommodation demonstrated by James Kennedy continued to have an impact; despite the older left establishment's rather grudging acceptance of the radical upstarts of the New Left, it was clear that PvdA would need to be responsive to the younger generation's demands, not least in order to remain politically viable after the breakdown of the predictable socialist pillar. Despite the mutual distrust between the "old" and New Left, their uneasy alliance was quite productive.[27] By adopting a conscious strategy in the early 1970s of political polarization and alliance with other progressive parties into one large, left-populist platform, the PvdA/PPR/D'66 alliance was able to offer voters a clear political choice, thus departing from the meek compromises of the previous postwar decades.[28] Promoted by the *Nieuw Links*-sympathizer Ed van Thijn, this strategy sought to redress the democratic deficit of the cabinet formation process, in which voters' political demands were highly diluted through the traditional process of negotiation among the pillars' elites.[29]

This polarization was sufficient for the new coalition to avoid being outflanked politically on the left by the Communists. The CPN did experience growing membership in this period, but it did not occur at sufficient levels to seriously challenge the Social Democrats and their progressive alliance.[30] And while the CPN and the Marxist splinter groups turned against the countercultural movements of the 1960s and returned to the classical language of class conflict, the *de facto* pacification of class oppositions through the welfare state consensus had long rendered the possibility of a proletarian revolution rather moot, Marxist-Leninist illusions aside, leaving comparatively greater political space for the new social movements.[31] The strike activities of the traditional trade unions also met with partial success, leading to the 1971 Law on the Workers Council (Wet op de Ondernemingsraad), giving employees of companies with more than fifty workers the right to form a council, suggesting the continued potential of non-revolutionary political action.[32] The keyword of *zeggenschap* or discursive participation was

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[26] The other parties in the coalition were the Christian party offshoot, the Political Party of Radicals (Politieke Partij Radikalen, PPR) and the liberal-democratic party offshoot D'66.

[27] Paul Kalma, "Der lange Marsch zum 'Dritten Weg': Die niederländische Partei der Arbeit (PvdA) seit den 1970er Jahren," *Zentrum für Niederlande-Studien Jahrbuch* 12 (2001): 180.

[28] Bart Tromp, *Het sociaal-democratisch programma: De beginselprogramma's van de SDB, SDAP en PvdA, 1878-1977* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2002), 355. As Paul Kalma notes, the den Uyl cabinet was the most strongly left-oriented cabinet in the country's history. Paul Kalma, "Der lange Marsch zum 'Dritten Weg,'" 180.

[29] Ido de Haan, "Doorzichtige politiek: veertig jaar na 1968," *Ons Erfdeel* 51, no. 4 (Nov. 2008): 11.

[30] Koopmans, "Van provo tot RARA," 66.

[31] Jan Willem Duyvendak and Ruud Koopmans, "Protest in een pacificatiedemocratie: Nieuwe sociale bewegingen en het Nederlandse politieke systeem," in Duyvendak et al., *Tussen verbeelding en macht*, 41.

[32] De Haan, "Doorzichtige politiek," 13. Similarly, the Lower House was soon persuaded to decriminalize the "homosexual seduction of minors" in 1971 as a result of mainstream pressure and committee advice. Kees Schuyt and Ed Taverne, eds., *1950: Prosperity and* Welfare, vol. 4 of *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 370.

therefore sufficiently actualized so as largely to prevent a sense of political exclusion from hardening into extremist desperation; as Kennedy puts it, rather than the violent deed, the Dutch "always continued to believe that a great deal could be accomplished through discourse [*met praten*]."[33] Indeed, one can argue that despite the revolutionary rhetoric of the time, the historical political culture of consultation and consensus continued to be felt and helps to account for the comparative lack of violence among radicals.[34] Conversely, a generally receptive citizenry and the continuing democratization of the sensibilities of the 1960s, as more of the population broke from the traditional pillars, provided a supportive context that created less a gulf than a continuum between political activists on the left and society at large.

In addition to these broad patterns, a political-theoretical analysis demonstrates how the particular political structures of the Netherlands and their relationship to the institutions of "civil society" facilitated the social movements' efforts to influence parliamentary power. The historical strength of Dutch civil society is a product of its balance of non-majority groups, exemplified in the system of pillarization. This strength was and is structurally favorable for social movements, first, because the state facilitates and supports each group's identity and "sovereignty," and second, because the similarly fractured legislative power in the two *Kamers* or houses of parliament is more directly answerable to the demands of social movements than a strong executive power would be. The political system remains relatively open because, due to proportional voting, the existing parties face real competition from newcomers, even with small numbers of voters. And while there are no possibilities for citizens to generate initiatives or direct referenda, beginning in the 1970s, procedural features of law-making featured genuine opportunities for citizens' input, a power that was formalized and expanded in the 1980 Law on Administrative Transparency (Wet op de Openbaarheid van Bestuur), which imposed rules concerning transparency and publicity for all levels of governance.[35] To be sure, citizens frequently found such transparency lacking in practice, but in keeping with Kennedy's thesis, the demand for political openness came not only "from below" in the 1960s but from the elites' own recognition of the need to democratize the political system.[36]

On the other hand, other formal features of Dutch politics, such as its non-federal, vertically-centralized power structure, could be structural hindrances to social movements. Nonetheless, the tendency for integrative approaches to governance—again a product of pillarization—often resulted in the cooperation with, or cooption of, oppositional movements. "The result of this is that the Netherlands is one of the few countries where leftist organizations were facilitated with scarcely any hindrance under center-right governments."[37] Thus, both the feminist and gay rights movements were highly successful because they were essentially supported as new *zuiltjes* or smaller pillars. The facilitation of these pillars through consensus or compromise politics could lead to limitations on any decisive changes, but it allowed Dutch citizens and groups a high degree of political input, thus permitting a characteristically "measured radicalism."[38] The new social movements, of which vast numbers of Dutch citizens

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[33] From an interview with Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 19.

[34] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 482.

[35] The analysis above is drawn from Duyvendak and Koopmans, "Protest in een pacificatiedemocratie," 44-46.

[36] De Haan, "Doorzichtige politiek," 16-17, 6.

[37] Duyvendak and Koopmans, "Protest in een pacificatiedemocratie," 47.

[38] Ibid., 47-49, here 49.

were members, were thus facilitated by the consensus-oriented government, producing a thoroughly institutionalized opposition with real chances for actualizing their demands.

Most important, perhaps, were the experiences of successful political mobilization and responsiveness from the authorities. Concrete successes, such as the environmental movement's first campaign against the establishment of a chemical factory in the Amsterdam harbor area in 1968, helped to polarize and broaden the movement, whereas the declining power and membership of the conservative parties prevented the development of sufficient political resistance to the social movements.[39] Moreover, the new social movements were quickly professionalized, strengthening new and existing organizations such as the radical feminist Man-Woman Society (Man Vrouw Maatschappij) and Nature and Environment Foundation (Stichting Natuur en Milieu), generously subsidized under the den Uyl cabinet.[40] Indeed, the den Uyl cabinet's recognition of the Man-Woman Society "illustrates how much this Cabinet comprised a political confirmation and recognition of the attitudes that had developed during the preceding years."[41] To be sure, some activists rejected parliamentary reform as a slippery slope toward cooption, but the period was dominated by the reformist path: "Whereas in countries like Italy and West Germany [revolutionary] countercultural currents could justify themselves because of the real repression of the authorities and the lack of [legal] successes, their Dutch counterparts were relegated to appealing to 'repressive tolerance,' as it were."[42] For most activists and politically engaged citizens, however, such appeals became less and less convincing.[43]

In sum, the political atmosphere of the Dutch 1970s, if not always the reality, was a marked exception to the sense of conservative reaction and even persecution experienced by the Left elsewhere. The den Uyl cabinet was the highpoint of the ideal of *maakbaarheid* or makeability, conceived as the possibility of radically transforming society for the better.[44] Despite the challenges posed by the 1973 oil crisis, struggling economy, and growing deficits, for which the Left would be criticized in the 1980s, the cabinet governed over a transformative period in Dutch politics and society with robust levels of political participation. Following the 1977 elections, despite the PvdA and D'66's strong showings, the PPR suffered losses, leaving den Uyl unable to form a new cabinet and creating a vacuum that would eventually be filled by the Christen-Democratisch Appèl (Christian Democratic Appeal, CDA) and the VVD. Ruud Koopmans has rightly identified the fall of the den Uyl cabinet in 1977 as marking the end of a first wave of protest in the Netherlands, from 1966 to 1977. The progressiveness of the den Uyl cabinet had tempered the need for radical extraparliamentary action to such an extent that some feared that overt opposition could destabilize the government. But even after the cabinet's fall, the return to conservatism did not immediately result in retrenchment, as might be assumed. To the contrary, the Christian Democrats (CDA) who returned to power faced their own internal left opposition, the so-called Loyalists. Thus a level of political instability remained under the Van

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[39] Koopmans, "Van provo tot RARA," 64.

[40] Ibid., 65.

[41] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 370.

[42] Koopmans, "Van provo tot RARA," 66.

[43] However, other groups dismissed parliamentary politics for other reasons. Most notably, some socialist-feminist groups dismissed mainstream politics as inherently patriarchal, interpreting the famous slogan "the personal is political" as a call for a libertarian politics of autonomous feminist culture outside mainstream society and politics. Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooiing*, 80.

[44] Ibid., 20.

Agt/Wiegel (1977-1981) and first Lubbers (1982-1986) cabinets that could be exploited by the new social movements, even under the *no-nonsense tijd* declared by the conservatives.[45]

Koopmans therefore identifies a second, overlapping wave of political protest beginning in 1977 and ending in 1989, which witnessed new, broader alliances among leftist opposition groups and movements—including religious groups, who effectively confronted the CDA with Christian principles of social justice. While the late 1980s were disastrous for left political parties, the 1970s and early 1980s were a high point for the political impact of new social movements in the Netherlands that contrasted strikingly with France, where, following François Mitterand's victory in the May 1981 elections, the Socialists dropped their previous support for the new social movements, and with West Germany, at least until the rise of the Greens (Die Grünen) in the late 1970s and their entry into the Bundestag in 1983.[46] The years of the Van Agt/Wiegel cabinet were particularly fruitful for the growth and mobilization of the new social movements, with the debate over the placement of cruise missiles in the Netherlands being a highly effective catalyst for the growth of the peace movement, which served as an inspiration for similar protests in Belgium and West Germany.[47] The PvdA, now in the opposition, buttressed the legalistic tendencies of the peace movement through its considerable presence in the No Cruise Missiles Committee (Komitee Kruisraketten Nee), seeking to dispel its political image of radicalism and irresponsibility from the 1970s.[48]

Despite fierce opposition and a petition signed by some 3.75 million citizens, or nearly one third of the adult population, the government decided to accept the missile placement in November 1985. Although the missiles never physically arrived, this was a near-lethal blow to the Dutch peace movement and prompted some belatedly to escalate radical protest actions and dismiss parliamentary politics as a bourgeois illusion.[49] A new split emerged between the radical and reformist wings of the movement, which allowed the authorities to isolate and repress more effectively the radical wing, which in turn provoked increasingly confrontational measures. During the second wave of protest, then, the Dutch situation was nearly the reverse of West Germany, where the radicalism and violence of the 1970s gradually shifted to institutionalized reformism with the political rise of the Greens, which facilitated a comparatively more robust dynamic between parliamentary politics and new social movements.[50] Still, despite the apparent stagnation of the Dutch new social movements in the late 1980s, membership in both small reformist movements and global organizations like Greenpeace grew significantly, with nearly a million Dutch members by 1984.[51] Of course such membership requires less effort and risk than the various forms of political action of the 1970s, as the new social movements were absorbed into "umbrella organizations with Giro [bank] accounts,"[52] but it nonetheless reflects the widespread sensibility of active, global citizenship that characterized the Netherlands from the 1970s to the mid-1980s.

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[45] Duyvendak and Koopmans, "Protest in een pacificatiedemocratie," 53.

[46] Ibid., 53-55.

[47] Koopmans, "Van provo tot RARA," 68-69.

[48] Ibid., 70. Internationally, the anti-cruise-missile movement prompted the historian Walter Laqueur to diagnose troubling symptoms of "Hollanditis" in 1981. Walter Laqueur, "Hollanditis: A New Stage of European Neutralism," *Commentary*, August 19, 1981, 19-26.

[49] Koopmans, "Van provo tot RARA," 70-71.

[50] Ibid., 73-74.

[51] Ibid., 74.

[52] Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*, 232.

The ideas of the early Frankfurt School and Habermas did not figure into these political developments in any direct manner. As the broad popularity of Marcuse began to wane, the diffuse political influence of Critical Theory in the late 1960s became concentrated primarily in the academy, rather than in the new social movements themselves. In Germany, too, Habermas, as the younger theorist who took up the tradition of Critical Theory in the new context of post-1960s late capitalism, always maintained a certain distance from the new social movements that he cautiously championed as the bearers of post-traditional consciousness—the non-materialistic representatives of what the American political scientist Robert Inglehart had coined as the "silent revolution" in 1977.[53] For Habermas, these movements embodied the rationalization of the "lifeworld," forming a potential bulwark against its colonization by the system, both processes for which contemporary evidence was found. Despite its theoretical abstraction and extraordinary systematicity, the *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) is explicitly shaped by the political challenges it attempts to conceptualize and address; one finds references not only to the German politics of the era but also to specific phenomena such as the anti-tax revolt of Proposition 13, passed in California in 1978.[54] However, rather than direct political correspondences or effects of ideas, we shall be tracing how these contextual determinants shaped Habermasian theory and its Dutch reception, including the writings of its most prominent supporters and one of its sharpest critics, Lolle Nauta. Both sides of this reception, I will argue, were inflected by a broader discourse of actuality for which the context of progressivism outlined above was constitutive. For the former, Habermas's theory of communicative rationality bore an elective affinity to the "learning processes" evident in Dutch civil society; for the latter, the actuality of modern progress meant that despite Habermas's departure from the dialectical "negativism" of the Frankfurt School, he still remained too beholden to its Hegelian, "idealist" inheritance. But to begin, we shall step back to the reestablishment of the relevant academic disciplines after World War II and their evolution through the late 1960s and 1970s, particularly sociology, philosophy, and to a lesser degree, political science, in order to reconstruct the intellectual reception of Habermasian Critical Theory.

The Critique of Sociology and the Philosophy of Science

Prior to an educational reform law passed 1960, philosophy was virtually nonexistent in the Dutch academy, having served under the pillarized faculties of theology.[55] Only with the 1960 law was philosophy given a central position in the new Centrale Interfaculteit (central interfaculty) established at each university and a doctorate in philosophy offered.[56] Philosophy's new prominence was designed to provide a foundation for the curriculum that would emphasize the connection between the sciences and social responsibility, in the modernizing direction

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[53] Robert Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

[54] Habermas offers Proposition 13 as an example of a regressive "defense of traditional and social rank (based on property)." Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 394.

[55] Herman Philipse, "Groei en krimp: De faculteit der wijsbegeerte," in *Altijd een vonk of twee: De Universiteit Leiden van 1975 tot 2000*, ed. H. J. de Jonge and W. Otterspeer (Leiden: Universitaire pers Leiden, 2000), 127.

[56] Ibid., 128.

emphasized after the war.[57] But given the years necessary to institutionalize the new faculty structure, the Dutch philosophical field became contested terrain before any particular tradition could achieve a dominant position. In the established field of sociology, with which philosophy would become closely intertwined, the battle lines were more pronounced. As we saw in the previous chapter, sociology was highly integrated into the planning politics of the first two postwar decades. Dutch sociologists had been largely isolated from the methodological debates that had occurred in France and Germany since the early twentieth century; as the sociologist J. A. A. van Doorn lamented, the question of value-neutrality that had been asked in the 1910s by figures such as Weber simply had no impact in the Netherlands until forty years later.[58] In the 1940s, Dutch sociology remained dominated by an American-style empiricism that could be, if somewhat unjustly, charged as being positivist, atheoretical, uncritical, and ahistorical.[59] But despite the dominance of this technocratic form of sociology, as in cultural politics, challenges to the status quo began in the "silent" 1950s. In 1958 Piet Thoenes argued there were two kinds of sociologists: *ontwerpers* or "originators" who asked big questions and gave social critique, whether on the left or right, such as Marx, Pareto, Mannheim, and Parsons, and *verificateurs* or "verifiers" who only asked tiny, technical questions in their service of the decision-making, established authorities (*machthebbers*).[60] According to Thoenes, the Netherlands was dominated by the latter, and his judgment spurned considerable debate among the leading figures of the discipline. As Dutch society entered the upheavals of the 1960s, younger sociologists such as Bé Cornelis van Houten decried the continued governmental embeddedness of the elder professors:

> Dutch sociology works in the service of policy, not in the service of enlightenment [*de Aufklärung*]. It gives policy advice; it supplies no real social critique. As Thoenes has observed, it is so preoccupied with its success that it has exchanged, in scientific and social terms, its scarcely-used birthright [*eerstgeboorterecht*] of critical marginality in return for the muddle of fanciful but unfruitful [political] usefulness.[61]

This charge was not without justification, for in the service of the governing elites through the Ministry of Culture, Recreation, and Social Work, each non-socialist pillar had formed its own sociological institute with the paternalistic goal of molding the masses to function in modern society.[62]

One outcome of Education Minister Veringa's University Administrative Reorganization Act of 1970 was the previously mentioned *vakgroep* model that organized students, faculty, and staff around focused academic subjects. In addition to introducing an element of democratic participation to the organization of research and teaching, the new model tended to structure and sometimes divide academic departments along partisan lines of methodology and politics. Marxism was the typical dividing line, though other theoretical sources sometimes permeated these boundaries. At the University of Amsterdam, a new historical sociology inspired by

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[57] Ibid., 128.

[58] Cited in Bé Cornelis van Houten, *Tussen aanpassing en kritiek: De derde methodenstrijd in de Duitse sociologie* (PhD diss., Rijksuniversiteit Groningen; Deventer: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1970), 33-34.

[59] Ibid., 34.

[60] Ed Jonker, *De sociologische verleiding: Sociologie, sociaal-democratie en de welwaartsstaat* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1988), 168.

[61] Van Houten, *Tussen aanpassing en kritiek,* 38.

[62] Kennedy, *Building New Babylon*, 60-62.

Norbert Elias sought to connect long-term changes in power relations to changes in the psychology of individuals. This was itself a critical departure from the structural-functionalism advocated by J. A. A. van Doorn and Cor Lammers in their classic 1959 handbook *Modern Sociology*, which remained a prominent approach.[63] But the shift against postwar functionalism was accompanied by the rise of various forms of "critical sociology" in the late 1960s that tackled philosophical questions in a more direct manner than the work of the disciples of Elias. Elias spent many of his last years based in Amsterdam and became an intellectual celebrity; two eminent colleagues there, Johan Goudsblom and Abram de Swaan, championed his work and formed something of an "Amsterdam school." The result, according to Dick Pels, was a gradual distancing of historical sociology from questions of critical methodology and social philosophy, alienating the more politically oriented students; the question "Elias or Marx?" became a kind of political litmus test for these students.[64] On the Marxist side, the sociologist Veit Bader won a professorship after considerable internal conflict. A third position developed with the arrival of the American sociologist Alvin Gouldner, coinciding with his major work, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (1970). His "reflexive sociology," heavily concerned with sociology's methodological foundations, had a broad impact on neo-Marxist students such as Harry Kunneman and Dick Pels, who founded the *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* (Amsterdam sociological journal) as a forum for discussing the philosophical foundations of social science.[65]

  All three groups—the Eliasians, the Gouldnerians, and the Marxists—grappled in different ways with the problem of sociology's social relevance, leaving students struggling to find a balance between Weberian neutrality and the crude Marxist partisanship being carried out outside the ivory tower. The emerging critique within the history and philosophy of science exemplified by Thomas Kuhn also began to bear heavily on these debates. By the mid-1970s, critical questions about the epistemological foundations of sociology had become so prominent that some detected an anti-empirical atmosphere. Bart van Heerikhuizen, while promoting a reflexive understanding of the history of the discipline of sociology in the Netherlands and applauding the attention given to philosophical questions within the Sociological Institute of the University of Amsterdam, questioned the primacy of theory over empirical research and rejected the anti-empirical attitude that had emerged: "In the mouths of these sociologists the term 'empirical' has acquired a somewhat obscene connotation."[66] He sensed a general frustration among his assistants that those who wanted to pursue empirical research were trapped discussing endlessly the theoretical positions of Kuhn, Imre Lakatos, and Karl Popper.[67] On the other hand, the contested atmosphere within the sociology department made the University of Amsterdam a center for methodological and disciplinary debates, which spilled over to neighboring fields like philosophy and political science.

  These battle lines, however, did not fall uniformly at other universities. At the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, one important *vakgroep* was centered around the Marxist labor historian, philosopher, and former CPN member Ger Harmsen, who had acquired a reputation as an elder guru of the student movement much like Marcuse in the United States (and similarly

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[63] Jonker, *De sociologische verleiding*, 175-84.

[64] Dick Pels, *De geest van Pim: Het gedachtegoed van een politieke dandy* (Amsterdam: Anthos, 2003), 81.

[65] Dick Pels, "Rondom Elias," in *Uit de zevende: Vijftig jaar politieke en sociaal-culturele wetenschappen aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam*, ed. Anne Gevers (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1998), 78.

[66] Bert van Heerikhuizen, "Volg het spoor terug, beeld en betekenis van een plan," *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 1, no. 1 (1974): 81.

[67] Ibid., 80.

ridiculed by Marxist hardliners). Here, a unique coalition between a leftist, politically engaged philosophy and historical sociology grew for twelve years in the *vakgroep* of Philosophy and Social Sciences (Filosofie en Maatschappijwetenschappen) under Harmsen and Lolle Nauta, with the young radical (and future anti-Islam politician) Pim Fortuyn as its administrator. Prior to Harmsen's arrival at Groningen, a new form of "explanatory sociology" (*Verklarende Sociologie*) had emerged, a variation of rational choice theory that broke with the broad cultural-historical vision of P.J. Bouman, who had been the dominant professor from 1946 to 1967, and with the social-philosophical view of the German sociologist Helmuth Plessner, a professor from 1936 to 1951,[68] who had trained Nauta. Harmsen and the scholars of the new *vakgroep* challenged this explanatory sociology, which was defended by the German sociologists Siegwart Lindenberg and Reinhardt Wippler, who held a strict opposition of facts and values and between science and politics.[69] For this *vakgroep*, overcoming the splits that had dominated Dutch sociology for decades and reconnecting theory and praxis became the primary goal. The broader perspective of Groningen sociology allowed a natural fusion of critical and historical social science, with a kind of division of labor between Eliasian cultural history and Marxist economic history.[70] The contrast between the sociological schools that developed at the Universities of Amsterdam and Groningen suggests something of the ferment and fluidity of Dutch sociology after its expansion from a postwar science of planning.

Marxist theory itself was a contested theoretical field. In late 1971, Harmsen published a widely discussed article in *Te Elfder Ure* (At the eleventh hour) called "Against Workerism and Sociologism," criticizing the then-popular Marxist ideal of a homogeneous, conscious, and revolutionary proletariat into which the intellectuals could immediately enter. In fact there was no unified proletariat to be found. The problem was thus one of political organization, not social-economic questions, and the question of what impact intellectuals could have on the formation of political consciousness. Harmsen's answer was that the political and cultural realms have a relative autonomy, which formed a sphere in which it was the task of the intellectuals to develop the socialist consciousness that was lacking at the empirical level of the proletariat. "The struggle must also be waged on the fronts of culture and science [*wetenschap*]," he suggested.[71] This critique of orthodox Marxism's economic determinism, however, did not necessarily lead in the Hegelian direction of Critical Theory. As the 1970s progressed, the recognition of the relative autonomy of the political sphere led some Marxists to turn to the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas; Siep Stuurman's influential 1978 tome, *Kapitalisme en burgerlijke staat* (Capitalism and the bourgeois state), sought to bridge structuralism with aspects of German and Anglo-American versions of Marxism, arguing that the autonomous power of the state from the economy could be utilized by the worker's movement.[72] Despite Harmsen's warnings against a simplistic conception of class oppositions, some of the younger Marxists took up these variants of French Marxism, which were debated in *Te Elfder Ure* and *Recht en kritiek* (Law and critique) as "a way to engage in class conflict on the level of theory," in Althusser's

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[68] J. Sperna Weiland, "Helmuth Plessner," in *De denkers: Een intellectuele biografie van de twintigste eeuw*, ed. Hans Achterhuis et al. (Amsterdam and Antwerp: Uitgeverij Contact, 1999), 236.

[69] Pels, *De geest van Pim,* 80.

[70] Ibid., 82.

[71] This quotation and summary of Harmsen's article are from ibid., 73.

[72] Ibid., 84. Siep Stuurman, *Kapitalisme en burgerlijke staat: Een inleiding in de marxistische politieke theorie* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1978).

words.[73] As we shall see in the next chapter, this notion maintained considerable currency until the early 1980s. In the 1970s, however, the reflexive critique of Marxism announced by Harmsen was also taken up in a promising new direction.

The Pragmatic Reception of Habermas

For a less militant group of younger scholars at the University of Amsterdam in the 1970s, the answers to the problems of late capitalist society were to be found not in Paris but in Frankfurt and Starnberg, where Habermas had become director of the Max Planck Institute after his association with the Institute of Social Research. It is perhaps difficult, particularly for readers of Habermas's mature theory, to imagine a group of young intellectuals reading his work undergoing the kind of conversion experiences that are so abundant in European intellectual history. One thinks of such famous instances as the Hegelians of the late 1810s and 1820s,[74] or the many students who flocked to Freiburg after Martin Heidegger published *Being and Time* in 1927 to witness, in Hannah Arendt's famous phrase, the emergence of this "hidden king" who struck out against the dominant forms of academic philosophy.[75] Although the young Habermas himself was drawn to Heidegger's thought, whose influence was still visible in the former's 1956 dissertation on the philosophy of Schelling at the University of Bonn, his disillusionment with Heidegger's postwar failure to comment on, let alone apologize for, his earlier defense of the "inner greatness of National Socialism" occasioned a fundamental break with the archaic pathos of Heidegger and the tradition of conservative *Kulturkritik* more generally.[76] All of his subsequent work, beginning with his *Habilitationsschrift*, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1961), was marked formally and substantively by an allegiance to the Enlightenment ideals of rational argumentation and linguistic clarity, also in great contrast to the rhetorical style and paratactic, essayistic form favored by Adorno. Indeed, despite his politically radical Marxism during his assistantship at the Institute of Social Research between 1956 and 1961, Habermas's mature work displays an exhaustive and even cautious scholarly quality that is densely analytical and eminently unquotable. In short, his emphasis on rational communication and the ideal of consensus is hardly the stuff of radical fervor. Nonetheless, a kind of intellectual conversion is precisely what happened for a significant number of scholars in the Netherlands. As Habermas had correctly claimed, 1968 would not be a revolutionary moment; instead, his evolving theory conceptualized an alternative with both intellectual and political potential for actualizing an emancipated, rational society from within.

For the central figures of the Dutch reception of Habermas, the student movement and the moment of 1968-1969 were indeed formative, but already in those years, the dogmatism of revolutionary Marxism was apparent to those of a more scholarly than activist bent. Marx and Engels's work, for all its subsequent historical failures, remained a normatively rich tradition, but

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[73] Pels, *De geest van Pim*, 83-84.

[74] John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), esp. chap. 5.

[75] See Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[76] Habermas's first publication as a student was "Mit Heidegger gegen Heidegger denken," published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (July 25, 1953), which drew the favorable attention of Adorno. On Habermas's break with Heidegger's thought, see Specter, *Habermas*, 10.

the methodological rigidity of Dialectical Materialism and the general air of anti-intellectualism of the various Marxist activists was evident to those who took philosophical questions seriously. On the other hand, the predominant analytical and positivist tendencies within the methodological discussions of the social sciences displayed an agnosticism toward normative questions that still corresponded too closely to the technocratic institutions to which they had traditionally contributed. What Habermas's thought offered, then, was a methodologically rigorous model for thematizing normative questions, and further, for interpreting how the rational discussion of such questions in the realm of symbolic interaction—what he called the "rationalization of the lifeworld"—could generate socially responsive institutional and political structures.

One of the great strengths of Habermas's work was its critical appropriation of insights from classical theorists and contemporary interlocutors and opponents. Although he refined and defended his theory through each encounter, sometimes polemically, this dialogical approach appealed to younger Marxists seeking to keep abreast of wider theoretical debates. The study of these alternative figures thus accompanied the reception of Habermas, even as the latter was often favored, along with Habermas's German colleagues. In November 1975, Jan Baars organized a major conference on "Theory and Praxis in Sociological Theory" at the Free University of Amsterdam, which offered the first major introduction of the systems theorist Niklas Luhmann to the Netherlands. Also attending were the "second generation" Critical Theorists Alfred Schmidt and Claus Offe, the phenomenological sociologist Thomas Luckmann, and Alvin Gouldner. Baars had taught a year-long course on their writings and viewed the events and congress report as a much needed corrective to the limitations of the Dutch literature on these topics.[77] He located the origins of this problem in the "scienticization" (*verwetenschappelijking*) of society itself: through techniques of policy and planning, science became the legitimating and regulating force of all social processes. Because sociology is itself a "moment" of its object of study, it had to be understood as contributing to this tendency, thus necessitating critical reflection on its own social significance and relation to praxis. Sociology's positivist tendencies could be corrected not by subordinating it to philosophy, but by using modern philosophy as a resource for grounding critically its theories and methods.[78] On the other hand, sociology could be understood as a form of self-analysis of society with practical consequences, necessitating a consideration of the theory-praxis relation as a theoretical problem.

> In the Dutch sociological tradition, theory and the reflection on its points of departure and foundations have never received the attention they deserve. Most theories are taken up from other countries in rather unmediated ways. Heated discussions, such as the German "Positivism" debate and the now contemporary Habermas-Luhmann discussion, often stand far from the concerns of the Dutch sociologist. Dutch sociology is in fact to a large degree integrated into social life, in comparison with sociology in other countries. In this sense one can state that where its praxis is concerned it is well developed, but it is theoretically very immature.[79]

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[77] Jan Baars ed., "Teorie-praxis in de sociologiese teorie: Kongress map" (Amsterdam: Afdeling Teoreties-Wijsgerige Sociologie, Subfakulteit Sociologie, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1975), 1.

[78] Ibid., 7.

[79] Ibid., 9.

Luckmann, who spoke on the first day under the title of "Phenomenology and Sociology," was taken to emphasize the subjective moment of the theory-praxis relation in the realm of concrete experience and language. Baars's preferences were rather plain: the second day would seem to be something of a "corrective" to this "fixation" on the subjective moment, with Alfred Schmidt emphasizing a dialectical relationship between subject and structure and introducing a Marxist approach to themes such as labor, history, nature, human needs, and social violence.[80] The third day was to bring the previous phenomenologically- and Marxist-inspired approaches to sociology into relief, pitting Luhmann against Claus Offe on the position of systems theory in sociology. To the extent that Baars's critique of Dutch sociology remained true, then, younger scholars were soon absorbing new theoretical approaches at the forefront of contemporary international debates.

Thus by the time the German Positivist Dispute was reenacted by Dutch sociologists in the 1970s, some scholars cautioned against hypostatizing the opposition, for some theoretical approaches claiming to be "critical" failed to be reflexive about Marxism's own normative foundations. In the introduction to his first edited book, *Wetenschap en ideologiekritiek* (Science and ideology critique, 1978), Harry Kunneman, soon a leading figure in the reception of Habermas, suggested that despite the real differences between Positivism and Marxism, it was only in their exaggerated versions that they were fully incompatible.[81] In fact, insofar as they both claimed to be scientific, the former on the basis of its value-neutrality and the latter on its putative foundation in objective historical developments, they became vehicles for repression, by exclusively privileging scientific knowledge: "Scienticity itself becomes an ideology, where science comes to function as the *exclusive* path toward the true and the good."[82] This did not mean, however, that science was inextricably bound up in the instrumental domination of nature. Indeed, one of Habermas's major departures from early Critical Theory was his more positive and differentiated conception of science. "Science as a productive force can work in a salutary way when it is suffused by science as an emancipatory force, to the same extent that it becomes disastrous as soon as it seeks to subject the domain of praxis, which is outside the sphere of technical disposition, to its *exclusive* control."[83] Instead, Habermas and his Dutch interpreters sought to build a more reflexive approach within the sciences.

Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism appeared to be a solution to the problems of Marxist social science. Having observed some of the deficiencies of the "scientific Marxism" of their peers in the late 1960s, Kunneman and a similarly-minded cohort of younger scholars absorbed Habermas's work in its evolution towards its mature form in the *Theory of Communicative Action*. Together with Michiel Korthals, who had also studied philosophy at the University of Amsterdam, Kunneman founded the Werkgroep Kritische Theorie (Critical Theory Workgroup) in 1978, an inter-university group that grew to nearly thirty members and remained active collectively until the end of the 1980s. Soliciting both well-established professors and younger, unhabilitated instructors (that is, doctoral graduates having yet to publish a second major work analogous to a German *Habilitationsschrift*) for membership, their initial aim was to

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[80] Ibid., 11.

[81] Harry Kunneman, ed., *Wetenschap en ideologiekritiek* (Meppel and Amsterdam: Boom, 1978), 9.

[82] Ibid., 17. Emphasis added.

[83] Jürgen Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision: On Theory and Praxis in Our Scientific Civilization," in *Theory and Praxis*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 281.

create an inventory of research and pedagogy concerned with Critical Theory and to assess the prospects for the national coordination of future research projects.[84] There were roughly twenty participants for the first meeting, who by 1979 constituted three research subgroups: anthropology and social theory; foundations of social science; and science, technology, and society. A secretary for each subgroup would be responsible for reporting on its discussions and activities to the rest of the collective group prior to a national meeting.[85] Regular subgroup meetings were held to discuss specific articles written by either the group's members or by Critical Theorists. The geographical density of the Dutch universities facilitated centralized meetings of scholars from across the country, often held in Amsterdam and Utrecht, in more frequent intervals than would be possible through organizing formal conferences. The more informal structure also made their research on Critical Theory a more collaborative effort.

Drawing on the related debates surrounding the work of Thomas Kuhn and the philosophy of science that had rendered traditional conceptions of truth untenable, the members of the Werkgroep took seriously Habermas's charge that only a form of knowledge capable of reflecting rationally upon its own methodology could have an emancipatory effect on society. In their co-authored book *Arbeid en interaktie* (Labor and interaction, 1979), one of the Critical Theory Workgroup's first publications, Korthals and Kunneman pointed out several limitations of Marxism along lines that were similar to those criticized by other Western Marxists, closely following on the heels of Habermas.[86] First, Marx's predictions about capitalism's collapse through the internal contradictions of its own productive forces continued to prove doubtful.[87] Second, with the economic upturn in capitalist countries since World War II, the proletariat was undergoing '*verburgerlijking*,' that is, becoming increasingly integrated into the status quo, protesting only on the basis of direct material misery with an aim for immediate gains (*AI*, 10-11). Moreover, many of the pressing contemporary issues did not fit into traditional Marxist theory, including the women's movement, the democratization of education, the humanization of physical and mental healthcare, and nuclear proliferation, all of which successfully galvanized citizens outside of the mechanisms of class struggle, and which Marxism had largely ignored. Third, insofar as the Eastern bloc could not be wholly separated from Marx's vision, the elementary markings of a free society were clearly lacking (*AI*, 11-12). Finally, Marxism's scientific pretensions masked its normative assumptions, when in fact they could be rationally evaluated and defended (*AI*, 12-13). Nonetheless, Korthals and Kunneman defended the value of the Marxist tradition for the pursuit of a free society, which "more than some other starting points indeed serves to reach these aims, despite the major problems against which—as demonstrated—Marxism must currently fight" (*AI*, 14). Habermas's critique of the foundations of Marxism and the introduction of the concept of "interaction" next to Marx's central concept of "labor" could be used to locate the positive dynamic in the evolution of modern societies.[88]

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[84] Undated letter from 1978, personal collection of Michiel Korthals.

[85] Letter from Harry Kunneman to Werkgroep Kritische Theorie, 16 November 1978. Personal collection of Michiel Korthals.

[86] For the impact of historical events on the transformations of Western Marxism over the course of the twentieth century, see Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

[87] Michiel Korthals and Harry Kunneman, *Arbeid en interaktie* (Muiderberg: Dick Continho, 1979), 9-10. Hereafter cited as *AI* in the text.

[88] These terms might be considered the germs of the theory of communicative action. Specter, *Habermas*, 123.

Korthals and Kunneman considered Althusser's structuralist Marxism as another possibility, but unlike their colleagues in Groningen, they quickly dismissed this option as merely an attempt to shift concepts around within Marx's existing system; Althusser had tried to resolve the tension between its cognitive and normative status through a kind of decisionism, which was rationally inadequate (*AI*, 14, 191). Habermas's work, in contrast, was "an entirely new way" (*AI*, 14).

Arbeid en interaktie was structured as an immanent critique of Marx and Habermas, with particular emphasis placed on Habermas's work after the Positivist Dispute. Korthals and Kunneman began with a detailed, systematic explication and critique of Marx's theory and concepts: historical materialism, the base/superstructure model, capitalist accumulation and crisis, class conflict and revolution, and finally the dialectical method and his conception of knowledge (*wetenschapsbegrip*). The main lacunae they identified were twofold: first, Marx failed to provide an explanation for the normative and philosophical starting points of scientific research, leaving no rational basis upon which to challenge the social misery he diagnosed (*AI*, 50-51). Second, he had hardly considered the problems tied to the verification of the results of his research, despite his materialist emphasis on empirical grounding at the level of relations of production (*AI*, 51). Ultimately, these absences left Marx's theory, with "labor" as its central category, unable to ground the bases of potential resistance. Only with the additional dimension of "interaction," in which norms could be rationally clarified and thus guide human action, could the progress toward a free society be grounded.

Here Korthals and Kunneman drew on Habermas's early essays on advanced capitalism and politics, including *Theory and Practice, Legitimation Crisis,* and especially "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'"[89] which warrants a detailed account here as an introduction to a number of the themes upon which the two authors drew. This essay was framed as a revision of Marcuse's critique of technological rationalization, which had proposed an alternative, "fraternal" relation to nature in the form of a "liberating mastery" of a "New Science," rather than its existing form as instrumental domination—a redemptive impulse that Habermas also detected in Schelling, Marx, Bloch, and the "secret hopes" of Benjamin, Horkheimer, and Adorno (TSI, 85-88). The less utopian Habermas was skeptical of this possibility on the grounds that the technology required to sustain the forces of production necessarily corresponded to what Weber had called purposive-rational (*zweckrationale*) action: "Technological development…follows a logic that corresponds to the structure of purposive-rational action regulated by its own results, which is in fact the structure of *labor*" (TSI, 87). In the place of what Weber called "rationalization" as the general historical process of the expansion of purposive-rational action, governed by strategically calculable rules, Habermas labeled this category "labor" and opposed it to "interaction" (TSI, 91). Interaction was communicative and symbolic; it was "governed by binding *consensual norms*, which define reciprocal expectations about behavior and which must be understood and recognized by at least two acting subjects" (TSI, 91-92). In this sphere, social norms were internalized to motivate appropriate behavior, and the ethical evaluation of existing norms in the communicative framework constituted a crucial social activity. Using these distinctions, Habermas reformulated the transition from traditional to modern societies based on the politically legitimizing function of the system of social labor under liberal capitalism, in which the apparent rationality of the market and the principle of exchange *themselves* provided the justification for the political system (TSI, 97). But whereas

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[89] Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" in *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 81-122. Hereafter cited as TSI in the text.

Marx had correctly diagnosed this ideology of just exchange as the object of emancipatory critique, in advanced capitalism, the cycles of economic crisis had prompted "an increase in state intervention in order to secure the system's stability, and a growing interdependence of research and technology, which has turned the sciences into the leading productive force" (TSI, 100).

Marcuse's key insight had been to recognize the novelty of this new function of technology, which undermined Marx's labor theory of value, and its role in legitimating political power (TSI 100-101). With the collapse of the ideology of just exchange due to market dysfunctions, a "substitute program" of minimal social welfare emerged in order to ensure mass loyalty. The sphere of politics became a negative space: "it is oriented toward the elimination of dysfunctions and the avoidance of risks that threaten the system: not, in other words, toward the *realization of practical goals* but toward the *solution of technical problems*" (TSI, 102-103). The new ideology of the "immanent law" of scientific-technical progress, in which the development of science seems to produce objective requirements, effaced the distinction between work and action and depoliticized the masses into mere "adaptation" to progress (TSI, 105-106). Habermas drew a link between "technocratic consciousness" and "positivist" ways of thinking that eliminated ethical and practical questions from the concerns of politics (TSI, 112-13). As an alternative, he concluded by differentiating Weber's concept of "rationalization" into two levels: first, the subsystems of purposive-rational action, and second, the realm of social norms, a level that needed to be preserved from the first in order for the development of productive forces to have a liberating potential: "*Rationalization at the level of the institutional framework* can occur only in the medium of symbolic interaction itself, that is, through *removing restrictions on communication*" (TSI, 118). For Habermas, the only potential for "liberation" was the active effort to create a sphere of communication free from domination and remove the structural blockages to intersubjective interaction, which was constantly under threat from the horizontal expansion of systems of calculation.

For Korthals and Kunneman, this early formulation of the theory of communicative action provided the foundation for a solution to the problems left unnoticed in Marx. Whereas Marx based his normative theory on an un-argued conception of human nature, Habermas gave an explicit argument for normative foundations of critical theory, based on the anticipation of the ideal speech situation. Furthermore, his reconstruction of historical materialism as a way to diagnose crises of legitimation in advanced capitalism would be crucial for understanding the Dutch political-economic system, in which state intervention in the avoidance of market disfunctions worked very smoothly. As Thomas McCarthy notes, Habermas's renewed focus on economics, largely neglected in the first generation's general turn away from economic to cultural problems, arguably restored analytical balance to Critical Theory: "In the final analysis, the early Frankfurt School did not so much integrate the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions into Marxist political-economic thought as replace the latter with the former."[90] Habermas's analysis in *Legitimation Crisis*, carried out in a continuing debate with the systems theorist Niklas Luhmann, defies easy summary, but a few points are worth noting. In the sociological analysis of social systems in general, he argued, "The level of development of a society is determined by the institutionally permitted learning capacity, in particular by whether theoretical-technical and practical questions are differentiated, and whether discursive learning

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[90] Thomas McCarthy, introduction to Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis,* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), xxi. See also Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978).

processes can take place."[91] Learning, he claimed, was built into the mechanism of human evolution, but the question was whether "reflexive learning" was allowed to occur. As he framed the distinction,

> *Non-reflexive learning* takes place in action contexts in which implicitly raised theoretical and practical validity claims are naively taken for granted and accepted or rejected without discursive consideration. *Reflexive learning* takes place through discourses in which we thematize practical validity claims that have become problematic or have been rendered problematic through institutionalized doubt, and redeem or dismiss them on the basis of arguments.[92]

From an anthropological perspective, one could define the relations and transitions between "primitive," traditional, and modern societies—and the defects of liberal and advanced capitalist societies—according to the level of institutionalization of reflexive learning. The task of Critical Theory at the practical level was thus to nourish these reflexive learning processes:

> the advocacy role of the critical theory of society would consist in ascertaining generalizable, though nevertheless suppressed, interests in a representatively simulated discourse between groups that are differentiated (or could be non-arbitrarily differentiated) from one another by articulated, or at least virtual, opposition of interests.[93]

This form of advocacy was a critical advantage of Habermas's work, in Korthals and Kunneman's view, because in the absence of traditional metaphysical foundations, the adequacy of Habermas's theory could be verified at the empirical level, through its practical impact. This social role, however, was inadequate as merely a theoretical ideal. In their reading of the conception of reflexive learning processes, the stakes were tacitly raised; if the ideal lacked actualization, its own validity would be threatened:

> The verdict on the validity of communicative ethics that can be derived from the theory of communicative action is not ultimately reserved for critical theorists or the scholarly community. To be sure, the cognitive merits are tested in theoretical discussions within the scholarly community, but the truth of critical theories and the validity of their normative foundation are ultimately secured through those who are able to bring consciousness [*bewustwording*] into existence (*AI*, 192).

Thus the social meaning of critical theories was their ability to allow practical learning processes and make visible the blockages of communication and the structural forces of power relations (*AI*, 192). In their reading, the practical value of Habermas's theory—which they positively affirmed—was thus dependent on its empirical realization, not merely its formal validity as a counterfactual ideal.

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[91] Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis,* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), 8.
[92] Ibid., 15.
[93] Ibid., 117.

Like Habermas, Kunneman and Korthals looked to the new social movements involved in socially critical activities and demonstrating a critical consciousness through their own learning processes as a way to test the positive meaning of Habermas's ideas. Feminism provided their first example, an issue for which Habermas's relative inattention has earned criticism.[94] Not only did feminists look to injustices in the economy and the family, they also rationally criticized the interpretation of feminine "character" in the search for non-traditional identities:

> These power relations are maintained not primarily through brute force, but rather through the structural force that is concealed in the definition of 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles: the content of these roles is reduced to the 'nature' of men relative to women, or to another final foundation that structurally cannot be presented for discussion (*AI*, 184).

The modern feminist movement had managed to break through the communication blockage surrounding gender definitions and to reveal these impeding structural forces to the light of critical discussion in the symbolic realm. Again, the movement's meaning for the validity of Critical Theory was determined through its success in altering the institutional framework: "Through the women's movement the principle of power-free practical discussions for the determination of the justice of norms, where possible, is exacted from the institutional level" (*AI*, 185). Moreover, as part of an evolutionary step in the rationalization of norms, this movement had a broader social significance for the neutralization of hierarchical power relations in general. Similar claims were made for environmentalism, healthcare reform, and university democratization, all of which could be cited as empirical evidence of the emancipatory potential of Habermas's reformulation of Critical Theory. In each of these cases, Korthals and Kunneman placed a somewhat optimistic emphasis on the rational and cooperative capacities of the social movements, as opposed to the oppositional and exclusionary identity politics that developed in other contexts.

This judgment, moreover, was not without justification, particularly in the Dutch context. At the height of the long 1970s, as we have seen, these new social movements indeed appeared to thematize new issues for political resistance in ways that were persuasive in the larger political sphere. In significant ways, the conviction that precipitated these scholars' conversions to Habermasian Critical Theory, namely that the horizontal expansion of rational communication would actualize fundamental social change, had a discernable, empirical basis.[95] All that was required, it seemed at the time, was to spread Habermas's insights and to elucidate and defend the channels of communication already operative in the lifeworld. The learning processes that seemed to characterize the long 1970s indeed demonstrate the considerable virtues of such an interpretive framework. Whether similar processes were occurring elsewhere, however, is another matter.

While the scholarship of the Werkgroep was meticulous, the particular register in which the Dutch reception of Habermas occurred was discernable through the lens of an important (partial) outsider. Willem van Reijen, the Dutch-born philosopher who had studied at Leuven

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[94] See the collection Johanna Meehan, ed., *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[95] In conversation, Kunneman emphasized the sense of intellectual conversion and empirical possibility in the Netherlands. Harry Kunneman, interview by author, Culemborg, the Netherlands, February 25, 2008.

and Freiburg, was a crucial mediator between Dutch scholars and the German Critical Theorists. After studying Greek, Latin, philosophy, and other subjects at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium, van Reijen continued his studies at the University of Freiburg, where Heidegger's philosophy remained preeminent. He participated in one of Heidegger's seminars in 1965 and wrote his doctoral thesis in philosophy on Kant and Heidegger and the question of finitude.[96] Continuing as an *Assistent* at Stuttgart and Heidelberg, he became radicalized during the events of the late 1960s, participating in protests and Marxist study groups, which led him away from Heidegger and towards Critical Theory. This political activity eventually prompted the Education Minister of Baden-Württemberg to deny him a professorship following his *Habilitationsschrift* at Stuttgart in 1975. Van Reijen then returned to the Netherlands and joined the philosophy faculty at the University of Utrecht, by then an esteemed and rather conservative faculty, where he taught courses in social philosophy that were then in demand among students.[97] Years later van Reijen would return both to Heidegger's thought and to Freiburg, where he became an honorary professor, but during his career at Utrecht he became an important scholar of the early Frankfurt School and an ally of Habermas. In addition to writing numerous studies and introductory works, he helped to organize conferences that brought many of these younger Dutch social philosophers together with German figures, such as a 1981 Amsterdam conference on rational action and social theory and the granting of an honorary doctorate to Habermas at the University of Utrecht in 1990.[98]

Having had his formative intellectual and political experiences in Germany, van Reijen offers a distinctive perspective on the reception of Critical Theory in his native Netherlands. Significantly, the less combative style of political disputation often translated into a less politicized form of philosophical exchange than in Germany. In Germany, by contrast, in the context of the *Berufsverbot*, scholarship on the Frankfurt School was "often the medium in which to produce clarity as much about the political situation before and during fascism as about the contemporary points of departure and philosophy's possibilities for influence."[99] The more contentious political situation in the Federal Republic could be felt in intellectual disputes, which often had an almost Schmittian friend-foe quality.[100] Clearly, the unfinished project of Germany's *Westbindung* raised the political stakes over debates in social theory, whereas for many in the Netherlands, the self-evidence of democracy was so overwhelming that the polemical, and significantly, counterfactual qualities of Habermas's ideal of rational consensus were sometimes, if not overlooked, underestimated.[101]

The affinity between the Dutch political culture of pragmatic discussion and Habermas's social theory—a loose, "elective affinity," to be sure, but one that was apparent to observers such

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[96] Willem Lodewijk van Reijen, *Verstehen der Endlichkeit: Historische und systematische Untersuchungen zu einem Problem der Tranzendentalphilosophie* (PhD diss., Freiburg im Breisgau, 1967).

[97] This biographical information is from Willem van Reijen, interview by author, Utrecht, January 10, 2008.

[98] Willem van Reijen and Karl-Otto Apel, eds., *Rationales Handeln und Gesellschaftstheorie* (Bochum: Germinal Verlag, 1984); Willem van Reijen, ed., *Habermas Leidraad* (Utrecht: Reproductie-Afdeling Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen, 1990).

[99] Willem van Reijen, "Oriëntatie: Sociale en politieke filosofie in de Bondsrepubliek Duitsland," *Wijsgerig Perspectief* 22 (1982/3): 91.

[100] Van Reijen, interview.

[101] Ibid. As Matthew G. Specter convincingly demonstrates, this political concern is a red thread that links Habermas's theoretical work and political interventions as a public intellectual. Specter, *Habermas*, 1-2.

as van Reijen[102]—explains in part the predominance of Habermas within the Dutch reception of Critical Theory. As Jan Baars, who had also become a Werkgroep member, noted in his 1987 philosophy dissertation on Horkheimer and Adorno, Dutch scholars seemed to have largely overlooked Critical Theory in its original formulations.[103] Indeed, the immanent critique in Korthals and Kunneman's *Arbeid en interaktie* quickly transitioned from Marx to Habermas, with only a two-page discussion of Horkheimer and Adorno, in which they claimed that the latter's analysis had remained beholden to Marx's concepts in the critique of political economy. As such, two of the problems they identified, that of the inherent link between the domination of nature and of humans in the process of rationalization, and the culture industry's disruption of any possible proletarian consciousness, could not be solved without being fused with concepts from non-Marxist theories, for which they credited only Habermas, apparently overlooking the considerable degree to which the first generation had integrated Marxism with aspects of Nietzsche, Freud, and Weber (*AI*, 73-75). Starting in the late 1980s, perhaps with an impetus from the approaching fortieth anniversary of the publishing of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in Amsterdam in 1947 and the growth of new studies in Germany and the United States,[104] the first generation of the school received a revived interest, generating a number of interesting commentaries. However, this early reception appears to be partially predetermined by Habermas's criticisms of Horkheimer and Adorno.

Baars's book explored the redemptive motifs in Horkheimer and Adorno's work, which he connected, especially in Adorno's case, to Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history. He began with the familiar assertion of the ideas' present-day relevance: Ronald Reagan's Star Wars program was given as an example of a totalizing instrumental rationality.[105] But while he found value in the motif of non-oppressive relations in Adorno's later aesthetics for contemporary theories of intersubjectivity, Baars argued that Horkheimer and Adorno brought a "myth of total domination" back to Germany after the war, with the result that their own social critique ultimately came to a dead end. This limitation was caused by a Nietzschean identification of identity thinking with the will to power, an aspect that had been perhaps over-emphasized in the reception of their work. But while he sought to highlight some of the more productive tensions in Adorno's thought, he concluded that Habermas had supplied the necessary solution to the overly messianic quality of the Frankfurt School's hopes:

> A negative practical consequence from this standpoint could be that the transformation of the world is conceived as (and thereby left to) the totally other, which as an until-now hidden superior being, would hopefully [quoting Horkheimer] "provide for resistance to injustice…." The finite subject exists in the dualism as a blind and helpless solitary individual versus a totally-other transcendence. Thus finitude inevitably means desolation and the end of any intersubjectivity that could be something more than manipulation. It is

[102] Van Reijen, Jan Baars, and Bert van den Brink (the latter two interviewed on February 8, 2008, Utrecht) all spoke about the affinity of Habermas's system to the Dutch context.

[103] Jan Baars, *De mythe van de totale beheersing: Adorno, Horkheimer en de dialektiek van de vooruitgang* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUA, 1987), 16.

[104] Martin Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination* appeared in Dutch in 1977 as *De dialektische verbeelding: Een geschiedenis van de Frankfurter Schule en het Institut für Sozialforschung*, trans. Chris Kooyman (Baarn: Ambo, 1977).

[105] Baars, *De mythe van de totale beheersing*, 10.

the great contribution of Habermas that he recognized these dangers and started in a new direction.[106]

As one of the major studies of Horkheimer and Adorno in this period, Baars's work buttressed the reception of Habermas as an "actual" or applicable model for social analysis. This is not to say that Baars fully accepted Habermas's critique of his predecessors. In a recent essay, Baars challenged Habermas's reading of Adorno's concept of reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) in the former's *Theory of Communicative Action* as a stunted prefiguration of his communicative notion of intersubjectivity, going so far as to characterize Habermas's appropriation as "a peculiar form of strategic action."[107] Nonetheless, Baars's earlier assessment was representative of the widespread judgment at the time that the early Frankfurt School's work was a dead end—aesthetically suggestive but incapable of recognizing, let alone supporting, the learning processes that were evident in society.

Unlike the widespread popularity (and notoriety) of Marcuse and other figures of the early Frankfurt School at the height of the protest movements of the late 1960s, the intensive reception of Habermas in the 1970s occurred primarily within an academic context. Yet as with the late 1960s, we can here identify a broader, diffuse form of public influence. Programs in "Science and Society" (*Wetenschap en Samenleving*) that began in the 1970s throughout the universities, which drew heavily on Habermas, popularized the idea of the social responsibility of the scientist and the ethical dimensions of scientific innovation, concerns that would later be formalized in government-sponsored institutions such as the Rathenau Institute and the Society for Genomics.[108] As former radicals made their "long march through the institutions," younger members of the professions—law, medicine, psychiatry, and especially social work—absorbed the democratic ethos of the 1960s and 1970s into their professional self-formations and their approach to client relations. This "democratization" of professional relations of authority began in a variety of alternative professional practices and collectives such as free "law shops" in the late 1960s, mirroring the pattern of generational hostility and subsequent acceptance within the university reform movements.[109] These groups often had militant roots, and the involvement of figures such as Michel Foucault in the anti-psychiatry movement were of greater initial importance than Critical Theory. But as the challenge of democratization stabilized, Habermas's fundamental idea of discourse free from domination became an important principle for large numbers of professionals. This not only mirrored the sense of growing rationalization of society at large through the institutional and political expansion of public discourse; moreover, the possibility of egalitarian communication within the professional-client relationship was further understood as anticipating a future, more deliberative democracy.[110] This impulse in the professions points not only to the lasting impact of the cultural shifts of the 1960s[111] but also to the particularly discursive and rational "key" of Dutch politics, broadly defined, in the 1970s.

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[106] Ibid., 254.

[107] Jan Baars, "The Anamnesis of the Non-identical in Adorno's Negative Dialectics," in *De omheining doorbroken: Economie en filosofie in beweging*, ed. Johan Graafland and Frans van Peperstraten (Budel: Uitgeverij DAMON, 2004), 129.

[108] Michiel Korthals, interview by author, Bussum, the Netherlands, December 20, 2007.

[109] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 370.

[110] Kunneman, interview.

[111] Schuyt and Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare*, 371.

While the historians Kees Schuyt and Ed Taverne are therefore correct to identify an underlying continuity between the tradition of political consultation through centuries of Dutch life—the so-called "polder model"—and the post-1960s expectation of democratic *zeggenschap*, one should not underestimate the sweeping change between the former model of elite consensus and the new, horizontal model of participation. The affinity between the sense of democratic, progressive possibility in Dutch society and the notion articulated throughout Habermas's work that essential social and political questions must be open and subject to critical debate does much to explain the academic and professional reception of his work in the Netherlands. The rationalization of the lifeworld that appeared to be embodied by the new social movements in the 1970s and the sense that the expansion of debate and dialogue could continue to guide social change seemed to promise the actualization of a more rational society. The critique of Habermas leveled by Lolle Nauta, to whom we shall now turn, pivoted upon precisely this promise.

Lolle Nauta and the Critique of Dialectics

As we saw in the previous chapter, Lolle Nauta was an enthusiastic early reader of the Frankfurt School who became increasingly critical of their work, especially the more romantic and totalizing claims of Marcuse in the late 1960s. As late as the early 1970s, however, Nauta was still engaging sympathetically with their ideas while drawing on other figures such as Norbert Elias and his former mentor Helmuth Plessner. Taking up the philosophical-anthropological question of the malleability (*veranderbaarheid*) of the human being, for example, he referenced Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in describing the historicity of human existence, which, in his view, was presently characterized by some form of oppression for the majority of the global population.[112] To be oppressed, in the classical Kantian language of autonomy, was to be deprived of the capacity to assume responsibility for one's own existence; yet those who deprived others of their autonomy were all too willing to blame the victims for their own oppression. Antisemitism was a key example, for which Nauta implicitly drew on Horkheimer and Adorno's chapter on "Elements of Anti-Semitism": having been excluded from economic guilds for centuries in Europe and dependent on princely favor, the Jews were compelled to pursue money-lending and trade in order to survive and were then attacked by anti-Semites on the basis of their allegedly "cunning nature."[113] In the postwar global economic order, this blaming mechanism most often took the form of a powerful elite controlling the forces of production, most especially science and technology, while invoking the classical liberal fiction of equal individual opportunity to blame the oppressed for their failures of responsibility. Nauta concluded that this inequality reflected the dominant ideology of progress:

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[112] L. W. Nauta, "Wijsgerige inleiding," in L. W. Nauta et al., *De veranderbaarheid van de mens* (Kampen: Uitgeversmij J. H. Kok, 1973), 10.

[113] Ibid. "Having helped as merchants to disseminate Roman civilization throughout Gentile Europe, they became, in keeping with their patriarchal religion, representatives of urban, civic, and finally industrial conditions. As bearers of capitalist modes of existence from country to country they earned the hatred of those who suffered under that system…. Trade was not [the Jew's] vocation, it was his fate." Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 143-44.

It could well be that whenever it appears to us that our ideals have been realized, we have in fact changed much less than we think…. Progress often appears greater than it is in reality…. The passage to the order of the day can be named as something terrible, because this order, upon closer inspection, is not much more than a kind of chaos.[114]

Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Nauta pointed to the underlying, fundamental irrationality of modern societies dominated by instrumental rationality at the control of the few.

Yet for Nauta, the historicity of human existence and the predominance of oppression were embedded in a more positive dialectic, which he described as an historical "dialectic of globalization and individualization." To be sure, one needed to be sensitive to the costs and potential risks of this dialectic, namely, the domination of nature at the heart of science and technology, which was a central motif of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. But Nauta was fundamentally unconvinced by the thesis of enlightenment as a dialectic of progress and regression. To the contrary, if rationally mobilized for the purpose of developing human autonomy, which he suggested was a possibility immanent within modern, complex societies, these scientific developments could result in genuine human *maakbaarheid* or "makeability."[115] This possibility, in turn, opened the question of the rationality of social norms, which were not fixed ideals but rather "possibilities to be actualized" (*te verwerkelijken*).[116] Reiterating his critique of Marcuse's totalizing view of society's manipulative one-dimensionality, Nauta argued that scientific and technical progress, despite being dominated by the powerful elite, also provided the concrete means for a democratization of the possibilities for individual development. To maintain otherwise, he argued with a jab at Adorno as well, was to risk an elitist philosophy of culture that mirrored and ultimately affirmed the cultural prerogatives of the few.[117] By contrast, Nauta posited a counterfactual ideal of "individual plurality," in which processes of rationalization would not be experienced as external, historically transcendent (*boven-historisch*) forces, but rather as offering a deliberate choice of social ends to be pursued or rejected, to which the individual subject could consciously form an ethical position within the larger collective.[118] In short, despite the forms of oppression that had hitherto governed the history of rationalization, the present state of scientific-technological development offered the possibility of rationally determining and pursuing individual and collective social goals and norms.

Given this critique of the Frankfurt School's theory of mass society and his more positive view of the potentials of modernity, it is not surprising that Nauta was to some degree drawn to the work of Habermas, by way of the Dutch debate over the Positivist Dispute. In the Netherlands, the question of value-neutrality had been given new life in the aftermath of the student movement when the higher education administration's attempted to minimize its reform concessions of 1970 by claiming that students sought radically to politicize science, necessitating more centralized control.[119] Nauta cautioned that while these charges were exaggerated, the more

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[114] Nauta, "Wijgerige inleiding," 19-20.

[115] Ibid., 18-19.

[116] Ibid., 19.

[117] Ibid., 18.

[118] Ibid., 17-18.

[119] L. W. Nauta, "Wetenschap en waardevrijheid," in *Argumenten voor een kritische ethiek* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1971), 108.

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revolutionary students' subordination of science to ideology risked giving credence to these charges.[120] Indeed, at the confessional universities, especially Tilburg, Nijmegen, and the Free University of Amsterdam, the long tradition of theologically-infused, anti-positivistic philosophy seemed to facilitate the absorption of heavily Marxist, normatively politicized science, which troubled the outspokenly secular Nauta.[121] Seeking to establish a more balanced viewpoint, he argued that it was wrong to assume that the defense of value-neutrality was intrinsically conservative, as the counterexamples of the leftist logical positivists Moritz Schlick and Otto Neurath illustrated. However, as the students correctly charged, the real issue was the specific form of cooperation between science and politics, which could be a productive, critical relationship, or a subservient collusion with the status quo.[122] This question had potentially dire consequences: Nauta provocatively invoked the passivity of Dutch professors in the face of the "Aryanization" of their Jewish colleagues' positions under the Nazi occupation as similar to the kind of political neutrality maintained by some of his own colleagues in the face of the Vietnam War.[123] In the context of a democratic society, he suggested, the defense of value-neutrality degenerated into ideology.

As a critique of technocracy, Nauta found Habermas's pragmatic approach to the relationship of science to politics instructive, for it sought to open precisely these kinds of normative questions to rational discussion. Such discussions could potentially have a positive impact on public policy debates, for example by helping to determine criteria for assessing the outcomes of different policy choices. Nauta, however, thought that Habermas seriously underestimated the conditions of social democratization necessary to realize his vision of the political public sphere.[124] Habermas, he argued, advocated a kind of separation of powers between critical scientists and the established economic and political powers. Nauta appears to have misread Habermas considerably, overlooking both the fact that Habermas's argument in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1961) was actually a devastating critique of the inadequacies of technocratic democracy, and that Habermas also opposed the kind of lack of reflection on the part of scientists regarding the social consequences of the knowledge they produced.[125] Despite his criticisms, then, Nauta's intervention in this public debate broadly affirmed the standpoint defended by Habermas on the importance of critical discussion on the social implications of science, while attempting a historically contextualized defense of the logical positivists.

However, Nauta soon expanded his critique of the actuality of Critical Theory as a model for interpreting modern societies to include Habermas along with the early Frankfurt School. Both forms of Critical Theory were too speculative, even given Habermas's rational reconstruction of historical materialism. Nauta's overarching concern was the role of dialectics, which, under the broader mantle of Marxism, appeared then to be ascendant in Dutch philosophy and sociology.[126] Despite his basic political sympathy, in the course of the 1970s and 1980s, Nauta took increasing exception to Critical Theory's "idealism," that is to say, its abstraction

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[120] Ibid., 118.

[121] Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooing*, 39.

[122] Nauta, "Wetenschap en waardevrijheid," 114.

[123] Ibid., 108-109.

[124] Ibid., 116-17.

[125] Specter, *Habermas*, 60-62.

[126] Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooing*, 40.

from concrete political realities. Exasperated by what he viewed as the paternalistic pretensions of philosophers on the radical Left, he disputed the notion of the primacy of society over the individual and the related claim that only a complete transformation of society could address its injustices, which he viewed as a betrayal of true materialism. Dialectical theory, Nauta alleged, was the culprit: "only after a fundamental coming to terms with the dialectic can Marxism restore its original materialist power."[127]

In a long essay on Habermas's work published in 1981—thus forgoing an analysis of Habermas's magnum opus, the *Theory of Communicative Action*, also published that year— Nauta argued that despite his apparent departure from Hegelian Marxism, Habermas remained nonetheless beholden to the model of the critique of alienation, which precluded a truly materialist social theory and research program (MFH, 64). Dialectics appeared to Nauta to be something like a foreign body whose removal would allow the healthy development of materialism.[128] The infection derived from his Frankfurt School predecessors, whose indebtedness to Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) remained foundational, even after they discarded Lukács's view of the proletariat as the subject-object of history. For all intents and purposes, Marcuse and Adorno eventually abandoned real politics and resigned themselves to a kind of aesthetic gesture of refusal:

> It seems as though if artists and intellectuals articulated a 'no,' it could contribute something to the transformation of social relations; but a 'no' that cannot be translated into political actions or social choices lacks practical meaning…. [T]he Frankfurters gave the student movement a political perspective without insight into the means for actualizing that perspective (MFH, 74).

As he pointed out, this familiar critique was also made by Marxist-Leninist critics of the Frankfurt School, but for Nauta this critique was just as "idealist" because it relied on a Dialectical Materialist conception of the laws of history. Habermas's work was an important but incomplete shift away from these tendencies. Provocatively, Nauta claimed that despite Habermas's reputation as a social critic, he was really a theorist of epistemology—albeit an insightful one who had succeeded in deprovincializing the Frankfurt School through the introduction of hermeneutics and American pragmatism (MFH, 75-76). By outlining the different stages of Habermas's work through the 1970s, Nauta sought to clarify this assertion about Habermas's underlying idealism, which made his theory epistemologically more sophisticated but no closer to effective social critique than the early Frankfurt School.

In his survey of Habermas's theoretical trajectory, Nauta sought to identify a red thread of idealism through Habermas's conception of the individual subject. In Habermas's earlier work through *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), this manifested itself in the concept of "self-reflection" (*Selbstreflexion*): Habermas's use of psychoanalysis as a model for overcoming intellectual blockages was analogous, Nauta claimed, to the Absolute Spirit's process of coming to self-consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (MFH, 88). Nor was Habermas's move from the notion of an emancipatory interest to the proto-communicative concepts of "work" and "interaction" after *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968) really successful in overcoming these

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[127] Lolle Nauta, "Het marxisme en de filosofie van Habermas," in *De gerealiseerde utopie en andere sociaal-filosofische stukken* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1981) 64. Hereafter cited as MFH in the text.

[128] Harry Kunneman, "Dialektiek en maatschappijkritiek: Nauta's afscheid van de dialectische methode," *Algemeen Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte* 76, no. 3 (1984): 198.

Lukácsian-Hegelian residues, for it failed to address concretely and empirically how to emancipate oppressed subjects. In his view, this was a question of addressing their basic material needs, which formed the precondition for any substantive participation in society. Moreover, the process of consensus-formation, he suggested, was still only a matter of subjective autonomy, not politics: "practically speaking, self-reflection is really only related to someone's mentality or disposition. It is an event that plays out *at the level of interiority* and thus where, socially or politically, nothing occurs" (MFH, 101). That Habermas's emergent theory of communicative action positioned itself against any "philosophy of the subject" went unnoticed at this point. For Nauta, emancipatory politics needed to discard fully the idealist residues of the theory of alienation that still haunted Marxism, orthodox and heterodox, even after Habermas's growing departure from dialectics, and thus to "not only turn Hegel on his head but set him outside the door" (MFH, 102).

This was not to say, however, that Nauta disregarded the question of subjectivity as a source of contemporary social pathologies. Returning to the work of the early Frankfurt School, Nauta argued that in appropriating Hegel's dialectical terminology and its idealist premises, Critical Theory rendered itself inadequate to the pressing contemporary issue (*aktuelles Problem*) of the linkage of economic marginalization to fascist and racist tendencies. Whereas Franz Neumann's *Behemoth* had explored the micro-level of individual action closely, as had the Institute's empirical psychological studies, the subsequent explorations of Horkheimer and Adorno, for example in the section on "Elements of Anti-Semitism" in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ignored the real workings of oppression at the level of the individual, relying instead on global, totalizing explanations:

> While borrowing concepts from the world of action, individual action has disappeared entirely from their theory. The dialectical theory of culture lacks the means to differentiate between those cultural objects that people have adopted freely and those that have been violently forced upon them. The entire society appears as a manipulated one.[129]

To be sure, Horkheimer and Adorno had turned to psychoanalysis to help explain the psychological mechanisms behind anti-Semitism, but again this was merely a "Freudian costume" for a demonic version of Hegel's *Geist*, whose "cunning of reason" operated behind the backs of individual actors. Writing with bombastic speculation, Nauta argued, they failed to analyze the concrete mechanisms by which fascism had actually managed to coordinate individual action by cultivating resentment and hatred. Social scientists who wanted to address similar issues today, therefore, would need to discard these types of dialectical premises in order to understand why "the proletarians of yesterday are the cultural throwbacks [*Rückständigen*] of today."[130]

Thus the underlying target behind Nauta's evolving critique of Critical Theory was its actuality for addressing present injustice. In his contribution to an international conference on "The Frankfurt School: How Relevant [*aktuell*] is it Today?" held in Rotterdam in 1988, Nauta's work as a social-democratic ideologue and a critic of the Frankfurt School converged. Featuring renowned scholars and critics of the Frankfurt School from the Netherlands, the United States,

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[129] Lolle Nauta, "Heuristischer Wert und Unwert der Dialektik," in *Frankfurter Schule und die Folgen*, ed. Axel Honneth and Albrecht Wellmer (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 310-11.

[130] Ibid., 310-11.

Germany, Eastern Europe, and beyond, the landmark conference was a wide-ranging assessment of the historical legacies and contemporary significance of Critical Theory.[131] Taking up both the early Frankfurt School and Habermas's theory of communicative action, Nauta argued that both versions abandoned the most pressing problems of inequality facing both European welfare states and the third world. Reiterating a number of his previous criticisms, he positioned his own avowedly reformist "politics of citizenship" against the absent politics of Critical Theory. Like Marx, he argued, Horkheimer and Adorno were trapped in a totalizing model of transformation (*das Transformationsmodell*) that dismissed all revision as illusory and remained trapped in the "idealism" of the dialectical method, even though they abandoned Lukács's claims about the proletariat as the subject-object of history.[132] What resulted, Nauta claimed, was a disastrous utopianism, completely irrelevant to the experience of the structurally unemployed, the new victims of the capitalist welfare state:

> The image of man, which led to the expectations and increasingly negative prognoses of both Horkheimer and Adorno, is something completely different from what we see today. In their eyes, the greatest sin is the reproduction of the existent. The Critical Theorists are the lonely ambassadors of another world. They were not able to take refuge in religion. A *sacrificium intellectus*, which has since become increasingly popular, need not be feared from these genuine intellectuals. But utopian tones ring unmistakably from the distance.[133]

With echoes of Lukács's famous accusation that the Frankfurt School had taken up residence in the "grand hotel abyss," but from a reformist rather than Marxist direction, Nauta's critique pointed to the unwillingness of classical Critical Theory to engage with contemporary political realities. Specifically, a new kind of poverty had emerged in the welfare states in which increasing numbers of people whose labor was rendered superfluous by the economy had become clients of the welfare bureaucracy, provided with minimal funds for food and shelter but unable to participate in public life. Addressing these problems required replacing the transformation paradigm with a "model of citizenship," which would emphasize the possibilities of all citizens to participate in public life.[134] To actualize the bourgeois ideal of citizenship for all, presently monopolized by the few, would be a true politics, to be pursued in the decision-making processes about the distribution of scare resources.

Habermas, to be sure, was attuned to the problem of client relationships under the welfare state; methodologically, he had also dispensed with dialectics. The question, however, was whether, in the process of modernization, citizens could have an effective influence in modern

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[131] Attendees included Peter Sloterdijk, Rolf Wiggershaus, Niklas Luhmann, Guzelin Schmid Noerr, Thomas McCarthy, Martin Jay, Helmut Dubiel, and many others, resulting in several published volumes of conference proceedings. In addition to the volumes discussed below, see Philippus van Engeldorp Gasterlaars, Slawomir Magala, and Otmar Preuß, eds., *Critics and Critical Theory in Eastern Europe* and *Wirkungen Kritische Theorie und kritisches Denken* (Rotterdam: Universitaire Pers, 1990).

[132] Lolle Nauta, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Kritischen Theorie für das gesellschaftliche Leben," in *Critical Theory and the Science of Management*, ed. Philippus van Engeldorp Gasterlaars, Slawomir Magala, and Otmar Preuß (Rotterdam: Universitaire Pers, 1990), 174-75.

[133] Ibid., 175.

[134] Ibid., 176. English in original.

structures of power, in which critique had now been "institutionalized."[135] Here, Nauta was much more optimistic than Habermas: while money and power undoubtedly produced blockages to this model of citizenship, one could see, he claimed, overwhelming evidence of the public influence of the citizenry. The matter at hand, rather, was twofold: to determine the subject or bearer of critique (*die Träger der Kritik*) and its object. First, Nauta emphasized that the notion of communicative competence of the speaker engaged in discourse was a necessary but insufficient condition for critique; one required sufficient cultural capital to be able to speak effectively in the political system.[136] Second, the theory of the colonization of the lifeworld ignored how the system's mechanisms could themselves be targets for the mobilization of the individual citizen's lifeworld experiences. In other words, what was crucial for addressing this pathology was less the manner in which the system coordinated action vis-à-vis the lifeworld, but the content of that "colonization," which could have positive or negative influence in terms of mitigating the types of material injustice that ultimately structured the "new poverty."[137] As with his critique of the early Frankfurt School, Nauta argued the Habermas's theory was, on the one hand, overly pessimistic about the structural conditions of modern society, and on the other, aloof from the material requirements that, if properly addressed, would serve to actualize the rational capacities of modern individuals.

The discussion following Nauta's lecture in Rotterdam was evidently contentious. Nauta threw a further barb that Critical Theory's failure to specify concrete social goals was tantamount to the negation of real existence and a flight into pure gesture (*reinen Bewegung*), actionism, and even arbitrary or groundless "decisionism," even though he specified that this decisionism was of a different variety than that which marked Carl Schmitt's existential definition of "the political." This claim met with strong objection, for Critical Theory was of course opposed precisely to the kinds of domination usually entailed by decisionist politics; as we saw in the previous chapter, Habermas criticized the value-neutrality of the technocrats as being decisionist. Nonetheless, Nauta maintained his suspicion that overriding, abstract negativity (*Nein-Sagen*) could allow the political space to develop for such a decisionism to emerge. These political failures, as one German observer reported, rendered Critical Theory for Nauta a "*Blind machende Kritik*," a politically blinding critique.[138]

Nauta's harshest critique, however, was not directed at Critical Theory itself but rather against its followers in the Netherlands, namely the Habermasians. In an indiscriminate, if somewhat tongue-in-cheek *ad hominem* attack in a short column in the popular *Filosofie Magazine*, Nauta went so far as to ridicule the Dutch pronunciation of "Hahbumaas," who, for his followers, "sits like a puppet in the clock tower of the brain and appears every quarter-hour."[139] Habermas had become so popular since the 1970s that scarcely any intellectual debate could be undertaken without reference to his writings, or so it seemed to Nauta. Dedicated as these scholars were to explicating each new inscrutable text for the lay public, their efforts were symptomatic of the Dutch tendency of merely importing foreign philosophy: "With regards to

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[135] Ibid., 177.

[136] Ibid., 178-79.

[137] Ibid., 179-80.

[138] The controversy is reported in Andreas Kuhlmann, "Auf dem Abstellgleis: Ein Kongreß über die 'Frankfurter Schule' in Rotterdam," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 6, 1988, 27.

[139] Lolle Nauta, *Ik denk niet na: Kwesties en pretenties in de filosofie* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2002), 46.

philosophy, we also have the largest harbor in the world."[140] Part of the problem, in Nauta's by-now familiar charge, lay in Habermas's all-encompassing claims and their abstraction from real human existence (*menselijk bestaan*), yet

> the epigones themselves bear responsibility as well. They promote one of the foremost protagonists of enlightenment and democracy into a new authority. They could not do a greater injustice to him. How is this possible? My explanation is simple: *they have not studied with him*. Since they stayed at home, they have only now and then made a pilgrimage to Frankfurt and thus could never give or receive sharp critique. They have mainly communicated with the master in writing, and thereby things went awry. Books do not get a hearing of both sides, in contrast to seminars or debates in the pub. In this respect one does him no justice, given that communication is considered exemplary for human action in his work.[141]

For all his increasingly vehement criticism, Nauta viewed Habermas as a formidable theorist and public intellectual whose work had been all-too-readily appropriated in the Netherlands. But why was this reception so troubling to him?

Conclusion: Pragmatism and the Antinomy of "Consultation"

In a lengthy reply to his critics in 1982, Habermas mentioned the Netherlands, along with the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries, as places where his work had found "the hermeneutic willingness requisite for its reception" and where he was "encountering a critique that over-indulges me with careful argumentation, that unsettles me with interesting objections, and that involves me in very instructive discussions."[142] In the course of the 1980s, the *Werkgroep* produced several more collaborative studies on Habermas that explored not only his theory but also its application in the Dutch context. For example, in a joint publication, Kunneman and Jozef Keulartz offered a sustained analysis and application of Habermas in diagnosing contemporary crises in the Dutch welfare and healthcare systems.[143] Increasingly, these scholars took the notion of scientific reflexivity championed by Habermas and incorporated it into more specialized fields. Significantly, many of the major participants of the Critical Theory Workgroup obtained professorships outside of the major university philosophy faculties. Korthals and Keulartz joined the agricultural University of Wageningen in the area of Applied Ethics, following Habermas's lead in incorporating American pragmatist philosophy into their work. Kunneman, who, as we shall later see, turned increasingly away from Habermas and towards postmodern theories of identity, became a professor and later the rector of the newly established University for Humanistic Studies in Utrecht. Jan Baars became a specialist in "critical gerontology" at the latter institution, exploring issues of aging, both philosophically and

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[140] Ibid., 47.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Jürgen Habermas, "A Reply to my Critics," in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. John B. Thompson and David Held (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), 219.

[143] Harry Kunneman and Jozef Keulartz, *Rondom Habermas: Analyses en kritieken* (Meppel and Amsterdam: Boom, 1985).

in social contexts.[144] As these scholars became more established professionally, their approaches to the issues of public communication and democratic responsiveness—in short, the principle of *zeggenschap* that emerged in the long 1970s—were increasingly brought to bear in governmental and professional committees and organizations beyond the confines of academia. Well after the long 1970s, the critique of "science as ideology" became firmly integrated into Dutch politics and civil society: a rich institutional structure emerged that, in principle and often in practice, allowed intellectuals to function not as the elite experts of the past, but as intermediaries to the public and as critical checks on scientific innovation.

Philosophers in general began to enjoy increasing influence, particularly ethicists, who were consulted not only in public committees, but also by private organizations. This turn to ethics and its social and political integration, one suspects, contributed to Nauta's irritation with Habermas's influence in the Netherlands. Whereas sociology, as we have seen, was traditionally integrated into the service of the political establishment, decades later, philosophy arguably took on an analogous position in the form of applied ethics:

> Philosophy has been deeply and broadly integrated into society [*vermaatschappelijkt*]. In ethical committees, philosophers work together with doctors and laymen to test policy decisions for hospitals. Philosophers are helpful to businesses in reaching compromises between profit and well-being, activities that are titled as *business ethics* [English in original]. Besides businesses, philosophers are also active in the environmental movement…. Bringing philosophy and society together, that is the jargon of decades past, and it is outdated.… The analytical-critical faculty, from time immemorial the professional mark of the philosopher, could get into difficulties. Perhaps in our discipline we eventually need to have a tribunal in order to expose those who sell rubbish in the service of powerful organizations and still have the nerve to call it "ethics."[145]

Although Nauta's polemic was not necessarily directed at the Habermasians, he rightfully pointed to the potential risks of actualizing too seamlessly the notion of rational communication. On the one hand, the procedural inclusion of ethical considerations into public and private deliberations might well mitigate the destructive effects of what Habermas called "system imperatives" or strategic action coordinated through the steering media of power and money. On the other hand, the more such rational discourse is successfully integrated, the greater the potential for the counterfactual dimension of Habermas's domination-free dialogue to be collapsed into the actual, sacrificing what Nauta called philosophy's "analytical-critical faculty." To consider this antinomy further, in conclusion, let us examine another attempt to grasp the actuality of Critical Theory.

The 1988 conference in Rotterdam at which Nauta presented his essay on the advantage and disadvantage of Critical Theory was organized under the auspices of the Faculty of Business Management and the Rotterdam School of Management at the Erasmus University as part of the university's 75th anniversary. In the introduction to the first volume of its proceedings, the organizers explained the unusual material base that supported this research into a critical intellectual tradition significantly derived from Marxism:

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[144] Jan Baars, ed., *Aging, Globalization, and Inequality: The New Critical Gerontology* (Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing, 2006).

[145] Nauta, *Ik denk niet na*, 17-19.

It may appear strange that a critical theory often associated with left political tendencies should attract researchers from a school of management, especially in view of a powerful critique of the entrepreneurial attitude voiced by the rebellious students in late sixties [sic] with some footnotes from representatives of the Frankfurt School…. There are two reasons for this particular choice. The first one is linked to a powerful paradigmatic shift in modern social sciences which makes old political alliances irrelevant, the second to the genesis of the faculty of business management in the institutional environment of Dutch higher education.[146]

For the conference organizers, Critical Theory had little to do with politics but rather with creating pragmatic approaches to issues of the management of organizations. Whether or not Habermas would have sanctioned such an appropriation, it is revealing that the notion of domination-free dialogue bore such strong affinities, in the organizers' view, to the idea of reciprocal dialogue within the hierarchical structures of corporations:

> The theory of communicative action has…been linked to the managerial practices of preventing purely functional addressing of problems in organization…. Thus in its typical expressions, [the] theory of communication draws attention to the reciprocity principle (which might be construed as an equivalent of the Habermasian constraint-free dialogue).[147]

The crucial issue, of course, is the larger social and economic function of the corporation, motivated by profit, for which the internal level of authoritarian or egalitarian interaction between managers and employees needn't be of much consequence. To be fair, the management studies scholars had absorbed to some degree the critique of "technology and science as ideology" inspired by Habermas's essay, and cautioned that "some political problems are being gradually reduced to…'technical' ones."[148] Nonetheless, it is difficult to accept their mobilization of Critical Theory to help explain "how technological innovations, legislative acts and political organization techniques all combine together to establish a framework for efficient company functioning and public order."[149] Reflecting on the 1988 conference fifteen years later, one of the organizers, the Polish-Dutch scholar Slawomir Magala, remarked:

> From the present day perspective, the move away from social movements towards business consulting (which I considered a hopeful development in 1988 contributing to the open nature of the profession) has not turned out to be so beneficial for critical

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[146] Philippus van Engeldorp Gastelaars, Slawomir Magala, and Otmar Preuß, eds., *Critical theory today: The Frankfurt School; How relevant is it today?* (The Hague: Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1990), 8.

[147] Slawomir Magala, "Elective Affinities: Criticism and the Growth of Organizations," in van Engeldorp Gastelaars, Magala, and Preuß, *Critical Theory and the Science of Management*, 11.

[148] Philippus van Engeldorp Gastelaars, Slawomir Magala, and Otmar Preuß, "Why Should We Link Critical Theory and Managerial Sciences?" in van Engeldorp Gastelaars, Magala, and Preuß, *Critical Theory and the Science of Management*, 5.

[149] Ibid., 6.

reflection after all. [The] New individualism is based on a collective "sleep of reason," and the illusion of essential, irreducible and individual sovereignty.[150]

Here one finds little with which to disagree.

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[150] Slawomir Magala, "Critical Theory: 15 Years Later," *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 2, no. 3 (2006): 188.

Chapter Four

Among the Quarreling Gods: The Dutch Dialogue between Critical Theory and Poststructuralism

I do not know how one might wish to decide 'scientifically' the value of French and German culture; for here, too, different gods quarrel [*streiten*] with one another, now and for all times to come.[1]

—Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation" (1918)

What are we calling postmodernity? I'm not up to date.[2]

—Michel Foucault, interview with Gérard Raulet (1983)

In his *Laudatio* for the University of Utrecht's conferral of an honorary doctorate to Jürgen Habermas in 1990, the philosopher Willem van Reijen emphasized two aspects of Habermas's contemporary actuality. Politically, as a critical public voice during the reunification of Germany, Habermas provided both the theoretical tools and the civic encouragement to problematize the all-too-easy absorption of the German Democratic Republic by West Germany, predicated fundamentally upon the latter's economic superiority, rather than any substantial reckoning with the historical problem of German political culture.[3] This process had wider implications for the practice of democracy in Europe: "In the Netherlands, no less than in the Federal Republic (even if many of my countrymen evidently have a different view), it is true that democratic conditions are not a once-and-for-all, secure achievement."[4] Philosophically, Habermas had not only contributed immensely to the research trajectories of many Dutch scholars, but also embodied a spirited defense of the project of modernity that had become so contested in the course of the previous decade. As van Reijen asserted admiringly, "Like hardly any other contemporary with comprehensive theoretical claims, you have shown yourself to be

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[1] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans., ed., and intr. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 148. I have substituted "quarrel" for "struggle" for the German *streiten*.

[2] Michel Foucault, "Critical Theory/Intellectual History," in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture; Interviews and Other Writings of Michel Foucault, 1977-1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York: Routledge 1988), 33.

[3] See especially "The Normative Deficits of Unification," in Jürgen Habermas, *The Past as Future*, interviewed by Michael Haller, trans. and ed. Max Pensky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 33-54. For an historical account of the significance of the process of reunification for Habermas's legal and democratic theory, see Matthew G. Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 183-90. According to Specter, "Habermas feared that absorption of the former East Germany would jeopardize his life's work: the liberalization and Westernization of German political culture" (ibid., 25).

[4] Willem van Reijen, "'Ich habe ein Gedankenmotiv…': Laudatio op J. Habermas ter gelegenheid van de verlening van het eredoctoraat van de Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht op 26 maart 1990," in *Habermas Leidraad*, ed. Willem van Reijen (Utrecht: ISOR and Reproductie-Afdeling Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen, University of Utrecht, 1990), 6.

tolerant and open to dialogue—and indeed also with all wished-for clarity, when it came to the heart of the matter, dismissed the—in your eyes conservative— postmodern."[5]

To be sure, many critics of Habermas found much to admire in Habermas's political interventions in postwar Germany, but van Reijen's second claim is far more open to dispute, particularly in regards to those thinkers who embraced, or were corralled under, the label of poststructuralism in what would become known as the modernism/postmodernism debates of the 1980s. In fact, as van Reijen observed in another piece presented at a public symposium with Habermas in Utrecht several years earlier, the meeting of leading French figures, including Derrida, with Habermas's allies Karl-Otto Apel and the German critic Manfred Frank at the Paris Centre Beaubourg several years earlier reflected not *Gesprächsbereitschaft* or willingness to converse, but rather cultural misunderstanding and outright political suspicion.[6] Quoting Max Weber's vision of the quarreling gods of French and German culture cited above, van Reijen pointed to a "new polytheism" which pitted the "moderns" against the "postmoderns." Siding with Habermas against one of his most vocal critics, Jean-François Lyotard, van Reijen insisted that philosophy must be willing to articulate rational, procedural grounds for defending the unfinished project of the Enlightenment and its values of democracy and human rights. As he concluded, "A philosophy which cannot defend these values within the framework of a [philosophical] reconstruction is indeed in danger of being appropriated by fascistic or fascistoid politics. Political neutrality cannot exist—even theoretically."[7]

Yet even Habermas himself was beginning to find such oppositions too rigid by the end of the 1980s.[8] In response to his symposium hosts in Utrecht, Habermas noted,

> theoretical approaches in philosophy no longer compete *in toto* today. Under the premises of post-metaphysical thought, systemic claims of the classical type seem comical.… The contrast between rationalist approaches in Germany and post-structuralist approaches in France is being quite unnecessarily exaggerated at the moment. I have the impression that we are concerned rather with a difference of rhetorical styles.[9]

Habermas's spoken comments would seem to indicate a sea change in his attitude since the beginning of the 1980s, when, beginning with his lecture for the Adorno Prize from the city of Frankfurt in September 1980, entitled "Modernity and Postmodernity," he sought to link "young conservatives" such as Derrida and Foucault to the reactionary *Kulturkritik* of Weimar Germany.[10] Matthew G. Specter argues, against Habermas's own self-interpretation, that the German political battles of the 1970s and the rise of intellectual neoconservatism in German public debates provide the operative historical context for this polemical defense of modernity, which seemed threatened not only by the anti-modernism of the conservatives, but also by the

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Willem van Reijen, "Philosophical-Political Polytheism: Habermas versus Lyotard," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (1990): 95.

[7] Ibid., 102. It is worth recalling that van Reijen spent his formative years as a scholar in Germany before returning to his native Netherlands in 1975; thus his view of philosophy and politics is a more characteristically German or even "Schmittian" perspective on intellectual-political friends and enemies, as he put it. Willem van Reijen, interview by author, Utrecht, January 10, 2008.

[8] For the evolution of Habermas's growing friendship with Derrida, see Lasse Thomassen, ed., *The Derrida-Habermas Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[9] Jürgen Habermas, "Remarks on the Discussion," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (1990): 127.

[10] Specter, *Habermas*, 138-39.

"pre-modernism" of some elements within the young Green Party.[11] How, then, was the reception of poststructuralism in the neighboring Netherlands, with its broadly parallel but also distinct political contexts in the late 1970s and 1980s, differently inflected? In what ways did this reception challenge the relative predominance of Critical Theory among Dutch scholars, and how were these theoretical traditions to be confronted with each other? For many Dutch philosophers, in contrast to van Reijen's view at the time, Critical Theory and poststructuralism were not irreconcilable gods but rather, anticipating the later Habermas himself, different modes of approaching a similar problematic. To be sure, intellectual allegiances and commitments remained, and judgments about the philosophical validity and political implications of these forms of thought were not abstained from, for the ideas here did indeed have political significance. Nonetheless, many Dutch scholars embodied the cultural figure of the intermediary or "go-between,"[12] translating, transmitting, and sustaining an intensive dialogue between Critical Theory and poststructuralism, and leading to flexible and nuanced interpretations and judgments. By pursuing this dialogue on the level of analytical concretion rather than theoretical abstraction, that is to say, by investigating these theories as specific inroads into the empirical conflicts and pathologies of contemporary societies, these intermediaries often managed to avoid, and in some cases facilitate the overcoming of the mutual incomprehension and hostility that elsewhere mired the modernism/postmodernism debates. Before examining this dialogue, however, we must first explore the reception of "French theory" itself, which emerged in the context of a very localized sense of intellectual and political crisis.

Krisis and the Deprovincialization of Dutch Philosophy

The international orientation of Dutch philosophy can be traced back at least to the early Enlightenment, when the Netherlands not only served as a publishing center and refuge for radical philosophers but also contributed to the tradition of free-thinking republicanism that culminated with Spinoza.[13] Much later, amidst the ferocious entrenchment of World War I, the desire to place the neutral Netherlands as a center for intellectual exchange led to the founding of the International School for Philosophy in 1916.[14] This tradition was amplified after the 1960s: as James Kennedy argues, the 1970s witnessed the development of a widespread internationalism within both the government and the citizenry, as the Netherlands projected itself as a *gidsland* or country of guidance. Simultaneous with the steady processes of depillarization and deconfessionalization, the quasi-theological sense of hope that had accompanied the project of

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[11] Specter, *Habermas*, 140-41. In a personal letter to Specter cited several times, Habermas wrote, "No, I consider it impossible to map [*unmittelbar abzubilden*] theoretical positions directly onto party-political ones." Habermas to Matthew G. Specter, 7 June 2005, here cited p. 140.

[12] Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), esp. chap. 5.

[13] Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. part II.

[14] Antoine Verbij, *Denken achter de dijken*: *De opmars van filosofie in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Ambo, 2000), 44-47. According to Verbij, the school began as a quasi-spiritual nature retreat, but later became a meeting place, at different times, for such luminaries as Martin Heidegger, Karl Popper, Emmanuel Levinas, and Peter Sloterdijk.

vernieuwing since 1945 was reinscribed in an ethic of global citizenship.[15] Among leftist academics, the process of exchange that had begun with the reception of Critical Theory in the 1960s continued to be important beyond the historical moment of the international youth and protest movements. For some younger scholars, the importation of foreign ideas was a way to break out of the perceived provincialism of Dutch academic life and participate in this expanded role. As we saw previously, the reception of Critical Theory was one important avenue for this ambition, and it had also been crucial to challenging the technocratic consensus of the early postwar decades and made sustained impacts on Dutch politics and society from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s.

Subjectively, however, the compromises at the end of that period, especially in the chilling political climate of so-called "new realism," were experienced by younger members of the radical Left as disasters, for which the intellectual atmosphere engendered by a Habermasian, communicative approach seemed easily co-opted, if not complicit. Thus the reception of structuralism and poststructuralism was also refracted by the questions that remained from the splintering of Marxism that occurred in the wake of the late 1960s and 1970s. According to René Boomkens's diagnosis at the time, the initial rediscovery of Marxism in the Netherlands by the student movement had been principally shaped by Critical Theory and thus heavily imbued with Hegel and Weber; the subsequent turn to "classical" Marxism coincided with the student movement's reorientation toward the workers movement and the Communist party.[16] Ironically, radical students now sought a path "from Marcuse to Marx."[17] To this end, the Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen, or SUN, a press that grew out of the radical movements at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, and the related journal *Te Elfde Ure* (At the eleventh hour), were among the first and most prominent in translating and publishing French theory, beginning with such figures as Louis Althusser, who visited Nijmegen in the late 1970s. Althusser's anti-Hegelian Marxism and the re-theorization of state power undertaken by the Greek-French thinker Nicos Poulantzas were studied intensively in this period, beginning with Siep Stuurman's previously mentioned *Kapitalisme en burgerlijke staat* (Capitalism and the bourgeois state, 1978).[18]

Although Nijmegen was perhaps the epicenter for the reception of structuralist Marxism at the time, these debates quickly spread to other universities such as the University of Amsterdam, where Stuurman taught political science. At the beginning of the 1980s, the philosophy department of the University of Amsterdam experienced something of a revolt from below, in the form of a new journal called *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* (Crisis: Journal for philosophy). Eventually *Krisis* would merge with *Kennis en methode* (Knowledge and method),

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[15] James C. Kennedy, *De deugden van een gidsland: Burgerschap en democratie in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2005), 16-24.

[16] René Boomkens, *Krisis en atopie: Over intellektuelen, politiek en wetenschap* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, Vakgroep Sociale Filosofie, 1984), 11.

[17] Cyrille Offermans, *Macht als trauma: Essays over de kritische theorie van de Frankfurter Schule* (Amsterdam: De Bijzige Bij, 1982), 53. However, Offermans notes that the discovery among Dutch literature students of Benjamin's embrace of communism under Bertolt Brecht's influence caused "euphoria" at the time.

[18] Siep Stuurman, *Kapitalisme en burgerlijke staat: Een inleiding in de marxistische politieke theorie* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1978). Ger Harmsen and Lolle Nauta's *vakgroep* "Philosophy and Social Science" at the University of Groningen hosted a major conference on Poulantzas in 1980, attended by leading structural Marxists such as Stuurman, as well as representatives of several progressive political parties who discussed the possibilities for using the state apparatuses to create a leftist hegemony. Gerrit van Maanen and Reint Jan Schuring, "Het Poulantzas symposium: Verslag van het symposium op 5 en 6 juni 1980 in Groningen over de invloed van het werk van Nicos Poulantzas," *Recht en kritiek* 7, no. 2 (May 1981): 168-77. These hopes, and structural Marxism's popularity, would prove rather short-lived, as we shall see.

another journal founded slightly earlier as a forum for methodological debates in the social and natural sciences, primarily among the Dutch Habermasians and philosophers of science developing the work of such figures as Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos, Paul Feyerabend, and Bruno Latour. But at the time, *Krisis* emerged as a more rebellious younger sibling. Founded by veterans of the student movement, or rather, its 1970s progeny, the young editors of *Krisis* took simultaneous aim at the prevailing philosophical culture of the Netherlands—"a charming debate club," as they put it—and the consensus-oriented political culture with which it was intertwined. Habermas was a clear target in this regard, seeming to represent a moderate, liberal universalism that sought to speak on everyone's behalf under the guise of "power-free dialogue."[19] Against this, the journal embraced a loosely-defined leftist partisanship that sought roots in political activism; thus its first issue in 1980 followed in the footsteps of *Te Elfde Ure* with a focus on Althusser. Yet in other ways, the journal's outlook echoed the larger problematic for which Habermas and Critical Theory had been so conducive in challenging the early consensus approach of postwar scientific planning. Thus the editors declared philosophy's "double solidarity" both with political and social movements, and with other sciences, whose empirically-oriented practices brought philosophy out of the realm of pure theory. But rather than simply embracing the Althusserian program of an anti-humanist scientific Marxism, the journal sought to preserve itself as a space for philosophical dissensus, rather than an organized unity. In this regard, the journal began to import a variety of contemporary philosophical streams from abroad, in order to break through the "bulwark" of Dutch philosophy that they claimed, with some exaggeration, had survived the social and political crises of the previous two decades unscathed.

Insofar as Althusser was initially the primary inspiration, *Krisis* took not only Habermas but Critical Theory in general to task, challenging its strong presence within leftist intellectual circles. Habermas was hastily dismissed for his theory's affinity to the Dutch traditions of consensus and *redelijkheid*, or reasonableness, that seemed to permeate Dutch philosophy, and the Frankfurt School's lack of connection to workers movements betokened a lack of authenticity. Arguably, in fact, Habermasian Critical Theory became a victim of its own success, as some of its Dutch exponents made the transition from the student movement to the professoriate. As it gained academic respectability, and as Habermas himself turned away from Hegelian Marxism and towards the philosophy of language and evolutionary psychology, it seemed to lose some of its critical bite. The sociologist Dick Pels, defending his own model of polemical, "subjective" sociology, argued that what Alvin Gouldner called the "minotaur" of Max Weber's value neutrality, once slain in the Positivist Dispute, had returned to haunt Dutch scholarship in the 1980s. Ironically, this return of neutral objectivity occurred, he argued, by way of the "bourgeoisification" (*verburgerlijking*) of Critical Theory under Habermas, one of the Left's former protagonists in the Dispute.[20] The return to Weber among sociologists mirrored the transition from Marx to Eduard Bernstein, a "logic of revisionism that reiterated itself in miniature in the Dutch intellectual world of the 1970s and 1980s; this also explains much of the enthusiasm of the moderate [*bezadigd*] 'Left' for Habermas."[21] In Pels's view, the turn away from the most radical, anti-academic forms of partisan science of the 1970s was well-taken,[22] but the lessons of the Positivist Dispute and the insights of its reception had been squandered

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[19] "Redaktioneel" (editors' introduction), *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 1 (1980): 2.

[20] Dick Pels, "De terugkeer van de Minotaurus," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 15 (1984): 78.

[21] Ibid.

[22] When Pels taught sociology at the University of Amsterdam in the 1970s, some of his own classes on Marx(!) were interrupted by Maoists. Dick Pels, interview by author, Amsterdam, December 17, 2007.

through an overcorrection in the directions of scientific objectivity and the mantle of academic sobriety. The challenge, then, was to develop a "politics of knowledge" (*kennispolitiek*) that would consciously and productively embrace a leftist standpoint, but without collapsing truth into power altogether.[23]

The theoretical tumult of *Krisis*'s early years can be read as series of attempts to grapple with this challenge. At the outset, it was Althusser's work that crystallized the challenge to Habermasian Critical Theory by reorienting philosophy away from communication and toward class conflict. Soon, however, *Krisis*'s ambition to foster debate among competing philosophical viewpoints was fulfilled, and a wide variety of theorists' work was absorbed, translated, explicated, and debated. As we shall see, the reception of Althusser and its impetus towards a scientific Marxism was soon overshadowed by the reception of Michel Foucault, whose work found resonance in the new social movements of the 1980s, especially its more anarchistic strains, such as the squatters' movement (*kraakbeweging*) and the punk movement. The journal's ambition to remain grounded in the concrete experiences of these groups, unsurprisingly, gradually faltered, particularly as tensions arose between the more conventional Marxist groups and the newer groups of radical feminists, who challenged the marginalization of gender issues on the left.[24] But in the process, *Krisis* became one of the most vibrant forums for theorizing contemporary political and cultural issues and for exploring different philosophical approaches that might be utilized to address them.

As the editors remarked, Dutch philosophy was uniquely defined by its openness to the Anglo-American, German, and French intellectual traditions. The relative isolation of other traditions had both advantages and disadvantages: French thought, for example, remained largely ignorant of Anglo-American and German philosophy, but was therefore able to develop its own strength independently.[25] By contrast, in the Netherlands, "despite—or precisely because of— this broad orientation, one cannot speak of an distinctive [*eigen*] philosophical tradition or Dutch School."[26] One reason for this, they suggested, was the absence of courses on philosophy at the secondary school level, which might have allowed the intensive gestation of philosophical intellect and personality characteristic of France, for example.[27] A second reason, which they sought to rectify through the journal, was the insularity of the various philosophical circles within the Netherlands. In particular, the Centrale Interfaculteiten (central interfaculties) that structured university curricula allegedly failed to nurture the climate of vigorous philosophical exchange that might foster innovative Dutch thought, both within and outside of the academy. Even having been placed prominently within the Centrale Interfaculteiten in 1960, philosophy had not only failed to spur and guide reflection within the other faculties, but even to "fertilize" itself (*zich bevruchten*), particularly relative to the intensive debate and activity evident in other

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[23] Pels, "De terugkeer van de Minotaurus," 84.

[24] René Boomkens, interview by author, Amsterdam, February 11, 2008.

[25] "Redaktioneel," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 2 (1980): 1-2.

[26] Ibid., 2.

[27] Napoleon decreed in 1809 that one year of philosophy be taught in all French lycées, and many of the subsequently famous students at the elite École normale supérieure had "already bonded when they attended one of two famous lycées in the Latin Quarter: Louis-le-Grand and Henri IV." Martin Jay, "Can There Be National Philosophies in a Transnational World?" *Essays from the Edge: Parerga & Paralipomena* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press), 170. As Jay points out, the intensive reception of foreign figures such as Nietzsche and Heidegger in twentieth-century French thought should caution us against the illusion of a 'purely' French philosophical tradition. See 169-73.

disciplines.[28] *Krisis*'s call to arms therefore sought to take stock of and promote forms of Dutch thought being developed within specific intellectual circles by circulating them and promoting open debate: "Let the real philosophers stand up and walk in the daylight!"[29]

The *Krisis* editors did not hesitate to direct this bravado against the academic philosophical establishment. Mobilizing Foucault's critique of the production of knowledge as a process of exclusion in *The Order of Things*, they argued that the resistance to translating foreign texts for the use of students in Dutch universities was a mode of hierarchical gate-keeping that was oblivious to the realities of mass higher education, in which the foreign language requirements of the *gymnasium* were no longer upheld. To demand otherwise, for which they took the University of Amsterdam professor Gertrude van Asperen to task, was exclusionary, unless the growing inadequacies of university pedagogy were addressed.[30] So as not to deprive the reader of other examples of the "exclusion mechanisms" that dominated Dutch philosophy, the editors went on to accuse the editorial board of the preeminent *Algemeen Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte* (General Dutch journal of philosophy) of exercising an elitist paternalism in its peer review system under the guise of "professionalism."[31] The rejected article in question, an analysis of the reception of the later Wittgenstein's work and its political significance by the Leiden philosopher Grahame Lock, was then published in *Krisis* in order to circumvent this alleged stifling of philosophical debate.[32]

Because the early years of *Krisis* coincided with the "new realism" of the 1980s, dominated by conservative-liberal coalitions, its sense of exclusion from the dominant academic channels was reinforced by government university reforms that threatened to further marginalize the discipline of philosophy, removing it from its central academic position within the system of Central Interfaculties. The conservative CDA's Minister of Education, Wim Deetman, sought to expand government oversight of the universities, significantly lower salary scales, and consolidate faculties, which included the outright elimination of most of the Central Interfaculties, with the exception of the confessional universities (the Free University of Amsterdam, the Catholic University of Nijmegen, etc.), and the University of Utrecht. During the planning of the law that implemented these reforms in 1985, the younger academics of *Krisis* recognized a grave threat to their professional futures, including unemployment, or at least marginalization from academic institutions and channels.[33] In anticipating life after "Deetman's Apocalypse," the journal, therefore, was envisioned as an alternative site for critical intellectual practice.[34] The reception and development of supposedly "dangerous" theoretical alternatives to mainstream philosophy, such as poststructuralism, constituted a vital alternative to the officially sanctioned "scientism" of both the government and the academic establishment.[35] Marginality

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[28] "Redaktioneel," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 3 (1981): 1.

[29] "Redaktioneel," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 2 (1980): 2.

[30] "Redaktioneel," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 3 (1981): 4-5.

[31] Ibid., 5-7.

[32] Grahame Locke, "Wittgenstein en de politieke filosofie," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 3 (1981): 9-35. The offending editors were not amused and justified their selection criteria in the following issue of *Krisis*, arguing that Locke had simply failed to fulfill his stated purpose of discussing Wittgenstein's relevance. Theo Kuipers, "Zakelijke kriteria: reaktie van het a.n.t.w.," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 4 (1981): 92-93.

[33] Indeed, following the reforms, many other academic departments developed their own methodology courses, displacing the large and ambitious courses that had been taught by philosophers, who increasingly turned instead toward publishing in Anglo-American philosophical journals. Boomkens, interview.

[34] "Redaktioneel," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 13 (1983): 1.

[35] Ibid., 2.

might then function as a virtue, particularly if the connections to the student movement and other social movements could be maintained. As the editors put it, with self-conscious grandiosity,

> We can ask ourselves whether the new group of unemployed philosophers (us, or many of us), do not form an exemplary group that can link its experience with a fruitful exchange of theoretical, socio-political, cultural, and other "experiences," without being impeded by the burdens of publishing and other sorts of academic norms…. Supported by the experiences gained through the various social movements, here could lie the beginning of a new intellectual praxis [*praktijk*], what we would like to call a post-scientistic "culture."[36]

Ultimately, *Krisis* and many of its contributors would in fact find professional success, and the journal itself gradually professionalized, though never in the style of a traditional journal of philosophy. But during its first years, its sense of exclusion and partisan rebellion gave the journal a distinctively experimental character and sense of urgency in the critical reception of new intellectual impulses.

The partisan attitude of *Krisis* not only turned against the academic philosophical establishment, but also sought to reorient the Left from the concerns that had motivated the student movement in the 1960s and 1970s, namely the issues of the social function of knowledge for which the reception of Critical Theory had been so instructive. While Critical Theory, other forms of Marxism, and feminism had challenged the reigning technocratic positivism of the early postwar period, the Left's "long march through the institutions" in the 1970s, in their view, had expended far too much energy on the quasi-Habermasian principles of co-determination, participation, and consensus. Had these infiltrators of the bourgeoisie not "confined themselves excessively within the 'enemy's' bulwark [and] made the methods and concepts of their opponent their own?"[37] Some cultural advances had been won, but at the cost of the splintering of the Left and the Thermidorian reaction of the authorities, prompting a sense of crisis within Marxism. Rather than continue to double down on their Marxism by way of Althusser, however, the *Krisis* group increasingly turned to Foucault's work in the early 1980s, though initially with the intention of mediating between Foucault and Marxism. While there had already been a limited and "depoliticized" Dutch reception of Foucault in the 1960s and early 1970s, Foucault's own increasing politicization in the transition from his "archaeological" to his "genealogical" writings, argued René Boomkens and Bert van der Schaaf, facilitated precisely such a rapprochement, which offered the Left a "radical break with traditional organizational forms, thematics, and theoretical standpoints."[38] A pivotal work in the newer reception was Samuel IJsseling's contribution to the 1979 collection *Denken in Parijs*, in which Foucault's analysis of "discourse" displaced Althusser's conception of ideology as constitutive of the production of subjectivity.[39] Boomkens and van der Schaaf did not accept the wholesale disposal of the concept of ideology unquestioningly, yet in retrospect, the writing was already on the wall for the Althusserian camp: as Boomkens remarked only a few years later, "Having swiftly become

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[36] Ibid., 2.

[37] René Boomkens and Bert van der Schaaf, "Foucault in Nederland: Notities," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 3 (1981): 36.

[38] Ibid., 36-37.

[39] Egide Berns, Samuel IJsseling, and Paul Moyaert, *Denken in Parijs: Taal en Lacan, Foucault, Althusser, Derrida* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Samsom, 1979).

an absolute 'must' within Dutch political-theoretical discussions, Althusser was just as swiftly forgotten."[40]

The speed with which Foucault had overtaken Althusser as the locus of critical Dutch thought prompted the *Krisis* group to reflect on the question of "French philosophy" more generally and its reception in the Netherlands. First, while cognizant of the dangers of generalizing about contemporary French thought, they contextualized its anti-rationalistic tendencies as a reaction against the rationalist tradition and centralism of the French university system, particularly since the Third Republic, and further, understood it to have been nurtured by oppositional power of the Parti Communiste Français. This close relationship between philosophy and politics, they claimed, contrasted completely with the Dutch context, which explained the dichotomous Dutch reception of many French thinkers. Either they were read in purely abstract, philosophical terms, or read impatiently in overly politicized terms. In place of these two extremes, the editors sought to focus on the concrete actuality of French thought, both in terms of its implications for the practice of the social sciences and in the formation of new political strategies. Perhaps, they suggested, "the 'thinking of difference' [*het 'differentie-denken'*] could work as a strategy, by which the classical, positivist-empiricist scientific practices, their ideology of expertise, and the apolitical climate of Dutch philosophy could be broken open."[41] French thought, if more carefully and concretely examined, might manage to "short circuit" the Dutch philosophical and political fields.[42]

The reception of poststructuralism within *Krisis* was never unified or uncritical. In one of the first treatments of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work in Dutch, the Belgian sociologist Rudi Laermans interpreted their work as a philosophical stylization of the depoliticized attitude of disillusioned 1968-ers. As evidence, he cited Deleuze's response to the philosopher and psychoanalyst Catherine Clément, who argued that Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* merely repeated previous critiques of psychoanalysis—namely, that this was true, but that "we, we are stylists."[43] For Laermans, this meant that philosophy had been reduced to a kind of sophistry, or a "spectacle that makes publicity for itself"—a heavily-loaded accusation, given the pejorative connotations of the term "spectacle" since the Situationist Guy Debord's famous *Society of the Spectacle* (1967).[44] In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari's work was a "failed departure" from the very dualism of Western rationality it sought to initiate through the pure immanence of productive desire. Instead, their "desirology" sanctioned the psychic and social divisions effected by modern mass societies and even enshrined them as virtues: the effacement of the unique individual became celebrated as the "decentering of the subject." In other words, "with desirology, philosophy finally appears to have caught up with reality."[45] This critique, as Laermans mentioned in passing, bore resemblance to Critical Theory's approach to the question

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[40] René Boomkens, "Ketterse historici: Over Marx, Menocchio en Montaillou," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 15 (1984): 28-29.

[41] "Franse variaties," editors' introduction to *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 6 (1982): 9.

[42] Ibid., 10.

[43] Quoted in Rudi Laermans, "Desirologie—of het mislukte afscheid," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 9 (1982): 14. For a critical and historical assessment of *Anti-Oedipus*, see Julian Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), chap. 9.

[44] Laermans, "Desirologie," 14. Debord's demonization of the spectacle, however, was undermined by some French theorists in the 1980s, such as Jean Baudrillard, who cheerfully embraced the spectacality of modern life. Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 429-33.

[45] Laermans, "Desirologie," 14.

of subjectivity, which explained the demise of the autonomous subject as the result of historical processes, rather than the product of the ahistorical dynamics of discourse or language.

Was poststructuralist thought heavy on style and light on substance? In Germany, despite prestigious translations in the "Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft" series, Foucault was either ignored by scholars or derided by journalists; like Habermas, most German readers assumed that Foucault's anti-humanism was necessarily politically reactionary.[46] For growing numbers of Foucault readers in the Netherlands, by contrast, Foucault's work was widely assumed to have a distinctly leftist political impulse, often described as anarchist. The Dutch left-libertarian sphere of activists and intellectuals that emerged in the 1970s offered a welcoming context for this reading, particularly its rejection of "pastoral" forms of care, such as psychiatry, in favor of autonomous forms of self-development.[47] The philosopher Hans Achterhuis's highly influential attack on the entire field of *andragogie* or adult social work—the theory and pedagogy of which (*androgologie*) he taught at the University of Amsterdam, and to whose academic demise he singularly contributed—in *De markt van welzijn en geluk* (The market of well-being and happiness, 1980) combined a Foucauldian critique of social work's treatment of clients as "objects of care" with the anti-authoritarian insights of Ivan Illich.[48] The tension between Foucault's genealogical critique of the subject as heteronomously produced by power, on the one hand, and Illich's foundation of self-knowing, autonomous individuals, on the other, was overlooked in Achterhuis's work,[49] which obscured the potentially deflating implications of Foucault's position for progressive politics. In any case, Foucault's turn to the "aesthetics of the self" in his last works further reinforced this positive reading of his political actuality.[50] Whereas in France, Jean-François Revel interpreted the second and third volumes of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, which appeared just before his premature death in 1984, as a turn to liberalism,[51] the *Krisis* editors viewed the aesthetics of the self as a new impetus for resistance movements. Foucault, they wrote,

> appears to be suggesting that there are other sources than science [*wetenschap*] that can contribute to the actualization [*verwezenlijking*] of the goals of diverse "emancipation movements." Instead of basing their "ethics" on scientific knowledge of, for example, "the ego," "the unconscious," desire, etc., they could accomplish a great deal by concentrating on the development of practical-aesthetic knowledge regarding their "own lives" ["*eigen leven*"].[52]

Despite the fact that the late Foucault's work was an enormous departure from his earlier treatment of power and subjectivity, his aesthetic turn therefore provided a fruitful alternative for political reinvention on the left, precisely when traditional politics seemed closed off.

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[46] Robert C. Holub, *Crossing Borders: Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction* (Madison and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 52-55.

[47] Jan Willem Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooiing: Wetenschap, politiek en de maakbare samenleving* (The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 1999), esp. chap. 4.

[48] Hans Achterhuis, *De markt van welzijn en geluk: Een kritiek van de andragogie* (Baarn: Ambo, 1980).

[49] Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooiing*, 41.

[50] For an historical treatment of Foucault's "return to the subject," see Eric Paras, *Foucault 2.0: Beyond Power and Knowledge* (New York: The Other Press, 2006).

[51] Cited in René Boomkens, Irene Klaver, and Bert van der Schaaf, "De verlangende mens: Foucaults geschiedenis van de seksualiteit," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 17 (1984): 38.

[52] Ibid.

Furthermore, Dutch audiences were perhaps more attuned to Foucault's persona as a public intellectual than German audiences. Although the relationship between philosophers and television was perhaps most significant in France,[53] it was on Dutch national television that Foucault's debate with Noam Chomsky took place in 1971, as part of the Dutch philosopher Fons Elders's television series.[54] As John Rajchman notes, the debate

> offered a space for conversation across intellectual and political geographies. The dispute over 'human nature' seemed to crystallize the differences in approach—at once linguistic, philosophical, and political—in the work of Chomsky and Foucault and in their respective countries.[55]

Whereas Elders played the role of neutral mediator in the debate, Foucault's critique of the tradition of Cartesian rationalism defended by Chomsky perhaps resonated more deeply with the mood of leftist intellectual circles in the 1970s. Thus, when Althusser's influence suddenly waned, Foucault's concept of, and self-practice as, a "specific intellectual" took primacy. As Boomkens described his own departure from Althusserianism, "The intellectual can no longer be the representative and mouthpiece [*vertolker*] of a universal social ideal, class interest, or model of rationality. Foucault's genealogy is a critical intellectual practice, which can only become actively engaged [*werkzaam*] by way of concrete, specific struggles."[56] Foucault's personal example provided a model for the direct, concrete relationship between philosophy and political practice that Marxism no longer seemed capable of sustaining.

As the key example of Foucault illustrates, the Dutch discourse of actuality shaped the reception of poststructuralism in several ways. First, poststructuralism seemed to offer a way to articulate and connect theoretically with a variety of leftist political movements amidst the continuing crisis of Marxism. Second, the Netherlands's proximity to France and linguistic familiarity with French allowed the Dutch to follow figures such as Foucault as politically engaged "specific intellectuals." One did not have to guess what the politics of poststructuralism were, although perhaps the Dutch took too much for granted that it provided adequate normative foundations for such a politics. Finally, in viewing poststructuralist theory as a tool for examining concrete practices, and in testing it through concrete analyses, they increasingly sought ways break through the impasses that emerged between competing figures like Derrida and Habermas, who often addressed each other on a strictly philosophical plane. But how did this last phenomenon, the improbable search for dialogue with Habermas, emerge, anticipating the kind of sympathetic *Auseinandersetzung* that would only occur years later between the two antagonists?

Although Critical Theory had been disparaged at the outset of *Krisis*, the appearance in 1981 of Habermas's magnum opus, the *Theory of Communicative Action*, provided an impetus for reconsideration. Still, some of the initial interpretations were highly critical. The philosopher Ron Haleber situated Habermas's account of modernization within a tradition of Western

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[53] Tamara Chaplin, *Turning on the Mind: French Philosophers on Television* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[54] Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*, with a foreword by John Rajchman (New York and London: The New Press, 2006). Curiously, Chaplin does not mention this debate, which powerfully illustrates her argument about the role of televised philosophy in projecting the prestigious image of French intellectual culture abroad to international audiences.

[55] John Rajchman, foreword to Chomsky and Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate*, viii.

[56] Boomkens, "Ketterse historici," 43.

sociological "ethnocentrism," which, even under the banner of Marxism, assumed the normative superiority of Western economic and political development.[57] Nor did the early Frankfurt School fare much better; the sociologist Ton Korver, drawing upon Peter Sloterdijk's iconoclastic *Critique of Cynical Reason*, which appeared in German in 1983, declared that "Critical Theory is finished."[58] And contrary to the student movement's claims in the late 1960s that Habermas and the early Frankfurt School figures had betrayed their own theory's implications, Korver argued, it was precisely Horkheimer and Adorno's fidelity to their own insights that produced this resignation. Because the philosophy of history outlined in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* reduced the appearance of anything new *a priori* to a manifestation of a closed totality overshadowed by Auschwitz, he claimed, Critical Theory condemned itself to non-actuality, a philosophy making its escape. Its central characteristic was the principled refusal to participate, which was responsible for both its consistency and its datedness.[59] Adorno made gestures toward the possibility of a correct praxis, but without further description, this possibility remained necessarily unfulfilled. This reading is familiar and points not only to Sloterdijk's "kynicism," but again to the actuality of Foucault. Although left unnamed, Foucault's famous analysis of the entwinement of power and resistance[60] suggested a possible exit from this dilemma: "Power is never complete. Its completion—herein lies precisely the insight of Critical Theory—would entail self-destruction. Power is dependent; it is not total; there is always a 'remainder;' there are ever-new forms of progression and protest."[61] For figures such as Korver, then, these alternatives suggested a way of maintaining fidelity to, and grounding concretely, the philosophy of the early Frankfurt School—a philosophy that, true to its faulty insights, had fled from the horror of its central historical experience of fascism and was incapable of making sense of the present.

As the decade progressed, however, Habermas seemed to open up some analogous pathways to the philosophical impasses of the present, in particular by means of the "linguistic turn." As Boomkens put it, French and German were indeed different languages, but if the misunderstandings that had arisen between Habermas and poststructuralism could be corrected, some degree of understanding might be possible, especially since both sides took the departure from the traditional "philosophy of the subject" as their starting points.[62] There was, to be sure, no denying the hostility evident on both sides; Habermas's accusation that poststructuralism constituted a form of "neoconservatism" in *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit*[63] (The new unsurveyability, 1985) was a polemical and even somewhat "journalistic" prelude to his no less critical *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1985), whereas Lyotard accused Habermas of embodying the repressive universalism of the Enlightenment and Western rationality.[64] Boomkens clearly had his doubts about Habermas's "project of modernity," which he viewed as

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[57] Ron Haleber, "Het etnocentrisme van de westerse sociologie: Habermas en het evolutionaire moderniseringsparadigma," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 13 (1983): 27-50.

[58] Ton Korver, "Een filosofie op de vlucht," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 13 (1983): 51.

[59] Ibid., 52.

[60] As Foucault put it, "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power." Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 95.

[61] Korver, "Een filosofie op de vlucht," 69.

[62] René Boomkens, "Inleiding: Konfrontatie of spraakverwarring rond 'het moderne,'" in *Afscheid van de rationaliteit?*, ed. René Boomkens and Annette Deckers (Amsterdam: CREA Studium Generale, 1986), 4.

[63] Translated as Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

[64] Boomkens, "Inleiding: Konfrontatie of spraakverwarring," 16-17.

homologous with the politics of reasonableness and consensus that, as he and his fellow editors had previously argued in *Krisis,* had effectively neutralized the student movement.[65] Yet he now seemed to view the divergent critiques of "the philosophy of the subject" as potentially working in similar directions to undermine hegemonic forms of rationality. Poststructuralism might well have a progressive rather than neoconservative potential, if approached in less combative and confrontational terms. The answer, Boomkens suggested, could only be determined by actualizing Habermas's and Derrida's respective critiques of rationality through an investigation of their specific historical, philosophical, and sociological analyses:

> Rather than a direct confrontation between the two types of the critique of rationality, it might be more relevant to present the manner in which their "critique" or "deconstruction" works to make visible the results of their divergent methods and styles, which seemingly have the same object and scope: the operation and development of Western rationality, the power and force of metaphysical thought, and the emancipatory but also oppressive and exclusionary dimensions of "the project of modernity," which is perhaps not ultimately a complete project....[66]

Boomkens did not venture an attempt at such an ambitious task here, yet this interpretive mode of *Auseinandersetzung* was exemplary of much of the Dutch discourse on the modernism/postmodernism debates. Rather than setting two thinkers or bodies of thought over and against each other, Dutch scholars sought to illuminate affinities and unexpected convergences between them. In the remainder of this chapter, we will consider two of the most prominent exemplars of this approach: Harry Kunneman and Hent de Vries.

Harry Kunneman and the Actuality of Habermas's Colonization Thesis

Although the editors and contributors of *Krisis* were by and large critical of Habermasian Critical Theory, there was one notable exception, Jozef Keulartz, who facilitated at least some connection between *Krisis* and the Habermasians of the Critical Theory Workgroup (WKT). Then a philosophy student at the University of Amsterdam, Keulartz was also a member of the *Krisis* workgroup on "alternatives within science," which examined, for example, the lasting influence of "Science and Society" (*Wetenschap en Samenleving*) curricula, begun during the student movement, within the universities' "beta" or natural science faculties.[67] As a member of both intellectual circles he was, with only some exaggeration, the first and last Habermasian in *Krisis*.[68] As an assistant for his fellow WKT member Harry Kunneman, Keulartz helped introduce Kunneman to poststructuralism, towards which the latter was, following Habermas, initially quite hostile.[69] Together, Keulartz and Kunneman published a series of studies probing theoretical and practical issues raised by Habermas's theory of communicative action, and especially its central argument about the colonization of the lifeworld, as outlined in the previous

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[65] Boomkens, "Inleiding: Konfrontatie of spraakverwarring," 6.
[66] Concluding ellipsis in original. Ibid., 16.
[67] Jozef Keulartz, Chunglin Kwa, and Peter van Lieshout, "Wetenschap en Samenleving 'gedisciplineerd'? Een tussenbalans," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 9 (1982): 66-80.
[68] Jozef Keulartz, interview by author, Amsterdam, January 29, 2008.
[69] Kunneman, interview.

chapter. While both were convinced by the general argument, namely, that social pathologies arose from the problematic expansion of systemic imperatives into the spheres of everyday life, they viewed the actual workings of this colonization as underexamined in Habermas's work.

Despite their allegiance to Habermas's theory, Keulartz and Kunneman argued that its heuristic power could be sharpened by incorporating insights from other critical intellectual traditions, one-sided as they might be on their own. The variety of theoretical problems faced by critical social theory, broadly construed, required a diverse set of approaches:

> If there is one thing that the Kuhnian turn in the philosophy of science, and the related work of Lakatos and Feyerabend, has taught us, it is that theoretical progress in any area can only be achieved in a situation in which, in principle, the possibility exists to confront particular perspectives with alternatives and to expose them to competition.[70]

They sought to give concrete form to this theoretical exchange through particular case studies involving, for example, healthcare and the welfare state, each of which offered the possibility for analyzing both the disciplinary effects of power and its resistance, themes articulated above all by Foucault. This in turn would highlight the theoretical fecundity and political relevance of Habermas's work, while offering solutions for its weak spots.[71] Keulartz and Kunneman remained convinced that unmasking these distortions would facilitate the further rationalization of the lifeworld at the center of the Habermasian paradigm.

Kunneman's major 1986 work *De waarheidstrechter* (The truth funnel) turned increasingly to French thought to supplement the weaknesses he perceived in the practical realization of Habermas's project.[72] It was still fundamentally Habermasian in its argument and outlook—its subtitle was "a communicative-theoretical perspective on science and society"—and reflected Habermas's more "Germanic" and dense, sociologically-molded style of analysis rather than the playful style of French thought. Starting from Kuhn and the problem of scientific truth, the book traced the history of debates over positivism and epistemology since Auguste Comte before turning to Habermas and the theory of communicative action. His guiding metaphor of the "truth funnel" aimed to convey an idea similar to Habermas's critique of the ideology of technological thinking, namely, that ethical and political (*praktisch*) matters were eliminated from discussion, leaving only problems of calculation behind. As Kunneman framed the issue, the modes of scientific problem-solving in Western societies acted as a large funnel that trapped all possible problems and transformed them into problems of scientific rationality; this filtering process let "the objectifiable aspects of problems through and reduces the normative, expressive, and aesthetic aspects to an irrational, indigestible remainder" (*WT*, 10). He sought to reintegrate these aspects into a broader conception of rationality that would make visible those dimensions hidden by positivist modes of thought (*WT*, 11).

Kunneman argued, however, that at the empirical level, Habermas underestimated the potential obstacles to power-free discussion, particularly in the relation between social-scientific expertise and the broader discursive field, thus revising to some degree his previous confidence about the empirical existence of communicative learning processes in *Arbeid en interaktie*.

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[70] Harry Kunneman and Jozef Keulartz, introduction to *Rondom Habermas: Analyses en kritieken* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1985), 12.

[71] Ibid., 13.

[72] Harry Kunneman, *De waarheidstrechter: Een communicatietheoretisch perspectief op wetenschap en samenleving* (Amsterdam and Meppel: Boom, 1986). Hereafter cited as *WT* in the text.

Specifically, he drew on Foucault's analyses of modern power relations to point out the potential dangers inherent to social-scientific knowledge itself, a possibility that Habermas largely ignored. He admitted that Foucault's analyses were primarily "destructive" of rationalizing projects promising liberation, and acknowledged that Habermas himself had specifically attacked Foucault. Nonetheless, if one looked beneath the surface of this opposition, he argued, Foucault's theoretical style could be used as the methodological starting point for sketching a "performative" and reciprocal discourse at the heart of an alternative *kennisschema*, or framework of knowledge (*WT*, 348).

According to Kunneman, Foucault's analysis was necessary to account for the empirical insufficiencies in Habermas's framework. One of the problems that arose out of the Habermas-Gadamer debates in terms of the relationship between social science and the rationalization of the lifeworld was that the competency of social scientists is primarily cognitive, not normative or expressive, when in fact all three are necessary to correct misunderstandings in reciprocal exchanges of criticism (*WT*, 349-53). Moreover, despite Habermas's awareness that this symmetrical exchange, free of domination, was only a counterfactual ideal and not an empirical reality, his theory failed to show how this could be achieved under empirical conditions: "Even when Habermas had plausibly shown that the *possibility* for critique and revision on a symmetrical basis is implicit in the structure of communicative action, this still says nothing about the *factual realization* of the possibility under specific historical circumstances" (*WT*, 351). Specifically, he overlooked the very asymmetrical power that social science exercises in modern societies, as Kunneman's erstwhile colleague Hans Achterhuis had amply, perhaps even excessively, demonstrated.

At the empirical level, Habermas examined the colonization of the lifeworld by the steering mechanisms of money and power, but when he turned to the symbolic realm of interaction itself, his analysis stopped short. He assumed that the reproduction of the symbolic level could be freed from the danger of interference of strategic action; while inevitable, individual deviations within the lifeworld were not a threat, he claimed, because these actions had no constitutive meaning for the symbolic reproduction of modern societies (*WT*, 353). But in fact, the problem of latent strategic action remained within the symbolic sphere itself. Here, Kunneman argued, Foucault provided an alternative path toward a performative discourse that could surpass the problem of the primacy of cognitive truth by looking at the *productive* nature of power; this analysis allowed one to determine the concrete influence of strategic action in the lifeworld more effectively (*WT*, 357). By incorporating the role played by latent strategic action into Habermas's analytical framework and reformulating it from an "evolutionary" perspective, strategic action could be understood more concretely and empirically, rather than as a negative, contingent obstacle to the counterfactual ideal of communicative action:

> Since latent strategic action, insofar as it is not "unmasked," also passes through the offering and accepting of validity claims and thus leads to communal definitions of situations and successfully coordinates action, latent strategic action not only makes *use* of the sources of help that the lifeworld offers, but also *keeps the lifeworld in existence* (*WT*, 357).

Insofar as individuals and groups made strategic use of social resources in the lifeworld for "renewing and transforming [*vernieuwen en verversen*]" (*WT*, 357) society, these efforts should be interpreted positively in the reproduction of the lifeworld. One could thus find a place for the

function of latent strategic action and still hold on to the normative core of Habermas's theory. Without these insights, he argued, Habermas was unable to contribute any theoretical leverage to the problem of the articulation of new views at the cultural level, or to the institutionalization of the results from those articulations, or contribute to strengthening personal identities under the conditions of psychic oppression, all of which required a degree of strategic action under existing hierarchical power relations (*WT*, 358). Given the positive potential of Foucault's work for a still-normative project, Habermas had wrongly foreclosed on the social-critical potential of postmodernist ideas by labeling thinkers as "neo-conservatives" (*WT*, 373n8).

Kunneman therefore sought to bring these thinkers into productive relation by using Habermas's theory of rationality to interpret Foucault's theoretical practice and to use elements of Foucault's analysis of discipline and normalization to strengthen Habermas's social theory. When properly understood, the two figures could not only be compared side by side but also positively interpreted in terms of the other: "the reflexive status of Foucault's social theory can be interpreted in meaningful ways in Habermasian terms, insofar as Habermas has opened the path for the performative discourse through which Foucault has developed a performative model that has broken radically from the primacy of truth" (*WT*, 352). In other words, Kunneman argued, Habermas and Foucault were both articulating, from different positions, a pragmatist, anti-foundationalist discursive framework in which truth could only emerge performatively out of a dialogical situation; there was no truth prior to intersubjective speech, though of course Habermas was far more optimistic about the possibility of egalitarian exchange and understanding.[73]

Kunneman thus far remained committed to the fundamental aims of Habermas's project but increasingly sought to supplement the latter's claims of providing the necessary empirical concepts for conceptualizing and resisting the colonization of the lifeworld. Greater attention to human embodiment offered a crucial supplement to the primarily cognitive dimension of communication. Kunneman sought to uncover a strain in Habermas's work that located the potential for rational intersubjectivity not exclusively in the structures of language, thus

> paving the way for more constructive forms of dialogue between postmodern thinkers and those philosophers, who – like myself – are impressed and inspired by the heuristic power and the political importance of Habermas's communicative paradigm, but who do not wish for that reason to be shut off from the vital insights contained in present day postmodern thought.[74]

Drawing a parallel between Habermas and Adorno's concern for non-identical thinking, he defended Habermas against the charges that he intended to eliminate forms of difference in the name of universal reason; rather, his rational reconstructions aimed to preserve a space of freedom in which individuation and plurality could develop.[75] Moreover, Habermas was conscious of the contingency and limitations of his own project; in fact, there were several areas of his work in which he admitted that the motivations for communicative action were dependent

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[73] For a comparison of Foucault's conception of truth to the American pragmatists, see Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical,* trans. Edward Pile (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[74] Harry Kunneman, "Stretching Habermas," in *Enlightenments: Encounters between Critical Theory and Contemporary French Thought*, ed. Harry Kunneman and Hent de Vries (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993), 78.

[75] Ibid., 78-79.

on non-discursive sources. For example, the development of responsive life forms was a precondition for his rational discourse ethics, and he admitted a tension between the goal of furthering the unity of reason between the insights of expert cultures and everyday communication on the one hand and the "centrifugal," differentiating tendency of rational argumentation on the other.[76]

For Kunneman, however, Habermas had insufficiently analyzed the role of these non-discursive functions, which Kunneman sought to supplement using the example of Lyotard's concept of "the differend" and suggesting, in keeping with feminist critiques of the Enlightenment, that "the aforementioned tension in Habermas's work could be alleviated by taking into account the "'communicative' potential of the body" in the realm of non-sexual forms of bodily intimacy, such as the caress.[77] Kunneman's argument, therefore, represented an attempt to actualize Habermas's principles of communicative action by engaging it with seemingly irreconcilable theories that, by moving beyond "the philosophy of the subject," concretized the workings of power and its potential resistance in contemporary societies.

Around the same time, however, Kunneman and others also revisited the contributions of Horkheimer and Adorno in the context of an attempted rapprochement between "modern" and "postmodern" philosophical standpoints. For Kunneman and Hent de Vries, the ambivalent position of reason in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was highly suggestive for structuring a more productive encounter between modernism and its supposed adversary, postmodernism. As they argued, the text "articulates the extensive separation of rationality on the one hand and reconciliation and freedom on the other—but at the same time, this apparent fact is passionately attacked by Horkheimer and Adorno in the name of a normative perspective that was first clearly addressed in the conception of reason of the Enlightenment,"[78] a tension that they took to be characteristic of the contemporary opposition in critical theory. The reason, they suggested, was that both sides constructed a bogeyman out of the other tradition.[79]

Kunneman's contribution continued the line of interpretation begun in *De waarheidstrechter*, using the criticisms raised by poststructuralism to illuminate and counteract the weaknesses within the edifice of Habermas's theory, but now incorporating the insights of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Taking up Habermas's charge in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* that linked early Critical Theory and poststructuralism as Nietzschean abandonments of reason, Kunneman asked whether these critics pointed to the opposite blindness in Habermas's search for normative foundations, namely "a blindness to the overwhelming reality of structural oppression."[80] To be sure, he argued, much of Lyotard's criticism arose from a misunderstanding of Habermas's theory, which the latter rightly claimed was hardly oblivious to "the microphysics of power." Yet while this was true in principle, Kunneman argued, the actual analysis of this microphysics of power was a significant lacuna in Habermas's work.[81] This blindness was due to two theoretical claims: first, that the lifeworld would become transparent in modern societies, and second, that the colonization of the lifeworld by the system took the form of an "assimilation." These two theses, which contrasted modern societies to premodern societies

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[76] Ibid., 83-86.
[77] Ibid., 88.
[78] Introduction to Harry Kunneman and Hent de Vries, eds., *Die Aktualität der >Dialektik der Aufklärung<: Zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 1989), 10.
[79] Ibid., 11.
[80] Harry Kunneman, "*Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Mikrophysik der Macht und die Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns," in Kunneman and de Vries, *Die Aktualität der >Dialektik der Aufklärung<*, 152-53.
[81] Ibid., 153.

through the substitution of money and power for violence as steering mechanisms, thus closed off the conceptual possibility of structural violence in Habermas's critique of capitalism. The colonization of the lifeworld, then, was interpreted as merely a falsification of the specific contents of communicative processes, rather than the displacement of communication as such. In this respect, Habermas's analysis, even on the level of theory, was too optimistic about modern society: the theory of communicative action seemed to promise that if only the fragmentation of consciousness could be overcome through communicative reason, the colonization could be reversed, but this hope conflicted with the experience of most contemporary intellectuals. Kunneman thus sought some way to justice to both:

> Perhaps one could develop a problematic that would, on the one hand, do justice to the empirical adequacy of so-called postmodern experience, and on the other hand, hold fast to the conceptual advantage that the Habermasian theory of communicative action offers to us, particularly regarding the normative foundations of Critical Theory and the possibilities for practical learning processes.[82]

As we shall see, Kunneman's incorporation of poststructuralist insights would eventually weaken his confidence in the strength of Habermas's theory itself. But what of Adorno and Horkheimer's pre-linguistic-turn philosophy itself? How might its figures of thought be actualized and illuminated by a sustained philosophical dialogue with French thought?

Hent de Vries and the Critique of Secular Reason

Following the success of their conference on *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Kunneman and de Vries organized another international symposium in 1991 at the newly founded Universiteit voor Humanistiek or University of Humanist Studies in Utrecht, where Kunneman had become a professor and later served as rector. Here, the encounters between, or rather among, early and contemporary Critical Theory and different forms of poststructuralism previously referenced took center stage. Their joint introduction to the proceedings explicitly focused on the intellectual ethics underlying the exchange. Without eliding the real differences in these debates, was there not also an element of what Freud called a narcissism of minor differences at play? As the conference title suggested, the concept of enlightenment was no longer something to be categorically celebrated or denounced. Both the late Foucault and Derrida had taken up the "good old *Aufklärung*" in their own thought, whereas Habermas in fact understood enlightenment not as a completed edifice but as an unfinished project. As Habermas himself had argued in his remarks at the Utrecht symposium on his work several years earlier, "Contrary to the stereotype occasionally drawn of me, I would like to insist that I am by no means advocating a linear continuation of the tradition of the Enlightenment. After all, I have studied the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* just as intensively as others…."[83] As Kunneman and de Vries insisted, "excessive polarization and journalistic simplification have all too often come to dominate the scene and snuffed out, in advance, the possibility of its being opened up to something more than a caricaturing exchange of views from two sides of a supposedly fixed borderline."[84] The

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[82] Kunneman, "*Dialektik der Aufklärung*," 155-56.
[83] Habermas, "Remarks on the Discussion," 127.
[84] Hent de Vries and Harry Kunneman, introduction to Kunneman and de Vries, *Enlightenments*, 7.

internationally drawn participants were thus chosen not simply as representatives of different theoretical perspectives, but for their own willingness to question the limitations of their respective positions.

To take up enlightenment as a question again implied reflection upon the status of modern forms of reason—what Habermas called the "unity in the diversity of its voices"[85]—as well as its irreducibly "performative" dimensions, which were constitutive of any possible *practice* of enlightenment. Even in forms of intersubjective communication, they argued, following elements of Kunneman's earlier criticisms of Habermas, important elements of contingency, power, and rhetoric structured the performative dimension of discourse, which could not be even counterfactually bracketed. The actuality of these intellectual encounters, then, consisted in addressing not only the contemporary state of the modernism/postmodernism debates, but also in their attempts to grasp the present in the sense that Foucault claimed Kant signaled with his famous 1784 essay in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, answering the question, *Was ist Aufklärung?*[86] To be a contemporary *Aufklärer* required both a commitment to theoretical reflection and a vigilant reflexivity towards the empirical messiness of reason's performative contingencies, thus neither suppressing nor nihilistically celebrating reason's limitations: "it is only by acknowledging (and living) this paradox that we could hope to circumvent the unappealing choice between metaphysical objectivism or absolutism, on the one hand, and relativism or skepticism, on the other."[87] The encounters enacted by the various contributions to the symposium, de Vries and Kunneman suggested, pointed not to a perfect "mediation or [Gadamerian] *Horizontverschmelzung*" between theoretical positions, but rather toward concrete but always provisional points of intersection, particularly through the interplay or "movement" of theory's figures of thought.

This "opening" of thought and phenomenological attentiveness to the concrete convergences and divergences of thought was in fact the moving force behind de Vries's own scholarship, which emerged from a different intellectual formation from many of the thinkers considered thus far but represents this distinctive mode of creative philosophical exchange in exemplary fashion. De Vries's dissertation, written under Hendrik Johan Adriaanse at the University of Leiden, grew out of the rich, phenomenologically and hermeneutically informed tradition of philosophy of religion in the Netherlands, which was by and large intellectually removed from the political tumult of the late 1960s and 1970s. Published in German in 1989, *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*[88] became the first in a series of influential books on religion and modern European philosophy. Here, however, we will focus especially on his inaugural work, which most directly reflects his reading of Critical

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[85] Jürgen Habermas, "The Unity of Reason in the Diversity of Its Voices, in *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 115-48.

[86] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" trans. James Schmidt, and Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" trans. Kevin Paul Geiman, both in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 58-64 and 382-98.

[87] De Vries and Kunneman, introduction to *Enlightenments*, 9.

[88] Hent de Vries, *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*, trans. Geoffrey Hale (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), hereafter cited as *MT* in the text. I have used the revised and translated version, which he describes as his "first and last word" in a trilogy of books on religion that also includes *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) and *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). Interestingly, the original title addressed the issue of the *Aktualität* of their thought: *Theologie im pianissimo: Zur Aktualität der Denkfiguren Adornos und Levinas'* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989).

Theory and embodies de Vries's distinctive mode of actualizing intellectual dialogue by reading thinkers against the grain.

Minimal Theologies continued the trajectory of Kunneman's critical insights into the blind spots of Habermas's theory of communicative action, albeit in a deconstructive vain of extraordinary subtlety and complexity. Not unlike Lolle Nauta's methodological pursuit of "exemplary situations," de Vries sought out the motivating force underpinning Habermas's vast theoretical corpus and asked whether his dazzling breadth and systematicity did not obscure something crucial behind, or beyond, discursive or "dianoetical" reason, something that quietly gave it its *raison d'être*. This "noetical ferment," he would argue, was marked—historically, and perhaps structurally—by the theological tradition and played a constitutive role even in forms of "secular reason" that excluded questions about the Absolute from the space of intersubjective discourse. Habermas's detranscendentalizing move towards formal pragmatics, de Vries claimed, ultimately found itself reliant on this "other," which the "philosophical discourse of modernity" had placed, in Habermas's words, "under the determinations of insight and error."[89] Drawing on this remark from Habermas, de Vries asked,

> Given its preoccupation with the formal, the procedural, the discursive, the finite, and the fallible, can the theory of rationality and communicative action Habermas proposes convincingly claim to have confronted the "sphere of nonbeing and the mutable," from which it claims to take its leading, and perhaps most fundamental, inspiration (*MT*, 4)?

De Vries's argumentative strategy was not to dismiss Habermas as an imperialist of Enlightenment reason bent on excluding difference, but rather to demonstrate, via immanent critique, that the theory of communicative action relied implicitly upon an "other of reason," *ein Anderes der Vernunft*—a phrase intended to preserve the full ambiguity of its double-genitive form. That is to say, de Vries pointed to an element of thought that lay both *beyond* reason (*genitivus objectivus*), approaching radically the nonrational as reason's apparent opposite, and *within* reason itself (*genitivus subjectivus*) as a constitutive moment, without any decisive means for resolving the tension between these two conceptions (*MT*, 5). What de Vries called "minimal theology" circled around, or more precisely, "oscillated" between these two poles, refusing to fix or substantialize this idea or ferment in the manner of a positive metaphysics.

In order to develop the idea of this "other of reason" in terms that would not rely on such philosophically untenable forms of metaphysics, de Vries reintroduced the traditional religious notion of the Absolute, so key to German Idealism and its monotheistic inheritance, but gave it, following Habermas, a "postmetaphysical" twist. Seeking to avoid the commitment to a substantive notion of *Geist*, as in Hegel's philosophy, or a traditional understanding of God, neither of which could be sustained *philosophically*, that is, through discursive validity claims, de Vries sought to carve out the space for this "sphere of nonbeing" that was not empirically verifiable but nonetheless produced "encoded indications" that could be grasped in the movements of thought (*MT*, 5). Here de Vries drew on Levinas's (and Derrida's) concept of the "trace," which allowed a new way to think about the traditional Absolute:

[89] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 392n4.

> Such an absolute, which no longer either can or should resemble or represent the highest being—indeed, in a certain sense, which no longer "is"—might, I would suggest, best be called an *ab-solute*, in the etymological sense of the word (i.e., from the Latin *absolvere*, "to set free") (*MT*, 5).

In other words, minimal theology was neither a positive theology that would ground the qualities and existence of God, nor even a negative theology, the "…*idea* of a divinity purified of all anthropomorphism…" (*MT*, 612), but rather a *movement* of transcendence "which incessantly breaks away from any solid or definite context of meaning and action, judgment and expression" (*MT*, 6). What was vital for de Vries, then, was not the object of traditional theology, but the dynamic relationship between transcendence and immanence precipitated by the other or Other.

If this seemed far removed from the philosophical world of Habermas's mature thought, de Vries was nonetheless able to point to Habermas's own elaboration of what he called his theory's "conceptual motive" (*Gedankenmotiv*), in which some trace of the absolute might be found. In a 1981 interview, Habermas pointed to two essential sources of inspiration for his work: F. W. J. Schelling, about whom he had written his doctoral dissertation, as well as Protestant and Jewish traditions of mysticism; and, from his own experiences of intersubjective communication, the future-oriented intuition of a "sphere of relations with others" that aimed at the fragile "experiences of undisturbed subjectivity."[90] Both of these components of his *Gedankenmotiv*, the transcendent and the quotidian, formed a counterpoint to his assessment of the irreversible process of differentiation in modernity, what Weber famously called the "disenchantment of the world." Indeed, religious and secular thinkers alike had been compelled, since the Enlightenment, to regard God as "a kind of 'postulate,' an 'idea,' or 'the absolute other'" who "must logically assume a progressively 'unreal' place" (*MT*, 50). Yet even secular thinkers like Habermas experienced the fragmented quality of modernity as a kind of loss. While the world could not be re-enchanted—and should not be imagined as being so, given the dangers of communal, *gemeinschaftlich* yearnings—the motifs bequeathed by these two sources functioned on a more "existential" (*MT*, 8) level, operating behind the structures and concepts of his formal theory. De Vries argued, moreover, that while neither of these sources could be justified formally or rationally as foundational structures, they remained constitutive for Habermas's theory and therefore pointed necessarily—that is, *philosophically*—beyond it. These insights formed a crucial lacuna: "In order to be consistent and coherent, Habermas's theory must, paradoxically, at once acknowledge *and* seek to deny this lack" (*MT*, 15). Yet de Vries, as one might predict, saw this "contamination" not merely as negative, undermining the "philosophical project of modernity" from within, but as pointing productively towards an "alternative modernity," in which theological elements of "argument, vocabulary, and imaginary" might still find resonance (*MT*, 17). Citing Walter Benjamin, de Vries sought to "enlist the services of theology" (*MT*, 25) to pursue, through a series of readings, these traces of the Absolute, which could be rendered legible through the exemplary reorientations of thought pursued by his two protagonists, Adorno and Levinas.

This elaborate intellectual project was what de Vries called "minimal theology": flipping Habermas's critique of "performative contradiction" on its head, a minimal theology identified the elements of the "other of reason" exemplified in Habermas's "conceptual motive," dramatized them, and thereby gave them a kind of phenomenological "concretion" or even

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[90] Jürgen Habermas, *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews*, ed. Peter Dews (London: Verso, 1986), 124-25.

"materiality or singularity" (*MT*, 29). Thus, he wrote, "performative contradiction is taken to be not an avoidable and corrigible flaw in reasoning but a matter of principle, the very modus operandi of any principle, concept, argument, judgment, or expression, rather than an alibi for its irrelevance or demise" (*MT*, 29-30), because the figures of linguistic expression always exceeded the bounds of "pure" thought. De Vries turned to two primary figures to develop his notion of a philosophically modern theology "*im pianissimo*" that would be attentive to the traces of otherness within reason, from two distinctive philosophical traditions: the dialectician Adorno and the phenomenologically trained Levinas. Both, he argued,

> see a "noetical" ferment (or, again, idea) of the ab-solute or the infinite, together with "dia-noetical-discursive" rationality and judgment, as being necessary for the constitution and regulation of reasoned and responsible thought, action, and "spiritual experience [*geistige Erfahrung*]," of expressiveness and passivity, without which no human life (or, indeed, life as such) would seem worth living (*MT*, 39).

Framed in these terms, both sought to approach the other of reason—the noetical—but in terms faithful to rationality—the dia-noetical—such that its traces could be, if not grasped positively, at least outlined in the form of a "negative metaphysics" that avoided the mutually reductive pitfalls of traditional religion or modern scientism. Both the non-discursive and discursive moments, as Herbert Schnädelbach correctly observed about Adorno, were necessary for a postmetaphysical, minimal theology (*MT*, 149).[91]

In neither figure's thought, de Vries admitted, were the elements of a minimal theology fully articulated, but through his parallel readings of Adorno's and Levinas's texts, he sought to demonstrate how both brought out the aporetic moments at the core of their respective philosophical traditions. For Adorno, this took the shape of a "dialectical critique of dialectics," and for Levinas, a "phenomenological critique of phenomenology." Although they never addressed each other's work directly,[92] the two critiques could be read together as a projected encounter through the figure of a "chiasmus," in which their "respective procedures can be brought to a 'point of indifference' where . . . they momentarily connect, intersect, and then part ways again" (*MT*, 34). What their diffuse "critiques of secular reason" shared was a philosophical attentiveness to the materialization or "concretion" of the transcendent or "ab-solute," which was embodied in parallel and mutually complementary philosophical forms. De Vries's reconstruction of these parallels, moreover, had broader implications for interpreting contemporary divisions in continental philosophy: "the 'actuality' of this philosophy [negative metaphysics] resides not least in the fact that it escapes the vague characterizations and genealogies of present-day thought in terms of the traditional and posttraditional, metaphysical and postmetaphysical, modern and postmodern" (MT, 30). As I have examined the substantive

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[91] Herbert Schnädelbach, "Dialektik als Vernunftkritik: Zur Rekonstruktion des Rationalen bei Adorno," in Ludwig von Friedeburg and Jürgen Habermas, eds., *Adorno-Konferenz 1983* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 75. See also the discussion in Martin Jay, review of *Towards a New Manifesto*, by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, February 12, 2012, accessed April 23, 2012, http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/29021-towards-a-new-manifesto/.

[92] Levinas read (and disliked) Adorno's anti-Heideggerian work *The Jargon of Authenticity*, and Adorno mentioned Levinas's translation of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* in his *Against Epistemology*. See de Vries, *MT*, 39n67.

dimensions of de Vries's project of minimal theology in detail elsewhere,[93] in what follows, I shall concentrate especially on his philosophical methodology's implications for redefining the genealogy and actuality of these disparate modes of thought.

Before turning to his investigations of Adorno's and Levinas's entanglements with theology, de Vries used Habermas's work as a foil for differentiating his minimal theology from both classical theological approaches to the "science" of God, which lapsed into metaphysics, and from modern, empirical approaches to the science of "God," which bracketed the absolute beyond the reach of thought (*MT*, 51-55). Both of these alternatives, he argued, resulted in a "bisected" form of reason, borrowing a metaphor from Habermas's own contributions to the Positivist Dispute. Yet de Vries also turned this metaphor against Habermas's thought itself, particularly its claim to have, as Kunneman demonstrated, sidestepped the poststructuralist critique of consensus by becoming the "placeholder" or guardian of rationality in its detranscendentalized, discursive form.[94] De Vries argued that Habermas's vision of a rationalized lifeworld, in which the spheres and logics of science, morality, and art were properly differentiated and mediated through intersubjective reason, relied on figures of thought that were tied to the idea of the absolute. This reliance, de Vries argued,

> enables and destabilizes his theory *from within*. In proposing this admittedly deconstructive reading, I am not opting for an aestheticization of theory, nor do I think that "aesthetic assimilations" are ever at issue in Derrida's writings, as Habermas suggests in the unnecessarily polemical pages of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*…(*MT*, 89-90).

Drawing on Derrida's deconstructive approach, de Vries pointed to the pivotal role of metaphors in supplementing the formalizations of philosophy. He drew particular attention to Habermas's metaphor of the rationalized lifeworld as a "tangled mobile" (*Mobile, das sich hartnäckig verhakt hat*), highlighting the ambivalence and uncertainty at the center of his hermeneutics of everyday life (*Alltagshermeneutik*) (*MT*, 90). As Habermas himself was forced to admit,

> Since the whole life-world cannot be problematized all at once, or in toto, we are always left with an 'impure reason' [*verunreinigten Vernunft*]. The life-world seems to be marked by a structurally diffuse remainder that can never reach the level of articulation…stipulated by Habermas's formal pragmatic concept of rationality (*MT*, 97).

Specifically, the various idealizations of his theory, such as the "ideal speech situation," provided no means for addressing the asymmetry of concrete lifeworlds and of non-discursive "others," such as animals, and "hence, all other incarnations of otherness" (*MT*, 119). Of course Habermas recognized that the different elements of his theory, as "methodological fictions," were susceptible to a "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (*MT*, 115), yet he failed to recognize the resulting consequences of "undecidability" for his theory of rationality.

Ultimately, de Vries argued, the concept of the rationalized lifeworld was a counterfactual projection and remained an aporetic concept requiring the "negative metaphysical

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[93] Nicolaas P. Barr Clingan, "Hent de Vries and the Other of Reason," *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 15, no. 5 (2010): 549-63.

[94] Kunneman, *De waarheidstrechter*, 411; De Vries, *MT*, 74.

supplement" of the very figures of the absolute that the theory of communicative action found unassimilable. Yet, when understood against the grain of Habermas's own conception, this aporetic supplement "could only confirm the invaluable but restricted heuristic function of the rest of his theory's most fundamental presuppositions" (*MT*, 106-107). In other words, not unlike Kunneman, de Vries understood the blind spots of Habermas's theory not as fatal weaknesses in a supposed battle between enlightenment and its other, but as aporias whose theological and philosophical pursuit could yield, if not systematic integration, a more coherent, "un-bisected" conception of rationality.

On the other hand, de Vries also showed that when correctly understood, deconstruction's insistence upon "undecidability" did not collapse into relativism or aestheticism, as Habermas alleged. In fact, in keeping with the demands of "dia-noetical reason," Adorno, Levinas, and Derrida all maintained a certain fidelity to Logos in their pursuit of the "noetical ferment" beyond the limits set by Habermas's formal pragmatics. Adorno's and Levinas's minimal theology "is *in its conceptual and rhetorical movement* neither negativistic nor skeptical of reason per se" (*MT*, 594). Although Habermas's claim that the absolute survived only in the "liquefied" form of discursive procedures prematurely closed thought to the interpretive modes developed by Adorno and Levinas, de Vries's reading demonstrated how all four of these figures, despite their disparate approaches, could be brought together in what he called *Hermeneutica sacra sive profana*,

> a hermeneutic of the sacred…which is at the same time a hermeneutic of the profane: it is not too farfetched to see a certain commonality between the works of Adorno, Levinas, Habermas, and Derrida in this programmatic statement of an unending decipherment of the ab-solute (*MT*, 592).

Although this hermeneutic exceeded the bounds of Habermas's formal pragmatics, it was nonetheless compatible with it, and with the demands of the "philosophical discourse of modernity" in general, because it demanded, in contrast to mysticism or metaphysics, rational formalization and concretization; these movements, however, pushed beyond formal pragmatics by opening a space for critical judgments, rather than validity claims, about the "singular instances" or traces of the absolute. Whether this double chiasmus, as it were, of such disparate thinkers can be convincingly sustained is certainly open to debate.[95] There is no question, however, that de Vries's critical mastery and imaginative reading of their texts forged new pathways for exploring the vicissitudes of reason and its other in modern thought.

Conclusion

Because of their linguistic mastery of French and German, as well as the rapid translations and explications produced by publishers such as SUN and journals such as *Krisis*, many Dutch scholars were able to anticipate and perhaps even facilitate a provisional peace among the quarreling gods. Just as the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School and Habermas had served to challenge the dominant intellectual sensibilities of the 1960s and 1970s,

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[95] Peter Gilgen has criticized de Vries for attempting to synthesize the views of thinkers who, in Gilgen's view, are fundamentally incompatible. See his "The Deconversion of Hent de Vries," *Journal for Religious and Cultural Theory* 7, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 83-103.

poststructuralism provided the means for questioning the new academic respectability of Habermas's theory of communicative action, which, to some at least, appeared to cohere all too easily with the reasonableness and "realism" of the conservative political backlash of the 1980s. Yet for others, such as Keulartz and Kunneman, poststructuralism, and especially Foucault's work, yielded an analytical framework for grasping empirically Habermas's key thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld. Whatever one's theoretical allegiances, the Dutch discourse of actuality often worked to prevent the kind of "abstract negation" that frequently governed the attacks on either side of the modernism/postmodernism debates. Taking stock of the debates around their zenith, or perhaps more accurately, their nadir, Boomkens declared that the discussion had reached a dead-end, or perhaps become simply meaningless.[96] What Foucault called the "ontology of the present" required more than journalistic soundbites and political accusations. Nor could one simply split the difference; one needed concrete analyses for testing these theories' actuality, rather than a kind of Icarian view at the level of pure philosophy. Rather than declare oneself for or against modernity, or still less, for or against reason, the actualization of different theoretical perspectives, Boomkens suggested, "allows us to expand our own space to play in relation to and *with* [different] rationalities."[97]

How did the Dutch reception of poststructuralism compare to those in Germany and America? The German case is somewhat vexing, as the example of the prestigious but largely ignored Suhrkamp translations of Foucault illustrates. As Robert Holub notes, "if we considered just the number of translations and the promptness of their translation, we would have to conclude that German intellectuals have had a *greater* opportunity to acquaint themselves with poststructuralism than theorists in the United States."[98] This is especially true because, as scholars such as Vincent Descombes have shown, German thinkers from Hegel to Heidegger were ubiquitous sources of inspiration for twentieth-century French thought.[99] Holub advances several causes that help to explain the absence of a reciprocal German reception of contemporary French thought, some of which were quite contingent but consequential nonetheless.[100] First, poststructuralism did not find a group of influential advocates in Germany analogous, for example, to the "Yale School" of deconstruction (Paul de Man, Geoffrey Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller). Second, the number of available positions for younger German academics declined sharply, whereas in the United States, despite pressures in the job market, poststructuralism was given a certain prestige, or at least a fashionability in a variety of fields in the humanities that gave it an institutional foothold. Third, and most revealingly, some of poststructuralism's German precursors, such as Nietzsche, and especially, Heidegger, were (with perhaps good reason) politically suspect in postwar Germany. Moreover, those scholars who did absorb poststructuralism in their work, especially Norbert Bolz, Werner Hamacher, and Friedrich Kittler, indulged in the kind of linguistic play that prompted a harsh and perhaps prejudicial reaction from most critics: "the playfulness of these early German poststructuralist texts served only to reinforce the prejudices harbored against the 'frivolity' of French theory in the critical establishment."[101]

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[96] René Boomkens, "Is alles hetzelfde of is alles anders? Over modernisten en postmodernisten," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 22 (1986): 39.

[97] Ibid., 48.

[98] Holub, *Crossing Borders*, 40.

[99] Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

[100] Holub, *Crossing Borders*, 40-43.

[101] Ibid., 46.

Many American readers, to be sure, bristled similarly at poststructuralism's more egregious linguistic contortions, but in many ways, the Dutch and American receptions contrasted similarly from the German reception. As the "American philosopher" Martin Jay noted in a 1987 interview with *Krisis*, in response to a question about the modernism-postmodernism debates and the Dutch tendency to search for intermediate positions, "In 'open' philosophical communities such as the Dutch and the American, where different philosophical traditions coexist, there is always a risk of a kind of intellectual opportunism. But in this case it is worth the risk."[102] Unlike the American reception, however, which chiefly took place in literature and humanities departments, rather than departments of philosophy, the Dutch reception stimulated a wide variety of creative philosophical approaches and fostered new encounters that reinvigorated Dutch philosophy amidst a political era of "new realism." Through sympathetic reading and familiarity with the public example of figures such as Foucault, moreover, Dutch philosophers discerned (or to some degree projected) the political actuality of poststructuralist thought. For the Left, it offered new tools for concrete, micrological analyses beyond the traditional focuses of class and state power, as well as new ways to theorize and even mobilize resistance. The discourse of actuality, in turn, rendered Habermas's polemical accusation of "neoconservatism" largely unconvincing, leaving open the possibility of new encounters with the tradition of Critical Theory.

This dialogical openness could lead to surprising changes in philosophical outlook. Kunneman's work through the early 1990s, as we have seen, was faithful to the paradigm developed by Habermas while seeking to incorporate insights from poststructuralism into a concrete analysis of the pathologies of modern society. The 1991 German translation of his *De waarheidstrechter* has been praised by one observer as "one of the most stimulating and creative commentaries on Habermas's recent work,"[103] and Habermas himself affirmed some of Kunneman's criticisms, such as the need to update his critique of the role of science and technology under capitalism from the 1960s as an aspect of the material reproduction of the lifeworld.[104] Moreover, Habermas's theory, when fine-tuned through Kunneman's empirical revisions of the colonization thesis, continued to prove useful for analyzing contemporary problems. For example, the refusal of the Dutch government to ban an insecticide produced in the Netherlands, despite new tests proving its danger to humans and animals in the mid-1980s, showed how strategic imperatives—in this case, economic profit—precluded *a priori* any rational deliberation, suggesting the need for greater empirical attention to the constitutive role of external social factors in the reproduction of the lifeworld.[105]

Increasingly, however, Kunneman became disenchanted with Habermas's theory. The concern for the body evident in much of poststructuralist thought no longer seemed like a way of

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[102] Frans Geraedts, "Socialisme, dekadentie en filosofie: Een gesprek met de amerikaanse filosoof Martin Jay," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 28 (1987): 133. The interview appeared in Dutch translation, which I have rendered back into English. On the mistaken professional attribution of "philosopher" rather than "intellectual historian," see also Jay, "Can There Be National Philosophies?" 162-63.

[103] William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 115.

[104] Harry Kunneman, "Some Critical Remarks on Habermas's Analysis of Science and Technology," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (1990): 117-25. Habermas responded, "I am so much in agreement with Kunneman's arguments that I only wish to add a short remark" contextualizing his critique of the dominant 1960s technocratic discourse. "Today Kunneman's theories make sense to me," he concluded. Habermas, "Remarks on the Discussion," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (1990): 132.

[105] Kunneman, "Some Critical Remarks," 123-24.

"stretching Habermas" from within, but as a glaring and potentially debilitating blind spot. The "forceless force of the better argument" that lay at the heart of Habermas's counterfactual ideal of rational communication relied, despite the turn from the transcendental subject of traditional philosophy to intersubjective, everyday language, upon rational subjects capable of recognizing this force. But this assumption, Kunneman argued, obscures one's

> view of the particularity of the persons concerned, of the significance of their unique biographies and the meaning of the specific narrative context from which they think, feel, and act. In this manner, the concrete questions, interests, and needs that are responsible for the measures by which they are shaped, and convinced through the ideas, opinions, and arguments that come forward in the sphere of conversations and discussions, disappear from view.[106]

Viewed empirically at both the societal level of the colonization of the lifeworld and the material, embodied level of the individual subject, the promise of the rationalization of the lifeworld, which had been so convincing for the early Kunneman, now appeared thwarted. Why, he began to ask, were individuals so susceptible to the distortions of communication? Foucault's analysis of the production of subjectivity answered this question in ways that rendered Habermas's metaphor of colonization inadequate. But, surprisingly, it was Kunneman's exploration of Lyotard that fundamentally altered his philosophical outlook. Lyotard's concept of the "the unattuned" from *The Differend* suggested, for Kunneman, the myriad dimensions of human subjectivity for which Habermas's heavily cognitive emphasis had little to offer.[107] Upon taking his professorship at the University of Humanist Studies in Utrecht, Kunneman increasingly turned away from the conventional academic forms of philosophical debate, seeking instead to develop and teach what he called "postmodern humanism" to non-academic professionals.[108]

De Vries, on the other hand, took a much different route, expanding his institutional bases from the University of Amsterdam's philosophy department to the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, which he founded with Mieke Bal, and subsequently to the Johns Hopkins University and the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris. In his capacity as the lead organizer for the ongoing "The Future of the Religious Past" research program, massively funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NOW) and through his other influential studies in the philosophy of religion, de Vries accomplished most successfully the deprovincialization of Dutch philosophy to which the founders of *Krisis* had aspired. His philosophical concerns, moveover, anticipated Habermas's own turn to the issues of "post-secularism": in his discussion with the future Pope Benedict XVI at the Catholic Academy of Bavaria in 2004, Habermas surprised his audience by affirming the "semantic potential" of religious traditions *sans* translation into rational validity claims, as he had long advocated.[109]

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[106] Harry Kunneman, *Voorbij het dikke-ik: Bouwstenen voor een kritisch humanisme* (Amsterdam: Humanistics University Press and Uitgeverij SWP, 2006), 43.

[107] Kunneman, interview.

[108] Harry Kunneman, *Humanisme, postmodernisme en het deskunkologische regime* (Utrecht: University for Humanist Studies [Universiteit voor Humanistiek], 1990).

[109] Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006). See also Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

In concluding, however, it is worth stepping back into the Dutch context and to *Krisis*, which merged with the journal *Kennis en methode* in 2000 and took on the latter's subtitle, becoming *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor empirische filosofie* (Journal for empirical philosophy). The fourth issue of the refashioned journal featured a dossier on de Vries's *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (1999), with comments from, among others, his friend and interlocutor, Harry Kunneman. Kunneman praised the book's erudition and magisterial interpretations, but raised two fundamental criticisms concerning the actuality of religion and academic philosophy. First, in de Vries's turn to religion, he argued, "the 'living word,' the narrative, evocative, and inspirational dimension at the center of practical theology, disappears from view and becomes replaced with cognitive insight into quasi-transcendental structures, inescapable aporia, and multiple ellipses."[110] In other words, de Vries's reorientation of philosophy to religion had the curious effect of de-concretizing lived religious experience into philosophical structures. In response, de Vries noted, with an ironic appeal to Habermas, that as an academic, he had no interest in preaching to others about religious experience or concepts of the good. Nonetheless, he insisted that the boundaries between concrete, practical issues and philosophical reflection were permeable and "undecidable": "One can never exclude the possibility that precisely the analysis of abstract concepts and formal structures can have a certain practical consequence—for individual existence and the public sphere—and thus mirror a process of social abstraction (which is not necessarily 'bad')."[111] As Adorno had put it at the beginning of *Negative Dialectics*, with its miscarried realization, "philosophy is obliged ruthlessly to criticize itself."[112] Thus, de Vries continued, Adorno determined that "a renewed reflection upon theory and the 'waste of abstraction' is the most practical—and the most responsible and critical—task for us 'to do.'"[113]

Second, Kunneman focused on de Vries's fundamental ambivalence regarding the descriptive versus normative status of the return of the religious, expressed as the ongoing process of "non-synonymous substitutions" for the transcendent. De Vries saw Kunneman's question on this issue as the most trenchant reaction his work received:

> is there really something like "the" place of religions, a constant place that could be replaced by "something else," or is "the place" of religions inextricably marked by the particularities and historical features of "the religious;" and is the (eventual) displacement of "religion" one not only of substitution but of transformation?[114]

Was "the religious," in other words, really here to stay, a permanent possibility, or might religion be sublated or marginalized through the process of secularization? Kunneman felt that these questions were beyond the purview of de Vries's philosophical practice, which explained his apparent lack of interest in the social sciences. To deal with the most "actual," contemporary problems, one needed to examine, in the quasi-Habermasian terms he developed in *De*

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[110] Harry Kunneman, "De kus van de dementor," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor empirische filosofie* 1, no. 4 (2000): 38.

[111] Hent de Vries, "Horror religiosus," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor empirische filosofie* 1, no. 4 (2000): 50-51.

[112] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 3.

[113] De Vries, "Horror religiosus," 51. Walter Benjamin commented in 1937 on Adorno's *Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie* (*Against Epistemology*) that one must "cross the frozen waste of abstraction to arrive at concise, concrete philosophizing." Cited in Adorno's preface to *Negative Dialectics*, xix.

[114] Kunneman, "De kus van de dementor," 39.

waarheidstrechter, the empirical zones of interference between the system and lifeworld, above all the social functions of professional expertise and the interconnection of capitalism and technology. Kunneman doubted that thinking philosophically through "the religious" had much to offer in terms of understanding the most "urgent and practical" issues that shaped subjectively individuals' concrete existences, especially in the overwhelmingly secular context of the Netherlands.[115] De Vries conceded that he found the question of the place of religion's possible substitution or transformation an indeterminate one, but he questioned Kunneman's prognosis about the persistent actuality of religion. As Kant had suggested during the Enlightenment in *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), religion might well play an irreducible, intermediary role within the exercise of reason. *Pace* Kunneman, de Vries insisted, "This situation is still—or once again—our own."[116] Perhaps neither man, however, could quite imagine how prescient de Vries's wager would be, not least in the Netherlands.

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[115] Kunneman, "De kus van de dementor," 40.

[116] De Vries, "Horror religiosus," 52.

Conclusion

Actuality and thought—more precisely the Idea—are usually opposed to one another in a trivial way, and hence we often hear it said therefore that, although there is certainly nothing to be said against the correctness and truth of a certain thought, still nothing like it is to be found or can actually be put into effect. Those who talk like this, however, only demonstrate that they have not adequately interpreted the nature either of thought or of actuality.[1]

—G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic* (1830)

The idea of truth transcends positivity.[2]

—Theodor W. Adorno, in conversation with Max Horkheimer (1956)

The previous chapters have shown how the reception of Critical Theory in the Netherlands was both enabled and shaped by the contexts of Dutch political, cultural, and intellectual life. While this reception has not gone unnoticed, it has often been treated as being of limited significance within the confines of academic disciplines such as sociology, or as having provided merely symbolic ammunition in the ostensibly generational revolt of the 1960s. The intellectual and political receptions traced here, however, demonstrate that Critical Theory played a pivotal role, if diffuse and often ambivalent, in framing, and at times, even mobilizing the energies for the dramatic transformations of Dutch history in the mid to late twentieth century. The Netherlands's geographical and linguistic proximity to Germany was not incidental to the reception process, for having been occupied under the Nazi regime and then acting as a partner to the Federal Republic, the countries' historical developments and dilemmas in the postwar period were interconnected, as were the critical responses they generated. The Critical Theorists' interventions into the debates of German society, while naturally oriented to Germany's unique challenges in addressing its recent past, also raised issues that all societies in capitalist welfare states faced: technocratic elitism, alienating consumerism and individualism, the threats of the Cold War, the democratization of the universities, and so on. As initial Dutch antipathies towards Germans gradually thawed and the cultural boundaries between the two countries became permeable, it is not surprising that Critical Theory found resonance in the Netherlands.

On the other hand, the reception of a set of ideas is always shaped by the contexts in which it takes place, which affect not only the relative breadth and depth of these resonances, but also their particular interpretations and inflections, or even the resistances to them. The case of Andries Sternheim, whose lack of philosophical education makes him a somewhat idiosyncratic example, is nonetheless indicative of a fundamental tension with the premises and claims of Critical Theory in its classical formulation under Horkheimer's directorship of the Institute of Social Research. The line of argumentation that not only situates Critical Theory in the context

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[1] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences, with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), 214.

[2] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Towards a New Manifesto*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 5.

of the revolutionary failures of the German working class and the subsequent rise of fascism, but further takes these experiences to have permanently distorted the Frankfurt School's perspectives on modernity, is certainly open to debate. It is clear, however, through Sternheim's personal example as a product of the "cultural socialism" he espoused, and through his international orientation to the developments and setbacks of the workers movement, that the other members of the Institute underestimated the movement's achievements and the crucial safeguards of liberal democracy. Their pivotal experience of American exile would lead them to revalue the latter, but the Frankfurt School's hopes for humanity's emancipation within existing Western societies always remained less sanguine than Sternheim's had been. Sternheim's critique of the shift to the paradigm of Critical Theory around 1937, I have argued, is an early articulation of the discourse of actuality that framed Dutch intellectuals' expectations for the making of a rational society. Despite the economic and political setbacks of the 1920s and 1930s, the emergence of new forms of capitalist manipulation in the organization of leisure time, and the growth of fascism, which he had anticipated more clearly and accurately than his Frankfurt School counterparts, Sternheim remained committed to the scientific certainty that historical progress had been achieved and would continue to grow. The Holocaust brought not only his tragic murder at the hands of the Nazis, but a profound challenge to the hopes he bore.

In the postwar reconstruction of the Netherlands, the sciences promised to many across the political spectrum that through political compromise and top-down steering by the elites, society would again take a rational course. This technocratic vision was challenged by small numbers of artists and intellectuals in the 1950s and by large numbers of students in the 1960s. For many of these individuals, Critical Theory provided the intellectual tools with which to challenge the dominant, positivistic function of the sciences and the hierarchy of the educational system. In the international context of the 1960s, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas enjoyed widespread popularity and readership, which was due not only to the transnational circulation of people and ideas, but because these ideas spoke to the pressing demands for the democratization of the universities, the production of knowledge, and society more generally. Dutch society was radically transformed in this period, and the concerns and concepts articulated by both generations of Critical Theorists played no small part in both raising these questions and proposing ways of answering them that fundamentally challenged the social and political structures of the postwar project of *vernieuwing* or modernization and renewal.

The "long 1970s" brought political splintering and some degree of academicization, yet here too the distinctive context of the Netherlands gave Critical Theory, primarily in its Habermasian guise following the reception of the Positivist Dispute, a remarkable degree of actuality. In contrast to the conservative retrenchment that took place elsewhere, the Netherlands had a dynamic political atmosphere in which parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forces often worked in tandem to prompt progressive change at the levels of policy and civil society more widely. Even after the fall of the progressive cabinet of Joop den Uyl (1973-1977), what became known as the "new social movements," organized around such issues as environmentalism, feminism, and gay rights, continued to facilitate mass political participation and to exert political pressure. Whereas Sternheim had defended the Institute's original program of interdisciplinary materialism because of its commitment to the development of a critical theory of society on the basis of the most contemporary advances in the humanistic and social sciences, Dutch scholars looked to Habermas's emergent theory of communicative action for its ability to understand the distortions of contemporary society and their potential resolution through the activities of the new social movements, the bearers of critical rationality. For the leading members of the Dutch

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Critical Theory Workgroup, this embodiment of communicative action formed an empirical sign of communicative reason's actuality, and they incorporated Habermas's theory pragmatically into their own work in several fields of applied ethics. For the critic Lolle Nauta, conversely, the actuality of modern progress meant that even Habermas's Critical Theory was too speculative, because of his theory's residual reliance on dialectics. Although his interpretations of Habermas were at times problematic, Nauta's later critique of Dutch philosophers' roles as business ethics "consultants" showed that the notion of discursive co-determination or *zeggenschap* could be watered down to the point where it actually served to legitimate the contemporary consensus, rather than critically problematize it.

The potentially conformist implications of Habermas's orientation towards consensus also drew the ire of a slightly younger generation of philosophers, who founded the upstart journal *Krisis* in 1980. The splintering of Marxism over the course of the 1970s had prompted a search for new theoretical guides for radical politics, which was filled initially by Althusser, who seemed to promise a new form of scientific Marxism. The turn away from German thinkers and towards France inaugurated a broad reception of poststructuralist thought, beginning with Foucault, whose analysis of power offered a new way to theorize political resistance. As the journal's interests expanded, this mode of reception, moreover, opened up new ways to think about the contemporary debates between modernists such as Habermas and so-called postmodernists such as Derrida. The Dutch discourse of actuality shifted the terms of the debate from the validity of abstract propositions (or journalistic political accusations) to the concrete analysis of the problematic of modernity, which anticipated the guarded rapprochement later pursued by Habermas and Derrida. This sympathetic mode of intellectual confrontation or *Auseinandersetzung* became especially evident in the work of Harry Kunneman, who used Foucauldian insights to investigate the concrete actuality of Habermas's thesis of the "colonization of the lifeworld," and in the work of his friend Hent de Vries, who showed how deconstructive insights clarified the underlying impulse behind Habermas's postmetaphysical conception of rationality, an impulse that pointed to what he called the "other of reason." The philosophical "minimal theology" which led from this insight to the metaphysical subtleties of Adorno and Levinas would prove to anticipate Habermas's own rethinking of the issues of religion and secularization in modernity—issues which soon took on dramatic actuality of their own in the Netherlands at the close of the twentieth century.

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In tracing the reception of Critical Theory from its beginnings in the 1930s through its entanglements with postmodernism in the 1980s, we seem to have come very far from the cultural socialism of Sternheim. But while the political issues confronted by critical intellectuals changed, and in turn, their responses to them, the discourse of actuality persistently shaped the important but uneasy role played by Critical Theory, particularly in its classical guise. Here it is instructive to turn once again to Nauta, whose ambivalence towards the premises of Critical Theory, from Adorno and Marcuse in the 1960s to Habermas in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, has been so indicative of the theoretical matrix in which its reception took place. In a discussion of PvdA's 1977 political program, of which he was one of the primary authors, Nauta returned once again to his critique of Marcuse. The degree to which his objections to Critical Theory echo those made by Sternheim exactly forty years prior is striking. Like Sternheim, Nauta attributed

Marcuse's pessimism to the dashed hopes for the proletariat as a revolutionary, collective historical subject:

> Marcuse's claim that the average worker is encapsulated (in consumer society) is certainly incorrect. He starts from the unproven presupposition that something exists to be encapsulated: that there was in fact an "awake" consciousness within the working class that has been finally subdued through the temptations of the welfare state. It appears that Marcuse—along with various other cultural philosophers—regards the worker as a mini-intellectual who, by means of a kind of "overfeeding" (through advertising and other forms of manipulation) couldn't keep his critical eyes open.[3]

Nauta was a sufficiently optimistic socialist to believe that it was neither manipulation by the Culture Industry nor the compensations of the welfare state that was responsible for the integration of the working class, but rather a failure to provide the possibilities for cultural emancipation that would allow individual self-development in the first place. The ever-growing gap between socialist intellectuals and workers could in fact be overcome through a radical commitment to social equality, in opposition to mere liberal freedom. A variant of Sternheim's cultural socialism was for Nauta still a fully viable project:

> No, Marcuse's answer is flat wrong. He neglects to analyze the appearance of the socialist parties (the social democrats not excepted) who in fact have not yet offered their constituents the possibility of emancipation…. One cannot yet speak of their *cultural emancipation*…. Scarcely any party is in the position to formulate a socialist cultural ideal, to say meaningful things about socialist upbringing, or, regarding the content of socialist education, to do more than impute a few social-critical generalities.[4]

By contrast, Nauta sought to concretize these mere generalities through a robust political and cultural program whose moment had only just arrived in the course of the den Uyl cabinet. To be sure, the conditions of the intervening decades had introduced a new set of problems of global magnitude for socialist politics. Neither environmental degradation and the limits to economic growth, nor global disparities of wealth could be addressed under the socialists' post-1959 reconciliation with capitalism, which sought only to mitigate its more negative effects. But the new global challenges had only made the task of socialist reform more urgent. Thus, Nauta wrote, "one can say that the growth problematic has actualized the socialist principle. The necessity of a redistribution of knowledge, power, and incomes (and certainly labor too) becomes even more acute in the light of this new contradiction."[5]

What became of this confident belief in the actualization of the socialist principle? Although the so-called Purple Coalitions, two cabinets without the Christian parties led by PvdA's Wim Kok beginning in 1994, seemed to some to promise a liberal "third way" and a thawing of the conservative 1980s, Kok himself inaugurated a new brand of "end of ideology" politics, just as had been done after World War II. Increasingly frustrated, Nauta abandoned the

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[3] Lolle Nauta, "Over gelijkheid en solidariteit (notities bij het koncept-beginselprogramma)," in *Demokratisch socialisme in Nederland: Over de beginselen van de PvdA*, ed. Wouter Gortzak (Amsterdam: Wiardi Beckman Stichting, 1977), 29.
[4] Ibid., 30.
[5] Ibid., 23-24.

party whose platform he had helped shape twenty years earlier, calling the current PvdA "visionless" and declaring his sympathy for the *GroenLinks* (Green-Left) party in 1998.[6] What had begun as an ambitious hope to transform the Netherlands into an enlightened, emancipated, and cosmopolitan country of guidance (*gidsland*), while not without lasting effects, had been cut short. Worse still, several influential intellectual figures, formerly of the Left—including Nauta's own former junior colleague, Pim Fortuyn—had joined rhetorical forces with conservative critics of the leftist elite's alleged "cultural relativism," decrying the religious backwardness of immigrants who had been allowed to overrun the country without conforming to the values of "Dutch civilization" (*de Nederlandse beschaving*). As Nauta noted dryly, "Here one is so concerned about seeming politically correct that it has meanwhile become politically correct to be politically incorrect."[7]

Nauta was hardly the only figure on the left to feel that the political situation in the Netherlands had become disjointed, particularly in the wake of Fortuyn's murder in 2002 and Theo van Gogh's murder in 2004, as the cosmopolitanism of the 1970s *gidsland* ideal seemed to unravel. While the historian's epistemological modesty precludes any predictions for the future, one hopes that the prognosis of Frederik van Gelder, a Dutch-born, contemporary associate of the Institute of Social Research, is correct: "…I have no doubt that in some form or other the old 'politics of pacification' will once again come into effect."[8] Yet as van Gelder explained to his audience in Frankfurt in 2005, the actualities of the globalized contemporary world held consequences with which the new defenders of secular Enlightenment in the Netherlands needed to come to terms, in order to avoid a polarization that might imperil enlightenment's own fragile gains under modernity and betray the Netherlands's best legacies:

> It is this which is meant by the notion that "Enlightenment" is subject to a "dialectic" which can turn it into its "opposite"—a warning which Horkheimer and Adorno formulated during their time of exile in the United States, and which was published in Amsterdam, the age-old haven for refugees and intellectuals, as soon as this became possible in 1947. It is not the worst inspiration for those who now wander these streets, sixty years later, trying to understand the direction which this old continent has now taken.[9]

Towards a Dutch Critical Theory? The Immanence of Empirical Philosophy

In the introduction, I cited Edward W. Said's claim in "Traveling Theory" that the reception of a theory beyond its original context of emergence is not just a matter of how ideas are transformed when taken up in new contexts, but also provides a critical distance that allows us to measure the original theory "against subsequent places where the theory turns up for use."[10]

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[6] Lolle Nauta and Rudi van den Hoofdakker, "Is de PvdA nog wel fatsoenlijk? Sociaal-democratische politiek behoort door de ogen van de ander naar de samenleving te kijken," *De Volkskrant*, April 27, 1998.

[7] Lolle Nauta, *Ik denk niet na: Kwesties en pretenties in de filosofie* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2002), 59.

[8] Frederik van Gelder, "Jihad behind the dikes—The end of the postwar period in the Netherlands," unpublished manuscript presented at the Institute of Social Research, Frankfurt am Main, September 12, 2005, accessed April 28, 2012, http://www.amsterdam-adorno.net/Jihad.html.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1982): 59.

What conclusions, then, can we draw about Critical Theory itself from its Gadamerian "history of effects" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) in the Netherlands, particularly concerning the contentious debates among adherents of the first and second generations of Critical Theorists?

As we saw, the journals *Krisis* and *Kennis en methode* joined forces in 2000 to create *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor empirische filosofie*, a sublation of the former's title and the latter's subtitle. The concept, or rather, practice of "empirical philosophy" was developed over the previous decade, primarily among philosophers who had worked in the orbit of Nauta at the University of Groningen. In the *Festschrift* for Nauta's retirement in 1994, Annemarie Mol offered an aphoristic introduction to the themes of empirical philosophy—in musical terms, its "undertones and overtones." Mol sought to uncover the immanent relation between theory and the empirical, asserting that rather than being opposed to each other as traditionally understood, with primacy given to one (rationalism) or the other (empiricism), both were in fact co-originary. All theory, on the one hand, is derived from specific, contingent realities: the localized context in which it is formulated, such as the Parisian cafes of Sartre's existentialism, or less obviously, through individual experiences, such as Foucault's difficulties as a homosexual in 1950s France; these, she claimed, had motivated Foucault's diverse, historical critique of forms of normalization from the beginning of his career, even when it dealt with seemingly distant phenomena and historical periods.[11] These realities formed what Nauta, drawing on the work of his mentor Helmuth Plessner, had called philosophy's "exemplary situations," those decisive moments of the empirical that became generalized into formal theories while concealing their contingent origins. One task of empirical philosophy, then, was to move in reverse, in a genealogical manner, to reveal the hidden, normatively-laden undertones of theoretical models:

> Within theoretical texts lies the empirical. Philosophy is a Trojan horse. In its wooden stomach it holds hordes of [*bevat ze legers aan*] conditions, situations, movements. Once the horse is brought inside the walls, the actualities [*werkelijkheden*] that are packed into exemplary situations, models, and illustrations sneak out of its stomach, laden with norms. Where do they go? Into the city. Language. Thought.[12]

Theory was therefore "always already" contaminated by the empirical, inflected by the exemplary situations from which philosophy emerged. The implicit norms carried by the empirical actualities, furthermore, made their way into broader structures and practices of linguistic and cultural life, exploiting the thoroughly permeable boundary between theory and reality.

On the other hand, the empirical world could be understood simultaneously as embodying philosophy in a material fashion. That is, philosophy's constituent parts resided immanently in existing social structures and practices, which are formalized in thought. In a more positive fashion, the empirical world had a generative power that produced the conceptual and normative means for theoretical reflection. This dimension was visible especially in philosophers' usage of illustrations. Whereas philosophical illustrations are often thought to be extemporaneous examples, Mol argued that they were the narrative forms that made the articulation of a theory possible in the first place. As narratives, these empirical descriptions

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[11] Annemarie Mol, "Ondertonen en boventonen: Over empirische filosofie," in *Burgers en vreemdelingen: Opstellen over filosofie en politiek*, ed. Dick Pels and Gerard de Vries (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1994), 77-78.

[12] Ibid., 82.

carried with them particular morals; the "philosopher-narrator," moreover, figured into the story herself as its protagonist.[13] Empirical philosophy, she suggested, would untangle philosophers' insights from the empirical forms in which their work was enmeshed, so as to achieve a degree of autonomy for both theory and the empirical:

> *Empirical philosophy* attempts to emancipate descriptions of the world from the theoretical claims that they conceal. And emancipates, in turn, philosophical discoveries from the empirical material in which they are sunk. It democratizes the relationship between theory and actuality [*werkelijkheid*]. At least: in the text. Empirical philosophy is textual politics [*tekstpolitiek*].[14]

The promise of democratizing the relationship between philosophy and the empirical was suggestive but rather unclear. If empirical descriptions could be separated analytically from philosophy, what exactly did either stand to gain from a new form of "textual politics"? Did the attempt to reconstruct philosophy's "exemplary situations" in terms of certain figures' life challenges not risk playing into a cruder form of psychological reductionism? And did such a disclosure not give the empirical the upper hand, and therefore primacy to the merely given?

Mol returned to the theme in the first issue of the reconfigured *Krisis* journal, specifying in greater detail how empirical philosophy sought to differentiate itself from mere empiricism, or "the regime of facticity."[15] By contrast, empirical philosophy emphasized the mutual entanglement of philosophy, language, and worldly activity, and therefore philosophy's "situatedness" and language's "performativity." The implication, she claimed, is that philosophy's pretension to stand over and against the empirical world was illusory: "transcendence is impossible." To take philosophy's situatedness seriously meant to ask: "what can it mean to be thought through, lived through, worked through, immanent *through and through*—yet still philosophy?"[16]

In sketching the outline of an answer to this question—rather than a complete program, as she insisted with her title—Mol pointed to a diverse set of ongoing intellectual practices that formed collectively a certain style of thought (*denkstijl*).[17] Indeed, empirical philosophy was a fusion of two older strands of research: first, what became known in English as Science and Technology Studies, or STS, and which had substantial roots in the Dutch "Science and Society" (*Wetenschap en Samenleving*) groups beginning in the late 1960s, and second, the politically oriented style of cultural philosophy practiced in *Krisis*. Feminist theories of "embodiment" formed an additional current; Donna Haraway's work was particularly influential in this respect. Taking an example from her own investigations into the anthropology of medicine, Mol showed how empirical philosophy shifted the focus of philosophy from the genesis or validity of knowledge to the locations where forms of scientific knowledge were mobilized in practical actions, such as hospitals.[18] But rather than merely factual information, the study of these

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[13] Ibid., 81-82.

[14] Ibid., 83.

[15] Annemarie Mol, "Dit is geen programma: Over empirische filosofie," *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor empirische filosofie* 1, no. 1 (2000): 6.

[16] Ibid., 7. Emphasis in original.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 11.

practices yielded an analysis of the operative models, structures, and ways of understanding at work. Foucault's thought clearly remained a pivotal inspiration:

> The most important result of philosophically inspired empirical research is less the description of reality than the specification [*vormgeven*] of the conditions of possibility for its description. In empirical philosophy it is not the production of facts, but the formulation of the theoretical techniques that make a new genre of facts knowable, or better yet, conceivable. These techniques create above all, and in fact simultaneously, a new place for philosophy *in* actuality [*werkelijkheid*].[19]

Here, Mol suggested a kind of philosophical ethnography, by which traditional, abstract questions such as "what is justice?" could be answered by multiple actors in a plurality of locally situated forms. The point, she argued, was not a lazy kind of "anything goes" cultural relativism, but rather to confront the pressing contemporary question of "how to live with differences."[20]

The immanence of philosophy meant that the engagement with metaphysical issues and practices of justification became activities of everyday life, the activities "of regular people and regular things in the regular world."[21] Yet despite this immanence, Mol claimed that philosophy's crucial element of counter-factuality did not disappear, but rather was pluralized through the contrast of difference, as conflicting perspectives were opposed to each other in the field of social practices. Philosophy's role, then, was to preserve the situatedness of particular values and practices and to reflect on the specific norms they embodied.[22]

Mol's point of departure and philosophical premises would seem to be rather far removed from those of Habermas, for she explicitly contrasted empirical philosophy's "respect for difference" with the orientation towards consensus. Yet as models of critical social theory, they shared the renunciation of the transcendent perspective of the critic in favor of an immanent approach to the concerns of the actors of the lifeworld itself. For Habermas, the philosophical claim to transcendence was irredeemably metaphysical and reliant on the philosophy of the subject, rather than locating truth "quasi-transcendentally" or pragmatically in the realm of intersubjective communication. However distorted by the steering forces of power and money, the structures for the asymptotic improvement of society were already located in the practices of everyday communication, bolstered by the historical achievements of modernity. For Mol, the emphasis lay not in the potential for consensus through the raising of validity claims, but rather the capacity for individuals to articulate their unique perspectives, thus resisting any hegemonic consensus, no matter how "postmetaphysical" its foundations. How one might go about negotiating conflicts arising from incommensurable perspectives was less clear. In any case, both Habermas and Mol demanded that philosophy relinquish its claim to be the final arbiter of truth and assume the role of "placeholder"[23] (*Platzhalter*) instead, merely formalizing the claims raised

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[19] Ibid., 12.

[20] Ibid., 14.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 15.

[23] "…Philosophy, while well advised to withdraw from the problematic roles of usher (*Platzanweiser*) and judge, can and ought to retain its claim to reason, provided it is content to play the more modest roles of stand-in (*Platzhalter*) and interpreter." Jürgen Habermas, "Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter," in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 4.

discursively by a plurality of modern subjects. For both thinkers, then, reason had been sufficiently actualized into immanent procedures of intersubjective communication (Habermas) or performative, embodied practices (Mol) to facilitate enlightened, critical reflection.

This immanent view seems to have the democratic virtue of dignifying the critical capacities of modern subjects who collectively, if not individually, stand at the end of a series of seemingly irreversible learning processes. As Dubiel suggested,

> despite persistent objections, [Habermas] remains convinced that in the development of the welfare state in mass democracies, there is something like the institutionalization of 'ratchet effects' (*Sperrklindeneffekte*), of fallback insurance, providing a certain guarantee that a democratically developed society does not revert to a predemocratic level.[24]

Interestingly, in one of his more optimistic moods, Adorno expressed a similar view: "I believe that there is a kind of progressive process of higher differentiation," such that successive generations could learn from the barbaric excesses of their predecessors.[25] Yet Adorno paired his cautious hope with a relentless opposition to the affirmation of immanence. Despite his commitment to the method of immanent critique, which drew its criteria from the society it criticized and, through "determinate negation," confronted society with its own inadequacy, he strenuously rejected the idea that the existing society or its subjects could generate a utopian alternative on an immanent basis. Here Adorno's conceptualization of the critical intellectual could not be more different from Habermas's and Mol's. In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno even seemed to anticipate critically a central weakness of Habermas's theory of communicative action. He challenged "the liberal fiction of the universal communicability of each and every thought," which is "wrong in itself as a principle of representation. For the value of a thought is measured by its distance from the continuity of the familiar."[26] Or as he put it in a notebook in 1960,

> Almost everything that is to be read has already been said, commonplace and, by virtue of that fact, untrue. The only things left to say are those that elude saying. Only the most extreme statements have any chance of escaping from the mush of established opinion. This stands as a maxim behind every sentence I write. One must *defend* oneself against the suggestion that even the normal, the average, can be true after all. Its place in the universal lie, the perfidious complicity which every reasonable view urges upon us taints those views.[27]

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[24] Helmut Dubiel, "Domination or Emancipation? The Debate over the Heritage of Critical Theory," in *Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment*, ed. Axel Honneth et al., trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 8.

[25] Adorno continued: "People only become Khruschchevs because they keep getting hit over the head." Adorno and Horkheimer, *Towards a New Manifesto*, 47.

[26] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 80.

[27] Quoted in Detlev Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 315.

Of course Habermas's claim was not that all empirically found views were equally rational; the premise of communicative rationality, rather, was that under the counterfactual conditions of the "ideal speech situation," communicating subjects were compelled to give reasons and recognize the "forceless force" of the better argument, on pain of committing a performative contradiction. But what if, as Adorno insisted, even the most critical thought was potentially pulled back into the "universal lie," the context of delusion?

What the Dutch discourse of actuality from Sternheim to Mol demonstrates is precisely this risk of the immanent move taken by the anti-utopianism of Habermas's thought in its pragmatist departure from Marxism and classical Critical Theory. As Deborah Cook argues, "the dialectic of immanence and transcendence effectively cancels itself out in favour (sic) of immanence in Habermas' work."[28] The implications of this cancellation are most evident in his mature legal and political theory, in which his ambivalence about the vitality of modern public spheres under capitalism seems to disappear all too easily. Referring particularly to Habermas's *Between Facts and Norms* (1992), Cook writes that

> when Habermas claims that communicative practices in the West exhibit rational structures, or that these structures are already 'more or less' (a recurring phrase in his discourse theory of democracy) instantiated empirically, he also uses communicative reason to legitimate contemporary liberal democratic states: what ought to be is what exists anyway. Rather than attempting to preserve and deploy in a more speculative fashion whatever critical leverage his notion of reason may originally have offered, Habermas now affirmatively predicates the rationality of the real.[29]

Admittedly, Cook seems to have overlooked Habermas's rather plain critique of capitalist triumphalism after the collapse of state socialism; in the book's preface, he argued that the new world order lacked "the energy to drive ahead with the task of imposing social and ecological restraints on capitalism at the breathtaking level of global society."[30] Democracy remained for Habermas an urgent task, not a stable achievement. Still, as other critics observed, Habermas seemed increasingly to accept the economic steering function of the market and to place his hopes for the market's restraint on the rationality of intersubjective communication, restricting philosophy to the function of placeholder. By contrast to both Habermas and Mol, for Adorno, "Philosophy that satisfies its own intention…has its lifeblood in the resistance against the common practices of today and what they serve, against the justification of what happens to be the case."[31] Adorno's targets in this essay, "Why Still Philosophy," were logical positivism and Heideggerianism, both of which opposed metaphysics, as he put it polemically, because metaphysics "essentially transcends that which is the case."[32] Still, Adorno's claim prompts one to ask whether philosophies of immanence, however critical their intentions, may not be able to avoid, as with positivism, the practical implication that they affirm the status quo.

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[28] Deborah Cook, *Adorno, Habermas, and the Search for a Rational Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 153.

[29] Ibid., 128.

[30] Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), xlii.

[31] Adorno, "Why Still Philosophy," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 6.

[32] Ibid., 8.

Of course Adorno no more believed that philosophy *itself* could make the world rational than Habermas. At best, philosophy could expose the immanent contradiction between the real and the rational—even if the contours of a rational society could not be known directly, or still less a blueprint for action:

> If philosophy is still necessary, it is so only in the way that it has been from time immemorial: as critique, as resistance to the expanding heteronomy, even if only as thought's powerless attempt to remain its own master…. Not that there is any hope that it could break the political tendencies that are throttling freedom throughout the world both from within and without and whose violence permeates the very fabric of philosophical argumentation. But…[critique] also registers a trace of hope that unfreedom and oppression…nonetheless may not have the last word.[33]

Only by penetrating unremittingly the "bad actual," in its simultaneous horror and proximity to utopia, could thought do justice to itself and to reality:

> The undiminished persistence of suffering, fear, and menace necessitates that the thought that cannot be realized should not be discarded. After having missed its opportunity, philosophy must come to know, without any mitigation, why the world—which could be paradise here and now—can become hell itself tomorrow.[34]

Thought, Actuality, and the Dialectic of Transcendence and Immanence

To return to the question posed in the introduction about the actuality of Critical Theory in the present, one could start with a brief essay by the philosopher Albrecht Wellmer, a former assistant to Habermas who often developed positions between the conflicting views of Adorno and Habermas. Originally presented as a lecture at a major 1984 symposium in Ludwigsburg, Wellmer's "The Significance of the Frankfurt School Today: Five Theses" began with an assessment of Critical Theory's (especially Adorno's) significance for postwar Germany.[35] In contrast to the line of argumentation, from Sternheim to Helmut Dubiel, that Pollock's state capitalism thesis blinded classical Critical Theory by universalizing the aberrant appearance of National Socialism to describe all modern societies, Wellmer showed how Horkheimer and Adorno's defense and cultural embodiment of "the other Germany" after their return from exile depended precisely on their refusal to ascribe fascism to specifically German conditions—a point that had struck Lolle Nauta in his youthful reading of their work. In some ways, Wellmer argued, their interpretation of German culture was the more differentiated one:

> Critical Theory proved to be a position from which it was possible *on the one hand* to analyze those aspects of the German cultural tradition that were reactionary, repressive, and hostile to culture, and to do so more precisely than from any other standpoint; and *on*

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[33] Ibid., 10.

[34] Ibid., 14.

[35] Albrecht Wellmer, "The Significance of the Frankfurt School Today: Five Theses," in *Endgames: The Irreconcilable Nature of Modernity: Essays and Lectures*, trans. David Midgley (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 251-62.

the other hand to reveal the subversive, enlightening, and universalistic features of that same tradition."[36]

However, Wellmer argued that Adorno's thought, despite the concreteness and specificity of his examinations of historical and cultural phenomena, had an abstract, *a priori* quality to it, which opposed its "messianic vantage point" to a world believed to be under the spell of a total context of delusion (*Verblendungszusammenhang*): "Adorno thought it was history itself that was casting its shadow over everything, and failed to notice that the shadow was being cast by the perspective from which he was viewing history."[37] Thus despite Adorno's indispensable interventions in postwar German culture—which Habermas similarly admired—Wellmer took the question of Critical Theory's contemporary actuality to be "a question which cannot be answered from a position of historical distance, but only in terms of the issue itself,"[38] in other words, immanently, through an evaluation of its ability to understand the contemporary world in its full complexity and possibility. The direction of this line of inquiry was clear: "It is no accident, of course, that the remarks I have just made describe a hollow form, so to speak, into which the thinking of Jürgen Habermas fits perfectly. It was Habermas who gave a concrete shape to the project of a *critical* continuation of the Frankfurt School" and "provided Critical Theory with a way out of the cul-de-sac of dialectical negativism."[39] Habermas's theory of communicative action, as will by now be familiar, differentiated Horkheimer and Adorno's reductionist conception of "instrumental reason," and with it, the understanding of modernity and its emancipatory possibilities. Horkheimer and Adorno, Wellmer alleged, gave up on modernity and resigned themselves to a historically transcendent utopianism. Their view implied

> that the possibility of ordering society in a way that is compatible with human dignity is ruled out as a *historical* possibility. Not the least of Habermas's achievements is to have recovered the historical horizon, to have opened up the *perspective of historical possibility*, for Critical Theory.[40]

The actuality of Adorno's thought, however penetrating, remained historically abstract and negative, whereas Habermas's theory of communicative action, despite having its own limitations, indicated the possibility of escaping the historical impasse that Adorno seemed to have wrongly diagnosed. Although for Wellmer, Adorno's negative dialectics captured an element of the relationship between rationality and reality that exceeded the limits of Habermas's pragmatist, consensus theory of truth, namely, "the dialectics of the particular and the general as a problem of epistemology," Habermas had worked through three of the master thinkers who work shaped Critical Theory—Kant, Hegel, and Weber—and reread them in a more effective manner. "In all three cases," Wellmer wrote, "Habermas has, so to speak, drawn a new line that separates the enlightening elements of the theory in question from those elements that impede enlightenment."[41]

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[36] Ibid., 254.

[37] Ibid., 255.

[38] Ibid., 253.

[39] Ibid., 256.

[40] Ibid., 257. Emphasis in original.

[41] Ibid.

Wellmer's treatment of Adorno's actuality, while both historically and theoretically nuanced, is nonetheless reflective of an interpretive tendency to evaluate Habermas's thought as by and large sublating the work of the early Frankfurt School. Wellmer's metaphor of the "hollow form" of Critical Theory is especially revealing, because it suggests that Habermas's substantialization of that form is not only more sound philosophically, but also empirically more concrete—more "actual," in the multiple meanings of the term. Similar evaluations can be found in Helmut Dubiel's work, which views early Critical Theory's fundamental weakness as its failure to make itself "relevant" to the existing self-conception of contemporary actors: "Between the utopian idealism of the theory and the radical negativity of its empirical descriptions, the chance for making the theory relevant to what actual collective actors are planning to do is lost."[42] Perhaps most influentially, Axel Honneth, reading Habermas and Foucault against each other in his first major work, *The Critique of Power* (1985), positioned his theory as "a reconstruction of the history of critical theory in the form of a learning process," one which avoided "the lapse of critical theory into the negativism of Adorno's social philosophy."[43] Although the ultimate telos of this learning process could not be known in advance, Honneth aimed, in explicitly Hegelian fashion, to be able to justify "the theoretical premises I had presupposed from the outset" in relation to Habermasian criteria: "The model of Habermas' [sic] theory has provided me with this sort of a direction, since his concept of interaction seemed to provide a theoretical way out of the philosophical-historical dead end into which critical theory was led with Adorno's negativism." Or, to provide yet another example, Seyla Benhabib's *Critique, Norm, and Utopia* (1986), though admitting that Habermas's "paradigm shift" entailed certain losses of insight, assessed his work similarly:

> After the triumph of National Socialism…the ideals of the Enlightenment, which linked reflection to autonomy, reason with justice and progress, came to sound increasingly hollow. Yet the self-consciously aporetic nature of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and Adorno's relentless deconstruction of these ideas, showed that critical theory, *aware of its own situatedness in history and society*, had reached an impasse…. The paradigm shift from the production or work model of action to communicative action is a response to this impasse.[44]

Benhabib's formulation of this argument is especially revealing, because she attributes Adorno's alleged "deconstruction" of autonomy and reason to a conscious decision to throw his hands in the air and resign to a position of pessimistic futility. Habermas, by contrast, was evidently not historically or socially situated, and was thereby able to correct Adorno's distorted perceptions of modernity.

All of these historical narratives follow what Max Pensky, drawing on Horkheimer and Adorno's metaphor of the *Flaschenpost*, has called the "message-in-a-bottle" interpretation, which sees their "post-exile intellectual life as a melancholy withdrawal into theoretical

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[42] Dubiel, "Domination or Emancipation?," 13.

[43] Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, trans. Kenneth Baynes (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), xv, xiv.

[44] Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 345. Emphasis added.

esotericism and political hopelessness."[45] In a review essay of Alex Demirović's *Der nonkonformistische Intellektuelle* (The nonconformist intellectual, 1999), Pensky contrasted the mountain of evidence of Horkheimer and Adorno's postwar educational, institutional, political, and administrative efforts amassed by Demirović to the dominant message-in-a-bottle view, which he attributed largely to Habermas and to Rolf Wiggershaus's historical account, *The Frankfurt School* (1986). If Adorno and Horkheimer really believed that political action, reform, and even "reflection" were hopeless in the face of the "totally administered society," why would they have expended such vast efforts to attempt to change it? As Pensky put it, "These are not the actions of hermetically self-exiled and defeated men."[46] To be sure, many of their more severe theoretical statements lend themselves readily to the prevailing narrative, and Pensky noted an irony in the fact that such a vast amount of documentation was required to challenge it. Furthermore, it was also possible that

> the First Generation of critical theorists did not coherently resolve the relation between their theoretical works and their roles as academic politicians, sociological reformers, and cultural mavens because to do so would have obliged them to recast convictions concerning the viability of progressive democratic reform, hence of the general characteristics of the postwar social order....[47]

Perhaps, then, the problem of the relation of theory to praxis, or as Adorno continually explored, the possibility of theory *as* practice, simply remained for them an intractable one.

This conclusion has been significantly corroborated by the recent appearance in English translation of Gretel Adorno's transcript of private discussions between Horkheimer and Adorno in early 1956, published under the title *Towards a New Manifesto*. In their candid discussions, which are recorded in a series of brief, wide-ranging, and frequently contradictory exchanges, the two men revealed their considerable uncertainty and confusion about contemporary political events, both in the Soviet Union and in the West.[48] Horkheimer appeared to be more resigned, and indeed, pessimistic, foreshadowing his late return to Schopenhauer's philosophy. Adorno, however, reflected on their different assessments in a way that qualifies Wellmer's claim about the ruling out of human dignity as a historical possibility:

> Our disagreement is about whether history can succeed or not. How are we to interpret this 'can'? On the one hand, the world contains opportunities enough for success. On the other hand, everything is bewitched, as if under a spell. If the spell could be broken, success would be a possibility.[49]

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[45] Max Pensky, "Beyond the Message in a Bottle: The Other Critical Theory," review of *Der nonkonformistische Intellektuelle: Die Entwicklung der Kritischen Theorie zur Frankfurter Schule*, by Alex Demirović. *Constellations* 10, no. 1 (2003): 136.

[46] Ibid., 138.

[47] Ibid., 144.

[48] Martin Jay, review of *Towards a New Manifesto*, by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, February 12, 2012, accessed April 23, 2012, http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/29021-towards-a-new-manifesto/.

[49] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Towards a New Manifesto*, 20.

Horkheimer, for his part, remained unconvinced, replying that "In the long run things cannot change…. We can expect nothing more from mankind than a more or less worn-out version of the American system."[50] At other points, Adorno's diagnosis was equally pessimistic. Yet his previous remark crucially negates the claim that historical progress was ruled out *a priori* by their philosophy of history. If Benhabib is correct in the first part of her claim, that Horkheimer and Adorno were aware of their historical situatedness and limitations, it does not follow that they ruled out the possibility of historical change. As Adorno added, "My innermost feeling is that at the moment everything is shut down, but it could all change at a moment's notice."[51] This was, to be sure, still a skeptical outlook, but—as de Vries showed in a different manner—Adorno did not satisfy himself with a messianic version of utopianism that promised reconciliation outside of or beyond history.

Nor were Horkheimer and Adorno, despite their general disdain for political reformism, indifferent to the benefits of progressive change. We have seen that despite their not-unjustified wariness toward the more extreme gestures of the student movement, their continuing engagement with the SDS and other political activities throughout the 1960s does not conform to the image of resigned disengagement, or worse, collusion with the authorities. Yet even in their more polished writings, the distance between their convictions about political possibilities and their actions in practice was not always as great as one might think. To take one example, Adorno's "Progress," first presented as a lecture in 1962, clarified that while the proclamation of progress as already actualized in bourgeois society was ideological, the concept itself was crucial: "Too little of what is good has power in the world for progress to be expressed in a predicative judgment about the world, but there can be no good, not a trace of it, without progress."[52] Even Benjamin, Adorno clarified, had criticized the Social Democrats and their reformism not because he found the idea of progress as such to be illusory, but their assumption of "an already existing humanity, coherent in itself and moving upward in a unity."[53] Several of Adorno's comments on progress, moreover, are surprisingly mundane. Although for Adorno enlightenment as the domination of nature and as human emancipation could not be separated, the dialectic of enlightenment, as presented here, did not find its telos in barbarism, as is often claimed. The kind of *Verfallsgeschichte* or history of decline that he detected, for example, in Heidegger's narrative of the "forgetting of Being," was just as undialectical as its bourgeois counterpart. Thus even though he rejected the redemptive theodicy of Hegel's "cunning of reason," which sanctioned the historical sacrifice of the particular in the progressive unfolding of the universal or *Geist*,[54] Adorno refused to discount the mechanisms for preventing and alleviating suffering that emerged out of tragedy:

> Whoever rubs his hands with humility and satisfaction while remembering the sinking of the Titanic, because the iceberg supposedly death the first blow to the idea of progress,

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[50] Ibid., 21.

[51] Ibid., 38.

[52] Theodor W. Adorno, "Progress," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 147.

[53] Ibid., 145.

[54] "In this sense we can say that, with regard to the world and its process, divine Providence behaves with absolute cunning. God lets men, who have their particular passions and interests, do as they please, and what results is the accomplishment of *his* intentions, which are something other than those whom he employs were directly concerned about." Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, 284.

forgets or suppresses the fact that this accident…occasioned measures that in the following half century protected sea voyages from unplanned natural catastrophes. Part of the dialectic of progress is that historical setbacks…also provide the condition needed for humanity to find the means to avert them in the future.[55]

To fail to acknowledge historical gains risked sanctioning the suffering of those in the past and even the future, for it neglected "every actual form of easing the persistent suffering."[56] On the other hand, progress should not be hypostatized as if it were fully existent, for in its role in taming nature—the first instance of and precondition for all future enlightenment—it sat on a razor's edge with domination and barbarism.

This dialectical concept of progress, in combination with Adorno's (and Horkheimer's) tireless practical efforts to salvage the fragile gains of modern society against its own destructive tendencies, suggests that the message-in-a-bottle interpretation, despite containing more than a grain of truth, collapses under close scrutiny. What remains—and what I shall argue in conclusion—is a political and intellectual perspective that concerns itself with immanent political concerns without relinquishing the transcendent perspective of thought, without which "utopia or even the truth of the slightest sentence would not exist."[57]

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The case of Dutch postwar history, I have argued, provides a remarkable example of the democratic potentials of modern societies. As a unique example, it embodies a particular European moment when, indeed, many dimensions of the lifeworld were rationalized through a deliberative process of problematization, led by the new social movements, that managed to challenge existing social and political norms. The affinity between this historical process and Habermas's theory goes a great distance towards explaining his enthusiastic reception by figures such as Kunneman, whose early work, as he later explained, sought to preach the gospel of communicative rationality as the key to a social emancipation that appeared within reach. Although this was not ultimately born out, the history reconstructed here counters the dominant historical assessment that the New Left "failed" because it was followed by the conservative 1980s. But it also might temper the radical leftist view espoused by contemporary theorists such as Alain Badiou, who, citing one of the slogans from May 1968—"*élections piège à cons*," or "elections are a con"—throws the democratic baby out with the "capitalo-paliamentarian" bathwater.[58] Like other critics such as Slavoj Žižek who refuse to concede the name "communism" to the critics of totalitarianism as an object of ridicule, Badiou and his English translator and expositor Bruno Bosteels decry mere "socialist reformism" as obscuring the immanently possible revolutionary "event." Citing the excerpt from Hegel's *The Encyclopaedia Logic* above, on the dialectical relation of actuality and thought, Bosteels describes the "actuality of communism" as

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[55] Adorno, "Progress," 154.

[56] Ibid., 154.

[57] Theodor W. Adorno, "Open Letter to Max Horkheimer" (1965), reprinted in Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno*, 358.

[58] Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, trans. David Macey and Steve Corcoran (London and New York: Verso, 2010), 56, 1.

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going so far as to accept the much maligned identity of the rational and the real, not as a dogmatic given guaranteed by the objective course of history, but as an ongoing and open-ended task for politics…. The point is somehow to perceive communism not as a utopian not-yet for which reality will always fail to offer an adequate match, but as something that is always already here, in every moment of refusal of private appropriation and in every act of collective reappropriation.[59]

In other words, without even turning Hegel on his head, the historical leap into communism is an immanent possibility, for as Žižek writes, "possibility itself, in its very opposition to actuality, possesses an actuality of its own."[60] On this analysis, the anticipation of the radical event is a matter of seizing upon the always already "actual" possibilities for revolution that are presently obscured by the "blackmail" of democratic proceduralism, whether liberal or socialist. It is, as Žižek describes, a matter of getting back to Lukács and ultimately to Lenin.[61]

    Adorno, for his part, also saw the possibility of a rational society, minimally described as a society free from want, as being, in a specific sense, immanently possible. He too described the reconciliation of antagonistic society in terms of "the liberating event."[62] But for Adorno, the impossibility of depicting a utopia from within antagonistic society was deeply paradoxical, for it was only by facing directly the full horror of the world, for which Auschwitz stood, that the imperative for something better could emerge as a negative image. This is expressed most poignantly in the "Finale" to *Minima Moralia*, which asserts our at once immense distance from and immanent proximity to utopia. To gain true, emphatic knowledge

> is the simplest of all things, because the situation calls imperatively for such knowledge, indeed because consummate negativity, once squarely faced, delineates the mirror-image of its opposite. But it is also the utterly impossible thing, because it presupposes a standpoint removed, even though by a hair's breath, from the scope of existence, whereas we well know that any possible knowledge must not only be first wrested from what is, if it shall hold good, but is also marked, for this very reason, by the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape.[63]

The alternative position for critique presented here—the dialectic of transcendence and immanence—allows us to think beyond the strict opposition of reformist parliamentarism or revolutionary communism in which the discourse of actuality can be entrapped. Although Badiou insists that the "communist hypothesis" is "generic" and "mainly negative," the truth of this hypothesis is immanent through and through: "…quite simply, if we accept the inevitability of the unbridled capitalist economy and the parliamentary politics that supports it, then we quite simply cannot *see* the other possibilities that are inherent in the situation in which we find ourselves."[64] Any uncertainty is therefore a matter not of knowledge or reflection, but of political

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[59] Bruno Bosteels, *The Actuality of Communism* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 39.

[60] Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 157. Quoted in Bosteels, *The Actuality of Communism*, 39.

[61] Slavoj Žižek, "From *History and Class Consciousness* to *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*…and Back," *New German Critique* 81 (Fall 2000): 107-23.

[62] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 245.

[63] Ibid., 247.

[64] Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, 64.

vision or the failure of nerve. The real is rational, provided only that some collective subject has the will to make it so. In the meantime, humanity is better served by abstention from "capitalo-parliamentarian" politics altogether, "despite the great things it was able to achieve or promote between 1900 and 1960" (in France).[65] In Badiou's view, to shirk from this conviction about the actuality of communism is to resign to the "enemies'" propagandistic claim that "to want something better is to want something worse,"[66] or in other words, the view that because "really existing socialism" led to totalitarianism, the communist impulse must be abandoned altogether.

To insist upon a dialectic of transcendence and immanence, by contrast, meant neither abdicating reason's actuality in the world and its capacity to mitigate and prevent suffering, whether by parliamentary or other means, nor presuming that the truth could be located immanently and translated into action. "The idea of truth," said Adorno emphatically, "transcends positivity,"[67] which means both that truth points beyond the world as it exists *and* that, because our very thought is mediated by "the scope of existence," we cannot grasp truth immediately or without distortion. But how would one go about negotiating such a seemingly impossible dialectical position? If gaining access to this truth is "the utterly impossible thing," do we not face a choice between postmetaphysical consistency (Habermas) or the quasi-decisionistic commitment to the revolutionary "event," all "liberal babble about the 'totalitarian' potential of radical emancipatory politics" aside?[68] Such questions indeed exceed the bounds of discursive argumentation delineated by Habermas's formal pragmatics, but this need not entail an imperialism of noetic certainty. Giving Hent de Vries the penultimate word, we might preserve instead not positive metaphysics, but rather Adorno's "solidarity with metaphysics at the moment of its downfall." Quoting Herbert Schnädelbach, de Vries notes that in contrast to positive metaphysics, Adorno's negative metaphysics "recalls only that the true and the good (and we should add, the beautiful) concern something that can never be expressed or even anticipated in discourse 'but must, rather, show [*zeigen*] itself and be experienced.' The true, the good, and the beautiful concern more than consensus alone" (*MT*, 142). For de Vries, the actuality of this thought exceeds discursive reason but is infinitely cautious against the false reconciliation of the world, whether by reformist or revolutionary means. Yet even at the level of reflection, this emphatic truth (*Vernunft*) cannot be grasped at once, but only through the experience (*Erfahrung*) and continuous hermeneutic decipherment of its traces, of that which "wrests itself free" from mere actuality, without thereby abandoning it. For this knowledge, as he writes of Adorno and Levinas, we have only the faculty of judgment to guide us, however fallible and imperfect:

> It is not by deduction or demonstration, nor by induction or empirical warrant, that these authors establish their philosophical claims but only through a mode of analysis which is at once conceptual and historical, cultural and existential, and which appeals to *our* acknowledgement of the appropriateness of its figures of thought (its idiom and arguments, systematic and rhetoric) to singular situations in which we happen to find ourselves (*MT*, 573).

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[65] Ibid., 65.

[66] Ibid., 1.

[67] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Towards a New Manifesto*, 5.

[68] Žižek, "From *History and Class Consciousness*…and Back," 112.

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In her "non-program" for empirical philosophy, Annemarie Mol recounted a revealing story from the philosopher Pieter Pekelharing, an early editor of *Krisis*. When Pekelharing looked through the names on the list of journal subscribers, he recognized more than half of them personally and asked himself whether each article might not begin with the informal salutation, "Dear friends" (*Beste vrienden en vriendinnen*). For Mol, this suggested the futility, not to mention the pretension, of a universalist philosophy addressed to all humanity. For in any case, the painful decision to write in Dutch undermined any such attempt from the outset. The question of the provincialism of Dutch intellectual life, persistent throughout the reception of Critical Theory traced here, is not easily answered. Philosophically, the Netherlands was, to be sure, a great "import country," as Nauta wrote, but its potential exports were largely confined behind the dikes. "The Dutch language, as we know, does not travel far," wrote Mol.[69] Hopefully this study contributes something to rectifying this judgment.

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[69] Mol, "Dit is geen programma," 17.

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