

THE CRITIQUES OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT
BY MAX HORKHEIMER AND THEODOR ADORNO
AND
THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF A NEW METHOD AND PHILOSOPHY

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EYLEM YENİSOY

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Sencer Ayata
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts of Philosophy.

Prof. Dr. Ahmet İnam
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts of Philosophy.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Halil Ş. Turan
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Dr. Adnan Akçay (METU, SOC) _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Halil Ş. Turan (METU, PHIL) _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Barış Parkan (METU, PHIL) _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ABSTRACT

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Yenisoy, Eylem

Master of Arts in Department of Philosophy

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Halil Ş. Turan

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The strong part of Horkheimer and Adorno's philosophy is their critique of the Enlightenment. They argue that the consequent of the Enlightenment has been the destruction of the Enlightenment itself. There are two main reasons in the background of this destruction. First of them is the destruction of individual because of the understanding of reason in the Enlightenment. Individuals cannot define their existence beyond the determined roles of society any more. The second reason is the certain distinction between the human beings and nature. The epistemology of the Enlightenment makes nature an object of knowledge and views the world as a summation of facts. This understanding makes subjects passive in providing the objectivity of knowledge. Accordingly, the subject is alienated from his or her knowledge. Horkheimer and Adorno's critical thinking provides possibility for the human autonomy. It tries to understand human beings and society in a dialectical process. It considers the relation between parts and the whole as a mutual relation. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the relation between subject and object is neither an absolute duality nor an absolute unity.

Key words: The subjective reason, the objective reason, instrumentalization, enlightenment, myth, dialectic, materialism.

ÖZ

MAX HORKHEIMER AND THEODOR ADORNO'IN AYDINLANMA DÖNEMİ ELEŞTİRİSİ VE FELSEFE VE METOD ANLAYIŞLARI

Yenisoy, Eylem

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Horkheimer and Adorno'nun felsefelerinin en güçlü tarafı Aydınlanma Dönemi eleştirileridir. Bu iki düşünür, Aydınlanma'nın sonunun kendi yıkımı olduğunu iddia eder. Bu yıkımın ardında iki temel neden vardır. Birincisi Aydınlanmanın akıl anlayışı nedeniyle öznenin yok edilmiş olmasıdır. Özne kendi varlığını toplumunun belirlenmiş kuralları ötesinde tanımlayamaz hale gelmiştir. İkincisi ise insan ve doğa arasındaki keskin ayırmadır. Aydınlanma epistemolojisi doğayı bilgi nesnesine dönüştürür ve dünyayı olgular toplamı olarak görür. Bu anlayış bilginin nesnellliğini sağlarken özneyi pasifleştirir. Buna bağlı olarak özne bilgisine yabancılaşır. Horkheimer ve Adorno'nun eleştirel düşünme yöntemi ise insan otonomisi için olanak sağlar. Bu yöntem, insanı ve toplumu diyalektik bir süreçte anlamaya çalışır. Parça ve bütün arasındaki ilişkiyi karşılıklı bir ilişki olarak görür. Horkheimer ve Adorno'ya göre, özne ve nesne arasındaki bu ilişki ne sabit bir ikilik ne de sabit bir birliktir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öznel akıl, nesnel akıl, araçsallaştırma, aydınlanma, mit, diyalektik, materyalizm.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Horkheimer and Adorno criticize the thought of the Enlightenment in terms of its understanding of reason. They do not refuse the ideal of “enlightenment” itself. According to them, “enlightenment” can be seen in each stage of history and history of thought such as myths. “Enlightenment” is one side of the dialectical history of thought. That is, they criticize the period of the Enlightenment especially in the eighteenth century. Horkheimer and Adorno insist in that thought is broken from its roots by the philosopher of the Enlightenment. Reason is no longer used to discover the ends. It is instrumentalized. A concept cannot be defended against the other, since there is no natural distinction between two different concepts for these thinkers. It is distinguished from the other only for its profit. Reason can capture only the means for the already accepted ends, any longer. This ability produces a kind of domination over nature, since human being must seek to find the means and use nature to survive more and better for the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Then, the domination over nature turns to the domination over human being. Individual is determined by the rules dominant in society. The individual loses his autonomy. This fact indicates a kind of domination of the

subjective reason over the objective reason. Horkheimer refuses this domination and does not assert the reverse. Horkheimer and Adorno assert that thought loses its roots by the instrumentalization of reason and that the method of dialectic makes certain thought in its real meaning.

Horkheimer and Adorno reject the theory of idealism that the world is a process of consciousness as can Hegel thought. According to Horkheimer and Adorno the identity between the thinking subject and the thought object is impossible. Subject and object cannot be separated from each other. Each one is determined by the other and by their circumstances. They do not have a certain structure or essence. This assertion does not mean that nothing can be said about “truth” because of its uncertain structure. It means only that truth is historical and dialectical. Truth can be determined by looking at the particular historical context. There is no transcendental truth that is valid everywhere and every time.

Horkheimer and Adorno are two essential members of the Frankfurt School, which is a school of social theory, social research, and philosophy. The formal name at the school is “The Institute for Social Research”. This institute is a part of Frankfurt University. The term “Frankfurt School” is an informal term. The thinkers of this school were influenced especially by the failure of working-class revolutions in Western Europe after World War I. The rise of Nazism in Germany also influenced them. They took up the task of clarifying social

conditions and emphasized the critical component in theory. They especially attempted to overcome the limits of positivism and crude materialism. The thinkers of the Frankfurt School emphasized that negation and contradiction are inherent properties of reality.

The first generation of the Frankfurt School especially Horkheimer laid down the foundations of critical theory. The thinkers of the Frankfurt School made contributions in the area of society and history. Their works focused on social phenomena such as personality, family and authority structures. Their first common work *Studies of Authority and the Family* gives examples of these issues. The realm of mass culture is another phenomenon that they search in their works. According to them, mass culture must be deeply analyzed to overcome it. Adorno says: “the struggle against mass culture can consist only in pointing out its connection with the persistence of social injustice.”¹ As Peter Osborne says, for Adorno, mass culture is “a form of dependent art.”²

Another work of the philosophers of the Frankfurt School *The Authoritarian Personality* conducts extensive empirical research. The thinkers use sociological and psychoanalytic categories for this research. The empirical research becomes significant as much as theoretical analysis. The members of

¹ Theodor W., Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. by Samuel and Shierry Weber, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), p. 109.

² Peter, Osborne, “A Marxism for the Postmodern?” in *New German Critique*, No. 56, Spring-Summer, 1972, p. 182.

the Institute aim to clarify the forces that led individuals to support fascist movements. They, for instance, use statistical research and experiment in order to achieve this aim.

The concept of critical theory is essential in the Frankfurt School, especially for Horkheimer and Adorno. It is contrasted to traditional notions of the theory. The term "critique" means philosophical reflection on the limits of claims. Such a philosophically critical approach seeks to create a revolutionary agency, it aims at least to find its possibility. The Institute takes on positivism, existentialism, and pragmatism with a critique. Horkheimer takes dialectic materialism as an alternative science or metaphysics. The Institute tries to formulate dialectics as a concrete scientific method. According to the thinkers of the Institute, this method must be continually aware of the particular social and historical roots of thought. Horkheimer says that materialism constitutes theory towards practice and towards the fulfillment of human needs. It does not have a metaphysical statement about the nature of reality. Accordingly, the Frankfurt School is usually more interested in understanding the world, although they would like to change it for better.

Max Horkheimer's and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Adorno's *Minima Moralia* are two essential works of the Institute. These authors wrote both of these works when they were in the United States in the Nazi period. In these books, the critique of capitalism turns into a critique of

Western civilization as a whole. For example, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* refers to the *Odyssey*. This is used for the analysis of bourgeois consciousness. Horkheimer and Adorno present many topics which dominate the social thought of recent years: i.e. the domination of nature.

More importantly, the members of the Frankfurt School endeavor to characterize the condition of reason in their historical period. They, in fact, prefer to develop a new concept of reason in their critique. Horkheimer argues that reason has been instrumentalized in the age of Enlightenment, and that the subjective reason has become more prominent than the objective reason. According to Horkheimer, on the other hand, the subjective reason or the objective reason must not be prior in the face of the other, neither of them should not come into prominence, Horkheimer also emphasizes that they are not separate parts of reason. However, each has its proper place and task.

Horkheimer and Adorno contemplate on the foundation of critical theory. Adorno formulates critical theory in his *Negative Dialectics*. The critical theorists recognize that the structure of capitalism has changed decisively, and that the modes of domination operate differently. Also the proletariat no longer is the determinate negation of capitalism.³ In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno attempts to see dialectic in an absolute method of negativity.

³ Tom, Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School and Its Critique*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 18.

Adorno tries to redefine dialectics of his era in *Negative Dialectics* which expresses the idea of critical thought. It cannot be co-opted the apparatus of domination according to Horkheimer and Adorno. Its central notion suggests that the original sin of thought is the attempt to eliminate all that is other than thought. The subject devours the object by the attempt, i.e. in the identity philosophy. This reduction in philosophy makes thought the assistant of domination. In *Negative Dialectics*, the predominance of the object through a thought, which, as Adorno argues, is based on differentiation, paradox, and ruse, is refused. For Horkheimer and Adorno, formal logic that is present in the thought of Enlightenment is an expression of recklessness of the individual.⁴ Also, it is a taboo that leads to the sovereignty over nature. This is a kind of logic of disintegration.⁵ *Negative Dialectics* concludes the tradition of the individual subject. The dialectic that is based on autonomous individual becomes more and more abstract in his work. I will try to elucidate Adorno's understanding of dialectic as an alternative method.

With regard to these points, I will first consider the form of thought in the Enlightenment and what the main assertions of the Enlightenment are, in the second chapter of my thesis. In the third chapter, I will explain Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the Enlightenment. Finally, in the last part of my thesis, I

⁴ Theodor W., Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. by E.B. Ashton, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), p. 230.

⁵ Martin, Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950*, (Toronto: Brown and Company, 1973), p. 108.

will try to elucidate what Horkheimer and Adorno argue as an alternative for the thought of the Enlightenment and to clarify Horkheimer's concept of reason and Adorno's assertion of negative dialectic and their understanding of dialectic materialism.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS THE ENLIGHTENMENT?

The Enlightenment is an important period in the history of thought. It is the end of an epoch the foundations of which can be found in the seventeenth century. The thinkers of this century argue against the sovereignty of religion over science and the understanding of knowledge. They emphasize that the sovereignty of religion is to be replaced by the sovereignty of reason. Thus, the confidence of human reason comes into prominence as a consequence of this emphasis. It is argued that we can acquire knowledge of reality by means of reason. The founders of the Enlightenment in the seventeenth century also believe that there is conformity between the laws of nature and the laws of reason. Reason must apply the method of science in order to find the universal laws and there are mathematical principles in the basis of scientific method as well. This view becomes widely accepted via the scientific progresses in this century. It is even believed that we can also solve social and philosophical problems by using this scientific method. On the other hand, these thinkers believe that these general laws are immanent in nature. However, they want to know these laws in order to capture and use nature in a more profitable way. In this sense, the relation between power and nature is important. According to

the thinkers of the Enlightenment the more we know nature the more we can take advantage of it.

Encyclopedia that Diderot and D'Alembert prepared for edition is one of the essential works of the Enlightenment.⁶ *Encyclopedia* was written by philosophers such as Voltaire, D'Holbach, Turgot and Jean Jacques Rousseau. In *Encyclopedia*, the sciences, arts and handicrafts are separately examined and explained. Writers, who worked for it, try to determine the principles, contents and essences of each science. While doing this, they try to establish the foundations of each science and art. In other words, they want to present historicity of these disciplines.⁷ In short, *Encyclopedia* is a book that has a systematic order. It is also arranged sequentially. The aim of *Encyclopedia* that is prepared by Diderot and D'Alembert is to explain the general system of whole knowledge and to transfer it to human beings, especially to the future generation. In addition to this, *Encyclopedia* aims at annihilating the enchantments and conservatism in that period.⁸

The philosophers of the Enlightenment criticize religion severely. Religion and its propositions regarding life style should be criticized by “reason” according

⁶ Lucian, Goldman, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment the Christian Burgess and the Enlightenment*, trans. by Henry Maas, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 1.

⁷ Denis, Diderot, and Jean Le Rond, D'Alembert, *Encyclopaedia*, trans. by Selehattin Hilav, (İstanbul: YKY, 2005), p. 29.

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 127-135.

to them. Thus, the political system and the religious convictions are interrogated. Philosophers of the Enlightenment challenge the thoughts that the thinkers of Christianity have put forward about history, human nature and the universe.⁹ As a consequence of these efforts, the Enlightenment becomes a war against the enchantments and against religion. The Enlightenment, indeed, is the intellectual act against the feudal social system and the oppressive religious point of view of the world.

The Enlightenment means to escape from the condition that is established by myth, mythos and enchantment. Moreover, it aims at establishing a complete new system, where right and wrong is determined by reason. Therefore, reason has become dominant in the Enlightenment. The main desire is to set up this system of reason for the whole of humanity, so the period is called as “the Century of Reason”. The view that everyone must use his own reason and that every religious dogma must be examined by reason becomes essential in this epoch. In addition, Immanuel Kant elucidates “enlightenment” as a state where human beings free themselves from an immature situation, which they have fallen in through their own fault.¹⁰ The immature situation is the state of human being’s inability of using his own reason without a guide. According to Kant, human beings cannot venture to use their own reason without a leader. As a consequence of this defect, they were in an immature situation before the

⁹ Norman, Hampson, *The Enlightenment*, (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 98.

¹⁰ Immanuel, Kant, “What is Enlightenment” in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. by Ted Humphrey, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), p. 41.

Enlightenment. Kant says “*Sapere aude!*”¹¹ as the Enlightenment’s watchword. The reason must criticize the whole knowledge, values, traditions and social institutions for the philosophers of the Enlightenment.¹² That is, everything must be judged in the court of reason.

Kant's definition of “enlightenment” helps to formulate the understanding of the Enlightenment more clearly. The individual’s task is to become enlightened individuals. Humans are truly autonomous. They can also choose and set ends for themselves. Furthermore, they can develop suitable methods to attain these ends. While doing this, the individual must respect the freedom of others. He can rationally consent to the freedom of others. Thus, human beings can maximize freedom in the world. If individuals esteemed and supported the freedom of others, the world would be a radically different world. This is the goal of the project of the Enlightenment and Kant recognizes this as an ideal.

The concept of progress is essential for the Enlightenment. The ideal of the Enlightenment is an intellectual culture, which is based on the progress of knowledge. This culture is a candidate for an eternal progress. The thinkers of the Enlightenment aim to complete the strict system of traditions via reason. Moreover, the other purpose is to establish a new system by means of the principles, which are put forward through reason. It is believed that human

¹¹ Or, “be brave in using of your own reason!” This phrase is a part of a poem by the Roman poet and thinker Horatius. Kant uses that in his “What is the Enlightenment”.

¹² Diderot and D’Alembert, *Encyclopaedia*, in the matter of criticism.

being will be happy and free in this new system. Furthermore, this happiness and freedom will increase continuously for the thinkers of the Enlightenment. According to Ernst Cassirer, this concept of progress is not only quantitative but also and especially qualitative. This qualitative change brings forth an expansion in the field of knowledge. It also means that the act of knowing should be more conscious and more certain progressively:

The problem of intellectual “progress” throughout the eighteenth century appears in this light. Perhaps no other century is so completely permeated by the idea of intellectual progress as that of the Enlightenment. But we mistake the essence of this conception, if we understand it merely in a quantitative sense as an extension of knowledge indefinitely. A qualitative determination always accompanies quantitative expansion; and an increasingly pronounced return to the characteristic center of knowledge corresponds to the extension of inquiry beyond the periphery of knowledge.¹³

Another intention of the Enlightenment is to make scepticism more popular as can be seen in Voltaire. For example, religious morality must be judged. Nevertheless, in the field of knowledge, the validity of the natural laws is stressed and a secular society is defended by the philosophers of the Enlightenment like Encyclopedists. Except the scepticism of Hume, confidence in reason is common to the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Additionally, individual and autonomy of individual become more important in the Enlightenment. Consequently, humanism becomes vital in this epoch.¹⁴

¹³ Ernst, Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 5.

¹⁴ Goldmann, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment the Christian Burgess and the Enlightenment*, pp. 34-37.

In the period of Enlightenment, the command of God is replaced with the law of nature and religion is replaced with science. Reason with the guidance of experiment becomes dominant. It is defended that the human being should rely on reason in every field. It is thought that the human being and society will be excellent in the future via reason.¹⁵ The arguments above represent the general scheme of the Enlightenment. In order to give a more detailed conception and interpretation of the Enlightenment, its content will be explained by means of the statements on reason, the laws and the understanding of system in this study. With the intention of fulfilling this purpose, I will first elucidate the concept of reason.

2.1 Reason

The concept of reason comes into prominence in the Enlightenment, which is called “the Age of Reason”. It is thought that there is a unity in the plurality in the world of phenomena and this can be discovered. The tool that must be used for this discovery is reason. This explanation for reason seems to be insufficient. It is essentially thought that the expansion of knowledge is centralized in thinking of the Enlightenment. This means that thinking aims to conceive of “the whole” and even has the ability to do this. There may be contradictions in our knowledge, but it does not mean that these contradictions

¹⁵ Peter, Gay, *The Enlightenment*, trans. by Alfred A. Kropf, (New York, 1969).

exist in reality. In other words, the center of unity, having the ability of knowing the whole, is “Reason” for the philosophers of the Enlightenment.¹⁶

The thinkers of the Enlightenment believe in the unity and interchangeability of reason. Reason is one and the same for every individual, nation, age and culture. However, religious beliefs, moral maxims, claims and decisions of institutions constantly change. According to the thinkers of the Enlightenment, there is a plurality in this respect and there is a firm, lasting and constant essence in this plurality.

Reason is unique and one in every human being for Encyclopedists. In addition to this, it is the most confidential source of knowledge.¹⁷ On the other hand, Encyclopedists are empiricists. While they emphasize the importance of the function of reason, they see the datum of sensation and the consequences of experiment as important sources of knowledge, as well. At the same time, reason is the faculty which has the ability of achieving knowledge. The epistemology of Encyclopedists, which is based on the datum of sensation, experiment, observation and the process of reason, resembles that of John Locke and Francis Bacon more than that of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz.

¹⁶ Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁷ Diderot and D’Alembert, *Encyclopaedia*, p. 13.

The concept of reason of the seventeenth century is essential for the Enlightenment. Moreover, reason in the seventeenth century is the ground of eternal and absolute truth; as it was for Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. This absolute truth is held to be common for the spirit of both God and human being. Because of this, human beings find the sign of God in everything, which they have known and recognized.

Reason in the eighteenth century is not power or knowing of field that determines whether knowledge firstly comes from experiment or there is innate knowledge. Especially for Locke, Bacon and Encyclopedists, reason is an act, which is used for information. Furthermore, the method of analysis, which is emphasized by Bacon and Locke, is also an act of reason as an addition to experiment. In this sense, reason has a special structure. The method of analysis is to cut the whole into parts and to put the parts of together again. Mathematics and especially geometry are included in philosophy by this method. Moreover, Hume and Berkeley unite “sensation” and “reflection”, which Locke separates from each other, into “perception” again.

According to D’Alembert, science is the concrete form of human being’s reason, which is always one and the same, in spite of plurality of phenomena, which science serves on.¹⁸ The main rule of reason is to change the plurality into a unity. In fact, this concept of a unity in the eighteenth century, which is

¹⁸ See the matter of science in *Encyclopaedia*.

the same in the age of the Enlightenment, replaces the concept of the absolute in the seventeenth century. There is no absolute in the philosophers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Their only assertion is that plurality in the realm of phenomena can be united, not that there is an absolute truth.¹⁹

The thinkers of the Enlightenment do not accuse reason for the presence as falsity in human thought. According to Diderot, who is an important philosopher of the Enlightenment, there is swerve in nature.²⁰ For him, there may be inexplicable facts in nature, and hence wrong conceptions about natural facts can be produced. The cause of these errors is the swerve in nature. Reason sometimes cannot recognize the right or the good, or does recognize what is wrong as what is right. The responsibility for this fault does not lie in reason itself, but in the wrong usage of reason. There are superstitions and human errors which bring up greed and wickedness.²¹ Similarly, Kant talks about the minority stage for human beings before the Enlightenment. Kant identifies the causes of this stage as “the lack of courage and determination” and “idleness and cowardice.”²² As it is clear in these two examples, there is no wrong the source of which is in reason, according to the philosophers of the Enlightenment.

¹⁹ Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 23.

²⁰ Diderot and D’Alembert, *Encyclopaedia*, p. 96.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 102.

²² Kant, “What is Enlightenment” in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, p. 41.

2.2 Laws

The philosophers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century look for general order and lawfulness in the realm of phenomena. They think that this order and lawfulness give a direction to the phenomenal world. The consistency between phenomena should be shown not in concepts, but in the realm of phenomena. Thus, a philosopher must go forward from phenomena to concepts and principles. Datum can be ascertained by observation according to the thinkers of the Enlightenment. Principles and laws, and phenomena that are observed, resemble each other.²³ The former ones are in thought, but phenomena are outside. Phenomena are data and principles are things that are sought in these data. If human being understands the internal structure of nature, the empirical order and the laws of nature, then nature is open to the human being.²⁴ That is, lawfulness can be captured by humanity. René Descartes asserts the method of deduction as a tool for this;

Those long chains of reasoning, so simple and easy, which enabled the geometricians to reach the most difficult demonstrations, had made me wonder whether all things knowable to men might not fall into a similar logical sequence. If so, we need only refrain from accepting as true that which is not true, and carefully follow the others, and there cannot be any propositions so abstruse that we cannot prove them, or so recondite that we cannot discover them. It was not very difficult, either, to decide where we should look for a beginning, for I knew already that one begins from the simplest and easiest to know.²⁵

²³ Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

²⁵ René, Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. by Laurence J. Lafleur, (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956), pp. 12-13.

Further, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau try to elucidate the structure of the society by its laws as the philosophers of the Enlightenment. In fact, according to them, the progress and lawfulness which can be seen in the phenomena of the physical and psychological areas in accordance with their hypothesis, can be shown in the structure of government. The search for laws is the desire of knowing, being sovereign and giving a direction to progress.²⁶ Thomas Hobbes describes the “government” as the only way of escape from the state of nature, in which there is not simply a war, but “a war of every man against every man”.²⁷ Also, the contract signed for transforming all rights to the sovereign and establishing the government is the command of first natural law, which is “dictate of right reason” like other laws.²⁸

In fact, a similar view can be found in D’Alembert. According to D’Alembert, each man has a desire to survive and some necessary needs to be alive. One firstly recognizes this fact for himself, later for everybody. Hence, the interests of individuals sometimes come in conflict. Then, one conceives that he must make an agreement with the others to join in society. Everyone profits from this union. This union is the only solution to conflicts between the necessary needs of the individuals according to D’Alembert.²⁹

²⁶ Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 18.

²⁷ Thomas, Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. and trans. by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 29.

²⁸ Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, p. 34.

2.3 The System Understanding

The seventeenth century seems to be a preparation for the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Cassirer, who is a philosopher of the Enlightenment in the twentieth century, makes a distinction between the conceptions of understanding of these two periods in order to determine the distinctive characteristics of the Enlightenment.³⁰

The philosophers of the Enlightenment especially reject the thought of system improved by the philosophers in the seventeenth century, especially by Descartes and Spinoza. The most important reasons for this rejection are that Diderot and D'Alembert give importance to experiment and defend empiricist epistemology, in which reason has an essential function. The Encyclopaedists also resemble Locke and Bacon in their rejection an absolute system. Moreover, the eighteenth century philosophers' rejections of absolute knowledge coming from reason, and not from experiment, as the seventeenth century philosophers thought and questioned the thought of system.³¹

On the other hand, this rejection seems to contradict the idea of lawfulness in nature, which the thinkers of the Enlightenment defend. However, they do not

²⁹ Diderot and D'Alembert *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 31-33.

³⁰ Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 3-36.

³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 6-8.

put aside “the systematic thought” in spite of the abandonment of the conception of system. D’Alembert criticizes the philosophers who defend the thought of system, in the preface which he wrote for *Encyclopedia*. D’Alembert asserts that the superiority of the physicist is not to establish a strict system in spite of their systematic thought. His example is Isaac Newton.

In fact, the main goal of the philosophers of the Enlightenment is to make a connection between “rational thought” and “positive thought”. This is the ideal and the goal of the Enlightenment. There is an order in the world of phenomena. The thinkers of the Enlightenment assert that this order could be grasped by reason. This order is the form of the connections in phenomena. The philosophers of the Enlightenment believed that this order can be discovered. Every discipline serves by accepting this conception of system. The ideal of the philosophers of the Enlightenment is to unite plurality of natural phenomena under a unique and universal principle. D’Alembert, for example, thinks that this ideal has been reached by Newton’s “law of universal attraction”.

In this thesis I will try to elucidate Horkheimer and Adorno’s critique of the Enlightenment especially with regard to the concept of reason. So, before explaining their view of the reason and their dialectical method I will analyze their critique of the Enlightenment.

CHAPTER 3
THE CRITIQUE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT BY HORKHEIMER
AND ADORNO

Max Horkheimer and Adorno criticize the understanding of reason in the Enlightenment, since they argue that this understanding brings forth catastrophic conclusions such as the fascism of Hitler. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the main strategy is to struggle with superstitions and dogmatism; however they also bring about a new understanding of absolute.

They sometimes demonstrate their assumption about the negative characters of the Enlightenment via its consequences in society such as fascism. However, they do not criticize “enlightenment” as a concept. Their critique is only about the Enlightenment as an epoch. In other words, the “enlightenment” is always everywhere, even in myth according to Horkheimer and Adorno. Since, it is only a part of the thing, which also has a dark part. Furthermore, “enlightenment” is a necessary part of every epoch. In short, they are not against “enlightenment”. They are only in opposition to the Enlightenment as a period of time, especially the eighteenth century in some respects. Horkheimer

and Adorno assert that the thinkers of this century are responsible for the activities of Adolph Hitler and Josef W. Stalin.³²

The concept of enlightenment, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, has always been opposed to myth. The age of the Enlightenment attempts to exchange science with superstition: "The program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy".³³ Religion retreats under the pressure of science. However, the Enlightenment also turns into mythology and produces myths. According to Horkheimer, one of these myths is the acceptance of the fact that only the scientific and mathematical method is valid. By using this method, the laws in nature and society and the control of God over humanity turns into control of commonwealth can be achieved. Thereby, imaginary control is replaced by real control. Enlightenment genuinely makes the world a better place. Horkheimer and Adorno never deny this. Yet they find the 1940's as an allegedly enlightened world. Disaster was triumphant in the world at the period.

³² James, Rolleston, "The Uses of the Frankfurt School: New Stories on the Left" in *Diacritics*, Vol. 21, No. 4, Winter, 1991, p. 97.

³³ Max, Horkheimer, and Theodor W., Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming, (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1972), p. 3.

Horkheimer and Adorno declare that subjective reason³⁴ commits the aims of objective reason³⁵ in the thought of the Enlightenment. The subjective reason begins to formulate universal and general laws as of the objective reason. However, it cannot perform these tasks. These functions belong to the objective reason. Accordingly, the Enlightenment reduces the reason only to the position of an instrument. The meaning and the consequences of this reduction will be evaluated in this chapter. In order to perform this evaluation, formulations such as “The Instrumental Reason”, “The Establishment of a System and the Sovereignty over Nature by Means of this System”, “The Relation between the Sovereignty over the Subject and the Removal of the Subject”, “Rationalization and Metaphysics”, “Science and Knowledge” will be clarified in this chapter. To understand Horkheimer and Adorno, it is necessarily to explain what “critical theory” means.

³⁴ According to Horkheimer, the subjective reason is a faculty that can discover the appropriate things with reason by the method of classification, inference and deduction. The subjective reason is interested in aims and tools. However, this reason cannot itself discover any purpose. The subjective reason determines conceivable tools in order to reach the aim, which has already been accepted. This aim is to survive for an individual. To examine whether the aim is conceivable is put aside. Thus, the profitless and spontaneous aim is foreign for the subjective reason.

³⁵ According to Horkheimer, the objective reason is not the reason of the individual. It exists in the objective world, in the relationships among human being, in public institution, in nature and even in the appearances of the nature. Aristotle, Plato and the German idealism are examples of that are established by the understanding of the objective reason. According to Horkheimer, these philosophies purpose to establish an explanatory system of the whole. This system contains the aims of human being and the whole existence. It aims to make everything illustrative in this system. The individual behaviors and thought are also to be explained in this system. For the objective reason, the criterion of individual behavior must be appropriate to the objective structure of whole existence.

3.1 Critical Theory

The Frankfurt School is also referred to as “Critical Theory”. When he became the most important representative of this school in 1930, Horkheimer tries to distinguish critical theory from traditional theory. He wrote “Traditional and Critical theory” in 1937. Traditional theory represents the Enlightenment. The objective reason of the traditional theory aims to formulate the general and to describe the world by consistent principles. The goal of traditional theory is absolute knowledge. It is not action. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, there is a unique relation between reason and act in the Enlightenment. This is the endeavor for technological mastery of the world by means of reason. It is the goal of traditional theory in the direction of activity. This is not praxis for the members of the Institute. Horkheimer asserts that traditional theory maintained the separation of thought and action.³⁶

Critical theory does not assert that knowledge is superior to action. It recognizes that scientific research is not separated from society that it is performed in. This is impossible; for, the researchers are always parts of the social object. The perception of researcher is mediated by the social rules and categories.³⁷ This fact is ignored by the philosophers of the Enlightenment

³⁶ Max, Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory", in *Critical Theory*, (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1989), pp. 226 and 240-242.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 227.

according to Horkheimer and Adorno. On the other hand, although the researcher is definitely a part of his society, he is capable of rising above it. His duty, according to Horkheimer and other members of the Institute, is to reveal the negative forces and tendencies in his society. These forces and tendencies reveal a different and possible reality.³⁸ Critical theorists reject the idea that the theory is general and abstract. They consider the contradictions in the present and in the possibilities of future. They try to grasp the whole in concrete particulars. They view the whole as a specific historical phenomenon. This also means that absolute explanations are impossible.³⁹

According to Horkheimer, critical theory proceeds from the theorist's awareness of his own partiality. Thus, theory is neither neutral nor objective. Its partisanship has certain goals. One of them is the idea of reconstruction of a society which is based on non-exploitative relations between persons. Another is the restoration of man. Every man must be self-conscious and he must be a self-managing subject of social reality. Further, each must have a central place in the evolution of human society. The term "critical theory" itself presupposes a definite philosophical standpoint. However, this awareness does not imply one-sidedness. On the contrary, the core of their critical theory is the

³⁸ Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory", in *Critical Theory*, p. 205 and Jay, *the Dialectical Imagination*, p. 81.

³⁹ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 82.

recognition of the fact that the world of perception is a “product of human activity.”⁴⁰

Horkheimer describes the traditional conception of theory as stored knowledge. Knowledge must be put in a form, since this form makes knowledge useful. According to Horkheimer, this makes the description of the facts more possible in the traditional theory.⁴¹ The task of critical theory, however, according to Horkheimer, is to penetrate the world of things, not to formulate them. Critical theory aims to show the relations between things. It, for example, works on the connections of things in the Capitalist System. For Horkheimer, the appearance of the capitalist social communication is that of equal exchange between things. To see the humanistic things in nonhuman things and to expose that the understanding of equality in the capitalist system is only to see a surface form. In other words, the critical theorists must look at the life of human being, at the relationship between one another. They must try to make “reality” open for the human being. An artist, for example, must show the dialectic, or the contradictory character of reality. He must not copy “reality” in his work. This copy is not artistic according to Adorno. Likewise, philosophy must have a social function for Horkheimer. This function must be criticism of what is prevalent.⁴²

⁴⁰ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. xiv.

⁴¹ Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory", in *Critical Theory*, p. 188.

⁴² Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. xiii.

Positivism is a kind of traditional theory. This view leaves the question of historical development aside. According to positivist thinkers, reality can be explained by certain calculations and methods such as induction. Positivists accepted the role of science as careful recording of facts. Thus, the positivists assert the certain explanation about the reality according to Horkheimer. Further, systematic thought forces philosophers to set up a certain system. The thinkers of the traditional theory use this certainty in order to administer nature and other human beings. Horkheimer and Adorno are critical of this certainty and this closed philosophical system. Their works have an “open-ended, probing, unfinished quality.”⁴³ So, they chose to articulate their ideas in essays and aphorisms.

Horkheimer and Adorno present a critical view of history rather than a constructive view. Horkheimer and Adorno are motivated by an awareness of the threat of domination. They see systematic philosophy as the instrument of this threat of domination. According to them, systematic philosophy defends certain profits of those who have power. Thus, Horkheimer and Adorno offer philosophical fragments instead of any systematic method. They want to break all closed systems of thought.

⁴³ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 41.

Horkheimer and Adorno criticized the period of Enlightenment. As in any systematic philosophy, the philosophers of the Enlightenment are supporters of bourgeoisie. This is what Lucian Goldman holds. Goldman asserts that the philosophers of the Enlightenment produce conceptions of bourgeoisie, or capitalism, such as “the autonomy of the individual”, “contract”, “equality”, “universality”, “toleration”, “freedom” and “property.”⁴⁴ Now, I will first try to elucidate the critique of the Enlightenment in Horkheimer and Adorno.

3.2 Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Horkheimer and Adorno note that the Enlightenment "has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty," and "the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant"⁴⁵ They aim at looking around to see how this happened. How did human being allow the world to degenerate into a state of barbarity, totalitarianism, and warfare? Their answer is briefly that reason has become instrumental. In addition, the barbarian sovereignty is guilty of modernity for Horkheimer and Adorno.⁴⁶ *Dialectic of Enlightenment* sets out these questions to answer.

⁴⁴ Goldman, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 15-24.

⁴⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Moise, Postone, “Modernity and Holocaust”, in *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 97, no. 5, Mar., 1992, p. 1523.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno criticize the ideal of the Enlightenment in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This book is one of the most important works of the Frankfurt School. Its terminology is obscure, and its structure is peculiar. The book consists of six parts: the first part is an introductory chapter on the concept of enlightenment. The second and the third are on Homer's *Odyssey* and Marquis de Sade's *Juliette*. The fourth book is an analysis of the culture industry. Horkheimer and Adorno analyze mass media of the twentieth century, and its effect on contemporary Western society. The fifth chapter is about anti-Semitism; and the last has various notes and drafts about topics mentioned in previous chapters. The topic of enlightenment is worked out in the introductory chapter on "the Concept of Enlightenment". The book aims to explain what is called "the project of enlightenment".

According to Enrique Dussel, Horkheimer and Adorno criticize modernity with regard to its irrational myths. In contrast to this, postmodernists put an emphasis on the rationalization of terror by modern reason. Horkheimer ve Adorno criticize modernity in this regard.⁴⁷

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is characterized by its two theses: "myth is already enlightenment and enlightenment reverts to mythology."⁴⁸ That is,

⁴⁷ Enrique, Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)" in *boundary 2*, vol. 20, no. 3, *The Modernism Debate in Latin America*, Autumn, 1993, p. 66.

⁴⁸ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xvi.

enlightenment is petrified in front of reality.⁴⁹ These theses show the dialectical structure of enlightenment. Horkheimer and Adorno see enlightenment as

subject throughout history to a dialectic wherein it all too easily gives itself an absolute status over and against its objects, thereby constantly collapsing into new forms of the very conditions of primeval repression which it earlier set out to overcome.⁵⁰

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, “enlightenment” in its every step becomes more deeply mythology, just as the myths already realize “enlightenment”. In fact, “enlightenment” receives all its matter from the myths in order to destroy them. The main concepts of myth are “fate” and “retribution”. In the myths, everything that happens must atone for having happened.⁵¹

Horkheimer and Adorno construct a "double perspective" on the modern West as a historical formation⁵² by a combination of philosophical argument, sociological reflection, and literary and cultural commentary. They do not supply a negative "metanarrative" of historical decline. They summarize these two perspectives in two theses: "Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology".⁵³ The first thesis allows them to assert

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁵⁰ David, Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory Horkheimer to Habermas*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), p. 151.

⁵¹ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 11-12.

⁵² Simon, Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 23.

that older rituals, religions, and philosophies may contribute to the process of enlightenment. In fact these may have contributed to the Enlightenment, although they call these mythical and outmoded by the forces of the Enlightenment. The second thesis allows them to expose ideological and negative tendencies within modern forces of secularization and disenchantment. However, Horkheimer and Adorno do not deny that these forces are progressive and enlightening. They also accept that the older conceptions were themselves ideological and negative.

Again, myth also contains elements of enlightenment, according to Horkheimer and Adorno. The systematic exploitation of enlightened reason led to the compounding of the animate with the inanimate. Although reason originated in the subject's struggle with nature, it turned "against the thinking subject" according to Horkheimer. The extension of enlightenment in practice led to the decline of critical thought. Enlightenment 'with every step became more deeply engulfed in mythology.'⁵⁴

There can be a mistake in interpretations of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Readers can consider the theses mentioned above, to be theoretical definitions of unchanging categories. However, they are critical judgments about historical tendencies. Horkheimer and Adorno do not say that myth is a force of the

⁵³ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xvi.

⁵⁴ Max, Horkheimer, "Authority and the Family" in *Critical Theory*, p. 51.

Enlightenment. Moreover, they do not claim that the Enlightenment "inevitably" reverts to mythology. In fact, what they find the same in both myth and the Enlightenment is resistance to change. This resistance characterizes both ancient myths of fate and modern devotion and importance attached to the facts.

The dilemma, which Horkheimer and Adorno claimed that there is in the Enlightenment, is firstly self-destruction of the Enlightenment itself. They say:

If enlightenment does not accommodate reflection of this recidivist element, then it seals its own fate. If consideration of the destructive aspect of progress is left to its enemies, blindly pragmatized thought loses its transcending quality and, its relation to truth.⁵⁵

The cause of retreat from the Enlightenment into mythology is not in nationalist, pagan and other modern mythologies. The cause is the Enlightenment itself. When the Enlightenment was paralyzed by fear of truth, it retreated to the myth, according to Horkheimer and Adorno. In fact, the feeling of fear is caused not by myth but also by "enlightenment".

On the other hand, myth is dark and light at the same time. Horkheimer and Adorno say that myth is also "false clarity", and that "myth has always been obscure and enlightening at one and the same time."⁵⁶ They assert that it is wrong to use this concept only in one meaning. Not only myth but also

⁵⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xiii.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. xiv.

enlightenment has a dialectic character and each one includes the other in itself. This paradox is the fundamental thesis of *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*. For Horkheimer and Adorno, there is a dialectic relationship between myth and enlightenment. They hold the unity and the difference of mythic nature and enlightened mastery of nature. They trace enlightenment to its mythical roots. Enlightenment and myth are not irreconcilable opposites.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the collapse of critical reason was a consequence of the achievements of the Enlightenment itself. The philosophers of the Enlightenment purged metaphysical concepts such as essence, soul, transcendent being, God, etc., from reason. Furthermore, they opened the way for an empirical science and technology. And this technology culminates in tremendous advances in material culture for Horkheimer.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the concern for a better society is dominated by the Enlightenment. This better society can be established via the processes in science and technology according to the philosophers of the Enlightenment. In fact, this material culture and the reduction of society to a thing are important for the critique of the Enlightenment, according to Horkheimer and Adorno.

Another aim in the critique of the Enlightenment for Horkheimer and Adorno is “the discovery of why mankind, instead of entering into a truly human

⁵⁷ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, pp. xiv-xv.

condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism.”⁵⁸ They ask whether the period of Enlightenment has some features, which necessarily cause barbarism by itself. They also want to demonstrate the negative consequences of the Enlightenment. These negative effects are not only from the foundations and principles of this view, but also from the wrong practice of these principles. The critique of the Enlightenment is also intended to prepare the foundation for a positive notion of “enlightenment” which will release it from “entanglement in blind domination”⁵⁹.

The Enlightenment created new social arrangements. However, these have conformist tendencies of instrumental reason. These new arrangements take on an alienated form. Although these arrangements are creations of humanity, human beings do not recognize this fact. Human beings do not see these arrangements as capable of being changed. The enlightened world becomes a new form of myth. For, the human being is alienated in this myth as in the pre-enlightened world.

Culture industry is one of the means of the social system: “If it can be said that in the early years of its history the Institute concerned itself primarily with an analysis of bourgeois society’s socio-economic sub-structure, in the years after

⁵⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xi.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. xvi.

1930 its primer interest lay in cultural superstructure.”⁶⁰ In the culture industry, there seem to be imitation, according to Horkheimer and Adorno. This imitation finally becomes absolute in the works of art. Everything turns out to be only a style.⁶¹ Culture consists in schematization and the process of classification. These bring culture within the sphere of administration. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt put this differently. Horkheimer and Adorno analyze how culture is controlled by the totalitarian state according to Negri and Hardt.⁶² Furthermore, culture is precisely industrialized. This culture industry occupies men’s senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening, to the time they arrive in again. This ensures productivity of the labor process. Furthermore, leisure is the continuation of labor by other means.⁶³ Adorno argues that labor and leisure are not opposed to each other.⁶⁴ So, the culture industry is the goal of liberalism. In other words, the system of culture industry is backed up with the capitalism, by its characteristic media, such as movies, radio, jazz, and magazines.

⁶⁰ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 21.

⁶¹ Rolleston, “The Uses of the Frankfurt School: New Stories in the Left”, p. 90.

⁶² Michael, Hardt and Antonio, Negri, *Empire*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 25.

⁶³ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 216.

⁶⁴ Theodor W., Adorno, “Free Time”, in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 28.

Horkheimer and Adorno say that the aim of the Enlightenment is to liberate “men from fear and establishing their sovereignty”.⁶⁵ They also consider the program of the Enlightenment to be the disenchantment of the world, the dissolution of the myths, and the substitution of knowledge for fancy. These aims, according to them, are declared by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, such as Francis Bacon or Denis Diderot. However, “the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant”.⁶⁶

The appropriateness between mind and nature is “patriarchal”⁶⁷ for Horkheimer and Adorno. The rules of human mind and that of nature are the same in this concordance in the Enlightenment, and the human mind can overcome superstition. Knowledge is power according to the philosophers of the Enlightenment. This is not an obstacle neither in the enslavement of men, nor in compliance with the world’s rulers. Power and knowledge become synonymous. Technology becomes the essence of this knowledge. Reason does not work by concepts or thoughts. Moreover, it “refers to method, the exploitation of others’ work, and capital”.⁶⁸ In fact, it can be said that this is the end of bourgeois economy. This system’s originates in the dictates of businessmen or in technology of control. However, this connection between the

⁶⁵ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

bourgeois economy and the Enlightenment is directly rejected by Norman Hampson. Since, this relation is based on a weak foundation.⁶⁹

Human beings distinguish themselves from nature in the Enlightenment. In fact, to say that their aim is to be sovereign over the nature is not an interpretation, but this is a view shared by the thinkers of the Enlightenment. Human beings want to learn how to use the nature in order to dominate it. The power of domination is not only power over the nature. It is also a power over other men. In fact, Adorno and Horkheimer think that this is the unique aim in the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment does not have its own self-consciousness for them. The kind of thinking comes to a conclusion as self-destruction in the Enlightenment.⁷⁰

It should be said that there was a talent of domination over the nature and humanity before the Enlightenment. In fact, myth is a means of this kind of domination. The philosophers of the Enlightenment recognize the powers in the Platonic and Aristotelian aspects of metaphysics. They opposed the superstition of that truth is predicable in universals. It was asserted that in the authority of universal concepts there was still discernible fear of the demonic spirits, which men sought to portray in magic rituals, hoping thus to influence

⁶⁹ Hampson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁰ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 4.

nature. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that matter would at least be mastered without any illusion of ruling or inherent powers, of hidden qualities.⁷¹

That which does not conform to the rule of computation and utility is suspect according to Horkheimer and Adorno. This produces universals. Every spiritual use of them is merely to increase its strength for Horkheimer and Adorno. This means that the Enlightenment still recognizes itself in myths. In the myths, the resistance may appeal to its opposition. Thus, the universals become arguments in the process of opposition not only in myths but also in the Enlightenment. In fact, these universals are means of rationality. And this rationality aims to make any act of individual and the sovereignty over the physical and social society legitimate in the Enlightenment.⁷² Horkheimer and Adorno reproach the Enlightenment from this point of view of rationalization. For them, Enlightenment is totalitarian.⁷³ As, Horkheimer and Adorno say: “Enlightenment is as totalitarian as any system.”⁷⁴

The thinkers of the Enlightenment try to make a scheme of the world. For them the world is calculable. Number became the canon of the Enlightenment.⁷⁵ In

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁷² Thomas, McCarthy, “The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School”, in *Political Theory*, vol. 18, no. 3, Aug., 1990, p. 440.

⁷³ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 6.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 24.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 7.

fact, the objective reason is able to calculate the world. Horkheimer emphasizes that calculation is made by the objective reason, and that this action cannot produce any universals, in contrast to what the thinkers of the Enlightenment held. This is contradictory. For, they try to understand the world by calculation and by using the objective reason, and they make some universal after this action according to Horkheimer. However, only the subjective reason is able to make universal. Conversely, the thinkers of the Enlightenment leave the essence or nature of universals or concepts aside.

The philosophers of the Enlightenment replace concepts by formulas, which Horkheimer and Adorno criticize as “nondialectical immediacy”. These are not the products of the conceptual thinking according to Horkheimer and Adorno. Concepts turn to be things like “rentiers in the face of industrial trusts.”⁷⁶ Yet, man distinguishes himself from animals by his ability of conceptual thinking. He reaches a sense of selfhood via his conceptual thinking.⁷⁷ This ends with the corruption of pure speech. So, there is no correct relationship between subject and its name. Horkheimer says: “Philosophy is the conscious effort to knit all our knowledge and insight into a linguistic structure in which things are called by their right names.”⁷⁸ For him, the concept of truth in each real philosophy is

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 41.

⁷⁷ Jay, *the Dialectic Imagination*, p. 261.

⁷⁸ Max, Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 2004), p. 121.

the conformity of name and things.⁷⁹ Negation is eliminated from language in the Enlightenment because the thinkers of the Enlightenment replaced formulas with concepts.⁸⁰

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, nature has become merely objective. Firstly, men pay for the increase of their power with alienation. They become sovereign over nature by means of tools of the Enlightenment, and they exercise their power over nature. However, they alienate themselves from nature. Men, in the epoch of the Enlightenment, behave not only things, but also towards other men as sovereign, according to Horkheimer and Adorno. One knows things and the others in so far as one can manipulate them. Likewise, man knows things by means of science in so far as he can make them. In this way their potentiality is turned to man's own ends. The nature of things is always revealed in the same manner. This identity constitutes the unity of nature, as Horkheimer and Adorno put.⁸¹ This unity serves to dominate nature.

This domination is paid for not only by the alienation of men, for Horkheimer and Adorno. It also causes the objectification of spirit. The individual is reduced to a commodity. This model of conventional responses and modes of

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 122.

⁸⁰ Jay, *the Dialectic Imagination*, p. 263.

⁸¹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 9.

operation is expected from any individual in society. Horkheimer and Adorno say: “animism spiritualized the object, whereas industrialism objectifies the spirits of men.”⁸²

Adorno and Horkheimer in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* do not intend to construct a philosophical system. Their aim is to develop a conceptual set. This is not a definitive set. Systematic philosophies of history tend to impose themselves on history, and history becomes the correlate of a unified theory. Furthermore, systematic philosophies tend to legitimize acts of severe brutality.⁸³ They criticize the Enlightenment especially for the ideal of a systematic philosophy. David Held interpret Horkheimer’s view as follows:

Christianity, idealism and materialism, which in themselves contain truth, are... also responsible for the barbaric acts perpetrated in their name. As representatives of power – even if of power for good- they themselves became historical forces which could be organized, and as such played a bloody role in the true history of the human race: that of the instruments of organization.⁸⁴

This means that the Enlightenment created certain ideals, and that they are used in the organization of society. However, they have led to barbarism. The discussion regarding the Enlightenment’s concept of reason is related to Hegel by Horkheimer and Adorno. Hegel sees an internal relationship between the Enlightenment and the ethic of utility and terror.⁸⁵ On the other hand,

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 28.

⁸³ Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory Horkheimer to Habermas*, p. 149.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Horkheimer and Adorno assert a relationship between scientific consciousness, pragmatism and ethical decisions, and barbarism. Scientific consciousness is based on instrumental reason.

Hegel's account of scientific consciousness is similar to that of Horkheimer and Adorno. For Hegel, the Enlightenment is marked by the dominance in the intellectual world of universal scientific consciousness. The Enlightenment's concept of science is basically that of Francis Bacon. According to this conception, scientific knowledge is a potential power to master nature. Science is the basic tool to control nature and the human being. Thus, reason is reduced to instrument in the Enlightenment.

3.3 Instrumental Reason

The members of the Frankfurt School have all criticized reason in the modern world. Instrumental or subjective reason serves to technological domination. It produces rational goals for the sovereign group. All interaction can be reduced to power relationships in the modern world. This instrumentalization of reason is the main cause of the destruction of the world according to Horkheimer and Adorno. For them, the disenchantment of the world, which is the major aim of the thinkers of the Enlightenment, has lost the original meaning firstly because of the instrumentalization of reason.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Jay, *The Dialectic Imagination*, pp. 271-272.

Horkheimer makes a distinction between the objective reason and the subjective reason. He rejects the idea that reason is only a useful instrument for purposes of everyday life, and that reason must fall silent in face of great problems. Philosophers of the Enlightenment consider that the great problems should be considered by “the more substantial powers of the soul.”⁸⁷ In fact, the consideration about the means only for daily purposes is the task of the subjective reason and the consideration of great social and conceptual problems is the task of the objective reason according to Horkheimer.

The Enlightenment’s concept of reason has a dual structure: reason as universal and as domination of the particular. The first dimension is common to every being. Reason as universal provides the ideals, which legitimate human activities. Reason as domination of the particular is about day to day practice.⁸⁸ Horkheimer calls the former “the objective reason” and the latter “the subjective reason”. In fact, he criticizes the thinkers of the Enlightenment not because of their usage of the objective reason or the subjective reason. This distinction between two kind of reason means only that the same and one reason has two distinct tasks. Furthermore, if each of them is used only for its own domain, there is not any problem. However, the thinkers of the Enlightenment employ the subjective reason over universals, which are in the

⁸⁷ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory Horkheimer to Habermas*, pp. 150-151.

domain of the objective reason. Thus, someone produces universals that are not valid for everyone, but only in accord his own or his groups' profit. Horkheimer stresses the importance of the objective reason as a solution to one-sided and instrumentalized subjective reason.⁸⁹ He says the following:

The two concepts of reason do not represent two separate and independent ways of the mind, although their opposition expresses a real antinomy. The task of philosophy is not stubbornly to play the one against the other, but to foster a mutual critique and thus, if possible, to prepare in the intellectual realm the reconciliation of the two in reality.⁹⁰

The mistake is to its use of the subjective reason in place of the objective reason. Philosophers of the Enlightenment, in fact, reduced reason only to an instrument, which is used only for determining other tools for an already determined aim. Reason itself has become the mere instrument, it has been considered as useful for the “manufacture” of all other tools.⁹¹

Horkheimer and Adorno assert that the “true concern is the negation of reification”⁹² According to Adorno, the fetishistic character of commodity is not only a psychological phenomenon. It is dialectical in that it produces consciousness.⁹³ Adorno also says that fetishization is not merely a psychological category, but an economic one as well, which is “rooted in the commodity character of a society dominated by exchange rather than use

⁸⁹ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 260.

⁹⁰ Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 118.

⁹¹ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 30.

⁹² *Ibid*, p. xv.

⁹³ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 181.

value.”⁹⁴ For, culture has become a commodity and is given to human beings for consumption in the Enlightenment. The understanding of reason in the Enlightenment should be dissolved. Hence, Horkheimer and Adorno criticize the consequences of the concept of reason in the Enlightenment. They examine cultural life in the entertainment culture. There is also a kind of flood of information in the society. These two distinct things also have different consequences. The former makes people stupid, and the latter makes more cleavers in the system.

One of the Frankfurt School’s main concerns is the rise and domination of instrumental reason. Horkheimer and Adorno distinguish the period of Enlightenment from “enlightenment.” The notion of “enlightenment” does not refer to a definite period of time, or to a particular set of intellectual works. Instead, this notion refers more to encompassing principles. When Horkheimer and Adorno examine the importance of instrumental reason in the Enlightenment, their aim is to prepare the way for a more positive understanding of enlightenment.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 190.

⁹⁵ Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory Horkheimer to Habermas*, p. 149.

3.4 The Establishment of a System and the Sovereignty over Nature

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the concept of nature is fundamental in the philosophy of Enlightenment. This concept suggests that subjectivity and nature are disjunctive things. In the context of Enlightenment, nature is pure matter, which is structured according to laws. It is capable of being known via a “mathematically formulated universal science.” This concept of nature is best expressed in Galileo. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the concept of nature can be connected with the aim of dominating nature.⁹⁶ If something does not conform to the rule of computation and utility, it is suspect for the thinkers of the Enlightenment.

Hegel argues that consciousness of the Enlightenment makes the world objective. This consciousness sees the world as an absolute reality of pure and simple things. These material things in the world are “given to the senses with no further determination of any sort. Nature is perceived as neutral, disenchanted. Matter has no intrinsic significance. It is, therefore, open to manipulation and alteration” for Hegel.⁹⁷

Bacon suggests that the human mind can and should overcome all forms of superstition. The human being can capture the structure of nature. Bacon

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 152.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 152.

asserts that men want to know how to use nature in order to dominate it and other men, as Horkheimer and Adorno note. The domination of nature is the basic aim of the philosophy of Enlightenment.⁹⁸

According to the philosophers of the Enlightenment, nature is useful. Nature is not valuable in itself and for itself. It has significance only for the human being. Nature must serve the ends and purposes of the human being. As a consequence of this, the concept of nature and utility constitute the principle of ethics. Acts and ideas are judged in terms of their usefulness. Their usefulness is assessed according to their consequences for some goal or aim. Horkheimer criticizes the philosophers of the Enlightenment for assimilating man to nature. This assimilation turned man into an object in that nature which is objectified for him. Hence, man loses the potentiality to change the world and his subjectivity. Man and nature are not more than machines in the eyes of the philosophers of the Enlightenment. They settle with the eternal return of the present in spite of their viewpoint of progress.⁹⁹ In contrast, for example, Giambattista Vico separates man from nature and avoids placing one above the other in concord with Horkheimer. He insists on the objectivity of man and saves the capacity of man for development.¹⁰⁰ Horkheimer praises him for his viewpoint in philosophy and history.

⁹⁸ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁹ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 257.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 258.

The development of this notion of nature can be seen before the period of the Enlightenment according to Horkheimer and Adorno. Firstly, the idea can be traced to myths. For Horkheimer, mythology intends to give an account of the Beginning. Mythology also aims to give an explanation of reality, and a confirmation of this explanation. A strong didactic element is included in myth. Thus, myth portrays a significant state in development of the instrumentalist view of nature. Secondly, Greek culture is already characterized by a desire for power that Bacon rightly underlines. Renunciation and sacrifice to the Olympic gods was linked to the control over nature.¹⁰¹ Thirdly, the domination of nature is important in the Christian tradition. Religious spirit is different from nature. It has the ability to shape and rule over nature. God is the sovereign power of the universe. Even the human being can govern on earth. This rule is set up by the concept of creation. In the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the idea of humanity's domination over nature enters into philosophy by science especially with Bacon's works. Finally, the development of capitalism causes an economic growth. This also causes new forms of knowledge, and science becomes an important productive force. Scientific development is related to technical development. As a consequence, the domination of nature becomes the primary goal of the whole system.

¹⁰¹ Horkheimer, "Materialism and Metaphysics" in *Critical Theory*, pp. 25-31.

The domination of nature is a type of relationship between the human being and nature. According to the human being, nature has meaning only if it has utility. The nature does not have meaning-in-itself. Thus, according to Horkheimer, the concept of nature leads to the domination of nature. The root of the desire to dominate nature is “fear” of unknown things. Horkheimer and Adorno assert that both mythology and the Enlightenment’s roots are in the same basic needs: survival, self-preservation and fear.

In short, Horkheimer and Adorno assert that the thinkers of the Enlightenment aim to know nature, even what the laws of nature are. These thinkers, for example Bacon, claim that knowledge is power without any hesitation. They want to know the code of laws in nature and to establish a systematic philosophy of the whole in order to dominate it. According to Horkheimer and Adorno;

The exchange principle underlying the Enlightenment notion of nature as fungible atoms was paralleled in the increasing atomization of modern man, a process that culminated in the repressive equality of totalitarianism. The instrumental manipulation of nature by man led inevitably to the concomitant relationship among men. The unbridgeable distance between subject and object in the Enlightenment world view corresponded to the relative status of rulers and ruled in the modern authoritarian states. The objectification of the world had produced a similar effect in human relations.¹⁰²

The thinkers of the Enlightenment intend to dominate humanity, or the subject. They compound nature and humanity to reach their aim according to Horkheimer and Adorno. By doing this, the members of the Enlightenment annihilate the subject. I will try to clarify this issue in following section.

¹⁰² Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 261.

3.5 The Relation between the Sovereignty over the Subject and the Removal of the Subject

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, domination is the root of the catastrophe in society. The domination of human being's nature is another form of domination. In both of these forms of domination, there is domination over the human being by others. An irrational fear of the unknown motivates these dominations. Everything is exploited and destroyed in society. The means of destruction is more sophisticated in the modern West, according to Horkheimer and Adorno. The exploitation is less direct than before. Martin Jay states: "Domination, they argued, was more direct and virulent without the mediations characteristic of bourgeois society."¹⁰³ Yet, it has greater and global consequences in capitalist economy, according to Horkheimer and Adorno.

Horkheimer claim that fearful events are rationalized and automated in the Enlightenment. Even revolts within the military and the defense against these can be rationalized. These actions are also parts of the power struggle in an age when more than one country has reached the same technological level. The age tends to eliminate every sing of a relative autonomy for the individual, according to Horkheimer. Against it, Horkheimer and Adorno try to develop

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 256.

the concept of the autonomy.¹⁰⁴ That the citizen could develop his own potentialities within the limits of liberalism and that his fortune is determined by his own activities is a common view in the Enlightenment for Horkheimer. Everyone should have this possibility of and demand for freedom and justice. However, the Enlightenment philosophers assert that an increase in one of them is usually matched by a decrease in the other. On the other hand, “the centralized regulation of life, the kind of administration which plans every detail, the so-called strict rationalization proves historically to be a compromise.”¹⁰⁵

Horkheimer argues that negative freedom is necessary as a transition moment for positive freedom; this is the reconciliation of general and singular advantages and happiness.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, positive freedom is only a utopian hope that will never be realized.¹⁰⁷ In this regard, Frankfurt School always makes a sign a utopian thought, even though it will not be actualized. Horkheimer asserts that utopian hope prevent turning of history to mythology, that fascism is the state that history has turned to mythology.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ McCarthy, “The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School”, p. 440.

¹⁰⁵ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. vii.

¹⁰⁶ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 398.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 402.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 403.

According to Horkheimer, family has an important role in order to determinate the subject. Horkheimer shows how the authoritarian character in social production is reproduced in the family life, in the person of father in capitalist system. Indeed, the contradiction in family is its socially reproductive function in changing society, for Horkheimer. On the other hand, the other role of family protects children from wretchedness of social life and raises them as adults in conformity with the system. As Horkheimer puts it, “the role of the family as refuge cannot overcome its predominant role within the authoritarian structure of capitalist society.”¹⁰⁹ Because of the regress of the negative function of the family, individuals are directly socialized by family. “Children learned to obey the prevailing order at mother’s knee, despite the potential for an alternative social system implicit in the traditional matriarchal ethic of warmth, acceptance, and love.”¹¹⁰

Every social system tends to reproduce the necessary conditions for its existence. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, this is fairly obvious. Hence, each social system will tend to produce the subject, who accepts the value system of his society. There is a strong tendency towards conformity in the social system. One can reflect on the values which he accepts. He can sometimes exchange them for others. However, this is not visible commonly. The individual accepts common ends and goals in society. Then, he calculates

¹⁰⁹ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. xviii.

¹¹⁰ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 126.

the means required to attain these ends. Therefore, the human being tends to use reason instrumentally rather than objectively, according to the Enlightenment's perspective.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the conventionalized modes of behavior are the only natural, respectable, and rational ones. This process produces agencies of mass production and its culture. The individual in this system defines himself only as a thing, as a static element, as success or failure.¹¹¹ His yardstick is self-preservation and being successful or unsuccessful, which means only whether his action is suitable to a certain aim.

Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the regression becomes an obstacle for the human being to hear with his own ears, to touch thing with his own hands in the modern society. The total society embraces all relations and emotions. Men are only species beings exactly like one another by isolation in society. This society is "forcibly united collectivity".¹¹²

There is a radical separation of subject and object, in the Enlightenment. However, this consciousness develops and unfolds. Consequently, the external world reduces to quantified objects of manipulation. The subject becomes

¹¹¹ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 28.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 36.

increasingly repressed and dominated by a second nature. The replacement of myth by empiricism and positivism lead to the reification of the social life.¹¹³

Horkheimer thinks that philosophers have some duties against the removal of the subject and this condition of the society. For him, the first task of the thinkers is reconditioned of the free world and the concepts of it. He puts this as follows:

[Since the end of the War] The material situation of the dependent classes gives rise to political and psychological tendencies which are different from those of the earlier proletariat. Individuals, like classes, are now being integrated into society. In such circumstances, to judge the so-called free world by its own concept of itself, to take a critical attitude towards it and yet to stand by its ideas, and to defend it against fascism, Stalinist, Hitlerian, or any other, is the right and duty of every thinking man..... the free world is at the moment still an island in space and time, and its destruction in the ocean of rule by violence would also mean the destruction of the culture of which the critical theory is a part.¹¹⁴

Further, the philosophers of the Enlightenment destroy the metaphysical bases of the concepts and emphasize “rationalism”, which is used for making legal the wild power of the sovereign, even of each individual. I will elucidate these two concepts in the following section.

¹¹³ Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory Horkheimer to Habermas*, pp. 155-156.

¹¹⁴ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. ix.

3.6 Rationalism and Metaphysics

According to Horkheimer, metaphysics claim that there is a certain thing in the essence of reality. This essence is eternal and does not change. Horkheimer argues that crude materialism is a kind of metaphysics, since it asserts that matter is the essence of whole, or that essence is matter. Horkheimer emphasizes that metaphysics is inadequate for understanding the social reality and its transformation. But, it at least understands the discrepancy between appearance and essence, the universal and the particular, the abstract and the concrete. In this respect, metaphysics is better than positivist thought, for it captures the dialectical structure of reality. Yet, positivist thought reduces everything to the same structure, which is calculable. That is, reason without metaphysics loses the sight of the nature of reality as well as the ability to define principles that will guide life.¹¹⁵ Reason is reduced to a tool for setting up the other tools¹¹⁶ used by economics, political arguments, institutions, and for removing metaphysics in the realm of reason.

Horkheimer also argues that metaphysics is ideological. This is not to say that its followers are not concerned with pure truth. In contrast, every human being

¹¹⁵ Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, pp. 12-13.

¹¹⁶ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 48.

acts with regard to contraries in the society. That is, everyone is a supporter of one side of these contraries. This supporter determines the essence according to his viewpoint of reality. Thus, all supporters are ideological for Horkheimer.¹¹⁷ For Horkheimer, the occurrence of ideology among the members of a society depends on their place in economic life. However, he does not say that it is impossible to be non-ideological. This is possible only when one penetrates beyond appearances and captures the essences of things. Then, he comprehends what is really going on. This comprehension is possible also when relationships are developed and conflicts of interest are intensified, since a conscious ideological apparatus is able to bring into appearance the essence of reality. Consequently, that metaphysics is ideological has a positive meaning. Horkheimer put this as follows: “as an existing society is increasingly endangered by its internal tension, the energies spent in maintaining an ideology grow greater and finally the weapons are readied for supporting it with violence.”¹¹⁸

Horkheimer says that metaphysics is destroyed in the Enlightenment. In its place, positivist thought has come into prominence. The concepts were not being produced any more, since the thinkers of positivist thoughts make use of only scientific methods and view reality as calculable. According to Horkheimer, they produce the non-implicit and non-historical concepts.

¹¹⁷ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. 7.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 7-8.

According to Horkheimer, the subject is aware of his own partisanship. And the subject is the only means to transcend the enslavement of social theory. Horkheimer asks us to “learn to look behind the facts; to distinguish the superficial from the essential without minimizing the importance of either...”¹¹⁹ In short, Horkheimer calls for a dialectical thinking as the precondition for the achievement of a rational community. He does not reject the establishment of society according to rational judgment; however, he emphasizes the dialectic structure of it.

There are two sides of bourgeois thought: positivism and metaphysics. Horkheimer tries to unify the world-view of the bourgeoisie. The thinkers of the Enlightenment are also split between science and ideologies. Science serves industry. Ideologies serve social domination. Furthermore, positivist thought denies the relevance of universals. It asserts the rationality of reality and documents its permutations. Yet, reality is only given as surface by the positivist thought. On the other hand, metaphysics abolishes the positivist enslavement to the concrete. It searches for teleology to give meaning to human existence. Science offers no transcendent meaning to men. It simply asserts facts. Its viewpoint is to unify thought with outer reality. According to Horkheimer, the universals that metaphysics uses for explaining reality are as

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. xiv.

abstract as those of religion: “If not God, then the absolute idea informs its search for purpose so resolutely denied by empirical science.”¹²⁰

In this context, Horkheimer criticizes pragmatic philosophy.¹²¹ In short, he argues that the pragmatist philosophers do not have the principle of objective truth. Pragmatism reduces reason to instrumental value. According to Horkheimer, in pragmatism, important is the achievement of action. The external reality does not have meaning. The subject becomes central for determination of reality. The object is thoroughly subjectivized. Consequently, pragmatism reduces the object to the instrument. It does not aim for changing the world. Pragmatism unifies value and truth. According to pragmatism, there are not criteria for human action and there is no room for the objective truth. Now, I will try to clarify the understanding of science and knowledge of the Enlightenment for Horkheimer and Adorno.

3.7 Science and Knowledge

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the Enlightenment reached its peak with the foundation of modern science and the mathematical structure of nature. It was assumed that this new science can achieve true knowledge of reality. The Enlightenment rationalizes the world. The universe is only

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. xv.

¹²¹ See Horkheimer’s *Eclipse of Reason*, pp. 29-39, and “On the Problem of Truth”, pp. 443-444.

comprehended by science. Every object is represented by mathematical elements. A universal and mathematically formulated science is developed, and it became the model of all science. This is the culmination of the Enlightenment's project. As Martin Jay puts it: "to consider that all true knowledge aspired to the condition of scientific, mathematical conceptualization was a surrender to a metaphysics as bad as the one the positivists had set out to refute,"¹²² since the positivists do not distinguish phenomenon from value, for Horkheimer and Adorno.

Horkheimer argues that reason turns to instrumental rationality in the Enlightenment. And it becomes a tool for industry in the eighteenth century. Its transformation causes knowledge to become a productive force. Also, it develops a concept of social progress. Critical reason was therefore suppressed according to Horkheimer.¹²³

On the other hand, for Horkheimer, it is impossible to achieve absolute knowledge. Yet, Horkheimer and his working friend Adorno are not relativists on this issue.¹²⁴ Horkheimer stresses the active element in cognition. He argues that the object of perception is the product of man's action. The relationship between the object and subject is not stable but dialectic and historical. Indeed,

¹²² Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 89.

¹²³ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. xiv.

¹²⁴ Göran, Theborn, "The Frankfurt School", in *New Left Review*, vol. 63, 1970, p.78.

nature itself is a historical element. Horkheimer denies the distinction between essence and appearance. He stresses the importance of historicity.¹²⁵ Man conceives nature differently at different times and under different social conditions. And true materialism, for Horkheimer, is dialectical.¹²⁶ It also involves the interaction between the subjects and objects. For them, dialectic investigates the “force-field” between consciousness and being, and between subject and object. It does not pretend to have ontological first principles.¹²⁷ Thus, the nature of knowledge is not absolute according to Horkheimer and Adorno. In other words, truth is not immutable for them. Yet, to deny the absoluteness of truth does not succumb to relativism. They deny that there is a dichotomy between absolutism and relativism. According to them, each period of time has its own truth. There is no truth above time. Adorno asserts that the locus of truth “becomes the mutual dependency, the production through one another of subject and object, and it should no longer be thought of as static agreement”¹²⁸

In the world, things are complicated and are determined by many factors. Horkheimer asserts that looking at problems from different aspects is important and necessary. One-sided men do not consider the circumstances. They ignore

¹²⁵ Thomas, McCarthy, and David Couzens, Hoy, *Critical Theory*, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p. 9.

¹²⁶ Horkheimer, “Materialism and Metaphysics”, in *Critical Theory*, p. 28.

¹²⁷ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, pp. 53-54.

¹²⁸ Adorno, *Zur Metakritik*, p. 146. quoted and translated by Martin Jay, in his *the Dialectical Imagination*, p. 70.

history and the present state of things. Furthermore, they do not get to the essence of things. Namely, they do not look for the nature of things and the internal relation between one thing and another. Such people are bound to trip and fall.¹²⁹ However, dialectical thought begins with the recognition that “the tension between the concept and being is inevitable and ceaseless.”¹³⁰

According to Horkheimer, science itself changes in the course of history.¹³¹ Science is subject to history. Neither the methods of theory nor reality itself are independent from man. Science is a factor in the historical process for him. The separation of theory and action is itself an historical phenomenon, according to Horkheimer.

Science has a number of limitations. These are the restrictions on science. For Horkheimer, these limitations in fact are conditioned by the increasing rigidification of the social situation. At the end of the medieval period, the task of describing facts and establishing the relationship between them were a goal of scientist against Scholastic restriction. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the task of scientists was determined as “the description, classification, and generalization of phenomena.”¹³²

¹²⁹ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. vii.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. xvi.

¹³¹ Max, Horkheimer, "Notes on Science and the Crisis", in *Critical Theory*, (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1989), pp. 3-4.

According to Horkheimer, scientific method was oriented to being and not to becoming in the period of the Enlightenment. The form of science was regarded as a mechanism that ran in unvarying fashion. The mechanism did not require a different scientific approach while explaining any complicated piece of machinery. However, according to Horkheimer, grasping the development of men acting in history requires “a theoretical delineation of profoundly transformative processes which revolutionize all cultural relationship.”¹³³ The structure of any events cannot explain by only recording their occurrences for Horkheimer. The real need is to connect “a set of explicated, rigid, and fetishistic concepts” of science with the dynamic movement of events. He emphasizes the role of speculation in science as follows:

The philosophical systems of objective reason implied the conviction that an all-embracing of fundamental structure of being could be discovered and conception of human destination derived from it. They understood science, when worthy of this name, as an implementation of such reflection or speculation. They were opposed to any epistemology that would reduce the objective basis of our insight to a chaos of unco-ordinated data, and identity our scientific work as the mere organization, classification, or computation of such data.¹³⁴

The categorical formulation of the phenomenal world is the eternal natural law. This formulation dominates all events, the relationship between subject and object, the distinction between mind and nature, soul and body. However, according to Horkheimer, this formulation is determined not because of the

¹³² Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. 5.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹³⁴ Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 9.

condition of science, but the social condition “which hinders led its development and are at loggerheads with the rational elements immanent in science.”¹³⁵ On the other hand, for the thinkers of the Enlightenment, the relationship between subject and object does not change, and the distinction between mind and nature, soul and body is rigid. The distance between subject and object is a presupposition of abstraction. This is also grounded in the distance from the thing itself. Since, the master achieved to be master by the mastered thing.¹³⁶

As David Held says, science and myth pursue objectives, according to Horkheimer and Adorno. However, the tools that each of them uses are different. Myth seeks to achieve its goal by mimesis. It aims at knowing and controlling natural processes. Myth does not radically distinguish thought from reality. Myth compounds the inanimate with the animate. On the other side, according to scientific consciousness of the Enlightenment, nature is disenchanted. For the Enlightenment philosophers, myth is superstition. However, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, the dualism between humans and nature is found in myth too as in the Enlightenment.¹³⁷ In Horkheimer and Adorno’s analysis of Homer’s *Odyssey*, people are said to admit the power of the solar system. They learnt to esteem nature and discover its forces of

¹³⁵ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. 6.

¹³⁶ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 13.

¹³⁷ Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory Horkheimer to Habermas*, p. 155.

repetition. In Horkheimer and Adorno's reading of the *Odyssey*, myth is an expression of our desire to dominate nature. The “basic principle of myth” is anthropomorphism.¹³⁸ In mythology, the nature is falsely interpreted as similar to human beings. However, gods, spirits, and demons of ancient mythologies are open to humanity's influence. Humans can bargain with them, sacrifice to them, pray to them to realize their ends. Natural beings are seen as hostile to humanity. For, the forces in mythologies are angry with humanity. These mythologies are clearly not forms of enlightenment. They are forms of alienation. The human being creates these mythologies. Then human being is controlled by them. They are intended to help humanity in order to control nature. They only give the illusion of control. They are hostile powers of human beings' own imagination. But humanity does not recognize them as its own creations. For Horkheimer, this was repeated in the Enlightenment as the philosophers of the Enlightenment tried to end the domination of religion. In the last part of my thesis, I will try to elucidate the concept of reason in Horkheimer. Then, I will try to explain their alternative method of dialectic for philosophy and for every discipline.

¹³⁸ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 6.

CHAPTER 4
HORKHEIMER AND ADORNO'S ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS
ABOUT REASON AND METHOD IN PHILOSOPHY

Max Horkheimer in his *Eclipse of Reason* elucidates some important concepts among which are reason, system and essence. Horkheimer investigates these concepts in history of philosophy. These concepts are important for the critique of the Enlightenment by Horkheimer and Adorno, and they should be examined carefully to comprehend their critique.

Horkheimer points out the difference between objective and subjective reason.¹³⁹ Subjective reason can make inferences and classifications, but cannot determine general purposes. It takes into account particular situations and social norms. It finds out instruments for the ends, which are already accepted. On the other hand, the objective reason, which not only individuals but also social institutions and nature have been endowed with, aims at establishing a general and universal system. It deals with universal truths that dictate whether an action is either right or wrong. The objective reason is able to set up a general and regular system that all existence is based on. Also, it

¹³⁹ See Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason*, pp, 3-7.

tries to reveal this regularity. This regularity implies a construction that is inherent in reality. This construction reflects the structure of essences. In this part of my study, I will present and evaluate the difference between the objective and the subjective reason in terms of relations between reason, system and essence.

4.1 Reason

The main purpose of the Enlightenment is to offer a life style for humanity. It must be appropriate for reason. Immanuel Kant says that the Enlightenment “is man’s emergence from his self-imposed minority, this minority is the inability of using one’s own understanding without the guidance of another.”¹⁴⁰ The cause of this minority is not reason, but the lack of courage and determination in using and trusting one’s own reason. That is, the Enlightenment purposes to show the way of escape from this minority. It is emphasized that the level of happiness and freedom of human being constantly increases with confidence in reason. Every institution is criticized by reason, since it is intended to establish each one with the principles of reason by the philosophers of the Enlightenment. However, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, in the epoch of the Enlightenment, reason becomes sovereign over everything and changes into the instrumental form.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Kant, “What is Enlightenment” in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, p. 41.

Horkheimer and Adorno criticize the Enlightenment over the concept of reason, too. Reason is the central concept in their critique of the Enlightenment. I will try to elucidate the distinction between the objective and subjective reason in Horkheimer. First, this distinction is just appearance, but inevitable for him. The mistake is not in the essence of this distinction. However, to make one of them absolute against the other is the real mistake according to Horkheimer.¹⁴² It is important to see that Horkheimer does not defend one of these distinct reasons. He only determines them by their function. On the other hand, Horkheimer does not prefer one of them against the other.

4.1.1 The Subjective Reason

The subjective reason is a faculty that can discover appropriate things by reason using the method of classification, inference and deduction. It is interested in aims and tools. However, this reason cannot itself discover any purpose. The subjective reason determines conceivable tools in order to reach the aim which has already been accepted. This aim is to survive for an individual. To examine whether the aim is conceivable is put aside. Thus, the profitless and spontaneous aim is foreign to the subjective reason.

¹⁴¹ Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 6, and Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.30.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 118-119.

When pressed for an answer, the average man will say that reasonable things are things that are obviously useful, and that every reasonable man is supposed to be able to decide what is useful to him. Naturally the circumstances of each situation, as well as laws, customs, and traditions, should be taken into account. But the force that ultimately makes reasonable actions possible is the faculty of classification, inference, and deduction, no matter what the specific content—the abstract functioning of the thinking mechanism. This type of reason may be called subjective reason. It is especially concerned with means and ends, with the adequacy of procedures for purposes more or less taken for granted and supposedly self-explanatory. It attaches little importance to the question whether the purposes as such are reasonable. If it concerns itself at all with ends, it takes for granted that they too are reasonable in the subjective sense, *i.e.* that they serve the subject's interest in relation to self-preservation—be it that of the single individual, or of the community on whose maintenance that of the individual depends.¹⁴³

The subjective reason can only be real for individuals. It cannot be asserted that an institution or a society has a reason. To be conceivable for an institution means that the human being has established this institution suitable with reason by means of calculation and the logical faculty.¹⁴⁴ The subjective reason determines the tools, in accordance with the aim, by calculating the probabilities. According to Horkheimer, this definition is concordant with English philosophy, which starts with John Locke. He says that, for Locke, the aims are reduced to the tools.¹⁴⁵ Locke classifies the faculties of reason, but he does not give different functions to each faculty. Both “Sensation” and “Reflection” produce ideas, which are based on only sensation. “Sensation” works on outside phenomena, while “reflection” works on inner operations of

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

reason.¹⁴⁶ Thus, there is no faculty for determining the ends in reason. The subjective reason does not reject that human being can establish his aims. But this aim cannot be superior to others:

In the subjective view, when 'reason' is used to connote a thing or an idea rather than an act, it refers exclusively to the relation of such an object or concept to a purpose, not to the object or concept itself. It means that the thing or the idea is good for something else. There is no reasonable aim as such, and to discuss the superiority of one aim over another in terms of reason becomes meaningless. From the subjective approach, such a discussion is possible only if both aims serve a third and higher one, that is, if they are means, not ends.¹⁴⁷

The subjective reason conforms to everything. As a consequence, it can be used not only as the defender but also as the contrary of the traditional humanistic virtues.¹⁴⁸ For instance, the subjective reason does not struggle with religion. For, it determines two distinct fields, which are science and philosophy, and mythology and religion. In fact, this distinction is abstract and indefinite. Because of the difference between these fields, philosophy or science do not talk about religion, for philosophy is based on the subjective reason.

For the philosophy of objective reason there is no such way out. Since it holds to the concept of objective truth, it must take a positive or a negative stand with regard to the content of established religion. Therefore the critique of social beliefs in the name of objective reason is much more portentous- although it is sometimes less direct and aggressive- than that put forward in the name of subjective reason.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ John, Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), Book II, Chapter I, §§, 22-25.

¹⁴⁷ Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 9.

In addition, religion does not say anything about the others. In fact, the open example can be seen in René Descartes. Matter and spirit are determined as two distinct essences by Descartes. According to him, the operations and qualities of these essences are different from each other. It is impossible to explain their interference. Each of them is subject to the different laws.¹⁵⁰ Since space is the main quality of the essence of matter, Descartes asserts that human being does not need “space” to think. As to thought, it is the basic quality of the essence of spirit.¹⁵¹ As a consequence of these, Descartes sees science and religion as two distinct realms. Science is interested in the essence of matter, and religion is concerned with the essence of spirit. Furthermore, philosophers should be interested in these issues which God has said nothing about.¹⁵² Horkheimer says that “the active controversy between religion and philosophy ended in a stalemate because the two were considered as separate branches of culture.”¹⁵³ Consequently, for Horkheimer, the philosophers of the Enlightenment killed metaphysics:

The philosophers of the Enlightenment attacked religion in the name of reason; in the end what they killed was not the church but metaphysics and the objective concept of reason itself, the source of power of their own efforts. Reason as an organ for perceiving the true nature of reality and determining the guiding principles of our lives has come to be regarded as obsolete.

¹⁵⁰ René, Descartes, *Felsefenin İlkeleri*, trans. by Mesut Akın, (İstanbul: Say, 1997), pp. 94-95. note 60.

¹⁵¹ Descartes, *The Discourse on Method*, p. 33. § 4.

¹⁵² Descartes, *Felsefenin İlkeleri*, p. 107. note 75.

¹⁵³ Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 12.

Speculation is synonymous with metaphysics, and metaphysics with mythology and superstition.¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, according to Horkheimer, truth is a matter of tradition or custom in accordance with subjective reason. Thus, truth is deprived of its spiritual authority.¹⁵⁵ That is to say, Horkheimer claims that the concepts are completely severed from their roots by the subjective reason. He gives the concept of “majority” as an example. For Horkheimer, this concept became irrational, because it has lost its rational foundation.¹⁵⁶

According to Horkheimer, the subjective reason is concluded by a crude materialism according to Horkheimer. It is almost impossible to escape from the subjective reason. In crude materialism, the subjective reason is the unique attitude of reason. Furthermore, it becomes real by reason’s conformity with the alienation between subject and object and the process of public instrumentalization.¹⁵⁷ According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the dominant form of reason is instrumental reason in the alienated world. This is the capacity for selecting the appropriate means to our ends. That is, the human being uses reason as an instrument to guide him to achieve his ends. This type of reason is contrasted to the other. The objective reason is not instrumental. It

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 12-3.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 21-26.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 117-118.

is not concerned with the means to our ends. Yet, it is concerned with the ends themselves. It asks about our ends and whether they express our deepest needs and desires. Horkheimer and Adorno contend that the objective reason has been undermined by the Enlightenment; for them, the objective reason should be used to advance the critique of the Enlightenment.¹⁵⁸ Instrumental reason simply conforms to the ends that we have acquired. It tells how to pursue them in the most effective fashion. The objective reason tells what our ends should be. It also tells how the world should be transformed in accordance with the human being's rational ends. Horkheimer and Adorno assert that man acquiesces in what others tell them to think and to do. Thus, they give up their independence and fail to achieve autonomy.

4.1.2 The Objective Reason

According to Horkheimer the objective reason does not exist only in the mind of the individual. It is also and especially in the objective world, in the relationships among human being, in public institution, in nature and even in the appearances of the nature. Horkheimer gives the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, Scholastic philosophy and German idealism as examples of that which is established by the objective reason.¹⁵⁹ According to Horkheimer, these philosophies bring the objective reason into prominence, and want to

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 4.

establish a system. This system contains the aims of the human being and the whole existence. That is, this objective reason wants to establish an explanatory system of the whole. It aims to make everything illustrative. Individual behaviors and thought itself should be included in this explanation. For the objective reason, the criterion of individual behavior must be appropriate to the objective structure of whole existence. Horkheimer explains the objective reason as follows:

For a long time, a diametrically opposite view of reason was prevalent. This view asserted the existence of reason as a fore not only in the individual mind but also in the objective world-in relations among human beings and between social institutions, such as those of Plato and Aristotle, scholasticism, and German idealism were founded on an objective theory of reason. It aimed at evolving a comprehensive system, or hierarchy, of all beings, including man and his aims. The degree of reasonableness of a man's life could be determined according to its harmony with this totality. Its objective structure, and not just man and his purposes, was to be the measuring rod for individual thoughts and actions.¹⁶⁰

The objective reason is a faculty which has the ability to discover universal laws and principles. The philosophies defending objective reason claim that there can be criteria which are common and the same for everywhere and everyone.

In the philosophical systems based on the objective reason, the ends are more important than the means in contrast to the system that established by the subjective reason. The subjective reason is capable of finding a reasonable tool for the already admitted the ends. There is no ability to determine the superior

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

end in the subjective reason. However, the objective reason asserts the ends in the relationship between individuals and society. In other words, the distinction between the subjective reason and the objective reason is that reason is not only faculty in the individuals, but also a principle in the structure of reality. The objective reason claims that it can discover the aims in the order of nature.¹⁶¹

The subjective reason has a function of finding the means in accord with the ends. Namely, whether a tool is good or not is dependent on the appropriation of this tool to our aims. On the contrary, there is no place for this viewpoint in the theory of the objective reason. The end is thing-in-itself, the good is thing-in-itself, even the best and the highest end can be determined according to the theory of the objective reason. In other words, the basic purpose of the theory of objective reason is to see the objective structure of reasonable things and its own special features.

The theory of objective reason indicates that there is a structure of reality. Furthermore, it also says that this structure can be known. There is a structure of existence which comprises everything and is the basis of everything, everyone can discover this structure by dialectic.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

The term objective reason thus on the one hand denotes as its essence a structure inherent in reality that by itself calls for specific mode of behavior in each specific case, be it a practical or theoretical attitude. This structure is accessible to him who takes upon himself the effort of dialectical thinking, or identically, who is capable of *eros*. On the other hand, the term objective reason may also designate this very effort and ability to reflect such an objective order. Everybody is familiar with situations that by their very nature, and quite apart from the interests of the subject, call for definite line of action—for example, a child or an animal on the verge of drowning, a starving population, or an individual illness. Each of these situations speaks, as it were, a language of itself. However, since they are only segments of reality, each of them may have to be neglected because there are more comprehensive structures demanding other lines of action equally independent of personal wishes and interests.¹⁶²

The same can be said for the human being and his action. There may be an act, which is made not for its actor's own profits. The theory of objective reason asserts that there can be a certain structure in human nature, according to Horkheimer.

For the philosophical system of subjective reason, science is to put in order and classify the datum perceived by senses. In contrast, according to the philosophical system of objective reason, this kind of operations is secondary. For this system, the most important character of science is “speculation”. In other words, real science is to produce speculations which assert that there is a certain structure of existence, and this structure can be discovered by human beings, and the ends of humanity can be produced by this structure. According to the critical theorists in the Institute for Social Research, science should aim to integrate speculation and empirical research.¹⁶³

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 8.

The theory of the objective reason is connected with the concept of objective truth. According to the theorists of the objective reason, there is an objective truth to defend or criticize. That is, they think that they have an objective criterion to evaluate everything including what the public believes. Thus, they negatively or positively attitudinize against these believes.¹⁶⁴ The struggle of this kind of theory against religion is harder than that of the philosophical system of subjective reason according to Horkheimer. For, the theory of subjective reason only distinguishes religion from philosophy and science. It means that these disciplines do not explain the same whole. For these theorists, these disciplines work at different parts of this whole. So, the philosophical system of subjective reason does not care to negate or exalt religion. On the contrary, the theory of objective reason tries to replace the methodic philosophical thinking and comprehension with religion.¹⁶⁵

4.2 The Concept of “Negative Dialectic” as a Method of Philosophy

Horkheimer and Adorno aim to carry out a dialectical enlightenment of enlightenment in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Two important concepts that

¹⁶³ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 253.

¹⁶⁴ Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 10.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 9.

they use in their project are “determinate negation” and “conceptual self-reflection”. “Determinate negation” indicates the importance of immanent criticism to escape from ideology. A dialectical enlightenment of enlightenment reveals each image as characters. It educates to comprehend “[the image's] features, the admission of falseness which cancels its power and hands it over to truth”.¹⁶⁶ Then, a dialectical enlightenment of enlightenment also calls to mind the goal of thought itself. Such remembrance is the work of self-reflection of thought.¹⁶⁷ Conceptual self-reflection reveals that thought arises from the very corporeal needs and desires. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, these needs and desires are forgotten when thought becomes a unique tool of human self-preservation.

Adorno works out epistemological and metaphysical claims in his *Negative Dialectics*. These claims are extended via the historical and social-theoretical arguments. *Negative Dialectics* tries to formulate a philosophical materialism. This materialism is historical and critical. Yet, it is not dogmatic. The book can be described as a “metacritique” of idealist philosophy, especially of Kant and Hegel¹⁶⁸. Adorno says what he considered his task as a philosopher is “to use

¹⁶⁶ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 18.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁸ Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 148-74.

the strength of the [epistemic] subject to break through the deception [*Trug*] of constitutive subjectivity”.¹⁶⁹

This book has a long introduction working out the concept of philosophical experience. In this book, Adorno challenges Kant's distinction between “phenomena” and “noumena” and rejects Hegel's construction of “absolute spirit”. Horkheimer too criticizes this dualism in Kant. In his study on Kant, Martin Jay says that Horkheimer “made it clear that although these antagonisms had not yet been overcome, he saw no necessary reason, could and must be reconciled.”¹⁷⁰ In the first section Adorno also distinguishes his own project from Heidegger's ontology in *Being and Time*. In the second part, he put forth his alternative. His alternative introduces some categories that he adapted from German idealism. Then, in the following chapter, he elaborates philosophical models. The concepts of freedom, world spirit and natural history are important concepts in *Negative Dialectics*. Adorno's main goal is breaking through the deception of constitutive subjectivity. In what follows I will focus on his critiques of Kant and Hegel, and on the alternative that he introduces.

Adorno criticizes Kant's distinction between phenomena and noumena. He argues that the transcendental conditions of experience cannot be pure or separate from each other as Kant claims. Space and time cannot simply be non-

¹⁶⁹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, p. xx.

¹⁷⁰ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 46.

conceptual perceptions according to Adorno, since a priori categories of the intellect or understanding would be unintelligible if they were not already about something that is non-conceptual. A transcendental philosopher would not have achieved these categories without concepts about the pure forms of space and time. The application of a priori concepts to a priori intuitions via the schematization of the imagination does not make possible any genuine experience. Genuine experience is not made possible by the grasp of thought and sensibility alone. Thought and sensibility must be exceeded. Adorno does not call this excess the “thing in itself”, rather, he calls it “the non-identical”.¹⁷¹

Horkheimer too rejects the goal of Hegelian metaphysics and the existence of absolute truth. For Horkheimer, a system such as that of Hegel’s can turn into a theory that justifies the existence of the status quo. Yet, the aim of a philosophy is not to expose the unchangeable truths but to accelerate social change.¹⁷² Horkheimer criticizes the identity between reason and matter, and subject and object in Hegel. There is no thought in itself. According to Horkheimer, all identity theories are problematic.¹⁷³ Horkheimer argues for the possibility of a dialectic social science that would avoid an identity theory. This kind of dialectic social science would allow the observers to go beyond their experiences.

¹⁷¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, p. 58.

¹⁷² Horkheimer, “Ein neuer Ideologiebegriff?”, in *Grünbergs Archiv XV*, 1(1930), p. 34. Quoted by Martin Jay in his *the Dialectical Imagination*, p. 46.

¹⁷³ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 47.

The concept of non-identity is essential for the difference between Adorno's materialism and Hegel's idealism. Hegel emphasizes a speculative identity between thought and being, between subject and object, and between reason and reality. Adorno shares this emphasis, yet denies that this identity occurs in a positive fashion. According to Adorno, this identity has generally occurred negatively. The identity is "exchange-relationship" for him.¹⁷⁴ In other words, human thought has imposed this identity on objects. Further, according to Horkheimer, human being suppresses or ignores the differences between subject and object and diversity by doing this.¹⁷⁵ Hegel's speculative identity amounts to an identity between identity and non-identity. Adorno rejects the positive side in Hegel's dialectic.¹⁷⁶ His "identity" means non-identity between identity and non-identity. So Adorno calls his dialectic as "negative dialectic". The methodical axiom of negative dialectic is that "universal history must be both construed and denied."¹⁷⁷

In addition to Hegelian idealism, Horkheimer and Adorno also reject the Marx's deterministic historical materialism. The only hope for the future is the

¹⁷⁴ Osborne, "A Marxism for the Postmodern?", p. 180.

¹⁷⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, p, 216.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 143-161.

¹⁷⁷ Osborne, "A Marksizm for the Postmodern?", p. 174.

negation of daily social condition.¹⁷⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno's difference from Hegel is that subjectivity is not a transcendental reality above individuals and that the roots of objective reality are not only in subjectivity. In short, they reject the theory of idealism that the world is a product of consciousness. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the identity between the thinking subject and the thought object is impossible.

Adorno does not reject the necessity of conceptual identification. However, he claims that thought must be non-identical to access. According to Adorno, thought can only be non-identical in the modern world. It must contain conceptual criticisms of false identifications. This criticism must be in the form of "determinate negations". Determinate negations have to put present contradictions between the claims of thought and the practice of it.¹⁷⁹

The drive for the negative dialectic is not only conceptual. Adorno's epistemology is materialist in two ways. Firstly, it is driven by undeniable human suffering. This is the corporeal mark of society and the object upon human consciousness: "The need to let suffering speak is a condition of all truth. For, suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 385.

¹⁷⁹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 24.

¹⁸⁰ Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, pp. 17-18.

Adorno insists on the "priority of the object".¹⁸¹ This insistence on the priority of the object clearly distinguishes Adorno's materialist epistemology from idealism, whether Kantian or Hegelian. For Adorno, any philosophy that affirms an identity between subject and object must be regarded as idealist. Such a philosophy assigns priority to the epistemic subject. Adorno refuses the priority of the subject. Adorno repeatedly makes three claims. Firstly, the epistemic subject is itself objectively constituted by the society. Since, the epistemic subject belongs to this society. Also, the subject could not exist without it. Secondly, the object cannot be fully known according to the rules and procedures of identity thinking. Third, the goal of thought itself is to honour itself in their non-identity. According to Adorno, the identity theory can be put forward when thought forgets that social forces impose the character of identity on objects. The object, in fact, differs in accordance with what a restricted rationality declares it to be. Adorno argues that the object cannot be independent from all of things under its circumstances. First of all, it can be an object only in relation to a subject. Also, objects are historical and have the potential to change.

Adorno argues that philosophy must give priority to the object dialectically. Although he admits that there is interdependence between subject and object, for Horkheimer, dialectics is the attempt to recognize the non-identity between thought and object. Dialectics conforms to the principle of non-identity. It is

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, pp. 183-197.

the non-identical in the face of the principle of identity.¹⁸² It embodies a contradiction. And, contradiction is the central category of dialectic. Thought itself emphasizes this contradiction. Thinking is identifying. It is thought to attain truth only through conceptual identification. So, identity, for Adorno, appears in thought itself, it is the only way to penetrate the immanent. Accordingly, there is a contradiction in all qualitatively different things and the resistance of things to being conceptualized.

The contradiction is the non-identical under the aspect of [conceptual] identity; the primacy of the principle of contradiction in dialectics tests the heterogeneous according to unitary thought [*Einheitsdenken*]. By colliding with its own boundary [*Grenze*], unitary thought surpasses itself. Dialectics is the consistent consciousness of non-identity.¹⁸³

Philosophies are forced to think in contradictions within the society itself, since society is also driven by fundamental contradictions. These contradictions are covered up by the identity, but they must be exposed and their possible resolution must be pointed out, according to Adorno. This means that philosophers must think against common thought and this can be achieved only by thinking in contradictions. The semblance of contradiction can be attributed to neither thought nor reality only. Adorno says: “To proceed dialectically means to think in contradictions, for the sake of the contradiction already experienced in the object [*Sache*], and against that contradiction. A contradiction in reality, [dialectics] is a contradiction against reality”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 144-5.

Nature is in itself neither good nor bad for Horkheimer and Adorno. They assert that the reconciliation with nature in accordance with the identity theory is not preferable. Critical theory stresses non-identity. This prevents the reduction of the subject to the object and vice versa. Horkheimer and Adorno do not think that a natural subject can eliminate the distinction between subject and object. In addition, Horkheimer says:

A dialectical process is negatively characterized by the fact that it is not to be conceived as the result of individual unchanging factors. To put it positively, its elements continuously change in relation to each other within the process, so that they are not even to be radically distinguished from each other. Thus the development of human character, for example, is conditioned both by the economic situation and by the individual powers of the person in question. But both these elements determine each other continuously, so that in the total development neither of them is to be presented as an effective factor without giving the other its role.¹⁸⁵

Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the utopian thought about reconciliation of human and nature can be preserved only by the contradictions in reality not by the unity of them.¹⁸⁶ Michael Foucault¹⁸⁷ and Terry Eagleton¹⁸⁸ criticize the Frankfurt School as utopist. Memory is the enemy of domination.¹⁸⁹ Memory means that human beings have to bear in mind all contraries in society. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that if this memory exists, the disturbed world can be changed.

¹⁸⁵ Horkheimer, "Materialism and Metaphysics", p. 28.

¹⁸⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 223.

¹⁸⁷ McCarthy, "The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School", p. 456.

¹⁸⁸ Rolleston, "The Uses of the Frankfurt School: New Stories in the Left", p. 90.

¹⁸⁹ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 305.

4.3 The Understanding of Philosophy in Horkheimer and Adorno

Horkheimer and Adorno think that society and culture set up a historical totality. So, the inquiry of freedom in society is inseparable from that of enlightenment in culture.¹⁹⁰ Society means the political and economic structures within which human being live. Horkheimer asserts that social theory cannot achieve the immutable truth on its run. Natural philosophy and individual scientific disciplines must be related to other disciplines such as psychology and sociology. This relationship is dialectical. Furthermore, social theory must take advantage of different methods that are used in other disciplines. The methods of social theory, for Horkheimer, “were to include the use of public statistics and questionnaires backed up by sociological, psychological, and economic interpretation of the data.”¹⁹¹ The thinkers of the Frankfurt School are not opposing the empirical method. They use this method in most of their works. For them, this method is essential for understanding social phenomena. Yet, this emphasis does not mean that the American empirical method must be central in research. It lays stress upon its profitability.¹⁹² Horkheimer especially emphasizes that social theory must be

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. xvi.

¹⁹¹ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 26.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, p. 251.

interdisciplinary.¹⁹³ He spoke on these issues in “The Current Condition of Social Philosophy and the Task of an Institute of Social Research”, at the opening ceremony of his term in the Institute in 1931. Martin Jay writes the following on Horkheimer’s viewpoint on these issues:

As Horkheimer explained in the foreword to the first issue, *Sozialforschung* . . . Horkheimer stressed the synoptic, interdisciplinary nature of the Institute’s work. He particularly stressed the role of social psychology in bringing the gap between individual and society. In the first article, which followed, “Observations on Science and Crisis” he developed the connection between the current splintering of knowledge and the social conditions that helped produce it. A global economic structure both monopolistic and anarchic, he argued, had promoted a confused state of knowledge. Only by overcoming the fetishistic grounding of scientific knowledge in pure consciousness and, by recognizing the concrete historical circumstances that conditioned all thought, could the present crisis be surmounted.¹⁹⁴

On the other hand, praxis is as important for the Institute as much as theory to overcome the contradictions of the social order.¹⁹⁵ However, praxis has a deep meaning. According to Martin Jay and Russell Jacoby, the philosophers of the Frankfurt School aim to create the concept of “praxis” to justify theory.¹⁹⁶ It is not important to be an activist or an active member of any political party. However, they aimed to provide a model for the future society. They want to “serve as a microscopic foretaste of the brotherly society of the future.”¹⁹⁷ Here appears their utopian characteristic. On the other hand, they prefer the bourgeois life style, although they constantly reject the system of the

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 253.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 27.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 46.

¹⁹⁶ Martin Jay, and Russell Jacoby, “Marxism and Critical Theory: Martin Jay and Russell Jacoby” in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer, 1975, p. 259.

¹⁹⁷ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 31.

capitalism. Horkheimer explains and rationalizes this preference in his “A Fable of Consistency”. He says that this preference or its contrary “drew the consequences, and both consequences favored the”¹⁹⁸ sovereign.

For Adorno, the bourgeois individual is only a dialectical instrument of transition. The matter is that totality is at the centre of reality. The members of the Institute, especially Adorno, emphasize the embattled individual. Only this individual can have the power to change the current world. According to Adorno, the utopian alternative can be seen only in the “damaged life”.¹⁹⁹

Horkheimer and Adorno are, in fact, dialectic materialists. Horkheimer argues that true materialism does not mean a type of metaphysics, which is based on the ontological priority of matter. For him, materialism giving primacy to matter is mechanic materialism. Horkheimer and Adorno reject this kind of materialism.²⁰⁰ For Horkheimer, materialists are and must be concerned with the future of the society.²⁰¹ Namely, they must have a political thought and take sides with the changing negative social conditions. Martin Jay states that for the question what one should do with political power, Horkheimer

¹⁹⁸ Horkheimer, *Dammerung*, p. 165. Quoted by Martin Jay, in his *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 36.

¹⁹⁹ Adorno, *Minima Moralia* in the subtitle. Quoted by Martin Jay, in his *the Dialectical Imagination*, p. 218.

²⁰⁰ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 53.

²⁰¹ Horkheimer, “Traditional and Critical Theory”, pp. 240-243.

“presupposes the condition which is supposed to disappear: the power of disposition over alienated labor.”²⁰²

According to Horkheimer, human thought is socially conditioned. This understanding of thought is necessary.²⁰³ The rejection of the ability of comprehending whole reality is not a rejection of distinction between true and false. According to Horkheimer, this is the problem of tools used for achieving the knowledge. Human’s being fallibility and the possibility of daily truths does not prevent claiming and defending truth.²⁰⁴ Horkheimer analyses this issue deeply in his “On the Problem of Truth”. For him, after Descartes’s distinction between the subject and the object, knowledge is valued with regard to being subjective or objective. The viewpoint of knowledge, in which the subject is central leads to relativism. On the other hand, the understanding of knowledge where the object is the main factor causes a kind of dogmatism, according to Horkheimer.²⁰⁵ For him, the distinction between the subject and the object cannot be described as two distinct superiorities. There are subjective factors in the objective factor, and factors contain subjective factor.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Horkheimer, *Autoritärer Staat*, p.153. Quoted by Martin Jay, *the Dialectical Imagination*, p. 119.

²⁰³ McCarthy, Thomas, “On the Critical Theory and Its Relationship with Philosophy”, p. 59.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 60.

²⁰⁵ Horkheimer, “On the Problem of Truth” in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. by. Arato and Gebhardt, (Blackwell: Oxford, 1978), p. 407.

Then, Horkheimer asks whether there is an alternative way in the relationship between knowledge and truth apart from being subjective or objective. His suggestion is the acceptance that concrete content is dependent and conditional.²⁰⁷ There is not any theory of reality that is isolated and should be accepted as an absolute truth according to Horkheimer.²⁰⁸ He adds that the value of knowledge is determined by its concrete situation and it cannot be determined a priori. There is no eternal mystery of the world. For Horkheimer, it is impossible to set up a theory that will be valid forever.²⁰⁹ That is, it is impossible to achieve a pure and perfect theory, or to behave fully in subjective attitude.²¹⁰ The thinking subject and the thought object continually change. Additionally, there is a tension between concept and reality. To look for the universal prescriptions is a mistake for an individual and for a group according to Horkheimer.²¹¹ Adorno argues that truth is a realm of power between the subject and the object. That is, truth is the product of the subject and the object through the agency of each other.²¹²

²⁰⁶ Horkheimer, "Materialism and Metaphysics", p. 32.

²⁰⁷ Horkheimer, "On the Problem of Truth", p. 414.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 416.

²⁰⁹ Horkheimer, "Materialism and Metaphysics", p. 10.

²¹⁰ Douglas, Kellner, "The Frankfurt School Revisited: A Critique of Martin Jay's The Dialectical Imagination", No. 4, Winter, 1974, p. 144.

²¹¹ Horkheimer, "On the Problem of Truth", pp. 416-419.

²¹² Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, pp. 107-108.

Horkheimer asserts that the process of knowledge contains real historical desire and act as much as experience and perception. In other words, the true desire and true thinking exist in a mutual relationship.²¹³ Horkheimer's main assertion is that the method of dialectic getting rid of the idealist illusion passes over the contradiction between relativity and dogmatism. For Horkheimer, the dialectical thinking does not accept its viewpoint as the absolute. Dialectical thought accepts that the knowledge, concepts and judgements are valid for a singular individual or a group of man in a general context. Furthermore, dialectical thinking does not assert that the contrary thought is false. The dialectical thinking includes the principle of contradiction. Also, a set of static principle is meaningless.²¹⁴ According to Horkheimer, if there was no any relationship between a theory of knowledge and a certain theory of whole, this theory of knowledge would turn into a formal and abstract theory. A concept achieves its meaning in the theoretical unity by being related with other concepts. A non-historical concept cannot be a criterion for fixing the truth.²¹⁵

In short, Horkheimer asserts dialectical materialism as an alternative method for thinking. He also views the dialectic metaphysics as a traditional theory.²¹⁶ It is essential to emphasize that Horkheimer criticizes both dialectic idealism

²¹³ Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 26.

²¹⁴ Horkheimer, "On the Problem of Truth", p. 420.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 424-425.

²¹⁶ Phil, Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School: A Marxist Perspective*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 75.

and the non-dialectical materialism.²¹⁷ The method of dialectic does not have universal laws. The meaning of a concept, in the dialectical construction, is not same in a different instance. According to Horkheimer, the function and content of a concept changes in each different setting,²¹⁸ there is a dialectical consciousness in materialism owing to the role of subject in producing of concepts. In the dialectic process, one pays attention to changing factors. Every moment of the dialectic process constantly change each other. The evaluation of the human character is subject not only to the economical conditions but also to his individualistic powers. Furthermore, according to Horkheimer, these factors operate on each other. Similarly, the condition of the object and the subjective factors of scientific research mutually interact each other in science. For Horkheimer, the subject cannot be separated from the object. The pure identity of the subject and the object is impossible. The theoretical and practical activity of humanity is in a process of changing reality. A necessary conformity between the subject and the object cannot be formulated.²¹⁹ That is, each dialectical construction is a product of humanity. Thus, each dialectical construction is detemined by the subject and the object.²²⁰

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 85.

²¹⁸ Horkheimer, "The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy", in *Between Philosophy and Social Science*, ed., G F Hunter, 1993., p. 206.

²¹⁹ Horkheimer, "Materialism and Metaphysics", pp. 31-32.

²²⁰ Horkheimer, "The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy", p. 212.

In other words, Horkheimer asserts that the main task of the Enlightenment was to determine and classify the phenomenal world. This determination and classification was made independent from a “theory” by the philosophers of the Enlightenment. There is no connection of the communal intention in the process of knowledge.²²¹ In contrast, in the dialectical materialism that Horkheimer supports, not only collection of data but also theory is important. According to Horkheimer, theory is a context of knowledge that originates from a certain practice and aim.²²² That is, theory is only a moment of history.²²³

Horkheimer compares materialism and idealism. According to Horkheimer, in idealist philosophy, i.e. in Hegel, there is a dogmatic concept of the whole. However, neither pure thinking and abstraction nor intuition can correlate the subject with a stable structure of existence according to materialist philosophy.²²⁴ Besides, there is no such a structure.

Furthermore, the non-dialectical concepts such as individual, commonwealth and nation should be passed over. The matter of the social philosophy is neither an isolated individual, nor a reified social totalitarianism. Horkheimer asserts

²²¹ Horkheimer, “Materialism and Metaphysics”, p. 83.

²²² *Ibid*, p. 84.

²²³ Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School: A Marxist Perspective*, p. 68.

²²⁴ Horkheimer, “The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy”, p. 204.

that the social theory is to change according to the interaction between the individual and the society.²²⁵

Adorno gives his own alternative to traditional metaphysics. His historiographic, social theoretical, aesthetic, and negative dialectical concerns meet in passages such as the following:

Thought that does not capitulate before wretched existence comes to nought before its criteria, truth becomes untruth, philosophy becomes folly. And yet philosophy cannot give up, lest idiocy triumph in actualized unreason . . . Folly is truth in the shape that human being must accept whenever, amid the untrue, they do not give up truth. Even at the highest peaks art is semblance; but art receives the semblance . . . from nonsemblance. . . . No light falls on people and things in which transcendence would not appear. Indelible in resistance to the fungible world of exchange is the resistance of the eye that does not want the world's colors to vanish. In semblance nonsemblance is promised"²²⁶

Calvin N. Jones says that Adorno criticizes the theory of identity. Accordingly, the artist should put emphasis on the contradicting part of society, for Adorno. This is the most significant part of his aesthetics. In addition, society and art must be connected. Also, the antagonisms in reality should be emphasized. Adorno puts emphasis on the autonomy and power of the aesthetic form. This form must demonstrate that which changes in practice and should assert the new evolution. In short, Adorno always emphasizes the concept of negation.²²⁷

²²⁵ Kellner, "The Frankfurt School Revisited: A Critique of Martin Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination*", p. 139.

²²⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, pp. 404-5.

²²⁷ Calvin N., Jones, "Ferdinand Raimund and Odon Von Horvath: The Volksstück as Negation and Utopia", in *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3, Summer, 1991, p. 326.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Horkheimer argued that no thinker can completely escape from his social origins. There cannot be a subject isolated from his historical conditions.²²⁸ He says that “the greater the work, the more it is rooted in the concrete historical situation.”²²⁹ The role of personal experiences can be seen in Frankfurt School’s analysis. The members of the Institute of Social Research do not deny this connection.²³⁰ They are interested in issues by which they are impressed. Most of them are Jewish. Thus, they have done research especially on the Nazi fascism. In addition, they had to take refuge in the United States during the period of the Hitler in Germany. They were interested in the culture industry there which became the most important means of the domination of the society.

Horkheimer and Adorno firstly criticize the Enlightenment with regard to what they see as its consequences, such as Nazism and culture industry. First of all, the philosophers of the Enlightenment separate the subject and the object,

²²⁸ Horkheimer, “The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy”, p. 215.

²²⁹ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 103.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 215.

especially after the Cartesian Philosophy. The object is thought to be independently from the subject by the philosophers of the Enlightenment. As a consequence of this, the subject has been viewed as superior and as capable to know and use the object. That is, it has been thought that the human being has a right to govern nature for the sake of his advantages. This assertion has finally led to Nazism in Germany.

According to Horkheimer, reason has two characters, the subjective and the objective. The objective reason is in everything. That is, it is “actual” for the individual, institutions and nature. In contrast, the subjective reason operates only for the individual. The subjective reason can be used to determine the tools for the already accepted ends. However, these tools are also thought to be ends. The process of technology has been considered to be the end in the period of the Enlightenment, although it is only a tool. Therefore, reason is instrumentalized by the philosophers of the Enlightenment. According to Horkheimer, these two processes cannot represent each other.

Horkheimer and Adorno suggest dialectic materialism to solve these problems of the Enlightenment. They argue that the dichotomy between idealism and materialism should be passed over, and assert that Hegel’s idealism and Marx’s materialism endeavor to overcome this dichotomy via “dialectic”, since dialectic has a perspective to pass over this dichotomy.

Horkheimer and Adorno are against the crude materialism that makes absolute separation between subject and object, and metaphysics that is based on the identity of subject and object. However, they put aside neither materialism nor metaphysics. There is a room for both in their dialectical method. Thought and being are separate things, but also they are in a unity. That is, the subject is determined by the object, and the object by the subject. Their example is that a researcher makes a survey according to his thoughts and emotions determined by his society. Namely, consciousness is not abstract, but it is an actual human being's consciousness. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the relationship between the object and the subject is neither an absolute dichotomy nor a certain unity. The subject and the object consist of each other, but neither is irreducible to the other.

Horkheimer and Adorno endeavor to provide a freedom for the particular in the whole. They aim to end sovereignty of the whole over particulars. The term "whole" means "the social structure", "totality" and "the order". Particular is the individual, or the social class. The existence of the particular outside the whole is impossible. That is, the particular can exist in the whole. According to Horkheimer, the particular can force the whole to change according to the particular's preferences.

Horkheimer and Adorno's epistemology is based on dialectic materialism. This kind of materialism asserts that the individual and classes have a right and

possibility to change the social system. The system is not absolute. Their dialectic is different from that of Hegel and Marx. For Hegel and Marx, dialectic has closed-edges and is complete. For example, according to Hegel, dialectic is completed in the bourgeois commonwealth. However, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, the idea that dialectic is complete, is contradictory to dialectic itself.

According to Horkheimer, dialectic must be “open-ended”. This dialectic does not assert that the reasonable has been completed in a certain time in history. Adorno’s dialectic is “negative dialectic”. According to him, dialectic must be aware of non-identity. Thesis-antithesis is “contradiction” and synthesis is the identity. In Adorno’s negative dialectic, identity is not an achieved through contradiction. In contrast, this identity is a sin or evil against it. Adorno asserts that it is impossible to remove contradictions. Negative dialectic does not have a determinate beginning and an end. It has a desire for passing over being, or given reality, it does not assert an alternative absolute. This assertion is a sign of Horkheimer and Adorno’s utopianism. Although they emphasize praxis, they do not assert anything for praxis. They argue only that truth can be changed and it changes by itself.

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