

CRITIQUE OF  
INSTRUMENTAL  
REASON

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Translated by  
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and Others



Published by Verso 2012  
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First published in English by the Seabury Press 1974  
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**Verso**

UK: 6 Meard Street, London W1F 0EG  
US: 20 Jay Street, Suite 1010, Brooklyn, NY 11201  
[www.versobooks.com](http://www.versobooks.com)

Verso is the imprint of New Left Books

ISBN-13: 978-1-78168-023-0  
eISBN-13: 978-1-78168-035-3 (US)  
eISBN-13: 978-1-78168-990-5 (UK)

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

v3.1

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## Foreword

“Reason” for a long period meant the activity of understanding and assimilating the eternal ideas which were to function as goals for men. Today, on the contrary, it is not only the business but the essential work of reason to find means for the goals one adopts at any given time. And it is considered superstitious to think that goals once achieved are not in turn to become means to some new goal. For centuries obedience to God was the means of winning his favor, but also the way to rationalize every kind of subjugation, crusades of conquest, and terrorism. Ever since Hobbes, however, men shaped by the Enlightenment, be they theists or atheists, have considered the commandments to be socially useful moral principles that will promote a life as free as possible from friction, peaceful relations between equals, and respect for the status quo. When stripped of its theological garb, “Be reasonable” means: “Observe the rules, without which neither the individual nor society as a whole can survive; do not think only of the present moment.” Reason is considered to come into its own when it rejects any status as an absolute (“reason” in the intensified sense of the word) and accepts itself simply as a tool. It is true, of course, that there have in modern times been serious attempts to give a theoretical grounding for the claim that reason grasps absolute truth. A great part of modern philosophy since Descartes has striven to effect a compromise between theology and science, the agent in the transaction being “the faculty of intellectual ideas (the reason).”<sup>1</sup> In Kant’s posthumously published papers we read: “What is divine about our soul is its capacity for ideas.”<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche attacked this kind of belief in the autonomy of reason as a symptom of backwardness: “The German sense of values” finds “Locke and Hume ... too luminous, too clear.”<sup>3</sup> Kant he considered to be “retarded.”<sup>4</sup> “Reason is merely an instrument, and Descartes is superficial.”<sup>5</sup> As it has in other areas of a culture touched by decadence, the twentieth century has here seen history repeating itself. In 1900, the year of Nietzsche’s death, Husserl published his *Logische Untersuchungen*, which was a new effort to give a strictly scientific basis for the claim that we perceive spiritual reality and have an intuition of essences. Husserl himself was thinking primarily of logical categories, but Max Scheler and others extended the doctrine to moral structures as well. The enterprise was marked from the beginning by an effort to turn the clock back. For it is an inner necessity that has led to the self-surrender by reason of its status as a spiritual substance. The function of theory today is to reflect upon and give expression to the whole process which we have here briefly indicated: the socially conditioned tendency toward neo-Positivism or the instrumentalization of thought, as well as the vain efforts to

rescue thought from this fate.

In response to requests that a complete collection of my writings might be published, I decided for the moment only on a selection of pieces that had appeared since the mid-forties. They were written in the time left free from my practical activities: the organization of *Studies of Prejudice*, academic administration, the revitalizing of the Institute for Social Research, and efforts at educational reform. I am well aware that the wishes expressed to me related to the period in which the critical theory took shape, especially in the essays I wrote for the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, of which I was editor, as well as in my unpublished studies and, not least, in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* which I wrote with my friend, Theodor Adorno, and which has long been out of print.<sup>6</sup> At the end of the Nazi period (I thought at the time) a new day, the beginning of an authentically human history, would dawn in the developed countries as the result of reforms or revolution. Along with the other founders of Scientific Socialism, I thought that the cultural gains of the bourgeois era—the free development of human powers, a spiritual productivity—but stripped now of all elements of force and exploitation, would surely become widespread throughout the world.

My experiences since that time have not failed to affect my thinking. The “communist” states, which make use of the same Marxist categories to which my own efforts in the realm of theory owe so much, are certainly no closer to the dawn of that day than are the countries in which, for the moment at least, the freedom of the individual has not yet been snuffed out. Given this situation, I decided that, along with some other studies, my various reflections on reason should be the first essays to appear in a collection. These reflections, which underlie my earlier studies as well, support, I hope, the contention that the rule of freedom, once brought to pass, necessarily turns into its opposite: the automatizing of society and human behavior. The pieces brought together here are efforts at reflection under the awareness of that contradiction, and without losing sight of either side of it.

Selection and revision are the work of Dr. Alfred Schmidt. Without his understanding and dedication this volume could not have appeared.

MAX HORKHEIMER

May, 1967

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## THE CONCEPT OF MAN

(1957)

When contemporary philosophers speak of man, they seldom fail to note that the fundamental philosophical problem, the problem of being as such, is inseparable from the problem of man. At least in Europe in recent times, philosophy, including existentialism (the philosophy of concrete existence) is characterized by the fact that in it the doctrine of being as such arises, if not objectively, then at any rate in the process of reflection, only after the effort to win insight into man.

Such a state of affairs would seem to be due to the very nature of the question, if nothing else. For one thing, man the knower is himself part of the totality, of the world and all it contains; he is therefore able to perceive within himself, and perhaps even more clearly there than elsewhere, the being with which he must come to grips philosophically. In addition, an understanding of the very question of being, and consequently of the conditions which any response must satisfy and to which indeed any response is antecedently subject, require man's entering into himself and especially into his own thinking and philosophizing. In this respect, the most recent ontological philosophy is following in the footsteps of that older critical philosophy which it rejects. Classical German idealism began with an analysis of thought, with a rigorous exposition of the requirements which metaphysical answers must meet, with the critique of reason. The now dominant ontological trend likewise turned its attention first of all to the meaning of philosophical questions and then proceeded to man and finally to that being which supposedly embraces every individual reality and the questioner himself. Ontology is thus related to German idealism in many respects, and perhaps it is again discovering behind hidden being, as idealism did behind the unknowable thing-in-itself, the subject and spirit and activity. Yet the tone of both question and answer is different today, and it is worth our while to dwell briefly on it.

Kant reduced the concern with man to three questions: "What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?"<sup>1</sup> The third question, which is "at once practical and theoretical,"<sup>2</sup> includes the other two. Examination of this third question leads to the idea of the highest good and absolute justice. The moral conscience, upon the truth of which depends the difference between good and evil, rebels against the thought that the present state of reality is

final and that undeserved misfortune and wrongdoing, open or hidden, and not the self-sacrificing deeds of men, are to have the last word. Kant, therefore, no less than Voltaire or Lessing, postulates eternity. The postulate of a transcendental world is identical, in his philosophy, with the judgment on the immanent world. What mediates between the two, however, is not faith alone nor interiority but human life. Reality indeed does not seem able to promise fulfillment of man's claims on it, but this does not mean that the idea of the world "in so far as it may be in accordance with all the ethical laws"—in other words, the idea of a just order of things—"may [not] have, and ought [not] to have, an influence on the world of sense, so as to bring it as far as possible into conformity with itself."<sup>3</sup> Such is the consequence of man's autonomy. Kant's assurance that the realization of right order and the removal of contradictions belong to the infinite, intelligible world, is intended to help bring about change in the finite world. Hope that urges men on and guides their action is a constitutive element in the Kantian system and plays a role in even the subtlest transcendental analyses, as it does not in mere epistemology.

In the critical view of man, therefore, an essential role belongs to the idea of a moral order and the conception of a world in which human merit and happiness are not simply juxtaposed but necessarily connected and in which injustice has disappeared. Kant, according to his own testimony, was "set straight" by Rousseau and would regard himself as "more useless than a common laborer" if his meditations could not contribute to "re-establishing the rights of mankind."<sup>4</sup> In this he is typical of the eighteenth century. The embarrassment which the militant Enlightenment causes contemporary philosophy, the neglect of its constitutive elements even in interpreting Kant, the superficiality which has been achieved through depth (as one Hegelian puts it) in the last few decades, the passage from critique to the positivistic stance and to concreteness—all this is proof not of an advance but only of resignation.

In the historical period after Kant the material conditions needed for a rational administration of the world improved to a degree undreamt of. Yet those who inherited these improved conditions are far from drawing the Kantian conclusion. Instead they have begun to speak of man in a different fashion. In the century of Enlightenment free thought was the force that knocked the solid supports of stupidity from under institutions which bad conscience had driven to adopt terroristic methods; it was the force that gave the bourgeoisie its self-awareness. In our own time, on the contrary, the feeling is abroad that free thought is helpless. Mastery of nature has not brought man to self-realization; on the contrary, the status quo continues to exert its objective compulsion. The factors in the contemporary situation—population growth, a technology that is becoming fully automated, the centralization of economic and therefore political power, the increased rationality of the individual as a result of his work in industry—are inflicting upon life a degree of organization and manipulation that leaves the individual

only enough spontaneity to launch himself onto the path prescribed for him.

Where the word “man,” therefore, is still used in a more pregnant sense, it does not imply the rights of mankind. It does not stand for a theory of reason such as once was based on the unshakable belief that a just world could still be brought into existence. The word “man” no longer expresses the power of the subject who can resist the status quo, however heavily it may weigh upon him. Quite differently than in the context of critical philosophy, to speak of man today is to engage in the endless question of the ground of man and, since in ontological philosophy ground supplies direction, in the endless quest for an image of man that will provide orientation and guidance. Speakers tirelessly challenge men and assure philosophers, sociologists, economists, and not least, the representatives of the economy and government, that “everything depends on the individual.” To the extent that the speakers are not simply, though quite legitimately, looking for qualified young people who are masters of their jobs (we are told in a periodical that the demand for “personality” is quite universally voiced today<sup>5</sup>), what they have in mind, especially in Europe, is the strong individual who stands out against the system. Such an individual is to be a symbol of the fact that there can be such individuals. We must note, however, that when man is regarded as a spiritual being and not as a biological species, he is always a definite individual, not the dimensionless abstraction, distilled from the individuals of every social stratum, class, country, and age, such as those who ride in the antitheoretical train declare to be the concrete reality. Now, do those who exhort us really think that an individual can escape the objective forces which coerce and put their mark on him from his earliest years? Do they think that any individual who is still capable of resistance would allow himself to be guided, even in his sleep, by the deceitful image of the supposedly authentic and real, and not rather by his own insight into relations as they really are, by his awareness of the unity of all living things, and by the desire that everything should turn out right?

The acknowledgment of abstract man as though he were the one to avert the evil that lurks behind all our economic miracles, sounds like both a referral and an appeasement. *Physical* suffering under injustice and under the complication of an existence which despite the rise in living standards and expectations is becoming ever more difficult and insecure, is fobbed off by referring it to the insight that the important thing is personality. *Psychic* suffering is assuaged by conjuring up figures, past and present, who are proof that one can still be a man and not part of the masses to which no one wants to belong. The call for the real, authentic man is a call for models and examples and, all too easily, for leaders and fathers. Conceptual thought that is alienated from theory has become so malleable that it is mesmerized by any star from the worlds of power and film if he can but slip inside its defenses with the help of publicity. The so-called “authentic” man, no less than the being that has been materialized into a subject of research for run-of-the-mill philosophers, is but an empty well from which those who cannot achieve their

own private life, their own decisions and inner power, fill up their dreams. In a typical book in praise of being and of the mind that inquires into it we read: "The person who finds himself engaged in this world of functions, whether it be a question of organic, psychological, professional, or social functions in the broadest sense, experiences deep within himself the need that there be *being*."<sup>6</sup> The vague profundity of the philosopher and, to no lesser degree, the popular idea that man will rescue us turn attention away from the real totality with its injustice and from the diversified interaction, overt and covert, between society and the individuals who are determined by society and determine it in turn, and direct that attention to the promising symbol of authentic reality. The symbol is then all too easily given its specific meaning by the great historical periods; theology is not indeterminate enough for the purpose. The idea of God and man which hides behind the doctrine of being and concrete existence carries with it a traditional sense. Even the relation of infinite and finite, as conceived by the idealists, still retains a utopistic element which has disappeared from the relation between being and concrete existence.

Theoretical reflection can assist in achieving liberation from this anthropological or existential deception. What is needed is converse with the great philosophers; I am thinking, for example, of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* and his *Logic*. He made us aware of the superstition of the isolated, independent being and the absolutization of immediate experiences as well as of being and all that claims to be being. What is needed, further, is a knowledge of the theological tradition, for our grasp of the inextricable meshing of human freedom and its conditionings, as well as the Kantian hope, have their historical roots in that tradition. What is needed, no less importantly, is the contradiction-filled whole which is body and spirit, and the interconnection between society and individual of which that whole is a part. The belief which declares the abstract concepts of being and man to be concrete reality depends for its existence on decadence in education. Productive negation, on the contrary, depends at every point on solid education. It is impossible to oppose falsity without falling prey to it, unless the knowledge won by past and present generations is kept alive.

In the following remarks I shall be concerned simply to clarify, in contrast to the talk about man which I mentioned above, what is meant by the influence of society and individual on each other, an interaction in which society with its institutions today exercises by far the greater pressure. The knowledge that man's existence is mediated by society and history does not justify resignation, for the reverse is also true: that history is just as much related to man. But if that dependence on society is not fully perceived, it perpetuates itself. Fatalism, or despair about man's power to determine his own destiny and to intervene in the course of events, is far more likely to spring from the dark overtones of talk about being and from exaggerated, rootless ideas about a supposed authenticity, than it is from the critical attempt to understand the influential forces that shape and move men for

good or for ill.

The action of society on the individual begins at his birth, if not sooner. We need not ask here what significance the mother's health and the nourishment and care given the child have for his future both physically and psychically. In great measure these factors depend on the wealth of the country, the present state of science, and the social status of the parents. After the initial months, mother love—the thing everyone talks about but rarely describes in any precise fashion—becomes decisive. Maternal love does not consist simply in feeling or even in attitude; it must also express itself properly. The well-being of the little child and the trust he has in people and objects around him depend very largely on the peaceful but dynamic friendliness, warmth, and smile of the mother or her substitute. Coldness and indifference, abrupt gestures, restlessness and displeasure in the one who attends the child can introduce a permanent distortion into his relationship to objects, men, and the world, and produce a cold character that is lacking in spontaneous impulses. This was recognized, of course, as far back as Rousseau's *Emile* and John Locke, and even earlier. Only today, however, are people beginning to grasp the factors involved in the connection of which we are speaking. It does not take a sociologist to recognize that a mother who is pressed by other cares and occupations has a different effect than the one she wants.

In the first year of life, before the human being is able to reflect and to distinguish himself properly from his surroundings, he is already in good measure being determined by society, right down to those aspects of his being which will develop only much later. For, among the capabilities which every man possesses as a biological being is the ability to assimilate and imitate. His behavior and gestures, his tone of voice, his very walk are all an echo in the child of the ways of some loved and admired adult. Psychic reactions are acquired, in the form if not their content; moreover, if a rigid separation of form and content leads to error in the analysis of a work of art, how much more in the interpretation of human feelings! Sadness and happiness, attention sought and given, shyness and devotion come into existence with the repetition of behavior and gestures, for, as Goethe says, "the outward is the inward." What we thoughtlessly ascribe to psychic heritage originates to a decisive degree in the impressions and reactions of earliest childhood, and is confirmed and modified by the circumstances and events of later years. Whether a man is bent on promoting his ego or is capable of vital interest in objective situations and of dedication to men and things; whether his thinking and even his sensibility are superficial or deep—all this is not simply a matter of natural fact but is the outcome of a history. The social position of his parents and their relationship to each other play a role in the process, as do the internal and external structure of the family and, indirectly, the ethos of the whole age. The character of an individual is no less determined by the time, place, and circumstances of his rearing than by the language he speaks, which shapes his very being and influences his thinking, and by his political situation of freedom or slavery and his religion.

Classical German philosophy has quite clearly formulated the non-independence of the individual being: "To have an individual, there is need of other realities which likewise appear to have an independent existence of their own; only in all of these taken together, with their interrelationships, is the concept fully realized. The individual as such does not correspond to its concept."<sup>7</sup> In other words, the individual is *real* only as part of the whole to which he belongs. His essential determinations, his character and inclination, his avocation and view of the world all have their origin in society and in his destiny within society. To what extent the society of any given moment itself corresponds to its own concept and thus to reason, is admittedly not settled.

The totality with which we are dealing here is not static but subject to internal movement. As the transition occurred from the bourgeois order of the beginning of the century (an order that was still in a semi-liberal stage) to the phase in which industrial power came to control everything, the change in man that was involved became fully clear. The child now grows up in a different kind of family; he becomes a different kind of individual than he would have been in conditions where a stratum of numerous independent entrepreneurs acting on their own initiative was a determining factor. The child now acquires a different kind of self-awareness. The fact that in the still intact bourgeois family the father was both loved and feared was not significant solely for the latter in his role as procreator or even as provider. Rather, he in his turn depended on his son for the continuation of his own active role in society. In influential circles the young man was the heir and destined to take over from his father the business or factory which the latter in turn had received from his father. At the very least the young man must follow a profession that accorded with his social position, and thus bring honor to his name. The concern with his son, which admittedly could turn a father into a tyrant, was the basis and consequence of the father's effective functioning as a member of the bourgeoisie.

At the present time education is tending to replace the narrow purpose of continuing the parents' life through the children, with the broader one of producing successful individuals who can stand up for themselves in the contemporary battle of life. The father no longer finds support for himself in a special future for his children; this becomes clear when we observe the liquidation of the remnants of the bourgeois class and the decreasing significance of individualist entrepreneurship. The characteristic social type today is the employee. His relationship to his children is rather that of an older and more experienced comrade to a younger person; in the advanced countries and advanced social strata strictness is being replaced by a toleration and readiness to help that are associated with new ideas in education. The changes in society mean that even the mother is pushed more and more into work outside the home; this of course makes new claims on her psychic capacities and interests. In the nineteenth century the upper-class family guaranteed a lengthy and protected childhood and, as a late reflection of feudal hierarchy, gave rise, in favorable circumstances, to a sense of

security, trust, and direction or, in unfavorable circumstances, to parental tyranny and filial resentment. But the family of today has surrendered many of its remaining functions to other institutions or to society at large.

Today's young man leaves the family a less encumbered person, but he pays for this with the loss of the interiority that had formerly been developed during the interaction which went on throughout a long childhood. In that earlier day the father was in large measure a free man. The outcome of his action in society did not, of course, depend on him alone. At least, however, no other will—neither of leader nor of group—made his decisions for him. As long as he stayed within the law, he was subject to no one and responsible only to his own conscience. He was his own master and for that very reason his rule did not have to take the form of tyranny. In favorable conditions he became for his child an example of autonomy, resoluteness, self-command, and breadth of mind. For his own sake he required of his child truthfulness and diligence, reliability and intellectual alertness, love of freedom and discretion, until these attitudes, having been internally assimilated by the child, became the normative voice of the latter's own conscience and eventually, in the conflicts of puberty, set him at odds with his father. Today the child is much more directly thrown upon society, childhood is shortened, and the result is a human being cast in a different mold. As interiority has withered away, the joy of making personal decisions, of cultural development, and of the free exercise of imagination has gone with it. Other inclinations and other goals mark the man of today: technological expertise, presence of mind, pleasure in the mastery of machinery, the need to be part of and to agree with the majority or some group which is chosen as a model and whose regulations replace individual judgment. Advice, prescriptions, and patterns for guidance replace moral substance.

The change in individuals is but the reverse side of social change. Not only the basis which once gave unity to the bourgeois family, but the very meaning of the qualities such a family produced have become outdated. The specific relationship of the large-scale merchant to his "business friends" at home or abroad, which in Wilhelm Meister's time involved a significant measure of cultivated exchange, is no less a thing of the past than the old-time relationship of client to lawyer or doctor. In similar fashion the civilian used to expect the academic man to be, not a professional, but a more educated counselor, one superior to himself in humanistic ways. The division of labor has long since, however, become more complex, life has become more rigidly organized, and in our part of the world, the cultural differences between nations and classes have been too leveled down for there to be need of a wide-ranging educational formation in order to bridge them. Public relationships, like private, have become the domain of the expert; in the eighteenth century men had little treatises on how to deal with people, in the twentieth whole professions occupy themselves with this matter. Personal views and convictions, and a general yet differentiated education are losing their usefulness. And once the dynamic urge is gone which a practical interest

in the preservation of elements of culture gave, the corresponding dimension of human character disappears as well. For this reason the struggle against the reduction of the university to a professional school is doomed to failure. The education that once was supported by a felt social need is degenerating into a high-class psychic preparation, a kind of intellectual prophylaxis effected by means of recordings and paperbacks for mass consumption. Education, in abbreviated or unabbreviated form, edited, filmed, and synchronized for sound, is being given to a far greater majority, but in the process it suffers a radical change of function, somewhat as the city woman's robe, once transplanted into the villages by lady's maids and servants, became the peasant woman's costume. Classical and European culture as inwardly assimilated by the individual, personal cultivation in the specific sense given the term by Humanism and German Idealism, is being replaced by modes of sensibility and behavior which are proper to a technicized society.

The realization that young men and women today are, at bottom, different even from what they were at the beginning of this century seems to contradict the notion that the decisive elements in man are unchangeable; in other words, that through all change in appearance the essence abides. In fact, however, the old principle that man is a rational animal, "a compound of soul and body,"<sup>8</sup> and with it the whole of traditional anthropology have not lost their validity. But their meaning differs depending on whether the distinction between essential attributes and the phenomenal qualities of the individual is made according to a discursive or a dialectical logic. In trying to rescue the permanence of concepts you may, of course, turn every essential trait and intellectual manifestation into a genus with such wide meshes that it retains its validity against all the phenomena (be they individual beings or qualities of the latter) which fall under it. You can interpolate as mediating links new species and, like subtle Scotus, all kinds of "thisness," and thus erect a hierarchy that moves from ideal essences down to mutable realities. Every change in the social whole with which the meaning and content of human traits are bound up would then require new psychological or even anthropological subcategories and varieties, as in the specimen-drawer system used in the classificatory sciences of a bygone era. The only things that would remain unchanged through the ages are overpowering physical pain and all the extreme situations in which man is no longer master of himself and is thrust out of his societally-oriented spiritual existence back into nature.

In contrast to such a statistical conception, the man of a given social stratum and period, and each of his traits as well, can be viewed in such a way that the definition given of him and his traits remains in principle fully open to possible and indeed necessary changes in it. For however much history may depend on individuals who submit or rebel, on rulers and ruled, victors and victims, it remains true that man's makeup is itself a product of his history. In its inmost meaning it is relative to the social forms of the life and culture to which it belongs, even if it is by no means simply reducible to these. The social whole ceases to act as an external force marking the very

being of the individuals who make it up, only to the extent that the rational spontaneity proper to society becomes the transparent principle of the individual's existence. Rousseau and Hegel saw in the objective Spirit and in society and state a second nature. If this second nature is to slough from itself the irrationality proper to the first, it is not enough for men to recognize themselves in it; the recognition must be legitimate. In other words, society becomes rational only to the extent that it fulfills the Kantian hope.

Until this happens, the attributes of man are subject to the power of a whole that is alien to him. This whole controls the change in love between man and woman no less than it controls the meaning of childhood. The fact that the girl in a bourgeois family was called upon to keep house for her future husband and to give him heirs determined the content and purpose of her education and moral training; it determined her self-awareness and expectations of happiness; it regulated her behavior. But even after the gradual extension of her rights in modern times the young woman did not become a genuinely free subject. Philosophy from the Greeks down to German Idealism has both expressed and justified this state of affairs by maintaining that woman is not a wholly mature and responsible being. Following Aristotle's lead, the great Scholastic theologians explained the very "procreation of a female" as due to unfavorable circumstances, whether "because of deficient active force or unreadiness of material" or as "the result of some quite extraneous circumstance."<sup>9</sup> Man was the complete being, woman a male manqué, a sort of inferior male. However perfect the community may be, the virtues of woman fit her simply to serve; they relate her to man through whom alone she may exercise any influence on public life.

The conflict that has marked our history since the Renaissance has thus determined the very nature of woman, who was still unable, in Kant's view, to choose her own husband and must not marry "against her parents' will."<sup>10</sup> Her nature, unlike that of man, was not shaped by activity in the labor market and adapted to circumstances outside the home. Yet her passive role, which nothing could justify, also enabled her to avoid reduction to object-status and thus to represent, amid an evil society, another possibility. In the passage from the old serfdom to the new she could be regarded as a representation of nature, which eluded utilitarian calculation. This element, regardless of whether woman was opposing society or submitting to it, determined her image for the bourgeois era. By renouncing any concern for her personal life and following her man in self-forgetfulness, the young girl was to reach her own self-fulfillment. The disobedience to family and society which a woman might unquestioningly accept for love's sake despite her having been educated and destined for service, her ability to love in contradiction to the world's norms, was not simply one factor but the dominant trait in the picture of the young girl and even of the mother; it marked her inner being no less than her outward behavior. No poetry gave fuller expression to this aspect of woman than did the German, in which the unconditionedness, the

irreversibility, the imminence of death gave love its sweetness.

In view of the changes which have occurred in the family in the age of full employment, however, Julia, Gretchen, and even Madame Bovary are now but curiosities. A woman's "false step" has lost its tragic character and no longer puts her into an irremediable state. This does not mean that a woman's professional prospects today are equal to man's; society is still a man's society. It does mean that though she has not won emancipation, woman in our manipulated society can make decisions like those of men. It is no longer the traits which once enabled her to avoid reduction to object-status, but those which today requires, that develop in the explicit forms modernity calls for. Woman must win mastery of life. Love, which no longer plays such a decisive role, is coming to resemble comradeship. Marriage no longer means such a radical change in her existence. The equation of woman and sex is disappearing; woman is becoming an economic subject in one or another sector of the division of labor, including the household sector. Thus not only the old social classes but even the pre- and post-marital states are becoming less differentiated. In marriage the relations between the partners must, above all, be rich in results, like those of teams in industry and sport. If a marriage proves burdensome it can be dissolved, and a person may perhaps be more successful with a new partner. Each partner is evaluated in terms of function, and this affects even the relations of the sexes before marriage, so that these relations become more uniform, more practical, less charged with momentous significance. Our mechanized world, which at present is assimilating man to itself, as well as the invasion of private existence by the machine and the acquisitive spirit, are stripping the romantic love tragedy of its historical relevance, although the tragedies themselves have not become rarer in this age of hasty decisions. The young woman and the young man, though oriented to each other by their sexual natures, stand against each other at the rational level, and their relationship is taking on a new quality, especially since young people now have a more important place in society.

As technology is being revolutionized and becoming widespread, an economic structure is developing which favors the young at the expense of older people. The old-style business firm needed the qualities which could only be developed in the course of a long life. From this fact came the high value placed on experience in the general consciousness. Modern mechanized complexes, on the contrary—be they the material ones in the factory workroom or the personal ones in the administrative offices—demand accuracy and energy rather than wisdom. When, in addition, total automation requires very highly developed abilities, the latter, found in relatively young men, represent an important investment for the company. Only with difficulty can the necessary training be acquired by older men. It is true, of course, that the commanders of the mighty corporations play a far more significant role in relation to mankind than did the managers of the old counting-houses. But, somewhat like military commanders, these men leave innumerable functions to the general staff which looks after details. In a factory, as formerly in war,

even the most important decisions are a matter for the quick mind rather than for experience. In Korea the chances of an attack at this or that point were calculated by a computer into which all the available data concerning manpower, equipment, and terrain were fed (think of all Napoleon still had to depend on his own judgment for!). So too the heads of the mammoth corporations receive from computers, which are more reliable than men, an overview of their world-wide activities and a preview of the course of these activities and of the economy as a whole. Civil affairs and military, war and peace, are all interlocked.

The great old masters of economy and administration, especially in the political sphere, are only a seeming counterargument. For what is characteristic of the economy now is not that older men can no longer reach certain heights in society. It is rather that in growing measure the young *too* can do the job and, at many points, do it better, and that not a few positions which at one time had to be filled by older men are now being eliminated by technology. The effects of the changed economy are heightened by the changed role of the father in the modern family, of which we have already spoken. The same kind of development shows in the lowering of the age at which people marry. The economy today pronounces men independent at an earlier age, although not independent in the old bourgeois sense. In comparison with older men these young people are not mature but they are without illusion, perplexed, and clever. What is happening is a mirror image of the social revolution in eighth- and ninth-century Europe, which affected the deepest levels of man's nature. At that time the transition took place from the age of the young military leaders and conquerors to the age of settlement in which instead of courage and rashness caution and adherence to tradition became decisive qualities.<sup>11</sup> This whole process is now being reversed at a higher level. It is as impossible to halt it as it would have been to make greater age an advantage in the days of the pioneers when North America was being colonized. The only question is whether in the phase upon which mankind is now entering the cultural qualities of past ages will, while undergoing a change, be carried over as part of the coming civilization, or whether they will simply be eliminated and have to be rediscovered later on.

The fact that through its alliance with technology youth is regaining its ancient advantage over age signifies the removal of an historically conditioned but now untenable distinction rather than the emergence of a new cultural quality, such as happened when experience came to be prized. The clarity and penetration which are replacing experience show their presence more quickly than experience did and at an earlier age. The search for such qualities as used to require a lengthy and, as it were, organic maturation is becoming less important as rationalization increases. Those qualities are now being sacrificed to the very principle which originally led to their development, and they are now receiving the kind of reverential tribute we give to museum pieces. The chemistry which is now outmoding age even biologically is simply ratifying the thrust of the economy. The leveling down

touches everything, even power and weakness.

Like the opposition between the ages of life, the opposition between city and countryside too is being reduced. It is well known that the takeover of the market by large-scale industry is moving forward in agriculture no less than in the manufacturing sector. In Europe, the continued juxtaposition of numerous individual cities (really an outdated phenomenon) is hindering this tendency, like a blockage in traffic. Yet even here the small farmer (the only farmer in the proper sense of the word) no less than the artisan is learning from personal experience that he has been born out of time. Government aid, the wealth of many farmers, and the great farm-complexes simply confirm that the day is now past when the city-dweller could think of the farmer's life, in contrast with his own, as the only proper way to live. The glorification of farm life as the perennially human situation cannot stand up to criticism any better than the contempt heaped on that same life in the days when Luther was summoning men to battle. The small farmer's wish is no longer simply for a tractor but for an automobile. He is urged to this not only by his personal economic situation but by the general style of life into which he is inexorably being drawn. The picture of the dead city and the living village that we find in Stefan George's poetry (*Der siebente Ring*) is no longer relevant (if indeed it ever was), simply because the two things being compared do not co-exist. The superiority of quiet valleys that have no landscapes to draw attention and no summer visitors to fill them is now appreciated only by connoisseurs; the very appearance of such places only rouses yearning for the city in the livelier village youth. On the other hand, when closeness to the city sets the tone of life and the quiet has vanished, when the filling stations point the way to go and come, then every shop is bent on rivaling its fellows in the city and every menu apes the city restaurant, unless a type of cooking proper to the place in generations past is now offered as a specialty in an effort to make the traveler stop. But in fact you get a more robust whole-meal break in your city delicatessen; and the wines, the recent vintages of which, like human beings, are winning out over the older ones, can more readily be found in the city than along the Rhine where the grapes are grown.

For their part the cities are now becoming indistinguishable from the villages. The transformation of village into suburb by incorporation is a Europe-wide expedient. The newer continental cities are, in the phrase of an expert observer, stretching out into the countryside like great beasts. Since the skyscrapers of the inner cities are occupied by offices and their appendages, people are moving their living quarters ever further out, and the noise follows them. Quiet becomes the privilege of the occasional especially elegant neighborhood. Since, moreover, the need for office space steadily increases as new businesses and factories arise, the character of various sections of the city is in constant flux. Old streets become thoroughfares crowded with the private automobiles which each owner must himself drive and park. On the now vanishing perimeters cities and countryside blend into each other, while the suburban market centers are coming to resemble modernized villages and vice

versa. Civilization has always gone forth from the cities: the countryside accepted religion and the breakdown of religions, theaters and morals, from the cities; now it has unquestioningly adopted newspaper, cinema, radio, and television. And the city comes half-way to meet the countryside. The pastoral plays of the Rococo age have their prosaic counterpart in the exaggeratedly careless dress of city youth with their bright-colored shirts and blue jeans. The higher degree of cultivation among the peasants matches the cities' return to ruder ways.

Machinery requires, for its operation no less than its invention, the kind of mentality that concentrates on the present and can dispense with memory and straying imagination. To find one's way around the jungle of city life with its machinery leaves no time or inclination for anything else; the release of tension is therefore sought in traveling great distances, in free movement, and, for hygienic reasons, in rest. The taste which family and factory direct to the immediate object of the moment seeks to exercise itself, even in so-called leisure time, on the multiplicity and changing quality of some kind of object, on the ordering and mastery of material reality; thus the capacity for experience that transcends the immediate situation is being atrophied. The cities, as sociologists could learn from the literary men, have on the whole promoted tolerance and freedom. The fact that each individual must daily take into consideration countless others who he does not even know, the fact that he accustoms himself to meet them, to look at them without gazing into their inner selves, to attend to their interests even while he pursues his own—all this gave him at one time the restless nervous temperament which Georg Simmel has described in such masterly fashion. But that too is now disappearing. Given social mobility and the rapid change in social roles, each person must be prepared to have his fellow-worker at the factory later become his foreman, his supplier a competitor, his neighbor a political functionary if not his immediate neighborhood overseer. This develops in him the reserve and suspicion of strangers which used to be characteristic of village life. Conversation becomes superficial, convictions a burden. The various machines—record player, radio, television—which do away with speech even among friends have made their appearance just at the right moment. They provide models for behavior and give muteness the illusion that something is being said. Despite his ability to think quickly the city-dweller is losing the habit of self-expression. Since, however, speech cannot be replaced by signs without the inner reality which speech conveys also being impoverished, city life in its most recent phase is fostering a shriveling of the very spirit it once developed in opposition to the dull superstition of the countryside; this in turn brings a distortion of personality.

If the distinctions between professions, between village and city, working hours and leisure time, child and young person, feminine and masculine frames of mind are now being leveled, then men are becoming like one another without drawing any closer together. Thus it is not only the mechanization of life but even the earlier age at which people marry that is

effecting not solidarity but fragmentation among men. Among Kant's marginal notations we find the remark: "The man with a wife is complete; he separates himself from his parents and is now simply in a state of nature."<sup>12</sup> Kant is thinking of Hobbes and that rudeness which characterized man's state before civilization but which continues to exist even in civilization. Marriage in bourgeois society limited the man's unfocused interests in the sense that henceforth he approached others in his life outside the home less with a desire for community than as an economic agent in the competitive struggle. In compensation, the domestic life of the family was, for good or for ill, structured along patriarchal lines and acknowledged the man's domination; relationships there did not depend on contribution or accomplishment. Today, however, the principle of equality is penetrating even into the family, and the contrast between private and social spheres is being blunted. The emancipation of woman means that she must be the equal of her husband: each partner in the marriage (the very word "partner" is significant) is evaluated even within the home according to the criteria that prevail in society at large. Even marriage is an exchange between equals, whether the measure be material or spiritual, and each party must receive his due. Thus at the moment when a culture based on equal exchange is threatened, such exchange is becoming the complete norm for the closest of human relationships; the personal sphere is being rationalized. How many circumstances are conspiring to disaccustom the individual to friendship, despite all the increased cultivation of acquaintances, all the proliferation of consultations, conferences, business trips, and tourist journeys, and all the energy put into organizing much-heralded "conversations" and "encounters"! Behind the stereotyped smile and the diligent optimism the isolation is growing more intense. We have already mentioned how the young man, even of the upper classes, is forced at a much earlier age to look after his own interests and therefore is the captive of the goals he pursues. An at age when the well-off used to be free of responsibility and worry about career and, unburdened by secondary concerns, had time for study and travel, the young man of today must keep a resolute eye on external goals. He is marked by a peculiar prevailing seriousness which suggests not so much any insight into wretchedness and injustice as that the wings of imagination have been clipped too soon. No one today learns to devote his leisure to anything but the much-praised "concrete reality," that is, to accomplishments that are very much like work: doing amateur repairs, driving an auto, sitting at machines; even the idea of an old age free of toil no longer awakens any great yearning.

The time society has gained through technology is organized in advance for the individual. The shortening of the workday is partially cancelled out in America by the greater size of the overpopulated cities, in Germany by the housing shortage. The work which the average modern man must do at home has been increased not only by changes within the family but also by shifts in the price-structure. The little things made by hand are now more expensive in comparison with large appliances and mass-produced goods. Not only the

worker and employee but also the upper classes who are not at quite the highest level have their time taken up by private and professional duties, on the one hand, and by necessary rest, on the other; thus they are losing the leisure which culture requires. As late as 1900 the employer could go to work in a not very crowded railroad car and might walk home; in the years before World War I he shifted to a chauffeured automobile. Today, maids and chauffeurs and all personal servants have become a luxury available only to a very few. Everyone is always busy. The time is gone when a sick person would listen for the hoof beat of the horse that pulled the doctor's cart through the still streets in the late evening. Today, like any tradesman, the doctor sits at the wheel of his own car and must be on the alert if he is to get through traffic safely. The number of his patients increases due to the competition which technology has intensified, and any thoughts not concerned with his work, be they ever so serious, such as thoughts of the human relationships involved in his practice, must yield ground and disappear.

The escape to a slower-paced style of life is closed off: for the individual because he would not survive economically; for peoples no less, because any economic stagnation, any slowdown or even a failure to advance in the factories, would bring the danger of crisis, deterioration, and ruin. The machinery of mass opinion—newspapers, radio, cinema, television—must provide guidance for men as they relax from their duties, and must carry for them the burden of all decisions not connected with their work. The very nature of each individual's work accustoms him to react ever more surely to signs, and signs are his guide in every situation. Men need directives, and their need increases the more they obey these directives; consequently they disaccustom themselves increasingly to spontaneous reactions. If the dream of machines doing men's work has now come true, it is also true that men are acting more and more like machines. Georges Duhamel writes: "Let us not forget that if the machine is making its way up to an ever greater likeness to man, the stresses of modern civilization tend to make man sink down to an ever greater likeness to the machine."<sup>13</sup>

Man indeed invented the machine, but this does not change the fact that the inventor's intelligence itself is becoming more like the machine's in that it must adapt itself to ever more precisely prescribed tasks. Every man becomes lonelier, for machines can calculate and work but they cannot get inspirations or identify themselves with other machines. Thus, for all their activity men are becoming more passive; for all their power over nature they are becoming more powerless in relation to society and themselves. Society acts upon the masses in their fragmented state, which is exactly the state dictators dream of. "The isolated individual, the pure subject of self-preservation," says Adorno, "embodies the innermost principle of society, but does so in unqualified contrast to society. The elements that are united in him, the elements that clash in him—his 'properties'—are simultaneously elements of the social whole. The isolated individual is a monad in the strict sense, that is, it reflects