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## **Enlightenment and the Dialectic of Particular and Universal:**

### **Toward A Cultural-Political Notion of Modern Identity Formation**

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Contemporary critical reflections on Enlightenment generally fall into two discursive positions: One, often (but not exclusively) stemming from non-Western socioeconomic and political contexts, is to question the self-proclaimed universality of a historically specific movement originated and evolved in 18th- and early 19th-century Europe and North America, the purpose of which is not so much as to relativize the validity of central Enlightenment values as to call for a more pluralistic, inter-subjective understanding of these values in order to make them truly—and not merely rhetorically or even self-servingly—inclusive and universal. The other, often (but not exclusively) rooted in European liberal traditions, and in recognition of various resistance to and assault on these traditions even within the geographical and social-institutional center of these traditions, argue for a continued or renewed commitment to Enlightenment as an unfinished project. Even though the two discursive positions come from different backgrounds and are equipped with different intellectual and philosophical resources, they tend to overlap with more than diverge from each other when it comes to the basic understanding of Enlightenment, historically, theoretically, even politically. What results from this discursive situation and its attendant mainstream arguments is the formation of various identitarian positions competing with one another for a more advantageous place within a conceptual and value framework that is given

and accepted, all while failing to explain, let alone justify, the historical and philosophical grounds on which they as increasingly particularistic positions and identities in relation to the very universal conceptual and value framework from which they are derived.

This paper therefore begins with this question: What is the relationship between Enlightenment and modern identity-formation as they are conventionally (that is, ideologically) understood? Is Enlightenment as it was conceived by its European intellectual pioneers compatible with identity and identity-formation witnessed in late-19th century and 20th century developments underscored by group rivalry, self-assertion, and egotism at both national and sub-national levels? This paper does not seek to revisit the close relationship between Enlightenment and nationalism which, to be sure, has been extensively studied and largely concluded (yes, throughout the history of the modern world, they prove to be mutually dependent and conditional in both European and Non-European contexts, despite or because of Enlightenment spirit also tended to spearhead a thorough, iconoclastic critique of national or pre-national political, religious, and cultural traditions). Rather, in the following pages, I want to focus on the dialectic of Enlightenment and identity-formation within the philosophical-conceptual space of Enlightenment discourse, and seek to show that this very dialectic makes Enlightenment an intrinsically political notion from the onset, whose implications will unfold as Enlightenment gathers more and more historical substance on its way of “universal” spread. My argument is that the true animating and productive power of Enlightenment is not the moral, epistemological, or religious-theological assumptions self-proclaimed as universal principles by the intellectual legislators of the modern world, but, rather, the inherent political tensions and dialectical energies to be released in Enlightenment’s becoming real in its concrete path of touching on and “enlightening” actually existing populations, and in rallying and transforming actually existing social forms, a historical course which is in every sense political and cultural-political. In short, what is universal is not Enlightenment *per se*, but the dialectics and politics of Enlightenment.

To grasp the dialectics and politics of Enlightenment means to treat the latter not as a philosophical or ontological entity, a sacrasanct myth, but as a loosely connected bundle of interests, values, desires, dreams,

and fantasies sealed historically—and politically—within a specific box of rhetorical arguments and propaganda, something whose validity lies only in its analytical and critical unpacking and reconfiguration into a group of less subjective, less sentimental or personal categories and notions pertaining to a more ruthless political and conceptual reading. In the following I discuss a few such categories and notions along the line of a series of binary opposites that tend to define the central properties of Enlightenment as we know it: Self and other; knowledge and power; tradition (the old) and modernity (the new); utility and trans-utilitarian (Kantian or otherwise) categories of the true, the good, and the beautiful. I will first sketch out a more general discussion on Enlightenment as internally driven by the politics of the modern with reference to the classical writers of and on Enlightenment, followed by a more specific reading of such politics as it is examined in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno.

Conventional discussions on Enlightenment often take as their point of departure the notion of Reason. Indeed, Reason and Enlightenment are sometimes used interchangeably in this context, as the Age of Enlightenment is also commonly referred to as the Age of Reason. But if we examine early writings on reason and its relationship to Enlightenment, we realize that the two do not operate on the same conceptual register, with the notion of Enlightenment far less stable and far more contested than that of reason, which is more or less used in traditional as well as common-sensical ways as a given and constant pertaining to human intellect. For instance, Kant's frequently quoted essay "What Is Enlightenment," (PW, 54–60) when read closely, starts not with a definition of reason as a matter concerning the cognitive faculty or human understanding, but with an irreducibly moral, psychological, and ultimately political matter: to exit the human from its self-inflicted being under age (*Unmündigkeit*) which leads to its submission to and domination by others. What Kant deems lacking, in this context, is not reason or rationality (*Verstandes*), but instead the "resolution and courage" (*der Entschließung und des Mutes*) to use it without direction from another. What can be inferred from this, as what does follow in Kant's text, is that Enlightenment as an endeavor is less about discovering our innate reason or rationality but more about the

resolve and determination to exercise it *publicly* in addition to its application in private affairs. The demand that reason must be used publicly places the Kantian thesis firmly in the political domain. It is tantamount to saying that Enlightenment is a struggle against cowardice, laziness, and fear and thus a striving for one's own rights and freedom. Reason, even within the Kantian framework, becomes an inverted space in which external political conditions are crystallized and contemplated. It is in light of this human emancipation from a socially sanctioned state of mind that sustains and prolongs an unacceptable power structure that the pre-enlightened realities are considered a cruelty (*Rohigkeit*).

What can be made clear from this initial analysis on the widely (mis)quoted Kantian text is twofold: First, the age of reason is the age of courage and resolution to claim one's rights and freedom. Second, such claim promises a collision course not only with preexisting arbitrary power and authority, but with fellow-travelers of Enlightenment who come up with competing claims which are also backed up by courage, resolution, and rational, even reasonable, understanding of their interests, values, desires, hopes, dreams, and fantasies. If the first half justifies the classic victory of bourgeois rights over medieval privilege, the second half quickly turns the newfound bourgeois legitimacy into a painstaking and questionable struggle against the universal promise of Enlightenment. The latter, in turn, leads to Hegel's thesis on civil society *and* Marx's on the overcoming of it.

The same logic can be extended to the knowledge-power binary. The issue lies not in how to pursue knowledge or the kind of power that ensues the possession of knowledge, but in how to use this power politically vis-à-vis other groups in the social space while it is applied to nature as a means to secure collective livelihood and well-being. Both the Marxian analysis of capital and the Freudian critique of civilization derive their forces from the dialectic—productive as well as repressive—tension between knowledge and power, production and domination, freedom and chain, life and death. While knowledge, power, as well as the knowledge-power dialectic remain as traditional as they are nearly constant, the real dynamic of modern times lies in the explosive growth of knowledge and increasing access to it; and in group politics in mass society aided by modern technology. This dynamic has made possible, indeed, intensified new knowledge-pow-

er constructions and thus identity formations at all levels. Enlightenment, in this specific context, means the ready coming-into-being of more ruthlessly entrenched positions, each is capable of producing its theoretically, organizationally, and technically competent programs of action and self-justification.

Rather than the creation of a radically relativistic mosaic of positions internally torn between the contradictory aspects of Enlightenment, I would argue that as far as modern identity and identity formation are concerned, what we witness today is a tendency that unevenly reinforces or dismantles Western and Non-Western worlds who exposure to and understand of Enlightenment are conditioned by very different historical, economic, political, and cultural-religious realities. In sweeping generalization, one may say that whereas in Western world Enlightenment tends to reinforce various group identities and identity formations; in Non-Western worlds Enlightenment is often and widely considered a negative force that tends to subject unreflected or even carefully constructed identities and identity formations to unrelenting doubt and skepticism, often resulting their dissolution in conceptual as well as practical terms even before they can be erected as a credible, substantive moment in historical movement of negation and sublation.

I have argued elsewhere that Western discourse on Universalism has been historically intertwined with successive and sustained effort at formulating and reformulating a political and cultural-political identity (of Europe, of the West, of the Bourgeois Class, etc.) which was rendered strenuous or fragmentary by the onslaught of the new and the many. Whereas Europe and North America, including the core Protestant regions identified by Max Weber as demonstrating a particularly compatibility between its inward (religious) traditions and capitalist spirit, went through the same brutal processes of industrialization, revolution, and war that mark crises-laden experiences of modernity, what distinguishes the West from the Non-Western world is, apart from temporal differentiation within the same global processes of capitalist expansion, the West's willingness and ability to rearticulate its modern adventure in terms of continuity as well discontinuity, coherence as well as incoherence, singularity as well multiplicity of its identity which is, in Hegel's memorable formulation, the combination of identity and difference. (Zhang, 2005-06)

This ability to “organize chaos” (Nietzsche, ) is no mere sign of philosophical feat and ingenuity, but more importantly the result of a Will to the Self (and self-identity) that is always underscored and substantiated by concrete economic, social, and political relations. When Nietzsche talks about the ancient Greeks in his *Unfashionable Observations*, he was actually talking about an unprecedented identity crisis of modern Europe vis-à-vis the multiplicity produced in its own modernity, but by means of making it familiar, that is, by means of an appropriation by an original identity thus created on the spot. Nietzsche writes:

There were centuries in which the Greeks found themselves threatened by a danger similar to the one we face today, the danger, namely, of perishing in a flood of things alien and past, of perishing of “history.” They never lived in proud isolation; on the contrary, their ‘cultivation’ was for many years a chaos of foreign—Semitic, Babylonian, Lydian, and Egyptian—forms and concepts, and their religion represented a veritable struggle among the gods of the entire Orient. This is similar to the manner in which today “German cultivation” and religion represent an internally struggling chaos of all foreign lands and all prior history. But despite this, and thanks to that Apollonian imperative, Hellenic culture did not become an aggregate. The Greeks gradually learned how to organize this chaos by concentrating—in accordance with this Delphic doctrine—on themselves, that is, on their genuine needs, and by letting those pseudoneeds die out. They thereby took possession of themselves again; they did not long remain the glutted heirs and eignes of the entire Orient; based on the practical interpretation of Apollo’s imperative, they themselves became, after a difficult struggle with themselves, the happiest enrichers and increasers of that inherited treasure; they became the first cultured people, and hence the model for all future cultured peoples. (UO, 166–67).

I would propose that Nietzsche’s love of the Greek be read here as a grand allegory for the “courage and resolution” with which the modern (imperialist) West struggled on all its frontiers of production, invention, conquest, and domination, encountering the new and alien while falling back to a renewing tradition that offers the possibility of reinvent-

ing the self and rearticulating a self-identity but in terms of difference, even alienness. Nietzsche's narrative is also a potent reminder of a crucial historical and political difference that sets the modern West and the non-Western world apart, and this has to do with his famous thesis of the "use and abuse" (advantage and disadvantage) of history to life: Whereas the West encountering the modern as a moment, an event, and a totality in the sense of a totalistic horizon of existence, the non-Western world experienced the modern as History (as both precedent and norm) brought upon them by a tempo and intensity—of production, competition, profit-making, administration, and of war—set else where. This burden of history has created such a sense of distance, hesitation, doubt, and sense of "alternative" that the immediacy and urgency of a life-and-death struggle, or at the very least the sense of wonder, challenge, and excitement, are forever denied or muffled by a historicist, apolitical attachment to the past or some cultural particularism. Whereas the modern West, as "enlightened" Subject, seeks to see itself own self-image in a world of "chaos" to be conquered, managed, and put into productive/exploitive use (and one should hasten to add that only through this concrete, materialist as well as symbolic productive/exploitive/conquering process and posture that the "enlightened" modern Western subjectivity has collectively formed and come into being), the non-Western subjectives remain trapped in their gods and autonomies as a pre-subjective, pre-Enlightenment "aggregate." The discrepancy between Western and Non-Western societies in so-called Enlightenment is, therefore, a philosophical and discursive optical illusion that reflects real discrepancies in productivity, mobility, and, ultimately, political intensity necessary for the functioning of modern capitalist societies and for the effectiveness of the ruling elite or Master class (Herrschaft) of modernity.

Before turning to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in which some of the issues discussed above receive more concentrated examination, I would like to touch on another aspect of the core values of Enlightenment subjectivity, namely its valorization in the domain of the senses, emotion, imagination, and creativity in stylistic and aesthetic sphere. In Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, arguably "the most brilliant work by the most brilliant Enlightenment intellectual", one meets with an individual ("Him") whose personal energy, dynamism, unconventionality and sometimes utterly

mischievousness find no parallel in earlier European literature. Rameau's nephew appears on the stage of urban public space filled with temptation and chance encounters, kept afloat by aimless wandering and seemingly endless talks and chatters about "politics, love, taste, or philosophy" (RN, 3). As a product of the Age of Enlightenment figure, he boasts not only his characteristics commonly recognizable in more standard figures (rational, self-guiding, free, etc.), but features so colorful that they border on the devious and bizarre. "Virtue...doesn't suit me," says "Him," and he continues with the following self-characterization as a matter of necessity:

I have to be light-hearted, adaptable, entertaining, clownish, amusing. Virtue demands respect, and respect is uncomfortable. Virtue demands admiration, and admiration isn't funny. I spend my time with people who get bored, and it's my job to make them laugh. Now, absurdity and folly are what make people laugh, so I must be absurd, and a fool; if nature had not given me those qualities, then the simplest solution would be to pretend to possess them. Luckily I have no need to be a hypocrite, since there are already so many of every hue, apart from those who are hypocrites with themselves. (RN, 36)

Besides being prone to the "seduction of senses" and adept in applying his "judgment and inventiveness" under changing and sometimes unpredictable circumstances, Rameau's nephew holds a sober, indeed Hobbesian, view on the world in which he lives in and is no sentimentalist when it comes to an understanding of human nature: "We seem a cheerful lot, but in reality we're all angry, and fiercely hungry. Wolves are not more ravenous, nor tigers more cruel." (RN 46) Often intoxicated in his own highly performative behavior, the nephew, actually, attributes his "systematic" accomplishment to his ability to achieve that "through clear thinking and rational, accurate observation" (as opposed to "instinct" which is "what the majority of others do", RN 49). A seasoned practioner of the belief that self-interest should trample anything else which is in any case non-essential, inabolute, contingent, and relative, he sees in gold the true and only universal measure and standard bearer that is everything and unifies all (RN, 75). What, then, might be the unifying quality of the man, a "composite of nobility and baseness, good sense and irrational-

ity” in the opinion of his interlocutor (“Me”), but in whom Goethe, the embodiment of 19th century German *Bildung*, recognizes a “genius,” “a man with a really good mind,” and indeed a representative of a “constantly aspiring culture of the mind that finally came to fruition” in the Age of Enlightenment? (Goethe, 1816/1822, 113) We have reasons to believe that the observations by the nephew’s interlocutor in the book, created simultaneously by Diderot as a narrative and intellectual complement, come close to capturing the cultural qualities of the Enlightenment Man in terms of his self-understanding:

[H]e’s like a grain of yeast that ferments, and restores to each of us his natural individuality. He shocks us, he stirs us up, he forces us to praise or blame; he brings out the truth; he identifies honourable men and unmasks scoundrels; it is then that the man of good sense keeps his ears open, and takes the measure of his companions. (RN, 4)

This yeast-like quality, indicative of the restless, agitated state and and irrepressible expansion of Man in both his internal properties and external sphere in the Age of Enlightenment. Seen from a distance, and in Goethe’s language, this is the quality for the modern, “enlightened” individual “to expand the limits of his field to infinity.” (Goethe, 1816/1822, 112) Goethe’s *Faust* is a contemporary literary monument dedicated to this “negative spirit”. However, it is Homer’s *Odyssey*, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, that prefigures the inner qualities of Man in the capitalist epoch, in which the light of reason threatens to disappear into the world of mythology as it thoroughly and ruthlessly destroys it.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno maintain that Enlightenment, understood as an subjectivist construct of knowledge-power which decisively alters the equation between Nature and Man by setting forth the concept of Man conceived in and guided by his own rationality, self-identity, purpose, and universality above everything else, is itself rooted in and susceptible to falling back to mythology as an undifferentiated state of nature ruled by blindness, powerlessness, and fear. Whilst the majority of critique of Enlightenment concentrates in the area of critique of knowledge and instrumentality, the main thrust of *Dialectic*

*of Enlightenment* is unmistakably the critique of power that drives the pursuit of knowledge as a technology of control throughout human history. The widely quoted “Enlightenment is mythology, and mythology and Enlightenment” notwithstanding, the accent of such critique falls on an existential as well formal-logical paradox from which to understand the intrinsic contradiction of Enlightenment as a technology of the Self in search of its sovereignty over Nature and Others:

From now on, being is split between logos—which, with the advance of philosophy, contracts to a monad, a mere reference point—and the mass of things and creatures in the external world. The single distinction between man’s own existence and reality swallows up all others. Without regard for differences, the world is made subject to man. (DOE, 5)

In other words, what is mythological about Enlightenment lies in its self-proclaimed magic being understood as a modern as well as premodern (that is, precapitalist) force; and what is “enlightening” about mythology comes, either historically or retroactively, from the world-historical rise of the bourgeois Self as the Subject of domination vis-à-vis all other forms of being, that is, as the new form of Sovereignty, against which nothing is allowed to hold on to its “immanent power or hidden properties” (DOE, 3). Unlike Foucault, who later generalizes the notion of power out of its historical and political concreteness and specificities, the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* insists on the arrival of Enlightenment Subjectivity as a world-historical event in class society: “The awakening of the subject is bought with the recognition of power as the principle of all relationships. In face of the unity of such reason the distinction between God and man is reduced to an irrelevance...” (DOE, 6). To this extent, the singular power and mythology of Enlightenment stems not so much from the instrumentality of knowledge that leads to the enslavement of all beings, as from the single-minded, relentless determination to formulate, produce, safeguard and advance identity of the (bourgeois) Self as self-identity and sovereignty. That is to say, the internal quest for self-identity, as power and knowledge in one, produces the “unity” of things (and others) which can be subject to conforming to that self-identity thus completed, namely, identity between the self and other as self-identity. It

is based on this observation that *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, taking its cue from Spinoza (“the endeavor of preserving oneself is the first and only basis of virtue,” *Ethics*, trans. A. Boyle, London/New York, 1948, Part IV, Propos, XXII, Corroll. Quoted from DOE, 257 fn. 32), considers “self-preservation (*Selbsterhaltung*)” as the “the true maxim of Western Civilization.” Horkheimer and Adorno write:

The man of science knows things to the extent that he can make them. Their ‘in-itself’ becomes ‘for him’. In their transformation the essence of things is revealed as always the same, a substrate of domination. This identity constitutes the unity of nature... Only when made in such an image does man attain the identity of the self which cannot be lost in identification with the other but takes possession of itself once and for all as an impenetrable mask. It is the identity of mind and its correlative, the unity of nature, which subdues the abundance of qualities. Nature, stripped of qualities, becomes the chaotic stuff of mere classification, and the all-powerful self becomes a mere having, an abstract identity. (DOE, 6)

It is only in this political interest of defending and producing such identity and sovereignty that scientific rationality is mobilized to establish a regime of meaning and value through a regime of calculation and purposeful action. And only through the implicit interaction between the formal-positivistic regime of “Enlightenment” conventionally defined and the substantive regime of “Enlightenment” politico-ontologically defined, that is, as self-preservation and identity formation can the “universal”, though invented, secondary, and mythological categories such as objectivity, equivalence, exchangeability, autonomy, etc. be settled and motivated by the modern bourgeois politics of the Self which is, by definition, the politics to end all politics; the war machine to end all wars; or, in Nietzsche’s language, “the struggle to rule the whole world.”

This self-identity of the Enlightenment Self comes into being at the expense of or, to be more precise, through the domination of others’ identity formation by rendering the latter impossible and undesirable even by the very others who are in desperate need for self-identity. From this perspective, one may argue that Hegel’s lord/bondsman dialectic is not only the rising bourgeois philosophy’s response to Spinoza’s noted obser-

vation; it is its generalization within the incipient bourgeois economic structure which already regards itself as universal. Under the disguise of a “world-historical” movement of Spirit, often interpreted as the universal story of the growth of freedom, Hegel *actually* provides a narrative justification on how labor is “inevitably” mediated by the principle of the Self and self-preservation (Cf. DOE, 23); and that the fear of death and the fatalistic “choice between survival and doom” (DOE, 23) serves as the supreme, although entirely pre- and even anti-Enlightened legitimation for the capitalist division of labor and social-political domination. In this light, Hegel’s notorious statism or conservative liberalism is not by design, but a by-product of his speculative philosophy’s accurate grasp of the “world soul” of the rising bourgeois class: its determination to subject both Nature and the masses to its rule; and to invent a neutral, reasoned and impersonal procedure by which to forge a new relationship between power and labor; knowledge and myth. Hence the following insight:

The essence of enlightenment is the choice between alternatives, and the inescapability of this choice is that of power. Human beings have always had to choose between their subjugation to nature and its subjugation to the self. With the spread of the bourgeois commodity economy the dark horizon of myth is illuminated by the sun of calculating reason, beneath whose icy rays the seeds of the new barbarism are germinating. Under the compulsion of power, human labor has always led away from myth and, under power, has always fallen back under its spell. (DOE, 25)

While conventional reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* tends to culminate in the Marxian theme of alienation, condemning capitalist division of labor and lamenting the inevitable separation between work and pleasure, tool and human purpose, economy and art, etc., the centrality of Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s critique quickly returns to that of bourgeois self-formation and self-identity. Earlier on in their conceptualization of the notion of enlightenment, they point out that:

The identity of everything with everything is bought at the cost that nothing can at the same time be identical to itself. Enlightenment dissolves away the injustice of the old inequality of unmediated mastery, but

at the same time perpetuates it in universal mediation, by relating every existing thing to every other. (DOE, 8)

What is happening to Nature, now reduced to mere object of the self-identical, universalizing Self of enlightened master of the universe is, at the same time, happening to human beings now reduced to mere object of governance, rule, and domination by ever sophisticated managerial, administrative and cultural-ideological apparatuses. The fragmentation of being includes not only the isolation in the social domain formerly called Nature, but more intensely and profoundly in the human-social sphere divided and ruled by “new forms of deception”. The result is the poverty of human experience resulting from the heightened self-identity of the ruling elite making truth claims on behalf of History or Humanity as such, on the one hand; and the increasingly weakened, hollowed-out, “quality-less” identity and identity formation of the masses trapped in their own mutual and self-isolation. Horkheimer and Adorno present this picture as follows:

The more complex and sensitive the social, economic, and scientific mechanism, to the operation of which the system of production has long since attuned the body, the more impoverished are the experiences of which the body is capable. The elimination of qualities, their conversion into functions, is transferred by rationalized modes of work to the human capacity for experience, which tends to revert to that of amphibians. The regression of the masses today lies in their inability to hear with their hands what has not previously been grasped; it is the new form of blindness which supersedes that of vanquished myth. Through the mediation of the total society, which encompasses all relationships and impulses, human beings are being turned back into precisely what the developmental law of society, the principle of the self, had opposed: mere examples of the species, identical to one another through isolation within the compulsively controlled collectivity. (DOE, 29)

In this paragraph, what is relevant to the discussion of politics of identity in today’s late-capitalist and postmodern environment is not only its totalizing critique of a self-universalizing system of power as coerced

social organization of labor, which is all but deepening to an saturating degree in today's globalized division of labor and cultural and biopolitical control; but also, and even more incisively, its poignancy regarding identity formation as a continued life-and-death struggle between different human groupings, including the particular late bourgeois identity as a politics of self-preservation that seeks to establish its self-identity through interrupting, denying, and dismantling all other organic or inorganic forms of self-identity and identity formations; and to proclaim its own value-system and culture as humanity and universality as such. What can be inferred from Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of is that enlightenment, ultimately understood as a politics of identity-formation driven by self-preservation, promises to intensify the preservation of a plurality and multiplicity of Selves, identities, and relationship of self-identities, through which a universal value-system and culture can be had but only after the false universality ("compulsively controlled collectivity" with "rational, atomic individual" as its rhetoric and basic ideological-narrative unit) is negated as figures of domination, that is, as one self-identity's deliberate and elaborate seeking of dominance over other identities and self-identities as individualities nourished by their traditions and existential politics. When the two authors regard prevailing ideology of advanced capitalist society as thought of alienation, whose truth content is "nature oblivious of itself" (DOE, 31), a pathway out of the world of alienation is conceived and presented as nature taken back to itself, with the enlightenment mind "rid[ding] itself of the very claim to mastery which had enslaved it to nature." (DOE, 31). This is not merely a utopian call for reconciliation between Man and Nature and between Man and himself; rather, it is to reaffirm the centrality of identities and self-identities capable of self-recognition and self-formation; and of overcoming the internal and external divide forced upon them by the mutilating power of false universality as the singular, hegemonic self-identity of the bourgeois Subject.

In so doing, the authors not only offer a historical analysis of enlightenment as an ideology of modern economic rationality, science and technology capable of being crushed by its own weight, thus the immanent possibility of new barbarism—this is why German Fascism, American consumerism, and, more implicitly, Soviet Communism can be discussed in the same breath; furthermore, they point out the mutual

reinforcement between enlightenment and “self-preservation” of the dominant or ruling class, a relationship which, through the “negativity” of enlightenment vis-à-vis Nature, tradition, and mythology, complements and completes the “positivity” of the dominant Self vis-à-vis other human groupings as well as the temporal, universalistic order of “progress”: Self-preservation, by supplying motivation, purpose, legitimacy self-identity and self-affirmation of “enlightenment” politico-philosophically understood) to the rational, goal-oriented, disciplined, self-negating agency of “enlightenment” conventionally understood, simultaneously bridges and transcends the Marxian-Freudian notions of social organization of labor and its internal alienation/repression. What is to be teased out from this dual narrative about the dialectic of Enlightenment of Western bourgeois Subject, then, is a critical differential that points to the dialectic of identity and identity formation under the world-historical circumstances of Enlightenment and modernity.

In lieu of a conclusion, I would like to argue that a productive and increasingly urgent task in rethinking the notion of Enlightenment in today’s global economic, political, and cultural context lies in understanding the symbiotic, though implicit, relationship between the rational, analytical, myth-wreaking and thus “negative” power of enlightenment in the form of modern science, theoretical discourses, and critical thinking with the atomic-universalistic individual as their launching platform, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the persistent, indeed obsessive identity and identity-formation of, for, and by human groupings in pursuit of their “self-preservation” and self-realization which still necessarily and constantly call into play the “mythological” or political categories such as class, nation, culture, or simply, the group. Such a perspective, as I seek to show, allows us to better, more critically but constructively examine often confusing and misleading debates around enlightenment—around knowledge and power; universality and particularity; Self and Other—whose intrinsic teleological and rationalistic assumptions tend to blur and obscure the political-ontological struggle at the core of human civilization by aligning its energies and focuses (and, along with them, anxieties and fears) exclusively or primarily with the “frontiers of civilization” understood to be a continuous struggle for survival, now framed and rationalized by the capitalistic mode of production.

In *Legitimation Crisis*, Habermas, Adorno's former assistant who has been commonly considered to have moved to the right of his teacher, argues forcibly against the legitimacy of universality, as a trope of bourgeois positive law, as it is formulated by the advanced capitalist society of the Western world, which can be used as a supplement to Horkheimer's and Adorno's thesis on politics of identity. As a normative thinker, Habermas argues that bourgeois moral- and cultural principles, in order to maintain its universal claim upon which its own identity and self-identity are rested, must be a system that "allows only general norms", that is, "norms without exceptions without privileges, and without limitations on the domain of validity" (LC, 88). And yet the bourgeois Law fails the test on two accounts. One is its dependency on its own, pre-capitalist traditions for supplying motivation, purpose, meaning, and value needed to drive and motivate continued processes of enlightenment and rationalization. Habermas writes:

The "Protestant ethic," with its emphasis on self-discipline, secularized vocational ethos, and renunciation of immediate gratification, is no less based on tradition than its traditionalistic counterpart of uncoerced obedience, fatalism, and orientation to immediate gratification. These traditions cannot be renewed on the basis of bourgeois society alone. ... Bourgeois culture as a whole was never able to reproduce itself from itself. It was always dependent on motivationally effective supplementation by traditional world-views. (LC, 77)

As long as bourgeois nation-state or even transnational socioeconomic, technocratic, and political-ideological systems continue to depend on "cultural traditions" to supply basic motivation, purpose, meaning, and value to produce "concrete citizen[ry]" (LC, 87); as long as the legal systems, moral principles and political loyalties continue to be based on, tied to, and limited by the reach of the constitutional state and the people who endorse and defend the constitution, the dilemma or paradox of bourgeois identity as self-identity, or bourgeois cultural-particularity as universality will continue to pronounce itself in terms of the "cosmopolitanism of human being" (a Marxian-Habermasian fiction) and the loyalties of the citizen. Thus, the normative thinking of Habermas, rather than reaching

its desired stage of rational communicative reason, falls even shorter from the Kantian ideal of the cosmopolitan and the universal with the following observation:

[bourgeois citizenry and its identity and self-identity codified in ‘universal law’] cannot be universalistic as long as international relations are subject to the concrete morality of the more powerful. (LC, 87)

In fact, the concrete morality, along with its concrete power, constitutes the historical substance of the contending parties in the struggle for identity and self-identity. Whereas all identities and self-identities are necessarily sealed within concrete temporal and spatial horizons at any given moment, over history they appear to be fluid both from within and without, as they are themselves but ideas and representations in the processes of self-preservation—as struggle for survival and struggle for recognition in one. Before the Subject of self-preservation becomes sufficiently socialized in both intra-societal and inter-societal terms, or, in Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s language, before thought as “alienated reason” becomes sufficiently self-reflexive by “relat[ing] to society itself as its true subject,” the “particularist origin of universal perspectives of thought” (DOE, 29) cannot be reconciled in any notion of universality, but only in the concrete interactions of particular identities and self-identities that are bound to be existential-political in nature, as the Other, in its fullest sense, is he who threatens the self-preservation of the Self—until the Self learns otherwise.

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