

contain likewise traces of violence and ciphers of possible emancipation" (*ibid.*).

Through his method of emancipatory dissonance, Adorno becomes an ethnologist of advanced civilization, seeking to reveal those moments of implicit resistance and suffering in which the human potential to defy the administered world becomes manifest. It is unclear, however, that these "ciphers" of possible emancipation to which Adorno appeals can justify the normative standpoint of critical theory. The charge that the critique of instrumental reason articulates the privileged discourse of a "holy family" is still left unanswered. Thus the transition from the critique of political economy to the critique of instrumental reason, examined in this chapter, alters not only the content criticized but the very method of critique itself. Through this transformation, the validity of the standpoint of critique is put into question.

APPENDIX

Lukács, Weber, and the Frankfurt School

The reception of Weber's work by Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse was primarily influenced by Lukács' synthesis of the Weberian category of "rationalization" with the Marxian category of "reification" in *History and Class Consciousness* (pp. 83–110). Restricting himself to Weber's claim that processes of Western modernization and industrialization led to the increasing predominance in all spheres of life of a *formal-rational* orientation, Lukács claimed that such an orientation was required by the predominance of the commodity form. For Weber, "formal rationality" signifies a cognitive as well as a practical

orientation toward reality. As a cognitive attitude, formal rationality means the attempt to comprehend reality by means of "increasingly precise and abstract concepts" ("The Social Psychology of World Religions," p. 293), enabling prediction and the instrumental control and organization of phenomena. This cognitive attitude is accompanied by a practical-instrumental attitude, according to which social action is increasingly oriented to the attainment of given ends by "means of an increasingly precise calculation of adequate means" (*ibid.*) on the basis of "universally applied rules, laws or regulations."⁵⁰ This mode of action is characterized by Weber as "purposive-rational" (*Zweckrational*). Instrumental action subordinates both the technical control of outer nature and the strategic control over other humans to predictable, homogeneous, calculable, and impersonal rules. It is this aspect of Weber's analysis of rationalization processes that Lukács synthesizes with the Marxian analysis of the commodity form.

For Lukács, the commodity is the "cell" of capitalist social relations: it reveals a structure which is reproduced in all spheres of life, from the organization of the work place to law to bureaucratic administration, and even to cultural products.⁵¹ The secret of the commodity form is the establishment of abstract equivalence: not only can all sorts of goods be equated and exchanged with one another in virtue of being commodities, but human activities and relations as well are commodified, i.e., reduced to abstract equivalence. The establishment of equivalence among qualitatively different things and human activities requires that one abstract precisely from those substantive, concrete characteristics that distinguish them from one another. This process of abstraction is a societal one: it is not a mental act performed by individuals, but corresponds to a real social process. As monetarily regulated exchange relations spread with the rise of the modern marketplace, and as capitalist social relations get established via the purchase and sale of labor power as a commodity, abstract equivalence becomes socially institutionalized. Concrete objects and activities, which are different from one another, are equated by means of their equivalence to a third—money. What can be made equivalent can also be measured in light of this equivalence; it can be quan-

tified into homogeneous units each of which is considered identical in value. In a capitalist economy, it is the magnitude of socially necessary labor time that serves as the measure of value. Human labor power is bought and sold in the marketplace as a certain quantity of labor time, while commodities are viewed as congealed forms of labor time.

According to Lukács, the spread of formal-instrumental rationality and the commodity form are two sides of the same coin. A formally correct technical and strategic orientation to the world, governed by predictable and calculable rules, requires the reduction of social reality to divisible, abstract, homogeneous, and equatable units. Such an "ontological reduction"⁵² of social reality takes place under capitalism via the logic of the commodity form, the secret of capitalist production. Lukács thus claims that the spread of formal rationality in the spheres of law, social organization, and state bureaucracies, analyzed by Weber, is only possible on the basis of a thoroughly capitalist economy. The commodity form is the mechanism by which formal rationality is produced and reproduced in the social world.

This analysis by Lukács, who had been a member of the Max-Weber Kreis in the 1920s, can be supported by reference to Weber's own work. Weber himself acknowledged that capitalism, which is "identical with striving toward profit in the continuous, rational business organization," "requires the rational-capitalist organization of [formally] free labor."⁵³ Neither rational bookkeeping nor the spread of monetary exchange relations is sufficient for the long-term institutionalization of the profit motive in society. This is only achieved when free labor, sold as a commodity in the marketplace, is organized into "industrial" wage labor in the modern factory. Weber also acknowledges that the bureaucratic organization of the law and state administration in a formally rational manner is only possible in the long term if a capitalist economy based on wage labor persists. Although not unsupported by Weber's own work, Lukács' brilliant synthesis of Weber nonetheless diverges from the main intention of Weber's *oeuvre*.

Lukács' own phenomenological social analysis, which sees in the commodity form a "cell" that gets reproduced in all spheres

of life, is incompatible with Weber's methodological nominalism. As Merleau-Ponty has observed, in his complex analysis of the genesis of rationalization processes in the West, Weber neither attributes causal predominance to some element over others, nor does he point to a single logic of rationalization that forces its way into different spheres of life. "Each of these elements," writes Merleau-Ponty, "acquires its historical significance through meeting others. History has often produced one of them in isolation (law in Rome, elements of calculation in India). . . . But their meeting strengthens in each the pattern of rationality it contains. . . . But at the beginning it is not an omnipotent idea, but a sort of *imagination of history* that gathers together here and there elements that are capable of being integrated one day."⁵⁴ Lukács' methodological orientation is hardly compatible with what Merleau-Ponty calls "the imagination of history" at work in Weber's writings, but it has been decisive for the subsequent reception of Weber's work by the Frankfurt School: behind the discontinuous, contradictory, and sometimes inconclusive strands of rationalization processes analyzed by Weber, they have searched for a single logic of explanation, be it the commodity form or the predominance of identity logic or instrumental reason.