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Notes on Whitebook and "Habermas LTD."

Murray Bookchin

"For a whole series of reasons, the reputation of Karl Marx has been reborn in a new form, the form of Marx as a sociologist. I believe that this is error: that Marx neither was – nor in a very important sense intended to be – a sociologist…"

Donald G. Macrae[1]

Whitebook has known for years that I reject the very use of the word "modernity." So his attempt to dissociate me from it is quite gratuitous.[2] He also knows that I reject it for

[1] Donald G. Macrae, *Max Weber* (New York, 1974), p. 9.

[2] The following critique of Habermas' version of "critical theory" – a project that has turned into a veritable industry in Euro-American "leftist" circles – would not have been written had I not been "attacked" by Joel Whitebook's "Saving the Subject" in *Telos*, 50 (Winter 1981-82), Whitebook and I were once involved in a close intellectual relation. It is important to mention this because it seems that Whitebook is privy to my intermost thoughts. In fact, there is very little in his criticism of my "Central European Jewish eschatologicali libertarian messianism and utopianism" that reflects my views on "modernity," "Geneinschaft," technics, individuality, and ecocommunities. I must either accept his explanation in a telephone conversation that the silly summary he advances is meant provocatively to "smoke out" my views on "modernity" or they are vulgarizations comparable to Alan Wolfe's "Listen, Bookchin," in *The Nation* (May 29, 1982).

reasons that have nothing to do with a desire to return to "premodernity." I also reject "sociology" and most of the reified jargon of the Habermas Establishment – a jargon open to the same irony Adorno deployed against the Heideggerians.[3] This is part of my conscious endeavor to retain Marx's combative nomenclature, just as Habermas' reified jargon is part of a conscious commitment to an academically conformist one, The contrast between socialism and sociology– including sociologese – has been conveniently forgotten by a generation of "leftist intellectuals", whose ideological apparatus was pierced together in class rooms, institutes, and the New School cafeteria. There is a sickening gall in Jameson's remarks that "Marxist literary criticisms… of the 1930s… was of a relatively untheoretical, essentially didactic nature, destined more for use in the night school than in the graduate seminar." Which is to say that Marxism generally is no longer sullied by the "burning issues of those days – anti Nazism, the Popular Front, the relationship between literature and the labor movement, the struggle between Marxism and anarchism."[4] Readers of Habermas' excursion into "new social movements" can judge whether Marxist "graduate seminars" have made contact with such "night school" issues as ecology, feminism, the anti-nuclear movement, homosexuality, and communalism.[5]

For my part, the term modernity needs legitimation. It can easily conceal real phenomena – social relations and institutions, values rooted in material interests, intellectual and social ideals, existential traditions – in short, much that can be bypassed by "radical" ideologues. It has an onus of abstraction that renders the neutralization of key social and cultural issues possible. How shrewdly modernity can be stretched or

[3] See Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (Evanston, Ill., 1973).

[4] Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton, N.J., 1974), p. ix.

[5] Jürgen Habermas "New Social Movements," *Telos*, 49 (Fall 1981), pp. 33-37.

contracted is suggested by Habermas' description of the "Enlightenment project" as an effort "to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art, according to their inner logic. At the same time this project intended to release the cognitive potentials of each of these domains to set them free from their esoteric forms."[6]

When one turns to the Enlightenment, however, it is astonishing what crucial issues Habermas' level of abstraction permits him to omit: the Enlightenment's "project" to dominate nature which fed into its mechanistic vision of the world, its highly behavioristic psychology which, in turn, formed the premises of its pedagogical strategies, and its myth of unceasing progress. By the same token, all of this naive progressivism existed in sharp tension with its sentimentalism, simplistic anthropology, and a "cognitive potential" for authoritarianism. This mix of Enlightenment features is not meant so much to criticize Habermas' definition of the "project" as to disqualify modernity and the proclivity of "leftist intellectuals" to accept a terminology that lacks particularity and contact with existential conditions.

But here one encounters a key problem in Habermas' "project," which even his most troubled critics share: a tendency to categorize, schematize, and abstract that, as Gillian Rose observes of Adorno, "provides no account of those social forms which would have to be specified prior to any account of corresponding political forms." Rose further notes that "This is also true of the work of Habermas. Although Habermas has based this theory of late capitalism on a theory of the state, he has abandoned the analysis of the commodity form as the basic unit of social analysis. As a result, the state is a force *sui generis* and the relationship between state and society is conceived as reducing it, ultimately to the question of the

[6] Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Post-Modernity," *New German Critique*, 22 (Winter 1981), p. 8.

legitimacy of the state. This makes it impossible to ask if the separation of the political sphere from the socio-economic, and the relative autonomy of the state is real or merely apparent."[7]

The problem Rose raises is not simply one of socio-economic reductionism, but of a failing in Habermas that Adorno called "conceptual fetishism" and a "surplus of method" which, "compared with the substance, is abstract and false."[8] What is "original" in Habermas' *Legitimation Crisis* is not a crisis in institutional "legitimacy." The issue of *deinstitutionalization* produced by the counter-culture, blacks and feminists was raised a decade before Habermas began to mummify it. Nor is the difference between *deinstitutionalization* and *delegitimation* merely terminological. The former is bound to a living practice while the latter simply reduces the issues to mere sociology.

In *Legitimation Crisis*, Habermas mystifies deinstitutionalization by rendering it almost completely conceptual. He has infused the problem of legitimation with systems theory, abstract normative categories, an "action theory" that itself becomes a category adorned with flow diagrams, charts, and an annoyingly abmbiguous jargon, a shallow recitation of evolutionary "social formations," surprisingly traditional "theorems of economic crises," a notion of "counter-culture" that is more Bohemian than populist, and a general analytical strategy that is bereft of dialectic. It lacks so much of what Adorno called "nuance" that it reads more like a manual that a coherent interpretation.[9] While Adorno's "concrete particular" stands in dialectical opposition to the concept, Habermas' proclivity for conceptual "reductionism" tends to dissolve the concrete. This failing is as acute as his dualism, his lack of a natural history,

[7] Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science* (New York, l978), p. 141.

[8] Theodor Adorno, *Narative Dialectics*, (New York, 1973), p. 48.

[9] *Ibid*., p. 44: "To comprehend a thing itself, not just to fit and register it in its system of reference, is nothing but to perceive the individual moment in its immanent connection with others."

of public life that nourished them. Such great individuals as Diderot and Rousseau embody the polarities that constitute this tension and synthesize them. Why a new synthesis should be impossible in a society that has abolished the market - the real social hallmark of "modernity" - is beyond my understanding. The newly gained power of self-reflexivity alone with the rich historical treasure upon which it can draw should provide a crucial element in forming a new, autonomous individual that is chained neither to the overpowering megalomania of a Faust or the humility of a Gertrude. To resolve this problem is not a matter of procedural analysis but of a substantive theory.

his inability to deal seriously with any "precognitive experience", his gross lack of esthetic insight,and his remoteness to the particularity of social and cultural problems. His "surplus" is not only one of method but of concepts at the *expense* of concreteness. Habermas can certainly think and schematize, but he is surprisingly pallid as a generalizer. This may seem like an overstatement. But coherence is not necessarily congruent with building systems from countlessly unrelated blocks; building systems is not congruent with flow diagrams and flow diagrams are not congruent with dialectics. The point is that the reality from which Habermas draws is so intellectualized, so thinned of its living substance, particularity, and potentialities that formal schemata become substitutes for dialectic and organic development.

Habermas' stupendous project is, in McCarthy's words, to formulate a critical social theory that will "be empirical and scientific without being reducible to empirical-analytic science, philosophical in the sense of critique but not of presuppositionless 'first philosophy,' historical without being historical, and practical in the sense of being oriented to an emancipatory political practice but not to technological-administrative control."[10] The question is whether Habermas has closed the gaps between an empirical science, critical philosophy, and emancipatory practice or is merely straddling them by remaining twice or thrice removed from the reality that alone can relieve him from such a terribly demanding posture. He uses communication theory as his groundwork. One may wonder why so few neo-Marxists embraced this wondrous resource a generation or two ago, when even "night schools" were troubled by the failure of proletarian socialism. That we must all communicate with each other, however, seemed Iike a banality and that freedom presupposes the absence of speech constraints

[10] Thomas McCarthy in "Tranlator's Introduction" to Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston, 1979), p. vii.

would have been assumed, Habermas' theory of communicative action is so shadowy, fiat, and pretentiously unfulfilling in its claims to consequence and insight that one is often led to believe that he has something to say simply because his dense prose is finally penetrated. The mere relief one feels from the pain of trying to understand what he has to say is mistaken for the belief that, he really has said something significant.

Habermas totally betrays the old Frankfurt School, however much he professes to deal with the unresolved problems that haunted it. In giving the "linguistic turn" in Anglo-American positivism an "Emancipation interest," he essentially separates the problem of communication from the *institutional* issues of emancipation, only to struggle, the problems of the Frankfurt School back in a linguistically reified form. After we agree that communicative competence rests on understandable utterances, truthful propositions, the sincerity of speech partners, and the appropriateness of a speech performance, we cannot evade the fact that the consensus required to fulfill these requirement must be grounded not in linguistics or communicative action, *but* in *institutions*. Either our priorities must be ordered in this fashion or Habermas must ground the conditions for ideal discourse in a depth linguistics that contains not only an innate human "grammar" but the potentiality for an innate rational society.

Habermas seems to have already produced a rather contourless metalinguistics which merely recycles the problem of normative validity without resolving it. Stated baldly, it is his belief that the concept of truth so essential to an ideal speech situation is implied in communication itself – a claim that begs the question[11] The grounding for ideal speech lurks like

[11] Consider this formulation: "What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: *language*. Through its *structure*, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us. Our first sentence expressed unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus. Taken together, autonomy and responsibility constitute the only Idea we posses *a*

are first encounter are as "new" to Euro-Americans as the latter are to the former. In any case, these are problems that must be explored on their own terms within their own framework, not dismissed from a Eurocentric viewpoint with words like Gemeinschaft. The linkage of the Enlightenment with individual autonomy *as such* is as ahistorical as the linkage of "oneness" with organic societies. It is ahistorical because it ignores the *different* forms of individual autonomy that have arisen - and hopefully *will* arise; forms that should appropriately constitute the multicolored fabric of individuality itself. What Whitebook seems to mean by individual autonomy is the introverted subject, self-preoccupied and privatized, whose *Angst* brings him or her to the edge of neurosis and beyond. In its most exaggerated form, all clinical accounts aside, it appears in Goethe's *Faust* (a more ambiguous subject than Marshall Berman would have us believe)[48] and, most conspicuously, in Nietzsche's "sovereign individual."

"Modernity" is the brief period between the total extinction of *feudalism* and the rise of *industrial capitalism* that produced highly ambiguous subjects. We can only ignore their unique roots at the expense of exaggerating their finality or ending their destinies in Nietzsche's "sovereign individual." These roots are no less "premodern" - the medieval and Baroque communities of a "premodern" world - as they were contemporary, notably, the dissolving forces of the market and industry. To ignore the former while overstating the latter removes the tensions that produced them - and no less, the rich sense

[48] Whitebook seems to accept Marshall Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts into the Air* (New York, 1982) with almost unqualified enthusiasm and draws his entire picture of Marx as an enthusiastic "modernist" from it. For a useful corrective to the faults that mar this book, see Robert M. Adams, "Jogging to the Abyss," *The New York Review of Books*, March 4, 1982, pp. 27-29. From my own knowledge of Russian literature - and the Bronx - there are many other criticisms that could be made of Berman's highly selective use of his material.

they are marginal excrescences of a tradition-riddled era that lacked the self-reflexivity attributed to the notion of "modernity." It is notable, in fact that the least individuated people of whom we have reliable record - the peasant folk of the great "Asiatic" empires - lived in a shadow world of villages that existed in marked tension to the great bureaucracies, priesthoods, and monarchies that exploited them. Yet, if we are to believe Tolstoy, who had a lived knowledge and a sharp eye for this village society, a spontaneity of personality and openness of manner could have easily satisfied the most demanding of individualists.

But we would be hard put to explain a figure like Pericles, who embodied the Greek democracy at its high point. Was he *less* autonomous and individuated than a Beethoven or autonomous and individuated in a *different* way? If we did not have the anti-democratic notions of a Plato or Aristotle to "describe" their *ideal* of the individual's relation to the *polis*, Whitebook would have nothing on which to hang his hat. That Hegel and others, including members of the Frankfurt school have repeated the same error of forming their image of the Athenian individual from the writings of the Athenian elite does not make that image any less erroneous.

Anthropologists like Paul Radin and Dorothy Lee also give us a picture of individuation in tribal communities that is at variance with the conventional wisdom on the subject.[47] Whether these images are more dubious than the Athenian is hard to say, but conventional wisdom takes a lack of individuality for granted while realizing that it is dealing with tribal exclusivity, parochialism, and a certain degree of innocence in the face of encounters with technically advanced cultures. The tendency to mistake awe and fear for lack of individuality is commonplace reaction; indeed, tribal peoples

[47] Paul Radin, *The World of Primitive Man* (New York, 1960); and Dorothy Lee, *Freedom and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1959).

a utopian potentiality in distorted communication. It beckons us toward ideality just as the "pleasure principle" beckons us toward sensual fulfillment. Here, Habermas' analysis drifts toward the "idealism" his claims to scientific rigor profess to transcend. But his attempt to straddle two conflicting , strategies of analysis leads to a theoretical limbo. This unfulfilled ideality latent in communicative action becomes a mere seed that lies on concrete; it requires a social medium in which to sprout – one that is repeatedly diluted by the importance Habermas ascribes to systems of ideas.[12]

How Habermas deals with "new social movements" beleaguering his world of communicative competence bears directly on the promise his system holds. On this score, few works more clearly reveal the extent to which a contemporary "dichotomy" exists in his own mind between "normative structures" and "substratum categories" – that is, the extent to which he has reduced "action theory" itself to a category – than an interview dealing with "The Crisis of Late Capitalism and the Future

priori in the sense of the philosophical tradition." Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston, 1971), p. 314. Emphasis added.

[12] That communications theory has its origin in the effort to reduce philosophy to methodology was already anticipated by Max Horkheimer in *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York,, 1947). Although written before the explosion of interest in linguistics, this work already implies a dialectical critique of communication theory. "Definitions acquire aquire full meanings in the course of a historical process. The cannot be used intelligently unless we humbly concede that their penumbrae are not easily penetrated by linguistic shortcuts. If, through fear of possible misunderstandings, we agree to climinate the historical elements and offer supposedly atemporal sentences as definitions, we deny ourselves the intellectual heritage bequeathed to philosophy from the beginnings of though and experience. The impossibility of such a complete disavowal is evident in the procedure of the most anti-historical 'physicalist' philosophy of our times, logical empiricism. Even its protagonists admit some undefinable terms of everyday usage into their dictionary of strictly formalized science, thus paying tribute to the historical nature of language" (p. 165). To speak, as Habermas does, of the *a priori* Idea we possess of "autonomy and responsibility" as a result of language *per se* is to bypass the historical genesis of language, indeed, of "autonomy and responsibility."

of Democracy" and the conclusion of his most recent book.[13] In the interview, the issue is joined most sharply when the interviewer queries Habermas about "apparently unpolitical phenomena of protest," most significantly the feminist movement. Habermas' response is revealing for its remarkable remoteness from reality. The "women's movement ... starts from a central problem – equality of rights" and it "belongs as much to the bourgeois tradition of emancipation as to the socialist one. From the ideological viewpoint, it can be placed among the great movements oriented toward universalistic values, at least partly. This is not true of the other movements [i.e., ecology, citizens' initiative, etc. - M. B.]."

The interviewer is startled "But women go beyond the demand for equality (and here this movement meets critiques of Marxism as a simple theory of social equality). They speak of liberation." Habermas, whose response is a cut below what August Bebel would have advanced nearly a century ago, is caught off guard. His elaboration, however, is even worse than his initial answer. We learn that there "are obvious similarities [between the women's movement] and neo-populism [i. e., the "other movements" – M. B.]." The "capitalist economic process" has "violated a reserve which is still protected in some ways by the family in Western societies, and by the middle class in particular." Moreover, women have entered into "the reserve army of the labor market. . . a process that is constantly engulfing larger bourgeois strata." Here, Habermas apparently has a vision of these "new social movements" that is closer to blindness than myopia.

In his survey of "new social movements," Habermas is as au courant as he can be: these movements are "sparked" not "by *problems of distribution'*, but concern the *grammar of the*

[13] Cf. Angelo Bolaffi, "Crisis of Late Capitalism and the Future of Democracy: interview with Habermas," *Telos*, 39 (Spring 1979), pp. 168-1 72; and "New Social Movements", *op. cit.*

within which critical theory has hitherto sought to overcome modernity and its discontents. That they cannot be reunited such as to integrate a crisis theory of the present with the anticipatory critique of present life forms from the standpoint of a utopian future is not obvious. Critical theory redeems past hope in the name of the future by revealing the as-yet unrealized potentials of the present."[46]

There is much that one would want to flesh out and extend in Benhabib's admirable account of this project. What is so repellent in Whitebook's "survey" of the "Central European Leftist intellectuals" is the crude amalgam he has made of mysticism with utopianism, of eschatology with revolution, of atavism with a redemptive democratic practice, of messianism with the principle of hope, of Gemeinschaften with ecocommunities, of "modernity" with subjectivity and individual autonomy. In effect, he *delegitimates* the ecological project by trying to marry Scholem to Adorno and by veiling the significance of the ecological project with wisecracks that are little more than vulgarizations of ideas that have been patiently spoon-fed to him for years. This betrayal of a tradition and a project that provides a meaningful coherent alternative to Habermas' aporias is not redeemed by his criticisms of the latter - which, ironically, are vulnerable to dismissal because they too can be speciously characterized as "romantic."

Postscript

To "save" the subject, we must first find it, or at least try to define it. This is no easy matter. Such sharply etched personalities like the Greek mercenary, Archilochos, who was formed by the tension created by the transition of the tribal into a feudal world are at best transient embodiments of individual autonomy. They do not offer us a guide to a clear understanding of individual autonomy as a broadly social phenomenon because

[46] Seyla Benhabib, "Modernity and the Aporias of Critical Theory," *Telos*, 49 (Fall 1931), pp. 58-59.

inherit the aporias of Habermas as their "logical successor" and remain hopelessly trapped in a real *cul de sac*. To suppose that a substantive approach involves mere intuition rather than a discursive strategy is an academic prejudice that can be used as misleadingly against dialectic as it can against the historico-phenomenological approach of Marx.

I have not dwelled upon discrepancies that show up in so many accounts of Habermas' work, nor have I tried to explore internal contradictions which surface as "dissatisfactions" in the writings of McCarthy, Benhabib, Cohen, Rose, and Whitebook - to speak only of some commentators. All of them have done salutary work in trying to determine the pitfalls in the Habermas corpus. The closing passages of Ben-Habib's "Modernity and the Aporias of Critical Theory" leap out to those who are sensitive to this fascinating essay: "Today both the women's and ecology movements are challenging the cultural legacy of modernity in the name of new ideals of autonomy and individuation in a non-patriarchal society and for the creation of the new institutional structures in which the industrial exploitation of nature can be overcome. It is not clear why a new socialization of the individual beyond the patriarchal family, school and culture, and a new mode of material interaction with nature, beyond the industrial mode of production, would be possible. No theory can define the limits of future possibility, although it can enlighten us about it. For this possibility is posterior and not prior to actuality - Aristotle long ago said of praxis. The resolution of the aporias of critical theory seem to lie in the direction of developing a conception of emancipatory politics in the present that would combine the perspectives of radical democratic legitimacy in the organization of institutional life with that of a cultural-moral critique of patriarchy [one is tempted to add the crucial word, hierarchy - M. B.] and the industrial exploitation of nature within and without us. The ideals of radical democratic legitimacy and utopian *Kulturkritik* have been the polarities

forms of life." Having unearthed their "grammar," Habermas can now formulate his Legitimation Crisis in its most contemporary forms. To understand the "new social movements" we must go beyond the "bourgeois liberation movements" and the "workers' movements" to the "social-romantic movements of early industrialism, led by craftsmen, plebeians, and workers; in the defensive movements of the populist middle class; in the attempts to escape motivated by bourgeois critiques of civilization undertaken by reformers, *Wandervogel*, and so on." In short, it is the source of Whitebook's argument against the "Central European intellectual leftists"[14] who are little more than highly intelligent but atavistic Luddites.

And if Whitebook's vision of Habermas as a bastion against "anti-modernism" is sound, this revival of "archaic" social and cultural tendencies *should be dismissed, nay, attacked, as reactionary!* But Habermas, possibly troubled by the bad name he would receive, waffles: only the feminist movement "follows the tradition of bourgeois-socialist liberation movements," a reiteration of the position he took in the Bolaffi interview. The remaining movements – "the anti-nuclear and environmental movement; the peace movement. . . the citizens' action movement; the alternative movements; minorities (the elderly, homosexuals, disabled peoples, etc.)" – are "reconstructed" to include not only "support groups, youth sects," "resistance to 'modernist reforms,'" and ethnic, cultural and linguistic autonomy movements but "religious fundamentalism." These movements are essentially "defensive in character." Habermas can perceive that feminism is linked "particularistically" to all of these movements and involves "the toppling of concrete lifestyles determined by male monopolies," but these residual "defensive" movements "do not seek to conquer new territory." They are "largely abstract and require "technical and economic solutions that must, in turn, be planned globally

[14] See Whitebook, "Saving the Subject," *op.cit.*, p. 96.

and implemented by administrative [read: bureaucratic – M. B.] means." . After some chit-chat about problems of the "life world" and "problems of over-complexity," Habermas begins to snipe at "undirected explosions of youthful disturbances, . , surrealistic *violations of the rules*. . . violent provocations and intimidations [that] negate the definitions of the citizens' role as well as the *routines* of a goal-oriented realization of interests" (emphasis added)

Never to be accused of having a firm opinion about contemporary reality, Habermas retreats into a "domain" of best wishes: "Regardless of how unrealistic" the notions of counter-institutions may be – notions which he draws from Gorz, of all people – Habermas comforts us with the reflection that "they remain important for the polemical significance of the new resistance and retreat movements which are reacting to the colonization of the life-world." Confused by the "rationalization of the life world" and the "increasing complexity of the social system," Habermas is in a position to explain why "new social movements" yield such internal cross currents as the "anti-modernism of the young conservatives" and "the new conservative defense of a post-modernism that robs a modernism alienated from itself of its reasonable content and its possibilities for the future."

When Adorno voiced his despair for the future, he did so with elegance and perception; when Habermas voices his despair, it is clumsy and shallow. There is no reason to believe that any of these vements are important to Habermas, except as an intellectual excercise. Indeed, their "challenges are largely abstract," which is to say that Habermas, who can only "reconstruct" them in terms of global planning by bureaucratic means, has intellectualized them to a point where they are simply coherent, indeed, atavistic. To intermix the "peace movement," alternative energy and community movements, homosexuality and itizens' initiative movements with "religious fundamentalism" and even neo-fascism reflects a breakdown in Habermas'

alternative to the rationalization of the world have been left dangling in the air while a stupendous literature has developed around Habermas' aporias,"stages of development," unfulfilled "promissary notes," and irrelevance to the real concerns of our time.[45]

Such an alternative is frankly substantive in its emphasis, and can best be called a radical social ecology. Social ecology elucidates the graded interface of nature and society without the repellent dogmatism of "diamat"; it tries to explore the possibility of an objectively rooted ecological ethics without entertaining - indeed, in overt opposition to - the reactionary crudities of sociobiology; the provides and ecological grounding for radical feminism and its vast historical potential; it seeks to develop a theory of community conceived as a utopistic, humanly scaled confederation of ecocommunities rather than parochial Gemeinschaften, subjectivity as individual autonomy that is nourished by directly democratic institutions and interrelations, and a technics that is oriented ecologically and humanistically to differentiation rather than domination. Habermas' dualism, which has literally expelled many of these issues from a radical discourse, is thus overcome and the grounding of society in nature is rendered coherent without naturalistic reductionism on the one hand and a "sociological" rupture on the other.

This "inventory" merely touches the high points of such an ecological approach whose details can hardly be developed here. If the aporias of the Frankfurt School, which are massively centered in its vision of nature and its dialectic of domination, are blandly dismissed as a dead-end, we will have failed abysmally to explore its entrancing insights and their radical potential for practice as well as theory. Instead, we will

[45] A recent bibliography of literature *about* Habermas covering the period 1949-1981 lists 923 items - and it may not even be exhaustive at that! See René Görtzan, *Jürgen Habermas: Eine Bibliographie seiner Schriften und der sekundänderliteratur 1959-1981* (Frankfurt am Main, 1982).

tation of politics. "If one calls democracies precisely those political orders that satisfy the procedural type of legitimation," Habermas declares,"then questions of democratization can be treated as what they are, i.e., as organizational questions." This is a tremendous "if" and presupposes that democratic "political orders" can be confined to the "procedural type of legitimation." For all Whitebook's chortling about Lenin's definition of communism, the Bolshevik leader's choice of the word "soviets" is not reducible to a simple "organizational question." Behind it lay a "specific type of organization" that for the Russian people was the materialization of a highly *normative* concept of self-administration, not simply a *contingent* matter of practical exigencies - indeed, a concept that involved their spiritual and psychic identities and members of a body politic. Whether they were correct in their view of soviets is beside the point. But a merely "empirical" problem it surely was not.

If the Frankfurt School's theoretical endeavors are regarded as an invaluable transition away from Marxian orthodoxy, a question arises: is there an alternative that can be developed other than Habermas' procedural strategy, his generalization of the so-called "social sciences" on the level of communicative action, and his "sublation" of linguistics, positivism, systems theory, Kohlberg's stages of moral consciousness, and Piaget's ontogenetic model of cognitive development among the many developments that have been generated by the academy and its hangers-on? Such an alternative does exist; one that is at least consistent with the traditions of the Frankfurt School - its latent naturalism, social combativeness, and monistic orientation which have been so facilely dismissed as "romanticism." This alternative is frankly substantive in its emphasis and can best be called a radical social ecology. On the whole, the subject has been largely ignored even by acolytes of Horkheimer and Adorno. As a result, critical theory has suffered greatly by this indifference. The Frankfurt School's exciting concerns with the dominations of nature and its attempt to develop an

reality rinciple. The unifying *potentialities* that provide the best of thee movements with radical possibilities elude this man. Habermas suffers from an incurable intellectual illness: he has no sense of potentiality. Every phase of a development must be frozen its fecundity ignored, its components rendered static and cross sectional.

In point of fact, the "older" Habermas here stands very much at odds with the "younger" in more ways than Whitebook suggests at the close of his article. If the Habermas of "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'" in the late 1960s was to advance the need for "reflection" that will "penetrate beyond the level of particular historical class interests to disclose the fundamental interests of mankind as such," the Habermas of the late 1970s stimatizes the very *generalization* of particular interests. The absence of "particularity" seems to earn them the odium of being defensively "neopopulist." This stimatizes them as a regression from the post-Luddite workers' movement, for all its shortcomings, to a universalistic "utopian" movement of "the people."[15] He designates them as "plebeians," others as the "oppressed." But he cannot recognize "the fundamental interests of mankind" –including womankind – in any form that is not "transcendental."

Enough has been written (often inaccurately) about the turn from an emancipatory critical analysis "of an economy based on exchange" and "bathed in bitter reality itself' (the words are Horkheimer's) to a strategy of the immanent critique of reason and culture in a world where "ideology means society as appearance" and even immanent critique "is dragged into the abyss by its object"[16] (Adorno's words) Dallmayr sees in Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* "the debunking of anthropocentric pretensions (which are not synonymous with the elimina-

[15] Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society* (Boston, 1970), p. 113.

[16] Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in *Critical Theory* (New York, 1972), p. 225, and Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

tion of reflection in favor of objectivism)," a debunking that "involves an effort to break open subjectivity in the direction of non-subjective reality, an effort guided not by a desire to control or manipulate the world, but an attitude of attentive care and a willingness to respect diversity. "[17]

So conceivcd, it is not clear that Adorno's perspective can be dismissed as irredeemably pessimisitic. His effort is much closer to our times than Habermas' "universal pragmatics" with its collection of unredeemed "promissory notes." Real pessimism lies in such casual dismissals of the Frankfurt School's critique of "instrumental relations" aS an "effort to link human emancipation] to a dubios, eschatological] notion of a reconciliation with nature in the form of new science and technology." This arrogant formulation by Menelsohn presupposes that the writer is on intimate terms with such greasy "night school" subjects as the technics that the alternative technology movement has been developing. To dismiss, as Mendlsohn dots, this "eschatological notion of a reconciliation with nature" as abstract, "moralizing" (a terrifying term!) and "ill-suited for generating a critique of the authoritarian elements ill orthodox socialism" (presumably, Mendelsohn is still jousting with "diamat") is to suggest that our virtually no sense of the fact that a serious critique of socialism must take its point of departure from the Enlightenment Mendelsohn apparently sees no alternative to the vision of a dominated nature.[18]technics, anit-naturalistic sensibility, and utimately scientiscit "amorality" of the status quo, with its insensitivity to "eschatological" and utopian visions.

To simply designate Adornoo as "pessimistic" is a cheap snot. Adorno was a transitional figure whose pulsating contrariety and focus on the non-identity of the object with the concept

[17] Fred R. Dallmayr, *Twilight of Subjectivity* (Amherst, 1981), p.37.

[18] Jack Mendelsohn, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate, " *New German Critique*, 18 (Fall1979), p. 49.

as *the* correct one. Nor does it exclude *a priori* every arrangement involving representation, delegation, and the like. The point is, rather, to find in each set of concrete circumstances institutional arrangements that justify the presumption that basic political decisions would meet with the agreement of all those affected by them if they were able to participate without restriction in discursive will-formation."

This is tunnel vision with a vengeance, despite its libertarian overtones. Here Habermas exhibits a shortsightedness that barely rises above the level of a public accountant. Aside from the fact that he accept the notion of a "minimal state" in a society that has attained an "ideal speech situation," he also removes the normative bases that underpin democratic institutions. This strategy collapses the profound ethical disputes that distinguish, say, council communism from sovietism, libertarian communalism from syndicalism, direct democracy from representative democracy, decentralized political studies from centralized ones. His focus on the "legitimating *grounds* of a political order" as distinguished from the "organizational *principle* that enters into "its institutionalization under given conditions" is barely enough to sustain the notion that Habermas has any political vision at all. His criticism of Rousseau to the contrary notwithstanding, Rousseau was perfectly correct for "mixing" *principles* of legitimation with the *structures* of political administration. Purely normative concepts of legitimation become dangerously abstract and hence highly manipulative as the Russian Revolution so dramatically revealed when they are so completely separated from the structures of freedom. Indeed, Habermasian politics becomes as arbitrary or trite as his "communicative ethics." They existentially lend themselves to almost any interpretation one chooses to give them under the rubric of an "emancipatory interest" - assuming, to be sure, that one always knows what Habermas is saying in the first place.

Cohen has the vexing problem of rendering Habermas into a guide of social practice built into Habermas' very interpre-

in the *agora*, the Romans in the Forum, and craftsfolk in the squares of the medieval communes.

The difficulty that ultimately arises concerns the way in which Habermas conceives of the problems of political reconstruction, not simply his normative concept of democracy." Formal democracy, whose universalistic principles Habermas was to emphasize in contrast to more traditional Marxian theorists, remains no less confined to the conceptual realm than his "universal pragmatics" and even his theories of delegitimation. In fact, he is at pains to reject any discussion of the "political apparatus" or legalistic "rules of the game" as limited - this, despite the fact that a "political apparatus" (assemblies, councils, direct forms of democracy, republican institutions, etc.) is indissolubly wedded to any "normative concept of democracy," notably, the *institutions* that *materially* foster or vitiate democratic norms.[44]

Put bluntly, Habermas dodges the issue of a "normative concept of democracy" when he declares that, because democratic institutions "are empirical processes, all discourses are subject to restrictions of space and time, psychological and social limitations, contingent discrepancies of information, personal influence, etc." Having overloaded the issue of institutionalization with everything from "psychological limitations" to "personal influence," we are direly in need of "regulations," which occupy a "pragmatic, but by no means contemptible status; they are meant to make practical discourse possible under given empirical restrictions." These remarks reveal the transcendental qualities, indeed, the neo-Kantian underpinnings, that characterize his entire project. McCarthy, who is sympathetic, observes that for Habermas, "democracy, as a *principle* of political order, does not single out *a priori* one specific type of organization (for example, a system of soviets)

[44] Citations from Habermas and McCarthy, unless otherwise stated, are from *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, op. cit.,* pp. 330-332.

advanced a powerful perspective for clearing the air of ossified notions of reason, history, progress, conformity, and conceptual fixity. It is ironical that this perspective has been developed in radical social ecology rather than in the sterile world of neo-Marxism. Unfortunately, Adorno did not advance his dialectic of domination into a dialectic of *hierarchy* – for here he would have had to embrace those haunting "ghosts" of anarchism against which he cautioned the New Left. Yet no thinker in the Frankfurt School was more anarchic. The real theme of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is simply not reduciblc to a self-negation of reason into instrumental rationality. It was, above all, a critique of " 'progress' in reason, which, *failing a revolution in the socio-economic structure*, began to duplicate the characteristics of that structure and fell back into myth."[19]

It is part of the perversity of our time that Habermas has staked out a claim to this work of consummation with text books in sociology and the history of ideas. Gillian Rose has summed up this dessicated endeavor with admirable succinctness: "Habermas work is well-known for offering an alternative to the shortcomings of Adorno's thought. He accuses Adorno of confusing the critique of ideology with a theory of late capitalist society; of making theory impossible by basing it on 'the whole is the false,' a proposition which precludcs any determinate negation. Habermas, furthermore, denies the possibility of 'immanent critique' because late capitalist society no longer offers any norms, values, or cultural forms to which an 'immanent critique' might appeal. Habermas interprets Adorno's critique of identity as Hegelian, and understands his thought as based on ideas of reconciliation and 'the resurrection of nature.' He appears to have taken Adorno's proposition 'the whole is the false' too literally, overlooking the dialectical play in it. He grants no validity to

[19] Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (New York, 1977), pp. 186-87. Emphasis added.

Adorno's generalization of Marx's theory of value to produce a sociology of illusion in late capitalist society. He does not see that Adorno's critique of identity is not Heglian, and that far from defining a problem of the resurrectin of nature, Adorno redefines 'nature' to mean 'the history of culture,' and emphatically rejects any reconciliation in history or any apotheosis of nature."[20]

For Habermas, the "resurrection of fallen nature" is actually an implicit imputation rather than an explicit formulation. It is a desideratum that reflects "the more secret hopes of Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor W. Adorno."[21] Rose's criticism on this score seems more trustworthy than Habermas' attempt to schematize Adorno. Humanity's relation to nature is primarily a problem of evolutionary theory, a substantive nature philosophy, technics and sensibility – not Jewish and Protestant mysticism. Bloch's more appropriate formulation – "that the human house stands not only in history and on the ground of human activity; it stands primarily on the ground of a *mediated* natural subjectivity" – more solidly reflects the aspirations of a new science and an ecological technics than the formless language of Hebraic and pietistic mysticism .[22]

It is tragic that Adorno could not remove what Buck-Morss calls "the taboo against positivity."[23] To do so would entail a "reconstructino" of humanity's relation with nature in terms of a radical social ecology according to which the *graded* (i.e. mediated) development of natural history into social history ceases to be teleologically pregiven in the emergence of capitalism and the notion of humanity's domination of nature – a notion of dominationn that has its roots in the domination of human by human. Contrariety is preserved in the vision of an alter-

[20] Rose, *The Melancholy Science, op. cit.*, p. 146.

[21] Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society, op. cit.*, p.86. Emphasis Added.

[22] Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Band II (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), pp. 806-807. Emphasis added.

[23] Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectic, op, cit.*, p. 190.

interest) without yielding its negation. Indeed, if Marxism has so often seemed to be economically reductionist, it is not because the proletariat came out of Marx's critique of political economy, but rather because Marx, drawing upon his image of the emergence of the bourgeoisie out of feudalism, utilized the critique of political economy to produce a dialectically similar type of subject called the proletariat.

Furthermore, far from considering "*happiness* as freedom" - one of the principal motifs in the "melodies of ethical socialism" and Hannah Arendt - I would regard *freedom* as happiness with all its "non-identities," toils of development, and autonomy of selfhood, in short, the *creative* pleasure that accompanies self-growth and self-management. Often lurking behind the priority given to happiness is the self-satisfied economistic vision of the "contented" life as distinguished from the fulfilling one, the satisfaction of need as distinguished from the strivings of desire. Yet, why the toils of development and the autonomy of the selfhood should be identified with predation, domination, and rivalry is inexplicable, in my view, except as a knee-jerk reaction of the alienated bourgeois spirit.

But to return to Cohen's project in her informative essay: one must consult it directly to follow the highly convoluted development of Habermas from his "early" political theory in the *Strukturwandel der Oeffentlichkeit* of 1962 to the *Legitimation Crisis* of 1973. Actually, Habermas' "public sphere," which, as he puts it, is "first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed," is strictly mediative rather than institutional, unless one wants to call the press, cafes, clubs, and the like institutions in any way similar to parliamentary forms.[43] Habermas' history of this public sphere is highly selective; it emerges with the Enlightenment, in which case one wonders what the Athenians were doing

[43] Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere," *New German Critique,* 3 (Fall 1974), p. 49.

possibly from the "modern" to the pre-modern," if we are to follow Whitebook's line of reasoning. We would thus be "thematizing the practical dimension of political institutions" and uncover "existing emancipatory norms by which to orient praxis." Put quite simply, we would "resurrect" the universal liberatory or even "utopian" dimension in liberal bourgeois institutions and utilize them counterfactually to develop a "praxis," dynamized where possible by the model of late capitalist development as formulated in the *Legitimation Crisis*. Hence, we could develop and immanent critique with a systemic crisis theory that would situate norms objectively - in short, "permit a reconciliation between immanent critique and systemic crisis theory." Precisely how "norms" would be situated objectively in a systemic crisis theory would be very interesting to determine.

What is wanting in the project is the Habermas himself, who wishes to preserve his formal approach at the expense of a substantive one. Cohen is a lone voice crying in the academic wilderness. I take no exception to an "immanent" critique of the emancipatory *potential* of bourgeois institutions (although I detest them even more than did Lukacs, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse) - notably, the American anti-decentralization, the ideal of "self-sufficiency" and "self-management," and even the confederations of town and neighborhood meetings that arose from the Congregationalist tradition of the English Revolution. To go even further - even in contravention to Cohen's understandable trepidations about a romanticized absolute subject" - I would readily invoke the bourgeois notion of "the people," *particularly in the context of the ecology, community, feminist, elderly, gender-oriented, youth*, in short, *neo-populist* movements which have a *potential* for subjectively universalizing the historic issues of emancipation beyond the historically particularistic interests of the proletariat, which have *always* represented the negativity of capitalism in Marxist theory (immiseration, rationalistic organization of labor, egoistic

native possibility: our separation from nature could have occurred on terms that involved *differentiation* rather than domination, and with that differentiation, a *conciliatory* rationality, subjectivity, and universal humanity rather than an antagonistic pathway rooted in hierarchy.[24] It may help Whitebook, who has always been somewhat puzzled by my emphasis on unity in diversity, to know that non-identity in a radical social ecology finds its real truth in the fact that the concept can never fully grasp the concrete in its own particular uniqueness and in the uniqueness of each ecosystem. Hence, "attentive care and a willingness to respect diversity" is grounded *objectively* in natural diversity itself and the ecological constellations it forms.

The previous examination of Habermas' views on "new social movements" is indispensable for responding to Whitebook. Critical as he may be, Whitebook has entered into a curious symbiotic relation with Habermas. Ever respectful and scrupulously prudent, he has sought thus far to point out the *incompleteness* of Habermas "project" rather than systematically criticizing it. Habermas himself may not realize how clever he is until he has read Whitebook's "critique." For example, Whitebook tells us that he finds "a certain one-sidedness in Habermas' position *vis-a-vis* the romantic critique [of Central European Jewish utopian eschatological and messianic libertarians – arrange the words anyway you like – whom Whitebook reduces to sheer comedians in his initial allusions to their view – M. B.]." Although Habermas "has 'entered into the strength' of hermeneutics, systems theory, positivism, etc. and sought to incorporate the respective truths in this position," he "never joins issue" with the Central European Jews "*on their own ground so*

[24] Feminist Theory at its best - particulary feminist anthropology – has endeavored to reclaim this pathway as a redemptive vision for the future. Pitifully, so little is known of the technics, theory, anthropology, and historiography of this possibility by "leftist intellectuals," particularly male academics. See Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology Freedom* (Palo Alto, 1982).

that his critique always remains incommensurate with their theoretical intentions."[25]

There is no irony in Whitebook's tone. Quite to the contrary, it is the advice of a friend who reduces the "theoretical intentions" of Central European Jews to a form of pastoral nostalgia. Actually, Whitebook shows Habermas how easily they can be waylaid, vulgarized and dispatched. Following Löwy's argument – which Löwy himself has since practically repudiated[26] – Whitebook proceeds to dump Rosenzweig, Buber, Scholem, Landauer, Kafka, Benjamin, Bloch, Adorno, the "young" Lukacs – and myself – into a huge sack labelled the "countcr-Enlightenment." What all of these Central European Jews have in common is that they regard "modernity" as a "nullity" – and, of course, are committed to an "eschatological" and "messianic" rupture between the old world and the new. Whitebook warns that, "all protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, a nostalgic yearning informs the utopian sensibility: in some sense Gemeinshaft becomes normative." Before one can blink and eye in the face of this nonsense about the "utopean sensibility," Whitebook's "some sense" becomes "in every sensee." Happily, however, "It is precisely the eschatology of that earlier generation of Central European Leftists and critical theorists that Habermas seeks to correct in order to restore socialism to the status of a historical subject."[27]

[25] Whitebook, "Saving the Subject" *op. cit.*, p. 94.

[26] See Michael Löwy, "Jewish Messianism and Libertarian Utopia in Central Europe," *New German Critique* , 20 (Spring-Summer, 1980). For Löwy's substantial retraction of his unqualified condemnation of romanticism as such, see Michael Löwy, "Marxism and Revolutionary Romanticism," *Telos*. 49 (Fall 1981), pp. 83-96.

[27] Whitebook, "Saving the Subject," *op. cit.*, p. 96. One can make mincemeat of such crudities merely on the strength of Löwy's own article. Indeed, aside from Löwy's prudence in denoting the many different directions the "Central European intellectual leftists" were to follow, we know that Rosenzweig was to evolve toward a Kierkegaardian form of Jewish existentialism with no sympathy for Zionism; Buber and Scholem were to become Zion-

of the New World, however, brought out the worst features of the commodity relation and posed the famous Marxist alternative: barbarism as the only consequence of capitalism if "the revolution" fails. Whitebook demurely conceals the fact that he has dropped the very idea of revolution; hence he must vitiate it by turning into a "telos" of Gemeinschaft and "premodernity" - a tendency that is becoming fashionable as a substitute for straightforward argument.

The full implications of this defamation of the revolutionary socialist project in all its forms - be they the "melodies of ethical socialism" and anarchism or the scientific socialism of Marx - are carried to their final conclusion by Cohen. In contrast to Lukacs, Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse, whose "hatred of bourgeois institutions and a peculiar brand of Marxist orthodoxy" leads them to political economy, commodification of the world, and cultural critique, Habermas starts with a "fresh analysis" of civil society and the state, which spares him the "old" Frankfort School's need to accept a "romanticized absolute subject" (the proletariat) or an "absolute spirit (art) as the bearer of reason and reconsiliation."[41] By contrast, the "early" Habermas focused on the public sphere, thereby yielding a much-neglected positive moment in his theoretical approach. Habermas viewed the public sphere "as a mediation between civil society and the state [which] provides the basis for both as alternative and the resigned political conclusions of Adorno and Horkheimer and an important corrective to Habermas' own analyses of late capitalism."[42]

In effect, Cohen wishes to shift the emphasis of the Habermas Project from the procedural to the more or less substantive,

[41] Jean Cohen, "Why More Political Theory?" *Telos*, 40 (Summer 1979), p. 73.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72. In the process, "neither the dissolution of civil society nor the abolition of the state is advocated by Habermas," Cohen notes in passing and with certain light-heartedness that one can only find admirable! (p. 71).

Horsemen of the Apocalypse or the prophesies of the Book of Revelation.[39]

In vulgarizing this "disjunction," Mr. Whitebook gives his terminology a life of its own. By the next sentence, "absolute abyss" is transformed into an act of "redemption," an undeserved expression of piety that becomes a ferocious "revolutionary apocalypse" as distinguished from a rational utopia." having appointed himself the custodian of "reason," not to speak of modernity," Whitebook delivers a *coup de grace* against all "Central European Leftist intellectuals": "Any transcendence must be an eschatological irruption. Eschatology follows as logically as resignation" - to which remarks one is prompted to say "Amen!"[40]

Habermas has the courage to be forthright about his liberal arthritis and to place himself somewhere between Eduard Bernstein and Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch (plus "some anarchists"). Precisely where that leaves him in a political terrain completely covered by reformism and revolution my be worth investigating. Here, I take much of Marx's analyses of the dialectic of capitalism very seriously. I share his conviction that capitalism is irredeemably destructive of society as such and its tendency to tear down social life cannot be mitigated by reforms or hopes of a benign evolutionary process. Whitebook, leaping from my revolutionary views to an image of the capitalist development as a pure "nullity," completely reconstructs a revolutionary approach as a total cleavage with history itself and "modernity" in particular. This is pure vulgarization. Josef Weber, decades ago, voiced the view that capitalism might have followed a more benign direction than it did if its origins and early development had been less rapid, indeed, less explosive. The discovery

[39] Jürgen Habermas, "The Dialectics of Rationalization: An Interview," *Telos*, 49 (Fall, 1981), p. 12.

[40] Whitebook,"Saving the Subject," *op.cit.* p. 95.

Whitebook's technique is divinely simple. By merely *describing* a situation, he thinks he has proffered an *explanation* – and his descriptions of almost everyone other that Habermas are crude and insensitive. Even mere "nostalgia" becomes a social desideratum. Accordingly, when I *describe* the destructive impact of the capitalist market on the "highly textured social structure" of procapitalist societies, Whitebook immediately concludes that I *want* to return to the Athenian *polis*, presumably the medieval commune, or whatever bounces around his head. Should I insist that no return is possible, Whitebook the psychoanalyst replaces Whitebook the social theorist. Lest my assertions fail to fit conveniently into his preconceptions, he guards himself with such clinical caveats as "all protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. . ."

As if pop psychoanalysis were not enough, Whitebook descends to the level of caricature when he discusses my notion of decentralized ecocommunities. Here, it is important for Whitebook to cast my views in the most atavistic terms he can muster. If he fails to turn me into a primitive rebel *á la* Hobsbawm, his whole criticism falls apart. So Whitebook goes to work: given my burdensome "nostalgia," Whitebook declares "that Bookchin recognizes no normative advance with modernity – not even a dialectics of enlightenment: modernity is nothing but dissolution." My work, *The Limits of the City*, which advances a progressivist viewpoint, is thereby erased with a phrase.[28] Perhaps this is just as well: Whitebook would almost certainly view my plaudits in the book for the Athenian *po-*

ist pacifists; Landauer, a Bohemian anarchist; Benjamin, an "on-again, off-again" critical theorist; Bloch, a committed, if utopistic, Marxist; Adorno, free of all Jewish measles, a hypercritical dialectician; and Lukacs, a Bolshevik and even a Stalinist. At best, Löwy clarifies some points about their origins; at worst, he utilizes friendships, commonalities of birth, geographic affinities, and poinnts of intersecting interests to overstate similarities that were often very tenuous.

[28] Murray Bookchin, *The Limits of the City* (New York, 1974). See especially pp. 34-35.

lis and my critique of the modern cosmopolis such as Los Angeles and New York as patently "atavistic." Once Whitebook prejudges one as eschatological and "messianic" – presumably especially if one is a Jew an a libertarian – every critique of the *status quo* is patent *evidence* of "nostalgia" and a desire to return to traditional Gemeinschaft, especially if one finds redeeming features in procapitalist cultures.

But these are trifles. Whitebook soon leaps for the jugular. Accordingly, "It is not accidental that Bookchin advocates the establishment of a network of decentralized 'ecocommunities' as part of the solution to the problems of the modern world" – no less! "This amounts to going back behind the modern division of labor and re-establishing *autarchic* communities – a perfectly logical response if one considers modernity a corruption in the first place."[29] Here Whitebook grossly misunderstands *everything* I have written about ecocommunities and decentralization if he fails to recognize that my decentralist views are focused not only on ecological problems but on *human scale* – in short, on a human environment that the subject can *comprehend, manage*, and thereby *grasp* as an *indispensable aspect of individuation. Self*-mangement is meaningless unless it rests on a fully developed and autonomous self. For Whitebook to ignore the fact that for me decentralization is a function of individu ation, *of a comprehensible public sphere that fosters authentic personal autonomy and empowerment, indicates intellectual dishonesty.*

[29] Whitebook, "Saving the Subject," *op. cit.*, p. 97. I'll leave Whitebook's emphasis on "autarchic" aside except to note that nowhere do I argue that economic autarchy is possible. Indeed, even the Athenian polis was never autarchic materially; the idea of self-sufficiency as the basis for individual autonomy or independence – a crucial in its time for the development of an ideal of individuation – is closer to what the Athenians had in mind than complete material independence. The citizen could avoid the lures of self-interest and particularity to degree that he was free of dependence upon others who could influence his judgment.

tions." Accordingly, Whitebook must grossly misrepresent my own position on the *polis*, indeed, on history as the broad evolution of universality, subjectivity in a variety of forms, and yes, horror of horrors! technics, *also* in a great variety of forms rather than mere industrial rationalization.[38]

Whitebook uses terms like "eschatology," "messianism," "Gemeinschaft" and "utopianism" to defame the very *concept* of social revolution. Waxing for some two paragraphs on a grossly overelaborated quotation from Scholem, as interpreted by Löwy, Whitebook conjures up the image of a "counter-Enlightenment" that seeks to achieve a rational society by an "*absolute* abyss" between the old order and the new. The absolute abyss is revolution - like in the French, American, Parisian, Russian, German, Spanish, Austrian, Hungarian revolutions - where the "night schools" empty out and to the annoyance of the "graduate seminars," rush into the streets, occasionally throwing up barricades, occasionally paralyzing society with demonstrations, confrontations, and such sordid "substantial" things as general strikes. This "disjunction" to which Benjamin, Bloch, and "some anarchists" adhere, to use Habermas' phraseology, does not involve the Four

[38] One wonders why Whitebook stops with my "atavistic" interest in the Athenian *polis*? What about my interest in the Parisian sections of 1793, the New England town meetings, my commitment of municipal confederalism, my critique of the Paris Commune of 1871, soviet forms of organization, and syndicalism? My retrospective views must be presented as mere "nostalgia" and my prospective views as "messianic" and "eschatological." That my primary interest in classical Athens *sans* "windmills" is *institutional* - notably, centered on the potentialities of structures like the *Ecclesia* (citizens' assembly), *Boule* (council of five hundred), rotation of civil responsibilities, sortition, and the principle of the militia system - is totally ignored by Whitebook. And not without reason: what Whitebook is challenging in my views is not nostalgia," but a substantial approach to social theory, an endeavor to expand the *reality* of history, and the importance of radical praxis.

from the procedural logic of theoretical discourse is an open question."

Notwithstanding Benhabib's prudent treatment, Habermas has opened a yawning chasm. One wonders what his transcendental strategy and his "reconstruction of historical materialism," not to speak of the many "sublations" that patch together his more recent works, are meant to achieve in social theory.

Whitebook's defaming of the classical tradition in social theory becomes relevant against this background. He must represent the Athenian *polis* as subversive of individual autonomy[37] if Habermas' procedural and formal "turn" is not to be challenged by the possibilities of real life and "new social forma-

[37] Still another issue rankles me in Whitebook's article. Is Aristotle the most authentic voice of the Athenian *polis*, or should we follow Hegel's advice by turning "not to Xenophon, nor even to Plato" for our "verdict of the Ancients on the political life of Athens," but rather "to those who had a thorough acquaintance with the state in its full vigor…to its Statesmen," most notably to Pericles,"the Zeus of the human Pantheon of Athens"? See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York, 1956), p. 261. Pericles' Funeral Oration stands flatly at odds with Aristotle's insistence that "the *polis* is prior to the individual." Here, Whitebook preserves the same aristocratic image of the Athenian citizen that Gouldner and even Hegel were to exhibit in their writings on Greece. Horkheimer was careful to note that while "Athenian ideology" (which, in substance, means the ideology of the men in Plato and Aristotle's class) regarded the *polis* as "both superior and antecedent to its citizens," the very "predominance of the *polis* facilitated rather than hindered the rise of the individual: it effected a balance between the state and its members, between individual and communal welfare." See Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*, *op.cit.*, pp. 130-131. Indeed, as Horkheimer observes: "Individuality is impaired when each man decides to shift for himself. When the ordinary man withdraws from participation in political affairs, society tends to revert to the law of the jungle, which crushes all esteemed personal qualities, such as independence, will to freedom, sympathy, and the sense of justice, are social as well individual virtues. The fully developed individual is the consummation of a fully developed society. The emancipation of the individual is not an emancipation from society, but the deliverance of society from atomization, an atomization that may reach peak in periods of collectivization and mass culture." *Ibid.*, p. 135. And to think Adorno and Lukacs, belongs to the "pre-modern," presumably atavistic, Gemeinschafters!

Habermas, on the other hand, is so well ajusted to contemporary "social complexity" and global centralization that his solutions to gigantism (whatever they may be) become a problem in the sociology of organization. One thing is certain avoid slipping back into *Wandervogel* romanticism and a "populist" form of neo-Luddism, solutions "must be planned globally and implemented by administrative means." Habermas' response here is simply reactionary. Not that Habermas wants to go either backward or forward in time; rather, he essentially appropriates the *status quo* in industry and technics as given – as a datum; he has "entered into the strength" not merely of hermeneutics, systems theory, positivism, and the like, but of a dehumanizing gigantism that totally disempowers the individual, while designating "new social movements" as "defensive" and "petty bourgeois." The "logic" of this reasoning apparently does not trouble Whitebook, whose concern with "saving the subject" is as far removed from the reality of finding the subject as Habermas is removed from West Germany's lived social reality.

Happily oblivious to Habermas' reactionary adjustment to the *status quo*, Whitebook argues that I am so atavistic that I want to go *back behind* the modern division of labor. The possibility that one could want to go *forward beyond* the "modern division of labor" is simply not entertained by Whitebook. What renders his remark so objectionable is that only a few pages earlier, Whitebook mocks Marx's views on "cooperation" as "especially bizarre" and "misleading" for failing to recognize on the one hand that a highly rationalized modern or "sophisticated" division of labor constitues cooperation rather than "reginmentation," while on the other hand Marx believed that the factory, by virtue of this very regimentation, "would produce revolutionary consciousness!" Following this triumphant exclamation mark, Whitebook refers the reader to Lukacs' "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" in *History and Class*

Consciousness, a reference that is strangely lacking in pagination.[30]

Whitebook prudently ignores the fact that it is none other than "Bookchin" who has taken up this contradiction. Indeed, I have *emphasized* it and *criticized* it. By the same token, I raised a key question which Whitebook, again in bad faith, fails to discuss: "From what source are workers - indeed, all dominated people such as women, young and elderly people, ethnic groups, and cultural communities - to acquire the subjectivity that fosters self-hood? What technologies can supplant the hierarchical mobilization of labor into factories?"[31] Here I tried to go *beyond* the existing division of labor - not "behind" it - to one that is ecological and esthetic as well as individuated.

What is interesting here is the ide logical rationale that guides Whitebook's "critique" of Habermas. He is faced with three alternatives if he wishes to "save the subject" rather than lose it completely. Either he must go "*behind* the modern division of labor" or settle down with Habermas and live with it by planning it in accordance with a vaporous sociology of organization, or go *beyond* the modern division of labor." Whitebook follows none of these alternatives. If he goes "*behind* the modern division of labor," he will become a Paleolithic food-gatherer or maybe a contented craftsman dependent on the "modern division of labor" for the very tools he uses. If he goes "*beyond* the modern division of labor," he

[30] *Ibid*., p. 80 fn. I say "strangely" because [Printing Illegible – TMB 4.4.98] with such contradictions. And surely enough, he does not. While Lukacs' section presents an admirable account of the impact of industrial rationalization on the worker (see pages 88-91), he nowhere juxtaposes the dehumanizing function of industrial rationalization with its presumably "revolutionary" function in producing a working class that is "disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of capitalist production itself," to use Marx's writings. See Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, 1971).

[31] Murray Bookchin, "Self-management and New Technology," *Telos*, 41 (Fall 1979), pp. 5-16.

tolerable if they acknowledge the "symmetrical" status of a substantive interpretation of institutions. Actually, Habermas' "formal procedures" permeate his entire theoretical universe, including institutions. Taken as a whole, this universe consists of a highly formalized theory of procedures that rest in part on a "meta-norm" called "ideal-speech situation" which, as Benhabib observes, defines "the immanent presuppositions of theoretical discourse aiming at the attainment of truth."[36] We have no way of knowing that trite formalizations such as understandable utterances, truthful propositions, the sincerity of speech partners, and appropriateness of speech performances are in fact "internally and externally free of coercion," especially if these things have yet to be clearly defined and we can convince ourselves that a level of generalization based on communicative competence is adequate to resolve the aporias of critical theory.

What is most disquieting in this whole "graduate seminar" rigmarole is that Habermas forecloses the possibility of determining the *institutions* that will *materialize* the norms for an "ideal-speech situation" by presupposing that under existing conditions of constraints of discourse it is impossible to discursively formulate the very substantive details for Habermas' emancipatory ideals. Indeed, "Any meaningful discussion of these ideals," Benhabib observes,"would entail references to certain contingent and material aspects of human existence." Which leads us to into a magnificently quietistic if not theoretical impasse: "Habermas may concede that further material specification of norms would have to be based on the elimination of the constraints of discourse. But whether he intends to derive substantive material norms

substantive one comes back to haunt him toward the end of his article when he criticizes Habermas for failing to see the merits of the "old" Frankfurt School's substantive approach in dealing with individuality.

[36] Seyla Benhabib, review of McCarthy's *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, in *Telos*, 40 (Summer 1979), pp. 179-180.

Whitebook does not consider this possibility, except perhaps, ironically. With some justification, he points to my emphasis on technical development and post-scarcity as evidence of my "latent Marxism." But he completely glosses over the role I impute to alternative technologies as catalysts in furthering individuality and autonomy. For my own part, I have modified my views on "post-scarcity" in the sense that *capitalism* has given "scarcity" a *unique* character.[34] The commodification of the world which Lukacs feared in the 1920's has produced a fetishization of needs, not only of commodities. The need for material abundance is means to exorcise bourgeois notions of scarcity and "stingy nature" from our conceptual framework, indeed, to establish the right to *choose* needs as the only *libertarian* way of demystifying need itself and thereby rendering it rational, not as a "normative" second material force that seems to control us. In this regard, the technological "telos" Whitebook imputes to me is grossly misleading.

The crux of the Habermas problem is the shift from a substantive to a procedural tradition in social theory - a shift from Hegel and Marx's phenomenological strategy to the formal strategy so much in vogue in the academy. Whitebook finds this laudable evidence of Habermas' "modernity," although the "night school" world of socialism might have used a less favorable and more juicy term. "Whereas Marcuse, for example, employs a substantive doctrine of true and false needs, Habermas appreciates that, once the right to subjective freedom has been recognized, an appeal to substantive doctrine of needs is illicit," Whitebook declares. "His approach is therefor *procedural*, that is, it has to do with formal procedures for adjudicating needs and abstains from discussing the substantive content of needs."[35] Habermas' "formal procedures" would be more

[34] See Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom*, *op.cit.*, pp. 68-69.

[35] Whitebook, "Saving the Subject," *op.cit.*, p. 87n. The praise that Whitebook visits on Habermas for opposing a procedural approach to Marcuse's

risks the possibility of miring his reputation in anarchism - which may destroy his credibility with the community that shares his version of "critical theory." If he accommodates himself to the "modern division of labor" and settles down with the Habermas, the ecological perspective he acquired from "Bookchin" will become arid and possibly technocratic. His solution is simple: distortion.

What is intriguing about Whitebook's article are the number of questions it raises but does not answer. Whitebook places a Habermasian taboo on almost every aspect of his community that is suggestive of mutualism, possibly even cooperation, so that his notion of the "subject" is cast in such neurotically monadic terms that even "identification" or "symbiosis" smacks of Gemeinschaft in the pejorative sense of the term. "Autonomy" is conterposed to any sense of rootedness in a community: anyone who does not collapse into a tortured ego like Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov fails to qualify as "modernity's" candidate for an authentic subject.

This raises the other question of the superego. If "paternal authority" (which the democratic Athenian *polis* challenged to disembed its young citizens from parochial kinship ties) "creates a vacuum which is filled by outside society," are alternate "modes of socialization possible through which autonomy can be achieved without renouncing "'reason, reflection, and individuation' as norms, as some of our more avant-garde culture critics and feminist theoreticians more or less implicitly do"? Here, once again, Whitebook begs the question that he has a very demanding - and curiously unstated - notion of subjectivity, individuality, reason, reflection, even paternity that renders any alternate mode of socialization atavistic. The existence of a "vacuum" created by the decline of "paternal authority" is placed on a par with the renunciation of "reason, reflection, and individuation." Faced with this boiling issue, a "vacuum" where there was once a "superego." and invasive society where there was once a father, Whitebook moves on to problems of "narcis-

sism." But this problem cannot simply be kept dangling in the air. If "maternal authority" were to fill this "vacuum," would we create subjects who renounce "reason, reflection, and individuation"? Are "reason, reflection and individuation" linked with tortured personalities like Ivan Karamazov? Is his caring, "passive-receptive" brother Alyosha a mute dolt, the creature of a Gemeinschaft tradition like Gertrude in Goethe's *Faust*? Indeed, what would happen if a free, ecological society based on reason were to fill the vacuum created by the decline of "paternal authority" the way the Athenian democracy did when it tried to edge out the Bronze-Age agonistic and competitive sensibility of the patriarchal kinship group with a civic and cooperative sensibility? What if radical communities less erratic, unstable and purposeless than so many communes of the Gaskin's "Farm"? Whitebook would probably exploit these extremes at the expense of creatively imaginative alternatives which may already exist - even in this insane society.[32]

A case can be made for a conclusion that we followed a male-oriented social pathway, perhaps sharply departing at some remote time from a dialectic of individuation nourished by ecological differentiation to one nourished by domination. It is remarkable how close Horkheimer and Adorno came to an understanding of this forgotten past.[33] The development of subjectivity through domination rather than differentiation

[32] Some anarchist theorists like Paul Goodman have tried to advance creative alternatives to "growing up absurd" in contrast to constipated pseudo-Marxists like Christopher Lasch, whose vulgarization of the so-called "counterculture" and "contemporary cult of sensuality" justifies "paternal authority" and the monogamous family. Whitebook accepts Lasch's argument but lacks the forthrightness to adopt his conclusions. See Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd* (New York, 1956).

[33] I leave aside Marcuse's sentimental, often contradictory excursions into this problem, which he was all too quick to abandon in the 1970s. The essay "Man and Animal," which essentially closes the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, attains a level of development in critical theory and keeps faith with its emancipatory message such as few works of the Frankfurt School were to

placed the terrifying seal of domination on human history. That the "model of emerging individual is the Greek hero," as Horkheimer observes, the warrior whose calling card is "daring," self-reliance, and freedom "from tradition as well as the tribe," - these origins describe the ambiguities of individuality as we "normatize" them today rather than the triumph of individuality. From the start, the heroic ego was fragile because it was rootless, imperiled because it continually faced physical annihilation, dangerous in its capacity for destruction as well as creation. Glorious Germany, which gave us Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Goethe, Marx, Beethoven, and yes, Wagner, also gave us Hitler and Himmler, It is a problematic of the male's ascendency over a human evolution that precluded woman in society's image of the superego and yielded a vacuum that has replaced the warrior's spear and the sword by the impersonal killing power of the neutron bomb.

With the *ascent of capitalism*, nature becomes "stingy," but so does man - and so does the ego. The comradeship of the warrior's camp gives way to "possessive individualism," the "intersubjectivity" of accumulative competition, mean-spirited predation, and rationalized subjugation. Only remote traces remain today in shattered preliterate cultures and ghostly myths of an alternative pathways for social evolution in which personality and autonomy could have found rounded fulfillment as a result of mutualism rather than parasitism, harmony rather than antagonism, reconciliation rather than conflict. Social ecology, which was unknown to the Frankfurt School except in a very technical form, could have provided the mediations that would have spared nature philosophy and a naturalistic ethics from the stigma it acquired as a result of a static Hellenic ontology, National Socialist "folk philosophy" and Marxism's "diamat."

do. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York, 1972), pp. 245-255.