#### Society, Language, Difference

2. The Frankfurt School

#### Agenda

- 1. Benjamin at the border
- 2. Why did the masses desire fascism?
- 3. Introducing the Frankfurt School
- 4. To hell with the Enlightenment
- 5. The Culture Industry
- 6. One Dimensional Life







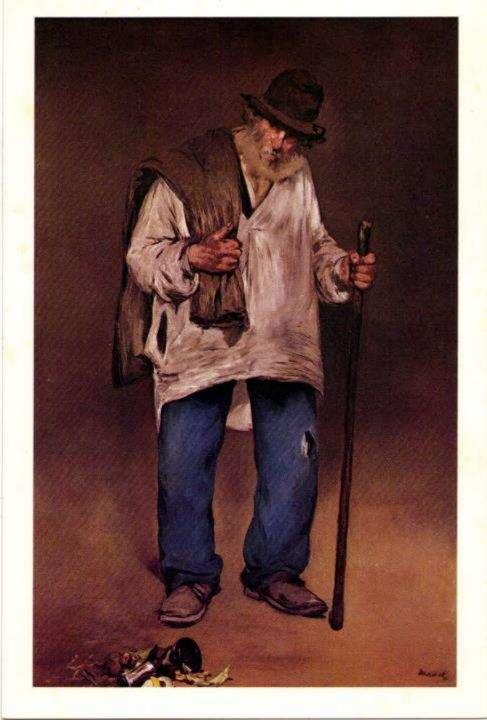


'This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.'

'There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism'.

- Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* 





'Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made,
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange.'

Shakespeare, The Tempest

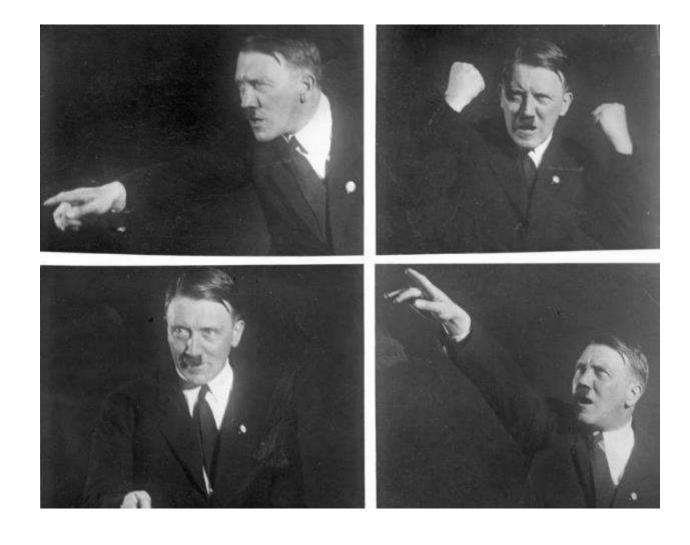
## 2. Why did the masses desire fascism?









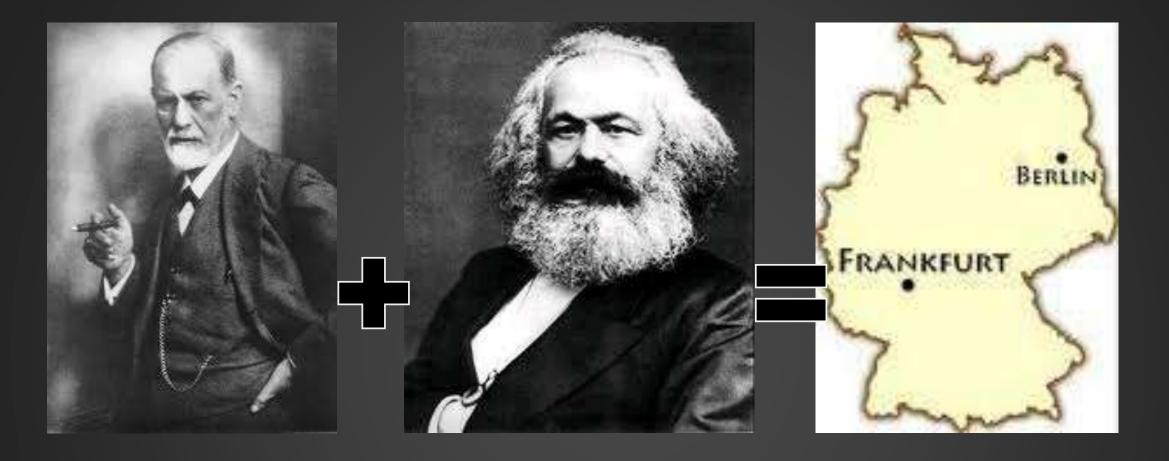


### 3. Introducing the Frankfurt School

## The Lives of the Frankfurt School STUART JEFFRIES

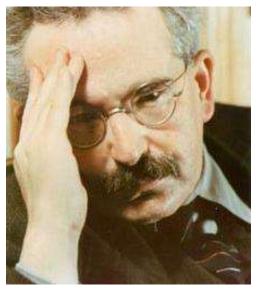
'In view of what is now threatening to engulf Europe and perhaps the world, our work is essentially designed to pass things down through the night that is approaching: a kind of message in a bottle.'
- Horkheimer

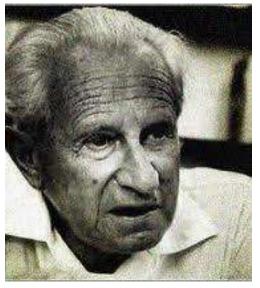




### The Frankfurt School

- Why had socialist revolutions failed in the West?
- How had capitalism become so popular?
- Did fascism arrive from nowhere, or did it have deeper historical roots?









#### The Frankfurt School

- Founded in 1923, Weimar Germany
- The 'first generation' of Frankfurt School: Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, among others.
- Second generation: Jurgen Habermas, Axel Honnett – drift away from Marxism

## What

- Horkheimer 1937: "Traditional and Critical Theory"
- A critical theory differs from a traditional one to the extent that it seeks human 'emancipation from slavery'
- Acts as a 'liberating ... influence ... to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers' of human beings.
- Explanatory, practical and normative
- Practical aim of social inquiry: transform capitalism into 'real democracy'

# What

- With totalitarianism followed by the allpowerful Western consumer society after, do human beings have any agency nowadays?
- Some in the School became sceptical of the possibility of social transformation
- Fascism and modern capitalism both eliminate the space for freedom, while 'the limited freedom of the bourgeois individual puts on the illusory form of perfect freedom and autonomy' (Horkheimer)
- This was nothing new its roots seemed to go back to the  $18^{th}$  century...

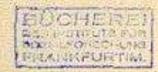
## 4. To hell with the Enlightenment!

MAX HORKHEIMER UND THEODOR W. ADORNO

#### DIALEKTIK DER AUFKLÄRUNG

PHILOSOPHISCHS FRAGMENTS





QUERIDO VERLAG NV. AMSTERDAM 'Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters.

Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity.'

#### Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947)

- Enlightenment thinking was meant to emancipate humanity, right?
- · Kant: 'Man's release from his self-incurred immaturity'
- · ... Achieved through developments in science and technology, which would make man 'master of nature' (Francis Bacon)
- A&H: What if, instead of freeing humanity, technology has been used to dominate both nature and humanity?

#### Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947)

- Not against "Enlightenment" at all but rather, focused on its self-destructive tendencies
- Rather than being liberating and progressive, reason has become controlling
- ... We are tending toward a 'totally administered society'
- Reason is used instrumentally to create ever more pervasive networks of administrative discipline and control
- Reconstruction of the history of Western reason in which calculative, instrumental reason drives out the utopian content of universal solidarity.

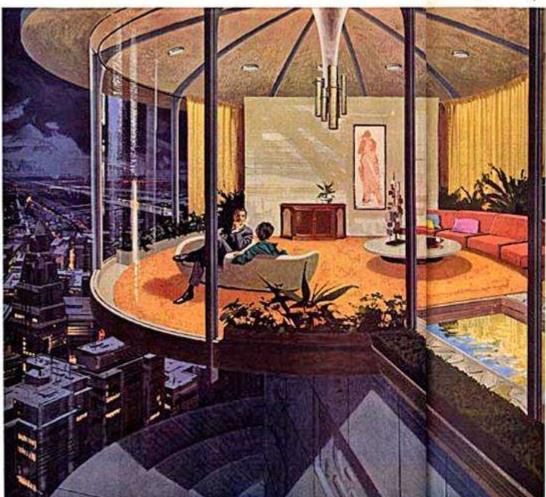


#### Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947)

- The sailors stop their ears with wax so they can continue the work of rowing their ship, just as modern labourers discipline themselves, repressing their sensuality and desire for gratification in order to keep working.'
- Odysseus is the Enlightenment bourgeois subject who has domesticated not just Nature, but himself.
- 'Odysseus is the first bourgeois hero one whose treacherous journey involves risks that justify profits, one who uses reason, trickery, self-renunciation and self-discipline to survive.'

## 6. The Culture Industry

#### FRESH FROM MOTOROLA ... hew leader in the lively art of electronics



#### Dynamic Sound Focus-the latest refinement in Motorola Stereo Hi-Fi



and "prosence" to stero sound that should stellabe the eur of one autophile,

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#### Chevy can match your

These new Chevrolets are the peoplepleasingest cars you'll find anywherefrom their easier-to-park new size to their easier-to-pack new luggage compartment. You can pay a whale of a lot more, but you just won't find any car that caters to your comfort and convenience in more ways than a '61 Chevy!

- I. Biscayne 4-Door Sedan-These new Biscaynes are the thriftiest full-sized Chevrolets, offering big-car room at small-car prices.
- 2. Impala Spart Sedan-Like all Chevies, these elegant Impalas have wider doors, higher, more comfortable seats.

#### '61 CHEVROLET



3. Corvair 900 Monza Club Coupe



4. Corvair Lakewood 500 4-Door Station Wagon

#### personality . . . and then some!

And where could you find a spunkier, 3. Corvair 900 Monza Club Coupe-ultrathriftier, happier car than Chevy's new Corvair? Your Chevrolet dealer's onestop shopping center has a whole crew of them for you to pick from - wagons, sedans, coupes-and every one's a pure delight.

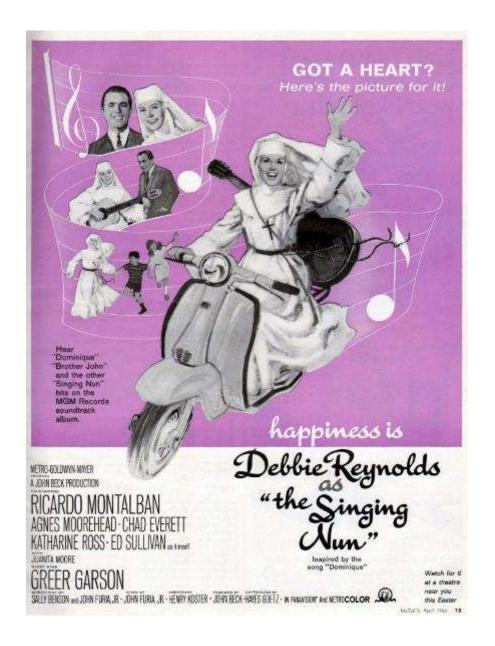
- comfortable bucket-type seats, nearly 12% more luggage space up front.
- 4. Lakercood 500 Station Wagon-a likable wagon with a lockable trunk. In all, up to 68 cubic feet of cargo space.
  . . . Chevrolet Division of General Motors, Detroit 2, Michigan.

**CHEVY CORVAIR** 



#### The Culture Industry

- · 'We had the freedom to choose what was always the same'
- Adorno and Horkheimer: consumption is used to pacify, coerce and manipulate the masses
- 'personality scarcely signifies anything more than shining white teeth and freedom from body odour and emotions'
- 'The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.'
- 'Every morning, to earn my bread, I go to the market where lies are bought. Hopefully I take my place among the sellers.' (Brecht)





#### EDIE ADAMS - JACK OAKIE - JACK KRUSCHEN PRICE D. STAMET SHAPED - IN PAIL HENRING - INVENTA DELBERT MARKS - STAMET SHAPED - IN ARTHS MELDER DOLLAR TRAINE TO SHEPED - IN PAIL HENRING - INVENTA DELBERT MARKS - IN-INVENTA STAMET SHAPED - IN ARTHS MELDER DOLLAR TRAINE TO SHEPED - IN THE SHAPED - THE PRINCIPLES. IN - THAIR TRAINEIUS IN, TOUR - I SHAPED - INVENTAMENTAL PRINCIPLES. - THE PRINCIPLE - IN THE SHAPED - IN THE PRINCIPLES. IN - THAIR TRAINEIUS IN, TOUR - I SHAPED - INVENTAMENTAL PRINCIPLES. - THE PRINCIPLE - IN THE SHAPED - IN THE PRINCIPLES. IN - THAIR TRAINEIUS IN, TOUR - I SHAPED - IN THE SHAPED - IN THE PRINCIPLES. - THE PRINCIPLE - IN THE SHAPED - IN THE PRINCIPLES. IN - THAIR TRAINEIUS IN, TOUR - I SHAPED - IN THE SHAPED - IN TH

#### The Culture Industry

- All Hollywood films follow the same top-down formula
- 'As soon as the film begins, it is quite clear how it will end, and who will be rewarded, punished, or forgotten. In light of music [popular music], once the trained ear has heard the first notes of the hit song, it can guess what is coming and feel flattered when it does come'
- A boring, predictable, materialistic and unchallenging culture industry had depoliticised the working class, by limiting its horizons to political and economic goals dictated by oppressive and exploitive capitalist society.

#### Donald Duck

They hammer into every brain the old lesson that continuous friction, the breaking down of all individual resistance, is the condition of life in this society.

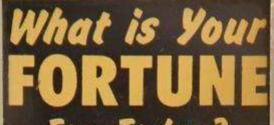
Donald Duck in the cartoons and the unfortunate in real life get their thrashing so that the audience can learn to take their own punishment.'











For Today?

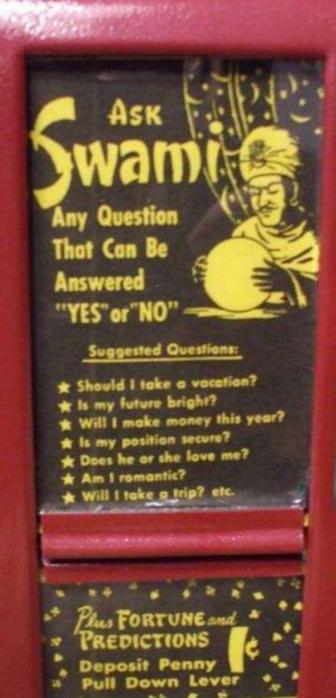
Answer Here



Your Character Readings

-AND-

Predictions
About Your Future



### Adorno vs Popular Culture

- Adorno's study of newspaper astrology columns: 'promoting conventional, conformist and contented attitudes'
- 'Fun is a medicinal bath. The pleasure industry never fails to prescribe it. It makes laughter the instrument of the fraud practised on happiness. Moments of happiness are without laughter ... In the false society laughter is a disease which has attacked happiness and is drawing it into its worthless totality.'
- 'AM is for work, reality and the ego principle, Adorno noted; PM is apparently for 'the instinctual urges of the pleasure principle'. ... But the pleasures of the PM are only justified if they ultimately served the 'ulterior purpose of success and self-promotion'. As a result, pleasure itself becomes a duty, a form of work'

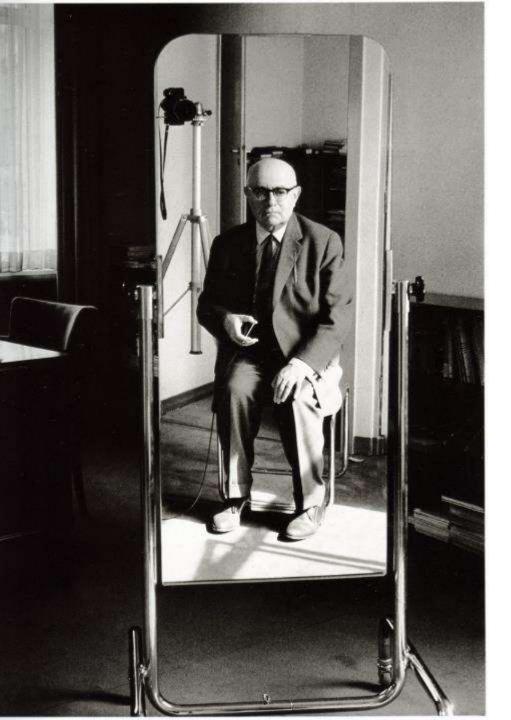


- Why do you shop?
- Who wants you to shop?
- How does advertising work?
- Advertising works not by fulfilling our needs, but creating new desires



'Our people have been transformed into constantly moving happiness machines.'

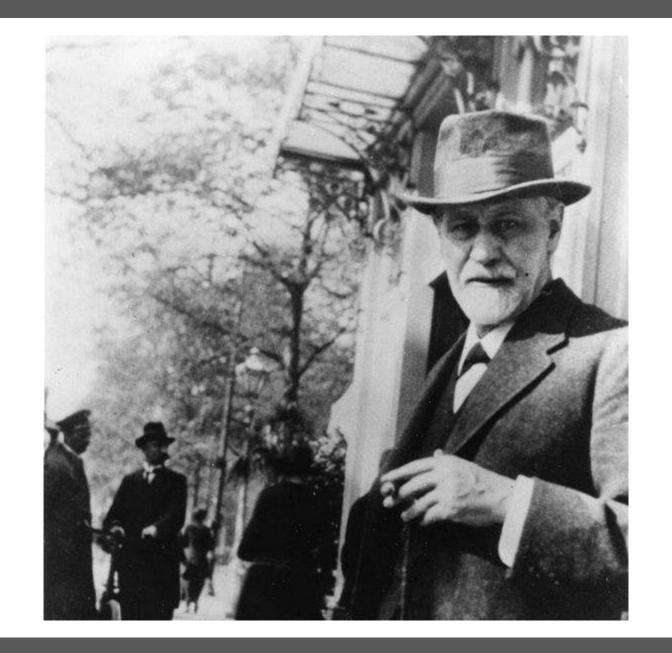
- Herbert Hoover



'mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism'

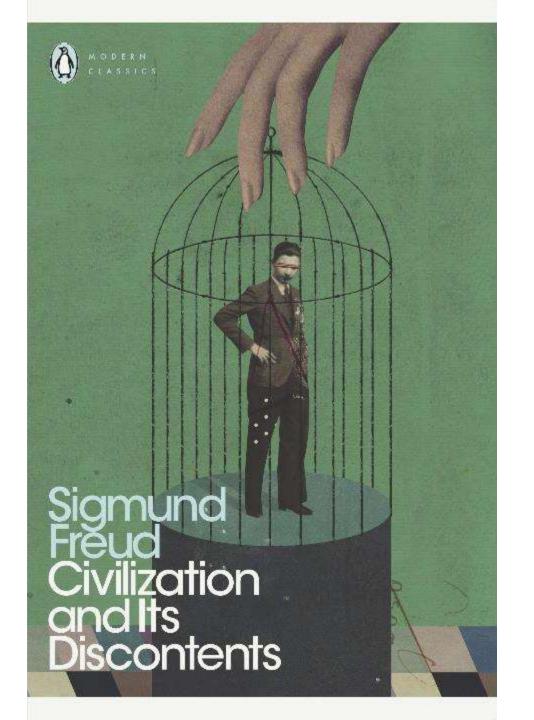
Adorno and Horkheimer

# 7. One-Dimensional Life



# Freud: the repressive hypothesis

- Unconscious forces drive most of our behaviour, not reason
- Infantile libido and pleasure-seeking must inevitably be repressed (morality)
- Human nature is inherently violent and aggressive
- The sublimation of our primal instincts 'makes it possible for higher psychical activities scientific, artistic or ideological to play such an important part in civilised life' (Freud)
- The pleasure principle and the reality principle



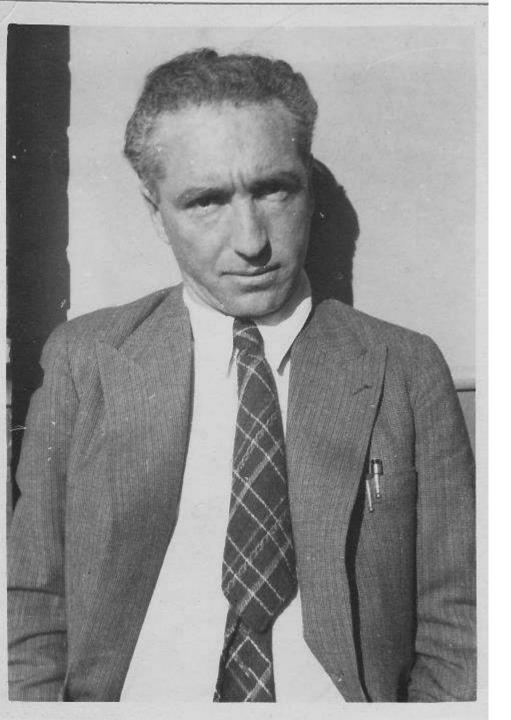
'One feels inclined to say that the intention that man should be 'happy' is not included in the plan of 'Creation.'

What we call happiness in the strictest sense comes from the (preferably sudden) satisfaction of needs which have been dammed up to a high degree, and it is from its nature only possible as an episodic phenomenon

... We are so made that we can derive intense enjoyment only from a contrast and very little from a state of things. Thus our possibilities of happiness are already restricted by our constitution.

Unhappiness is much less difficult to experience.'

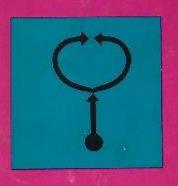
- Civilization and its Discontents



#### Wilhelm Reich

- Against Freud, human nature is inherently peaceful, loving, and affectionate.
- Rather than repression and redirection of the primary drives (sublimation) being necessary for peaceful coexistence ...
- Such repression was the cause of violent and pathological tendencies in humans.
- As our primary (pleasure-seeking) drives become chronically unsatisfied, we develop secondary drives
- · Money, fame, the sports car, a new dress or suit
- The sexualisation of popular culture actually involves a deeper repression of our sexual nature

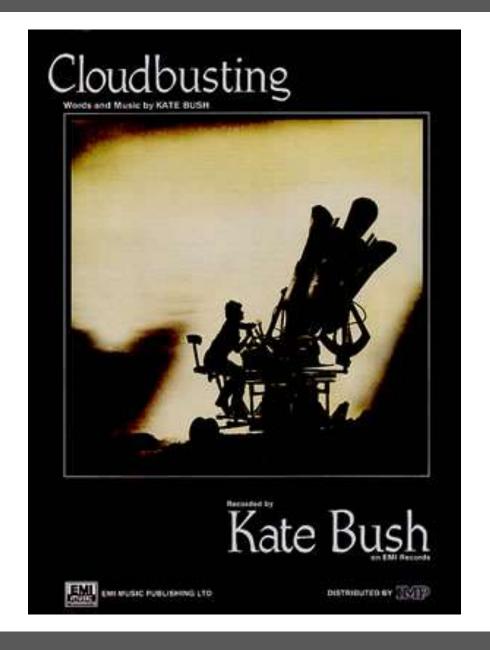
# Wilhelm Reich



THE MASS
PSYCHOLOGY OF FASCISM

a condor book









- Like Freud: some basic repression of our instincts was necessary
- But there also exists 'surplus repression', above what is necessary to keep society functioning, which feeds into the 'performance principle'
- Since Hegel, philosophers had defined human identity in terms of production, action or non-alienated *work* e.g. Marx
- But doesn't this neatly coincide with the capitalist work ethic?

'The performance principle, which is that of an acquisitive and antagonistic society in the process of constant expansion, presupposes a long development during which domination has been increasingly rationalised

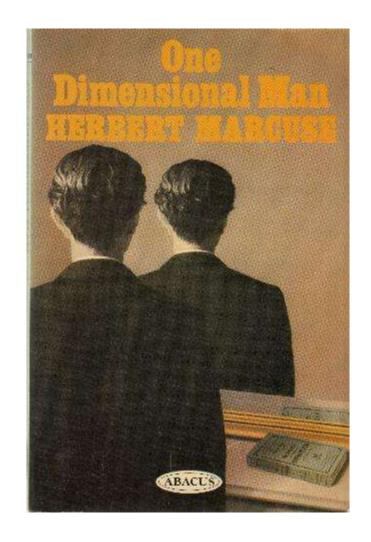
... For the vast majority of the population, the scope and mode of satisfaction are determined by their own labour; but their labour is work for an apparatus which they do not control, which operates as an independent power to which individuals must submit if they want to live.

And it becomes the more alien the more specialised the division of labour becomes.

Men do not live their own lives but perform preestablished functions. While they work, they do not fulfil their own needs and faculties but work in alienation'

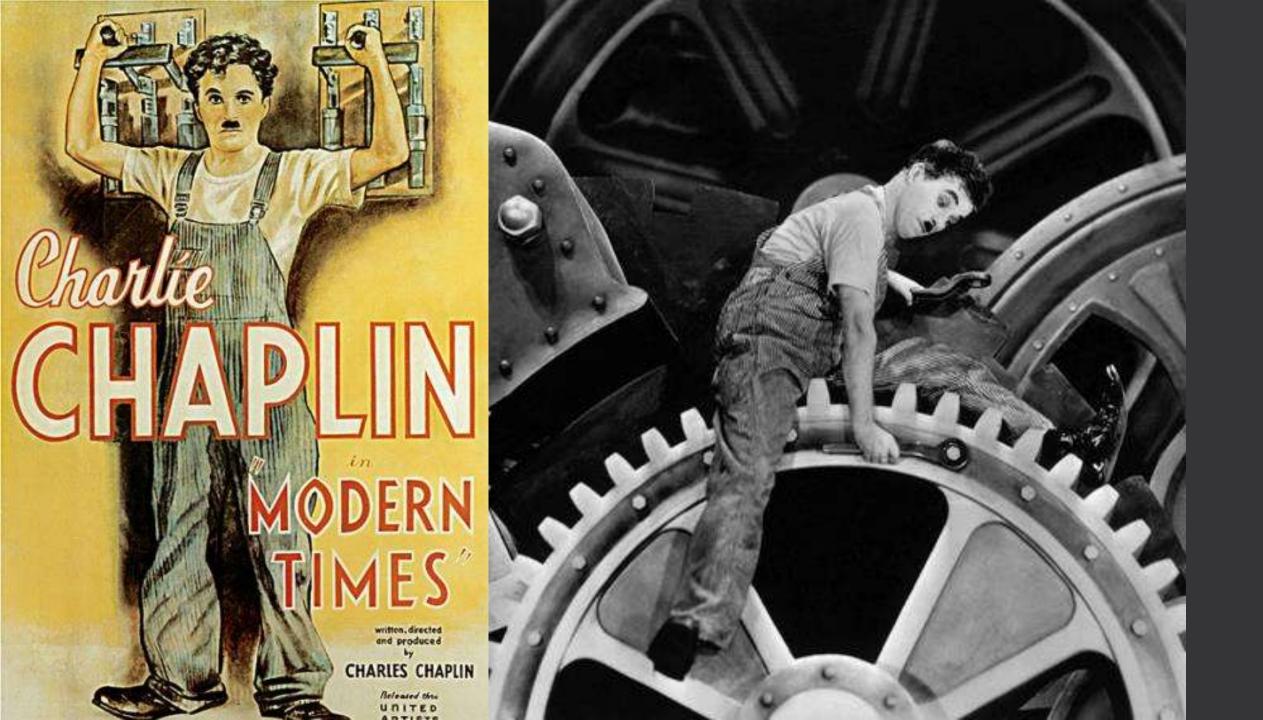
- Eros and Civilization (1955)





## Never had it so good

- Why hadn't the class struggle turned out as Marx predicted?
- In his 1964 *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse used Marx and Freud to explain how western capitalism had bought off workers' opposition through a consumer society, advertising, and co-opting dissent
- Freedom is repressed through a process of 'repressive desublimation' seemingly, we can get everything we want...
- False needs
- A deeper sense of self or non-alienation disappears...





'in one-dimensional society we mistake ourselves for our consumer durables.

The people recognise themselves in their commodities; they find their souls in their automobiles, hi-fi sets, split-level homes, kitchen equipment'

'The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood.

And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life.

It is a good way of life – much better than before – and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change.'

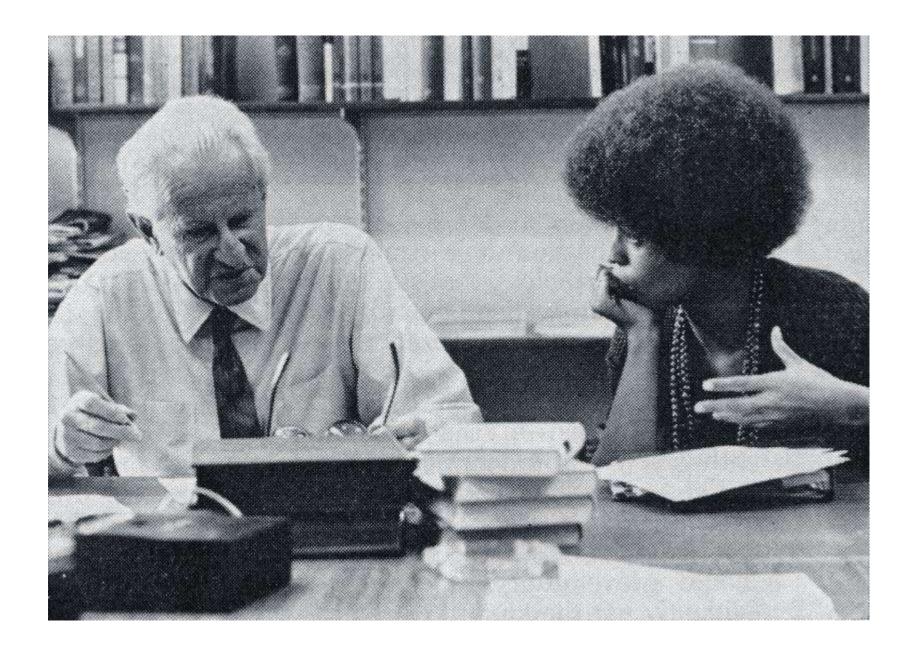


- If the old proletariat were no longer agents, who could fight back?
- The Arts: 'an elementary force which violates the rules of the game and, in doing so, reveals it as a rigged game'
- Vanguardism?
- Sublimation but liberatory...
- Outcasts and outsiders...



'the substratum of outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable.

They exist outside the democratic process; their life is the most immediate and the most real need for ending intolerable conditions and institutions'



'What is denounced as "utopian" is no longer that which has "no place" and cannot have any place in the historical universe, but rather that which is blocked from coming about by the power of the established societies ...

Utopian possibilities are inherent in the technical and technological forces of advanced capitalism and socialism: the rational utilisation of these forces on a global scale would terminate poverty and scarcity within a very foreseeable future.'

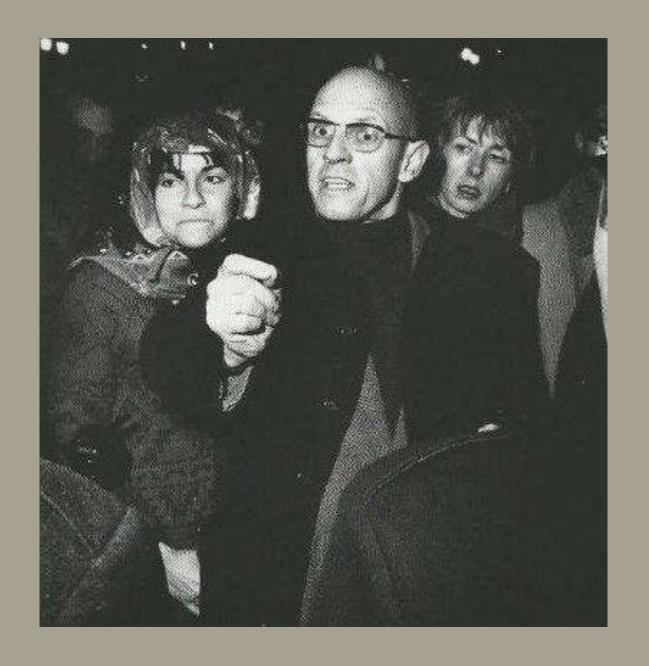
- Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (1969)





- 1. What does Marcuse mean by one-dimensionality?
- 2. Why was the social analysis of the Frankfurt School so critical of western capitalist societies?
- 3. How do we apply the analyses of the Frankfurt School today?

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May – 6pm



Week 3's reading:

Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* 

Also recommended: an interview, "Truth and Power"