A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF PROGRESS:

SALVAGING THE REPRESSED NORMATIVE CONTENT

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A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF PROGRESS: SALVAGING THE REPRESSED NORMATIVE CONTENT

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

A Critical History of the Concept of Progress:

Salvaging the Repressed Normative Content

This study revisits the concept of progress for the purpose of excavating and laying bare its normative content. The critical examination of its conceptual history enables me to delineate two ideal-types of progress which can be differentiated from one another based on their level of affinity with the utilitarian logic and instrumental rationality of market relations characteristic of modern bourgeois society. Auguste Comte's unilinear and scientific conceptualization of progress displays contiguity with the economic and social conditions following the dissolution of the ancien régime and works predominantly to contain the contradictions that posed a threat to the well-being of the bourgeois society. Tapping into the irrational elements of civil society, Kant posits two distinct areas of progress - moral and civilizational, the relations between which are shown to be marked with tension and contain a dynamic and dialectical dimension. Following this typological analysis, I explore Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of progress and do so by investigating his diagnosis of modernity as a period of nihilism. I show that Nietzsche rejects both Comte's and Kant's theorization of progress on account of their stark incompatibility with the model of agonistic individuality that Nietzsche judges to be the sole antidote for overcoming nihilism. In the final chapter, I direct my attention to Theodor Adorno's determinate negation of the concept of progress, which is argued to extend beyond the predominantly individualistic and abstract nature of Nietzsche's criticisms and develop a socially engaged and concrete idea of progress by sharpening its critical edge and rejuvenating its repressed emancipatory aspects.

ÖZET

İlerleme Kavramının Eleştirel Tarihi:

Bastırılmış Normatif İçeriği Kurtarmak

Bu çalışma ilerleme/terakki kavramının normatif içeriğini ortaya çıkarmayı ve içinde bulunduğumuz ve değişmez addedilen düzeni olumsuzlayacak kışkırtıcı yönünü yeniden etkin kılmayı amaçlıyor. Kavramsal tarihin eleştirel açıdan ele alınması ilerleme/terakki kavramına dair iki ideal-tip oluşturulmasına imkan sağlıyor. Bu ideal-tipler erken dönem piyasa ekonomisine hakim olan faydacılık düsturu ve araçsal rasyonalite ile kurdukları ilişkiler bakımından birbirinden ayrılıyor. Auguste Comte'un geliştirdiği tek-doğrultulu/çizgisel ve bilimsel kavramsallaştırmanın, *ancien régime* sonrası ortaya çıkan ekonomik ve sosyal şartlarla yakın ilişki kurduğu ve burjuva toplumunun geleceğini tehdit eden çelişkileri zapt etmeye çalıştığı görülüyor. Diğer ideal-tipi oluşturan Immanuel Kant'ın çift-katmanlı ilerleme teorisi ise menfaat ve çıkar ilişkilerinin baskın olduğu modern toplumun gayri ahlaki ve irrasyonel yönlerini açığa vuruyor. Bu eleştirel yaklaşımın neticesinde karşımıza ahlaki ilerleme ve medeniyetsel ilerleme şeklinde iki katmanlı bir yapı ortaya çıkıyor. Katmanlar arasındaki ilişkide ortaya çıkan gerilim ise Kant'ın teorisine dinamik ve diyalektik bir nitelik kazandırıyor. Bu tipolojik analizin akabinde Friedrich Nietzsche'nin ilerleme/terakki fikrine getirdiği eleştiriyi nihilizm tartışması yoluyla inceliyorum. Tarihin yorumlanmasında teleolojik yaklaşımları reddeden Nietzsche, ilerleme/terakki fikrinin Tanrı inancında zuhur eden çileciliğin kalıntısı olduğunu öne sürüyor. Çileciliğin tarihe içkin bir yapıya büründüğünü belirten Nietzsche, nihilizmi aşmak için gerekli gördüğü agonistik birey tipiyle uyuşmazlığını öne sürdüğü Comteçu ve Kantçı ilerleme/terakki düşüncesini külliyen reddediyor.

Çalışmanın son bölümünde Theodor W. Adorno'nun ilerleme/terakki fikri karşısında "belirli olumsuzlama" (*bestimmt Negation*) yöntemine sadık kalarak geliştirdiği kritiği inceliyorum. Adorno'nun eleştirisinin Nietzsche'nin soyut ve bireyci reddiyesinin reddiyesine tekabül ettiğini vurguluyor, bu minvalde ilerleme/terakki fikrinin normatif içeriğinin yeniden canlandırıldığını ve kavramın kendi tarihi gelişimi süresince baskılanan olumsuzlayıcı yönünün sosyal değişim talebini seslendirecek bir biçimde canlandırıldığını savunuyorum.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Progress is possibly one of the most confounding concepts in the entire vocabulary of modernity. Gaining ascendency during the second part of the eighteenth century and dominating the discourse of bourgeoning sciences right until the very end of the Great War, the nature of its decline is bewildering and tragic, such that to advocate progress in the twenty-first century has become tantamount to a curious anachronism if not delusional optimism. Indeed, it is quite commonplace to encounter statements which speak of the wrongness of the idea of progress with such a cool complacency that it seems as if they are merely reiterating the banally obvious. Wallace (1981) asserts, for instance, that "'progress' is no longer the watchword, the unquestionably beneficial goal and process that it once was in the United States and the West. The European intelligentsia shed its illusion about progress some time ago, under the impact of world wars, the 'Final Solution', etc." (p.63).[1] Discarding the notion of progress, then, is equated with liberating oneself from the dominion of illusions. Yet one may inquire contra Wallace whether dispensing with the illusion of "progress" contributes to the dismantling of the very forces and structures which served to refute the idea of progress in the first place. The positivistic attitude of the social sciences, for which the primary objective has always been the categorization and unadulterated grasp of what is existing and real, naturally leads to the renouncement of the task of changing social and political injustices. On the other hand, it is difficult to overlook the curious fact that while the idea of progress disappears from our conceptual

[1] This is a view shared by Madore (2011) in her book on Kant's understanding of evil. She contests Kant's affirmation of the idea of progress by referring to the bloody history of the twentieth century and asks accordingly: "Haven't these events taught us there is no idea of a steady development in history aiming towards the realization of an ultimate moral goal?" (p. 136). I will visit this argument in Chapter 2.

lexicon, we continue to live in the midst of rapid and uninterrupted technological progress that continues to radically alter the nature of social relations. It should be stated from the outset that one particular question will be my principal guide in this thesis, illuminating the path and questions throughout: How should the so-called untenability of progress, and in conjunction with this conviction, the very ban imposed on the concept of progress, be interpreted in the context of unprecedented technological advances achieved in the last two decades?[2] Besides, it does not really seem feasible to speak of the general enervation of ideals traditionally interlaced with the concept of progress. Indeed, a recently published book by Lauren Berlant (2011) demonstrates that fantasies of a good and happy life – political and social equality, vouchsafed liberties, durable intimacy – are persistently reproduced, irrespective of the structural and systematic impediments raised by liberal-capitalist societies against their actualization. In this respect, it seems highly questionable to assume that the fading popularity of this concept is accompanied by a revolutionary transformation of consciousness; a solid comprehension of the historical nature of this concept and its ideological entanglements continues to be absent.

It is my contention that arguments propounding the untenability of progress as an idea stand out rather awkwardly in light of the contemporary enthusiasm for technological progress, which is being peddled and indefatigably pursued by the official organs of the state and private conglomerations alike.[3] This confusion or contradiction strikes me as the outcome of a *process of decoupling* which I shall

[2] Here, I simply allude to the potential and actual benefits of developments in sectors related to health and energy, as well as groundbreaking advances achieved in the field of communication. I grant that defining these historically embedded changes as "advances" reveal my presumptions regarding the worth and value of technological progress. Notwithstanding the inner susceptibility of these developments to utter degeneration (as can be observed in the state of "social media" for example), I think that *in itself* technological progress reveals the astounding depths of human imagination and can provide the material infrastructure essential for the betterment of social and economic conditions on this planet. In this respect, the problem with technology does not stem from technology *per se*, but rather from the ways how it is handled, utilized and even propagated.

[3] See the footnote above.

attempt to bring into the foreground in this thesis. Roughly from the middle of the eighteenth century until the end of the second world war, the progress of material or technological forces was dovetailed, to a lesser or higher degree, with the progress of humanity, which entailed the transformation of social and political structures in harmony with the inherent dignity and autonomy of human beings. It is not far-fetched to assert that the issue of progress was never entirely limited to the optimistic celebration of the benefits of technical and technological developments but also possessed, either explicitly or in an indirect way, a critical undercurrent addressing social and political shortcomings and problems. This conceptual decoupling, which has gained impressive momentum with the end of the Second World War, occurred simultaneously with the naturalization of technology and its seamless integration to liberal-capitalist society for its very expansion and consolidation.[4] Effectively insulated from the demand of more humane social conditions and alleviation of deep-seated contradictions, the rate of technological development *tout court* has been taken as an index of human development and forced to play an increasingly instrumental function as a subfield of "race" and "competition" between antagonistic global powers. Indeed, it would hardly have been possible for the conceptual unity of progress to sustain itself in the wake of the rigid demarcation of the world into two antagonistic camps – NATO vs. the Warsaw Pact – where history appeared to be

[4] In this case, the naturalization of technology and technological progress broadly refers to the way in which it is taken as an "exogenous force influencing society rather than an expression of changes in culture and values" (Feenberg, 2010, p. 8). In other words, the process of naturalization effectively insulates technological progress from the inner contradictory developments occurring in society, thereby paving the way for the codification of technology as an "extrapolitical" domain. Andrew Feenberg rightly contests this viewpoint and points out to the fact that political democracy has come to a stage where it is overshadowed by the tremendous power and privileges "wielded by the masters of technical systems" (p. 5). Hence, the *naturalization* in question connotes the way in which technological rationality can operate as a form of hegemony and a means to profit and power while enabling the exemption of the agents of technical systems from responsibility sharing. One of the immediate consequences of this situation is nothing other than the transformation of technology into an appendage of market economy, at the expense of the intensified misery of socially and economically destitute masses.

stuck in a "frozen dialectic" with imminent destruction lurking in the horizon (Thompson, 1994, p. 364). With the naturalization of technological progress, the plea for the attainment of genuine human happiness was forced to transform into abstract wish statements mediated and reproduced by the various components of the liberal-capitalist system.

All things considered, a serious engagement with the notion of progress strikes us as more expedient than ever. This is especially the case if one observes the fact that most academic studies concentrating on the idea of progress were first and foremost engaged to ascertain its conceptual origins. Some scholars preferred to approach it as an exclusively modern notion, whereas others adopted a more genealogical approach and sought to excavate its Judeo-Christian origins.[5] Notwithstanding the contributions of these discussions for a comprehensive understanding of what modernity means in itself and for us, they were ultimately historiographical in nature and thus offered only a partial insight into the phenomenon of progress. The main objective of this thesis is therefore to address this shortcoming by analyzing the contiguity of the idea of progress with the rules and forces of commercial society, scrutinizing at the same time its disciplinary and regulatory functions over human temporality. This study aims to show that, notwithstanding the effective neutralization of the concept of progress achieved by the process of conceptual decoupling, the emancipatory/normative content of this idea can still be salvaged by analyzing the history of this concept. I shall argue that the concept of progress continues to bear this content only in a repressed form, meaning that it can only be seized once the ideological integuments concealing its

[5] Among those who have discerned a conceptual continuity or affinity between progress and the idea of providence, see Dawson (1931); Löwith (1949); Tuveson (1949). For the literature advocating the novelty of the concept of progress and its embeddedness in modernity, see Todd (1924); Bury (1955); Doren (1967).

truth content are peeled away. Before elucidating in detail the plan and content of this study, it is suitable to commence by surveying the literature on the subject at hand.

1.1 Progress and *Begriffgeschichte*

Iggers notes that it would be a futile attempt to search for a single non-historical and formal definition of progress, especially if one bears in mind the impact of geographical differences and the long span of time since its dissemination across Europe. Indeed, this fact alone requires us to treat each and every theory of progress in relation to its concrete social, political and intellectual context (Iggers, 1982, p. 43). It is neither feasible nor is it strictly my intention to cram into this limited space an entire chronology of a single concept, and to trace its historical development in the fashion of history of ideas. Given the semantically rich nature of this concept, therefore, it seems absolutely necessary to circumscribe what I intend to denote by progress. This could be achieved by heeding Keohane's thesis, according to which it is fairly viable to make a typological differentiation between the conceptions of progress during the seventeenth century and its formulation throughout the eighteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the idea of progress was predicated upon the philosophical rupture instantiated by the groundbreaking theories of Descartes and Bacon, where the cultivation of proper methods of science was associated with the overcoming of moral degeneration and the reestablishment of humankind in its original condition (Keohane, 1982, pp. 29-32). In other words, the ability to control nature by discovering its laws became the yardstick of progress, a task enjoined above all to the scientist who will demonstrate by his works the rationality of the world and the privileged status of mankind. As we approach the end

of the eighteenth century, however, the idea of progress starts to acquire the form with which we are familiar, starting to be articulated in relation to social advancement and evoking a more rational organization of society from education to legislation and economics to statecraft (Keohane, 1982, pp. 33-38).[6]

The connection between the rise of the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century and the growing popularity of the idea of social progress has been studied intensely and does not need to be reiterated here. Suffice it to note at this point that the incorporation of the bourgeoisie into the various departments of state management (bureaucracy) was as crucial as the efforts of the *philosophes* for promoting the mission of restructuring social totality in accordance with the dictates of reason (Engels, 1968, pp. 400-402; Sorel, 1969). It was not only the *philosophes* but also eminent statesmen such as Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot who advocated for the limitation and revocation of privileges reserved for particular estates, or called for the revocation of institutions that disseminated superstitions and played an active role in the unnecessary expenditure of social resources (Nisbet, 1975, pp. 214-215). Equally important here is the intellectual commitment of the advocates of progress to the ethos of their seventeenth century counterparts in England and France. The possibility of social progress was strictly predicated upon the proper implementation of empirical sciences, requiring the amassment of a posteriori knowledge and the popularization of science as a means of charging philosophy with a critical edge to

[6] One can perhaps make a rough differentiation between Britain and France, in the sense that whereas in the former the idea of progress was intricately tied to the science of economics, in France it was always accentuated within the context of heated polemics against the superstitions and dogmas of the Catholic French society, thus considered to be coeval with the implementation of scientific method and the accumulation of scientific knowledge. Of course, we do not intend to downplay here the role of the bourgeoning bourgeoisie in France, since the likes of Turgot and Condorcet prove abundantly enough that the progress of French society were adjudged, after a certain threshold, to be impossible without due changes in the administration and economic management of French society. Our point is rather to underline that the bedrock out of which the idea of progress stemmed forth and assumed prevalence should be seen as the result of different cultural, economic and political factors, lest we end up searching for a single, extra-historical essence of the concept.

expose the problematic aspects of society (Martin, 1954, pp. 44-47; Schwab, 1963, p. xxii). Voltaire did go as far as to equate the age of Louis XIV – dubbed by him as "the age which most nearly approached perfection" – with the age of the English, due to his reverence for the founding fathers of modern science that included Bacon, Newton and Locke, and the other scientists of the Royal Society in London (Voltaire, 1935, p. 353; Durant & Durant, 1965, pp. 366-371). With this interpretation, Voltaire was certainly hinting that an "immaculate" perfection of society had become a possibility only within the confines of scientific thinking. It was no longer to be a fantasy based on abstract thought and theological and theodicean speculations – a long-established trend he vigorously and satirically attacked in *Candide*.[7]

It is during the course of this alliance between science and progress that a critical junction in the field of historiography can be observed. George Nadel writes that the nature of historical studies until the eighteenth century was shaped by two complementary sources – Renaissance humanism and the inductive model devised by Francis Bacon. He notes that these studies could be subsumed under the category of *Ars Historica* on account of their displaying, to a lesser or greater extent, the following features: a) the utilization of examples, drawn mostly from Greco-Roman antiquity, in order to inspire or deter and to generate subjective principles of volition, b) adherence to exemplary history with motifs such as the "man of action", c) the persuasiveness of examples and the historian's critical role in revealing factual truth, d) the guiding role of history – history as *magistra vitae* (Nadel, 1964, pp. 304-305). The mode of historical thinking instigated by *Ars Historica* operated in tandem with

[7] It has been suggested by some scholars that Voltaire's philosophy in general was predominantly pessimistic, and therefore stood at the opposite pole of Leibnizian optimism. See for example: (Joubert, 1939, p. 314; Zerffi, 1882). The problem with this viewpoint is that it turns blind eye to the fact Voltaire was but only contesting a specific type of optimism, one that was founded on theological premises and theodicean accounts. As a matter of fact, it was no one other than Voltaire who mused in one of his poems: All may be well, that hope man can sustain, / All is well now; 'tis an illusion vain. The possibility that future may indeed be better than the present is therefore not discarded, but rather embraced by Voltaire. The mentioned poem is quoted in Wood, 2005, p. 197.

ethics inasmuch as the role of exemplary history was to counteract the moral predicaments that surfaced as a result of the ideological attenuation of Christianity. Indeed, it was in light of this problematique that a seventeenth-century Dutch scholar, Gerardus Vossius, argued history to be philosophy teaching by examples, whereas his contemporary Degory Whear went as far as to hold that the events of history could be used to construct all kinds of moral precepts (Nadel, 1964, pp. 309-310). The pressing task was the collection of facts and events (the motive being the cataloguing of examples) for pedagogic – didactic and practical – purposes, as instruction drawn out from the past in order to reveal in present the standard patterns of action and illuminate their possible consequences (Koselleck, 2004, pp. 26-31). Certainly, perusing history for the sake of enhancing ethical education was bound to assume the singularity of events rather than conceiving history holistically, that is, as a continuum on which its distinct parts are organically and dynamically related to one another. Elaborating on the temporal structure of *Ars Historica*, Reinhart Koselleck thus asserts that the historian's selective and pragmatic approach to history is predicated upon a predominantly *spatial* framework: An exclusive emphasis on the control of actions via the empirical observation of past events provides a highly limited perspective with regard to the passing of time, one that relates the present to the past by *static mobility* rather than in the context of the dynamic concatenation of events (Koselleck, 2004, p. 22). In other words, the framework of static mobility enables events to be interconnected to one another on the basis of similitude and analogy, rather than treating them in and with respect to the grand scheme of things.

It would not be implausible to designate this narrow perspective and limited applicability of *Ars Historica* as one of the factors precipitating its eventual decline starting with the eighteenth century. According to Nadel (1964), this decline is the

direct result of a series of novel and significant attempts at constructing a scientific system of ethics, which was to be based not on history but on the study of human psychology, on the investigation of man rather than the deeds of men (p. 312). However, Nadel's account provides us with only a single aspect of a much more revolutionary transformation, especially if we keep in mind the general atmosphere of social and political perturbations fanned by the disgruntlements of the bourgeoisie, and stimulated by the diatribes and persistent demands of the members of "the Enlightenment".[8] Notwithstanding the undeniable effects of the emergence of psychologism on the decline of exemplary history, it will prove more comprehensive to approach this transformation as a *sign* of an unprecedented historical awareness that is entangled with the unique socio-political characteristics of this age. Iggers (1982), for example, insists on the uniqueness of this new conception of history by referring to the major role attributed to notions such as development and process (p. 44). The celebration of the progressive development of intellect, culture and society amounts to a radical contestation of the temporal structure defined by Koselleck as *static mobility*, accepting in its stead a linear conception of history marked by dynamic growth and perfection. The impact of this historiographical turn cannot be understated insofar as

> [this] awareness of a theme [progressive development] changes the character of historical writings and introduces a developmental structure to the great narrative historical writings of the eighteenth century (for example, those by Robertson, Hume, and Gibbon) and distinguishes them from the cumulative approach of scholarly historiography until this time. (Iggers, 1982, p. 44)

[8] Using quotation marks here is not for the purpose of demonstrating my skepticism towards the idea of the Enlightenment but rather to underline how these thinkers sought to affirm their negative position vis-à-vis the existing order and self-consciously christened their epoch as the Age of Enlightenment. See (Fitzsimons, 1978, p. 447).

It has to be noted that by reiterating the novelty of the concept of progress and evincing its embeddedness in the socio-political environment of the eighteenth century, I am not endeavoring to make an ontological argument so as to emphasize the absolute modernity of this concept. In conjunction with Koselleck's metahistorical approach, my primary aim is to trace and unveil the historical conditions in which the semantic structure of progress undergoes fundamental changes (Triebe, 2004, p. ix, xv). As White (2002) puts it succinctly, Koselleck's conceptual history (*Begriffgeschichte*) should be construed as a "methodology of historical studies that focuses on the invention and development of the fundamental concepts (*Begriff*) underlying and informing a distinctively historical (*geschichtliche*) manner of being in the world" (p. ix). Hence, it does not seem feasible to pigeonhole a polysemous concept such as progress by defining once and for all its eternal, constant predicates and qualities. Koselleck does not seek to provide an answer to the hackneyed question, "What *is* progress?" Rather he asks in what ways the idea of progress envelope a certain historical manner of being in the world. Or what type of insight could the history of a particular concept (i.e. progress) offer us concerning the epochs in which it is conjectured, and especially about the unique elements and components of their historical imagination?

Approaching the subject in light of these questions, Koselleck avers that the conceptual history of progress could not be disclosed unless we heed the process of temporalization (*Verzeitlichung*) that had a sweeping impact on the perception of history. This transformation was precipitated by two equally important developments until finding its consummate form at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Concurring with Nadel and Iggers, Koselleck specifies the first to be the emergence of scientific methods, which not only discredited the authority of astrological

prophecies and spearheaded the separation of history into three exclusive categories (sacral, human and natural) but also ended the monopoly of theological speculations over the end-times (*eschaton*) of temporal history. The second development is the unassailable upsurge of absolutist states that were determined to buttress and expand their power by curbing the anachronistic principles embodied by various politically and religiously orthodox groups (Koselleck, 2004, pp. 15-17).[9] While the formerly sacralized *eschaton* was disenchanted by science and had been made part of cosmological observations and astronomical-mathematical studies, this also contributed to the secularization of the entire temporal continuum (*tempus*), which had hitherto been construed *in relation to* the hierarchical supremacy of God's ever-standing presence (*aeternitas*).[10] According to Koselleck, there were ethical as well as political repercussions that followed the increasing untenability of the Christian cosmology and the connection it presupposed between God's divine will and the created world. The displacement of the Christian provision of "end times" was compensated by the principle of rational forecast (*prognosis*) and neatly incorporated into the sovereign power of the state (Koselleck, 2004, p. 18). The future is no longer to be prefigured on the basis of dogmatic insights but to become a temporal domain of finite possibilities, that which is ultimately unforeseeable but could be predicted had the politician or historian engaged in the investigation of things and deeds that took place in the past (*res gestae*). In this respect, it could be argued that Koselleck

[9] A prolific figure symbolizing the more militant aspect of this obsession with "the end of times" was Thomas Müntzer (2000) whose Christian egalitarianism and radical engagement to millenarian politics constituted a direct and imminent threat to the sovereigns of the Reformation period. In his sermon to the princes of the Holy Roman Empire, this threat is in its most fervent form: "But for this use of the sword [the destruction of the godless] as it should and in the right manner, our dear fathers who confess Christ with us – that is, the princes – should do it. But if they do not do it, then the sword will be taken away from them, [Daniel 7:27] . . . I, together with pious Daniel, bid them not oppose God's revelation. But if they do take the contrary course, may they be strangled without any mercy" (p. 30).

[10] Elsewhere Martel (2012) similarly argues that "the 'transfer' to earth of the celestial kingdom and its sense of possibility and endurance, permitted the rise of the idea of sempiternity, the endurance of institutions and nations on earth and in time" (p. 21).

associates the emergence of *Ars Historica* with the growing suspicion towards the Christian Weltanschauung and seems to agree with Nadel regarding the ethical and pragmatic underpinnings of this novel historiography.[11]

Koselleck (2002) further argues that it is due to this prominent role of ethics that the concept of progress was initially utilized synonymously with perfection (*perfectio*) or profection, denoting the process in which one travels upwards, and by climbing the ladders of his spiritual journey reaches to his/her ownmost spiritual salvation (pp. 89-91). This promise is directed to the human being in the form of *vocation*, such that one is called to perform (*facere*) in order to become full, whole, complete (*per-ficere*) – perfect. Such an idea of perfection is predicated upon a hierarchical classificatory model that was conceived statically and spatially, argues Koselleck (2002), and therefore brings into foreground the effect of temporalization (*Verzeitlichung*), which fundamentally transforms the meaning of perfection (p. 89).[12] The predominantly moral and ethical schemata of progress and its vertical representation of perfection begins to be displaced by a unique sense of historical time, the value and meaning of which was to be drawn from "criteria which could only be derived from an understanding of history itself" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 119).[13]An expression of a goal, which requires a horizontal trajectory that could bind

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[11] The admiration of the ancients was intricately related with the endeavor to establish ethical models extraneous to traditional Christian hagiography. Although this was partly the offshoot of Renaissance humanism, the contemporaneous suppression of millenarian groups as well as the wide-ranging impact of empiricism should not be understated. Koselleck (2004) notes accordingly: "As millenarian expectations became more volatile, ancient history, in its role of teacher, once more forced itself to the fore. Machiavelli's call, not only to admire the ancient but also to imitate them, gave an edge to the resolution that one should continually draw benefit from history because of the unique manner in which it united exemplary and empirical thought. (p. 29).

[12] A similar conceptual transformation could be said to have happened in the Turkish equivalent of the concept of progress. The highly politicized concept of terakki (ترقّي), which signified the necessity of modernizing the Ottoman society and was charged with a national-historical mission, is etymologically related to the word raka (رقا), which means to climb up or to ascend and thus betrays its relatedness to moral/ethical perfection.

[13] According to Koselleck (2002), historical time takes place at an elusive present, between the past and future and requires a community for which exists a predetermined mode of experience mediated by the past as well as a specific horizon of expectation that emerges in the present towards future.

the present to the future, precipitates the marginalization of the term *perfectio* and starts to be articulated through the concept of *perfectionnement*, especially in order invoke the processual category of movement (Koselleck, 2002, 228). Koselleck offers the following comment on the structural co-dependence of this unique sense of historical time and the concept of progress:

> One could also say that progress is the first genuinely historical definition of time that has not derived its meaning from other areas of experience such as theology or mythical foreknowledge. Progress could be discovered only when people began to reflect on historical time itself. It is a reflexive notion . . . The discovery of temporalization, to use this ex post facto expression, was certainly at first an idea of the intellectual elite. But with it, new modes of behavior emerged that reached beyond the world of the estates, that is to say the ancien régime. We see an acceleration in the changes, which, since the advent of technology and industry, have provoked an additional and specific experience of time. (pp. 120-121)

This assiduous reflection on the meaning of historical time is also crucial given that it paves the way for a conception of history that is universal, yet which draws its universal quality from no other domain than itself. In 1714, decades before Voltaire published *The Age of Louis XIV,* François Fenelon already voices the necessity of offering a philosophical interpretation of history: "The principal perfection of history consists in order and arrangement. To attain such order, the historian must embrace and possess all of his history; he must see it entirely as a single perspective . . . [and] its unity must be shown" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 282 [fn. 43]). Koselleck's analysis proves that Fenelon's plea for imparting on history a unified structure was not at all a nugatory remark and had been sought to be realized by other historians with the transformation of distinct histories into a *collective singular*. With such

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Historical time, then, is to be construed dialectically, since on the hand there is a past that lives on (the state of experience = have-been) and on the other, a future that is to come (the state of expectation = will-have). This relationship between the two determines the nature of historical time, which is never constant and always subject to oscillations depending on a variety of socio-historical and political factors (p. 111).

transformation, every single event that had taken place in the past became a part of this superimposed totality, such that the historian no longer dwells on the isolated singularity of past events and then painstakingly demonstrates their relevance for the present. Rather, he focuses on how the particular relates to the whole, probing the value and meaning of past events, in short, their historical significance from the viewpoint of this unified temporal continuum. It no longer suffices to give a report of what and how a particular thing did happen at a certain time, that is, to offer a particular *historie* among other historical accounts. Subscribing to a much more holistic outlook, the historian aims to produce "History" (with a capital "H") in the form of *Geschichte*, systematically interconnecting events to generate a single coherent narrative (Koselleck, 2004, pp. 33-34). In light of White's (1975a) analysis, it could be stated that this narratology seals the victory of fiction over fact, *res fictae* over *res factae*, in the sense that the regulatory idea which enables the historian or philosopher to produce a genetic story form also allows the given set of data to be constructed and modified accordingly (pp. 1-42). As White (1975b) argues elsewhere, "the historian *shapes* his materials, if not in accordance with what Popper calls (and criticizes as) a 'framework of preconceived ideas,' then in response to the imperatives of narrative discourse in general" (p. 48).

While diachronic modeling and processionary narratives comprise what may be dubbed as progressive history writing, it is imperative to tap into the legitimizing effects of such historiography on the period that declares itself either to be the final stage or one of the last *états* of this grand process. While the idea of progress becomes a "modern" concept by either surmounting or forgetting its earlier field of signification, that is, surmounting its spatial organization by the admission of horizontal movement, and is taken more as linear movement that permeates the

entirety of history, such conception also affects the relationship between the juxtaposed units (epochs) of this holistic scheme (Koselleck, 2002, p. 221). This means in other words that the idea of progress functions additionally as a periodizing concept that enables what is new or contemporary to pose itself as superior over the epochs preceding it (Davis, 2008, pp. 77-102). It is on account of such historical self-consciousness and legitimization that Koselleck states how this period is conceived as one of *Neuzeit*, for the emergence of "new times," with which this narrative historically associates itself, constitutes the epochal boundary marking the definitive transition to modernity. Terms such as *saecula* or *Jahrhunderte* no longer merely subsume a collection of events organized chronologically but are taken as specific, authentic intervals in history. They have started to be construed as coherent chronological units loaded with unique and characteristic features and meaning, contributing in effect to the purpose of epochal organization and the periodization that bolsters the narrative of progress (Koselleck, 2002, p. 166). Koselleck (2002) states further that this process of periodization is accompanied by an increasing awareness of a unique mode of historical time, which bestows on the lived present a quality of unprecedented originality and superiority vis-à-vis the preceding epochs or centuries (p. 159).

With the prioritization of this narrative structure, the relationship between time and history also undergoes some vital transformations. As I showed earlier while discussing *Ars Historica*, it was not history but rather the possible *function* of history which was of supreme importance, given that the events were to be drawn out and studied on account of their empirical significance for the establishment of ethical examples and models. History was not to be overlooked since some events which took place in the past were still of relevance; they served, in other words as

guidelines, to which one may consult for determining his actions in the present. With the emergence of *Neuzeit*, however, "[history] no longer takes place in time, but rather through time. Time is metaphorically dynamicized into a force of history itself" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 165). At the same time, this dynamism severs the link between the past and present, a link that was so vital for the elucidation of proper ethical conduct. And this force of history has to be harnessed and sought to be controlled by those who are contemporaneous with this modern age (*Moderne*), for the novel vision of the future, which has become radically "open" and "without boundaries", testifies to the fact that "concepts no longer serve merely to define given state of affairs, but reach into the future" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 83; Koselleck, 2002, p. 121). According to Koselleck (2002), this theoretical engagement with the future could already be gleaned from the conceptual structure (*Begriffe*) of *Neuzeit* itself insofar as it anticipates (*Vorgriffe*) the radical newness of what is to come and thereby seeks to placate its disconcerting otherness (p. 168).

1.2 The repressed content

How, then, is the relationship between the present and future conceived with the emergence of *Neuzeit*? What does Koselleck mean by this "otherness" – the otherness of the future? Could we deduce from the narrative organization of progressive "history-writing" that it is latently in fear of what is to come, of what time can actually bring forward? Now, narrative (*narrare*), which derives from *gnarus*, "knowing" or to "know", already attests to the deep-seated dialectic at the heart of history-writing. Narrative moulds, shapes and bestows on history its particular form. Yet it is always already liable to be violently torn apart by the very content that is not yet existent, that has not yet come to be, namely, the radical

newness of future which cannot yet be known (*gnosis*). The question of progressive history-writing, or the idea of progress in general, therefore revolves around making a decision on the relationship of the present to the future. Considered historically, this enables us to view the conceptual history of progress in the framework of social and political reconfigurations following the dissolution of the *ancien régime*, and in the piecemeal consolidation of bourgeois society. In other words, the question of progress becomes inextricably tied with the fate of the commercial society, providing at the same time the temporal horizon, thanks to which bourgeois values served to justify their ends and interests.

In Koselleck's exposition, we witness that the universalization of the concept of progress, where it had slowly transformed from being limited to developments and advances in specific areas into a notion of highest generality, takes place roughly in the same time, marking the development and consolidation of bourgeois society. The universalization in question is shown to be one of the three overlapping phases as a result of which the concept of progress has emerged as a *collective singular* (Koselleck, 2002, p. 229). It is noted that with this semantic shift, the concept "condenses ever more complex experiences on a higher level of abstraction" (p. 230). It is also during this process of universalization that the emphasis on the agential role of humanity in instigating and sustaining a visible trend of cultural and moral progress is dropped in favor of what was only the vacuum or the milieu in which progress was conceived to take place, i.e. history. History is represented as having and being capable of exerting the force of its own, operating over and above the particulars. Put differently, subject and object switch their roles in such a fashion that the abstract notion of progress "assumes the leading role" and becomes the historical agent itself (Koselleck, 2002, p. 230). Again, it is due to this semantic transformation

of the concept of progress that not only initiative and potential affectivity of individuals but also that of "humanity" is rendered subservient to the function of this "historical agent". The temporal dynamic placed at the heart of human striving and affiliated with the general improvement of human condition is nicked away and starts to function as a law unto itself, growing ever more independent from what it originally served to embolden and spur into action.

In Koselleck's view, this last development marks the stage in which progress becomes "progress purely and simply", that is, a subject of itself. Not only does the concept become highly amenable, but it also grows increasingly susceptible to ideological appropriation, so much so that Koselleck adjudges it to have turned into a "catchword" at the disposal of diverse political factions including the Catholics with their nostalgic negation of the *Neuzeit*. He sums up the situation as follows:

> With this [the effects of progress turned into a collective singular], the term turned into a political catchword, a catchword that first had an effect on the formation of political parties and awareness, but that was eventually claimed more and more by all factions. Thus, since the nineteenth century, it has become difficult to gain political legitimacy without being progressive at the same time. (Koselleck, 2002, p. 230)

Unfortunately, Koselleck does not delve deeper on the structural relationship that he diagnoses between the discourse of progress and political legitimacy. Nevertheless, it is not far-fetched to deduce that the term political legitimacy here is not utilized to signify the legal-juridical basis of sovereignty but rather alludes to the prevalent capitalist-bourgeois system, with its characteristic penchant for further technological developments and dogged resistance against the extension and amplification of social and political rights. In this respect, it could be postulated that the universalization of the concept of progress could not have occurred unless the idea of progress was

enframed within the temporal horizon of a new set of technical, institutional and economic possibilities, effectuating this transition with which progress indeed becomes a historical agent independent of individuals comprising it.

Thus, comprehending the ways in which the mentioned ideological appropriation takes place requires an astute analysis of the ways in which the concept of progress becomes contiguous with the bourgeois society. Secondly, to decipher how progress develops into a "collective singular", it is of paramount importance to analyze the system of discursivity and probe the enunciative possibilities forming, molding and constantly modifying the concept of progress. Accordingly, I intend to focus in the first chapter of this thesis on Auguste Comte's positivistic conception of society, which is significant on account of its being the first systematic attempt to harmonize the idea of progress with the order of bourgeois society. I will show that in order to curb the negative forces that posed a potential threat for the well-being of bourgeois society, Comte had to rely on a new *episteme*, a novel field of scientificity which could legitimize the coupling of progress with order. As we shall see, this encouraged him to lean heavily on the bourgeoning natural sciences, especially biology, prodding him to make a clear-cut differentiation between the law of "social statistics" and "social dynamics", amounting to order and progress, respectively. The analysis of this new *episteme* will be carried out in conjunction with the inquiry of the social reforms Comte had proposed and which were to materialize in the synthetic unity of order and progress in social life.[14]

The second part of the first chapter will bring into the foreground Kant's two-tiered conception of progress. I will argue that, in stark contrast to Comte's unified law of progress where the advance of civilization is seen to be taking place in

[14] Here onwards what we intend to denote by a new *episteme* is simply the employment of a novel semantic structure, along with the incorporation of a frame of reference that connects, interlaces and binds semantic units into a coherent whole.

concomitance with the advance of morality, Kant's differentiation of moral progress from the teleological history of civilization admits, in the very least, a certain tension or the existence of social contradictions in civil society. The examination of this tension, which crystallized especially in Kant's discussion of evil and the demarcation of ethical community from the sphere of civil society, will therefore serve as the main topics of this section. It will be shown that by affirming rather than covering up this tension, Kant's model of progress has proven to be resistant to political appropriation. While at the center of Comte's theorization of progress stood cardinal values of capitalism such as the logic of instrumentality and productivity, I will demonstrate that Kant's unwavering emphasis on autonomy and moral life as the final end (*Endzweck*) of human beings, prevented his two-tiered conception of progress to be easily apprehended by political discourse. All in all, my objective in the first chapter of this study will be to flesh out two ideal-types of progress: 1) Comte's unilinear and undialectical theorization which complies with the standing order of things under the economic and political conditions following the dissolution of the *ancien régime* and 2) Kant's two-tiered and dialectical conception which discerns and critically explores the irrational and immoral elements of society driven by self-interest and the logic of utility.

Notwithstanding their irreconcilable differences, these two types of progress are deeply embedded in the period of *Neuzeit*, such that the consummation of the *telos* of history is argued to take place only in and through history and certainly not through the grace of a transcendental entity. The end-point of this teleological story enveloped in the concept of progress, its *terminus*, is supposed to harbor a state of existence that is presumed to be in attunement with the intrinsic worth of humanity.

Accordingly, the purpose of incorporating Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of

progress into my discussion stems from this psychological and theological basis undergirding the idea of progress. By focusing on Friedrich Nietzsche's proverbial remark about the death of God and the advent of nihilism in Chapter 3, I will inquire whether the hurried dissemination of the idea of progress, as a form of immanentism that imparts unity and purpose on history, was actually serving to replace the debilitated authority of God. In this respect, Nietzsche's emphasis on agonistic individuality and his fervent denigration of herd spirit will be evaluated within the context of two intersecting dimensions: a) the element of will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*) as the psychological impetus inciting the pursuit of solid innerwordly and historical meanings, b) the ascendancy of "historical sense," which was not only in concordance with the scientific ethos of modernity but also creating a life-world detrimental to the creative potentiality of human beings. Meanwhile, Nietzsche's rejection of the idea of progress will be fleshed out by taking a close look at his critique of David Strauss' *Der Alte und der Neue Glaube*, which will simultaneously reveal the affinity Nietzsche discerned between the celebration of progress and the so-called "disease of Hegelism".

I will show that Nietzsche's condemnation of the idea of progress as a sign of nihilism cannot be demarcated from the new horizon of truth that was replacing the static worldview of Christianity. The novel *episteme* of science, with its exclusive claim on scientificity, exerted itself with such a gargantuan momentum that it was able to force itself into the consciousness of Strauss and propelled him to glorify the tenets of *neue Glaube*, this new faith not far removed from the *Religion de l'Humanité* of Auguste Comte. Strauss was able to bear the burden of God's death, of which he himself was partly responsible with his revolutionary *Das Leben Jesu*, only insofar as it paved the way for a faith whose content would well-behoove social

realities of his epoch. For Nietzsche, this was but the manifestation of a radical fear in the face of becoming, which was compensated by the deification of the arbitrary course of history into an orderly arrangement, the crowning achievement of which was to be modernity with its ubiquitous and peremptory calling. Differently expressed, Nietzsche's trepidation was essentially about the myth of Christianity with its glorious yet inscrutable God-head, *deus absconsidita*, morphing into an immanentist belief whose values were just as pernicious and downgrading as the values of its predecessor.

Certainly, Nietzsche's solution for the ailment of nihilism was the heroic/tragic figure of *Übermensch*, a man of "glad tidings", who had to go under in order to rise above the miserable state of culture and politics, preaching an aesthetics of life that was by all means antithetical to the vulgarity and *common* sense of modern existence. In this respect, the fourth chapter of this study is dialectically related to the analysis of Nietzsche's concept of nihilism insofar as it discerns in Nietzsche's celebration of the agonistic man the symptoms of abstract individualism, that is to say, a *modern fantasy* that tries to compensate for the essential powerlessness of human beings in their utmost singularity before the predominant historical and social forces. This basic premise will be fleshed out by means of focusing on Theodor W. Adorno's critique of progress. It will be demonstrated that unlike in Nietzsche's philosophy, Adorno contends that the experiential domain of human individuality can be redeemed only insofar as the concept of progress is not rejected *in toto*, but rather handled through the method of determinate negation. This will show in the first place that the myth of progress cannot be discarded by an equally mythological exaltation of heroic strife, one that is in the habit of flouting the historical determinacy of individuality. For Adorno, Nietzsche's critique of myth

debarred itself from truth by succumbing to another myth, that is, the untrammeled love of everything that time throws in front of the individual – the myth of *amor fati*. In other words, by finding refuge in the eternal recurrence of the present, Nietzsche himself thought that he finally thwarted the assailing power of historical sense. And Adorno's exposition underlines that precisely in failing to discern that this solution itself was mediated by history, Nietzsche could not entirely save himself from mythology.

While analyzing Adorno's critique of progress, I will therefore try to peel off, as it were, the mythological integument of the concept of progress and probe into whether we may discern a *truth* content that still bears relevance for our society. For this purpose, I will attempt to clarify exactly what Adorno deems to be mythological in some usages of the idea of progress, especially in its appropriation by political catchwords that more or less display affinity with the standing order of things. Yet this will require in the first place a close scrutiny of the concept of myth, which requires us to pay attention to its elaboration in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Having done so, I will examine Adorno's problematization of Auguste Comte's conceptualization of progress, with specific emphasis on the relationship Comte contrived between social statistics and social dynamics. It will be discussed that the law of social dynamics actually served to repress the negative and emancipatory content which initially propelled the idea of progress, at least in the period preceding the downfall of the *ancien régime*. The "historical experience" sedimented in the concept of progress, however, resists total expropriation by virtue of encapsulating a demand, a "rational" demand that contradicts and negates the thoroughly "rationalized", albeit irrational, mode of existence in our epoch. For the sake of

elucidating what this rational content may be, I will finally address the utopianism of Adorno and investigate whether it complements his overall critique of progress.

Throughout this thesis, I will endeavor to show the way in which the idea of progress has undergone what can now be provisionally defined as a conceptual repression. Although I do not use this term in a strictly limited sense, it is worthwhile to note that the nature of repression, according to psychoanalytic theory, involves the active prevention of mental content from becoming conscious in addition to the recurring episodes of intraphysic conflict (Boag, 2013, p. xi). Just like psychoanalytic theory, which aims to unearth the specific mechanisms of repression and tries and to illuminate unconscious elements in the mental life for therapeutic reasons, I will engage in the uncovering of the logic and the corresponding mechanisms of repression in order to excavate the normative/emancipatory content of the idea of progress. In this respect, one of my objectives in this thesis is the examination and assessment of the philosophical and historical reasons behind the *conceptual decoupling* mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that is, to carry out an analysis that will clarify why this normative content has been kept at a certain distance or receded into background. Why has it been actively prevented? Secondly, I will inquire whether a therapeutic reconciliation with this repressed content is possible, and if so, in what ways can this be achieved? Although potential loci and configurations of such a reconciliation will be hinted at indiscriminately throughout the following three chapters, the systematic discussion of this issue in relation to our epoch has to wait until the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 2

WHICH PROGRESS? COMTE, KANT, AND THE MORALITY OF CIVILIZATION

In the preceding pages, I have shown through Koselleck's argument that the conceptual transformation of the idea of progress eventually reached a stage whereby it had become ripe for political appropriation, as an intellectual resource that can be utilized for the preservation of social totality. This stage in the course of its transformation is crucial insofar as it roughly overlaps with the period of revolutionary waves primarily shaking France at its core and then sending ripple-waves across the entire European continent. Put differently, the political appropriation of the idea of progress becomes possible as a result of the dissolution and breakdown of the social cohesion intrinsic to the *ancien régime*. It seems to emerge as a substitute in the wake of the disconcerting realization that older, traditional values were inadequate to mould, refine and preserve the social totality that had been forming piecemeal after the Revolution. Positivism, flowering in the chaotic works of Comte Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and evolving into a systematic whole by the prolific *doctrinaire* Auguste Comte (1798-1857), is such a case where the concept of progress, owing to the new *episteme* by means of which it is melded into the new scientific language of the day, is turned into a fixed *law* of sociology. No longer does it designate the indefinite yet optimistically imagined future that negates the present in its multitudinous aspects. Rather, by being accentuated in conjunction with social and political order, it is diluted of its vitriolic essence and becomes an ideological tool utilizable for the reproduction of the bourgeois society. The first part of this chapter revolves around a series of interlaced

questions: What were the social factors that facilitated the dovetailing of the idea of progress with the post-*ancien régime*? Had the culture of utilitarianism, work ethic and productivity, which were endorsed and propagated by Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, played a role in shaping and redesigning the semantics and temporality of progress? What impact, if any, did the integration of the concept of progress into the discourse of sociology have for the individual and his relation to society?

Analyzing the historicality of the emergence of sociology as a branch of science, Nisbet(1943) wrote that the essential problematique which paved the way for Comte's formulation of Positive System was neither political nor economic, but social – it was "social in the exact sense that it was the outcome of a disruption of those primary ties of relationship uniting man in nonpolitical society" (p. 161). Nisbet further noted that the identifying characteristic of early sociology was a highly sharpened concern with social groups, especially with the nature and form of these groups that were to play an intermediate function between the individual and the state, and to alleviate the isolation and atomization of the *citoyen* resulting from the disintegration of previous social ties and identities (p. 165). In the eighteenth century, the *philosophes* were eager to theoretically contest, and practically curb down the social power of powerful guilds, the church and the patriarchal family, whereas the rise of sociology is said to involve a "profound deviation" from most of the ideas on society and human beings during the Enlightenment (Nisbet, 1943, p. 157). Although Nisbet insightfully diagnosed the social factors precipitating the emergence of positivism, the fact that he strictly demarcates economic factors from their social counterparts turns out to be the weakest spot of his argument, undermining the possibility of providing a compelling account for this "profound deviation" in the Positive System from the ideals of Enlightenment. Fortunately,

Gouldner tapped into this shortcoming by demonstrating how the cardinal questions of sociology, namely, social cohesion and the control of society, emerged as a counterbalance to the requirements of an individualistic utilitarian culture. Espousing the efficient use and production of utilities for private gain, unrestricted individual cooperation and technological progress, Saint-Simon and Comte were eager to find the "complementary structures" which would accommodate the dire need for consolidating or *completing* the new, advanced phase of bourgeois economy (Gouldner, 1970, pp. 91-92). Gouldner shows convincingly that the social calamities surfacing in the aftermath of the Revolution, and especially during the tumultuous period of the Restoration spanning almost two decades, are intricately tied to economic developments that pitted the nobility, clergy and the other traditional pillars of French society against the third estate, and other times urged them into an uneasy coalition against the bourgeoning and disgruntled working class. "What was at stake," claims Gouldner, was not finding a specific political system in which conflicting demands would be optimized, but rather "the total network of institutions and total culture that had surfaced during and after the French Revolution" (p. 95). In a context where one of the oldest sources of authoritative social mapping, traditional religion, continued to lose public support and was bereft of its previous credence, it was science *qua* discourse and application which stepped up, continued to develop and win public prestige (Gouldner, 1970, p. 95). Its formula was terse, epigrammatic, and tapped effectively into the social exigencies of the day: *Savoir pour prévoir et prévoir pour pouvoir* (Know in order to foresee, foresee in order to act) (Reedy, 1994, p. 8). As evidenced elsewhere, this new discourse of science exerted such an influence that it even managed to perforate the mindset of a prominent royalist and a staunch believer of Catholic dogma, Vicomte Louis de Bonald (1754-1840), who

was one of the masters of the art of garbing non-scientific values in a scientized language (Reedy, 1984, p. 2).

I shall have the opportunity to address these matters in the first section of this chapter. The subsequent section, on the other hand, will concern itself with Immanuel Kant's philosophy of history, with specific emphasis on his formulation of progress and its implications within the context of the relationship between the individual and society. As Bury (1955) once remarked in his classic study on the history of progress, Kant's conceptualization of progress will not be fathomed properly unless its relation to the other aspects of Kant's architectonic philosophy is heeded, highlighting the subject of ethics in particular (pp. 246-247). Indeed, it will be shown that Kant's emphasis on autonomy and his unwavering resolve in placing the individual at the center of the pursuit of moral life induced him to make a clear-cut demarcation between the progressive development of culture and civilization on the one hand, and moral progress on the other. While the great author Nature plays a role in the former by developing the capacities of human species, a process comprising the establishment of civil republican constitution and the attainment of perpetual peace between nations, Kant conceives moral progress to be dependent upon whether the individual can bring about, through bitter struggle and painstaking effort, a revolution in his/her mode of thought (*Denkungsart*) and moral disposition.

Without this resolve in creating a "new man" out of our existence, it will be futile to expect progress in the mode of sense (*Sinnesart*), which also affects the set of norms and values molding the nature of the interactions between persons. More importantly, this proposed revolution in the *mode of thought* is not some abstract ethical reorientation enjoined for the individual monads. Instead, it is based upon a scathing critique of the immoral nature of human interactions in civil society, where

persons generally tend to treat each other merely as means for the sake of individual happiness and well-being. As I shall argue, this turns out to be of great significance to the extent that, unlike Saint-Simon and Comte, Kant does not take for granted the values of commercial society, and moreover, he does not aim to cover up its defects by promoting an artificial, engineered social consensus supervised by temporal or spiritual powers. Kant's standpoint becomes especially clear in *Religion Within the Limits of Mere Reason,* where the ideal realm in which the ends of the individuals will form a systematic whole is denominated as ethical community or ethico-civil society and is strictly distinguished from the sphere of juridico-civil society. The logic of utility, in Kant's view, has to be subordinated to the practical reason of morality. I argue therefore that by associating the moralization of the world, which is also the highest end (*Endzweck*) of human species, with the transcending of civil society, Kant was able to resist the sway of the utilitarian culture unto which Saint-Simon and Comte succumbed decades later as they endeavored to moralize civil society. Hence, Kant's two-tiered conception of progress, his foresight regarding the necessity of differentiating cultural progress from moral progress, seems to have achieved two important feats: a) resistance against political appropriation which is achieved through emphasis on the uniqueness of the *individuum* rather than defending its assimilation to the social whole and b) anticipation of the irrational element in civil society which has become objectively obvious in the course of the nineteenth century and wherein the *dignity* of human being is practically abrogated by the overriding ratio of *utility*.

2.1 Perfecting society: Unilinear progress and the Positive *état*

Approximately seven years of academic and personal collaboration between Saint-Simon and Comte, beginning in the autumn of 1817 until its dissolution in 1824, can give us a rough indication of the possible degree of affinity and reciprocal influence between these two thinkers. The nature of this relationship could be better construed in light of the fact that following its eventual dissolution, a spiteful polemic started between these two long friends and bitter accusations of jealousy and intellectual theft were hurled from both sides mercilessly (Pickering, 1993a, pp. 231-235). Fortunately, we are concerned here with the onset of this academic relationship rather than its aftermath. As Pickering (1993a) underlines, one particular factor that brought about this long-lived academic camaraderie was both thinkers' markedly ambivalent stance toward the eighteenth-century *philosophes*. Praising them for having laid the groundwork for the organization of a new intellectual system – the "positive system" – they were nevertheless reprehensive about their excessive destructivity (p. 106). Renouncing Catholicism and embracing the progressive and technological ideals of the *Ecole Polytechnique*, both thinkers showed great enthusiasm for natural sciences and were avowedly optimistic about their prospective application to the crisis-ridden French society. Exalting the work ethic of *industriels*, they displayed a keen interest in the works of political economists and were assured that the society had to be organized on the basis of a productive ethos, a conviction which signified their utter contempt for the clergy and nobility and their oft-caricatured idleness (Pickering, 1993a, p. 102).

But what was this destructivity of the *philosophes* that Saint-Simon and Comte criticized so fervently? Given that the relentless critique directed against the traditional elements of French society was a feature endorsed by Saint-Simon and Comte, this alleged destructivity seems to have had stemmed from the inability of

philosophes to offer an alternative model of social organization. In other words, they were incapable of propounding a positive theory in conjunction with the realities of society and were thwarted by what Comte often designates as "imperfect knowledge", that is, an outmoded *savoir* – an insufficient and weak epistemic framework incapable of defining, explaining and categorizing social phenomena. This is not to say that Comte totally shuns the intellectual heritage of the eighteenth century. Indeed, he praises the efforts of thinkers such as the innovative administrator of the crumbling French monarchy, Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, or the early political scientist Marquis de Condorcet, for seeking the phases and causes of the progress of humankind in the complex interaction between economic and material conditions (Nisbet, 1975, p. 214, p. 217). Turgot's speculation in favor of a deterministic law of progress that binds all ages into one single vast continuum, therefore, gets full backing from Comte (1896b), who personally interprets this type of quasi-organic concatenation and homogenization of historical events to be the epistemic signs heralding sociology's transition into a full-fledged science (pp. 201-202).[15] Similarly, Condorcet's call for fashioning political science after the example of natural sciences and his plea for finding the general laws governing the development of social, moral and intellectual capacities of humankind makes him in the eyes of Comte, as well as Saint-Simon, the spiritual father of the theory of progress (Beauchamp, 2009, pp. 27-28).[16] As I will show, this idea of progress conceived as a general law was later perfected by Auguste Comte, for whom

[15] Consider for example the following statement by Turgot: "All ages are linked together by a sequence of causes and events, which connects the existing state of the world with all that has preceded it . . . [The] human race, seen from its origin, appears to the eye of a philosopher as one vast whole, which itself, like each individual composing it, has had its infancy and development" (as cited in Stephens, 1895, p. 9).

[16] Condorcet's (2004) question in his famous treatise is quite straightforward: "The only basis for belief in the natural science is the idea that, whether we know them or not, the general laws governing the phenomena of the universe are necessary and constant. Why should this same principle be less true for the development of the intellectual and moral capacities of the humankind than for other natural processes?" (p. 65).

Condorcet's work (and here his criticism also applied to Turgot), despite its unwavering emphasis on the necessity of comprehending society in a scientific manner, was methodologically flimsy due to the negative effects of revolutionary doctrines and the author's imperfect knowledge of biology (Comte, 1896b, pp. 200-202).

Most certainly, this line of criticism was not tantamount to a repudiation of the long-standing attempt at the systematic unification of history, nor to a disowning of the overflowing optimism for the perfectibility of society found in both Turgot's and Condorcet's expositions. For Comte and Saint-Simon before him, it was necessary to consolidate this narrative by shaping and molding it in accordance with the pregiven conditions of reality or the order of things, rather than seeking to impose the narrative of progress on reality *tel quel* and replicating the astounding errors of the previous generations. The destructivity in question, therefore, could only be eliminated by bridging the chasm between the ideal and real, by rooting out scientifically inept social and political doctrines that had failed to grasp the rationality of the present and over-emphasized the *futural* dimension of progress. For Saint-Simon, this shortcoming could be amended by means of showing how the institutional framework of feudal society needs to be overcome in order to accommodate the forces and processes of the new industrial society. What does Saint-Simon imply, however, with the emphasis on the *processes* and *forces* of the industrial-technological society? From what source do these forces and processes actually spring? As noted before, these questions should be viewed in light of the formation of a new *savoir*, as an expression of a revised mode of approach to the society in general. Indeed, when Saint-Simon evokes the existence of forces, these forces appear him to be just as real and concrete as physical forces acting upon

objects in nature, and therefore, they should be interpreted within the context of their discursive significance. Above all else, the following question seems to stand out: What does Saint-Simon mean by the *accommodation* of these forces?

One way of addressing this question is by specifying the nature of these forces. Saint-Simon makes the following remark in *Du Système Industriel*:

> A political *force* is not created; either it is numbered among the leading powers of society when it had reached a certain stage of development, or it simply appears; that is all. This recognition . . . this legitimization of the most powerful *forces* which exist in a society at every important stage of civilization is what is called its constitution, and, without this, it would merely be a metaphysical dream.[emphasis added] (Saint-Simon, 1976a, p. 169)

The context in which we find this passage is quite striking. For here, Saint-Simon expounds why the Charter of 1814, granted by Louis XVIII, is a constitution that does not accord with the social and intellectual realities of its epoch. Critical of the fact that the Charter imputed the regulation of national education to the clergy, he underlines how religion itself had lost its spiritual power over the course of the eighteenth century and was no longer compatible with the social *forces* it had to work in cooperation (Saint-Simon, 1976a, pp. 170-178). Instead of the clergy, Saint-Simon argues in the same text for national education to be controlled by a group of elite scientists whose authority will be beyond reproof with the constant progress shown in natural sciences (p. 170).[17] Thus, Saint-Simon's comprehension of *forces* is thoroughly historical and very much imbued with the mentioned narrative of progress, necessitating us to not interpret it as a mere technical term. This can be

[17] It has to be underlined that Saint-Simon was an advocate of national education as a substitute for the outmoded and incommensurately restrictive tenets of dogmatic Christianity. While this is particularly interesting for us to observe how he was influenced by the debates of philosophes throughout the course of the eighteenth century, it should be admitted that he is more ambitious inasmuch he seeks to establish national education as an administrative branch in order entrench and increase the efficiency of the industrial system. See Saint-Simon (1976b), p. 149.

noticed clearly in the role attributed to science, which will not only replace the dogmatic and retrogressive tenets of Christianity but will demonstrate, through its very agent, scientists, the rationality of social and economic forces brought about by the advance of mankind. Saint-Simon (1976a) holds primarily that the supremacy of science will be established with the unification of sciences, enabling "all the separate sciences to be unified in a universal system of the study of nature", accompanied by a well-developed understanding of the laws of nature (p. 164). In fact, this development will contribute towards actualizing a change of approach in studying social phenomena. It is accented over and over throughout his career that politics, unless divested of its conjectural basis and attaining a positive framework like chemistry or astrology, will be destined to merely mimic the pseudo-sciences of astrology and alchemy, fundamentally inept to confront and resolve the complicated causes of the crisis European society succumbed to during the first quarter of the nineteenth century (Ionescu, 1976, p. 9; Saint-Simon, 1976a, p. 154).[18]

It has to be noted that the method of politics Saint-Simon propagated was inspired by the tradition of physiocrats and the subsequent political economists whose works were relatively devoid of metaphysical debates and based on empirical research – the direct observation of facts rather than *a priori* argumentations. This intellectual orientation was essential for the promotion of the new science of politics, "the science of production",[19] which will endow the industrialists with the historically relevant "principles", similar to how the old feudal classes had their characteristically authentic spirit. According to Saint-Simon (1976d), these

[18] As we shall see later, the age of transition from the metaphysical stage to the positive stage is also described by Comte as a period of *crisis*.

[19] Saint-Simon (1976c) clarifies what he means by "the science of production" as follows: "A [particular mode of] science whose object is to create the order of things most favorable to every kind of production" (p. 108). With this guiding principle, politics will allegedly break free of its conjectural or metaphysical basis and achieve a status of authority similar to other natural sciences.

principles are disclosed by political economists (and especially by Adam Smith) for whom it is the search for "a national association as an industrial concern the aim of which is to procure for every member of society, according to his stake at society, the greatest comfort and well-being possible" (p. 122). Furthermore, he equally vouches for the basic Smithean conviction that the creation of wealth could only be achieved through the elimination of the principles of military administration, which is in itself geared towards the consumption and dissipation of resources, and the establishment of industrial administration that will provide the means to bolster rationalized production. According to Ionescu (1976), what Saint-Simon intended to bring out with this revisionist program was institutional transformation, and implied the organization of society in accordance with the politics of instrumentality, such that the harmonious "cooperation of all those whose skills, services or capital are indispensable to the functioning of the economy", could be established (p. 37). Furthermore, this institutional transformation signifies the abandonment of politics that was based on governance (the methods of which was simply to exercise submission and instill fear) and the adoption of administrative methods that will facilitate the coordination of productive sectors (pp. 41-42).

Saint-Simon's call for instituting a new mode of politics based on the science of production was spurred by the necessity of accommodating the *forces* and processes that were meanwhile radically changing the French society. Now, although these material developments entailed a radical reorganization of the relationship between the individual and the crystallizing units of political power, it never went as far as the suspension of the *asymmetrical* power existing between the state and the *citoyen*. The task befalling the new science of politics was simply the administration of human life and the education of what modern life required. As Saint-Simon

(1976c) boldly declares, political science apropos of its positive content, has to "illuminate" the inevitable progress of events, to show human beings what they have to do and how to do them, and to render them self-conscious about the acts and deeds that were hitherto done inadvertently (p. 105). This self-consciousness will consequently reveal for humanity that “ever since the enfranchisement of the communes, mankind has clearly been advancing towards a general revolution”, by “general revolution” Saint-Simon certainly charging the idea of progress with universality since it will allegedly be “common to all civilized peoples of all lands" (Saint-Simon, 1976c, p. 105). Indeed, the representation of humanity as faring through a linear progress suggests a condition of determinacy before which the level of autonomy attributable to human agency proportionally diminishes. Consider, for example, the following statement by Saint-Simon, which is emblematic of an understanding of history patently deterministic: “[The] future consists of a series whose first terms constitute the past. When one has carefully studied the first terms of a series, it is easy to supply the following ones; thus one may easily deduce the future from a proper observation of the past” (Simon, 1956, p. 319).

At first impression, this might appear as a downright contradiction. How can such a deterministic portrayal of history comply with the epoch of industrialism, an age in which the entrepreneur should stand out as an essential agent of production and change? Earlier, I noted that Saint-Simon valued above all the harmonious cooperation of a diverse group of producers, in order to ensure the smooth functioning of industrial society. In fact, this very statement highlights to what extent Saint-Simon's ideas intersected with the political scientists, since the latter held the most fundamental principle of market economy to be free trade strictly based on individual initiative. Indeed, here in this seemingly problematical formulation resides

the originality of the convictions of Saint-Simon (and subsequently Comte) for whom the principal objective of the scientists should be conciliating progress with order, the accommodation of forces and processes in order to bridle and insulate its negative consequences. It was precisely for this reason that the critical tradition of the eighteenth century irked him, so much so that he expressed quite openly that the epoch of industrialism necessitated organization and the cooptation of unruly and disruptive forces (Saint-Simon, 1976a, p. 153).[20]As Ionescu (1976) points out, Saint-Simon's avowed aim was to provide the scientific analysis of the interrelation and the functioning of the components of the industrial system; to form a "science of mankind" and to grasp the ultimate reality of modern and future mankind as transformed by industry (p. 30). This scientific organization, coupled with the insights gleaned from the methodology of political economy, would lead to a "doctrinal transformation" which would "sooner or later be adopted, in accordance with the universal law, confirmed by all historical observations, that *nothing can permanently halt the progress of civilization*" [emphasis added](Saint-Simon, 1976d, p. 125).

Saint-Simon's ominous warning is clear: whatever and whoever dares to stand before the force of progress will be trampled. Certainly, behind this ominous warning looms Saint-Simon's conviction regarding the utter powerlessness of human existence, the impuissance of individual acts which are destined to vanish before the indomitable force of history. Stated within the context of his discussion pertaining to philosophy of history, Koselleck (2004) makes the following comment which could well be applied to the implications of Saint-Simon's sense of history: "[The] self-accelerating temporality robs the present of the possibility of being experienced as

[20] The victims of Saint-Simon's wrath were primarily jurists and metaphysicians who putatively interfered with and obstructed what the French Revolution initially promised, namely, a smooth transition to an industrial-scientific society (1976a, pp. 155-156).

the present, and escapes into a future within which the currently unapprehendable present has to be captured by historical philosophy" (p. 22). This statement not only taps into the withering away of the possibility of experiencing the present, but also raises the question of human agency/autonomy. Indeed, an incapability of experiencing the present, lacking the necessary opportunity to respond either in affirmation or negatively to whatever history may bring, ultimately nullifies human agency and makes it incidental to the course of history. It is in this context that we should evaluate Saint-Simon's firm embrace of the ideal of organization and his equally calm denigration of the idea of freedom which appeared to him as a metaphysical, and ergo, an unscientific notion irreconcilable with the forces of industrial society. In one footnote, he vituperates the metaphysicians of the preceding centuries, noting with a curious interpretation of Aristotle that the ultimate purpose of human organization is not freedom but organization *per se*, governed by the principle that man depends significantly less on each other individually than on the collectivity of individuals comprising the totality of society. The metaphysical idea of individuality obtrudes the affective and regenerative power of this totality over the particulars. This could consequently counteract the development of civilization and the organization of a well-regulated system, which demands that parts should firmly be linked to the whole and depend on it (Saint-Simon, 1976a, p. 158).[21]

[21] The Saint-Simonians, as they are called nowadays, among whom Bazard and Sismondi were perhaps the most famous and influential, strived to recuperate the "metaphysical" idea of freedom by pointing out to the contradictory development of the industrial system. Rejecting the optimistic implications of Saint-Simon's theory of progress, they played a key role in bringing into foreground how alarmingly human suffering and the degree of oppression increased, in stark contrast with the early premonition that industrial system was capable of engendering happiness and social felicity. Herbert Marcuse argues that this "critical" reappropriation of the idea of progress eventually fizzled out against the predominance of the positive philosophy of Auguste Comte. As we shall see later in this section, Comte sought to eradicate from sociology the "philosophical negativity" of metaphysics, a commitment he wished to fulfill even more fervently than Saint-Simon. See: (Marcuse, 1955, pp. 335-341).

Pressing forward the role of scientific elites for the elimination of metaphysics, it is certain, all things considered, that Saint-Simon conceived of humanity as a collective singular (*qua* its species-being) rather than human beings in their infinite plurality. And this conviction contributed to that narrative which chiefly emphasized the ineluctable law of history and limned a highly fatalistic universe, while the potential role and agential influence of the individual slowly yet steadily receded. The issue of fatalism in Saint-Simon's teaching has been raised by various scholars. One amongst them is Lyon, who ventures to argue for a demarcation between what he denotes as "passive fatalism" and "active fatalism". Granting that Saint-Simon's aim was to circumscribe the laws of history to elucidate what should be done to facilitate further progress in the course of history, Lyon notes in hindsight that there was still some kind of autonomy ascribed to humanity, which constituted its active aspect and amounted to the capacity of retarding or accelerating the march of history. However, this conceptual differentiation seems far-fetched if not totally confusing for what can the meaning of human autonomy be if it is ultimately held under check by the immutable laws of history, according to which things that *are to take place will inevitably happen*, irrespective of the collaboration shown by human beings (Lyon, 1996, pp. 55-56). Indeed, Lyon's idea of "active fatalism" subtly conceals a motto of defeatism, disguising under the concept of "active fatalism" the impuissance of human beings and their capacity to contest the so-called laws of history. How we can we speak of a genuine capacity to act, to start something new and unique if it amounts simply to subjecting oneself to the laws of history and progress? Lyon's call for differentiating active fatalism from passive fatalism is similarly discredited by W. M. Simon (1956), for whom Saint-Simon's construal of history and his understanding of the course of human events were subject to rigid

determinism, regulated by an overdeterminate principle which he was wont to denominate as “the order of things” (p. 319). What may strike us in hindsight as a vague and fleeting definition, the so-called "order of things", signified for Saint-Simon the irrefutable facts of reality that had been laid bare thanks to the improving methods of science. At one point while discussing the differences between militaristic and industrial administration, he can thus propound with unabashed confidence, referring to his industrious colleague/student Auguste Comte, that it was he "who proved that *modern peoples* were lagging behind the enlightened spirit of their age", criticizing the futile attempts at fostering commerce and industry through means inherited from an epoch no longer in existence (Saint-Simon, 1976d, pp. 123-124). The order of things was therefore simultaneously historical and factual, a result of historical progress as well as scientifically explicable web of datums constant and unperturbed by history – an expression that reflects most vividly Saint-Simon's presentism and his fascination with the logic of utility and production embodied in the heroic figure of the *industriel*.

Earlier, I hinted at the possible personal reasons behind Comte's gradual disillusionment with Saint-Simon, yet it is important to add that this was more than a clash of personalities. Pickering (1993) apprises us that from 1820 onwards, Saint-Simon was "increasingly taken with the power of the wealthy industrial class because of their financial status, which made them the dominant force in the community as well as his chief supporters" (p. 235).As Saint-Simon heavily relied on the financial support of his patrons and gave into occasional pampering of the powerful, it seems that Comte grew gradually skeptical about Saint-Simon's prognosis regarding the role of the *industriels* in the establishment of the positive period (Pickering, 1993a, p. 237; Pickering, 1993b, p. 213). In Comte's view, Saint-Simon was overemphasizing

the practical and pragmatic benefits in enlisting the services of the industrial class, for not only were they were in habit of cutting down their support but also they were more concerned with chasing after their private interests than attending matters regarding common good (Pickering, 1993a, p. 130). It was becoming more apparent to Comte that, while the practical needs of production were of great importance, it was the scientists of society who were entrusted with the paramount task, namely, the discovery of the social and political structures that the march of civilization had destined for the contemporary age. Praxis, therefore, had to be subordinated to theory.

2.2 A scientific conceptualization: Progress as the dynamic law of society

The implications of this divergence can be observed most clearly in Comte's conceptualization of progress qua social dynamics. Similar in outline to Saint-Simon's deterministic understanding of historical progress, Comte goes even further by advocating the elaboration of the distinct stages of socio-political systems within the context of the development of sciences. Since this development should be traced by analyzing and categorizing the epistemological and methodological characteristics peculiar to each stage, Comte (1896a) advocates for viewing the development of natural sciences as the progress of the individual mind, which correspondingly sheds light on the stages of the general mind and depict the progress of humanity as a whole (p. 3). As a matter of fact, the way in which the phylogenetic development of humankind dovetails with the ontogenetic development of the individual mind discloses Comte's ultimate objective: the establishment of an encyclopedic account of all kinds of scientific knowledge available, indeed the encyclopedia par excellence of his day. In this respect, Comte could be said to have worked towards the knitting

of a socio-scientific tapestry, where the whole could only be comprehended and appreciated once its constituent parts are interconnected with each other, and their relations to one another manifested in a clear logical fashion. Although this endeavor in itself was not really original, what set Comte apart from the philosophers before him was his grandiloquent purpose to write this encyclopaedic narrative across the modern society, to realize the harmonious unity of the individual mind with the general mind under the auspices of two primary forces of sociology – Order and Progress.

Before we engage in the exposition of Comte's understanding of history, it is therefore imperative to address his understanding of the history of science. Although the implications of his almost dogmatic belief in science could be discerned in the calendar he proposed for the age of Positivism, Comte's sincere belief hinged upon no manipulative strategies like that of Robespierre's, for whom science and the idea of progress were nothing other than tools to extirpate the threatening remnants of the past and promote a sense of presentism for the well-being of the regime. For Comte, the Positive stage was not to be a self-absorbed stage solely appreciative of its achievements but should encompass the entire course of history indiscriminately, cognizant of each period's contributions and aware of their indispensability for the accumulative growth of sciences. This is nowhere better formulated than in his monumental work, *Cours de Philosophie*, where he tenaciously delves deep into every single branch of natural sciences, endeavoring to demonstrate their particular effects on the development of the individual and general mind. In this plan, Comte (1896a) places mathematics at the very core of natural sciences, accenting how gradual development in the subject of mathematics contributed to the emergence of the *art of prediction*, enabling the calculation of the type of relationship between

different units (p. 41).Chemistry, on the other hand, brought into the foreground the *art of comparison*, which was necessary in order to classify molecularly different substances that are nevertheless subject to the same laws of composition and decomposition (Comte, 1896a, pp. 316-319). Third, Comte (1896a) mentions the branch of physics, the contribution of which was the promotion of the *art of experiment*, developing as the need to understand the laws that regulate the general properties of physical entities were deemed expedient (pp. 234-235).

This classification, which enabled Comte to associate the mentioned methods of observation with their respective disciplines, serves two interrelated purposes: a) accrediting the Positive stage with historical rootedness and methodological authority with its capacity of representing the paradigmatic culmination of various sciences, b) forming a genealogical and taxonomic interrelation between these sciences as a result of their partaking in the basic precepts of the Positive stage. Hence, the mentioned sciences become the precursors of the Positive stage, which will finally be achieved once the vain search for absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the inner causes of phenomena are abandoned and a thoroughly synthetic analysis of the invariable relations of succession and resemblance is brought forth in their stead (Comte, 1896a, p. 2).[22] I will later demonstrate how Comte's emphasis on the *invariable relations of succession and resemblance* essentially reflects the psychological and sociological universe of his imagination, on the basis of which stands his unshakable belief in order. As stated elsewhere, Comte's understanding of the invariability of relations depended on one crucial presupposition: "Phenomena were only to be explained in terms of other phenomena. An explanation should confine itself to the search for laws expressing observable regularities... yet [this

[22] It is precisely due to this reason that Comte (1896a) does not elude paying homage to the luminaries of science such as Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes and Galileo, who with their unique precepts, concepts and discoveries laid the groundwork required for superseding the stage of metaphysics (p.7).

idea] rested on one crucial presupposition, namely that *such regularities exist* [emphasis added]" (Wernick, 2003, p. 42).

It is most certain that for an epistemological synthetist such as Comte, the existence of such regularities could have been nowhere formalized better than in the field of astronomy. His unflinching praise for astronomy as the perfect science hinged on the basic fact that it required a synthetic analysis, a simultaneous application of the methods of induction and deduction, by means of which the observation of celestial occurrences, with the help of mathematical deductions and the introduction of hypotheses due to the distance of astral bodies, could be transformed into laws of celestial phenomena. In fact, this was already achieved with Isaac Newton's law of gravitation, proving for Comte the "importance of not only of reducing phenomena to a single law but also of using hypotheses to advance one's misunderstanding, especially when concrete, observed facts were missing" (Pickering, 1993, p. 578). Another reason why Comte emphasized astronomy could very well be the latter's role in showing that the order of the universe did not depend on any external agent such as God, existing as it is according to a set of fixed rules immanent to its constitution, and moreover, for proving that the earth was a single planet among others, a mere part of the vast solar system (Pickering, 1993, p. 579).[23] Comte's understanding of astronomy as the perfected form of science and a medium through which order, stability and organization could be shown to be immanent to the universe might give some hints as to why he had asserted the necessity of building social physics, that is, sociology after its image. Indeed, creating the standard tools and methods of social analysis concurrent with the principles of celestial and terrestrial sciences would not only have placed sociology at the top of

[23] For Comte's detailed elaboration on the stability and order of the universe, see: (1896a, pp. 220-230).

the hierarchical ladder of sciences (Comte, 1896a, p. 7), but would also have guaranteed the indisputable establishment of the Positive stage as its principles finally achieved universal authority (p. 8).

Having shown the unprecedented degree with respect to which Comte sought to associate progress with the general advance in sciences, it would be a fatal mistake to overlook Comte's approach towards biology. Indeed, tracing Comte's primary argument throughout the *Cours*, we learn that Comte was a keen admirer and student of the developments in physiology and biology during the first decades of the eighteenth century, so much so that he propounded the impossibility of grasping the complex nature of society and fleshing out the discipline of sociology by remaining oblivious to these developments. As Georges Canguilhem elaborates brilliantly, Comte veered away from the mechanistic theories of organic molecules (animalcules) which had downplayed the significance of "unified" bodies and conferred misleading emphasis on the composition of molecules and their interactions in complex organisms. Dispensing with the sensationist theories of the eighteenth century, including that of Helvetius and Condillac, Comte brought into foreground scientists such as the father of modern histology, Marie Bichat, and the esteemed physiologist Paul Barthez for the sake of underlining the necessity of adopting a holistic approach to the phenomenon of life, rather than breaking down the organism into distinct, complex parts by means of intellectual abstraction (Canguilhem, 1994, pp. 237-241). What exactly was Comte's aim in discrediting these sets of ideas? And what are the repercussions of his stance regarding biology within the context of our discussion?

As I shall argue, Comte's portrayal of positive biology amounted to an immensely important epistemic transformation vis-à-vis the concept of organization.

In the case of Saint-Simon, the concept of organization was still a conjectural proposition and merely addressed the harmonious cooperation of the parts for a better functioning of the whole, that is, the industrial system. However, the concept of organization Comte later developed hinged upon a conceptual infrastructure developed in tandem with important breakthroughs in the subject of biology, taking into account the laws of organic life revealed by the latter. Canguilhem (1994) notes similarly that "[when] Saint-Simon published *De la physiologie appliquée à l'amelioration des institutions sociales* in 1813, he did not attempt to impose a biological model on social structure . . . [his] conception of an 'organized' body required no such analogy" (p. 250).[24] Indeed, immediately after asserting at the beginning of the second volume of the *Cours* that sociology should be modeled after the example of biology, Comte (1896b) goes on to explain in detail the principles of positive biology. Influenced by M. de Blainville's taxonomy of human life, he situates at the center of his exposition the law of organization, the introduction of which would not only eliminate the misleading approaches mentioned above, but show positively that the crucial factor demarcating organic life from the inorganic resides in the former having an anatomical structure (pp. 7-12). The anatomical structure, which bestows on organic life its static condition, does not operate in isolation with its dynamic counterpart; they are inseparable and necessarily related. Whereas other biologists opted for separating the static state from the dynamic state (ergo, the two irreducibly divergent perspectives – the anatomical and the physiological), Comte relied on the conclusions of Gall's cranioscopic method and

[24]This argument is contested by Dominique Guillo (2002) for whom Saint-Simon, not any less vigorously than Comte, strived to impose the model of biology on sociology. The problem with this perspective surfaces at once before the truly encyclopedic quality of Comte's work, wherein all branches of natural sciences are interlaced with one another, presenting an all-inclusive narrative that enables the reader to trace back sociology to mathematics, or to discern in the rudimentary formation of sciences the germs of its most developed form. In any case, Saint-Simon was neither theoretically aware of the shifting paradigmatic framework nor had an extensive and detailed knowledge of natural sciences as Comte did to propound a genuinely biocratic model of society.

phrenological physiology. As the conclusions showed that certain areas of the brain were by their nature associated with certain faculties, Comte was assured enough to suggest that the "conditions of existence" necessitated a mode of compatibility and viability between the organism and its environment, or between the organ and its function (Comte, 1896b, pp. 7-12; Canguilhem, 1994, pp. 244-245). For a thinker who was eager to apply the conclusions of biology to society and history, this insight carried immensely important implications that far surpassed the hard determinism of Saint-Simon. Once this biological model is taken as a blueprint for the investigation of social phenomena, any discussion concerning the meaning of human agency and temporality becomes a redundant and unwarranted metaphysical speculation. Viewing himself as a scientist entrusted with the mission of observing social phenomena and elaborating its fixed patterns and causal relationships, and also with the elucidation of the static and dynamic laws that were supposed to alleviate the state of crisis in France and across the continent, these breakthroughs in biology were bound to be applied to the investigation of society, especially with regard to the relationship between the particular and universal, or between the *individuum* and society. In this respect, Comte seems to have dispensed with the regulative use of ideas or simply lacked the necessary self-reflexivity to concede that the constructive use of these so-called laws, which impose a certain order and intelligibility to the constantly changing and fluid nature of things, were nonetheless a specific representation of reality rather than reality itself. As a matter of fact, the application of this biological model for sociology meant nothing other than the repression of human temporality, that is, the indeterminability of human action and freedom.

I grant that, at first impression, this uncanny connection between sociology and biology seems far-fetched and exaggerated, or even worse, anachronistic, as if

we are misattributing to the Positivist thought the characteristic features of Social Darwinist ideology. However, the following quotes prove otherwise. The text itself is laden with statements brimming with confidence and unflinching as follows:

> The whole social evolution of the race must proceed in entire accordance with biological laws; and social phenomena must always be founded on the necessary invariableness of the human organism . . . We see that [sociology] is not an appendix to biology, but a science by itself, founded upon a distinct basis, while closely connected, from first to last, with biology. Such is the scientific view of it. As to the method, the logical analogy of the two sciences is so clear as to leave no doubt that social philosophers must prepare their understandings for their work by due discipline in biological method . . . There is a most valuable philosophical principle common to both sciences which remains to be fully developed before it can attain its final prevalence;– I mean the positive version of the dogma of final causes . . . [t]his principle, being the necessary result of the distinction between the statical and the dynamical condition, belongs eminently to the study of living bodies. But, great as is its direct use in the study of individual life, it is applicable in a much more extensive and essential way in social science. (Comte, 1896b, pp. 260-264)

The proposition that the evolution of human species could be explained via biological laws necessarily entails another postulate regarding the social constitution of humanity. On the one hand, the anatomical structure – the static state – of society should correspond with the structural and institutional conditions of society, and conceived analogically as the cells, tissues and organs of a body, within the context of which certain social phenomena exist under the laws of solidarity. On the other hand, the dynamical aspects refer to the exercise and results of the intellectual powers of the general mind, which are affected by the laws of movement and determine the accretions of the moral and intellectual progress within the context of which humanity as a whole progresses through successive and relatively unified phases of technical, social, religious, intellectual and political development (Comte, 1896a, pp. 11-13). Curiously, in a book written two decades after *Positive*

Philosophy, Comte (1875) subsumes these two laws under the complementary ideas of *bio-cracy* and *socio-cracy* (pp. 498-502).[25] These terms are not really coincidental to the extent that they simultaneously tap into the *powerlessness* of human agency against the laws of solidarity and movement. The transition from Saint-Simon's relatively tentative construction of history and society into that of Comte's systematic, rigidly deterministic biological conceptualization seals the fate of human autonomy and agency, forcing it to comply with and genuflect before the invariable laws of society or simply perish before their ineluctability.

Comte's famous "Law of Three Stages" has to be mentioned at this point. However, it will be convenient to note initially that it is practically impossible to offer an encompassing account of this law given that approximately one-third of the entire *Positive Philosophy* is allocated to its detailed elaboration. Put in succinct terms, however, the law dictates that history should be categorized into three distinct stages, each having its own distinct features, and each stage reaching its *limit* once multiple causes that are posited to be responsible for the existence of phenomena are eventually reduced to one single entity, as the primary cause of things. According to Comte, the first stage, the theological stage, is characterized by a pressing demand for absolute knowledge, and the search for primary and final causes are sought in supernatural entities. The *limit* of this stage is God *qua causa prima*, signaling the establishment of monotheism. The metaphysical stage constitutes a transitional stage between the first and the third, differing from the former insofar as multiple concepts

[25] The intimate relation between biology and sociology was already elaborated in *The Positive Philosophy*. Here, Comte (1896a) holds that even though physiology and sociology are not identical, they are nevertheless homogeneous in their operation and that the laws of sociology are dependent on the laws of physiology (p. 29). As a matter of fact, this continuity contravenes a general yet outdated tendency in Comte scholarship which chooses to divide Comte's work into two mutually exclusive areas, Comte the Academic who laid the foundation of positivism as a method and Comte the High Priest whose interest crosses the "redline" of academic conventions and attempts to transform society in accordance with his convictions. As could be inferred from my argument, I am very skeptical of this artificial and misguiding periodization.

and abstract notions once again emerge as explanatory devices, ultimately condensing into the notion of Nature. Thus, Nature finally emerges as the *limit* of the second stage and becomes the new *causa prima*. The positive stage constitutes the final phase, in which the discussion of final and primary causes, teleological speculation and the search for absolute knowledge are relinquished in order to study the "laws" of phenomena, that is, the invariable relations of succession and resemblance. The ultimate perfection of the system is reached as soon as all phenomena are represented as the particular aspects of a general fact (Comte, 1896a, pp. 2-3). Scharff's (1991) succinct description is also helpful, allowing us to get hold of Comte's highly broad and encompassing definition of the law:

> Epistemologically, [the law of three stages] explains how each species of "natural philosophy" comes to be a true science by passing first through theological and metaphysical stages. Sociopolitically, it depicts the development of the types of human society which follow . . . the passage within the society from one intellectual stage to the next. Biographically, the law characterizes the stages of intellectual maturation for individuals. And historically . . . it describes the stages of intellectual growth for the whole of humanity. (p. 185)

All in all, Comte's argument smacks of a self-fulfilling prophecy. While the "law of three stages" perpetuates the narrative of progress inherited from the intellectual tradition of eighteenth century, it seeks to surpass this narrative by endowing it with a feature it previously lacked – scientificity. Serving as a critique of the early, conjectural definitions of progress, the Positive stage, allegedly neutral and merely factual, represents itself as embodying the perfected form of the idea of progress. In the following pages I will have the opportunity to inquire into whether or not there were political motivations behind this conviction.

2.3 "Order has to be seen as the condition of all progress"

For Comte, striving against the principles and laws disclosed by the intellectually ripe period of the Positive stage is destined to be devoid of any affective power. Even more importantly, Comte emphatically underlines, these endeavors are ultimately conditioned by "subjective chimeras" which are ignorant of the futility of their political agendas. It is for this reason that Comte continuously debunked the two irreconcilable camps that had emerged following the disintegration of the *ancien régime*. At one political pole, there were *légistes et littérateurs* such as Rousseau or Saint-Simon, subscribing to a metaphysical belief that individuals could design workable utopias; on the other, the "retrograde party" of counter-revolutionary royalists such as de Maistre, for whom the immediate agenda was the restitution of the principles of the ancien régime, yearning overtly for the absolutisms of Catholic dogma (Wernick, 2003, p. 34). Comte criticizes both approaches on account of their incompatibility with the dynamic law of society. Whereas the revolutionary and utopian doctrines of the post-Revolution era established their theories on premises and supposition based upon the intellectual setting of the Metaphysical stage and embraced unrestrained progressivism, the members of the retrogressive party conjured up the atrophied ideals of order based on the Theological stage of intellectual development. For Comte, remedying this particular predicament of epistemo-political incommensurability was only possible through a synthetic unity ordained by the Positive stage, which was, simply put, the reconciliation of order with progress. As a matter of fact, such unity was the inevitable outcome of the *necessary correlation of existenc*e (static) *and movement* (dynamic), the necessity of which was disclosed by the Positive stage, and required a new form of relationship between these two principles. Comte's stake in eliminating the historically

entrenched prejudice regarding the ultimate incompatibility of these two principles is in attunement with his ideas on biology (Aron, 1968, p. 77). Comte (1875) warrants that order and progress have to be reconciled by effecting a syncretistic model disclosed by the science of biology. According to this viewpoint, there are three complementary theses: A) Order has to be seen as the condition of all Progress, B) Progress has to be viewed as the object of Order, and C) Progress is to be regarded as the development of Order (p. 83). It is further asserted that reconciling these two principles will entail a new form of "spiritual organization", one that is based on the combination and simultaneous overcoming of the distinguishing principles of the theological and metaphysical stages (p. 86).

An inquiry pertaining to this "spiritual organization" will be essential for better understanding how human temporality was rendered completely insignificant and smothered under laws Comte had affiliated with the Positive stage and consecrated to the point of veneration. As Marcuse (1995) criticized Comte on account of the lack of "negative" and "critical" elements in his philosophy, he also laid bare a problem that was essentially temporal in its core, inasmuch as the positivist emphasis on observation rather than speculation rendered superfluous concepts such as reason, freedom or justice, in short, disabling the very media through which the particular relationship between the subject and his surrounding world could be dialectically formulated (pp. 340-360). Reedy (1994) eloquently taps into this issue, offering the following interpretation:

> Time will reach its obliterative fulfillment once civilization is organized in a manner that accommodates, while neutralizing, dysfunctional subjectivity and individuality. Changes other than the linear one prescribed by the three-stage schema are meaningless incidents or paroxysms attributable to ignorance or warped institutions . . . Positivist polity promises to shackle individuals' aberrations. (p. 11)

Indeed, the social world Comte had envisaged was not meant to be a sphere of speculation and dissidence. It was to foster a sense of cohesion and unity that would extol the virtues of what he dubbed as "sympathetic instincts" (social feelings) at the expense of "selfish instincts" (personal feelings). Shoring up his ideas with contemporary developments in biology, and in a manner reminiscent of the behaviorists in the following century, Comte (1875) goes as far as to suggest that the "constant exercise" and inculcation of socially functional instincts would eventually cause selfish instincts to fizzle out, followed by the much-needed coalescence of personal feelings with their social counterparts (pp. 73-79). True, Comte did not shy away from relying on rhetorical devices by taking advantage of the ambiguity and nebulous nature of the concept of "organization" (Guillo, 2002, p. 139) and propagated it for the sake of showing the predominance of social feelings over selfish instincts. But who was really able to escape them? For example, Saint-Simon, just like Comte after him, skewered the royalist tendencies of Louis de Bonald, yet still, he favored the vicomte's idea of the "utility of systematic unity", which stressed the prevalence of social whole over its parts and emphasized social duties at the expense of personal rights (Pickering, 1993a, pp. 74-75). It may strike us curious to see that Bonald advocated unity by the notion of "utility", a scientific idiom that stood rather awkwardly with his call for restituting theological thinking (Reedy, 1994, p. 8). Yet neither Saint-Simon nor Comte regarded this as a problem related to the nature of scientific idioms *per se*. The problem resided rather in the *content* of Bonald's solution, and specifically with the outmoded ideas of regal sovereignty and theology, rather than in the *form* of their exposition.

For Comte, the demand for systematic unity dictated that the activities of individuals falling outside the line of march laid down by his schema were ultimately

devoid of any autonomous agency. As Reedy (1994) notes, "such historical activities can be impediments but do not perturb the veracious *primum mobile* [that] steers history toward a destination beyond the mundane ephemera of events" (p. 9). Elsewhere, we encounter an analogous observation:

> As science, sociology above all exposes as illusion those earlier theories according to which all social structures are attributed to "original" compacts or contracts concluded in the spirit of self-interest, in calculation of profit or loss. Underlying all theories of the social contract is a philosophy that ascribes reality to individuals only and regards the collectivity either as a mechanism devised for convenience or as a theoretical abstraction. Positive sociology will show, however, that the opposite is true: it is the "individual" that is a mental construct, and society is the primordial reality. (Kolakowski, 1968, pp. 62-63)[26]

Hence arose in Comte's eyes the necessity of subduing those metaphysical "fancies" which were often in dangerous dissonance with the dynamic law of society. Comte designates the notion of right in particular as an idea incompatible with the Positive polity, expendable just as the notion of final causes was cast away from the domain of science. Comte (1875) proffers, in its stead, the idea of duty, which will facilitate the preponderance of social feelings over personal instincts (pp. 289-290). And it is precisely in this proposition that we clearly witness how sociology operates in tandem with biology, since the subordination of the parts to the whole is modeled by Comte in light of biological laws that demonstrate the subordination of singular organs to the organism as a whole. Similarly, individuals should not be regarded as distinct beings separable from the social organism, but conceived analogously as particular organs, the existence of which cannot be fathomed unless they exist and operate in absolute cooperation with the other organs comprising the social body (Comte, 1875, p. 291). Most certainly, a rigid understanding of human existence

[26] Also see: (MacKintosh, 2009, p. 26).

through biological metaphors, including its social or political aspects, is in total contradiction to the notion of right to the extent that the latter signifies and endorses individual *autonomy*, that is, the rule of being a law unto oneself; on the other hand, the *nomos* ruling over an organism dictates unwavering submission from its individual parts and thus imposes heteronomy. For Comte (1875), the disappearance of autonomous agency does not appear to be a problem, given that "the tendency of modern industry and science is to make us less dependent on individual caprice, as well as more assailable to the universal organism" (p. 296).

It is in accordance with this observation that Comte finds solace in dangerous and flimsy arguments such as in the proposition that *true* liberty consists in the efficacy of social union or that liberty would expand in proportion with the level of devotion shown to the universal organism by the members of society. Here, too, Comte's deification of the dynamic law of society manifests itself as he associates the *right* of free inquiry (among which he includes liberty of conscience, expression, and communication) with the revolutionary doctrines of the metaphysical stage, arguing how these ideals fulfilled their function by helping the overthrow of the theologico-military state, and thus evolved into nothing but disruptive force paving the way for intellectual anarchism. Indeed, Comte(1896b) spells out explicitly that the emergence of positive politics will be realized by imposing strict limitations on the metaphysical principle of liberty, and by replacing disagreement and difference of opinion with agreement and concordance as the arch-principles of the new phase of political life (pp. 151-154). It is in harmony with this line of criticism that Comte discredits the two overarching principles of the French Revolution, *liberté* and *égalité*, based on their incapacity to redeem people from various ideological, economic and political entanglements, the cause of which should be sought in the anachronistic objectives of

these ideas. It goes without saying that this very anachronism, apropos of its error in relating to the social time codified by the "law of three stages", was judged by Comte to be a sufficient reason for their astute reprobation at this more advanced stage of history. Similar to the position he had taken *vis-à-vis* liberty, Comte was assured that the idea of equality was in need of urgent revision whereby it would be grounded upon a more solid foundation than on the legal and abstract basis of political citizenship. What was then to be done according to the dynamic law of sociology? How was this much-needed social cohesion to be achieved?

According to Comte (1875), the two permanent functions of any societal organization – temporal and spiritual powers – should be modified so as to accommodate themselves with the necessities of the epoch, the *Zeitgeist*, as it were. Whereas temporal power would oversee the appropriate implementation of the principle of order and look after government, economic activity and the regulation of egotistical interests, spiritual power would dedicate itself to moral education, strive towards the promotion of social feelings and endeavor to foster a social ethic imbued with the spirit of cooperation and reciprocal duty (p. 268).[27] Comte's attempt to pave the ground for a new sort of social structure was a result of his conviction concerning the necessity of reconciling an age of increasing specialization (*un âge de spécialité*) with the spirit of union (*l'esprit d'ensemble*). In other words, Comte problematized the basic idea of individualism that early capitalism required and promoted. He noticed in this development a grave tendency toward anarchism, the inevitability of which was certain unless this very individualism was checked and countered with equal and perhaps bolder emphases on the idea of order. It is within this framework

[27] It has to be noted incidentally that this dual categorization and the respective separation of the features of government were fashioned after Bichat's theory regarding the structure of organisms: The life of nutrition amounts to processes indispensable for the establishment and maintenance of order. Progress, on the other hand, is modeled with respect to the life of relations as they appear in the complex network of inter-organic innervation.

that Comte (1896b) made the following claim: "No real order can be established, and still less can it last, if it is not fully compatible with progress: and no great progress can be accomplished if it does not tend to the consolidation of order" (p. 140). At the heart of this claim reside two equally important assumptions: a) the two mentioned functions of society – temporal and spiritual powers – also constitute the contents of *l'Humanité*, and b) the gradual changes in these permanent functions are subject to invariable laws that have to be revealed in accordance with the methods of positive science (Comte, 1875, p. 269). The determination of these dual powers by the invariable laws of sociology enables Comte to conceptualize the idea of humanity into an absolute principle of sociology, whereby it is dubbed as *le grand-Être*, the supremacy of which is said to arise from its continuous development throughout history. And precisely at this point we start to discern how humanity *qua* the supreme being assumes a quasi-religious function, which would supplant the role of Christianity in its role of promoting social feelings and contributing to the consolidation of order. In the second chapter, I will dwell more on this issue in the context of Nietzsche's discussion of nihilism.

One of Comte's assertions reveals how his comprehension of humanity encompasses a vast temporal horizon, stretching from the dawn of humanity to an anticipated period in some indefinite future. He notes remarkably that "the fact that all human affairs are subject to a fundamental law, as soon as it becomes familiarly known, enables . . . each one of us to live in . . . the Past and even in the Future" (Comte, 1875, pp. 277-278). What does this enigmatic phrase really amount to? From one specific angle, it seems that Comte is interrupting the traditional association of the eternal with the transcendent, and by bringing down the former into the world and sprawling it along the course of time, he is attempting to infuse

history with a sacred purpose and meaning. Or does Comte simply mean that the sociologist, once he based his query on legitimate methods circumscribed by the Positive stage, grasp the privilege of viewing the entire history panoramically, from the reflective standpoint of the moment? It will be evident shortly that Comte does not limit the implications of his statement to historiographical questions but actually situates the issue of temporality right at the heart of his political project. This can be noticed most strikingly in the volleys of criticism he hurls at communism. Although the theorists of communism partake in boasting the spirit of social union, Comte writes, their understanding is necessarily limited by their lack of insight. He asserts critically that communists are only concerned with delineating the problems of their contemporaries, stopping short of cognizing the importance of history in its entirety, either by neglecting to address earlier generations or by deliberately ignoring them, and therefore failing to comprehend the historical continuity of *l'Humanité* (Comte, 1875, p. 128). The motto of social solidarity signifies a mode of union based on contesting the conditions of the present, that is, it is a social consensus based on the radical overthrow of the present forces of power. Comte is adamant that the consensus of social organism should be extended in the direction of both past and future. A theoretical and practical framework solely engaged in the present, often accompanied with little or no sympathy towards the past, will fall short of grasping the historical implications of the continuity of the social organism and the totality of *le grand-Être* (Comte, 1875, pp. 291-293).

Nevertheless, the implications of Comte's axiom – namely, *to live in the past and in the future* – is not exhausted by his denunciation of communism. It also brings to the surface Comte's suggestion for a new occidental faith which will be erected on top of the foundation of positive rationality, and fulfill accordingly the need for a

naturalist understanding of humanity's place in the cosmos.[28] For Comte, this is a step necessitated by the irreversible and progressive events of 1789, which already then was auguring the inevitability of a post-theistic religion (Wernick, 2003, pp. 18-19). This new occidental faith was to be propagated under the guidance of the afore-mentioned spiritual power, a novel priesthood composed out of scientific elites and embodying the principle of feelings (*les sentiments*), contributing in effect to the moral and spiritual well-being of people. In this sense, to live in the past and in the future discloses a new form of religion, a secular and curiously narcissistic one at that, as each individual is supposed to partake in the entire processes comprising the march of l'Humanité. This march assumes a quasi-divine power, as the individual who intimately feels part of the long and arduous history of humanity acquires a mystical insight into the meaning of his existence. Wernick (2003) hints the religious and immanentist undercurrent of the idea of humanity in Comte's system as follows:

> No more than 'society' does 'Humanity' consist only of the synchronously interconnected body of the living. The space of its existence includes the fourth dimension of time. It is intergenerational. Humanity includes, then, not just those presently with us, but also the dead, who live only in our minds . . . It also includes those not yet born, who constitute a future horizon for our furthest aims. (p. 113)

It is equally important to highlight that Comte's emphasis on the participation of the whole in these venerational and commemorative duties had taken shape as a result of his dissatisfaction with the individualistic foundation of Christianity, according to which salvation ultimately resides in one's own-most inclinations and disposition, in one's fulfillment of what dogma dictates and the sets of duties and actions it prescribes for the singular man (Comte, 1896c, p. 187). By shifting the focus from

[28] Kolakowski (1968) underlines this same point with reference to Comte's differentiation between rights and duties: "As it has always done, religion [in Comte's view] will unite human beings and order their lives, will keep alive the consciousness of their ties to the Higher Being, and teach people their duties (never rights)" (p. 65).

the individual to the social, Comte continued exhibiting his deep distrust for the metaphysical proposition that individual insight and the demonstration of moral precepts were sufficient alone to foster the foundation for public order and moral union. Indeed, it was not through stiff and formalistic moral syllogisms but by means of the force of feeling (*les sentiments*) that the moral well-being of the society could actually be achieved. He (1875) noted that since positive philosophy possessed "the true theory of human development, every mode and phase of that development [would be] celebrated," requiring the deliberate submission of each person to the scientifically proven laws of the society (p. 81). At the core of this new occidental faith, Comte (1875) argued, mutual love had to stand, knitting together the various parts of the society while they are indiscriminately given the opportunity to participate in the past, present and future, immersed to the spatio-temporal totality of humanity and fully conscious of their solidarity and participation in the latter (p. 264).[29]

It has to be underlined that the principle of love occupies a very prominent status in Comte's thought: So much so that if order is not rendered subservient to love, he argues, the force of progress could also get hampered. Indeed, the socially integrative function Comte ascribed to love can nowhere be seen better than in the function a handful of social and cultural institutions will play for the perpetuation of

[29]A similar emphasis on the socially cohesive function of love was accentuated by Saint-Simon over three decades before Comte's *System of Positive Polity*. There is no doubt that Saint-Simon's conviction was familiar to Comte and partly shared by the latter. Underlining the necessity of a historically appropriate cohesive force, and dubbing it in a highly bold fashion as "New Christianity", Saint-Simon distinguishes the latter from its 'older' and traditional counterpart by eliminating dogmatic elements from its content and grounding it on a rationalist basis. Discipline and hierarchy, while ensuring the further rationalization of production, was to supplemented with a spiritual power vital for the industrial system. Love, according to Saint-Simon, would be extremely functional in gluing together the separated parts into a whole. In *La Politique*, he asserts that the Christian principle 'love thy neighbor' could be perfectly realized in the industrial system to the extent that it would enable and encourage through systematic means the industriels towards satisfying the primary needs of other people comprising the society. Comte's new occidental faith is similar to Saint-Simon's in terms of its complicity with the prevalent social order, yet it does not partake in the optimistic evaluation of the role Christianity could play in the capitalist society. See: (Saint-Simon, 1976e, p. 131).

his Positive Polity. One particular site in which love was to disseminate among the people was during the celebration of festivals. Static festivals were to celebrate social order and instill into the participants' hearts the sense of solidarity required for the proper functioning of the society. Dynamic festivals, on the other hand, were to explain social progress whilst praising and extolling the inspirational force of historical continuity (Comte, 1875, p. 274). Bolstering the spirit of union (*l'esprit d'ensemble*), and facilitating the effective organization of public opinion, festivals thereby assimilate the heterogeneously dispersed individuals of an age of specialization (*un âge de spécialité*) into a single homogeneous entity.[30] More importantly, as a site/moment of spectacle and action, it opens up a socially predefined and regulated "now", by means of which the present starts functioning as a junction connecting the past with the future, realizing the aforementioned objective of the social body – *living in the Past and in the Future*. Undoubtedly, the common adherence of the participants to this temporal organization subsequently alters their relations to one another, rendering efficacious and fortifying the principle of reciprocal duty inasmuch as their conduct is now affected by social feelings under the aegis of love.

In addition to festivals, Comte (1875) recognizes art as one of the efficient media for the propagation of this new occidental faith – *Religion de l'Humanité*. The role of art is averred to be the "ideal representation of fact[s]" (*idéalizer la réalité*) which will "cultivate our sense of perfection" by depicting, in accordance with the rules and standards of aesthetics, that which science formally and merely explains (p.

[30]The unifying role of festivals was brilliantly elaborated by Georges Bataille (1991). The festival operates as a bracketed timeframe in a world normally regulated by the complementary principles of labor and accumulation of wealth. Although it is essentially divergent from and antithetical to the rules of capitalist society due to its cooptation of unbridled expenditure and excess, its appropriation by sovereign powers confers on it a supportive function for a system that is rational through and through at its core. See the first two chapters in particular.

227; Caird, 1879, p. 668). However nebulous it may sound, Comte's emphasis on cultivating the sense of perfection is an implicit reference to the supremacy of l'Humanité, the authority of which stems from the "scientifically" demonstrated, palpable and universally shared features of humankind. In this respect, the specific form and content of art that Comte espouses is certainly the one that provides a beautiful and sublime representation of the moral, political, social and scientific universe he had been diligently working out. As he elucidates later in the text, the concrete works of positive art should not only increase sympathy and spur the members of society towards synergistic activities but ought to be responsible for the continuous regeneration of society and function as an ethico-moral compass for the *Religion de l'Humanité* (Comte, 1875, pp. 240-241).

It is not surprising that Comte's pragmatic interpretation of art as a faculty for social cohesion and unity was subject to fervent criticisms by his contemporaries. Fuchler (1979) mentions a prominent art critic, an author in a famous French journal of music entitled the *Revue et gazette musicale*, who complained in 1852 that the theory of art propounded by positivism was a threat against individuality, imagination, sensibility and emotions, ready to sacrifice them to banal commonalities and physically observed reality in the name of stimulating a communal *force vitale* (pp. 142-144).[31] We do not know for sure if François-Joseph Fétis was aware of Comte's critique of the concept of individuality, the roots of which were to be found in metaphysical thinking and was inextricably tied to the notion of right. In any case, Comte's theory of art certainly repudiated the form of individualism encountered in

[31] It is interesting to note that the critic mentioned here, François-Joseph Fétis, engaged in his diatribes against positivism on account of some worrying similarities he spotted between the latter and Richard Wagner's musical theory. As a matter of fact, the article suggests that Fétis might have been correct in his comparison since Wagner's central text on aesthetics, *Das Kuntswerk der Zukunst*, did indeed argue that art should primarily strive towards facilitating the internalization of collective ideas and constitute the basis of communal worship.

the Romantic art. The wanderer in the tableau of Der *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* by Caspar David Friedrich, this idealized image of Romantic man standing before the mystical forces of nature and immersed in the imagination of the sublime certainly appeared to him as a historical artifact incommensurate with the laws of progress, if not a subversive form of art most dangerous due to its socially misleading content. One could hold further that the social function attributed to art by Comte indeed materialized in the paintings of Jean-François Millet and Gustave Courbet, wherein we are confronted with characteristics peculiar to Naturalism/Realism: a) the concept of psychological truth based on the principle of causality, b) the utilization of characteristic details based on the method of scientific observation, and c) the striving for impersonality and impassibility as the guarantees of social solidarity and objectivity (Hauser, 2005, pp. 35-61). This last feature complements another feature of naturalism, at the heart of which we discern a Comtean topos, namely, the generalization of art in order to render it alluring for the masses and for instilling a sense of solidarity through thematically and historically practical, natural and straightforward representations. As Fulcher (1979) argues, Comte believed that "the arts were to address themselves to 'l'élément populaire' as embodiments of familiar and common opinions, dealing with things that everyone experienced, and not with the aberrations of individual minds" (p. 146). The successful implementation of this type of art would consequently bolster sympathetic instincts or social feeling and accordingly enhance the moral and emotional foundation of mutual love, which, as we have seen, was synonymous with social order and harmony.

As a matter of fact, it is precisely because of this social role attributed to art by Comte that it has intricate relations with the matter at hand. By expunging from positive art the residues of defunct ideals such as individualism and metaphysical

fancy, art operates as a medium for consecrating the order, that which manifests itself in the *presence* of things. This presentism, which is determined and preserved by the *necessary correlation of existence* (statistics) *and movement* (dynamics), occupies so much an importance that even utopias, though naturally expected to have a critical and poetical content, are thought to be subjected to impregnable laws and regulations. Indeed, Comte (1875) boldly underlines that the systematic construction of utopias should be in total concordance with the basic fundamental rule of positive philosophy, which strictly expects that the ideal be subordinated to the real (p. 254). Doubtless, we are not in the slightest close to the fantastic worlds carved out by Thomas More in *Utopia*, or *L'an 2440* by Louis-Sébastien Mercier, insofar as the definition of utopia by Comte nullifies any social project that is not immediate and immanent to the society from which it springs forth. In other terms, Comte holds rather extraordinarily that utopias should dispense with the Greek prefix ou-, arguing for the suspension of the dialectical tension that exists in utopic literature between the present and the non-existent *topos*, between the now-time and the limitless expanse of imagination. Comte's understanding of utopia is strictly topological insofar as it makes the "no-whereness" (-ou), of topos redundant for political imagination and duly consecrates the order of things. The dissolution of this supra-spatial dimension, which have had otherwise underpinned the poetic flight and imagination of the mind, indicates a form of impoverishment peculiar to human temporality since the "no-whereness" of topos is logically connected to the interruption of time in its regular ebb and flow, and the representation/creation of a temporal dimension that is uniquely resistant to the orderly procession of everyday time. Keeping in mind our previous elaborations, it would follow that Comte's outlook on utopianism enforces his former claims concerning the necessity of

realizing progress *with* order; this symbiotic relationship between the cardinal forces forming his sociology – the *with*-ness of progress – demands the unwavering repudiation of metaphysical imagination, the vestiges of which Comte would have discerned in the utopian projects of his day. Comte's antagonism towards critical insight and his vanguardism of socio-political order is buttressed by what Michel Foucault identified as the discourse of continuity (*le discours du continu*). Subordinating imagination to the laws of movement and order, Comte's utopianism reveals an epistemic framework, generally tending

> to group a succession of dispersed events, to link them to one and the same organizing principle, to subject them to the exemplary power of life . . . to discover, already at work in each beginning a principle of coherence and the outline of a future unity, to master time through a perpetually reversible relation between an origin and a term that are never given, but are always at work. (Foucault, 2007, pp. 21-22)

As could be validated with examples scattered throughout this chapter, the discourse of continuity (*le discours du continu*) is certainly not limited to the subject of utopianism and engulfs themes as diverse as socio-politics, art, ethics and the history of science. By *mastering time*, or the temporal dimension within the context of which these subjects change, mutate and respectively crystallize in a specific form at a certain period of time, this narrative formation forges a unified, coherent and definitive totality. And this marshaled scheme connotes to a state of normality, the standardized blueprint of truth, before the authority of which deviations, dissociations and anomalies could be detected, measured, experimented with and, if necessary, eliminated altogether.

Most certainly, the problematic application of binary opposites, which is frequently immanent to grand discursive structures, manifests itself in Comte's oeuvre with a characteristically biological hue. As I have accentuated previously,

Comte did not shy away from applying the laws of physiology to sociology. We have also seen how the *necessary correlation of existence and movement* was hypothetically put forth after various discoveries in biology concerning the correlation of physiology and anatomy, respectively, inducing Comte to propose the existence of societal *organization* after the theoretical construct of *organism*. What could be the implications of understanding society as *un phénomène composé*, analogous to the individual organism treated in biology? One answer to this question is provided by Canguilhem (1994), for whom the discursively constructed state of normality necessarily implicates its binary opposite, namely, the ever-present possibility of pathological phenomena (p. 245). Having discussed the features of Comte's *normatively* delineated Positive state, it would not be difficult to imagine under which category he would have lumped those principles and ideas that were putatively incommensurable with the model sketched out. Indeed, Comte's positive politics should primarily be thought as a politico-medical institution incorporating a systematic procedure of diagnosis and cure, endowing the system with its unique functional rules for the "normal" achievement of social unity and solidarity, while provisioning the requirements and modification necessary for ensuring order appropriate to the particular level of social development (Wernick, 2003, p. 57). As the discourse of continuity decides upon the threshold between normality and pathology by *mastering time*, the biocratic or sociocratic model observes and examines the concrete social milieu through the lens of a highly dichotomous structure intent on locating and dealing with undesirable elements.

It is certainly foreseeable that the conceptual affinity accentuated by Comte between two notions, organism and organization may be overlooked on account of the body metaphor hitherto utilized in political philosophy, starting with Plato,

followed by the embodiment of Christ with the Church and finally taking its modern and secular form in the formidable figure of Leviathan. Nonetheless, there is a crucial nuance which comes into view once the two viewpoints concerning the ontological value ascribed to pathological entities are contrasted. For example, discussing the politico-spiritual unison that could be realized in the body of Christ, Pascal (2008) notes in the *Pensées* that deviating from this union is analogous to the condition of a limb "cut off", amputated, no longer attuned with the body and "no longer seeing the body to which it belongs, [the limb turned into] a withering and moribund being left" (p. 90). Falling astray from this corporeal totality, self-love without the mediation of God, consequently places the former member *out of* this totality insofar as he *apo-stenai* (stand away from), the apostate hereby conceived ontologically at variance with that of the spirit embodied in the body of Christ. *Qui adhæret Deo unus spiritus est* [But he that is joined unto the lord is one spirit (1 Cor. 6: 17)]. According to Pascal, the disrupting element or the pathological force (if we may say so without succumbing to anachronism) is irreducibly unique in the sense that it is subdued by laws that are completely antithetical to those ruling over the healthy, Christian politico-spiritual body. In the case of Comte, however, the ontological status of pathology transforms irrevocably. Following Broussais's theoretical conclusions, he concurs that diseases are not to be considered phenomena qualitatively different from the optimal, healthy functioning of the body, but conceived rather as subject to a set of similar laws of biology. The causes of diseases and other pathological phenomena are to be sought with respect to quantitatively calculable differences, arising due to comparatively different and irregular intensities (Comte, 1875, p. 527). Not only does this formulation allow the possibility of controlling various physical aberrations, but it also nails down categorically the

crucial principle that "placed in a given system of exterior circumstances, a definite organism must always act in a necessarily determinate manner" (Comte, 1896b, p. 10). Thus, the phenomenon of disease becomes a matter strictly related to irregularities and is typified as a form of exception to the rule, a sort of deviation in an organism that otherwise, that is to say, *normally* acts in a determinate manner. Fully assured in the extensive applicability of Broussais's principle, Comte(1875) discusses its social implications as follows:

> [There] is the more reason for counting upon this systematic aid from pathological analysis that medicine will undoubtedly be soon recognized as one of the accessory functions of the sociological priesthood . . . The collective organism, by virtue of its higher complication, is liable to disturbances even more serious, more varied, and more frequent than the individual organism. There can be no doubt that the principle of Broussais is applicable here also; and in fact I have myself frequently made use of it in verifying or in developing sociological laws. (pp. 527-528)

Hence, Comte explicitly brings into the foreground the model of biology as an important tool *in verifying or in developing* those sociological laws we have analyzed throughout our discussion. Put differently, this amounts to nothing other than squaring the role of sociological priesthood with the function of medicinal treatment. The more serious, varied and frequent disturbances will be handled by this group, whose duties will include the previously discussed organization of festivals, the commemoration of the martyrs of *le grand-Être* – Humanity – the regulation of aesthetics and utopian programs, and the promotion of sympathetic instincts vital for social cohesion. The healthy cooperation of all biocratic/sociocratic organs in the same cause, that is, their uninterrupted service for *le grand-Être* will eventually result with the passing away of the theological militarism of the earlier phases of historical development. In its stead, society will be infused with a sense of altruism, purified from the destructive effects of egoism, and each member/organ fully

committed to performing his duties as determined by the dynamic laws of history (Comte, 1875, p. 500).

In conclusion, Auguste Comte's significance for the conceptual history of progress resides in his systematic subsumption of history under the discipline of sociology. Deciphered by the scientist, the *laws* of society are postulated alongside a conception of history that is regular, fixed and at the same inherently teleological, driving ineluctably towards the organic period of Positive state. Secondly, Comte stands out among his contemporaries with his highly synthetic mindset, emphatically insisting on the need to develop a systematic method that will not overlook the highly intricate web of relations between biology, history and politics. With this project, the question of human temporality also takes on a conspicuously social hue. Articulated to the pressing aim of social unity and harmonious totality, individual and social dimensions of temporality become reciprocal areas of administration that are to be organized and supervised by the sociological priesthood. The mastering of objective time is carried out along with the containment and assimilation of the particulars, determining the state of normality according to the degree of compatibility with the fixed dynamic law of society. Considered within the context of the social and community-building aspects of temporality, this can certainly not be comprehended as an innovative formulation sketched out by Comte, especially if one recollects that the ideological appropriation of social time had long started before the introduction of positivism. Indeed, the ingenious attempt of the Jacobins to impose a new calendar by the end of the eighteenth century, essentially for rooting out temporal symbols that belonged to the *ancien régime* and Christianity, was certainly

known by Comte.[32] Nevertheless, the complete overhaul of social time, which was the primary objective of this undertaking, was not as deep and intellectually complex as the temporal horizon peddled by the intelligentsia of positivism; in the eyes of Comte, the calendar promoted by the Jacobins was destined to be a conjectural and unrealistic programme advocated only by a certain fanatical clique. In fact, these kinds of "critical" initiatives, nestled in the precarious foundation of metaphysics, were precisely what Comte sought to eliminate from the realm of political and sociological thought.

2.4 Evil in society: Immanuel Kant's two-tiered conception of progress

Mary Pickering's meticulous archival study of Auguste Comte's correspondences unearths some fascinating facts about the thinker's life-long interest in German philosophy, revealing his rather striking celebration of Immanuel Kant's views on history and progress. Thanks to her exhaustive intellectual biography, we now know that Comte had been able to read some extracts from the first two *Critiques*, that he was relatively familiar with *Perpetual Peace*, and was so impressed with *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (1784) that he read and reread it "with infinite pleasure", concluding that its "details" reflected the "positive spirit" (Pickering, 1993a, p. 291). It will not be an exaggeration to say that Comte's reading of this text was simultaneously a humbling and encouraging experience, as evidenced by his frank admission during his correspondences with Gustave D'Eichthal, who served as an intermediary between Comte and German philosophy and supplied him with the necessary translations:

32 See the "*Decree Establishing the French Era" and "Decree Establishing the New Calendar",* in *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution,* pp. 508, 510 & pp. 511-512. For an outstanding analysis of the semiotic implications of this calendrical reform, see: (Zerubavel, 1977).

> If I had known it [the essay] six or seven years earlier, it would have spared me the effort [of writing my own] . . . Today I thank my lack of erudition, for if my work, such as it is now, had been preceded . . . by the study of Kant's treatise, it would have lost much of its value in my eyes. (as cited in Pickering, 1993a, p. 291)

Beneath this appreciation of Kant's views, however, resides Comte's firm conviction in the inexorability and superiority of positive spirit. Notwithstanding his insightful and principally correct exposition of human history, Comte asserted, Kant was still a member of the metaphysical school and his ideas therefore required necessary tuning and tampering. Comte was certain that his "law of the three stages" achieved precisely that by systematizing and conceptualizing Kant's ideas in full accordance with the Positive stage. As a result, historical facts were now concatenated even more deterministically and the cumulative growth of reason in human species was demonstrated in a more clear and logical form. Perhaps it is this affinity that he sensed between his ideas and Kant's on history, which later spurred him to incorporate Kant into the Positive Calendar and bestow on him a highly prominent position as befitting, in Comte's words, "the greatest modern metaphysician . . . closest to the positive philosophy" (as cited in Pickering, 1993a, p. 296).

Sidestepping Comte's remarks about the epistemological project of Kant, and focusing solely on the question of progress and philosophy of history, it is convenient to commence by pointing out the rather superficial nature of Comte's interpretation. First and foremost, Kant underlines in *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* that the *necessity* of ascribing meaning to human history is inextricably linked to the limited scope and purpose of empirical history. Once history is read through an empirical lens, we end up getting confused by the fortuitousness of human actions: "Despite the apparent wisdom of individual actions here and there, everything as a whole is made up of folly and childish vanity" (Kant,

2009a, p. 41). Human history is not analogous to the natural history of bees or beavers which act in concert, but only do so out of instinct. There can be no law-governed history of mankind to the extent that human beings do not *act* in accordance with any "integral, prearranged plan";mankind follows *no purpose of its own*, thus we are spurred to discover *a purpose set by nature* (Kant, 2009a, p. 42). One may well imagine what Comte would have formed in his mind after reading the introductory section of *Idea*. Is this *call* not enunciated by Kant for discovering the ultimate purpose of mankind anticipate his greatest discovery of the law of three stages, the scientific *principle* which proves history, as it were, to be a process of the progressive development of humanity? It is not far-fetched to surmise that while expressing his great joy in finding Kant a kindred spirit, Comte was certain that he had achieved more than him, precisely because the progressive development of humanity was now being *empirically* demonstrated and transforming from mere speculation into the fundamental *law* of society. In other words, it was in the process of becoming a full-fledged matter of positive sciences that can actually have direct impact on the present composition of society and single-handedly guide its course of development. As stated in the introduction of this section, this perspective, however, relied on a grave misunderstanding of the *idea* of progress in Kant's philosophy. In order to describe in what ways Kant's idea of progress radically departed from Comte's scientistic conception, we have to approach the *text* as a part of Kant's system considered in its unity. Unless we situate the idea of progress within the context of the architectonic unity of Kant's philosophy and analyze, specifically, its connection to the metaphysics of morals, it will not be possible to show in detail and with as much clarity as possible the two ideal types of progress that have developed in the history of the concept.

It will be helpful for the purpose of my following argument to commence with a detailed look at the title of the text in question: Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose [*Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*]. In her lectures on Kant's political philosophy, Hannah Arendt interpreted Kant's resolve in writing a "universal" (*allgemeinen*) history to be in conflict with the conception of political "men" worked out in the first part of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the idea of political beings endowed with common sense, *sensus communis*. She argues that Kant's idea of progress in history as a whole "implies disregard for the particular and [directs] one's attention, rather, to the "universal"', thus serving to undermine the *condicio sine qua non* of political existence, the *plurality* of men (Arendt, 1992, p. 26). In Kant's philosophy of history, Arendt continues, one is confronted not with the existence of men in plural but rather with human species as a universal category, subject to history in the form of being a plaything of nature's ruse and to be considered only under what Kant defines as its ultimate end (*letzter Zweck*) (p. 27).[33] Elsewhere, while elaborating on the condition of men *qua* members of human species, and/or in their destiny within the setting of Kant's philosophy of history, Arendt (2006) suggests that "by pursuing their own aims without rhyme or reason men seem to be led by the 'guiding thread of reason'" (p. 82). This almost unconscious vulnerability to the ruse or cunning of reason happens to bequeath on Kant's philosophy of history a distinctively Hegelian tincture. Even more problematically, by dividing Kant's conception of human being

[33] Thus Arendt does not pay enough attention to the distinction Kant had tried to work out in the second part of *Critique of Judgment*. As we shall see, the distinction between the ultimate end (letzter Zweck] and the final end [Endzweck] is of paramount importance, so much so that without the vocation (*Bestimmung*) of human beings, without this active responsibility in bearing the weight put upon their shoulders by nature, the idea of being nature's end is not worth anything. See: (Kant, 2001, p. 298) (5: 431). For the sake of the reader's convenience, I will provide the pagination of the standard German edition of Kant's works, *Gesammelte Schriften*, alongside the page numbers of the translated books. For the distinction between the ultimate end (*letzter Zweck*) and the final end (*Endzweck*), see Guyer, 2006, p. 338.

into three mutually exclusive domains – "man" as a *moral* agent, "human species" as a *natural/historical* category and finally "men" as *political* beings – Arendt seems to be proffering that Kant's philosophy of history or idea of progress is irrelevant, if not in conflict with, the consideration of man as political beings.

This line of criticism would have made more sense if it had been directed towards Comte's theory of progress. We have seen in the first section in what ways the principle of universality reigns supreme in the works of Comte and elaborated on its repercussions for the particular. In any case, it has to be highlighted that Arendt is not alone, at least in terms of arriving to the conclusion that Kant's theory of morality is ultimately in conflict with his philosophy of history. In an article that continues to raise controversy among the scholars of Kant, Emil Fackenheim (1956) asserted boldly that even though Kant's philosophy of history should be construed as a "systematic part of a larger systematic whole", it was ultimately a "failure" because it failed to show the normative value of history and because the link suggested between nature and morality actually conflicted with the distinction set by Kant himself between noumena and phenomena. Leaving the details aside, Fackenheim's argument boils down to this particular question: Is it really possible to reconcile the spontaneity of practical reason (*Vernunft*) and the idea of freedom with the phenomenal realm of history and nature? Was it not Kant himself, Fackenheim asks, who painstakingly showed in the first *Critique* that our empirical knowledge of the objective world *has to be* limited due to the concepts of the understanding (*Verstand*)? Answering these questions would require us to focus exclusively on the *Critique of Pure Reason*, an endeavor which cannot be carried out here in this limited space. As a matter of fact, my intention in raising these questions was only for the sake of offering a glimpse into the gargantuan task Kant was grappling with. As he wrote in a letter to C. F.

Staudlin almost ten years after the publication of *Idea for a Universal History*, the plan he prescribed for himself called for an examination of the field of pure philosophy *with a view to solving three problems*: 1) What can I know? 2) What ought I to do? 3) What may I hope? (as cited in Peters, 1993, p. 15; Lahat, 2013, p. 164).[34] In any case, I argue in contrast to Fackenheim that Kant's philosophy of history and morality did not end with failure, especially if we understand by *failure* any inconsistency in Kant's part by falling short of operating within the epistemological bounds strictly constituted in the first *Critique*.

While Arendt capitalized on the word *allgemeinen*, I would like to follow a similar strategy and draw attention to the word *Idee* as it is employed in *Idea* for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose [*Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*]. Regarding the nature and function of the *ideas* (*Ideen*) of reason in Kant's philosophy, Wilkins (1966) offers the following explanation:

> They regulate in some respect our way of looking at or arranging the objects of possible experience. The ideas of reason are indispensable, even though they sometimes give rise to the illusion that the concepts of the understanding have their ultimate source in a real object lying outside the field of empirically possible knowledge - 'just as the object reflected in a mirror are seen as behind it . . . It is only through the understanding that reason has its own specific empirical employment. It does not create concepts of objects - a task of the understanding - but it orders these concepts and gives them unity. Just as the understanding unites the manifold in the object by means of concepts, so reason unifies the manifold of concepts by means of ideas. (p. 177)

Wood (2006) adds correspondingly that "an idea (*Idee*) is a concept of reason to which no empirical object can ever correspond, but which we use regulatively in

[34] These questions, of course, first appear at the end of *Critique of Pure Reason* and from here onwards serve as the guidelines of Kant's philosophical investigations. See: (Kant, 1996b, p. 735) (A805/B833).

arranging our cognitions in a system" (p. 355). In *Idea for a Universal History*, Kant (2009a) openly declares that the plan of nature aimed at a perfect civil union of mankind is merely a guide, playing a regulative function by representing "an otherwise planless *aggregate* of human actions as conforming, at least when considered as a whole, to a *system*" (p. 52). Insofar as the planless multiplicity of events is acknowledged to be out there in their empirically disjointed and meaningless aggregation, it is obvious that Kant does not make a theoretical claim or offer a determinative judgment about history. Rather, he brackets this "objective reality", which exists by itself without any meaning whatsoever, in order to offer a unified history (*Geschichte*) that would serve a practical purpose for morality. It is only by assuming this critical stance that we can view history as a fertile ground to cultivate hope, a form of hope which is nonetheless *rational* through and through insofar as it is regulatively assembled, and that without the regulative utilization of an *idea* of history, hope would ultimately degenerate into utter superstition and fancy. Sensing in advance that his exposition is liable to misinterpretations, he tries to make his point as clear as possible: "It would be a misinterpretation of my intention to contend that I meant this idea of a universal history, which to some extent follows an a priori rule, to supersede the task of history proper, that of *empirical composition*" (Kant, 2009a, p. 53).

Squeezing out of Kant's philosophy of history quasi-Hegelian motifs is a long-standing custom in Kant scholarship, and is most conspicuously attempted by a student of neo-Kantian school, Yirmiyahu Yovel, in his book centering on Kant's theory of progress. Here Yovel (1980) asserts that it was only with the publication of *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in 1789 that the principle of the "cunning of nature" passed through a radical reformulation in its methodological status and

achieved a standing compatible with the demands of the critical reason (p. 8).[35] Although this interpretation may sound a little bit harsh on account of overlooking the fact that Kant was already tapping into the regulative function of the idea of progress in *Idea for a Universal History*, it is nevertheless valuable, given that Kant really did wait until the third critique for offering a systematic and fully fledged theory of teleological judgment. With this final layer of the critical project finally paved, both the *idea* of universal history and the *idea* of progress in history achieve a coherent form. Kant (2001) summarizes the difference between *reflecting* (regulative) and *determining* (constitutive) judgments as follows:

> [The] power of judgment can be regarded either as a mere faculty for *reflecting* on a given representation, in accordance with a certain principle, for the sake of a concept that is thereby made possible, or as a faculty for *determining* an underlying concept through a given empirical representation.[emphasis added] (p. 15) (20: 211)

What makes the *idea* of progress in history and the *idea* of purpose in nature *regulative* rather than *determinative* is the fact that as *idea*, they deliberately stop at ascribing to nature an objectively valid teleological constitution: "To subordinate the idea of mechanism of nature to the idea of the whole of nature as a system in accordance with the rule of ends can be appropriate *only subjectively* – a guideline for considering things in nature" [emphasis added] (Kant, 2001, pp. 259-260) (5: 388). As cognitive guidelines, reflective judgments merely offer new vistas pertaining to the possibility of things in themselves, but they are "not meant to introduce any special ground for causality, but [are] only means to add to the use of reason another kind of research besides that in accordance with mechanical laws, in

[35] Most recently, Lahat expressed his disagreement with Yovel regarding the question of the similarity of Kant's philosophy of history with Hegel's, noting with emphasis that Kant "did not argue that reason itself evolves throughout history, but merely exposes and is exposed to new characteristics that it had had all along". See: (Lahat, 2013, p. 184).

order to supplement the inadequacy of the latter even in the empirical search for all the particular laws of nature" (Kant, 2001, p. 254) (5: 383). Unlike in Arendt's portrayal, therefore, reality is not really conceded to the *idea* in a modality where nature or history is seen through the lens of developments taking place according to the cunning of nature. Rather than abandoning the sensible world into the "prison-house" of contemplative experience, Kant (2001) warns us adamantly that we should never stray from the sensible world, especially when we are making regulative judgments about it (p. 260) (5: 389). Cohen (2009) notes accordingly:

> Insofar as [Kant's] teleology is a heuristic tool (that is to say, reflective rather than constitutive) it is not intended to make any objective or scientific claims about the world . . . Rather, it consists in thinking 'as if' history were following a plan, namely as if it were teleologically oriented by the idea of the destination of the species . . . [He] does not claim that human history is directed towards a purpose, but rather that it looks as if history were directed towards a purpose, and that moreover, looking at history in this way is helpful for the historian. (p. 119)

DiCenso (2011) offers a complementary interpretation:

> Kant's teleological formulations are not arguments at all, but rather serve to indicate the wider vistas of significance (i.e. the ends) within which inquiries into the amelioration of ethical and political conditions can occur. In criticizing objectifying approaches to analogical reasoning, Kant therefore applies a crucial distinction between the ontologically constitutive and the practically regulative uses of principles. (p. 157, p. 130, p. 245)

This heuristic standpoint with its self-conscious "as if" perspective differentiates Kant's theory of progress from Comte's highly deterministic system wherein progress is treated as a *law* of society. Moreover, Comte's judgment is ultimately constitutive or determinative insofar as a) it assigns to a concept of nature an *objective* function and validity vis-à-vis society, b) conceives the telic purpose of nature to be available for cognition *objectively*, and c) confounds the Kantian distinction between practical

law and theoretical *law* to the point where the *rules* of science are ascribed with universal moral authority, and held to be authorized for issuing imperatives to the maxims of individuals.[36]

Notwithstanding this great chasm between two thinkers' teleological conception of progress, the possible reasons pertaining to Comte's avowed esteem for Kant's *Idea for a Universal History* is still in need of elucidation. Although Pickering's book is immensely valuable for unearthing Comte's sincere sympathy towards Kant on account of this particular text, she understandably refrains from engaging in a comprehensive analysis of the issues that captivated Comte's attention. On the other hand, Pickering's (1993a) rather hurried and passing remarks sometimes lead to serious errors, specifically when she contends that Kant's appeal to Comte rested primarily on the former's "deterministic" and "providentialist" philosophy of history (pp. 290-291). Contrary to Pickering, I argue that Comte's fascination with the text was a result of a combination of hermeneutic problems *as well as* textual ambivalences. By hermeneutic problems, I am actually referring to Comte's outright *mis*understanding of the methodology of teleological judgments. As we have seen so far, Kant's philosophy of history refrains from making ontological claims regarding

[36] Consider for example the following statement by Kant (2001): "Legislation through the concepts of nature takes place through the understanding, and is theoretical. Legislation through the concept of freedom takes place through reason, and is merely practical. Only in the practical alone can reason be legislative; with regard to theoretical cognition (of nature) it can only (by being well-versed in law by means of the understanding) draw inferences from given laws to conclusions that still always stop at nature" (p. 62) (5: 175). Elsewhere, Kant (2007a) similarly suggests that it is within the context of *practical*, that is, *moral* considerations that the purposiveness of nature takes its fully fledged form: "Now the use of the teleological principle in explanations of nature, given that it is restricted to empirical conditions, can never indicate the ultimate ground (*Urgrund*) of the purposive connection completely and with sufficient determination for all ends. But the latter has to be expected from *a doctrine of pure ends* (which can be no other doctrine than that of *freedom*), the principle of which contains a priori the relation of reason in general to the whole of all ends and can only be practical (p. 217)." In hindsight, the problem with Comte's teleological model is that for the sake of producing a synthesis in which nature is seen exclusively through the filter of the of *theoretical* reason, the issue of morality becomes a superfluous topic fraught with outdated metaphysical speculations, and in urgent need of radical transformation that can set and bring about conformity and/or harmony with the society. As discussed earlier, this moral universe marginalizes the moral significance and worth of human individuality to the advantage of the totality of social relations and the social whole.

nature and history, and the *ideas* operate regulatively, that is, as guidelines that are legitimate only in *subjective* considerations. As for *textual ambivalences*, I will dwell on some sections and concepts in *Idea for a Universal History* which give the impression of a deterministic and even fatalistic interpretation of progress, and as a result of which the history of inter-state conflicts and war, oppression and other calamities of civilization are seemingly vindicated. It has to be granted that this leads to an uneasy impasse once we recollect that Kant employed the *regulative* use of the idea of progress and the purposiveness of nature *for the sake of* practical and moral reasons. In order to address this issue, I will engage in an extensive analysis of the concept of "unsocial sociability", tracing the history of the concept within the context of Kant's philosophy of progress and documenting its affinity with the early optimism of Kant regarding the spirit of commerce and bourgeoisie and their beneficial impact on the cultivation of morality. This will pave the ground for my next and central thesis where it will be shown that starting with the systematic differentiation of cultural progress from moral progress with the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant started to discern the various ills and vices endemic to civil society, and moreover, by finally signifying in *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason* the realm of ethical community rather than juridico-civil society as the sphere where the highest good (*summum bonum*) of morality could be approximated, he anticipated in a proto-Marxist fashion the incapability of capitalist-bourgeois system to attain and institute a truly moral society.

2.5 Unsocial sociability or the teleological story of civilization

Kant puts forward the thesis of "unsocial sociability" as his fourth proposition in *Idea for a Universal History* and describes it in a nutshell as the tendency to come

together in society coupled with continual resistance that constantly threatens to break it up (p. 44). Nature is assumed to employ this antagonistic tendency in order to bring about the development of innate capacities of human species. Most certainly, Kant is not positing a quasi-Hegelian claim here. It is not reason which is claimed to be developing but rather the predispositions for the use of reason (Cohen, 2009, p. 62). According to this teleological model, pure egoism, unmediated by the inclination to live among the presence of human beings, would have resulted in eternal strife and conflict in the form of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. On the other hand, without this egotistic, self-centered disposition of human beings, the society that would come about would remain in eternal self-sameness, very much similar to the community of bees and beavers, where their capacities are prefixed and incapable of further development. As Kant (2009a) states unequivocally, "[the] end for which they were created, their rational nature would be an unfilled void" (p. 45). For Kant, the "end" nature prescribes for human beings – its ultimate purpose – is the development of natural dispositions through civilization, encompassing a wide range of traits including the ability to manipulate things out there in the world (the development of *skill*), the mental digestion of *science*, and the cultivation of *arts* (Cohen, 2009, pp. 122-130). Kant(2009a) then adds that "[nature] should thus be thanked for fostering social incompatibility, enviously competitive vanity, and insatiable desires for possession or power" (p. 45). Inevitably, this statement paves the way for the following questions: Was it not Kant himself who suggested the necessity of utilizing the *idea* of progress for practical-moral reasons? On what grounds can he defend or rather maintain the moral significance of progress while justifying immoral traits such as envy, vanity and power mongering?

As will be seen later in the following pages, it is Kant himself who later identified the above-mentioned traits as *vices*, that is, as the outward manifestation of the propensity to radical evil that is innate to human nature, taking the form of objectively perceptible habits or actions. This crucial *ambivalence* has also been noted by Alix Cohen, who consequently argued for the necessity of postulating two types of teleological history in Kant: moral progress and cultural progress (Cohen, 2009, p. 129). Although such a distinction becomes increasingly transparent in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, there are some sections in *Idea for a Universal History* that hardly overlap with the framework propounded by Cohen. One such case is when Kant (2009a) elaborates on the beneficial consequences of unsocial sociability, pondering a stage of development where

> all man's talents are now gradually transformed, his taste cultivated, and by a continued process of enlightenment, a beginning is made towards establishing a way of thinking which can with time transform the primitive natural capacity for moral discrimination into definite practical principles; and thus a pathologically enforced social union is transformed into a *moral* whole. (pp. 44-45)

Reflecting on Kant's construal of this transformation from pathologically enforced union into a *moral* whole, Michalson (1990) underlines that Kant's language betokens a transitional process that is very much providentalist to the extent that moral evil is ultimately "rationalized as instrumental towards the production of a greater good" (p. 26). "Kant is playing Hobbes," states Michalson, "but Hobbes with progressive, teleological tendencies. Were it not for our selfishness, civil society would not progress" (p. 27). Similarly, Yovel (1980) argues that the actualization of a rational political system in Kant's view requires the existence of antisocial inclinations and a certain disposition to violence, which nonetheless cancel

themselves in the long run or in the grand scheme of things (p. 140). In any case, many scholars agree that behind Kant's conviction regarding the smooth transition from pathologically enforced social union into a *moral* whole looms the *optimism* of Leibniz (Despland, 1973, pp. 170-171; Yovel, 1980, pp. 77-78; Michalson, 1990, p. 26). By this, we are not asserting that Kant's optimism pertaining to the progress of human species is entirely bereft of any cynicism, as evidenced by his borrowing of a metaphor – crooked/warped wood – used earlier by Augustine and Luther: "Nothing straight can be constructed from such warped wood as that which man is made of" (Despland, 1973, p. 46, p. 193). Yet this does not really threaten the conceptual integrity of his proposition where Kant actually designates as man's *duty* the establishment of a civil republican constitution, the *only* setting where all natural capacities of mankind could be fully developed. Yet it is one thing to associate the ultimate purpose of nature with the founding of a proper civil society in which the freedom of its members are safeguarded by external laws under a perfectly just civil constitution (Kant, 2009a, pp. 45-46) and entirely another thing to designate the *civil society* as the sphere that can be *transformed* into a *moral* whole. Just as any transformation, this will necessarily require a temporal as well as agential dimension, that is, the combined acts of the members of a society powerful enough to effect change in the pre-existing structure and formation of society. Thus, Kant's optimism, at least in *Idea for a Universal History*, is not entirely reducible to the position of Leibniz. Yovel (1980) offers an analogous interpretation:

> Kant's 'best world', unlike Leibniz's, is not actual but yet to be realized [and] the harmony between nature and morality is a product of human action and not that of God . . . In Leibniz this harmony [between the realms of nature and grace] exists actually. It is a pre-established harmony, belonging to the external and unchangeable structure of the universe. Accordingly, Leibniz's world is already 'the best of worlds' . . . Leibniz tried to solve a modern

> problem with classical means . . . [For Kant], man's task is not to disclose a harmony which is pre-established but to produce it. Man is the being who must impose the system of rational ends upon the causal system of nature. His metaphysical problem thus becomes a problem of praxis. (p. 50)[37]

How are we supposed to read Kant's *optimism*? Lea Ypi's valuable analysis pivoting around Kant's changing views on commercial relations might provide us with a fresh and invigorating perspective. According to Ypi (2004), Kant's analysis of unsocial sociability of human beings in *Idea for a Universal History* is worked through alongside sympathetic remarks on the commercial spirit that accompany it (p. 102). It is in this text that "the selfish instincts that accompany commercial sociability, the desire for competition, acquisition of property, the investment of labor and resources are revealed . . . to form part of a productive cycle that turns human unsocial sociability into a motor of social progress" (Ypi, 2004, p. 104). Indeed, Kant's emphasis on the value of individual welfare and his appeal to the *laissez faire* attitude can be most clearly seen in his call for civil republican constitution, which, as we have seen, is supposed to guard the *freedom* of each and every person against the whole and enable the pursuing of one's own ends unless they encroach and violate the freedom of the other. According to Ypi (2004), Kant judges this legal mechanism, in addition to instituting the sphere of juridico-civil society, to be ensuring the individual pursuit of welfare or establishing the structural conditions for *praxis*, which consequently play a positive role in improving the moral condition of individuals (p. 105). In light of our arguments, it is not far-fetched to claim that the transition from a pathologically enforced into a *moral* whole, with

[37] Also see: p. 77, p. 134. Yovel suggests that in Kant there is a "historical imperative", according to which "what is not given initially has to be created by rational praxis. It is not an ontological fact, but a historical task, in which human spontaneity finds a more elaborate field for its world-shaping function" (pp. 137-138). Indeed, while at first impression Kant's optimism seems indeed to be saturated with this "historical sense", it will be shown later in this chapter that viewed from another angle it can also provide the spectator with enough empirical material to slide into a more pessimistic standpoint. If we may put it more boldly, it was precisely the lack of this type of "historical sense" which led Leibniz to stick firmly with his providentialism based on Christian dogma.

regard to the details of which Kant had offered almost no explanation in *Idea for a Universal History*, was presumed to be following its natural course almost under the guidance of an "invisible hand".[38] The distinguishing feature of Kant's optimism, what Yovel identified as its "modernity" in contrast to the "classic" formulation of Leibniz, is therefore its economic and liberal features which outweigh the strictly providentialist accounts of Christianity.

Any commentator informed about Kant and his moral theory might raise eyebrows over the interpretation we have offered here. For example: How is this interpretation compatible with the principle of morality worked out in *Groundwork of the Morals*? If human beings are to treat each other as *ends* and not *merely* as *means* in order to act in accordance with moral law, how will it be possible to achieve this in a society based upon the principles of competition and the insatiable desire for the amassing of wealth? The reason we have mentioned a certain *ambivalence* rather than outright *contradiction* on Kant's part resides in the fact there are some parts in *Idea for a Universal History* which represent the exact opposite of the passages offered above, and which are congruent with Kant's philosophy taken as a whole. The passage I will quote betrays this *ambivalence* most clearly and allows us to catch a glimpse of Kant's pessimism seeping through the cracks of his early optimist views on history:

> We are *cultivated* to a high degree by art and science. We are *civilized* to the point of excess in all kinds of social courtesies and proprieties. But we are still a long way from the point where we could consider ourselves morally mature. For while the idea of morality is indeed present in culture, an application of this idea which only extends to the semblances of morality, amounts merely to civilization. (Kant, 2009a, p. 49)

[38] For an analysis of Kant's views on Adam Smith and the latter's impact on his philosophy, see: (White, 2010; Fleischacker, 1999, p. 187).

By the semblances of morality, Kant refers to the habits arising out of a firm resolve to comply with one's duties. They are *semblances* in the sense that they are empirically available to be seen and heard and inspire respect among the spectators, and moreover, the agent who performs these duties is judged to be virtuous only in an external sense – *virtus phaenomenon* (Kant, 1998, p. 67) (6: 47).[39] It is claimed similarly that semblances of morality, that is, acts considered merely in their empirical aspects do not disclose the moral character of the actor:

> That lawgiving which makes an action a duty and also makes this duty the incentive is ethical. But that lawgiving which does not include the incentive of duty in the law and so admits an incentive other than the idea of duty itself is juridical . . . The mere conformity or nonconformity of an action with law, irrespective of the incentive to it, is called its legality; but that conformity in which the Idea of duty arising from the law is also the incentive to the action is called its morality (Kant, 1991, p. 46) (219)

As Kant unequivocally shows, the *legality* of an action is decided by whether an act accords with the laws of the society in which they are enacted. Civil society concerns itself only with the *legality* of actions and has at its disposal various coercive and punitive means to enforce their full-scale application. Thus, the task of establishing a republican constitution does not involve the moral improvement of man but is rather about setting the minimum conditions of *peace* within which the laws can be enforced (Kant, 2009b, p. 113). It is important to highlight that this *peace* in question is quite different from the nature of *pax perpetua* envisaged by Kant for the context of international relations among nation-states. It merely signifies the transformation of the hostile relations among men, found in the original state of nature (*status*

[39] The difference between motives governing actions and acts in their external or consequential aspects is a matter of paramount importance in Kantian ethics. It is this fundamental difference leading Kant (2009c) to state elsewhere that "the profit which accrue to the human race as it works its way forward will not be an ever increasing quantity of morality in its attitudes. Instead, the legality of its attitudes will produce an increasing number of actions governed by duty, whatever the particular motive behind these actions may be" (pp. 187-188).

naturalis), into a level where the lawlessness of freedom and the ever-present threat of war and violence are curtailed (Kant, 1998, pp. 107-108) (6: 96-97).[40] In other words, this peace attained at the societal level does not bring about an ethical transformation among the members of civil society. The following controversial statement by Kant (2009b) reflects this fact perfectly:

> It only remains for men to create a good organization for the state . . . and to arrange it in such a way that their self-seeking energies are opposed to one another, each thereby neutralizing or eliminating the destructive effects of the rest . . . As hard as it may sound, the problem of setting up a state can be solved even *by a nation of devils* (so long as they possess understanding)[emphasis added] (p. 112)

The possibility of establishing a civil society even by *a nation of devils* makes a stark contrast with the claim that the pathologically enforced union attained in the society may well be transformed into a *moral whole*. This a*mbivalence* has pushed many scholars into opposing camps over a bundle of questions related to the relationship between morality and legality. Is the Kantian view of morality irreconcilable with the sphere of legality? Does it concern itself merely with the moral duties of the individual or could we deduce the principle of right as a limited expression of the moral principle and by this way show the former's subordination to the latter? Or could we speak of a "middle way" according to which the possibility of moral action is held to require the existence of a field of political right, notwithstanding their irreducibly different natures and unique modes of operation (Lahat, 2013, pp. 164-166)?

[40] Peters (1993) correctly observes that moral whole is lacking in the sphere of civil society: "In a political state of nature, judicial anarchy reigns. In an ethical state of nature (read: civil society), moral chaos dominates. But whereas in the former people are at war with each other, in the latter, people war against both virtue and the moral law (p. 92).

Bearing these questions in mind, I would like to call attention on the second part of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where Kant's optimism concerning the possibility of an uninterrupted process linking the pathologically enforced union into a moral whole finally disintegrates and gives way for a two-tiered conception of progress that carefully distinguishes the teleological story of civilization from the moral progress of humankind. The most obvious change in the text is Kant's tone of expression when he elucidates the relationship between nature and the human species: "It is so far from being the case that nature has made the human being its special favorite," states Kant (2001) and points to the natural insecurity and vulnerability of human species before the hardships of nature including hunger, pestilence, cold, risk of flood, and other dangers posed by ferocious animals big or small (p. 298) (5: 430). Worse, the conflict arising out of the natural predispositions, denoted earlier in *Idea for a Universal History* as unsocial sociability, is now adjudged to be causing a depressive array of calamities, including the "barbarism of war", the "oppression of domination and inequality" (p. 298) (5:430). Certainly, this does not mean that Kant rejects his earlier stance in favor of the idea of progress, but rather implies that while the predispositions for the use of reason may develop, it does not ensure eo ipso the general happiness of human beings (Kleingeld, 1999, p. 62). Although happiness is not the *end* that nature prescribes for human beings in Kant's teleological system, we will be able to witness later on that Kant never overlooked the centrality of the human search for happiness in matters related to individual morality and ethical life. In the context of the ultimate end of nature, however, it is reason rather than happiness which stands at the core of the thesis regarding the ultimate end of nature (*letzter Zweck*), as the following passage demonstrates:

> As the sole being on earth who has reason, and thus a capacity to set voluntary ends for himself, he is certainly the titular lord of nature, and, if nature is regarded as a teleological system, then it is his vocation (*Bestimmung*) to be the ultimate end of nature (*letzter Zweck*); but always only conditionally, that is, subject to the condition that he has the understanding and the will to give to nature and to himself a relation to an end that can be sufficient for itself independently of nature, which can thus be a final end (*Endzweck*), which, however must not be sought in nature at all. (Kant, 2001, p. 298) (5: 431)

The significance of this passage cannot be overemphasized. In order to understand its extended implications for Kant's two-tiered conception of progress, it is important to keep in mind that Kant (2001) denotes the culture of skill or civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) in its formal constitution as the specific locus wherein the ultimate end (*letzter Zweck*) of nature can be realized (p. 298) (5: 431). Secondly, while the culture of skill may be crucial for raising the aptitude or improving the capacity of human beings to use their own reason in setting ends, Kant also argues that the progress of civilization does not thereby realize the promotion of a universal disposition that can give itself a final end (*Endzweck*). If we consider the proviso added by Kant in the passage above – which is that the human being can be the ultimate end of nature *only if* he gives to nature and to himself a final end – the nature and concrete meaning of this vocation (*Bestimmung*) becomes something that can only be understood in relation to its direction and orientation within the civil society. Yet before tackling with this issue, we have to dwell a little bit more on what Kant intends to denote by the *Endzweck*.

For Kant (2001), "a final end is that end which needs no other as the condition of its possibility," and this unconditionality attests to the fact that it cannot be an end that nature would be able to produce (pp. 301-302) (5: 434-435).[41] Thus,

[41] Wilkins (1966) elucidates the relationship between morality and the final end as follows: "While we can find ends in nature, we can find no final ends; morality, not physics, covers the area of final ends. It is from the moral and not the scientific point of view, according to Kant, that we are justified in

this final end has to be considered by taking a priori the idea of human being as *noumenon*, and by identifying the supersensible faculty of freedom as endowed with the capacity to legislate, unconditionally, its own ends (Kant, 2001, p. 302) (5: 435). While happiness can only be a conditioned and relative end mediated by natural factors and incentives, with the capacity of freedom, the human being actually becomes a subject of morality. Kant (2001) describes the moral law "as the formal rational condition of the use of our freedom" which obligates us by itself alone and commands in the form of categorical imperatives, "without depending on any sort of end as a material condition" (p. 315) (5: 449-450).[42] Nonetheless, this should not lead us to partake in a widely prevalent, albeit rather incorrect point of view which readily prefers to dub Kant's approach to morality as "formalistic". The charge of "formalism" holds Kant's practical system to be devoid of any substantive value that underlies the ultimate principle of morality (Wood, 2006, p. 352). This line of interpretation putatively takes its cue from *Groundwork of the Morals*, yet it is often the case that by equating the principle of morality solely with the Formula of Universal Law,[43] it undermines the appropriate "content" or "matter" of the same rational principle articulated in the text. This approach has also been subjected to criticism by Kant scholars who have underlined the necessity of reading the formulas put forth in *Groundwork*, in conjunction with one another, reciprocally rather than disjunctively (Guyer, 2006, p. 207; Korsgaard, 1999, pp. 106-107).[44] This criticism is

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treating man, as the only creature in nature who consciously pursues certain ends, as the final end of nature. Kant's belief is that from the point of view of nature alone, man might be treated as either end or means" (p. 181).

[42] Elsewhere, Kant (2002) states correspondingly that "practical principles are formal when they abstract from all subjective ends; but they are material when they are grounded on these, hence on certain incentives" (p. 45) (4: 427).

[43] The *Formula of Universal Law* [FUL] reads: "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (Kant, 2002, p. 37) (4: 421).

[44] The other formulas, in addition to the *Formula of Universal Law*, are a) the *Formula of Humanity* [FH], and b) the *Formula of the Realm of Ends* [FRE]. Kant (2002) describes them as follows: a) "Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the

in attunement with Kant's ultimate purpose in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where it is explicitly stated that the idea of the final end arises out of the moral law, not as a relative end but rather *absolutely*. It is *absolute* to the extent that we ought to strive after this end by abstracting and making it superior to all other ends, whatever they may be in relation to our desire for happiness (Yovel, 1980, p. 42; Kant, 2001, p. 315) (5: 449-450).

Since human beings are the only natural creatures endowed with the capacity of setting ends for themselves, there can be no determination of the will without an "end". Kant (1998) adamantly notes that even if the ruling maxim of our actions is under moral law, the representation of an end "must nonetheless be admissible as the consequence of that power's determination to an end through the law (finis in consequentiam veniens)" (p. 34) (6: 4).[45] Yet he repeats that this end is sui generis, arising from the moral law rather than serving as its foundation. If this were not the case, the act in question would be heteronomous to the extent that the will would have been "necessitated by *something else* [other than merely by moral law] to act in a certain way in conformity with the law" (Kant, 2002, p. 51, p. 58) (4: 433, 4: 441). As for the concrete object of this end, he identifies it as the highest good (*summum bonum*) and describes it as follows:

> The subjective condition under which the human being (and, according to our concepts, every rational finite being as well) can set a final end for itself under the above law [moral law] is happiness. Hence the highest physical good that is possible in the world and which can be promoted, as far as it is up to us, a final end, is happiness - under the objective condition of the concordance of humans with the law of morality, as worthiness to be happy. (Kant, 2001, p. 315) (5: 450)

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same time as end and never merely as means" (p. 55) (4: 436), b) "Act in accordance with maxims of a universally legislative member for a merely possible realm of ends" (p. 56) (4: 439).

[45] Kant tells us in other words that this "end" provides an orientation for practical reason inasmuch as the latter cannot remain indifferent to the question, "What is then the result of this right conduct of ours?" (p. 34) (6: 5).

> [The final end] is only the idea of an object that unites within itself the formal condition of all such as we ought to have (duty) with everything which is conditional upon ends we have and which conforms to duty (happiness proportioned to its observance), that is, the idea of a highest good in the world. (Kant, 1998, p. 34) (6: 5)[46]

In summary, by the highest good, Kant refers to happiness *in the world* that is proportional to the observance of moral duty. That highest good is possible *in the world*, however, is a striking modification of Kant's views regarding the possibility of harmonizing happiness with morality. It has been shown in detail that Kant, in his earlier texts (especially in the first and second *Critique*), devised the idea of a separate and transcendent world, what we may call a critical and rational version of the next world, due to his conviction that achieving both virtue and happiness was impossible in this world (Yovel, 1980, p. 72; Peters, 1993, pp. 39-40). Guyer (2011) emphasizes similarly that the idea of God had emerged in Kant's earlier texts as a necessary postulate of reason, or "as the condition of morality's self-rewarding production of happiness in future life" (p. 98). According to Guyer, starting with the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant dispenses with this view of heavenly compensation and concentrates on the possibility of their harmonization in the present-life or inquires as to the possibility of the immanent realization of the highest good. Notwithstanding this radical change, Guyer correctly warns us, we should not suppose that Kant thereby drifts to a "secular" outlook. While Kant revises his views regarding the setting in which the highest good will be realized, the existence of God is always postulated by the practical reason as a moral cause of the world (Guyer, 2011, p. 98). Be that as it may, presuming the possibility of attaining the highest

[46] Elsewhere, Kant (2009d) offers a parallel explanation: "My theory is that the creator's unique intention is neither human morality in itself nor happiness in itself, but the highest good possible on earth, the union and harmony of them both" (p. 65).

good *in this world* attests to the fact that the scope of morality and moral life in Kant's complete practical system is not restricted to the individual and that it has been gradually shifting in favor of a more communitarian point of view.[47] Some corresponding questions necessarily emerge: Where are we supposed to attain the highest good in the world? Should we understand by the concrete object of the highest good the perfected form of juridico-civil society? Is the process of the transformation of civil society into a "moral whole" what Kant might have meant by its perfection?

One may answer these questions in the affirmative after perusing the literature revolving around this subject. For example, Madore (2011) asserts that in Kant's view "humanity as a whole can hope to reach [the highest good] through the continued enlightenment of successive generations", that is, with the help of cultural progress (p. 133). Kleingeld (1999) similarly notes that if the conditions of peace, freedom and improved moral education are properly secured, "the preconditions are there for humans to transform society from a merely legal order, initially established on the basis of inclinations, into a 'moral whole'" (p. 67). Rossi (2005) too concurs with the view that the highest good can only be procured through the perfection of the juridico-civil constitution and goes as far as to suggest that moral improvement is dependent on the consolidation of international peace and is intricately connected with a commitment to work towards this ideal (p. 92 & p. 99). Lastly, Thorpe (2011) has put forth that the ideal community formed by the systematic union of the ends of

[47] In this case, by the "complete" practical system I am referring to Yovel (1980), who asserts that the first stage of Kant's practical system was concerned predominantly (but not exclusively) with formal ethics. In this stage, he sought to clarify in what way the individual was to act in order to act *morally*. The second stage, starting with *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and continuing in *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, is marked by Kant's endeavor to circumscribe the definitive content of morality, that is, the exposition of the fixed, total object to which all moral actions should ultimately aspire. "The complete practical system of Kant thus tries to determine not only the absolute form of moral action but also its supreme content, in two stages related by priority and inclusion. These two stages are expressed by the two central imperatives of the system, one demanding action only from the maxims that can be universalized, the other the promotion of the highest good" (pp. 35-36).

its members can only emerge out of a substantial social composite, the autonomous members of which are to be the source of laws that will provide the whole with its unity. For Thorpe, the Kantian realm of ends in its unified composition of autonomous individuals can only be materialized in the juridico-civil society (pp. 100-106).

The problem with this mode of interpretation is, first of all, the fact that Kant himself had never explicitly designated the civil society as that sphere in which moral life will be consummated. We shall have the opportunity to see this more clearly. What is even more problematical, however, is that the authors mentioned here either overlook or simply confuse the crucial distinction Kant draws between the ultimate end of nature (*letzter Zweck*) and the final end (*Endzweck*). As far as I am concerned, Kant's purpose in differentiating the teleological story of civilization from moral progress was lodged in his gradually increasing pessimism about the incapability to achieve such a synthesis, the attainment of a "moral whole", in the civil society. The civil society can be conceived, at the very most, as providing the infrastructure necessary for the pursual of the vocation (*Bestimmung*) that calls for a wide-ranging and immersive moralization of the entire world independently of nature.[48] Yet as the final end of this vocation, the highest good cannot be attained in and through the juridico-civil society, simply because it would violate the principle of autonomy so central to Kantian conception of morality. This is what Kant (1993)

[48] It is stated elsewhere similarly that "although the external system is desirable in itself . . . it is only secondary to the moral system, from which its value derives. In addition, progress in the field of politics and civilization is a precondition for the growth and propagation of the ethical community, which is the crux of the whole development and the true meaning of 'moral history'" (Yovel, 1980, pp. 139-140). Concurring with this view, Linden (1988) argues that the ideal institutions cannot be seen as incurring moral progress for otherwise this would imply the existence of a heteronomous force conflicting with the autonomy of moral subject. Indeed, what makes the moral subject autonomous is precisely the fact that this duty is addressed to the faculty of free choice merely by practical reason and not by other external agent. Yet he grants that cultural progress may indeed facilitate moral progress (and *vice versa*), and that this relationship could therefore be viewed as "feedback processes" mutually beneficial in the long run (pp. 10-11, p. 35, p. 98, p. 152).

intends to signify by saying that "no external lawgiving can bring about someone's setting an end for himself", even including the external lawgiving of a divine will (p. 46, pp. 64-65, p. 188) (219, 239, 383). The universal principle of Right dictates that "my action or condition can coexist with the freedom of everyone in accordance with a universal law, and yet whoever hinders me in it does me wrong," thus transgressing the law in the form of not fulfilling his legal duty (Kant, 1993, p. 56) (261). Insofar as it is the duty of the person to act in accordance with law, an act that is contrary to law is punishable by the force authorized to enforce the application of law. This law (*Rechtgesetz*) is something qualitatively different than the moral law which commands the categorical imperatives issuing from practical reason. Civil society, the legal boundaries of which are drawn by the constitution, are not supposed to interfere with the ends that any person can set for himself/herself.

> It cannot be required that this principle of all maxims be itself in turn my maxim, that is, it cannot be required that I make it the maxim of my action: for anyone can be free as long as I do not impair his freedom by my external action, even though I am quite indifferent to this freedom or would like in my heart to infringe upon it. (Kant, 1993, p. 56) (261)

There is no doubt therefore that the idea of the highest good, as the supreme end of ethics, rises beyond the formal condition of outer freedom that characterizes the sphere of juridico-civil society. It has to be willed *autonomously*, *freely* in the purely moral sense and certainly not as a result of objective *coercion* through prerogatives, laws and other means. Indeed, the pursuit of the highest good is not viable unless it is consciously and autonomously willed: "I can indeed be constrained to perform actions that are directed as means to an end, but I can never the constrained by others to have an end; *only I myself can make something my end*" [emphasis added] (Kant,

1993, p. 186) (381).[49] Kant's heated reprimands against paternalism are often permeated with his sincere concern about the dangers posed by this most despotic type of all governments. A paternal government approaches the members of the society as a father does to his immature children, promoting a wave of passivity where people come to rely on the judgments of the head of state, and incapable of determining their own ends, they succumb to the ends devised for them (Kant, 2009d, pp. 74-75; Kant, 1993, p. 128) (317). Admittedly, it is highly astounding to bump into remarks, despite a plethora of examples pointing out to the contrary, where Kant is portrayed as a wise conservative who has foreseen that the state might well become in the long run an instrument of morality.[50] Kant is aware that if this instrumental function of the state refers to top-down indoctrination of the members of civil society, not only this state of affairs would lead to heteronomy but also the outcome is bound to be fatal for human freedom.

We need to open parentheses here. As I have mentioned before, Cohen (2009), in his meticulous study focusing on Kant's conception of teleology, has shown in detail that Kant's idea of progress is composed of two different strands, each distinct but reciprocally connected, as represented in the figure below.

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[49] Kant's emphasis on autonomous and spontaneous willing as the locus of freedom heavily rests on the analysis in *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is worked out in the second chapter of the second book (The Antinomy of Pure Reason). For Kant, human being are called free only insofar as this freedom is understood to have its own mode of causality separate from the laws determining the relations and effects of natural or external objects on one another. Kant gives an example of a person spontaneously standing up from his chair and offers the following observation: "[This] decision and act of mine do not lie at all in the succession of mere natural effects, and are not a mere continuation of them. Rather, as regards this happening of my decision and act, the determinative natural causes entirely cease above them; and although this happening follows upon the determinative natural causes, it does not result from them, and hence must be called –not, indeed, as regards time, but yet with regard to causality, an absolutely first beginning of a series of appearances." (Kant, 1996b, pp. 478-479) (A450/B478).

[50] Here, I am specifically referring to Despland (1973) who states rather problematically the following: "Culture and civilization for Kant are thus not condemned to being a forever a hypocritical force or a machinery of oppression. The State can be an instrument of morality. There is a possibility of 'wisdom' (as moral wisdom rather than pragmatic survival) in social arrangements". Of course, Despland's word choice here – "wisdom" rather than pragmatic benefits as he accentuates – is interesting to the extent that it builds up a highly well-known yet misguiding image of Kant, a conservative who *secretly* justifies the social arrangements he *publicly* deplores. See, p. 87.

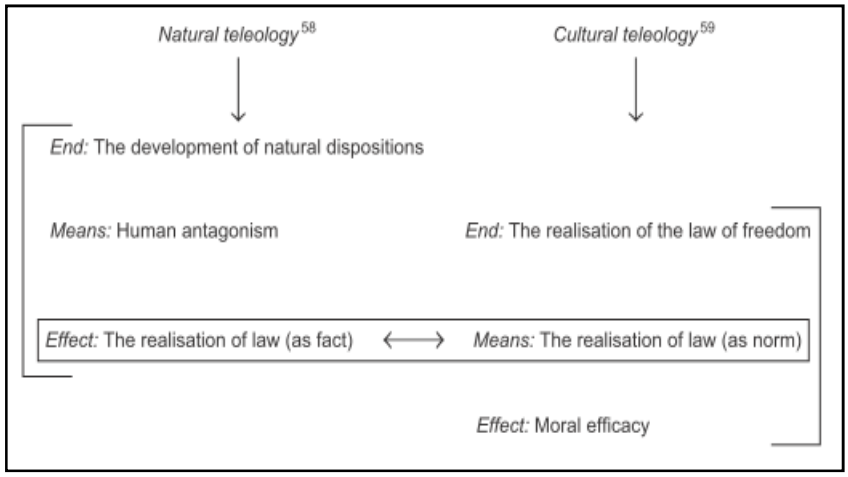

Fig.1 Natural teleology and cultural teleology[51]

While Figure 1 is useful for demarcating the teleological story of civilization from the teleological story of moralization, it suffers from some specific drawbacks. First, the unsocial sociability of human beings [referred to as "human antagonism"] is subsumed under the progress of civilization, yet its implications within the context of morality is left unattended, if not totally neglected. It appears from this representation that human antagonism is related to moral progress only peripherally, that is, insofar as it plays a role in bringing about the *means* for the realization of the law of freedom. So should we assume that once natural teleology brings about the legal and formal constitution of freedom we are somehow redeemed from the effects of human antagonism? This is certainly implausible. However, Cohen (2009) seems to overlook the dialectical tension which continues to operate even after (and indeed, *especially after*) the constitution of juridico-civil society, and makes the astounding thesis that we can conceive these two strands to be the "necessary and complementary parts" of "pragmatic history", defined as "the knowledge of history

[51] For the original figure, see: Cohen, 2009, p. 129.

that is necessary to further the realization of human purposes in the world" (p. 136).[52] According to Cohen (2009), Kant's "pragmatic history" is a guideline which serves to help the moral politician in offering a "pragmatic, forward-looking answer to what has been presented as a metaphysical problem" (p. 140).[53] It appears that the metaphysical problem Cohen mentions here is the pursuit of the *Endzweck* through the highest good in the world. Unfortunately, as for how this "pragmatic history" will be useful for the members of civil society, those who are indeed indiscriminately obligated to pursue the highest good without the interference of any constraint or incentive lest they violate the principle of autonomy, Cohen leaves us looking for answers. In the end, pragmatic history overemphasizes the role of the moral politician by understating the ethical task allotted to the moral subject, who has to strive for the highest good amidst a society still marred by antagonism.

2.6 The question of evil and the idea of ethical community

The text we have to take into consideration for revealing the social setting in which the highest good will be approximated is *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason* (1793), written only four years after the publication of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Divided into four sections, the book commences with the explication of the indwelling of the evil principle in human nature, elaborates on the struggle of the evil principle with the good both within the human being and in society, and offers a trenchant critique of the prevailing superstitions and dogmas taken for granted in the

[52] What I aim to denote by "dialectical tension" is simply that Kant's differentiation of civil society from ethical community mirrors his adamant conviction regarding the continuing presence and impact of human antagonism after the constitution of civil society, as I shall show in the following pages. It should also be noted that I do not employ "dialectical" in the sense Kant (1996b) used it, i.e., as a type of logic which produces illusions (p. 114-115) (A61-62/B85-86). This "illusion" comes about when logic *qua* the canon of truth becomes an organon of a universal and unlimited use, exceeding its bounds when through "pure understanding alone we venture to judge, assert, and decide anything synthetically about objects as such" (p. 116) (A63/B88).

[53] See Kant (2009b) for his elaboration on the difference between the "political moralist" and "moral politician" (pp. 117-119).

churches or religious communities in his day. The changed way in which Kant presents and confronts the problem of evil immediately attracts the reader's attention, especially if it is read side-by-side with *Idea for a Universal History*. In the words of one commentator, the text brings us into a "different intellectual universe", where we hear of "forces of evil which are to be defeated rather than utilized" (Despland, 1973, p. 171; Michalson, 1990, p. 27). However, this evil in question is not conceived as the total sum of bad things that *happen* to people, which are subsumed under the category of "ill" (*Übel*) and could be exemplified by natural or similar type of destructive disasters. Kant concerns himself with the question of evil in its distinctively modern sense: Why do human beings, though rational and naturally predisposed to the good, act in disconformity with the moral law and thereby commit evil (Wood, 2010, p. 145)? Let me briefly address this question before carrying on with the analysis of the social and communal aspects of evil.

According to Kant (1998), there are three natural predispositions found in human beings, which belong to the possibility of human nature, that are original and by themselves exist for the good: a) The predisposition to *animality* refers to the physical, mechanical self-love and includes the drives of self-preservation, the propagation of the species and community with other beings, b) the predisposition to *humanity*, which stands for the rational capacity of human beings in setting ends as well as denoting self-love, which is distinguished from its animalistic counterpart in involving *social comparison* with others (and for which reason is required), and c) the predisposition to *personality*, which can be summed up as an innate openness to respect the moral law or to be heedful of it by taking it as a sufficient incentive for the power of free choice (*Willkür*) (pp. 50-52) (6: 26-28). This representation is immensely important insofar as by characterizing natural or animalistic drives as part

of an innate predisposition to the good, Kant refrains from the traditional account of evil which readily associates or makes a causal connection between evil and human corporeality. Kant (1998) asserts accordingly that "the ground of evil cannot lie in any object determining the power of choice through inclination, not in any impulses"; it rests, rather, "only in a rule that the power of choice itself produces for the exercise of its freedom, i.e. in a maxim" (pp. 46-47) (6: 21).[54] The following passage has to be quoted at length for making sense of Kant's consequent controversial assertion, namely the propensity to evil in human nature:

> [Whether] the human being is good or evil, must not lie in the difference between the incentives that he incorporates into his maxim (not in the material of the maxim) but in their *subordination* (in the form of the maxim): *which of the two he makes the condition of the other*. It follows that the human being (even the best) is evil only because he reverses the moral order of his incentives in incorporating them into his maxims. He indeed incorporates the moral law into those maxims, together with the law of self-love; since, however, he realizes that the two cannot stand on an equal footing, but one must be subordinated to the other as its supreme condition, he makes the incentives of self-love and their inclinations the condition of compliance with the moral law. (Kant, 1998, p. 59) (6: 36)

From this passage, we learn that evil is precisely the perverted subordination (*Unterordnung*) that takes place in the maxim-making process, as a result of which the moral law is subordinated to the law of self-love, and to the conditional *end* of this self-love – happiness. On the other hand, this does not mean that the process of perverted subordination is consciously applied and overseen by the acting agent every instant. This process may very well be reproduced unwittingly (Caswell, 2006, pp. 199-200).[55] As Caswell (2006) convincingly shows, multiple lower order maxims tend to fit into higher order maxim of generality, giving to our system of maxims the

[54] See also: (Michalson, 1990, p. 38).
[55] For a detailed discussion of the logic of subordination (*Unterordnung*) and its centrality in Kant's understanding of evil, see: Michalson, 1990, p. 35.

form of a branching tree. For Kant, the moral attitude or disposition [*Gesinnung*] of a rational being is precisely that maxim "which stands at the very root of the tree – or, according to another analogy, it is that maxim which lies all the way at the bottom of our character" (p. 196). This analogy is indeed quite helpful for Kant (1998) denotes this propensity to evil in human nature as *radical*, as the ground or *root* (*radix*) of our all maxims that corrupts all the lower order maxims that stem from it (p. 59) (6: 37). The reason why Kant does not include this propensity among the predispositions of human nature that we have stated above is related to the *contingent* nature of evil, that is, because of the fact that evil is *brought* by the human being *upon* himself as a result of *free arbitration* conducted in the faculty of free will (*Willkür*) (Kant, 1998, p. 64) (6: 43). This means, consequently, that evil has to do with the way we handle or deal with our original predisposition to humanity *qua* living and *rational* beings (Wood, 2010, p. 152; Anderson-Gold, 2010, p. 201). It is the human being who *freely* and *rationally* determines his/her own ends and subordinates the unconditional moral law to the end of happiness.

For Kant (1998), this corrupt propensity to evil in human nature is not arrived *a priori* (for otherwise it would have conflicted with the *noumenal* nature of freedom and its indeterminateness) but is rather demonstrated by experience or "in view of the multitude of woeful examples that the experience of human *deeds* parades before us" (p. 56) (6: 32-33).[56] Among such deeds are the scenes of unprovoked cruelty that can be witnessed in the state of nature and a "long melancholy litany of charges against the humankind" that have occurred even under relatively more civil circumstances (Kant, 1998, p. 56) (6: 33). It is not far-fetched to assume in light of Kant's insistent

[56] Consider also the following statement by Kant (1998): "The rational origin, however, of this disharmony in our power of choice with respect to the way it incorporates lower incentives in its maxims and makes them supreme, i.e. this propensity to evil, remains inexplicable to us, for, since it must itself be imputed to us, this supreme ground of all maxims must in turn require the adoption of an evil maxim" (p. 64) (6: 43).

supplication for universal peace that the most atrocious form of these *deeds* are encountered in war. Kant reckons that while the formation of civil society may minimize the risk of war among nations with civil republican constitutions, the threat is never entirely extinguished given the insatiable ambition, love of power, and greed demonstrated by human beings, especially by those who are in power.[57] As an avid reader and observer of the social and political developments of his age, he was certainly aware to what extent Prussia had been militarized by the House of Hohenzollern throughout the course of the eighteenth century, as the efforts to promote a strong and efficient bureaucracy complemented with institutional and legal reforms resulted, in the words of an eminent German historian, with the "regimentation of the Prussian population" and a highly submissive and obedient personality type lacking precisely that intellectual courage Kant saw vital for the *Aufklärung* (Büsch, 1997, p. 118; Behren, 1985, p. 45). War, however, is only a single aspect of the complex and dynamic development of calamities interlaced with the continuing advance of civilization, leading Kant (2001) as early as the third *Critique* to state that "there is no denying the preponderance of the evil showered upon us by the refinement of taste to the point of its idealization, and even by the indulgence in the sciences as nourishment for vanity, because of the insatiable host of inclinations that are thereby aroused" (p. 300) (5: 433).

Kant's emphasis on the *arousal* of certain inclinations is significant to the extent that it also points out to their earlier dormancy, signifying the connection between the development of certain desires and the cultivation of reason. Elsewhere, he similarly notes that "as reason grew more cultivated, vices emerged which were quite foreign to the state of ignorance and hence of innocence" found in the realm of

[57] Kant's *Perpetual Peace* is in its entirety dedicated to this issue and questions the possibility of eliminating war once and for all. For other textual platforms in which the problem of internecine war is raised, see: (Kant, 2001, pp. 299-300) (5: 432-433). Also see: (Kant, 2009e, p. 231).

instincts, or in the stage where the immediacy of the human species within nature had not yet been broken (Kant, 2009e, p. 227). For Kant (1991), vice (*vitium*) is the real opposite of virtue rather than its logical opposite. This means that whereas failure in virtue denotes mere deficiency in moral worth, the concept of vice covers those type of actions which are contrary to the principle of duty and where the intentional transgression of the moral law becomes a principle in its own right (p. 189, p. 194) (384, 390).[58] Put differently, vice becomes the real opposite of virtue insofar as the vicious person intentionally and consciously subordinates the moral law to the incentives mediated by the law of self-love, and accordingly, by reversing the form of the maxim, ascribes to his *conditional* ends (happiness) an absolute value. Kant's emphasis on the rational, free and maxim-related aspect of vice and evil is unmistakable. In *Religion*, he elaborates on this by offering an analogical reading drawn from the Scriptures, noting that the idea of primordial *sin* should be understood as an archetypal representation of the transgression of the moral law *as* divine command, which necessarily has to predicate the freedom of the subject or the faculty of free choice (*Willkür*).[59] Reason and the first act of freedom signals the release of man from the womb of nature, bestows honor and dignity on man by elevating him above animal society (Kant, 2009e, p. 223, p. 226). On the other hand, Kant (2009e) notes that this change of status is also fraught with danger insofar as from the moral point of view it marks the *fall* of man from the state of innocence, prompting Kant to convey the dialectical tension in the following words:

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[58] Similarly, Kant (2007b) asserts in his anthropological study that although the original predispositions of human beings are good, it is proven by experience that there is also a "tendency to actively desire what is unlawful, even though he knows that is unlawful; that is, a tendency to evil, which stirs as inevitably and as soon as he begins to make use of his freedom, and which can therefore be considered innate" (p. 420) (7: 325).

[59] "Evil begins, according to the Scriptures, not from a fundamental propensity to it, for otherwise its beginning would not result from freedom, but from *sin* (by which is understood the transgression of the moral law as *divine command*)" (Kant, 1998, p. 63) (6: 42).

> Thus, the history of nature begins with goodness, for it is the work of God; but the history of freedom begins with evil; for it is the work of man. For the individual, who looks only to himself in the exercise of his freedom, a change of this kind represented a loss; for nature, whose end in relations man concerns the species, it represented a gain. (p. 227)

Indeed, this dialectical tension between the destiny of man *qua* species-being and the destiny of *homo moralis* in the singular, between progress towards perfection and the radical propensity to evil, pervades Kant's depiction of the story of civilization. On the one hand, we are told in what ways the capacity to use reason spurred human communities to create new social spaces characterized by the ownership of land, agriculture and mutual exchange, massively effective socio-economic developments under which the rudimentary steps for the public administration of justice had been taken and culture had begun to prosper. On the other hand, Kant explains almost nostalgically (and it is here that Rousseau's influence shines glaringly) that this transition also testified to the abandonment of the age of leisure and peace for the epoch of labor and strife, leading to the intensification of security concerns and imminent threat of war, and finally, the beginning of human inequality, that "abundant source of evil" which continued to increase thereafter (Kant, 2009e, p. 230). It is interesting to observe, however, that among the bulky sum of works centering on Kant's formulation of radical evil only few scholars accentuate the significance of this dialectical tension (Wood, 1999, pp. 281-320; Anderson-Gold, 2001). The dominant trend is exemplified in the approach of Grenberg (2010), according to which Kant's idea of radical evil cannot be grasped unless the existential and psychological factors in the Kantian understanding of subjectivity, namely, finitude and human vulnerability are given explanatory precedence over the impact of social relations and interactions. According to Grenberg (2010), these two conditions play a great role in spurring human beings to prefer self-love to the moral

law, and she argues correspondingly that the anxiety surfacing in the presence of others is related to these psychological conditions that are also responsible for molding the competitive streak of human sociability.[60] Thus, the question is less about making sense of this dialectic at the heart of Kant's representation of evil than certifying the *origin*, that is, whether society or the radical propensity to evil predates or predicates the other. She expresses her conviction as succinctly as possible: "Our propensity to evil is previous to every exercise of freedom, including any social interactions (however defined). To put the point more bluntly: society does not inspire evil in us; rather, we bring evil to society" (Grenberg, 2010, p. 179).[61]

I beg to differ from this line of interpretation on account of a number of reasons. First, Grenberg is incorrect in asserting that our propensity to evil is previous to every exercise of freedom, since, as we have seen above, for Kant evil is inextricably linked with the capacity of reason and the faculty of free choice (*Willkür*). Secondly, Grenberg's argument seems to imply that the *original* condition of human beings prior to the use of reason is totally bereft of any sociability, as insinuated by the last part of her statement ("We bring evil to society", which may be transliterated as: We, that is, individual monads previous to any social interactions, are stricken with such propensity that upon embarking on the creation of a social space we necessarily bring evil to this society). Yet we have seen earlier that Kant discerned in the predisposition to animality of human species a remarkable tendency to sociability, which is incited by the principle of mechanical self-love and realized for the sake of the propagation and security of the species. I have also shown that the animal predisposition in human species is not denoted by Kant to be the source of

[60] See also: (Grenberg, 2005, pp. 35-39).
[61] A parallel interpretation is offered by Madore (2011): "Society's chronology is temporal, historical, whereas the adoption of a propensity is timeless and noumenal. Hence, the historical works uncover a wickedness that appears coeval to society only *because it was already there*" (p. 134).

evil. The nature of this sociability, on the other hand, should certainly be treated differently than the idea of society insofar as the latter, by virtue of its distinct institutional, economic and cultural elements, reflects the aptitudes of our second predisposition, namely, the predisposition to humanity. Society, conceived in the strict Kantian sense of the term, can only develop out of our predisposition to humanity, notwithstanding the fact that other modes of sociability with their purely mechanical and animalistic aspects may very well precede it. We do not, therefore, bring evil into society as peasants carry heaps of wheat to the granary. Rather, evil is *sui generis* – it is a unique feature of social relations and society characterized by the association of human beings endowed with reason and the faculty of free choice. Indeed, for Kant (2007b) this provides a clue to the question of why human history has a habit of exhibiting a counter-purposive tendency: "[Nature] within the human being tries to lead him from culture to morality and not (as reason prescribes) from morality and its law, as the starting point, to a culture designed to conform with morality" (p. 423) (7: 328). Commenting upon this passage, Wood (1999) makes a striking point, the full implications of which will come to full light in the fourth chapter:

> [The] demand of reason is not merely to subordinate our inclinations to reason's principles but also to reconstitute our disordered social relationships on the basis of rational principles. In this sense, human history works backwards: It makes us rational through an irrational society, leading us to the task of remaking society through reason. (p. 295)

As a philosopher of *Aufklärung* who endeavored to interweave reason with morality, the *irrationality* in question manifests itself most conspicuously in the phenomenon of evil. I am deliberately stressing on the phenomenal aspect of evil for although the propensity to evil is rooted in the noumenal realm of human freedom, the idea of the

highest good in the world designates a moral world in which evil is *overcome*.[62] In this respect, Kant's remonstration of the self-incurred immaturity of human mind not only targets the sway of opinion and superstition under which the majority of people carry on living, but also inveighs against the lack of critical thinking required for unveiling and changing the conditions preventing the attainment of the highest good. The following passage, which has to be quoted at length, offers a new mode of thinking (*Denkungsart*) regarding evil and the social context in which it thrives:

> If he [the human being] searches for the causes and circumstances that draw him into this danger [of the dominion of evil] and keep him there, he can easily convince himself that they do not come his way from his own nature, so far as he exists in isolation, but rather from the human beings to whom he stands in relation or in association. It is not the instigation of nature that arouses what could properly be called the *passions*, which wreak such great devastation in his originally good predispositions. His needs are but limited, and his state of mind in providing for them moderate and tranquil. He is poor (or considers himself so) only to the extent that he is anxious that other human beings will consider him poor and will despise him for it. Envy, addiction to power, avarice, and the malignant inclinations associated with these, assail his nature, which on its own is undemanding, *as soon as he is among human beings*. Nor is it necessary to assume that these are sunk into evil and are examples that lead him astray: it suffices that they are there, that they surround him, and that they are human beings, and they will mutually corrupt each other's moral disposition and make one another evil. [emphasis in original] (Kant, 1998, p. 105) (6: 94)[63]

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[62] Nonetheless, *overcoming* evil should not be conceived as *extirpating* the propensity to it, for the simple reason that the act of overcoming captures the logic of evil far better by targeting and trying to set right the perverted and distorted form of maxim-making operative in an evil disposition, namely, the subordination of the unconditional end arising from the moral law to that of personal ends mediated by happiness. On the other hand, evil cannot be wiped off or extirpated to the extent that this idea would implicate the possibility of transforming human beings into holy creatures, who, by definition *cannot act* contrary to the moral law. Kant (1991) states accordingly: "For finite *holy* beings (who could never be tempted to violate duty) there would be no doctrine of virtue but only a doctrine of morals, since the latter is autonomy of practical reason whereas the former is also *autocracy* of practical reason, that is, it involves consciousness of the *capacity* to master one's inclinations when they rebel against the law" (p. 188) (383).

[63] Kant's emphasis on the social dimension of evil has interesting implications for the question of happiness and self-love as well. In *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant (1996a) argues that "the principle whereby one makes happiness the highest determining basis of the power of choice is the principle of self-love" (p. 34). Under these conditions, Kant points out, "a pathologically affected power of choice" rules the maxims in such a way that the pure objective determining basis of morality is rendered subordinate to the objective of happiness. This pathos therefore does not merely arise from purely subjective considerations but develop as a result of social interactions, where each actor become susceptible to deviations "as soon as" he/she is among human beings. A new mode of

Wood (2010) points out that Kant's interest in the problem of evil was especially piqued by the active, mutually affective dimension of evil and was worked out in cognizance of "the obscene gap between rich and poor, both within each society and between different societies, and the oppression of the powerless, based on economic evils, on social customs, or the abuse of power built into political systems" (p. 145). For Wood (1999), Kant's emphasis on the practical-social rather than solely theological roots of evil produces a surprising pattern once interpreted in conjunction with his teleological story of civilization, namely, a proto-Marxist conception of history which puts under scrutiny the development of people's social and productive powers vis-à-vis the gradually exacerbating conditions of inequality and oppression (pp. 244-245).

Turning back to the passage quoted – what exactly does Kant try to convey by associating the *dominion* of evil with the network of human interactions or the totality of their social relations? Is this *dominion* a rhetorical device, one that is thoroughly Christian, utilized simply in order to indicate and portray the degree of the human beings' subjection to evil? (As in Colossians 1:13-14, "For He rescued us from the *dominion* of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son") Or should we read it more literally, that is, as a territorially confined social space under which the hegemony of evil principle holds sway over its subjects? We have seen above that for Kant the transition to a proper juridico-civil society or political community marks the *end* of *the juridical state of nature*, the state of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, with the introduction of rights safeguarded by legal mechanisms. Kant (1998) notes, however, that "in an already existing political community all the political citizens are, as such, still in the *ethical state of nature*,

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thinking (Denkungsart) therefore entails a form of "resistance" on the part of practical reason, which is an "inner but intellectual restraint" (p. 48).

and have the right to remain in it", and incorporates the following addendum: "[For] it would be a contradiction for the political community to compel its citizens to enter into an ethical community, since the latter entails freedom from coercion in its very concept" (p. 107) (6: 95). Unless it is abandoned freely and consciously, human beings continue to remain in the *ethical state of nature* in which they swing from the one side of the pendulum to the other, in the form of a "public feuding" between the principles of virtue and inner immorality (Kant, 1998, p. 108) (6: 97). Kant (1998) also tells us that human beings under the ethical state of nature are vulnerable to deviate from the common goal of goodness, that the good will of each individual will fail to suffice alone and that everyone is prone to becoming instruments of evil by mutually corrupting one another's moral predisposition (p. 108) (6: 97).

From a strictly ethical point of view, Kant's explanation seems to suggest that the dominion of evil is actually set in the midst of civil society, ruling over its members in such a gripping way that so far moral progress has not been achieved in a relatively efficacious manner. On the other hand, Kant (2009d) reckons that in comparison to the people who had inhabited the earth at the beginning of history, and who had dimly understood that they ought to regard their fellow human beings as ends, we have a much more perspicacious awareness of the obligation to heed the imperatives of the moral law (pp. 88-89). In this respect, civil society seems to create the *institutional* conditions *via* which the moral depravity and perversity of members could be surmounted, by the free and conscious will of its members, in a context that is based on a *non-coercive* and voluntary participation. Indeed, Kant (1998) grants that "without the foundation of a political community, it [ethical community] could never be brought into existence by human beings" (p. 105, p. 109) (6: 94, 6: 99). However, Kant (1998) emphatically calls for demarcating the ethical community

(ethico-civil society) from the political community (juridico-civil society), certainly in conjunction with his strong disdain for despotic governments which have a knack for confounding them, noting that the former is an association of human beings merely under the laws of virtue (p. 105) (6: 94). Kant's tenacity on this matter is quite striking. First of all, he posits that the duties of virtue are universally valid, that is, inclusive of the entire human race, and then adds that an ethical community always "refers to the ideal of a totality of human beings, and in this it distinguishes itself from the concept of a political community" (Kant, 1998, p. 107) (6: 96). A political community has to be a delimited entity whereas the cosmopolitan universality entailed by the idea of ethical community surpasses the territorially bound notion of legal citizenship and attests to a form of membership marked by the voluntary union or interconnection of ends. Thus, it is difficult to agree with Rossi (2005) who has suggested that for Kant moral improvement can only be a consequence of international peace, nor do I find it feasible to correlate the peaceful existence of the federation of states with the establishment of ethical commonwealth on the presupposition that Kant's aim was "to put a final end to human warfare in all its forms, internal and external" (pp. 88-92).[64]

The idea of perpetual peace is concerned with the ultimate end (*letzter Zweck*) of nature; it is the purposive plan of nature in "producing concord among men, even against their will and indeed by means of their very discord" (Kant, 2009b, p. 108; Wood, 1999, p. 298). On the other hand, Kant's purpose in demarcating the political community from the ethical community grows out of the social, ever-present and concretely interpersonal manifestations of evil, the overcoming of which has to be

[64] Rossi (2005) overlooks the crucial fact that for Kant this "internal war" in the faculty of will never be entirely extinguished (it may be overcome, yet the moral subject must always be vigilant since he is always at the brink of falling prey to the evil principle) insofar as this would also implicate the cessation of moral struggle that is central to Kant's understanding of free and moral subject.

achieved by means of the systematic interconnection or unification of the ends of human beings, by the harmonious organization of a final end (*Endzweck*). This subtle nuance has to be kept in mind if we are to comprehend why Kant in addition to analyzing *why* people prefer the incentives related to happiness over the unconditional ends of the moral law, also elaborates in *what form* they pursue the end of happiness among their fellow beings; and moreover, in *what ways* the isolated, predominantly hedonistic pursual of ends conflict with the *humanity* (*Menschlichkeit*) of human beings. The idea of ethical community, though never fully attainable in its sublime form due to the human condition, nevertheless serves as an *archetype* (*Urbild*), depicting a model/picture (*Bild*) in which the existing, immoral state of inter-personal and social relationships is negated (Kant, 1998, p. 111) (6: 100). Taking cue from Allen Wood's above-mentioned, provocative insight regarding the proto-Marxist traces of Kant's philosophy, we could perhaps venture to state at this point that what Kant *negates* through the idea of ethical community is the price-*form* or the market-*form* under which human beings operate in order to attain happiness. This should not be conceived as if Kant was opposed to the search for happiness per se for he was genuinely concerned to show that it is reasonable for a virtuous person to hope for happiness (Peters, 1993, p. 28).

Wood (1999) tells us that the ethical state of nature refers to the ensemble of human relationships often characterized by the self-conceit and depravity of its actors, where we tend to "make exception of ourselves to rules we will others should follow (violating FUL), use others as mere means without treating them as ends (violating FH), and set ends that cannot be united with theirs (violating FRE)" (p. 288).[65] It is striking that while elaborating on the creation of a realm of ends, that is,

[65] Abbreviations in the quoted passage refer to the formulas constructed in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. See fn. 43-44.

the systematic connection of various rational beings whereby the content of each person's personal end is consciously and freely subordinated to the harmonious unity of ends, Kant complains about how the humanity (*Menschlichkeit*) originally nested in each and every rational being is undermined once he/she is treated *merely* as means and only according to the worth he/she is ascribed by the instrumental and utilitarian logic of the acting subject (Kant, 2002, p. 51) (4: 433). He consequently makes the following assertion:

> In the realm of ends everything has either a *price* or a *dignity*. What has a price is such that something else can also be put in its place as its equivalent; by contrast, that which is elevated above all price, and admits of no equivalent, has a dignity. That which refers to universal human inclinations and needs has a *market price*; that which, even without presupposing any need, is in accord with a certain taste, i.e., a satisfaction in the mere purposeless play of the powers of our mind, an *affective price*; but that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end in itself does not have merely a relative worth, i.e., a price, but rather an inner worth, i.e., *dignity*. [emphasis in original] (Kant, 2002, pp. 52-53) (4: 434-435)

Kant could not have revealed it more clearly. The price-*form*, operative in the spheres of skill and industry, is in strict conflict with morality and humanity to the extent that the dignity of human beings is held inferior to the law of self-love, and thus bestowing priority on the ends of self-satisfaction and happiness. It consequently follows that the struggle against evil must consist in a different subjective relationship to others based on mutual respect for human dignity rather than mere conflict or competition among human ends (Wood, 2011, p. 129; Anderson-Gold, 2010, p. 203). Kant is aware, however, that this is not an easy task. Almost a decade after the publication of *Groundwork*, Kant (1998) taps into this problematique and summarizes the gravity of the situation by reciting, with obvious disproval, Robert Walpole, an English parliamentarian who exclaimed in the heat of

the debate: "Every man has his price, for which he sells himself" (p. 61) (6: 38). Put differently, Kant is adamant that rather than striving for a systematic interconnection of ends, human beings choose to capitulate to the network of human interactions where each subject is taken as a means for the other's end of happiness. Thus, the idea of ethical community is not only an elaboration of the idea of "realm of ends" previously formulated in the *Groundwork*, but more importantly, it appears to spring from Kant's intuition of the market logic that lays at the heart of the civil society, a striking testimony to his genuine effort towards its overcoming (Yovel, 1980, p. 110).

Admittedly, this interpretation is liable to be contested by a number of prominent Kant scholars for whom the idea of ethical community seems less about human striving and the effort to overcome the various evils of civil society than Kant's belief in the existence of God, the supernatural impact of grace on human life, and the supra-political idea of *civitas dei* incorporated into the lexicon of Christian theology by Augustine (Despland, 1973, p. 186; Beiser, 2006, p. 590). Firstly, we should indeed be cognizant of the fact that the idea of ethical community in Kant's view emerges in tandem with the presupposition of another idea, namely, "of a higher moral being through whose universal organization the forces of single individuals, insufficient on their own, are united for a common effect" (Kant, 1998, p. 109) (6: 98).[66] Yet this presupposition does not really amount to affirming that the realization of the highest good or the closest approximation to this ethical community is ontologically predicated on the existence of God. The moral law does not flow out of God; rather, the *existence* of God is postulated by practical reason in order to empower those moral individuals who cannot know in advance whether their active

[66] Yovel (1980) underlines similarly that the whole objective significance of the postulate of God's existence is that "there must necessarily be *something* (in the structure of the world or of man) that makes the realization of the highest good through human activity possible" (p. 126).

cooperation for bringing about this community will be sufficient by themselves.[67] Secondly, whereas Kant denominates the ectypal formation of the ethical community as *church*, the *church* in Kant's representation is certainly divested of the intolerance, parochialism and the hierarchical nature of its historical counterparts. Kant (1998) boldly condemns blind and passive obedience based on pre-established ratiocinations that are learnt and submissively reproduced by the members of the community (p. 133) (6: 103).[68] Lashing out against a religion of passivity and serfdom comprised of penitential and bodily service (*Frohndienst*), arising out of manifold fears (the most threatening one being eternal reprobation, i.e., hell) and is conducted in anticipation of happiness under the influence of various incentives (the expectation of eternal bliss, i.e., paradise), Kant (1998) contrasts it with active service which is conducted by fulfilling duties toward human race as a whole (p. 122) (6: 115-116). As Shell (2009) emphatically remarks, in Kant's view, to serve God only with one's body (*Frohn*) is to become enslaved to the dominion of the evil principle since the subject "refuses to undertake the moral change of heart by which God's final purpose in creation would become his own" (p. 203). We will shortly analyze in detail what Shell means by the "moral change of heart" and in what way for Kant this change actually spearheads or paves the way for the moral progress of human species. Suffice it to state at this point that the required "moral change of heart" is actually tantamount to a powerful negation of a modality of faith Kant classifies as *fidis*

[67] As it is evidenced elsewhere: "[The] concept of an absolutely necessary being [God] is a pure concept of reason, i.e. a mere idea, whose objective reality is far from proved by the mere fact that reason requires this idea. Indeed, the idea only instructs us to seek a certain – although unattainable – completeness and serves in fact more to confine the understanding than to expand it to new objects." (Kant, 1996b, p. 578) (A592/B620)

[68] The relationship between these two modalities, the *ectype* and *archetype* in Kant's philosophy is described as follows: "[The] ectypal idea is generated by the archetypal idea being forced to the limitations of the sensible world and human nature . . . What is within our power is furthering and striving to realize the highest good in the sensible world as ectype. What is not within our power is promoting the highest good in the intelligible world, as archetype, because that idea depends on all-powerful being for its realization" (Wike & Showler, 2010, p. 526, p. 531).

mercenaria, a category under which the mentioned features of the appeal to God by human beings can be subsumed (Kant, 1998, p. 122) (6: 115).

Why *fidis mercenaria*? Literally meaning mercenary faith, the phrase is undoubtedly used in a pejorative sense. However, there is a subtle correspondence here with our earlier discussion regarding the price-*form*, in light of the fact that the Latin word *mercenarius* in addition to referring to the person who is hired and will do anything if rewarded duly, is etymological cognates with another interesting word, namely, *merx - the market*. Hence, Kant seems to recognize that both inner faith and the moral nature of the interactions between human beings suffer from this specific market-*form* under which they are *consciously* or *unconsciously* carried out. Thus, Shell (2009) is correct when she suggests that "our lazy failure to inquire, as we should, into our own way of thinking – an inquiry that might put us on the road to self-enlightenment – is ultimately rooted in a self-satisfaction we take in our own outward conformity to law" (p. 197). Evil, therefore, is intricately connected with a certain perfidy (*Tücke*) and "self-deceit", and as Kant underlines, conformity to law can transform anyone into a person of good morals (*bene moratus*) but it does not necessarily make the person in question a morally good human being (*moraliter bonus*) (Kant, 1998, p. 54) (6: 30). This seems to shed some light on Kant's astounding assertion that the problem of setting up a state can be solved even by a nation of devils. Extending the implications of this a little farther, would it be incorrect to say that from a purely moral standpoint there exists no radical difference between a nation of devils and a society of human beings subsequent to the creation of a juridico-civil society, since a devil too can actually become a subject of good morals (*bene moratus*) merely by showing outward conformity to law?

While addressing the idea of the highest good and Kant's identification of the latter with ethical community, Yovel (1980) notes at one point that "when the moral agent is guided only by formal law, he must remain in a passive situation". Consequently, he offers an immensely crucial analysis that not only serves as a direct refutation of a common yet mistaken view about Kant's alleged conservatism but also taps into the *negative, critical* role the idea of ethical community inevitably plays vis-à-vis the juridico-civil sphere:

> Although his actions originate in freedom, their content is dictated by circumstances. Such a man does not initiate, he only reacts; lacking the binding conception of a better world, he must confine himself to the existing system, attempting to preserve the purity of his will by responding correctly to a given situation. Politically, too, this must lead to a passive and conservative position. In contrast, the material imperative becomes a source of positive initiatives, enriching the concept of freedom. It no longer suffices to respond to circumstances; one has to change them in light of an a priori moral scheme, thereby creating new orders and system, such as moral education, free political institutions and a "rational" church. (Yovel, 1980, pp. 46-47)[69]

Even though Kant highlights the requirement of a concentrated effort that will bring persons into a whole and orient them towards the final end (*Endzweck*), that is, the universal ethical community formed merely under the laws of virtue, this should never lead us to undermine the crucial task Kant had assigned to each and every individual. Although Yovel insightfully captures the *active*, critical, and *praxis*-

[69] For a similar interpretation, see: (DiCenso, 2011, pp. 171-172). Another distinguishing feature of ethical community is certainly the lack of any coercive mechanisms. It "has nothing in its principles that resembles a political constitution" (Kant, 1998, p. 112) (6: 102). Thus it can neither be monarchical/theocratic as under a pope, nor aristocratic in constitution (regulated by bishops, prelates, etc.); Kant resembles it to the household, which is admittedly an awkward and misleading metaphor. Yet this may be partly exonerated in light of Kant's religious background who still finds the relationship between the Son and the Father as the linchpin of religion and therefore of any community shaped according to moral religion. Wood (1999) suggests that we may view the idea of church in Kant as a realm of friendship (pp. 316-317). Rossi (2005), on the other hand, argues in a Habermasian fashion that the "noncoercive" nature of ethical community could be read as a field of communicative rationality, characterized by dialogue and unfettered channels of communication (p. 81).

oriented element in Kant's idea of ethical community, perhaps he should have also noted how these elements reach far beyond and make a stark contrast with the semi-feudalistic, traditional, bureaucratic and militaristic political environment under which Kant lived and was able to put forward these ideas. Kant may not have endorsed a sweeping large-scale political revolution and insisted rather on the cumulative benefits of reform, yet while he ponders over the possibility of overcoming evil and the nature of individual struggle against the dominion of evil, he strikingly resorts to the binary opposites (reform vs. revolution) we know he was well acquainted from his political writings, and makes the following assertion:

> That a human being should become not merely legally good, but morally good (pleasing to God), i.e. virtuous according to the intelligible character [of virtue] (*virtus noumenon*) and thus in need of no other incentive to recognize a duty except the representation of duty itself - that, so long as the foundation of the maxims of the human being remains impure, cannot be effected through gradual *reform* but must rather be effected though a *revolution* [das kann nicht durch allmähliche Reform, solange die Grundlage der Maximen unlauter bleibt, sondern muß durch eine Revolution in der Gesinnung im Menschen]. And so a "new man" can come about only through a kind of rebirth, as it were, a new creation . . . and a change of heart. (Kant, 1998, pp. 67-68) (6: 47)

Commenting upon Kant's utilization of such notions as "change of heart", "new man", and "rebirth", Michalson writes critically that although Kant attempted to convey the moral conversion necessary for the transition from the state of depravity to virtue, he failed to conceptualize this change purely in his own terms. For Michalson (1990), these notions are narrative devices of biblical nature, which come directly from the Konigsberg catechism and the language of pietism on which Kant was raised (pp. 79-82). He states accordingly:

> Kant's remarks about rebirth arise in the context of his labored effort to reconcile the gradualism associated with the phenomenal appearance of a

> moral undergoing 'reform' with the invisible (because noumenal) 'revolution' in the underlying disposition that presumably generates the observed reform. He needs the revolutionary motif to protect freedom from the causal clutches accompanying temporality, and he needs the gradualism motif to remain true to our actual experience of moral improvement. The revolutionary motif finds expression in biblical imagery, imagery that manages simultaneously to contribute to a narrative element . . . . When Kant states that moral conversion can come about only through a kind of rebirth, he deploys an image that serves as a needed proxy to capture the temporal transition latent in the motif of a revolution, a proxy made necessary by the missing conceptual splice between time and freedom. (Michalson, 2010, pp. 64-65)

Although Michalson perceptively discerns the narrative feature in question, I think he fails to spot a more important matter, namely, Kant's curiously extravagant ambition in building a conceptual bridge between the language of *religion* and the *critique* of juridico-civil society wherein the dominance of the logic of exchange and price (the commodity-form) perpetuates the conditions of moral depravity. Thus, Kant actually manages to tap into what Žižek (2000) identified as the "liberating kernel" of Christianity, insofar as he advocates for the reorganization of the social system or warrants for opening up a new social or communal setting wherein people will never be treated merely as means (p. 2). As Karatani (2003) states in his excellent book dedicated to reconciling Kant's philosophy with that of Karl Marx, with Kant's critique of prevailing immorality marking the sphere of judicio-civil society, we "apodictically arrive at the regulative idea of superseding capitalism" (p. 129).[70]

To conclude: While the *primum mobile* which steers history towards its ultimate *terminus* assumes a veracious and insuperable force in Comte's conception of progress, Kant's emphasis on autonomy and the task of overcoming evil

[70] For Karatani, this dimension is overlooked partly because Kantian ethics is generally read as boiling down to a single moral end that is categorically exclusive of any means, contributing to a grossly misleading picture where Kant is represented as if giving a "priestly sermon". As we have seen earlier, Kant speaks of treating each person as "an end, never merely as means", a statement that testifies to Kant's awareness of the concrete historical conditions grounding the web of inter-personal relations.

necessarily conflicts with a representation of history as deterministic as Comte's. Kant seems to notice as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century that even as a regulative idea, the teleological history of human species will wind up becoming a history of irrationality once it fails to grasp that autonomy and the development of individuality are the genuine products of this process. The efforts directed at curbing down individuality, limiting the autonomy of the subject and enhancing the supremacy of society over its parts will be at odds with the *end* of cultural progress, an *end* which in Kant's view is only the development of the rational capacities of man, the total sum of means required to defeat self-incurred immaturity and the incapability to think for oneself. Here, of course, one should not overlook DiCenso's (2011) warning, which clearly evokes the pronounced connection between autonomy and the kingdom of ends: "Since autonomous willing and acting involve my attitudes towards and relationships with other people within social-political frameworks, it is clear that autonomy has nothing in common with the solipsism and closure of *autarky*" (p. 171).[71] All in all, it seems to me that Kant's call for revolution in the mode of thinking (*Denkungsart*), assigned to each and every person to become a "new man" by shouldering the never-ending strife against evil, is in attunement with the project of Enlightenment. Enlightenment is to be expected from the "learning process enacted by revolutionary events realizing specific principles of right and justice", rather than merely through the progressive moderation of political elites (Ypi, 2014, p. 117).

As I have tried to show in this chapter, Comte's unilinear conception of progress culminated in the sacralization of the Positive state, the principal function of which was the containment of forces that were purportedly the remnants and

[71] It is noted similarly that the struggle against evil is not to be conducted in a radically individualistic fashion, as revealed by Kant's denigration of the status of the "hermit" whose solution entails isolation and a certain "flight from humanity" (Wood, 2011, p. 130).

offshoots of preceding états. Here, the fundamental question regarding the compatibility of commercial society and the moralization of nature was skirted and derided as a metaphysical speculation to pave the way for a science of society capable producing and preserving a homogeneous social totality. Duty has become synonymous with necessity under the ineluctable and eternal laws of society which were discovered by Comte himself. Kant's two-tiered conception of progress, on the other hand, taps into the dialectical tension surfacing in civil society and the commercial nature of relations between its members, entrusting the moral agents with the task of extricating themselves from the dominion of evil and the founding of ethical community. While the advance of civilization arrives at its terminus with the establishment of civil society, ensuring in the process full-scale development of human aptitude for reason, the critical threshold in the course of the moral progress of humanity arrives *only after* the establishment of civil society. The gist of Kant's two-tiered conception of progress is that the task allotted to the moral agents, which is the final end of humanity (*Endzweck*), entails the overcoming of inter-personal relations dictated by the principle of self-love and the aim of individual happiness. While ethical community can only materialize in the midst of civil society, it nonetheless surmounts the latter in terms of providing the platform for the systematic interconnection of ends and the realization of a truly moral life. This dialectical tension between the civil society and ethical community – between the merely means-oriented and instrumental relations embedded in the commercial society, on the one hand, and the end-oriented web of relations conducive to the establishment of humanity and a moral life – will resurface in the fourth chapter as I examine Theodor Adorno's critique of progress. In what follows, I will turn my gaze towards Friedrich

Nietzsche's relentless negation of the idea of progress within the context of his diatribes with the new idols appearing in the wake of the demise of God.

CHAPTER 3

TIMES OF NIHILISM:

GOD'S DEATH AND THE REIGN OF HISTORICAL SENSE

Ich kenne nicht Ärmeres,
Under der Sonn als euch, Götter!
Ihr nähret kümmerlich
Von Opfersteurn
Und Gebesthauch
Eure Majestät
Und darbtet, wären
Nicht Kiner und Bettler
Hoffnungsvolle Toren.[72]

This poem, thought to be written before 1780 by Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, wittily depicts through the archetypal figure of rebellion, Prometheus, the disintegrating authority of God just before the *fin-de-siècle* of the eighteenth century. Although this particular term – *fin-de-siècle* – is customarily used to denote the spiritual agitation that pervaded the end of the nineteenth century, I have nevertheless retained it for the sake of emphasizing the magnitude of upheaval and revolution this very epoch was bearing and longing desperately to vocalize. Goethe here announces the wretched condition of gods, ridicules their granted majesty, often upheld by those "fledgling" minds not able to utilize their reason in the right way; and in the following lines of the poem he provocatively asks: *Ich dich ehren? Wofür?* [I honor you? For what?]. Suffice it to say that this very poem had not stopped reverberating until the beginning of the 1800s if not even long afterwards, often becoming a matter of heated discussions and great praise among philosophers such as Jacobi and Fichte, containing in itself the very seeds of theological and socio-political polemics that

[72](Goethe, 1962, p. 9). I know nothing poorer/under the sun than you gods!/Wretchedly you nourish/your majesty/on sacrificial tolls/and flimsy prayers,/and would starve if children and beggars were not hopeful fools.

characterized the perturbations liberal Protestant theology had to endure during the course of the nineteenth century (Kaufmann, 1962, pp. 3-4).

Now, it is highly necessary to note that this poem is emblematic of another feature: the dissolution of the authority of God, which is intuited by Goethe, does not simultaneously implicate the disappearance of all values hitherto venerated. As we shall see later on, this last point was rather put forth by Friedrich Nietzsche for whom the disappearance of God, his eventual death was unveiling a novel and even more complex problem, namely, the advent of nihilism. For Goethe (1962), however, defying God was a potentially fruitful action heralding the coming of a secular brotherhood, that is to say, the emergence of humanism*:* Hier sitz ich, forme Menschen/ Nach meinem Bilde,/ Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei,/ Zu leiden, zu weinen,/ Zu geniessen und zu freuen sich,/ Und dein nicht zu achten,/ Wie ich! (p. 11).[73] Goethe's defiance, his "Wie Ich!" *qua* a poetico-philosophical model amidst all uncertainties that would have surfaced in the age of post-theism, still reeks of an optimistic hope with regard to the inherent capacity of humanity in creating an ultimate meaning of existence, one that would be more welcoming, warmer, encompassing and progressively humane than the ideals Christianity had strived to inculcate. It would not be far-fetched to claim that for Goethe the question Why? . . had not yet acquired the degree of urgency as it had done for Nietzsche a century later. For Goethe, the question concerning the meaning of existence is to be answered by the poet, by the *homo poeta,* who at that very theological threshold, appears to be the only agent capable of forming and announcing new values. On the other hand, the question Why? . . . concerning the ultimate meaning of existence had come to Nietzsche as an uncanny *factum* looming at the hallway of humanity. It was for this

[73] Here I sit, forming men/ in my own image, / a race to be like me, / to suffer, to weep, / to delight and to rejoice, / and to defy you, / as I do.

reason that he was planning to include a detailed, comprehensive survey of nihilism for his projected *magnum opus*, *Revaluation of All Values*, which he failed to materialize but the main ideas of which we can garner from his posthumous publication *Will to Power* (Kaufmann, 1974, pp. 113-114).

Yet what do we mean by this elusive concept, or if may borrow a term from semiotic analysis – by this *floating signifier* called nihilism? Is it a spiritual mood brooding over a human being in his ownmost depths of existence, hurling him into the pits of distress and anxiety? Is it a dark cloud of gloom hovering and towering above humankind, dreadfully palpable on account of its *visibility*? Or is it precisely *the uncanny* insofar as we *cannot* understand it, namely, that it emerges *extra*-ordinarily, eluding the categories of reason we are culturally and historically accustomed to? Nihilism, as understood and sought to be elucidated by Nietzsche, will be the central motif of this chapter. My first objective will be delineating what is intended here by nihilism. This endeavor is crucial for this chapter since by nihilism we can allude to a wide array of implications. Are we to subscribe to the popular understanding of Nietzsche's so-called *nihilism*, which is customarily and often arbitrarily limited to his *radical resoluteness* in unveiling the genealogical lineage of morals and esteemed values? With the light shed by this perspective we are encountering an annihilator fraught with resentment, motivated by unappeasable urge for destruction; a mettlesome companion in the eyes of his atheist followers and a sacrilegious philosopher according to the believer. It has to be noted contrarily that there have been many serious researches geared towards contesting this reductionist reading, which argue for the necessity of perusing Nietzsche within the context of his epoch and upbringing. Indeed, in contrast to the limited nature of analyses which have opted to understand Nietzsche *merely* as an atheist deconstructivist *avant la*

lettre, there is now a growing consensus regarding the urgent necessity of situating Friedrich Nietzsche within the context of his life-world. For example, Williamson (2004) asserts that "Nietzsche identified closely with the traditions and culture of German Protestantism", as his entire *oeuvre* displays an engagement with the rhetoric and presuppositions of the contemporary Protestant theology, "including its 'secular' manifestations in art, scholarship, and politics" (p. 236). Similarly, consider an even bolder statement by Jaspers in *Nietzsche und das Christentum:* "[Nietzsche's] thought has grown out of Christianity through Christian motivations. His struggle against Christianity in no way intends to simply abandon Christianity or remove it from history or return to a time prior to it; rather, he wants to overcome it, surpass it, with forces that Christianity and only Christianity has developed" (as cited in Smith, 2011, p. 152).

These insights are of great significance especially in light of the fact that a comprehensive understanding of the "historical sense" which had gained ascendency in and through what we have *heuristically* defined as modernity (*Neuzeit*) would beg many questions if we were to overlook a simultaneous phenomenon, namely, the demise of Christianity. Thus, the temporalization of the world and the emergence of the concept of progress should be examined in light of Nietzsche's diagnosis of nihilism. Admittedly, the way I identified this event with the word – *demise* – might justifiably raise some eyebrows. However, I do not intend to convey with this word the total disappearance of God, nor attempt to argue that Christianity had by then come to a stage in which its authority, institutional or spiritual, was already irrevocably lost. By *demise*, I stick to the etymological meaning of this term: Death, which is customarily associated with demise, is nevertheless a relatively recent meaning that has gained currency from the eighteenth century onwards, connected to

the literal meaning of the word, that is, the transfer of estate (*des-mettre – démettre*). In this respect, and as we shall see shortly, by the *demise* of Christianity we are referring to the *process* of this very transfer, or to the possible complications that might have arisen during this *transfer.* Our utilization of this term is justified if we pay attention to Nietzsche's description of nihilism. First and foremost, he defines it as the devaluation of highest values which formerly constituted the meaning of existence and itself formed the "center of gravity" (*das Schwergewicht*) by virtue of which humankind lived (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 7, p. 20) (§1, §30).[74] Secondly, and most importantly, he accentuates the transitional characteristic of nihilism, defining this threshold to be containing in itself the possibility of authentic or inauthentic engagement with the event of the death of God (Nietzsche, 1968, pp. 14-15) (§ 13-15). What is crucial for Nietzsche is *how* and *in what spirit* this "event" is affronted. Will it become a sign of increased power (*Macht*),[75] a "divine way of thinking" with which the existence of the long-standing veneration of the "true" world is finally discarded? Or is this event the harbinger of spiritual calamities, the likes of which have not been yet encountered and which grimly foretells the culminating decline and recession of the spirit, as Nietzsche puts it? (1968, p. 17) (§21) Nihilism, therefore, refers to a state of gravest uncertainties and ambiguities, invading the present and yielding on future an uncanny strangeness that cannot be prognosticated.

In any case, the indeterminate nature of nihilism clearly shows that Nietzsche comprehended nihilism as a *crisis*. Every process of demise or the corresponding stage of indeterminacy in which the transfer of material or spiritual estate is supposed

[74] I will be including the section number (§) of the text whenever I can, for the purpose of helping the reader compare the translated versions of the original text.
[75] Huszar (1945) suggests that the German word *Macht* should not necessarily be read as power *over* something, that is, the potentiality of enforcing this or that will or decision on the other. He notes that *macht* is employed by Nietzsche as power *in* man and is synonymous with vitality, enthusiasm and *virtú* in the Renaissance sense.

to take place is fraught with crisis. In this sense, the death of God appears to be a "turning point" (κρίσις) or a critical junction that presses for judgment, which demands a decision for or against with regard to the questions raised above. Thus, Pippin (1996) is correct when he asserts that for Nietzsche "the modernity crisis, nihilism, is a wholly historical crisis, one that originates within the self-understanding of modernity, *because* of the pursuit of modern ideals" (p. 266). It is *because* of the pursuit of modern ideals that the question of nihilism is intricately connected with the legacy of God, with the fact that what had hitherto kept in thrall the imagination and reason of human species has finally come to a stage where it can no longer fulfill the conditions and criteria demanded by the will-to-truth. Nietzsche has thus spoken of this situation in *Gay Science* as the death of God, judging it to be a tremendous event (*ungeheurliches Ereigniss*) in the history of human species. As Heidegger (1991a) has perceptively underlined, in this context, the phrase "God is dead" is not an atheistic proclamation but "a formula for the fundamental experience of an event in Occidental history" (p. 156).[76] This particular *Ereigniss* reveals the historicality of nihilism as a process through which the dominance of the "true world" as a "transcendent" entity is nullified (Heidegger, 1991b, pp. 4-5).Yet Heidegger, like Nietzsche, was certainly aware that the nullification of the transcendent did not altogether annul the possibility of fashioning a "true world", only at this stage to be composed out of thoroughly historical and immanent forces. In this respect, my discussion will pivot around the implications of this possibility,

[76] Smith (2011) agrees with Heidegger and argues that "for Nietzsche, 'the end of God' would not result from a particular argument, that proofs and disproofs were not the point. But rather, the very history of those arguments contains the seeds of God's end" (p. 155). As we shall see later on, Nietzsche adjudges these theological speculations to have been responsible in shattering the veil of illusion that was necessary for preserving the existence of God. In other words, what had critical impact on the end of God was nothing else than the increasing utilization of the categories of reason.

namely, the emergence of a new mode of belief *qua* immanentism within the context of the nullification of the transcendent.

This analysis strikes me as expedient insofar as examining closely this process of *demise* enables us to put forth the intimate connection this chapter bears with the previous one. By addressing *how* and *why* belief in history *qua* immanentism has emerged as a substitute for a transcendent entity, I will also have the opportunity to reevaluate the optimism and presentism of Comte. Moreover, I will open into critical investigation and further our analysis of the discursive significance of the epistemic break, the so-called advance from metaphysics to science, advocated by Comte in his celebration of the Positive stage of the law of progress. At the same time, I will be asking whether the self-avowed rejection of metaphysics really manages to overcome metaphysics by bringing into foreground Nietzsche's concept of will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*). Is it necessarily true that while liberating humankind from the yoke of God, science paves the ground anew for the spontaneous and singular determination of human life and existence? In the previous chapter, I have carried out a detailed analysis that occasions us to approach this particular question with justified suspicion and doubt. I have shown that history in its entirety had been apprehended by Comte in such a way that functioning as the dynamic *law* of society, it morphed into one of the two pillars on which sociology – as the *queen* of the sciences – was to stand. Not only was it ontologically articulated to the development of sciences in general but was also charged with an inherent *telos*. Comte went so far as to repudiate the idea of freedom altogether on the pretext of its metaphysical basis, offering in its stead the notion of *duty* which would be strictly required from the people if the purpose of historical progress, its persevering *telos*, was to find its consummation.

On the other hand, we have witnessed that Kant's two-tiered conception of progress, though tenaciously holding onto the autonomy and freedom of human subjectivity, put forth the possibility of realizing the final end of nature in the ectypal idea of rational church. Although different in its nature and scope from the positivist conception of progress with its critical approach towards the logic of utility and pragmatism that has triumphed in modern society, Kant's conception of moral progress was nevertheless an immanent one, that is, the *telos* of progress was expected to reach its consummation in *this* world. Analyzing what Nietzsche understands by nihilism will therefore come in handy for uncovering the common temporal structure that underpins the metaphysical framework of Kant's theory of progress as well as the allegedly anti-metaphysical positivist conceptualization of progress. Besides, by delving deeper on the historiographical questions related to the discussion of progress, and probing how the meaning of history has undergone radical semantic fluctuations, we will have the opportunity to address the tension between being and history in modernity. This investigation will enable us to discover whether the decaying sense of the meaning of existence, which Nietzsche diagnoses to be the hallmark of nihilism, has anything to do with the disappearance of the temporal structure inherent to the worldview of Judeo-Christian tradition. In what follows, I will first attempt to elucidate what Heidegger described as the historicality of nihilism, delving deeper on the meaning of the death of God and the "historical sense" which he argued to be the main reason behind this "event". Then, I will delve deeper on Nietzsche's criticism of the historical sense, situating his plea for the agonistic orientation of human beings within the context of his diatribes against the life-denying features of historical thinking.

3.1 Faith and Truth under the empty heaven

Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God is announced by the madman, first in *The Gay Science* and subsequently in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Climbing down from his cave after a long period of solitude, Zarathustra initially wanders around the countryside and finally arrives at a nearby town, announcing in the marketplace the death of God:

> God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? The holiest and mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us?...What festivals of atonement, what holy games will we have to invent for ourselves?...This tremendous event [*ungeheurliches Ereigniss*] is still on its way, wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder need time, the light of the stars need time; deeds need time, even after they are done, in order to be seen and heard. This deed is still more remote to them than the remotest stars – *and yet they have done it themselves*! (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 120) (§125)

Reading the text carefully, it is impossible to miss the emphasis that the death of God is not really imputed to God's agential incapacity in securing his authority, that is to say, in maintaining the conditions necessary to preserve the ground of faith. God is not dead in the ordinary, commonsensical understanding of death. He has not simply vanished out of sight, becoming superfluous, nor is his memory treated with indifferent shrug of the shoulder. God is *murdered*, argues Nietzsche, and adds that this deed is nevertheless failed to be recognized by the perpetrators - *This deed is still more remote to them than the remotest stars*. However, Nietzsche leaves us in the dark as for whom or what specific act he concretely refers to in designating human beings as the responsible perpetrators of this great crime-event.[77] It was precisely for

[77] The following articles for example do not even refer to the statement in consideration – that it is *we* who have killed God – although they investigate Nietzsche's enunciation of the death of God. See: (Ausmus, 1978; Moore, 2000).

this reason that I earlier evoked Heidegger's emphasis on reading death as an event revelatory of the historicality of nihilism.

The question of the historicality of nihilism cannot be addressed adequately unless it is interlaced with the genealogical examination of the modern self as well as the meaning of truth within the context of the demise of Christian worldview. According to Crooks (2002), Nietzsche diagnosed at the heart of modern selfhood the interplay of two dynamic forces, two different valuations which are respectively "tragic-heroic" and "Christian-moral". Without dwelling on details, we can note that, for Nietzsche, the former emanated as a result of the unrestrained display of power that was performatively agonistic and self-affirmative, whereas the latter not only was able to surface as an antagonistic revaluation, but had to uphold this formula of negativity geared against the "tragic-heroic" ideal precisely in order to sustain its internal coherence. Therefore, the devaluation of "Christian-moral" ideal *par excellence*, that is, the death of God, signals the dissolution of this binary structure:

> In vanquishing that ideal, it [the "Christian-moral" valuation] simultaneously destroys its own ground. For Nietzsche, then, the ruin of modern culture is a function of the fact that reactive selfhood reaches in it the peak of its ascendancy. The devaluation of values is nothing but the moment of denouement (*anagnorisis*) in the tragedy of that selfhood – i.e., its fulfillment/eclipse. (Crooks, 2002, p. 47)

Certainly, Nietzsche's association of the moment of denouement *(anagnorisis*) with the death of God sets him apart from his predecessors for whom the death of either the Christian or a pagan god similarly signified the singular human plight of disorientation and hopelessness (Luft, 1984, pp. 266-268). While Nietzsche's entire *oeuvre* is pervaded by speculations and grim forecasts speaking of impending distress and spiritual predicaments, he focuses on something far more fundamental and disconcerting. What if the death of Christian God was to unveil the idea of

human subjectivity as it is – viz., a necessary presupposition and powerful fiction? How were we to tackle this moment of denouement if it amounted to nothing other than the simultaneous intuition of the lack of foundation laid bare with the dissolution of the apparently the greatest fiction ever designed (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 35) (§34)? How could this eclipse be affronted by a being for whom the most troublesome trepidation is precisely the disappearance of foundations, that is to say, and as Nietzsche was wont to express - *horror vacui*? For Nietzsche, therefore, philosophy has to slough off its longstanding engagement with the logos, abandon its search for the absolute being in order to make room for heeding the pressing urgency of the above-raised questions. Nietzsche accordingly writes: "Parmenides said, 'one cannot think of what is not'; - we are at the other extreme, and say 'what can be thought of must certainly be a fiction'" (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 291) (§539).

How was it that Nietzsche actually succeeded to take a leap to what he defines as the other extreme? Whereas with Parmenides we are to discard what is *not-truth* on account of its ontological untenability, with Nietzsche we are to reject the principle of ontological tenability inasmuch as it is the ground upon which *truth* is claimed to be towering. With this critical turn, Nietzsche holds, we are submitting to a genealogical search for the origins of truth and that this origin is nowhere to be found other than in human psychology, and is to be sought in the ineradicable drive he denotes as will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*).[78] By the *other extreme*, therefore, we are referring to this methodical reorientation of Nietzsche that is in stark contrast

[78]I agree with Benger (1973) that what Nietzsche signifies by will-to-truth, at least up to a certain extent, could be approached *via* Max Stirner. His philosophical significance has been undermined as a result of gross generalizations geared towards apprehending him as a precursor to Nietzsche, often in accompaniment with belittling remarks that Stirner's philosophical perspective was not as developed as his successor's. The veracity of these statements does not concern us in this paper. However, the following definition of "truth" clearly has affinities with Nietzsche's understanding of it: "[The] truth is only a—*thought*; but it is not merely "a" thought, but the thought that is above all thoughts, the irrefragable thought; it is *the* thought itself, which gives the first hallowing to all others; it is the consecration of thoughts, the "absolute", the "sacred" thought" (as cited in Benger, 1973, p. 531).

with the realism of Parmenides and Plato, which not only formed the backbone of Christian theology but also succeeded to permeate the secular tenets of modern philosophy as well. It has to be underlined at this point that the ontological and psychological factors undergirding Nietzsche's elucidation of nihilism is closely aligned with a set of historico-cultural reasons which played a critical role in Nietzsche's leap to the so-called *other extreme*. Therefore, an analysis oblivious to the historicality or the historically embedded nature of Nietzsche's philosophy, as well as his ambivalent relationship to the very tradition he sought to overcome, will be marred with serious drawbacks (Walker, 2002, p. 11).[79]

We should keep in mind that any attempt at grasping nihilism without this psychological dimension is doomed to failure. However, the opposite is also the case since omitting historical and theological debates in which the "event" was unfolding would ultimately render the systematic elaboration of the psychology of nihilism incomplete and untenable. Nietzsche discerned as the operative principle of will-to-truth a longing for permanence, construing the function of *the truth* as an antidote against suffering that stems from the transitoriness of things, from the continuous cycle of disappearance and appearance. The destructive nature of time is sought to be alleviated by this willing *to truth*, which emerges out of a psychological need (*Bedürfnis*). Nietzsche (2007) expresses the psychological ground of this need in the following terms: "[The] unconditional will to truth . . . is *faith in the ascetic ideal*

[79] This necessity can also be witnessed in the way Nietzsche evaluated his ownmost historicality: He has not viewed himself as a philosopher *stricto sensu*. This stems from the fact that his denigration of ascetic spirit is often accompanied by his problematization of the figure of the philosopher, who pursues his wager, according to Nietzsche, from the standpoint of putatively eternal and hierarchically superior values while denigrating, to the point of extreme abstention, the so-called base values such as sexuality, gaiety, festivity, etc. It should also be remembered that Nietzsche has never identified his work *a-timely*, but sought to express his antagonism and critical mindset through another temporal concept. Untimeliness (*Unzeitgemässheit*), with which he intently dons himself bears testimony to the temporal tension he sensed between his existence and his historicality. Finally, we should underline that the word *untimely* does not amount to rejecting one's ownmost epoch *in toto*, but subtly manifests the dynamic tension that is realized, affirmed and agonistically cherished. It is a way of laying claim to future by carving out one's destiny. See: Large, 1994.

itself . . .the faith in a *metaphysical* value*, a value as such of truth* as vouched for and confirmed by that ideal alone (it stands and falls by that ideal)" (p. 112). Immediately after this statement, he apprises us of the *formal nature* of the ascetic ideal which has simply outgrown its traditional *content* – Christianity:

> Our faith in science is still based on a *metaphysical faith*, – even we knowers of today, we godless anti-metaphysicians, still take *our* fire from the blaze set alight by a faith thousands of years old, that faith of the Christians, which was also Plato's faith, that God is truth, that truth is *divine* . . . (Nietzsche, 2007, p. 112)

We are often reminded by Nietzsche that the advantage of Christian moral hypothesis resided in its capacity to offer a worldview that would adequately appease this need associated with the will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*). According to him, it succeeded above all in bestowing meaning and value on the incessant flux of becoming, functioning as a spiritual haven against the merciless indifference of nature before the passing away of things (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 9) (§4). However, Nietzsche does *not* claim that God's death causes the simultaneous elimination of the will-to-truth; quite the contrary, for "[the] religious *instinct* is indeed growing vigorously – but it rejects any specifically theistic gratification with profound mistrust" (2002, p. 49) (§53). Should we assume therefore that when spelling out the lack of theistic gratification Nietzsche refers to a certain breaking point within the internal structure of "Christian-moral" interpretation? Does this have anything to with the blatant suggestion mentioned above by Nietzsche regarding God's death – that, it is *we*, who are the sole cause of this demise?

In his brilliant book, Howard apprises us of Heinrich Heine's allegorical remark concerning Immanuel Kant's *Kritik* and the latter's impact on the envisagement of God: "Do you hear the little bell ringing? Kneel down. They are

bringing the sacraments to a *dying* God" (as cited in Howard, 2000, p. 83).[80] This remark is highly revelatory of the nature of philosophical debates that took place during the last decades of the eighteenth century in Germany. Indeed, it is in the intellectually fertile atmosphere of such religious/theological debates that originally new ideas sprouted forth, perhaps propelled by the new vistas and forays made accessible with the maxim that encapsulates the spirit of this age: *Sapere aude*! In congruence with this viewpoint, Cassirer (2009) claims the following: "The problem of history for the philosophy of Enlightenment arises in the field of religious phenomena, and it is here that this problem first became urgent" (p. 195). In the context of German *Aufklärung*, the connection between religion and philosophy is certainly deeper and more intricate. It is argued elsewhere that "[religion] has always been the goal of German thought . . . The philosopher could not construct his system without making it terminate in religion, or the theologian expound his theology without translating its doctrines into the philosophical speech of his school and age" (Fairbairn, 1875, p. 957). Since the scope of our analysis does not permit us to delve deeper on this important historical threshold, we have to keep in mind of the existence of voluminous literature dealing with the logical and philological contradictions in the Bible as well as the emergence of trenchant arguments directed towards the traditional presuppositions of supernaturalist theology (Smith, 2011, p. 84).[81] These discussions are often perpetrated under the aegis of historical criticism, since the latter had gained an increasingly important function in dealing with the

[80] Heine's remark may very well be springing from his everyday observations since the social-communal aspects of the Church were already under threat of severe disintegration by the end of the eighteenth century. Hence, "the little bell" was ringing not solely due to Kant's *Kritik*; it was reverberating across Germany as a wider social phenomenon. Williamson (2004) supplies us with the following data: "In Berlin, the average annual number of church communions for every 100 church members fell from 150 in 1739, to 100 in 1780, down to 40 in 1800. Similar patterns can be observed in Hamburg, Dresden, Nuremberg, and Hannover; in once church in Hannover participation dropped from 115 in 1750, to 95 in 1760, to 23 in 1810" (p. 29).

[81] For an extensive analysis of the decline of supernatural theology and related issues centering around the meaning of the historical existence of Christ, refer to: (Schweitzer, 1961).

events and revelations cited in the Scripture. This methodological orientation emphasized the necessity of forming a scriptural exegesis that would conciliate revelation with the universal and necessary categories of reason (Howard, 2000, pp. 80-84; Cassirer, 2009, pp. 187-191).

Surveying this intellectual orientation, for which the harmonization of the ahistorical demands of reason with historical reality had become the principal tenet, Howard (2000) justifiably describes these developments to be attesting to a deeply pervasive "cognitive crisis" emerging out of an historical mindset no longer content with standard explications and presupposed convictions that traditionally safeguarded the authority of God (p. 80). As a matter of fact, by "cognitive crisis" we might be referring, as Nietzsche would have concurred, to the insidious process by means of which religion has been enforced, with ever-increasing magnitude, to comply with the demands of reason. And it was precisely this process which has contributed to, if not prompted, the death of God (Smith, 2011, p. 156). In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche (2005a) summarizes the transformation of God under the austere supervision of Kant, who formidably severed the link between religion and morality:

> A hidden path to the old ideal lay open; the concept of a '*true* world', the concept of morality as the *essence* of the world (- the two most vicious errors in existence!) were once again (thanks to an exceedingly canny skepticism), if not provable, then at least no longer *refutable* . . . Reason, the *right* of reason, does not extend that far. . . Reality was made into 'mere appearance'; a complete lie called 'the world of being' was made into a reality . . . (p. 9) (§10)

Hence, according to Nietzsche, Kant tried to subdue the arguments of rational theology by rendering irrelevant the *logos* of science within the context of faith, liberating philosophy from its earlier status of being a handmaiden to theology. Ceasing to become an object of experience that could neither be refuted nor proved

with the categories of reason, faith was thereby rescued and granted immunity from the pangs of modern skepticism. God has been transformed, Nietzsche (2005a) claims, into the *thing-in-itself* (*Ding an Sich*) (p. 15) (§17). Nietzsche judged that rather than downplaying the role faith plays in the milieu of modern life, this move was essentially endeavoring to resuscitate faith in an epoch whose internal dynamic and mode of operation was irreconcilably different from previous centuries. Kant himself does not shy away from admitting the changing circumstances in *Lectures on Philosophical Theology* and even seems to endorse it insofar as it is logically exacted by his *critical* turn:

> [All] speculation [i.e., traditional proofs] depend, in substance, on the transcendental concept. But if we posit that it is not correct, would we then have to give up the knowledge of God? Not at all. For then we would only lack the scientific knowledge that God exists. But a great field would still remain to us, and this would be the belief or faith [*Glaube*] that God exists. This faith we will derive a priori from *moral principles*. (as cited in Smith, 2011, p. 79)[82]

For Kant, theology hitherto conceptualized religion within the context of the a posteriori proofs of God, such that the existence of an objectively provable God was a necessary hypothesis for making sense of human beings as moral agents (*homo moralis*). Hence, when it is held that *moral principles* are to be the source from which faith (*Glaube*) is to be derived, this radically transforms the relationship between morality and religion in favor of the former. Duties are not to be comprehended as a set of rules imposed externally, but are to be conceived as arrived a priori with apodictic certainty through pure reason (Smith, 2011, p. 84; Tillich, 1967, p. 68). By this formulation, Kant denies the longstanding authority of ecclesiastical and scriptural pronouncements since ethics no longer take for granted

[82] See also: (Williamson, 2004, p. 31).

the so-called sanctity of scriptural-ecclesiastical (external) motivations. They bring about, Kant argues, a state of heteronomy in which external motivations may very possibly meddle with moral axioms.[83] In their stead, Kant puts forth the necessity of human autonomy, *auto-nomos*, the principle of being a law to oneself, as the proper ground of genuinely ethical life. Put differently, Kant signals the annulment of theonomy, *theo-nomos*, insofar as autonomy is devoid of any divine content, neither governed by God nor in intimate contact with divine law. Once human subjectivity is dissociated from its earlier mirroring function of the majesty of God (*imago dei*), that is, the removal of this divine content and the postulation of a formal ground of morality, the immediate outcome of this operation added up to the transformation of theonomy into humanism (Tillich, 1967, pp. 27-28; Barth, 1959, p. 182). Indeed, Kant seems to approve revealed religion merely as a mode of representation (*Vorstellung*) that is to be helpful in the practice of morality. In other words, it will simply be a means to an end, to a "higher" end, the superiority of which emanates from Kant's understanding of morality *qua* its embeddedness in the human reason alone (Smith, 2011, p. 88, p. 93; Barth, 1959, p. 169).

Nietzsche's relentless reproach of Kantian ethics is intimately linked to what he judged to be a subtle and cunning move, as a consequence of which the idea of God was localized as far as possible from the domain of phenomena. In Nietzsche's view, though redeeming morality from the early superiority of dogmas and scriptural-ecclesiastical pronouncements, Kant could not entirely dispense with the injunction "Thou shalt" insofar as this imperative was essential to substitute formal conscience with the dictates of ecclesiastical religion (*Vorstellung*). In other words,

[83] Smith (2011) points out that by associating religious dogma with *Afterdienst*, Kant was alluding to the Old German etymology of the word, which means “behind” or “anus”. This would imply that dogmas are “anal services”, a repetitive obsession with minutiae that do not require the faculty of practical reason (p. 85).

Kant did not mourn the debilitated influence of God on the worldview of his contemporaries, quite to the contrary inasmuch as he sensed in this historic event the possibility of basing morality on the ground of reason by limiting it to merely formal constitution. Nietzsche (2001) underlines the problematic construction of this formal conscience by asserting that dismantling God from the ground of subjectivity does not ensure that it will not be filled by another content (p. 115) (§117).[84] In fact, he patently argues that in an age where the authority of Christianity is disputed, the content of this injunction (Thou shalt . . .) will be determined by other means such as the legal power of state or through class prejudice or public opinion (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 86) (§199). In light of our analysis in the first chapter, we can with valid reasons count among the possible alternatives the secularized version of sociological priesthood propagated by Comte, which aspired to fill the evacuated content of this formal conscience with the religion of humanity.

Certainly, Nietzsche's fervent criticism of this formal conscience and its radical humanism depended on his conviction that this modification will not eliminate the essential ailment of human beings, namely, the general inability to command one's own will with the accompanying obedience to the herd instincts. Religion indeed has functioned so far as an invaluable opiate:

[84] It should be noted that Nietzsche was equally skeptical of Kant's emphasis on autonomy and subjectivity: In *Gay Science*, he covertly repudiates Kant's theorizing of individuality by asking whether the feeling of self in the individual (*des Einzelnen*) is supposed to be recognized as the basis of justice (*des Recht*). Emphasizing on the etymological proximity of *einzeln* (feeling alone) and *allein* (to be alone), he underlines that being an individual was not always treated as something positive, let alone being considered as the basis of justice. As the mythological tale of Prometheus by Aeschylus is supposed to show us, Nietzsche holds that many have been "sentenced" to be an individual (*Individuum*) since they defied the entrenched values and common dispositions of their age, putting themselves at the risk of banishment and permanent loneliness. No doubt, Nietzsche evinces here how human beings have internalized the injunction "Thou shalt" which has perhaps emerged as an external commandment, focusing attention on this learned (or disciplined) disposition to heed the parameters of established justice rather than seeking to create new ones.

> [The] great majority, who exist and are only *allowed* to exist to serve and to be of general utility, religion gives them an invaluable sense of contentment with their situation and type; it puts their hearts greatly at ease, it glorifies their obedience, it gives them (and those like them) one more happiness and one more sorrow, it transfigures and improves them, it provides something of a justification for everything commonplace, for all the lowliness, for the whole half-bestial poverty of their souls. Religion, and the meaning religion gives to life, spreads sunshine over such eternally tormented people and makes them bearable even to themselves. (Nietzsche, 2002, pp. 54-55) (§61)

However, we are similarly informed by Nietzsche that the disappearance of religion does not necessarily mean that one could *ipso facto*, that is, as a result of brushing away the promises and prohibitions of religion, liberate oneself from this submissive psychology. Worn down by a lack of orientation and meaning previously provided and supervised by the ideal of God, they might react to this malady with an equally subservient attitude *qua passive nihilism*. Some supra-human agency might and will surface, though this time to be carved out of this world rather than being a product of the transcendent realm, bearing the new modern insignia under which formal conscience will be marshaled. According to Nietzsche (1968), one possible contender for this role is history:

> The nihilistic question "for what?" is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded *from outside* – by some *superhuman authority*. Having unlearned faith in that, one still follows the old habit and seeks *another* authority that can *speak unconditionally* and *command* goals and tasks . . . [The authority of *history* now steps up front] with an immanent spirit and a goal within, so one can entrust oneself to it. One wants to get around the will, the willing of a goal, the risk of positing a goal *for oneself*; one wants to rid oneself of the responsibility (one would accept fatalism). (pp. 16-17) (§20)[85]

It would not be far-fetched to claim that by lashing out against such an appropriation of history, Nietzsche had in mind the nineteenth century theological and secular

[85]As we shall see later, Nietzsche reached to his conclusion as early as the beginning of the 1870s, while he was working on a series of fragments collected under *Untimely Meditations*.

studies which were inescapably and deeply permeated by Hegel's philosophy (Murphy, 2010, p. 69). It should be accentuated, however, that Nietzsche's polemical engagement with Hegel's conception of history was not limited to its implications for the status of religion in modern societies. Importantly, he discerned in the emphasis on becoming and development (*Entwicklung*) an emblematic characteristic of post-theistic intellectual speculation. Perhaps, this might be the reason why we occasionally encounter hyperbolic statements in which Nietzsche emphasizes the curious affinity between Darwinism and Hegelianism. Evoking the key concept of dialectics, Nietzsche asks whether this proposition, by permeating the mindset of Europe, has finally transformed into a sixth sense where, in a world vacated by God, the divinity of existence could finally be justified. This "historical sense", according to Nietzsche, was nothing but the decisive background of the story of the "last great scientific movement" – Darwinism. And upon this basis stands the hyperbolic statement of Nietzsche (2001): "Without Hegel, there could be no Darwin" (p. 218) (§357). Regardless of the veracity of this claim, we have to underline that here a more crucial phenomenon is reproached by Nietzsche. The devolving of history into *ancilla metaphysica* whereby the exhausted and prostrate status of absolute Being could be resuscitated with an opportune source behooving modernity, that is, through historical spirit (Dries, 2008, p. 7). According to Nietzsche, this would in effect fulfill the greatest desire of human psychology which has hitherto aimed at *a becoming one with being* (as cited in Dries, 2008, p. 5).

Nietzsche was certainly aware that philosophical debates that had taken place in the post-Kantian intellectual setting revolved around the strict demarcation Kant sketched out between faith (*Glauben*) and knowledge (*Wessen*). Although Hegel concurred with Kant regarding the necessity of salvaging God from being an object

of thought as represented in traditional theology, he was deeply critical of the way in which Kant insulated faith from reason; the immediate outcome of such demarcation was a world of alienation and "tornness" (*Zerissenheit*) where thinking and being, and knowledge and faith were left unmediated and radically isolated from one another (Smith, 2011, pp. 109-110). In this respect, it could be surmised that Nietzsche discerned in Hegel's emphasis on history a plea for overcoming the "tornness" (*Zerissenheit*) perpetrated by the world of *Bildung* with its critical insight and willingness to empty every form out of its content. According to Hegel, the cause of this "tornness" overlaps with a sense of inner lack/need (*Bedürfnis*) for unity which calls for a new method that would reconcile finitude with the infinite, and similarly, reason with feeling, and form with content.[86] Mere understanding (*Verstand*) will be replaced by Reason (*Vernunft*) which will consequently allow us to reconcile the separated realms of faith (*Glauben*) and knowledge (*Wessen*). Smith (2011) explicates how Hegel sought to realize the process of reconciliation as follows:

> Both sides [faith and knowledge] are in fact of the same "spirit", i.e., because each has produced the other and lives in misrecognition of its own origin, [scientific] insight and faith need to recognize their status of mutual interdependence. Unity emerges not by the imposition of a solution as in a court case but by the collapse of the particular positions in their recognition of internal relationships. (p. 110)

Certainly, this Hegelian formula hints at the problematic nature of Kant's famous dictum. It appears that for Hegel one does *not* necessarily have to abandon knowledge in order to make room for faith (Kant, 1996b, p. 31) (B: xxx). Whereas

[86]As we have noted above, Nietzsche retained the concept *Bedürfnis* and connected it to what he problematized as will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*). We do not know with clear certainty whether he intentionally retained this concept in order to lay bare those psychological dynamics operative behind the mindset of Hegel, or any philosopher in general, who have purportedly discovered an ultimate meaning for making sense of existence.

Kant postulated a categorical demarcation between being and becoming, Hegel rejects to submit to this "arbitrary" method of separation insofar as the absolute truth revealed by *Vernunft* manifests how essence (*Wesen*) unfolds itself systematically and dialectically, as process in the realm of becoming and history. Put differently, being for Hegel comes to itself out of itself as a result of pure movement which is encapsulated in its potentiality - It gradually but *necessarily* finds itself in history since *Geist* is self-realizing and at the same time carries the self-realized final cause in itself (Popper, 1947, pp. 36-38). It follows logically that history is not to be conceived as a series of unrelated, accidental and merely contingent events since it is actually a rational totality comprised of organically inter-related moments that pour unto each other *along the course of* a linear and dialectical movement (Murphy, 2007, pp. 57-58).[87]

3.2 Resurrection: Hegel's inner-worldly God

I have earlier explicated how Nietzsche diagnosed in the proposition “thing-in-itself” (*Ding an Sich*) an insidious attempt at preserving God, albeit only formally and at the expense of scriptural and ecclesiastical commandments. In *Anti-Christ*, immediately after he speaks of the transformation of God in the hands of Kant, Nietzsche (2005a) proceeds and argues that with Hegel, God has finally transformed into *Pure Spirit (Geist)* (p. 15) (§17). These propositions of Nietzsche are of immense significance since they concretely manifest how will-to-*truth* (*Wille zur Wahrheit*) doggedly persists in an epoch devoid of God, how the nullification of the “transcendent” entity

[87] According to Hegel, a deficient mode of historiography might treat events at their face value inasmuch as by delving strictly on the objective features of events, or on their manifestation (*Vorstellung*), it overlooks the principle of development (*Entwicklung*) and fails to detect the rational essence operating behind them. Similarly consider the following statement of Hegel on the essential goal of *Geist*: "The goal of Spirit is, if we may employ the expression, to comprehend itself, to remain no longer hidden to itself. The road to this is its development, and the series of developments form the levels of its development" (as cited in Murphy, 2010, p. 72).

is followed up by a willing of *truth* that is this-worldly, immanent and historical. Nowhere do we encounter a better specimen of such reorientation of willing than in Hegel's prefatory remarks in *Encyclopedia*:

> It is true that philosophy initially shares its objects with religion. Both have the truth for their object, and more precisely the truth in the higher sense, in the sense that God and God alone is the truth. Moreover, both treat the sphere of finite things, the sphere of nature and the human spirit, their relation to each other and to God as their truth. Philosophy thus may definitely presuppose a familiarity with its objects - indeed it must do so - as well as an interest in them from the outset, if only because chronologically speaking consciousness produces for itself representations [*Vorstellung*] of objects prior to generating concepts [*Begriff*] of them. What is more, only by passing through the process of representing and by turning towards it, does thinking spirit progress to knowing by way of thinking [*denkendes Erkennen*] and to comprehending [*Begreifen*]. (Hegel, 2010, p. 28)

According to Hegel, therefore, the apparent demarcation drawn between religion and philosophy is "arbitrary" to the extent that both spheres of thought endeavor in their own particular mode to grasp *truth*. Yet if we were to concur with Hegel and assert that all error emanates from stopping and staying at one of the moments of the concept, this *truth* becomes nothing other than the *progressive development* of truth (hence Nietzsche's formula of Hegelian essentialism: Being=Becoming). Submitting to a holistic understanding of history and seeing it from the viewpoint of the self-development inherent to the Concept (*Begriff)*, we are led to conclude that "philosophy, in explaining religion, is only explaining itself, and in explaining itself it explains religion . . . Thus religion and philosophy coincide . . . philosophy is itself in fact an act of divine worship" (as cited in Barth, 1959, p. 293). If, as Hegel declares, we define philosophy to be an act of divine worship, we could well infer that this belief actually crystallizes as philosophy of history where the antinomy between the transcendental and historical-empirical modes of thought are sublated

(*aufzuheben)* and historical events become the necessary *points* traversed for the culmination of *Geist* and the realization of its teleological essence.

It is a generally acknowledged fact that the primary reason behind Nietzsche's ardent criticism of Hegel was the latter's conception of history. Houlgate (2004) subscribes to this argument and points out to the intellectual influence of Jacob Burckhardt and Arthur Schopenhauer on the way Nietzsche approached Hegel and evaluated his influence on the *Wissenschaften* of the nineteenth century. According to Houlgate (2004), both Burckhardt and Schopenhauer criticized Hegel on account of his misrepresentation of history "as progressing towards a continuingly improving future" and his optimistic affirmation of the present "as the rational goal of historical development, or as a rational stage in that development" (p. 30).[88] Nietzsche's antagonism towards Hegel ran deeper however inasmuch as what deeply irked him was the implications of this philosophical reformulation of history on human temporality; and specifically the pressing question as to the possibility of spontaneity and individuality in a setting where human temporality is predominantly regulated by philosophy of history. As I have earlier remarked, it is emphatically underlined by Nietzsche that the elimination of myth, that is, the disintegration of the traditional formula that equated God with absolute truth, could well be compensated by the *historicization* of religion or by the *sacralization* of history (Williamson, 2004, p. 246). Inasmuch as Hegel veers away from affronting the sheer negativity of becoming and the destructive flux of time, he is suffering from a "disappointed positivism". History is designated as the truth of all there is, yet in such a way that

[88] On the other hand, Houlgate (2004) also argues that in his so-called "mature" period Nietzsche wrestled himself away from the influence of these thinkers and that his ideas regarding Hegel equally changed. This assertion seems dubious since Nietzsche never ceased to preserve his distance from Hegel. It could be even be argued that his emphasis on nihilism at the end of his intellectual career manifested his radical diffidence of Hegel and the representation of history he put forth.

this truth is simultaneously domesticated by being imparted with unity or purpose (Hatab, 1987, pp. 93-96).

By this logic, we arrive at the following conclusions. First, the Hegelian understanding of history yields a secularized providence that is distinguished from its Christian counterpart on account of removing the veil of *mystery* from history. Whereas previously the meaning of history was *partly* accessible to humanity as a sovereign decision of an omniscient God, with Hegel each and every event is now apprehendable and is rational in itself due to the principle of development (*Entwicklung*) that determines the dialectical branching out of the essence (*Wesen)* of *Geist* (Tillich, 1967, pp. 130-133). And this is precisely what elicits Nietzsche's criticism for by dispensing with history *qua historia abscondita,* a highly rigid blueprint of history emerges and the retroactive force of human being on what is past, his ability to bring into light something new out of history is therewith curtailed (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 53) (§34). Consequently, a petrified passivity, a complacent mediocrity broods over humankind which takes the form of a sterile love of the present, of what is common, vulgar and comforting. Nietzsche identifies this psychological state as *Nächstenliebe* and contrasts it with *Fernstenliebe*, a noble way of loving the future, of what is unexpected, of what is yet to become through the will to create, *via vis creativa* (Luft 1984, p. 270; Large, 1994, p. 44). The sterile love of the present, on the other hand, constitutes for Nietzsche the bedrock of *passive nihilism*, an internalization of obedience and receptivity as a result of which herd mentality is encouraged and perpetually reproduced. This particular form of historical consciousness covers up the phenomenon of singular future, of one's ownmost future, in short, the very act of laying claim to future by carving out one's own destiny (Large, 1994, pp. 34-35). Drawing on Nietzsche's allegory, Large (1994)

poetically remarks that '"modern men" have effectively colonized the future already and mapped it all out, so that its "new seas" are no longer uncharted *enough* for him (p. 41).

Dwelling on this metaphor will be helpful. What does it mean from Nietzsche's vantage point to leave future deliberately *un*charted or *not* mapped? It could be intimated that charting the seas, or mapping out the coordinates of one's ownmost temporality brings about a framework that could be portrayed as follows: The point X symbolizes the standpoint of the present. To the right stretches the sea of time and future, and between the point X and the farthest point to the right (Y), the charted territory of this voyage is neatly drawn. According to the Nietzschean perspective, however, the following modification has to take place. The standpoint X is retained, yet the sea stretching before this standpoint is now dotted in order to emphasize the unknowable nature (*un*-chartedness) of what is to come; and the multiple variants of Y (Y1, Y2, Y3, *ad infinitum*) emphasize the subsisting temporal relationship between the present and future in a mode of radical *un*-determinateness. The present is impregnated with an act of spontaneity that relates to one's creation of his/her ownmost destiny. What form of modification is bound to occur if we integrate the underlying logic of the first model with the Hegelian formulation of history we have discussed above? Kojève (1980) highlights that the Hegelian conception of time cannot be apprehended if we fix our attention to the present, since time is engendered in the future and only returns to the present by way of the past (p. 134). Hence, the Hegelian conception of time appears as a *demi*-sphere, and the *logic* that determines or permeates the dynamic inter-relationship between the past, present and future should be denoted as the principle of development (*Entwicklung*), which is teleological. In this respect, the *logic* is not to be anchored to a single point, to the

nunc stans, which would then evoke a transcendental reference operating above history and thus contradict the *essentially moving nature of logic*, the immanance of the opening up (*Offenbarung*) of *Geist* in Hegel's understanding of history.

Here, Kojève's analysis of the Hegelian conception of time revolves around the following statement drawn from *Phenomenology*: "*Was ist* Zeit *betrift, . . . so ist sie der daseiende Begriff selbst* (In what concerns *Time*, [it must be said that] it is the Concept itself which exists empirically)" (as cited in Kojève, 1980, pp. 132-133). What does this formula, namely the identification of time with the concept, suggest within the context of Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God? Clarifying the previous statement can be helpful. According to Kojève (1980), a number of typical relationships that could be arranged between the Concept and Time has bestowed on each particular philosophical perspective its distinctive mark. With Plato or Kant, the Concept is not at all possible without a *suspension* deliberately introduced into the continuity of time, that is, an interrupting moment which will bring about a leap of transcendence. A web of coherent relationships between ideas is consequently interwoven, which are then organized under the umbrella of an encompassing Concept. This Concept enables one to "lay claim to the truth", which in the strict sense of the term is "supposed to be a thing that cannot be either modified or denied . . . which is 'universally and necessarily' valid− i.e., it is not subject to changes; it is, as we also say, *eternal* or nontemporal" (Kojève, 1980, pp. 100-101). Although Kojève does not analyze in detail the relationship between truth and God, he at one point argues that the possibility of a theistic system, or a theological conception of truth, is intrinsic to this *suspending* moment:

> [The] difference between the theological system and the atheistic Hegelian system is to be traced back to the very beginning point. Speaking in

> metaphysical terms, we can say that a theistic system properly so-called – that is, a frankly transcendentalist and mono-theistic system – results as soon as the Concept (i.e. Absolute Knowledge) is defined as an *eternal* entity that is *related* to Eternity, Eternity being *outside* of Time. (Kojève, 1980, pp. 107-108)

Are we to conclude from these sets of arguments that Hegel's system denies the existence of God? Certainly not, so far as when Kojève equates the system of Hegel with atheism, he is merely alluding to the disintegration of the formula that had hitherto taken God as an *eternal* entity that is *related* to Eternity. What we have to speculate is not whether God has become redundant in the system of Hegel, since we have ample proofs suggesting otherwise. As we shall see, the *death* of God in Hegel's system – if we can speak of such a *death* – could only be put forth if we can discern that at its core *this death is a Christian form of death*. Certainly, the mode in which Hegel revealed God's death is radically different from Nietzsche's diagnosis of this event, which is associated with another phenomenon, that is, the historicality of nihilism.

First and foremost: What do we mean by God's death *qua Christian form of death*? Let us elaborate on this subject after lending ear to a beautiful exposition of Hegel's understanding of the death of God and its logically necessary and progressive aspect within the context of Hegel's conception of history:

> Hegel refers to the "infinite pain" ("unendlichen Schmerz") that characterizes the feeling of religion in modernity ("die Religion der neuen Zeit") and arises from the sense that "God himself is dead" ("Gott selbst ist tot"; "Glauben und Wessen," 432). The experience of the Enlightenment, the wrenching apart of earlier unities and the destabilization of traditional authorities, must be lived through in all its infinite diremption. But with a kind of paradoxical mathematics that will become formalized only in the nineteenth century, Hegel hopes to fold this infinity ("Unendlichkeit") associated with "the pure concept" ("der reine Begriff"). *The infinite pain would thus become a moment, and nothing more than a moment, in a longer temporality that defies time.* The feeling of loss must be transformed into a "philosophische

> Existenz." *The death of God and sense of godlessness ("Gottlosigkeit") would thus have to confronted in all its severity and seriousness as a "speculative Good Friday" ("spekulativen Karfreitag").* However, this reintroduction of the Christian image into the conceptualization of the end of religion demonstrates that *the loss of God is an act of self-removal for the sake of a higher return. We must accept God's death/suicide in religion* so that the highest totality can *and must rise up [be resurrected] again* in its full earnestness and out of its most profound depths, both all-encompassing and taking the form of the most serene freedom." [emphasis added] (Smith, 2011, p. 117).

The parts I have italicized above reveal the context in which Hegel accentuates the event of God's death in modernity – *Gott selbst ist tot*: For Hegel, the death of God should be experienced as a *moment* in the opening up (*Offenbarung*) of Geist, a necessary moment that has to be confronted in all its severity, insofar as this death realizes what could not be actualized had this event not taken place. Although Smith identifies this formula as "paradoxical mathematics", this paradox is not the creation of Hegel himself since it fashions itself after the pivotal dogma of Christian theology, namely, the resurrection theme of Christ (Easter event) after his death at the Calvary (Good Friday). What bestows on Hegel's idea of trans-substantiation its distinctive mark should be sought in the fact that the very object conveyed to be transubstantiating is not the very same God construed in traditional theology. Philosophy, Hegel self-assuredly remarks, has to take up the defense of religion against various types of theological doctrines, so as to unveil that "God is not eternally static substance, but the eternal *dynamis*, the eternal drive and energy of existence" (Murphy, 2010, p. 96; Hegel, 1988, p. 17). What is pressed on by the "infinite pain" (*unendlichen Schmerz*) of modern ir/religiosity is the obligation to grasp by thought that Absolute Truth or God has traversed history in such a way to be beheld in each and every aspect of this long and self-propelled process. Informed by this insight, Hegel (1988) contends that the proof of the correctness of the idea of Providence will thus be finally provided, cancelling the traditional method of

explication via the particular (individual) and focusing instead on the universal by means of taking the state and the nation as the proper objects of analysis (pp. 15-16). As a result, what we have before us is a form of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), the unity and affective force of which is founded on an overdetermining historical synthesis realized by the mutually supporting aspects of religion, state and community:

> The objective existence of this unity is the State. The state, thus, is the foundation and center of the other concrete aspects of national life, of art, law, morality, religion, science. Among the forms of these conscious unions, religion is the highest. In it the spirit existing in the world becomes conscious of absolute Spirit (Geist) . . . The idea of God thus is the general fundament of a people. (as cited in Murphy, 2010, p. 82)[89]

It is on account of this intricate web of relations that Hegel's paradoxical celebration of the death of God diverges from Zarathustra's declaration of this event. While Zarathustra simply announces the death of God *post factum*, and evaluates it within the context of how this event is to be affronted, Hegel is right at the heart of this historic threshold, adjudging the necessity of God's death only to pave the way for his resurrection in the form of *Geist* that is to be grasped by thought and philosophy. In this respect, it could be asserted that from the viewpoint of Nietzsche, despite Hegel's endless strife for wresting himself away from Platonism he molds it anew since he cannot escape from falling into a worldly Platonism – viz., *inverted Platonism*. We are entitled to put forth this argument by heeding the following

[89] Hegel develops the idea of *Sittlichkeit* in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*: Ethical life, which finds its fully developed form in the modern state, provides the integration of the abstract rights of persons and subjects into an organic and harmonious system. It is the setting in which the limitations of civil society arising from the abstract and arbitrary freedom of persons are surmounted and the concrete freedom of its members realized. Hegel notes accordingly: "The state is the actuality of concrete freedom. But *concrete freedom* requires that personal individuality [Einzelheit] and its particular interests should reach their full *development* and gain *recognition* of their right for itself . . . and also that they should, on the one hand, *pass over* of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and on the other, knowingly and willingly acknowledge this universal interest even as their own *substantial spirit*, and *actively pursue* it as their *ultimate end*." (Hegel, 2008, p. 282) (§260)

passage taken from *Twilight of the Idols*. Describing the successive stages of metaphysical thinking that are distinguished from one another on account of their conceptualization of truth, Nietzsche (2005b) is verily concerned over the possible dangers that could well arise following the disappearance of the "true world" *qua* transcendence:

> 5. The 'true world' - an idea that is of no further use, not even as an obligation, – now an obsolete, superfluous idea, consequently a refuted idea: let's get rid of it! (Bright day; breakfast; return of bon sens and cheerfulness; Plato blushes in shame; pandemonium of all free spirits.)
>
> 6. The true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps? ... But no! we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one! (Noon; moment of shortest shadow; end of longest error; high point of humanity; I N C I P I T Z A R A T H U S T R A). (p. 171)[90]

Since time or history is argued by Hegel to be the empirical Concept – the totality of necessary "moments" of Truth that have appeared empirically, that have opened themselves up (*Offenbarung*) – Hegel retains the "illusory world" and imparts on it the predicates of the obsolete "true world": Knowledge, Being, Ideal, Absolute, etc.[91] Thus, he prolongs the very error of his predecessors and delays the overcoming spirit of Zarathustra whose tragedy is not possible to commence unless the *architectonics* of Platonic philosophy is discarded in its entirety.[92]

It is quite interesting that many scholars have either missed or overlooked this anti-Platonic vitriol of Nietzsche's philosophy. According to Ausmus, Nietzsche's future-oriented philosophy totally discards the significance of the past as well as the

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[90] A similar conclusion is drawn by Adorno (2008b) for whom "Hegel's philosophy of history and his construction of dialectics really belong to traditional theory; they remain imprisoned in a Platonic framework" (p. 43).
[91] See: (Nietzsche, 1968, pp. 310-311, pp. 315-316) (§579, §584-585); (Nietzsche, 2005a, p. 9) (§10).
[92] In this sense, Nietzsche has not flipped over Platonic system as it were, and put it on its proper foot. What is at stake here is something more radical, the dissolution of the Platonic system in its entirety. Also see: (Hinman, 1975, p. 93).

present while propped up by an imaginary teleology not unlike Hegel's. Nietzsche, Ausmus (1978) further argues, hoped for a future in which history will be justified and that his idea of history was deeply permeated by a belief in progress orchestrated by the collective *novus dux* of Übermensch. A similar argument was voiced by Clegg (1981) for whom Nietzsche's philosophy occupies the opposite pole of Augustinian epistemology, duly "preaching" bodily desires within the context of an "evolutionist" and naturalistic historiography and his "will to power" functioning akin to an obscure teleological principle. In contrast, I have invoked the invalidity of this line of interpretation by figuratively demonstrating the significance for Nietzsche not only of the present and future but also of the past. As discussed above, the loss of transcendence and of the monistic conception of other-worldly entity is not sought to be recuperated by Nietzsche through historicism as in Hegel's philosophy of history: the "event" rather "signals the liberation of the human spirit towards creating better out of himself" (Luft, 1984, p. 270). Yet it is merely a "signal" and therefore amounts to nothing substantially grounded inasmuch as the disappearance of God signifies a state of crisis, a transitory stage which will be dealt with either authentically *or* inauthentically. And Nietzsche is adamant that an "authentic" mode of nihilism does not simply originate by means of a futural disposition, since what is *to come* has to be built upon what is *past*; and it is this tension between the past and future which signifies the present as a site of indeterminacy.

By identifying this temporal interval as a site of indeterminacy, we are seeking to show Nietzsche's embracement of each of these temporal registers, for whom neither of them should be preferred over the others and none of them hypostatized at the expense of others. As Kaufmann (1955) also underlines, the particular mode of temporality that Nietzsche discarded was a Romantic sense of

time much prevalent during the course of the nineteenth century, which veered away from the present in order to escape to the past or future (Kaufmann, 1955, p. 13). By covering up the time-bounded nature of human existence and its ineluctable subjection to the vicissitudes of time, such flights nourish their internal consistency by postulating an ideal which imparts on existence a form of permanence and stability (Dienstag, 2004, p. 85). This temporal flight does not face the present *head on*, and likewise fails to meet the ultimate criterion Nietzsche nails down for authentic nihilism – the necessity of affronting the present *as* the eternally recurring same.[93] By evading this harsh reality or maneuvering one's way into historical periods that offer a sojourn of security and meaning, one deliberately forgoes the terrible truth concerning the impossibility of finding an absolute meaning purely in and through history. Consider the following passage where Nietzsche (2007b) articulates the temporal tension that demarcates human species from the realm of animality:

> [The] animal lives *unhistorically*: for it is contained in the present, like a number without any awkward fraction left over; it does not know how to dissimulate, it conceals nothing and at every instant appears wholly as what it is; it can never be anything but honest. Man, on the other hand, braces himself against the great and ever greater pressure of what is past: it pushes him down or bends him sideways, it encumbers his steps as a dark, invisible burden . . . It affects him like a vision of a lost paradise to see the herds grazing or, in closer proximity to him, a child which, having as yet nothing of the past to shake off, plays in blissful blindness between the hedges of past and future. (p. 61)

[93]The obvious complexity of this concept necessitates an entire chapter, if not an entire thesis dedicated solely to elucidating and elaborating it. Some Nietzsche scholars such as Dienstag (2004) and Pletsch (1977) are inclined to read it as an "allegory" revealing the temporal dynamics of authentic nihilism or simply the "art of living" which one has to bear willingly and agonistically. In contrast to this interpretation, other scholars such as Löwith (1945) emphasize that Nietzsche's idea of the "eternal recurrence of the same" sought to synthesize the Greek notion of cyclical history and the phenomenon of *anakuklesis* with the Christian formation of subjectivity (p. 283). We will elaborate on this concept in the following pages.

Yet Nietzsche immediately adds, this blissful play of the child is destined to be disturbed once the state of forgetfulness vanishes and is substituted by a clear-cut crystallization of these temporal registers: "Then it will learn to understand the phrase 'it was': that password which gives conflict, suffering and satiety access to man so as to remind him what his existence fundamentally is – *an imperfect tense that can never become a perfect one*" (p. 61). What does this enigmatic phrase mean – existence as an imperfect tense that can never become a perfect one? Once considered vis-à-vis the ontological modality Hegel attributes to the *objective* world history (*Weltgeschichte*) and human mind as its subjective mirror image, it is plainly obvious that Nietzsche refuses to impart human condition with *telos.* Rather, the crucial phenomenon for Nietzsche seems to be the condition of suffering and conflict, "the fatality of human existence" which necessitates the investigation of powerful psychological reasons behind the construction of ideals, that is, the elucidation of the psychological mechanisms inherent to the invention of the concept of "purpose" or *telos*.[94] For it is only through the notion of *telos* that the *possibility* of perfection could be imagined, and thus demanded and desired. However, Nietzsche rebukes this tenacious ordering principle lying at the heart of modernity, which he discerns as the prominent principle of herd mentality and slave morality. In strict contrast to the multitudes who are in dire need of purposes, Nietzsche's "high-spirited, vital, world-affirming" individual does not simple accept and go along what was and what is, but "wants it again *just as it was and is* [emphasis in original] through all eternity, insatiably shouting *da capo* not just to himself but to the whole

[94]The ground for an earnest psychological investigation is cleared out, for Nietzsche, by means of accepting that the "fatality of human existence" is deeply connected to the "fatality of everything that was and will be", which extends to the transience of what is called "history" including the past and the future. The question of nihilism is tackled authentically once it is granted that "[people] are not the products of some special design, will, or purpose, [and that] they do not represent an attempt to achieve an 'ideal of humanity', 'ideal of happiness', or 'ideal of morality', it is absurd to want to devolve human existence onto some purpose or another. We have invented the concept of 'purpose': there are no purposes in reality" (Nietzsche, 2005b, p. 182.)

play and performance" (Nietzsche, 2002, pp. 50-51) (§56).[95] Accepting and cherishing existence as an imperfect tense models a "hygiene" of life – an art of living that is not contaminated with degenerating principles such as those that wish to "reveal what a spirit might free himself *from* and what he will be then driven *towards*" (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 41) (§44).

In short, therefore, Nietzsche's "high-spirited" individual distinguishes himself by engaging the present without the bad conscience that is often accompanied by *ressentiment*. Refusing to judge the past from the standpoint of the present, this higher individual stands firm before it, welcoming it as what *it is*, and most importantly not as what *it should be* or what it *could have been* under different circumstances.[96] Hence, freeing oneself *from*, or to be driven *towards* some predetermined goal appears to Nietzsche as the temporal formula within the limits of which the injunction "Thou shalt . . ." operates. Endowed with a sense of clearly defined direction, the subject can therefore "hope" for a possibility of redemption that is yet to be revealed *as per* the gradual revelation of an ultimate meaning:

> You want, if possible (and no "if possible" is crazier) *to abolish suffering*. And us – it looks as though we would prefer it to be heightened and made even worse than it has ever been! Well-being as you understand it – that is no goal; it looks to us like an *end*! – a condition that renders people ridiculous and despicable – that makes their decline into something *desirable*! (Nietzsche, 2002, pp. 116-117) (§225)

[95]We cannot exactly know whether Nietzsche here sketches out a rudimentary picture of what he later on developed as the theory of *Übermensch*. However, there are obvious parallels to the idea of the eternal recurrence of the same, such as with his emphasis on the affirmation of everything "as it was and is", which distinguishes the "high-spirited" individual from the impoverished types characterized by an inherent yearning for melioration and enforcement of a certain type of historical consciousness.

[96] Denying the representation of history from the standpoint of what there should be or what there should have been imparts on Nietzsche's conception of becoming a highly non-teleological streak. The "high-spirited" individual, who is also described as the übermensch, does not understand by becoming a Hegelian vision of history that is developmental or progressive. Put differently, the Nietzschean celebration of becoming is thoroughly naturalist in the sense that it gaily acknowledges the eternal recurrence of things, their coming-to-be and eventual disappearance. For Nietzsche, the Übermensch is supposed to embrace this cyclical process of appearance and disappearance and should not try to deceive himself by regarding history to have its own decipherable meaning.

It has to be propounded consequently that failing to grasp this anti-teleological streak in Nietzsche's writings often result with a deficient, if not totally misguiding representation of his critique of Christianity. Worse, it obscures perforce Nietzsche's lifelong occupation with what we have defined as the process of *démettre;* this "transitional period" (*Übergangsperiode*) characterized by the dissolution (*Auflösung*) of Christianity, and in place of which novel teleological concepts were sought to be established. Indeed, whereas Nietzsche's diatribes against Christianity revolve predominantly around the motifs of soteriology and eschatology, his equally fervent critique of modernity stems from the theme of salvation, which has undergone transformation and henceforth has started to be designated as "ideals" of happiness, morality, and humanity. For Nietzsche, these "ideals" entertain a sense of belief with regard to the possibility of abolishing suffering altogether, and for that reason they cover up the time-bounded aspect of human existence and shy away from admitting that the temporality of human beings *is* in fact the very source of suffering. Accordingly he notes, and I quote, that "the will and way *to that day* is now called "progress" everywhere in Europe [emphasis in original]", with the arrival of which day fear, suffering and all other calamities of life will supposedly come to an end (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 89) (§201). It is striking that his criticism of Christian eschatology, exemplified by the "kingdom of God", capitulates upon the same problematic form of temporality – an anticipation of future bliss that justifies the way things are from an imagined state of redemption:

> – And what do they call that which serves as a consolation for all the sufferings of the world – their phantasmagoria of anticipated future bliss?
> – What? Do I hear correctly? They call it "the last judgment", the coming of their kingdom, the "kingdom of God" – but in the meantime they live in "faith", "in love", "in hope". (Nietzsche, 2007a, p. 29)

Admittedly, one can discern in Nietzsche's salvos the traces of Karl Löwith's theory (1967), according to which modern social and political ideologies preserve the temporal process of redemption originally found in the theological view of history formalized in Christianity (pp. 1-2). Although Nietzsche never identified, at least overtly and in a systematical exposition, the idea of progress as a secularized version of Christian eschatology, what really bothered him was the Platonic infrastructure of Christian belief and its dogged persistence notwithstanding the dissolution of the transcendental referent of religion – God.[97] What undergirded the scientific spirit of his age, for Nietzsche (2001), was an unwavering belief in the idea of "truth", its divine status, the pursuit of which has become a new vocation (*Beruf*) for philosophers, scientists and politicians alike; and even more importantly, it was the will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*) before the ferocity of which no faith, including Christianity, was spared from being slaughtered and sacrificed on the altar of science (p. 201) (§344). What seems to concern Nietzsche is then whether this new exclusive faith in science, the modified *will*-to-truth, reflects a modern representation of the ascetic ideal by paving the way to a new form of "Thou shalt . . ."; and secondly, whether this injunction accrues its affective power from an "affirmation of another world from the one of life", that is, not from an otherworldly, supernatural entity but one directly fermented from nature or history (Nietzsche, 2007a, p. 112). In order to elaborate on this subject, I would like to concentrate on a relatively neglected or

[97] On the other hand, there is one striking instance where Nietzsche taps into the eschatological dynamics of the "philosophy of history" and chides the "optimism" of historicism as an essentially life-denying and nihilist sentiment at its core: "Historical culture is indeed a kind of inborn grey-hairedness and those who bear its mark from childhood must instinctively believe in the *old age of mankind* . . . Is there not concealed in this paralyzing belief that humanity is already declining a misunderstanding of a Christian theological idea inherited from the Middle Ages, the idea that the end of the world is coming, that we are fearfully awaiting the Last Judgment? Is the increasing need for historical judgment not that same idea in a new dress, as though our age, being the ultimate age, were empowered to exercise over all the past that universal judgment which Christian belief never supposed would be pronounced by men but by 'the son of Man'?" (Nietzsche, 2007b, p. 101)

overlooked territory in Nietzsche studies, namely, on two of the essays comprising *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen - Untimely Meditations*.

3.3 The curious case of David Friedrich Strauss: History as "neue Glaube"

What reason prompted Nietzsche to designate the collection of these fragments *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* we cannot know for certain; however, something is "*zeitgemess*" when it is "timely", not in the sense of being "punctual" or "opportune", but rather in the sense of being "appropriate to the time" or, more figuratively, "up to date", "in fashion" or "modern". In this respect, Nietzsche seems to lift on the curtain for his great polemic against “modern” ideas, commencing with two eloquently constructed critiques that also set off his lifelong strife towards his ownmost self-overcoming (*Selbst-Überwindung*), and his very own historical facticity. One of these meditations (observations) revolves around a controversial figure, David Friedrich Strauss, whose impact on the nineteenth century is compared by one English scholar to that of Charles Darwin (Fairbairn, 1875, p. 951). By this comparison, Fairbairn designates the seminal work of Strauss published in 1835, *Das Leben Jesu* (The Life of Jesus), comparing it to the revolutionary effects of the *Origin of Species* on account of the former’s groundbreaking ramifications within the context of German *Sozialwissenschaften*, and especially on theological studies. But still, why would Nietzsche have bothered himself with penning a critique that shines as one of his best eloquent compositions, dictated with remarkably painstaking analysis, saturated with bitter sarcasm, and all in all, stands out as a clear testimony to his literary excellence? One is literally dumbfounded upon seeing blow after blow mercilessly directed at Strauss' cultural philistinism, bourgeois etiquette, and last but not least, the underlying Hegelian foundation of the book which confirms the

rationality of the real and extols the present unto a plane of quasi-divine status. Thus, it can be replied – were these symptoms not sufficient enough for infuriating and spurring Nietzsche to write an extensive critique of *Der Alte und Neue Glaube* (The Old Faith and the New)? They definitely were, but I have to elaborate on the content and context of this critique so as to better understand why Nietzsche diagnosed the "sense of history" as a reality hovering perilously over the disenchanted horizon of modern humankind. As Jensen (2013) remarks in his brilliant study, Nietzsche occasionally directed his assault on Hegel *via* contemporary historiographical teleologists such as David Friedrich Strauss and Eduard von Hartmann (p. 99). I would like to go further and assert that in this particular scathing review of Strauss' final work we may also reach to some conclusions about Nietzsche's stance concerning the sociological ideals of positivism and especially the idea of progress.

As the title tritely implicates, the ultimate objective of the old Strauss fashioned itself after the catechistic programs Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte had similarly devised over thirty years ago. Asserting the inevitable dissolution of the old society ideologically buttressed with Christian theology (*alte Glaube*), Strauss (1873) heralds the coming of a new social structure, one that has to abandon the abstract and alienating dogmas of Christianity and replace it with historical and scientific research (Vol. I, pp. 51-53).[98] These principles will then become the lynchpin of the new faith (*neue Glaube*), the propagation and successful institutionalization of which requires the coordinated effort and sympathy of each and every segment of German society – scholars and artists, office workers and military officers, traders and landed proprietors. Organized under an unwavering reverence for these ideals, they will thereby constitute the German nation, the "we" as Strauss was wont to accentuate, a

[98]Since two volumes are offered in the same book with separate paginations, I will specify which volume is being referred to in addition to the relevant page number.

community of believers who will be the pioneers of the newly founded German Reich. The adherents of the new faith (*neue Glaube*) are expected to duly respect the right of private property, dedicate themselves to industrious life and tolerate economic inequality as a necessary evil to the upholding of a higher good – free competition.

Judged solely in its normative and catechistic aspects, Strauss' proposals in *Der Alte und Neue Glaube* were not really original. As far as Nietzsche was concerned, the sole *originality* of the book resided in the *character* of Strauss – his profession, his slow yet gradual transformation from a modest theologian into an optimistic preacher of modern ideas:

> It may be that in earlier years a few simple people sought a thinker in David Strauss: now they have discovered him to be a believer and are disappointed. If he had stayed silent he would have remained a philosopher . . . But he no longer desires the honor of being a thinker; he wants only to be a new believer, and is proud of his 'new faith' [*neue Glaube*]. Confessing it in writing, he thinks he is inscribing the catechism 'of modern ideas' and constructing the broad 'universal highway of the future. (Nietzsche, 2007c, p. 15).

Thanks to the intellectual biography of Nietzsche, we are able to assert that he was mildly exaggerating when he downplayed the philosophical significance of the early Strauss. Indeed, the records prove us that Nietzsche had conducted an intensive reading of Strauss' scandalous book, *Das Leben Jesu,* at Pforta during the 1860s (Brobjer, 2008a, p. 44). As Brobjer (2008a) underlines, this book alongside with Feuerbach's *Das Weben der Christenthum* (1841) had in fact played a crucial role in sealing the fate of Nietzsche's faith; by the time he was writing his first meditation, he was already alienated from Christianity. Nevertheless, Nietzsche kept on perusing both *Der Alte und Neue Glaube* and *Das Leben Jesu* until the end of the 1870s, in

our eyes a perplexing enterprise for a person who adjudges their author to be a "philistine chieftain" everybody mockingly laughs at (Nietzsche, 2007c, p. 16). Perhaps this is the reason why Nietzsche secretly begs Strauss to be silent since he witnesses "the philosopher" Strauss, with the intellectual guidance of whom he himself shook of the burden of Christian faith, vanish right before his eyes.

What Nietzsche found even more disconcerting than the conservative role of this new faith *(neue Glaube*) was the Darwinist backdrop that imparted on the catechism some sense of scientific authority and legitimacy. The second volume of the book is entirely structured upon this reconciliatory attempt of Strauss in bringing together the German philosophical tradition with the breakthroughs spearheaded by Darwin in the area of phylogeny. More importantly, Strauss appears to belong to the group of German scholars who utilized the Darwinian theory to defend individualist economic competition and laissez faire as well as an equal emphasis on a collectivist struggle for existence between societies (Weikart, 1993, p. 471). In the crushing words of Nietzsche (2007c), he fancies "covering himself in the hairy cloak of our ape-genealogists and praises Darwin as one of the great benefactors of humankind" (p. 29). For Strauss, the most important contribution of Darwin resides in "scientifically proving" what had hitherto been a subject of mere speculation, namely, the progressive ascension of human species in the process of evolution. Lauding Darwin and his French predecessor Jean Baptiste Lamarck, he holds dear their "scientific" endeavor in supplanting the cosmological theory of Christianity, and the mode in which they showed the slow yet gradual ascent of mankind from its undeveloped forms to the state Strauss beholds them in his epoch (Strauss, 1873,

Vol. I, pp. 203-204; Vol. II, p. 55, p. 72).[99] Underlining the reciprocity of the concept of mankind with the idea of progressive ascension, he puts forth a politico-moral maxim that is reminiscent of Saint-Simon and Comte: "[All] moral actions arises from the individual's acting in consonance with the idea of mankind. To realize this, in the first place, and to bring himself, as an individual, into abiding concord with the idea and the destiny of mankind, is the essence of the duties which man owes to himself" (Strauss, 1873, Vol. II, p. 51).

Certainly, the mode in which Strauss seeks to amalgamate the particular with the generic, the interest of the individual with that of the mankind, has an unmistakably British tune – a tune so fascinating and irksome for Nietzsche that, as he delved deeper on Herbert Spencer and the tradition of Darwinism in the 1870s, his skepticism and rejection exponentially grew. He was critical in the first place of the idea of evolution laden with the liberalist assumptions of progress. Secondly, problematizing the emphasis on reconciling egoism and altruism, he inquired whether this *end* ascribed to society; this *telos* was actually being propagated, if not sponsored, by the "existing" conditions of society (Call, 1998, p. 18). Seen in this light, it is quite understandable that Nietzsche in his so-called "mature" period still dwells on the teleological delineation of history, a problematique he first engages within the "early" years of his career. "Without Hegel, there could be no Darwin" - this obviously exaggerated claim that I have mentioned earlier turns out to be an excusable hyperbole which invites us to ponder the *affinity* between the two seemingly irreconcilable domains of modern thought –science and metaphysics.

Analyzing the dissemination of Hegelian thought in Victorian England, Willis (1988) asserts the following: "Secular transcendentalism and spirituality as well as

[99] Other than the various signs of respect to Lamarck here and there, it is surprising that there is not one single reference to Auguste Comte. Nevertheless, the affinity is obviously there, especially if one considers the motifs of progressive ascension, the improvement of mankind, etc.

the unique mechanism of intellectual and historical evolution . . . proved especially appealing to many British students schooled in Darwinian controversies" (p. 101). Furthermore, he contends that this interest could be evaluated as an expression of a need for spiritual sustenance. Willis (1988) even provides us with the candid confession of a famous Hegelian scholar who admitted openly that his thought was "the reasoned intellectual expression of the effort to get to God" (p. 101). This new orientation by means of which T. H. Green and countless others sought to reappropriate God, however, was not to be achieved via the methods of traditional faith. In Strauss' terms, it was to be realized through "new faith" (*neue Glaube*), taking its cue from the progressive ascension of mankind, heeding its higher interests that are revealed through the scientific and historical research of the worldly phenomena. This obvious immanentism leads Nietzsche (2007c) to conclude that the heaven of the new believer will have to be instituted on earth, especially since the Christian prospect of an immortal heavenly life has become a delusion incompatible with the scientific ethos of his age (p. 17). In this respect, it is convenient to note that, whereas Hegelian thought turned out to be a source of spiritual sustenance for the predominantly empiricist mindset of English thinkers, the case of Strauss exhibited a different synthesis of Hegelian and Darwinian thought. For Nietzsche, by the time Strauss was writing *Der Alte und Der Neue Glaube*, he was still under the influence of Hegel. His endorsement of the Darwinian doctrine of the evolution of species, the optimistic presentism underlying his cultural philistinism has to be traced back, argues Nietzsche, to the obvious youthful habits and predispositions that are still clandestinely operative. In direct reference to Strauss, he then asserts that

"whosoever has contracted Hegelism is never cured of it" (Nietzsche, 2007c, p. 27).[100]

According to Nietzsche, therefore, behind Strauss' confession of secular faith and endorsement of the Darwinian theory of evolution looms the specter of Hegel. Unfortunately, Nietzsche does not elaborate on how Strauss was inflicted in the first place, as it were, with the "disease" of Hegelianism. Nevertheless, he speaks about his "youthful habits and predispositions", which could be interpreted as the period in which Strauss wrote his *magnum opus*, *Das Leben Jesu*. We have earlier noted that Nietzsche carefully read through this book during his education at Sforza. Nietzsche, who was readily turning into a fierce opponent of the "sense of history" dominating his age, was aware of the theological ramifications of this very book. Not only had the arguments of this book threatened the historical foundations of Christianity, but it also contributed to its ongoing debilitation, threatening its socially cohesive function. One scholar wrote after the initial publication of the book in 1836 that because Strauss wrote in German rather than Latin, "unbidden" interlopers "from the milieu of laymen" could engage in the "impertinence of leafing through the book," and risked "sinking into a state of religious nihilism" (as cited in Linstrum, 2010, p. 596, p. 600). Indeed, so wide-ranging and revolutionary was its impact that Howard (2000) speculates whether it actually changed the course of world history (p. 85).

[100] A similar argumentation whereby the present is affirmed alongside the doctrine of the evolution of species is evident in an article written by David Ritchie, a nineteenth century English scholar of Hegel. According to Ritchie (1893), what positively distinguishes Darwin's theory of evolution from Hegel's is that the latter fails to endow us with a proper "scientific" explanation. Despite this shortcoming, however, the significance of Hegel resides in bringing into foreground the notion of final cause (*telos*) as the proper category of investigation. More importantly, it lays in his insightful formula regarding the rationality of the real. For Ritchie, this concurs with the Darwinian theory of evolution which demonstrates "from many points of view [that] what happens may be very far from what we consider *our* good, yet it must be the better adapted for success which succeeds." The moral and political ramifications of this theory is then expounded as follows: "Natural selection in its lower stages . . . works solely by the destruction of the less favorably circumstanced organism and species. Natural selection among "articulate-speaking", thinking morals, who can 'look before and after', works in other ways as well. Morality, to begin with, . . . means the conscious and deliberate adoption of those feelings and habits and acts which are advantageous to the welfare of the community" (p. 61, p. 63).

It is obviously beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the contents of this book. What concerns us is its groundbreaking methodology than the myriad details of the life of Jesus which Strauss invites the reader to contemplate. Strauss questions the deeply entrenched anti-historical approach common to the two antagonistic trends in the field of scriptural exegesis. On the one hand, there are rationalists for whom the ministry of Jesus had to be analyzed by omitting the blatantly supernatural events such as the ascension and the resurrection of the dead, and on the other hand, the supernaturalists, who advocated the veracity of these acts on account of the miraculous and graceful interventions of God (Reventlow, 2010, pp. 250-259). Motivated by the prospect of resolving "the long-standing conflict between rationalist and supernaturalist approaches to the Bible", Strauss directs his attention on the necessity of ascertaining the historicity of the Christ-event, which is to be achieved by testing whether biblical accounts are "compatible with known and generally asserted laws of phenomena" (Williamson, 2004, pp. 160-16; Reventlow, p. 259). This propaedeutic inquiry sets the stage for Strauss' own mythical approach, the so-called allegorical method in which events are not simply taken as they are, but are refracted through a Hegelian prism. Indeed, by contesting the historical authenticity of the events, and by disenchanting the divine essence imprinted on them, Strauss was able to read into these events his own interpretation of Christianity. Linstrum (2010) explains the outcome of this method as follows:

> Even if the historical factuality of events such as the virgin birth, the miracles, the Resurrection, and the Ascension were refuted, as the Life of Jesus sought to do, they would nonetheless stand as "eternal truths". This view was the essence of Strauss's Hegelianism: the Gospels were at once the time-bound artifacts of a primitive civilization, and representations, in narrative form, of the fundamental truth that God is immanent in the human race. (p. 598)

In other words, Strauss, *à la* Hegel, was describing the time-bound artifacts of Jewish hopes and expectations as religious conceptions or mental images (*Vorstellungen*): however, these representations were to be philosophically grasped as the revelation of a higher truth, comprehended by the thinking mind (*der denkende Geist)* as notion/concept (*Begriff*). Seen in this light, Strauss was sympathetic to the cause of Hegel for whom the condition of spiritual tornness (*Zerissenheit*) was pressing for the task of conciliating thinking with being. By then the fundamental, higher truth for Strauss, as it was for Hegel, was the immanence of God; the eternal *dynamis*, the eternal drive and energy of existence opening itself up in this world. However, Hegel differed from Strauss on one crucial point. He took for granted the historical factuality of Christ, and for whom this historical event stood for a *momenta* in the development (*Entwicklung*) of *Geist*. God becoming human, amounted for Hegel to the sublation of the radical difference between the finite and infinite, between *Natur* and *Geist*, symbolizing the emergence of a new consciousness for humanity (Murphy, 2010, pp. 94-95; Tillich, 1967, p. 136).

In strict contrast to Hegel, Strauss argued for the dismantlement of the belief in historicity, that is, the historical factuality of the life of Christ, precisely in order to reveal the higher truth behind it. The Christ-event was to be conceived as nothing else than post-religious humanism as the unadulterated truth of Christianity (Cooper, 2008, pp. 462-463). This was the logical outcome of his methodology. If the historical basis of the Gospels was invalid, the symbol it had hitherto stood for had to redefined. In *Das Leben Jesu*, Strauss's argument proceeds along these lines:

> Should it not rather be that the idea of the unity of the divine and human nature would be real in an unending, higher and actual sense, if I grasp the whole of humanity as its materialization? Would this be the case, if I were to separate an individual human [Jesus Christ] as such? . . . Humanity is the incorporation of both natures, the God who has become human, who through

> finitude relinquished unending existence, and yet whose finite spirit recollects its eternity. (as cited in Reventlow, 2010, p. 261)

Now, this passage is immensely significant since it depicts the Hegelian backdrop to Strauss's thinking and at the same sheds light upon the radical aspirations of his philosophy.[101] Indeed, Strauss's above-cited commentary – the hypostatization of humanity as the fundamental truth of Christianity – strikes us a border-line case, an ambiguous formulation that could be conceived either as outright heresy or as a preface to an entirely new religion outgrowing its former shell. As the following passage will argue, however, this ambiguity can also be conceived as a symptom of what Nietzsche defined as the sickness of modernity, nihilism, insofar as it threatens the very fabric of communal life:

> Only by regarding the scriptural narrative as itself part of the rational revelation of reality does the community gain access to conceptual truth. Accordingly, community as understood by mythical interpretation is in fact diametrically opposed to the significance which Hegel gives that term. Strauss's view of community follows logically: if historical representations are myths generated by the community because it lacks full conceptual awareness, then the abandonment of representation will be the abandonment of "Gemeinde". (Cooper, 2008, p. 460)

Even though this abandonment amounts to the dissolution of "Gemeinde", of community, our early analysis of Nietzsche's review of *Der Alte und der Neue Glaube* disclosed that the primary objective of Strauss was to foster a new sense of community and communality. And this was to be achieved by relying upon the tenets of Darwinian evolutionism and post-religious Hegelian humanism, harmonizing them so as to generate a sense of *history* that is (re-)sacralized by the constituent

[101] Fairbairn (1875) similarly asserts that the kernel of the historical shell, which was broken and cast away, was "the Hegelian idea of the God-man universalized, the attributes which the Church had ascribed to Christ made the property of the race. The unity of the divine and human natures was realized in man, not in a man" (p. 974).

principle of humanity. In effect, this type of history turned out to be an anthropocentric one, delineating a new tablet of "Thou shalt" based on "what is real", commanding the imperatives of the present *qua* the reasonable demands of the rational.[102]

3.4 Agonistic life and the dangers of excessive "historical sense"

Being the only text of Nietzsche in which he discusses the historiography of his age in detail, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History* merits to be mentioned at this point. First and foremost, this is the text in which Nietzsche explicitly contests the "historical sense" that he carefully diagnosed in Strauss' proposals and evaluates this ailment in conjunction with his own model of a healthy "suprahistorical" man - the so-called high-spirited individual in contrast to the ordinary and vulgar beings who will be the members of the Straussian *neue Glaube*. Secondly, elucidating Nietzsche's idea of nihilism will falter unless we situate the pivotal declaration of the death of God within the context of the reinforced prevalence of historicism. One may very well raise the question whether we encounter any tangible definition of nihilism throughout this text. To this we have to reply in negative. Nevertheless, there are motifs, allusions and lines of inquiry which obstinately linger throughout the later writings of Nietzsche and form, as far as I am concerned, the bedrock of the concept of nihilism elaborated later in the 1880s. Thus, whereas Nietzsche defines nihilism as the devaluation of highest values which formerly constituted the meaning of existence and by virtue of which humankind lived,[103] *On the Uses and*

[102]We may well observe that Strauss's "imagined community", if we may borrow this concept from Perry Anderson, could not be abstracted from the religious motifs ascribed to it. In his *Das Leben Jesu für deutsche Volk* (1864), a concise version prepared for the taste of German public, Strauss already advocates for a "religion of humanity" in place of Christianity, anticipating his eventual transition to the catechism of "neue Glaube" put forth roughly in ten years time. (Reventlow, 2010, p. 251).
[103]Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, pp. 7-8 (§1), pp. 20-21 (§30).

Disadvantages of History taps into this process of devaluation *minus* the concept of nihilism (Nietzsche, 1968, pp. 7-8, pp. 20-21) (§1, §30). Here are the three relevant passages wherein Nietzsche bemoans the excessive predominance of "historical sense" and relates this ailment respectively to the temporal structure of human life; to the problematic interaction between knowledge and life; and last but not least, to the irrevocable damage it inflicted on Christianity:

> Close beside the pride of modern man there stands his ironic view of himself, his awareness that he has to live in an historicizing, as it were a twilight mood, his fear that his youthful hopes and energy will not survive into the future. Here and there one goes further, into *cynicism*, and justifies the course of history, indeed the entire evolution of the world, in a manner especially adapted to the use of modern man, according to cynical canon: as things are they had to be, as men now are they were bound to become, none may this inevitability. The pleasant feeling produced by this kind of cynicism is the refuge of him who cannot endure the ironical state . . . [and] calls his way of living in the fashion of the age and wholly without reflection "the total surrender of the personality to the world process". The personality and the world-process! The world-process and the personality of the flea! (Nietzsche, 2007b, p. 107)

> When the historical sense reigns *without restraint*, and all its consequences are realized, it uproots the future because it destroys illusions and robs the things that exist of the atmosphere in which alone they can live. Historical justice, even when it is genuine and practiced with the purest of intentions, is therefore a dreadful virtue because it always undermines the living thing and brings it down: its judgment is always annihilating. (Nietzsche, 2007b, p. 95)

> What one can learn in the case of Christianity – that under the influence of historical treatment it has become denaturized, until a completely historical, that is to say just treatment resolves it into pure knowledge about Christianity and thereby destroys it – can be studied in everything else that possesses life: that it ceases to live when it is dissected completely, and lives a painful and morbid life when one begins practice historical dissection upon it. (Nietzsche, 2007b, pp. 97-98)

These passages enable us to construe how profound and exhaustive was Nietzsche's criticism of historical science. Indeed, they speak of a deeply complex problem that penetrate into every aspect of modern existence, so much so that with human life in

singular jeopardized, the imminent risk emerges to be nothing other than "total surrender of the personality to the world process". The picture Nietzsche draws is certainly grim: once human existence is determined exclusively *via* historical sense, the outcome is a life characterized by morbidity and despair. The temporal confusion suggested by the deracination of future crystallizes in the form of *ver-rücktheit*, a mood that relates not only to the inability of finding one's way but also to the *dis*-placement or *dis*-location of spiritual and material constituents that are crucial for preserving one's life-world. In this respect, the last passage in which Nietzsche singles out the condition of Christianity as a case, that is to say, as emblematic of the effects of excessive historical sense is quite important. For it directly taps into the efforts that find its best expression in the work of Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, according to which neither cultural artifacts nor various symbols but the *idea* of humanity should be emphasized. As we have analyzed, this development amounts to the trivialization of *Vorstellungen*, and at the same signifies that the reconciliation process which Hegel fervently sought to realize ended with knowledge becoming the dominant and devouring partner of faith (Howard, 2000, p. 89).

Hence, we have to keep in mind that when Nietzsche addresses the destructive influence of "pure knowledge" on Christianity, we are to understand how the trivialization of representative modes of religion threatens the very fabric of community (*Gemeinde*). Since Nietzsche places life (*Leben*) at the center of his philosophy, he is aware how religious representations are historically grounded, and by being transmitted from generation to generation operate as a cultural compass in guiding one's way around the world. By the metaphor of compass, however, we are not referring to a set of standards ascertained through rational inquiry or theoretical reflection but employ it in a Heideggerian fashion, in close affinity with the concept

zuhandenheit (readiness-to-hand, handiness). Things out there in the world are always "together-with . . . ", calling out to one another by means of the principle of "something in order to . . .", according to a chain of referentiality that is determined by the "what-for" of a thing's usability (Heidegger, 1996, pp. 62-67). Seen in this light, religious representations appear as certain referents that are subjected to the *circumspective* (*Um-sicht*) look of Dasein, and which are in constant relation to other departments that are part of one's being-in-the-world. What we intend to show by the lack of theoretical reflection in the state of *Zuhandenheit* and the latter's affinity to Nietzsche's critique of historical sense will be clarified with the following passage:

> All living things require an atmosphere around them, a mysterious misty vapour; if they are deprived of this envelope, if a religion, an art, a genius is condemned to revolve as a star without atmosphere, we should no longer be surprised if they quickly wither and grow hard and unfruitful. It is the same with all great things, which "never succeed without some illusion", as Hans Sachs says in the *Meistersinger*. (Nietzsche, 2007b, p. 97)

Metaphors such as "atmosphere" or "mysterious misty vapour" elicit us to imagine a spatial organization in which things exist ensconced in state of perdurance. This "atmosphere" restricts or narrows down the horizon in such a way that this particular representation diverges from the profusely illuminated panoramic scenes where objects shine forth with their plastic features. It seems for Nietzsche that the mist "envelops" the living things, grounds them literally and metaphorically into an environment, and upholds their mystery by means of resisting their full disclosure. In this sense, the mysterious vapor functions similar to how *aura* covers and protects: the spectator, while intuiting an undeniable presence surrounding the object, cannot directly behold or apprehend the source of this mystery.

On account of these considerations, it would not be far-fetched to claim that Nietzsche's critique of the extirpation of religious representations (*Vorstellungen*) from life heralds or even paves the ground for his later development of the concept of nihilism. While Nietzsche's ripened formulation of nihilism revolves around the concept of will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*), we find as early as in *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History* a rigorous investigation of history *qua* science. Almost half of the text is reserved for a typological illustration of historiography in which Nietzsche engages in a comparative analysis of its three-ideal types – monumental, antiquarian and critical. What has to be emphasized, however, is the yardstick by means of which Nietzsche measures the intrinsic value of each type. As one might expect, the ultimate criterion of this valuation for Nietzsche is not truth, if we understand by the latter a scholarly heedfulness to the accurate and detailed representation of events. Rather, the intrinsic worth of any historiography is to be determined on account of its capacity in contributing to life, and whether it furthers and enriches the means ready-at-hand (*Zuhandenheit*).

That said, however, one should not hastily draw any conclusions and regard Nietzsche's philosophy of life as a thinly veiled expression of social conservatism. Nietzsche is well aware that history alone cannot furnish persons with necessary means for spiritual sustenance, a conviction duly encapsulated in the following statement: "The unhistorical and historical are necessary in equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture" (Nietzsche, 2007b, p. 63). Are we to understand from this that there is an innate possibility in the nature of human beings, by means of which one can isolate oneself from the flux of things and repose in the realm of eternity? Certainly, for Nietzsche neither the activity of thinking nor philosophy in its strict sense can take place *a*-historically, that is to say, in an abstract

domain cloistered from the historicity of the very activity of thinking. Every thought bears the stamp of its age, notwithstanding the positivity or negativity of its contents. This indeterminateness alone constitutes what Nietzsche underlines as the *un*-historicality of thinking since it is performed amidst concrete and determinate aspects of history, surrounded in every aspects by conditions, material or ideal, that necessarily leave their mark on the process of thinking. It follows therefore that while inspecting the *un*-historical aspects of human life, one should never overlook the very condition enabling this negativity (the –*un*), in the sense that the un-historical is un-*historical* through and through.

Since pure un-historicality is literally impossible, the antidote Nietzsche proposes in order to alleviate the ill effects of historical sense is comprised of the agonistic energy that comes out of the tension between life and history. On the one hand, it depends on “forgetting”: “forgetting” the past makes room for action, enables one to counteract the suffering caused by history through his/her plastic power (Nietzsche, 2007a, pp. 35-36). This plastic power amounts to the capability and "capacity to develop out of oneself, [and] to transform what is past and foreign" into new constellations of one's life-world. Not only does this approach dispense with the habitual mode of *ressentiment* towards the past but it also liberates the present in the sense of founding a ground for agonistic activity and creative spontaneity. Overall, this creative and agonistic potential taps into Nietzsche's later idea of *Übermensch* and signifies a break with the standardized modern mediocrity embodied in the "last human being":

> To what end the "world" exists, to what end "mankind" exists, ought not to concern us at all except as objects of humour . . . on the other hand, do ask yourself, why you, the individual, exist, and if you can get no other answer try for once to justify the meaning of your existence *a posteriori* by setting

> before yourself an aim, a goal, a "to this end", an exalted and noble "to this end". Perish in pursuit of this and only this - I know of no better aim of life than that of perishing, *animae magnae prodigus*, in pursuit of the great and the impossible. (Nietzsche, 2007b, p. 112)[104]

By separating the justification of existence *a posteriori* from existence *a priori*, Nietzsche makes clear that a valuable life emerges from within, that is to say through the performative, agonistic activity carried out against the predominating and ruling forces of the present (historical actuality/reality).

The implications of Nietzsche's emphatic insistence on the *agon* of human action, its radical negativity against the predetermined, already-there elements of history – in short, the facticity of historicity – is quite important. First and foremost, it is a direct contestation of the Hegelian formula where individual striving and negativity is pacified, if not nullified, by the presence of the tribunal of history with *Geist* as its supreme judge. As we have earlier stressed, the conception of history by Hegel strikes Nietzsche as a new form of divination, a creation of a new God out of history, "transparent and comprehensible to himself within the Hegelian craniums and has already ascended all the dialectically possible steps of his evolution" (Nietzsche, 2007b, p. 104). It impregnates history with sanctity, power, and makes an impression that is awe-inspiring and frightening. It is precisely as a result of this "power" so ardently celebrated that idolatry thrives, where it becomes incumbent on

[104] The "last human being" is systematically conceptualized by Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* This type is the most "contemptible" since, argues Nietzsche, he/she is only determined to live in health, sets well-being and contentment as the greatest good, and imitates other people in order to not deviate from the conventions of the herd. Longing for happiness coterminous with a sense of personal security, the "last human being" dispenses with all other activity and practice that Zarathustra endorses and inculcates for the arduous mission to the overman (*Übermensch*). The "last human being" is unable to live up to the maxim Nietzsche sets for this task, which he aptly summarizes as *nitimur in vetitum,* striving for the forbidden. The breaking of the tablets, the disclosure of ideals as they are, that is, as mere fictions, and the creation of new values require stern discipline and relentless determination to endure" the air of high places", "strong" climates where one is often condemned to solitude and even isolation. No doubt, Nietzsche pits the timid and impaired individuality of the "last human being" against the agon-ridden, heroic qualities of the overman (*übermensch*), in full awareness of the social consequences the latter have to affront. See: Nietzsche, 2006, pp. 9-10, pp. 14-15, pp. 65-66) (§5, §9). Also see: (Nietzsche, 2005c, p. 72) (§3).

each person "to accommodate oneself to the facts". For Nietzsche (2007b), the agonistic potential is discarded right at this moment when after bending one's back and bowing one's head before this power comes a stage where one nods affirmatively before every power simply because it is power (p. 105).

Secondly, and even more importantly, Nietzsche elevates and sets this agonistic vitality as the ground of an alternative historical methodology. According to him, a suprahistorical (*Überhistorisch*) vantage point has to replace the standard approach of treating history as science as well as do away with the following common mistakes: a) thinking of all things in relation to others and weaving isolated events into one whole, b) imposing the concept of purpose (*telos*) from outside, and c) postulating laws in order to fix a relation of necessity sovereign over all events (Nietzsche, 2007b, pp. 90-92). A suprahistorical vantage point crystallizes as soon as it is understood that *every historical event takes place within the context of the unhistorical*. This bestows an unconditional value on each and every fleeting event provided that they are not hijacked by a totalizing narrative that displays the above-mentioned fallacies. While it affirms the terrible reality of becoming, it shies away from attributing an ultimate meaning to history, refusing to see salvation neither in the *process* of history nor at its terminal point (*finis*). The suprahistorical person recognizes "becoming and passing away of all things and is therefore wise [that is to say, historical] but is unhistorical in that he is not disgusted but rather glad and acts as though each dying moment were eternal" (Pletsch, 1977, p. 39).

Certainly, we have to tread carefully with Pletsch's utilization of the word "disgust" since it denotes a state of uneasiness that is caused by a lack of historical order, a deprivation of appeasement and a growing sense of insecurity originating due to the suprahistorical approach that rejects to impute to history the very condition

of thingness, discarding in full its fictional unity (*res fictae*). Thus, this disgust is similar, at least with respect to the sense of discontent it generates, to nausea and is therefore reminiscent of Large's (1994) aforementioned allegory of *mare incognitum*. This analogy has to do with how for the modern individual, the "new seas" of future are no longer uncharted *enough* to bring about a radical and agonistic engagement with the future. In hope of security and contentment, one can eliminate the possibility of seasickness altogether by *mapping out* the future or similarly put down the intruding sense of disgust before the abyss of history by forming a *perspective.* Similar in effect to the cartographical fever of the modern individual, this perspective projects an image in which originally un-related events now appear inter-related to one another; their absolute distance from the vantage point of the present is transformed into a matter of depth which in itself attests to a narrative/imaginary unity.

In any case, these analogies are helpful in terms of demonstrating Nietzsche's comprehension of the suprahistorical (*Überhistorisch*) as an antithetical approach to that of historical science. Insofar as the latter is driven by will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*), it is perpetrated in hope of acquiring a sense of certainty, as a result of which one can find a strong foothold in the wake of God's death (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 245) (§347). We are told by Nietzsche (2007b) that the longer the historical man peers at history the more he is impelled towards the future, fully adamant in his conviction that what he wants *can* still happen in future, believing that "the meaning of existence will come more and more to light in the course of [historical process]" (p. 65). Nietzsche's emphatic rejection of this wishful thinking and the optimistic mood accompanying it has to do with servile passivity and the slackening of the will which undermine the agonistic pursuit of creating the meaning of existence *a*

posteriori.[105] Moreover, it generates a certain receptivity to ideas sealed by the imperative "Thou shalt", which, as we have seen, had to be codified anew with the demise of God and the successful emergence of immanentist and positivist interpretations of reality.

In conclusion, it will be convenient to draw upon what we have achieved in this chapter and the tasks we have to accomplish in the following. As intimated at the beginning of this chapter, the concept of nihilism and its analytical exposition helped me to concretize the relation between science and religion, demonstrating that we need not understand this particular relation exclusively as conflict but as a case of demise (*des-mettres*), which attests to the handing down of power, to its transfer and inevitable expropriation. In other words, we have not before us two isolated entities which we can safely demarcate as science and religion. Nietzsche's criticism of will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*) proves us that scientific discourse often sought to achieve the authority of religion whereas increasingly with the Enlightenment, theological speculations aspired to synthesize the fundamental dogmas and doctrines of Christianity with the conditions of truth revealed by historical science. In this respect, Nietzsche's putatively atheistic declaration of the death of God slowly

[105]Certainly, by existence *a posteriori* we are not referring indiscriminately to any mode of thinking and activity that simply rejects every given, that is to say, *a priori* valuation. In contrast to such intellectual libertinism, as it were, Nietzsche's exaltation of the *agon* is circumscribed by an *ethics* of contestation. This, I believe, is most conspicuous in the following passages where Nietzsche demarcates between the "first nature" and "second nature" of existence: He is able to say firstly that "the best we can do is to confront our inherited and hereditary nature with our knowledge, and through a new, stern discipline combat our inborn heritage and *implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature, so that our first nature draws away*" (emphasis added). Afterwards, however, he makes an immensely important remark regarding the necessity of reflecting upon this transition where every acquired "second nature" will ultimately draw away and consequently be touted as the old and inherited nature that has to be overcome. Hence, the afore-mentioned *ethics* pertains to the insight, to the knowledge yielded by suprahistorical vantage point, and incessantly reminds that every "first nature was once a second nature and that every victorious second nature will become a first" (Nietzsche, 2007b, pp. 76-77). I believe this *ethic* has never lost its vitality for Nietzsche and could be detected in the three metaphors of the spirit he formulated in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The first one is a lion, a nay-saying beast that is capable of creating freedom for itself merely through the negation of values, and in this case, by a ferocious rejection of "first natures" and is thus stricken with *ressentiment*. On the other hand, the child surpasses the creative capacities of the lion by means of a merry yea-saying in that he is able to cherish the innocence of becoming, and is aware of the fleeting nature and transitoriness of every valuation. See: (Nietzsche, 2006, pp. 16-17).

crystallized as a reminder concerning the historicality of nihilism, that is to say how this "event" had surfaced, slowly yet arduously, as a result of thinking that is buttressed by what Nietzsche defined as "power of history". Furthermore, I have shown in concurrence with the conclusions of the first chapter that the discourse of progress had also found an amicable environment, a Hegelian climate to prosper and flourish, and finally to find its culminating formula in Strauss's *Der Alte und der Neue Glaube*. In this respect, it grows more and more plausible to speak of an *alliance intellectuelle franco-allemande*, a term coined by Celestin Bougle in order to emphasize the parallel, mutually enforcing elements in French and German thought during the first half of the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding the obvious differences between Comte and Hegel, they converged in holding that "the central aim of all study of society must be to construct a universal history of all mankind, understood as a scheme of the necessary development of humanity according to recognizable laws" (Hayek, 2000, p. 292). All in all, we are witnessing an unmistakable surge of immanentism that accompanies the demise of God. The nullification of God as a transcendental entity, which is above and sovereign over history, is compensated by an emergence of immanentism as a mode of belief in which the object of reverence becomes history or simply the historical.

The significance of these findings resides in the fact they propel the study towards an analysis by means of which the social mediation of the concept of “historical sense” could be elaborated. By framing the category of “historical sense” within the context of social mediation, we are seeking to uncover its very function as ideology insofar as our purpose is to ask in what ways the sense of history could be propagated and utilized in conjunction with the exercise of power in a social body. In this way, reflecting on the relationship between history and individual is suddenly

impregnated with a sense of urgency which retrospectively suspends the *naturalizing* narrative of power and presents us with a *film négatif* – a means to gaze at history in its violence against singularities. Although Nietzsche has perceptively discerned the possibility of the appropriation of history and even encouraged it under certain conditions, his pensive reservations about collective will restrained him from venturing into the possibilities of historical imagination springing from the standpoint of the oppressed. He is adamant, on the one hand, that the danger lies in the way the state envisages itself vis-à-vis the people: "State is the name of the coldest of all monsters. It even lies coldly, and this lie crawls out of its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people'" (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 34). What the state subsumes under the category of "people" is interpreted by Nietzsche to be nothing other than the distinguishing traits of the "last human being": individualist egoism, utilitarian vulgarity and the penchant for a brotherhood geared towards a rapacious exploitation of non-brothers. According to Nietzsche (2007b), these traits are deliberately propagated by the state and should therefore be seen as a direct consequence of "writing history from the standpoint of the masses and seeking to derive laws which govern it from the needs of these masses" (p. 113).

He is especially concerned that *the people* (which he often used pejoratively as a synonym for "far-too-many" or "superfluous") will look up to the state in thrall with its ordaining power. Especially in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, this contiguity Nietzsche intuited between the state and the collective will is reflected as a dangerous malady of modernity, a pathological residue still reeking of the *death* of God. The following aphorisms drawn from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* cannot but evoke our earlier discussion of Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism:

> Once the spirit was God, then it became human and now it is even becoming rabble. ("On Reading and Writing") (p. 28)
>
> And I turned by back on the rulers when I saw what they call ruling today: haggling and bantering for power – with the rabble! ("On the Rabble") (p. 74)
>
> Language confusion of good and evil: this sign I give you as the sign of the state. Indeed, this sign signifies the will to death. Indeed, it beckons the preachers of death! . . . Just look at how it lures them, the far-too-many! How it gulps and chews and ruminates them! "On earth there is nothing greater than I: the ordaining finger of God am I" – thus roars the monster. ("On the New Idol") (p. 35)

Nietzsche's denigration of this problematical relationship between the state and the collective will has to be interpreted alongside the idea of *Übermensch*, the emergence of which is argued to be intrinsic to the dissolution of the state. The state plays an obstructive role in hindering the cultivation of agonistic politics inasmuch as the "coldest of all monsters", the state, coexists side by side with the multitudes, as both of them mutually recognize the indispensability of the other for its preservation. The "new idol" has to be destroyed and precisely in its end, Nietzsche (2006) contends, "the human being who is not superfluous" would be able to emerge in its fantastic brilliance (with the rainbows and bridges) (p. 36). However that may be, Nietzsche's elaboration lacks the skeptical pungency with which he generally affronts the so-called idols, thus bestowing on the idea of *Übermensch* precisely what he is critical of, a mythical quality that is intimately connected to *horror vacui*. Whereas the underlying causes of Nietzsche's idolization of *Übermensch* might be traced back to his penchant for *Kultur* over *Zivilization*, this should not deter us from highlighting the problematical implications of this formulation. As Sadler (1995) underlines, Nietzsche's formulation of the eternal recurrence of the same and the corresponding idea of *Übermensch* as a model of post-nihilistic agency constitutes Nietzsche's understanding of redemption, which amounts to a release from the natural and everyday conditions of untruth, and a "passing over into truth" as a comprehensive

existential reorientation (p. 7). It has been accentuated how the idea of eternal recurrence serves as an antidote, or as an existential reorientation that will have a redemptive function by alleviating the deep-seated problem in the temporality of human beings, namely, the past as a source of anguish and restlessness (Richardson, 2008, p. 88; Hatab, 2008, pp. 151-152). As we shall come to analyze more scrupulously in the next chapter, the idea of *Übermensch* is exuberantly mythical to the extent that it is coterminous with Nietzsche's hypostatization of the state. Given the fact that Nietzsche often turns a blind eye to the complex material and economic dynamics operative in the functioning of modern society, both Nietzsche's negation of the state and the alternative modality heralded by the coming of *Übermensch* falls short of providing concrete analyses and solutions, and appears rather to be fantastic or poetic images that serve to compensate the socially determined impuissance of human beings.

Certainly, these shortcomings should not eclipse the ingenious insights provided by Nietzsche in an epoch characterized by naïve belief in the general progress of humankind. As Theodor W. Adorno (2008a) also asserts, Nietzsche's legacy resides less in the political solutions he offered than in his prophetic anticipation of the consolidation of this "cold monster", and at the very least in his perception of how the idea of progress could be duly manipulated by the state for the sake of maximizing its power (p. 44). In the next chapter, I will continue by analyzing in what ways Adorno extended and supplemented the "critique of domination", a tradition Adorno does not refrain from identifying with Nietzsche himself. This will convey us theoretically to what Adorno identified as concrete negation and probe the possibilities by means of which the sway of history *qua* progress over the singularity of human existence could be suspended.

CHAPTER 4

THE RIDDLE OF PROGRESS AND ADORNO'S SOLUTION: EXCAVATING THE REPRESSED TRUTH CONTENT

In his inaugural lecture presented at the University of Frankfurt in 1931, Theodor W. Adorno (1977) argues sternly that the actuality of philosophy stems partly from the exclusive emphasis given by science on research and the correspondent method of classification and organization of empirical data. The idea of philosophy, he continues, rests in the art of *interpretation*, which refuses to take its finding as indestructible and static but rather as a sign to be unriddled and decoded. However, this should not lead us to suppose that in solving this riddle, one can readily present reality as a meaningful whole and justify it. In this sense, the art of *interpretation* eschews what traditional philosophy has been very much presupposed on, namely, that the power of thought is sufficient to grasp the totality of the real (Adorno, 1977, p. 120). One should constantly resist this temptation, implicates Adorno (1977), since "no justifying reason could rediscover itself in a reality whose order and form suppresses every claim to reason" (p. 120). More than ever, reality confronts the cogitating subject as incomplete, fragmentary and contradictory and thus to present this reality as *Gestalt,* a seamless whole, will prove to be inimical to the very principle that determines the actuality of philosophy. The actuality of philosophy arises "only out of the historical entanglement of questions and answers", and not by the *extra*-historical solutions, as evidenced by "the failure of efforts for a total and grand philosophy" (Adorno, 1977, p. 124).

How then is the art of interpretation supposed to uphold the actuality of philosophy? For Adorno (1977), the fragmented and contradictory nature of reality

presses for a historically mediated method that will not only ensure the preponderance of the object but will also acknowledge as its task the recognition and banishment of demonic (*daemonic*) forces (p. 126). We shall later focus on what these demonic forces may be, during our analysis of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. For the meantime, I would like to quote at length the passage in which Adorno describes in detail this method, through the allegory of *riddle-solving*:

> [The] function of riddle-solving is to light up the riddle-Gestalt like lightning and to negate it (*aufzuheben*), not to persist behind the riddle and imitate it. Authentic philosophical interpretation does not meet up with a fixed meaning which already lies behind the question, but lights it up suddenly and momentarily, and consumes it at the same time. Just as riddle-solving is constituted, in that the singular and dispersed elements of the question are brought into various groupings long enough for them to close together in a figure out of which the solution springs forth, while the question disappears - so philosophy has to bring its elements, which it receives from the sciences, into changing constellations, or, to say it with less astrologically and scientifically more current expression, into changing trial combinations, until they fall into a figure which can be read as an answer, while at the same time the question disappears. (Adorno, 1977, p. 127)

It is in light of this art of interpretation that I offer to read the insights we have gleaned from the preceding chapters. Approaching the question of progress as a riddle enables us to bring together the findings we have so far amassed, in such a way that they become part of a constellation or a trial combination that could then be unriddled. Hence, at one pole we have Comte's scientistic program of positivism which is geared towards amalgamating progress with order, and *via* the introduction of the Positive state seeks to neutralize the negative function and the dynamic quality of progress. Kant's two-tiered conception of progress admits the irreducibility of morality to the teleological representation of civilization, implying the potential contradictions in the constitution of civil society which have turned out to be well-founded in light of the catastrophic history of the last two centuries. And yet at

another pole, there is Nietzsche's problematization of immanentism, which is addressed through the concept of nihilism, and highlights the joint effect of will-to-truth (*Wille zur Wahrheit*) and "historical sense" in producing inner-worldly idols to compensate for the death of God. This picture already demonstrates that Comte's allegedly scientific positivism falters by failing to notice the metaphysical *moment* in its constitution. In replacing God with the Nouveau *Grand-Être,* by propagating in its stead the religion of humanity, the idea of progress too becomes an echo of a now-defunct Christian universal history.

In this chapter, I would like to introduce into this analytical combination Adorno's understanding of progress which will shed further light on the subject, and thus pave the way for an *answer* to the riddle. More importantly, however, I contend that the significance of Adorno's perspective resides in providing us with the necessary means to *negate* (*aufzuheben*) the riddle of progress, making the question disappear in a fashion that is different from the way Nietzsche's nominalism dictates. Whereas Nietzsche decries the idea of progress to be a degenerating and corruptive hypostatization of becoming and debunks it as a symptom of passive nihilism, Adorno calls for the negation of the idea of progress for reasons that are altogether very different. Notwithstanding Adorno's usually affirmative reception of Nietzsche, it is easily discernible that Adorno does not hesitate to criticize the latter's fatalistic perspective in issues related to human temporality and historicality (Pütz, 2007). In *Minimia Moralia*, he questions whether Nietzsche's inculcation of *amor fati*, the agonistic celebration of radical becoming, replicates the same inference that he ruthlessly criticized:

> But Nietzsche himself taught amor fati: 'thou shalt love thy fate' . . . We might well ask whether we have more reason to love what happens to us, to

> affirm what is because it is, than to believe true what we hope. Is it not the same false inference that leads from the existence of stubborn facts to their erection as the highest value, as he criticizes in the leap from hope to truth? If he consigns 'happiness through an idée fixe' to the lunatic asylum, the origin of *amor fati* must be sought in a prison . . . No less than in the *credo quia absurdum*, resignation bows down in the amor fati, the glorification of the absurdest of all things, before the powers that be. (Adorno, 2005, p. 98)

Thus, Adorno's general intention is to turn the tables on Nietzsche and inquire whether Nietzsche's project hits the wall by succumbing to resignation before the way things appear to us, that is, before reality as *it is*. He seems to imply that he falls into the allure of what *is*, of the captivating and eternal recurrence of things. And precisely because of this mesmerism, one can ask whether Nietzsche himself repeats the same error that he deftly perceived in the ascetic's will to believe in the absurd. For Adorno, Nietzsche's lifelong project, the critique of myth, does not carry into its logical culmination but rather suspends itself in subscribing to the order of things.[106]

However adamant Nietzsche may be in revealing the theological sediments of modern thinking, Adorno is convinced that "myth debars Nietzsche's critique of myth from *truth*" (Adorno, 2005, p. 98). What does this cryptic statement mean? It is not far-fetched to suggest that Adorno here contests the limited scope of Nietzsche's critique of progress. While Nietzsche writes off progress as an emblematic mode of immanentism, and by extension as a problematic temporalization of salvation history, he turns a blind eye to the *truth*-content of the idea of progress. As Pütz

[106] As for the question of what subscribing to the order of things means, Adorno notes in *Minimia Moralia* that by ridiculing the difference between essence and appearance and taking appearance as the sole criterion of truth, Nietzsche sided "with the total ideology which existence has since become" (p. 169). By the transformation of existence into total ideology, Adorno certainly refers to the piecemeal transition into a reality wherein historical and social forces now determine human subjectivity with unparalleled ferocity. Nietzsche sides with total ideology insofar as he commits two fundamental mistakes: a) He simply cannot decode the impact of tangible social mechanisms and forces on the constitution of human subjectivity, leading him, analogically speaking, to hold accountable the sheep for herd-mentality rather than the institutionalized herd-mentality for creating the sheep, and b) His insistence on "genuine" character or "authenticity" as evidenced by his celebration of Zarathustra and the übermensch forge a "cultus" out of the mind that becomes an absolute to itself (Adorno, 1972, p. 30; Adorno, 2005, pp. 148-150). Also consider: (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 114).

(2007) also claims, this could be partly explicated by the perspectivism of Nietzsche, whose emphasis on the "random interchangeability of perspectives and positions prevents him from gaining insight into the comprehensive meaning of society" (p. 134). Lauded by Adorno for having been one of the few philosophers who discerned the logic of domination that is operative in the discourse of progress, Nietzsche's reluctance to analyze the historical and social embeddedness of this concept inevitably conveys his philosophy to a series of abstract formulations populated by images of self-overcoming (*Selbst-Überwindung)* and quasi-mythological portrayals of the *Übermensch* (Adorno, 2008, p. 44).[107]

In this respect, we can postulate that for Adorno the *truth*-content of the concept of progress cannot crystallize unless its interpretation is carried out by heeding the history of this very concept and by disclosing the modes in which the concept stands in a state of entanglement with the ruling and dominant forces of society. Put differently, getting hold of *truth* amounts to the process of uncovering the real social experiences which exist in a sedimented form under concepts. For Adorno, the traces of bodily pleasure or suffering, fear or desire are buried indiscriminately within each and every concept, and therefore in excavating these layers one is granted access not only to contradictions but also to the mark of violence inflicted on such experiences (Jarvis, 2006, p. 6). In this respect, the concept of progress should be approached *via* the investigation of what the concept has failed to deliver – i.e. by what it is not – and by riveting the damaged lives that bear its mark. This means that critique cannot dispense with "the ontology of the wrong state of things", the wrong state of things not in the sense of quantitative aberrations, as

[107] See fn. 106.

mere datum, but in the most palpable sense of human suffering in social totality (Adorno, 1973, p. 11).[108]

In this chapter, I will therefore try to show that for Adorno the negation of progress is destined to be ill-fated unless it strives to get hold of the *truth*-content of progress and is geared towards liberating the concept from its mythical and irrational degeneration. This endeavor takes its cue from one particular statement of Adorno, which is articulated rather extraordinarily in an article as well as in his preparatory lectures to *Negative Dialectics*. Progress only comes about at the point when it comes to an end (Adorno, 1983-84, p. 61; Adorno, 2008b, p. 152). I will attempt to prove that Adorno's emphasis on the "end" of progress signifies something entirely different than the abrogation of this concept *in toto*. The "end" of progress rather connotes to the dissolution of myth, the very same problem Adorno diagnosed as the main shortcoming of Nietzsche's critique of progress. I will also analyze in depth how Adorno interlaces the promise of genuine progress with the "end" of progress *qua* myth, thus bringing into foreground his indebtedness to the project and spirit of Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*).

In order to meet these tasks, the first section of this chapter will focus on Adorno's analysis of myth, with special emphasis on the arguments presented in *The Idea of Natural History* and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This discussion will be conducted in conjunction with the arguments presented by Foster (2007) and Bernstein (2001), in order to demonstrate that Adorno's analysis of myth is normatively founded upon the facticity of "damaged lives" and that it should be interpreted as a plea for the recovery of "spiritual experience" (*geistige Erfahrung*) in modernity. In the second section, I will delve deeper into Adorno's critique of

[108] As we shall see in the last section, the ethical élan of Adorno's philosophy especially comes into view during his theorization of utopia. For an analysis which asserts the opposite, that is, the overall amorality of Adorno's philosophy: (Tassone, 2005).

Auguste Comte and especially on the latter's sociological model based upon the rigid conceptual differentiation between the static and the dynamic laws of society. Consequently, I will try to demonstrate that Adorno's critique of progress depended very much on his perceiving of the recoil of the impetus of Enlightenment, the project of understanding the world through reason, into myth and universal irrationality. Put differently, I will inquire whether the recoil into myth is tantamount to the appropriation of the idea of progress by order, and whether its enforced complicity with the capitalist-bourgeois society severs the link between the concept of progress and the sedimented social experiences that are necessarily contained in the concept. Built upon the insights and conclusions gathered from these two sections, the final part will be based on the explication of Adorno's theorization of utopia and probe into the possibility of relating it to his critique of progress. It will be argued that Adorno's enthusiastic affirmation of utopia is not indicatory of him conceiving the latter as an historical alternative to the concept of progress, but rather as a therapeutic mode of thinking that will demystify and pave the way for a "genuine" understanding of progress.

4.1 Myth and the restriction of spiritual experience

> In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant. The program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and substitution of knowledge for fancy. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 3)

With this almost prophetic indignation *Dialectic of Enlightenment* commences, expressing dismay against what could be easily described as the most catastrophic decade of entire history, amidst full-scale destruction of not only human life but also

hope and human dignity. It taps into the failure of the progressive thought of the Enlightenment. Let alone being eradicated from the face of the earth, fear has continued to grow, manifesting itself in myriad shapes, and the sovereignty of men has thrived not on the basis of autonomy and reason but on power, intimidation, domination and irrationality. The project of the disenchantment of the world has certainly been achieved with unforeseeable success. As for the complementary side of this project, the task of dissolving myths, which was conveyed beautifully in Kant's slogan "Sapere aude!", failed miserably. Overlooking the historical conjecture in which this text was written or simply the plain inability to put ourselves in the shoes of those who have had the misfortune to witness events of the most calamitous nature, are perhaps the reasons why the interpretation of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can become like finding one's way in a labyrinth. Besides, the textual composition with its aphoristic style, unusual allusions and allegories make the book excruciatingly difficult, despite the fact that, as such, it overlaps with the primary argument of the book and resists the temptation to compose a systematic and organized depiction of an idea whose development could then be traced and easily seized (Schultz, 1990, p. 19). As early as fifteen years before the publication of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno (1984) had already emphasized the necessity of fostering perspectives that can generate shock effects, by means of which the naturalized patterns of thinking and conventional forms of philosophy can be overcome (p. 118). Nonetheless, the eclectic origins of Adorno's philosophy, combined with his modernism and allegiance to the method of dialectics, is often cast aside when his philosophy of history is set under scrutiny and tried to be decoded via *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[109] While the critics almost univocally

[109] For an in-depth analysis of these influences presented mostly in chronological fashion, see: (Buck-Morss, 1977).

inveigh against the disconcerting pessimism of Adorno and Horkheimer, they suggest in an obviously disproving manner that the arguments raised in the book amount to nothing less than the total abandonment of the enlightenment of rationality. Paul Connerton, for example, makes the following controversial assertion:

> What was criticized in Marx as an apotheosis of history is transformed by Adorno into a 'diabolisation' of history. What was condemned in Hegel is once more turned on its head: radical evil - Evil as such - is promoted to the status of the World-Spirit. The history of salvation is replaced by the history of damnation. (as cited in Jay, 1984, p. 263)

In a similar manner, Klapwijk (2010) states that the thematic structure of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* contains a good dose of "crisis-philosophy", "for faith in progress is abandoned and dialectical reversal [of enlightenment into myth] is explained as dialectical decline. *Pro*gression is interpreted as *re*gression" (p. 6).

Before analyzing closely and exposing the problems in these arguments, I would like to bring into view the central theses of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: 1) Myth is already Enlightenment and 2) Enlightenment reverts to mythology (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. xvi). As noted by Jarvis (2006), it is absolutely necessary to read these two theses conjunctively, insofar as it is only through a vigilant observation of the interrelatedness of these moments that we can get hold of the *dialectic* of Enlightenment (p. 22). As for the first thesis, Adorno's argument is quite straightforward. Coupled with the tendency to narrate for the beginning/creation and the order of things, the hierarchical classification and meticulous organization of deities in national mythologies demonstrate that myth primarily intended report, naming and explanation (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 8). These features not only attest to the nascent rationality with which myth is entwined, but also account

for the emergence of a radically unique approach towards nature. According to Adorno and Horkheimer (2008a), even though animism and magic similarly pursued the aim of bridling the forces of nature, this was achieved *via mimesis*, that is, through the imitation and representation of the forces of nature (p. 11). Hence, magic operated by *spiritualizing* the object whereas myth progressively *distances* itself from the objects of nature:

> The Olympic deities are no longer directly identical with elements, but signify them. In Homer, Zeus represents the sky and the weather, Apollo controls the sun, and Helios and Eos are already shifting to an allegorical function. The gods are distinguished from material elements as their quintessential concepts. From now on, being divides into the *logos* (which with the progress of philosophy contracts to the monad, to a mere point of reference), and into the mass of all things and creatures without. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 8)[110]

In Adorno's view, it is this *distance* rather than *relatedness,* the abstraction of *logos* from nature entire, which sets off the process of Enlightenment. Myth makes the awful and alien presence of the sun manageable by registering it as the *sign* of Apollo's majesty, and by extension as the object of its narrative discourse. However, once the grand referent of this sign loses credibility under the scrutiny of critical reason, Enlightenment ruthlessly seizes the *sign*, first by entirely disenchanting it, and then by integrating the sign into its conceptual network. Jarvis (2006) offers the following analysis concerning this process of Enlightenment, which should be read within the context of the Enlightenment's inherent struggle to wrest itself away the world that had been delineated by myth:

> Adorno and Horkheimer see the history of thought . . . as an ever-increasing skepticism about any claims for access to a "transcendent" content or

[110] For an extensive analysis of the transition from mimesis to mythology, see: (Schultz, 1990, pp. 25-35).

> meaning, that is, to a content or meaning lying outside thought itself . . . In order to escape the charge that it is merely subjective, thought sets itself the task of replicating what exists - no hidden extras . . . Enlightenment insists that if knowledge is really going to be knowledge of an object, it must not be contaminated by anything subjective. (p. 25)

If we may put it differently, Adorno construes the history of thought as the history of *distancing*: The transformation of myth into enlightenment hinges upon a process in the course of which nature is turned into mere objectivity (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 9). Given that mythology carries *in potentia* the very rationality that can only be actualized properly by the abrogation of mythology, the thesis that myth is already enlightenment does not necessarily raise any eyebrows. This is also admitted, for example, in Brunkhorst's (2000) otherwise polemical dispute with the overspreading argument of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. He notes that if the first thesis were to be isolated from the second, it becomes clear that "enlightenment, disenchantment and rationalization are co-original with the societal level of human evolution, a statement that fits well with progressive intellectual projects like that of Hegel, Marx, Durkheim, Dewey, or Talcott Parsons" (Brunkhorst, 2000, p. 137). For Brunkhorst (2000), it is with the second thesis – Enlightenment recoils to myth – that Adorno's critique of the blinded enlightenment of rationality ends up with the negation of reason *in toto*:

> This thesis expresses an a priori necessity that enlightenment must return to mythology once it is developed completely . . . History in its course follows a tragic design . . . Here the difference between myth and enlightenment, rationality and cruelty, vanishes. All hope for the progress of enlightenment is destroyed. Enlightenment is not just one mythological narrative among others, but the myth of all mythology . . . With their second thesis [the reversion of enlightenment into myth] Adorno and Horkheimer go along with Heidegger and a broad stream of conservative cultural criticism. Critical theory falls back into a negative philosophy of the history of decay. (p. 137)

It is certainly arguable whether Brunkhorst succeeds in substantiating these arguments in his article, however ambitious they are. The most problematic aspect of this passage above is that by carefully separating one thesis from the other, Brunkhorst simply opts to overlook the dialectical structure within the context of which they are postulated. Hence, we are obliged to address the following questions: What does Adorno really mean with this thesis – Enlightenment reverts to mythology? Does it amount to a negative philosophy of the history of decay, as Brunkhorst claims? Given that philosophy of decay is predicated upon a model of linear regression and therefore has to presuppose the past as a period of now-lost intimacy, is it logically plausible to assert that Enlightenment can become *the myth of all mythology*? It is imperative to note incidentally that the very last question is not mere quibble. Contrary to what Brunkhorst claims, Adorno and Horkheimer (2008a) do not really intend to invalidate the process of Enlightenment but rather set as their task the analysis of the self-destruction of the Enlightenment (p. xiii). They are convinced that social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought, yet they also warn that this conviction alone should not render one blind to the fact the recidivist element of Enlightenment, the ever-present threat of the reinstatement of myth, is always around the corner (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. xiii).

Briefly put, the recoil of Enlightenment into myth connotes the suspension of the subjective and objective conditions of freedom, which arises as the historicality of social reality is conceived as "what has always been, what as fatefully arranged predetermined being, underlies history and appears in history" (Adorno, 1984, p. 111). Elsewhere, Adorno (2008b) describes this predicament to be the mistaking of what is originally *thesei* as *physei*, that is, the misrepresentation of the historical and contingent features of social totality as the very appearance of innate and eternal

properties of nature (p. 121). In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, this is thematized in relation to the hypertrophy of the logic of abstraction and equivalence. It is argued that the *distance* firmly fixed between subject and object finally culminates in the reduction of nature into abstract quantities, as a result of which everything in nature can then be treated as repeatable phenomena.

> When in mathematical procedure the unknown becomes the unknown quantity of an equation, this marks it as the well-known even before any value is inserted. Nature, before and after the quantum theory, is that which is to be comprehended mathematically; even what cannot be made to agree, indissolubility and irrationality, is converted by means of mathematical theorems. In the anticipatory identification of the wholly conceived and mathematized world with truth, enlightenment intends to secure itself against the return of the mythic. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 24)[111]

In a manner that is very much reminiscent of the Freudian theory on ego formation, Adorno diagnoses here the ambivalent implications of Enlightenment's resistance against myth. The more Enlightenment obeys the injunction to secure itself against the eruption of myth, the less likely it becomes to promote a sense of self-reflexivity or self-awareness towards its own *modus operandi*. Thus, this non-critical approach towards its theoretical groundwork and presuppositions serves to conceal the identifacatory mechanisms which essentially legitimize factuality and the order of things by pigeonholing everything new and dissimilar into pre-established categories. In this respect, it is quite staggering to encounter arguments such as those we have mentioned above regarding Adorno's alleged *diabolisation* of history. It does not seem implausible to suggest, in contrast to this particular viewpoint, that the *diabolus* comes about, if ever, at the moment when history is subjected to severe repression. This is due to the fact that Adorno (1984) conceives history as "a movement that

[111]Also see: (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 7, p. 13).

does not play itself out in mere identity, mere reproduction of what has always been, but rather one in which the new occurs; it is a movement that gains its true character through what appears in it as new" (p. 111). Insofar as what distinguishes itself as new can only come about through history, to dissolve that which is new into the reified and mathematized patterns of thinking ipso facto amounts to the defilement of history.

In repressing the element of newness and reproducing a picture of reality that is founded on the principle of ever-sameness, myth necessarily reduces history to the category of nature and propagates a social totality from which nothing is exempt and no one is able to escape. Without considering this repressive function of myth in its effacement of historical and temporal horizon from the face of reality, it will certainly be difficult to grasp what is meant by the recoil of enlightenment into myth. While discussing the law of repetition in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno mentions at one point the mythical figure of Persephone, whose story conveys how time's passage and cycle of seasons were conceived in the setting of Greek mythology. It is pointed out that in its original form, the story "was directly synonymous with the dying of nature", such that the abduction of Persephone by Hades to the underworld was literally taken to be the reason for the infertility of land and distressing non-productivity (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 27). Here, the emphasis on *synonymity* is extremely important. It means, in a very compressed form, that the coming of autumn had not yet been isolated or abstracted from Persephone's kidnapping. Put differently, the logic that underlies this narrative upholds the element of *relatedness* we have articulated above, to the extent that nature is not yet stripped off its magical quality and objectified entirely. At least in its initial form, the story embodies the perseverance of human hope against the harsh

and cruel forces of nature, a theme that is already latent in the anticipated redemption of Persephone from captivity, i.e. the *coming* of spring. Adorno underlines that this magical residue is eliminated once the event is taken as a sign, as a sign-event of pre-history (*Urgeschichte*):

> With the rigidification of the consciousness of time, the process was fixed in the past as a unique one, and in each new cycle of the seasons an attempt was made ritually to appease fear of death by recourse to what was long past . . . Through the establishment of a unique past, the cycle takes on the character of inevitability, and death radiates from the age-old occurrence to make every event its mere repetition. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 27)

Adorno's intention here is to show the rigidification of the consciousness of time that had been occurring in tandem with the reification of *ratio* against objectified nature. However cyclical the recurring motif of Persephone's captivity/redemption may be, the event, in its original form, is conceived to be happening *each and every year*, such that it always happens as something *new*. However, the problem for Adorno arises precisely when this cyclical framework is expropriated in order to legitimize the present. Thus, myth amounts to the sacralization of the order of things by recourse to an extra-historical or metaphysical point; it ensures the legitimization of things in their supposedly *eternally recurring nature*, signifying at the same time that everything seemingly new is actually predetermined in the sense of being under the law of a unique event spotted in prehistory.[112]

We have seen so far that Adorno's conceptualization of history hinges upon this normative ground that is adamant to preserve the sanctity of the *new* against its

[112] In this sense, the myth of Persephone reflects the general characteristics of time in antiquity. Time has a rhythm and thus can never have a pre-defined direction towards a point of consummation. It does not have an "end" in the Hebraic and Christian sense of time. History is part of the cosmos, and is therefore subject to the same laws that regulate the movement of stars and other celestial objects. Circularity rather than linearity, repetition and eternal return (ἀνακύκλωσις) rather than novelty, comprise the standard features of temporality in Ancient Greece. See: (Moltmann, 1969, p. 31; Rust, 1953; Puech, 1958, pp. 40-45).

standardization and subsumption. Even more significantly, while there can be no history without this element of newness, it is imperative to point out that without history there cannot be any progress in the strict sense of the term. It is thus plainly wrong to assume, as Klapwijk (2010) did, that Adorno went as far as to equate progression with regression. Despite expressing his concern over the prevalence of regressive elements in our age, this diagnosis did not signify the catastrophic self-culmination of Enlightenment, its piecemeal *progression* to hell, but rather problematized its self-suspension and congealment into myth. This type of regression, neither ontogenetic nor phylogenetic by definition, instead connotes the lack of self-reflection by Enlightenment on its own relation to myth and tradition (Jarvis, 2006, p. 25; Bernstein, 2001, p. 86). Horkheimer succinctly formulates the problem by stating that "when the idea of reason was conceived, it was intended to achieve more than the mere regulation of the relation between means and ends: it [reason] was regarded as the instrument for understanding the ends, *for determining them*" (Horkheimer, 2001, p. 7). In this respect, Adorno and Horkheimer bewail the curtailment of reason into one of its constitutive properties, whereby it is seen exclusively as an organ of coordination, organization and systematization. By dispensing with self-reflexivity, and therewith the capacity to determine the *ends* of reason, *ratio* grows to assume a predominantly instrumental function (*Zweckrationalität*) and widens the abyss between itself and nature:

> The objects' sensuous particularity, with all the aspects of their organic life, have been displaced from nature and degraded to the status of secondary qualities. What has been left following this systematic and methodological operation of abstraction and cognitive ascent is a disembodied subject facing from outside an objectified nature. The constitutive fact of their mutual dependence as parts of a living system has thus been repressed to the point of cognitive disappearance, while their living and organic essence has been assimilated to the nonliving. (Tassone, 2004, p. 265)

> Reason originated as the tool for the domination of nature, but, intimately connected with self-renunciation and bourgeois asceticism, it had turned "against the thinking subject himself". Rational control of inner and outer nature was reflected in the very form of Enlightenment thought: logical abstraction led only to the reification of cognition but also to the domination of the content of thought by the concepts; such conceptualizing legitimated doing violence to "first nature". (Buck-Morss, 1977, p. 61)

In Adorno's view, this inevitably results in the eventual capitulation of enlightenment to mythic fear, which especially manifests itself once the ideal of scientific unity (*mathesis universalis*) and systematization is jeopardized by the resistance of the particular against subsumption, classification and categorization (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 7). "Nothing at all may remain outside," Adorno and Horkheimer (2008a) state, "because the mere idea of outsideness is the very source of fear" (p. 16). Whereas the elimination of fetishes was achieved by the law of equivalence and rendered nature explainable through rational categories, the dread now experienced before the resistant particular attests to the fact that the law of equivalence itself has become a fetish (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 17).[113] This is achieved partly by the fact that the law of equivalence serves to perpetuate the formal structure of mythic fear by its constant reproduction of boundaries, by the strategic determination of what has to be internalized and what has to be eradicated on the pretext of the homeostasis of the system. In the meantime, it is precisely this same “mythic fear” which has to be kindled surreptitiously since the arch-principles of arrangement, juxtaposition and order require the imago of an ostensibly threatening presence, a “resistant particular” whose content cannot be subsumed as it is in-itself.

[113] According to Adorno, this fear arises due to the unknown: Although demythologization is characterized by the process of compounding the animate with the inanimate (numbers, logic of equivalence, formulae, etc.), that which does not reduce to numbers is treated with suspicion.

Now, it is in the context of such arguments that Adorno and Horkheimer (2008a) went as far as to articulate their most audacious claim – *Enlightenment is totalitarian* (p. 6). It should be obvious from our discussion so far that by invoking the totalitarian nature of Enlightenment, Adorno alludes to the seamless, self-enclosed reality legitimized in the structure of mythology. It is also the case that he discerns in the strict immanence of mythology a latent or potential proclivity to violence, which can be unleashed towards things that are marked as indissoluble or unapprehendable. What makes this statement especially noteworthy, however, is its embeddedness in the social and political developments that actually shape and nourish the arguments of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Rather than being a hasty conclusion apropos of the nature of Enlightenment, this charge actually testifies to the *concrete* basis of its formulation, building upon observations and analyses related to the experience of totalitarianism. As Benhabib similarly underlines, "the core of what has come to be known as the 'critical social theory' of the Frankfurt School . . . [becomes] the analysis of the transformation of liberal nineteenth-century capitalism into mass democracies on the one hand and totalitarian formations of the national socialist sort on the other" (Benhabib, 1986, p. 160). According to Benhabib, it is precisely the results of this engagement with the transforming social and political conditions in late capitalism that bestows on "the critique of instrumental reason" its distinguishing mark from the orthodox Marxist conception of *Ideologiekritik*. Habermas' argument proceeds in a similar vein. Insofar as the primary objective of *Ideologiekritik* was the disentanglement of "the inadmissible mixture of power and validity" and the concomitant grasp of unadulterated reality, the method of immanent critique had extolled the cardinal principle of Enlightenment – self-reflection (Habermas, 1998, p. 116). Yet Adorno and Horkheimer saw themselves compelled to

surpass the method of *Ideologiekritik*, argues Habermas, since they had been observing that this supposedly "unadulterated reality" was itself part of the pervasive irrationality characterizing modern society. Buchwalter elaborates on this last point as follows:

> Because the essence of reality is its irrationality, criticism of the real in terms of its own ideals amounts to the "duplication" - or "groveling" ratification - of the irrationalities in question. Indeed, far from presenting immanent critique as a viable basis for criticism, Adorno asserts that it contributes to the irrationalities it purportedly exposes: It is "itself an ideology," constantly "in danger of acquiring a coercive character". As he also writes: "The notion of ideology has changed from an instrument of knowledge into a straight-jacket". (Buchwalter, 1987, pp. 300-301)

In this respect, *exposing* the untruthfulness of existing structures, by itself, will not be capable of unveiling how the forces of production (apropos of its ever-advancing technological means towards the control and subjugation of nature) enter into a banefully symbiotic relationship with the relations of production (Habermas, 1998, p. 118). Worse, it stubbornly turns a blind eye to the derangement of the emancipatory potential of reason given that it has become sinisterly complicit with the order of things (Habermas, 1998, p. 119).

According to Benhabib, Adorno's pursuit for an historically relevant methodology was built upon a vast array of sociological and economic studies conducted by the members of *Institute for Social Research* during the 1930s. Especially crucial to this endeavor was the co-founder and eminent economist of the *Institute*, Friedrich Pollock, who was among the first to propound the thesis that the increasing etatization of society and the new prerogatives of the state had come to necessitate a new form of analysis that could go beyond the traditional Marxist critique of political economy (Benhabib, 1986, p. 159). With the new institutional

structures and state policies, Pollock claimed, the "autonomous market" thesis no longer applied to social reality, whereas the cardinal values that provided the normative legitimation of this society were gradually becoming defunct. Ideas such as freedom, consent or individuation no longer served as ideas that can be evoked by revolutionary discourse for the sake of surpassing the contradictory *form* of capitalist-bourgeois society and realizing their potential (Benhabib, 1986, p. 159).[114] Hence, it could be surmised that Pollock's arguments had contained *in nuce* what later became in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* a detailed and philosophical exposition of "societal rationalization". The critique of political economy was insufficient by itself to serve as the sole basis for a critique of highly complex, multilayered foundations of administrative and political domination that extended into all spheres of social life (Benhabib, 1986, p. 160). In an age when emancipatory and negative *ends* of reason were being curtailed and rendered structurally impossible, the task was rather to show how the effectivity and adaptability of these new social-political organizational techniques were made possible "by the application of science and technology, not only to the domination of external nature, but to the control of interpersonal relations and the manipulation of internal nature as well" (Benhabib, 1986, p. 162).

As a matter of fact, it is precisely Adorno's emphatic insistence on the congeniality of the abstract, logical *modus operandi* of instrumental rationality and the increasing efficiency and peremptoriness of societal rationalization, that spurred a great deal of scholars to charge him with pessimism. This charge is predicated on the inference that if Enlightenment reverts to myth as Adorno claims it to be, then what has to remain is nothing but reality as a prison-house, from which escape is hardly imaginable. Habermas (1998), for example, asserts that *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

[114] The influence of Pollock on the general argument of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* could be detected from the fact that the book itself is dedicated to him.

depicts a depressingly bleak picture where "it is no longer possible to place hope in the liberating force of Enlightenment" (p. 106). And there is "scarcely any prospect", he continues, "for an escape from the myth of purposive rationality that has turned into objective violence" (p. 114). Ironically, the nature of Habermas's criticisms are strikingly reminiscent of Adorno's own trepidations regarding the Nietzschean principle of *amor fati*. Habermas seems to imply that by regarding Enlightenment *as* myth, Adorno perpetrated the same mistake that he discerned in Nietzsche and embraced a *fatalistic* standpoint towards the order of things. The problem with Habermas's diagnosis springs from the fact that he misconstrues what Adorno saw as a historically, socio-politically and economically grounded *miscarriage* of Enlightenment to be an ontological argument regarding its essence (*esse*), as a result of which the inevitable outcome of Enlightenment *has to be* full-scale catastrophe (Bernstein, 2001, p. 78).

A similar tendency can also be witnessed in Benhabib's interpretation, according to whom Adorno generally viewed "reason to be *inherently* an instrument of domination" (emphasis added) (Benhabib, 1986, p. 164). Yet Benhabib stops short of elaborating on the immediate implications of her thesis. If Adorno really conceived reason to be *inherently* an instrument of domination, then this entails that he saw little difference between ideas and armaments, between reason and total war. Weapons, which are instruments of domination *par excellence*, are consequently nothing other than material tools with which reason pursues its ultimate objective – the domination of world *in toto*. In other words, pressing out a *natural*, inherent characteristic of reason from its historical constellations obfuscates the dialectical configuration of reason, and thus it is destined to miss the gist of Adorno's argument by dwelling solely on its dominative aspect. In Benhabib's view, Adorno's

conception of history becomes simply the history of the *progress* of domination of internal and external nature, the suspension of which depends on the "overcoming" of the Enlightenment. More problematically, Benhabib pictures this "overcoming" to be an act of "*giving back* to the non-identical, the suppressed, and the domination their right *to be*" [emphasis added] (Benhabib, 1986, p. 169). The alarming nature of this proposition could be gleaned by the terms I have emphatically italicized, inasmuch as Benhabib's explication utilizes the highly polemical idioms of ontology at the expense of Adorno's warnings in *Jargon of Authenticity*. She seems to overlook the fact that every form of "giving back" connotes an implicit relationship of power; giving back to something the right to *be* does not annul the logic of domination, it simply amounts to its recodification on a basis comparatively more open and tolerant. Above all, however, Benhabib's preference to dilute the crucial difference between the emancipatory potential of Enlightenment and its actual mythical congealment into *false* Enlightenment militates against the essential purpose of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. To the question of whether the latter paves the way for an alternative consideration of reason and its social role, Benhabib replies with a resounding "no" and offers the following explanation:

> *If the plight of the Enlightenment and of cultural rationalization only reveals the culmination of identity logic, constitutive of reason, then the theory of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, which is carried out with the tools of this very same reason, perpetuates the very structure of domination it condemns*. [emphasis in original] (Benhabib, 1986, p. 169)

Although this assertion could be contested from a variety of angles, it will not be infeasible to interlace it with the earlier claim we have problematized, namely, the non-dialectical comprehension of the *inherently* instrumental and dominative nature of reason. It is on the basis of such misinterpretation – *the conflation of myth with*

Enlightenment – that Benhabib could harshly indict Adorno for speaking with the tools and discourse of dominative logic, with categories that are the offshoot of identity thinking. Yet in stark contrast to Benhabib, who views Adorno's project of "overcoming" Enlightenment coextensive with the abrogation of reason, Adorno would have treated such a proposition as extremely dangerous insofar as it deceptively evokes a field of uncontaminated reality and signifies a locus of immediacy that can putatively overcome the limitations of reason.[115] Adorno makes this point abundantly clear by noting that the task of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is not limited to the critique of instrumental reason and pervasive societal rationalization but also includes the negation of every immediacy that may be used to compensate for the abandoned categories of reason. "The task of cognition", writes Adorno, rather resides "in the determinate negation of each immediacy" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 27). It is not through naturalized judicial and economic categories such as exchange (*giving back*) that we should ponder our relation with the non-identical. Unless the urgency of this task is tackled in its historicality and addressed in respect of the social and material forms through which they are mediated, formulating *what* is to be "given back" as the *right to be* is destined to remain abstract. The following passage by Adorno elucidates the problem with Benhabib's exposition much more clearly:

> If one wants to attain the object, however, then its subjective determinations or qualities are not to be eliminated; precisely that would be contrary to the primacy of the object. If subject has a core of object, then the subjective qualities in the object are all the more an objective moment. For object

[115] A typical example of such misreading is manifested in Finlayson's article in which we find the surprising assertion that Adorno's great interest in the "non-conceptual" or im-mediate experience could be compared with Denys the Aeropagite's apophaticism. This proposition entails that Adorno is at best a modern gnostic, for whom language *in itself*, rather than in its particular function bestowed on it through its historical mediation, has to be abrogated in order to reach "out" to truth. The falsity of this assertion will be more obvious throughout this chapter. See: (Finlayson, 2012).

> becomes something at all only through being determinate . . . Conversely, the supposedly pure object, free of any added thought or intuition, is the very reflection of abstract subjectivity: only it makes the Other like itself through abstraction. (Adorno, 1998, p. 250)

To speak in Hegelian terms: For Adorno, the critique of Enlightenment assumes its *concrete* form precisely when it dispenses with the total negation, or its overcoming for that matter, of Enlightenment and concentrates on its *false* expression, which is to be carried out through the disclosure of its self-reproducing, phobic and totalitarian aspects. As Espen Hammer similarly underlines, Adorno is "not in the business of rejecting the enlightenment but rather of reconsidering it in the sense of *Besinnung* (mindful consideration)" (Hammer, 2006, p. 44). Considered in this vein, the recoil of enlightenment into myth should be construed as a thesis explicating such degeneration as a defect rather than a logical result of its innate teleological constitution. The emergence of myth is therefore a mirror image of the specific historical, economic and social conditions with which it gets entangled. It points out to a historical moment in which the liberation of humankind is obstructed by the very means that are supposed to work towards this end, and yet where technological progress and the mastery of nature continue untrammeled to the detriment and destitution of human species. Building upon this analysis, let us bring into foreground the following questions: What implications do Adorno's demarcation between enlightenment and myth bear for his critique of progress? Is it plausible to proffer that Adorno's diagnosis of myth in modern society nullifies the idea of progress in its entirety? Or is it more appropriate to speak of its determinate negation, by means of which the idea of progress is to be retained on account of its undeniable *truth*-content? If so, what is the nature of this truth that makes the idea of progress so captivating and tantalizing for Adorno, and what form of conceptual modification

does the critique of progress entail in order for this truth to manifest itself in its inner-historical significance?

Let me commence by citing an extremely important passage that serves as a first-hand refutation of the earlier interpretations we have mentioned above regarding Adorno's putatively fatalistic and pessimistic understanding of history. Originally asserted in the article "Progress" [*Fortschritt*] in 1962 by Adorno, it is quite surprising to come across the same argument repeated almost *verbatim* in his preparatory lectures to *Negative Dialectics*:

> The concept of progress is dialectical in a strict, unmetaphorical sense, in that its organon, reason, is one; not because a nature-dominating layer and a reconciling layer are continuous in reason, but that both share in all of reason's determinations. The one moment changes into its other only by literally reflecting itself, by reason turning reason upon itself and emancipating itself, in its self-limitation from the demon of identity (Adorno, 1983-84, p. 63; Adorno, 2008b, p. 157).

Here, Adorno virtually leaves no doubt over how *false* Enlightenment could be surmounted, i.e. through the very organ that had established the prevalence of this corrupted and arrested modality that goes by the name of instrumental *ratio*. However, it is hardly possible to overemphasize the way in which Adorno opts to describe this instrumental ratio inasmuch he mentions two traits we have been addressing in this chapter: 1) the demon (*daemon*) of identity, which is suggestive of the *mythical* composition of this rationality and 2) the *self-limitation* of reason, which represents its self-enclosed totality and marks its strong immanentism. If the concept of progress, in its dialectical nature, contains this irresistible mythical moment in itself, then it will not be far-fetched to surmise that, without the corrective and therapeutic function of self-reflexivity, the immediate application and utilization of the idea of progress will simply reproduce mythology. In this respect, Adorno's

purpose is to salvage the concept of progress, to sever and disentangle its relation to myth, as an act of emancipation that is true to the reconciling layer of reason's determination. The question necessarily follows: How is this difficult task to be accomplished?

Having mentioned earlier the importance Adorno attributes to *novelty* and *newness* for a sound interpretation of history, I have sought to demonstrate how the mythical reproduction of reality was arraigned by Adorno on account of its intolerance towards the particulars. What appears in history as something new has always been stigmatized on the basis of its primary indissolubility with the order of things. In his earliest of writings, *The Actuality of Philosophy*, Adorno (1977) had already been expressing his dismay towards the notion of totality and offering some hints about the possible direction of his interest: "If philosophy must learn to renounce the question of totality, then it implies that it must learn to do without the symbolic function, in which for a long time, at least in idealism, the particular appeared to represent the general" (p. 127). As Jay (1984) has shown, this criticism had later proved to be the theoretical taproot with which Adorno carried out the critique of the Hegelian philosophy of history, as well as Lukács' ambitious project to combine the latter with the theory of the proletariat. Adorno's insistence on the preservation of the non-identity of subjects induced him to dispense with any synthesis that could impose on the particulars the dominance of the universal, be it through the vindication of reality via *Geist* or the revolutionary potential of premeditated collective subjectivity (Jay, 1984, pp. 256-260; Hall, 2011, pp. 64-67; Lunn, 2002, p. 199). In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, however, Adorno's problematization of totality could be said to manifest itself in two inter-crossing areas. While the minute elaboration of myth enables the problem of non-identity to

come into foreground by manifesting its imperilment and vulnerability in the face of irrational totality, by also focusing on the concept of *self-preservation*, Adorno paves the way for a concrete understanding of myth that could be captured in its inner-historical formation. Self-preservation becomes the distinctive mark of bourgeois-capitalist constitution of subjectivity, by means of which the interpellative powers of the system are exercised through the very vessels that come to partake in its continuous reproduction:

> The individual owes his crystallization to the forms of political economy, particularly to those of the urban market. Even as the opponent of the pressure of socialization he remains the latter's most particular product and its likeness. What enables him to resist, that streak of independence in him, springs from monadological individual interest and its precipitate, character. The individual mirrors in his individuation, the preordained social laws of exploitation, however mediated. This means too, however, that his decay in the present phase must not be deduced individualistically, but from the social tendency which asserts itself by means of individuation and not merely as its enemy. (Adorno, 2005, p. 148)

According to Adorno (2008a), the logic of self-preservation comes to prevail in tandem with the unique relations of production originated and precipitated by industrialism, contributing to the objectification and incapacitation of human spirit (p. 28). The human being is reduced to a thing, a static element into whom the virtue of conventional responses and prescribed modes of conduct are constantly inculcated. Thus, the reproduction of myth resides not only in the *naturalization* of its objective structure, but also depends on the exaltation of self-preservation as the *summum bonum* of human activity. Dispensing with the idea of transforming the inhumane conditions under which he strives to survive, the "yardstick [of modern man] becomes self-preservation, successful or unsuccessful approximation to the objectivity of his functions and the models established for it" (Adorno &

Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 28).In fact, Adorno's tone in describing the plight of the human condition under late capitalism is deeply reminiscent of his remarks regarding the fatalistic universe of mythology. Consider the following statement: "In their eyes, the reduction to mere objects of the administered life, which preforms every sector of modern existence including language and perception, represents objective necessity, against which they believe there is nothing they can do" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 38). It is striking that almost twenty years after he drew this bleak portrayal of human destitution, Adorno can still propound in his *Lectures* that the identification of historically mediated structures with blind fate reveals

> the danger of regarding as justified the supremacy of an objective power over human beings who always believe that they are in full possession of themselves and, because of their certainty on this point, are highly reluctant to admit the degree to which they are merely the functions of some universal. (Adorno, 2008b, p. 17)

In this respect, it will not be implausible to speak of the Janus-faced nature of mythology, so as to underline that the two moments which constitute it are intimately related. While reason congeals into an instrument of domination, the brute facticity of domination is, in return, simultaneously comprehended as reason in actuality, and thus accepted as rational. We could argue that this is precisely what Adorno means when he speaks of how the objective course of history asserts itself *over* and, at the same time, *through* human beings. *Over* them because it operates out of their reach, lords over them and can turn against them; and *through* them insofar as mere individual interest leaves unscathed the objective forces that perpetuate this destitution, thus making history "for the most part [as] something that is done to people" (Adorno, 2008b, p. 9, pp. 26-27). Hence, we should ask whether the "mythic fear" that we have associated with enlightenment, the fear of non-identity and

indissolubility, also permeates the inner core of human beings, so thoroughly as to shackle them into a spellbound state in the face of existing structures. How are we then supposed to delineate the relationship between mythic fear and the logic of self-preservation? The passage recited below offers some very important clues, not only with respect to the relationship between self-preservation and mythic fear, but also vis-à-vis the role they play for the systematization of progressive history by the discourse of enlightenment:

> The mythic terror feared by the Enlightenment accords with myth. Enlightenment discerns it not merely in unclarified concepts and words . . . but in any human assertion that has no place in the ultimate context of self-preservation . . . The self (which, according to the methodical extirpation of all natural resides because they are mythological, must no longer be either body or blood, or soul, or even the natural I), once sublimated into the transcendental or logical subject, would form the reference point of reason, of the determinative instance of action. *Whoever resigns himself to life without any rational reference to self-preservation would, according to the Enlightenment regress to prehistory.* [emphasis added](Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 29).

The threat of regression to prehistory reveals how civilization makes a categorical demarcation between itself and pure natural existence and any implication of such regression suffices to fill with dread the very self that had estranged itself with so huge an effort from nature (Whitebook, 1995, pp. 19-24). In a well-known section focusing on Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens, Adorno elaborates precisely on this effort in order to bring into foreground how the ratio of survival depends on the concession of one's own defeat. Binding oneself to the mast of his voyaging ship and plugging the ears of his crew in order to let them do their duty unhampered, Odysseus succeeds in resisting the alluring voices of the Sirens – an act of self-renunciation as much as an archetypical instantiation of the logic of self-preservation. The enticement of the Sirens, in Adorno's view, emanated from the

magnetic pull of the past, and by evoking the irresistible suggestion of pleasure and reconciliation with past, it promised to wrest away Odysseus and his crew from the arduous practicalities of his journey. Odysseus' forbearance and his careful stratagem not only saves him from the disintegration of his self and imminent death, but also marks the definitive demarcation of prehistory from civilization, of deception form reality. Obedience, self-control and labor become the cardinal features of civilization while over them the promise of human happiness and fulfillment "shines forth perpetually – but only as illusive appearance, as devitalized beauty" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, pp. 32-33).

I shall investigate in detail the implications of the critique of the logic of self-preservation at the last section of this chapter, while elaborating on Adorno's theorization of utopia. At this point, it is important to reiterate that Adorno's critique of this logic could not be extricated from the critique of *false* Enlightenment, or of Enlightenment's recoil into myth. According to Finney (2008), who undertakes the daunting task of comparing Walter Benjamin's interpretation of myth with Adorno's critique of progress, at the heart of Adorno's project lies the disclosure of mythic violence which is distinguished not only by its cyclicality and repetitive nature but also by the fact that it "imposes itself upon human existence as that which governs and delimits potentiality" (p. 98). In a similar vein, Benjamin (1979) construes mythic violence to be "power over mere life for its own sake", detecting it in the totality of judicio-legal mechanisms that are geared towards the administration and organization of human life (p. 151). In Finney's view, Benjamin’s particular emphasis on “mere life” and its strict demarcation from “all life”, a term denoting the entirety of human life with its experiential and existential features redeemed from the hold of mythic violence, had a profound impact on the formation of Adorno's

philosophy (Finney, 2008, p. 99). Yet unlike in Giorgio Agamben (who has chosen to tap into this conceptual difference between "mere life" and "all life" by stressing on its Aristotelian origins), Adorno channeled this input unto a different terrain, where the abandoned promise of human happiness is interlaced with the problem of withered/restricted experience in modern society.

Withered/restricted experience characterizes the form of modern life which is, under the unique historical conditions of mythology, divested of the capacity of initiating something new and is therefore deprived of both history and historical existence. Similarly, the "recovery of experience" is supposed to vitalize the very history that has been reduced to a frozen agglomerate under the seemingly insuperable objective conditions in mythology. In militating against the immobilization and paralysis of the potential of newness which constitutes the essence of history, Adorno seems to lay emphasis upon what Hegel called the "finite-teleological standpoint" of human beings, that is, "the finite goals of finite, spatially and temporally limited men limited areas of the natural and social world" (Schmidt, 2014, p. 36). Although this aspect of Adorno's philosophy has received considerable attention among commentators, it was the rich work and exposition of Roger Foster (2007) which has brilliantly demonstrated that Adorno's project above all was the reawakening of "spiritual experience" (*geistige Erfahrung*) against the form of experience that was the legacy of the historical process Max Weber identified as disenchantment. Although it is impossible here to dwell on Foster's detailed analysis of Max Weber, it is reasonable to assert that Foster's general outline and the nature of his arguments overlap with the analysis of myth we have been carrying out. This is especially the case where Foster construes, *inter alia*, the process of disenchantment to be resulting in the preponderance of the universal over the particular. Distorted by

the classificatory operation of concepts, the particular comes to be a mere instance of universal property, irrevocably deprived of its irregular singularity (Foster, 2007, p. 3). In this regard, Foster's perspective also converges with the thesis of Bernstein (2001), who has asserted that while Adorno invested much attention on the questions of reason and rationality, it was the nature and status of concepts, hence the myriad directions and tendencies of the conceptual capacity of human beings, which had deeply intrigued him (p. 3). Once conceptual cogitation, which functions in tandem with instrumental rationality, is pulled out of the context of human life and interests that invests the world with experiential significance, it transforms, in the words of Foster, into "pure classification" (*pure* classification in the sense of becoming an end unto itself) (Foster, 2007, p. 14). Adorno interprets this process to result in the "hollowing out of meaning from social practice", leading to an increasing sense of anomie where the historically mediated nature of things confront people as abstract categories devoid of any tangible meaning (Foster, 2007, p. 14). Hence, Adorno's plea for reawakening "spiritual experience" develops out of his simultaneous castigation of an exclusively classificatory utilization of concepts, which propels the logic of identitarian thinking and spreads it across the vast surface of modern life:

> In spiritual experience, the particular is directly the *expression* of a universal, not an instantiation of a universal property. In other words, the universal is not detachable from the particular as a repeatable property because it is the figure formed by the deciphering of the contextual significance of its elements . . . The point is not to dispense with classificatory knowing. Adorno's intention is rather to circumscribe it. Adorno wants to demarcate classification as part of a far broader notion of philosophical understanding that encompasses a richer view of cognitively significant experience. In this richer view, the particular does not figure solely as a replaceable item, an instance of something it has in common with other things. Each thing, rather, forms legible surface, from which a universal uniquely and materially tied to the thing is constructed. The universal is reflected in it, as the unique configuration formed by its manifold relations to other things. (Foster, 2007, p. 3)

Adorno's diagnosis of withered/restricted experience in modern life simultaneously discloses a macrological picture. Through the damaged life of each particular and each stigma signifying the violence inflicted by an irrational totality, we arrive piecemeal to the *essence* of mythology. Elsewhere, when Bernstein noted that the self-defeating character of enlightened reason stems from its glorification of itself as free and self-determining in relation to the very world it distanced itself from, he was actually alluding to the very problematique that we have been trying to expound (Bernstein, 2001, p. 36). It is "spiritual experience" (or in Bernstein's lexicon: "ethical experience") which will encompass a richer view of cognitively significant experience that will militate against the *distance* that marks the phenomenological structuration of mythology. Yet for Adorno, the formulation of the question of this *distance between subject and object,* between the impoverished particulars and totality, is just as determining as the impetus that initially yearns for reconciliation. It is due to this aspect of Adorno's approach that his method of *Naturgeschichte* evolves out of his diatribes with the solutions offered by neo-ontology. The latter propagates only an *apparent* solution to the problem of the reconciliation of nature and history, Adorno argues, to the extent that it not only clings to the classical thesis of identity of subject and object but also leaves unscathed the historical-objective conditions, takes them for granted and is therefore bound to remain in sinister complicity with them (Adorno, 1984, p. 115).[116]

[116] What Adorno problematizes in modern philosophy, and especially in neo-ontology, is the disappearance of the Platonic tension between what is empirical, dynamic or history and that which is transcendental, static and eternal: In philosophical tradition, this tension has never faded away and thus the question of "meaning" has generally appeared negatively, in the form of tapping into the constantly recurring problems and burdens marking worldly existence. With neo-ontology, Adorno argues, "the existing itself becomes meaning and a grounding of being beyond history is replaced by a project (*Entwurf*) of being as historicity" (Adorno, 1984, p. 113). Hence, this project postulates that "the historical being [which has] been subsumed by the subjective category of historicity is supposed to be identical with history. Being is to conform to the categories with which historicity stamps it'. (Adorno, 1984, p. 116). It is striking that Adorno perceptively discerns in this emphasis on the project (*Entwurf*) of *Dasein* the signs of subtle conformism, a trepidation which indeed proved to be well-

For Adorno, the *concrete* unity of nature and history amounts to the interpretation of the existing itself in its concrete inner-historical definition. It surmounts idealism to the extent that it requires the subject as its point of inception and not as its *terminus ad quem*, and its intention above all is to snatch the subject from the clasp of the logic of self-preservation. Indeed, the method of *Naturgeschichte* aims to *eject* the particular from the totality of myth, rather than accommodating it to the existing suffering through the jargon of *project* (*Entwurf*). In Adorno's terms, any chance of reconciliatory solution depends on whether it is possible "to comprehend the historical being in its most extreme historical determinacy, where it is most historical, as natural being, or if it were possible to comprehend nature as an historical being where it seems to rest most deeply in itself as nature" (Adorno, 1984, p. 117). The significance of this radical historicization resides in placing the subject at the centre of a process which requires a unique mode of engagement with reality, an experience of shock or wonder (*θαυμάζειν*) that will uproot the entrenched and pregiven categories of understanding (Adorno, 1984, p. 117). This experience of shock resonates with what Foster (2007) intends to signify by the rediscovery of "spiritual experience". This is evident, for example, in his claim that the rediscovery of the cognitive role of the experiencing subject is supposed to be an "awareness of scientific rationalism about itself in its self-reflection" (Foster, 2007, p. 10). More importantly, it has to reveal scientific rationalism to be a form of experience premised on the mutilation of experience, a perspective which would truncate the distance between nature and human beings,

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founded given Heidegger's subsequent celebration of Nazis. In the last section, we will address how Adorno diverged from Heidegger by envisaging reconciliation to take place not in the form of a turn towards being but by emphasizing the contradiction between the objective tendency of history and the living particular.

enabling the latter to discern themselves in nature *via* shared history, through the experience of suffering and domination.

Here, of course, some substantial questions related to the idea of progress finally come into view. Should we not abandon the notion of progress altogether, given that spiritual experience, as a genuine effort of emancipation from myth, heralds the possibility of an unprecedented epoch of reconciliation? Is this epoch not supposed to symbolize a radical break, a quasi-messianic interruption that will simultaneously nullify the impression of continuous improvement of technical mastery and rationality? In response to these questions, it is almost inevitable that we reiterate our earlier point regarding the dialectical composition of the idea of progress. For Adorno, the apparent complicity of the concept of progress with *myth* could not justify its wholesale negation. Otherwise, this negation would have replicated the error of idealism in the sense of demarcating cognitive activity from the world of finitude and transience, and subsequently assumed reconciliation to take place in an extra-historical, almost mystical dimension. Hence, it is an inner-historical engagement with the concept of progress that can achieve what Foster touts as the task of philosophy *qua* spiritual experience. The revelation of the experiential substance of hollowed out concepts, which can be unearthed by "bringing the concepts to express the loss of experience that makes them work as disenchanted concepts" (Foster, 2007, p. 15). In the following section, I will endeavor to pinpoint precisely this experience that has long been quelled under the mythological semblance of progress, and will take the opportunity to inquire whether Adorno's critique of the concept of progress really congeals into a bleak interpretation of history, as some of his commentators adjudicated. For this purpose, I am planning to concentrate on Adorno's problematization of Auguste Comte's understanding of

progress, digging deeper into his critique of Comte's analytical bifurcation of the concept of society into two forces – static and dynamic.

4.2 The *end* of progress as progress

In the first part of this chapter, I brought into the foreground a specific statement of Adorno to serve as the keystone of this chapter: "Progress only comes about at the point when it comes to an end". Given our discussion so far, it is fairly plausible to state that what Adorno intended by the "end" of progress was the abrogation of a specific conceptualization of progress, the end of progress *qua* concept, rather than its wholesale negation. Indeed, if the latter had been the case, this would have implied a controversial ban on the very act of thinking itself. Yet it is the task of philosophy *apropos* spiritual experience, which has to unearth and lay bare the sedimented rational and logical content of concepts. Rejecting the idea of progress *in toto*, on the pretext of absent empirical validations and confirmations, is not so different from backsliding to the affirmation of myth, since it takes for granted its particular representation of reality. Nonetheless, it has to be granted that some of Adorno's heated and polemical remarks may appear outrageously antithetical to our argument. Such is the case with the often-cited apocalyptic statement drawn from *Negative Dialectics*: "No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb" (Adorno, 1973, p. 320). Notwithstanding the definitive tone of Adorno, it is astonishing to stumble across a passage Adorno had written only four years earlier, possibly during the drafting process of the very same book. Chiding those who contemptuously cast away the idea of progress and cling tightly to the existing order of things, he writes as follows:

> The side of the terrible is taken with self-righteous profundity, and the idea of progress is slandered according to the formula: whatever miscarries for human beings is ontologically refused them; in the name of their finitude and mortality it is said to be their duty to make both their own. It would be sober to reply to this false reverence that, although the progress from the slingshot to the megaton bomb is satanic laughter, not until the age of the bomb can a situation be envisaged in which all violence disappears. (Adorno, 1983-84, p. 64)

Here, Adorno clarifies just as definitively that the looming danger of total annihilation is dialectically related to the forethought of universal reconciliation. The importance of this statement resides, above all, in ascertaining that the imminence of global catastrophe, which threatens each and every human being, *concretizes* for the first time the possibility of emancipation from universal irrational totality. Adorno's determination to tackle with the idea of progress *via* the particulars, by focusing on the history of damaged nature as well as withered/restricted experience, aims to bring into expression the historical experience that underlies the concept of progress, that works as the *condicio sine qua non* of its conceivability. Although Adorno does not turn a blind eye to the miscarriage of progressive discourse that had dominated the political and cultural scene from the second half of the nineteenth century until the eruption of the Great War, he questions whether this failure necessarily legitimates the abandonment of deposited experience as well. What he strives to get hold of through the critique of progress will be more comprehensible in light of the following lecture notes extracted from *History and Freedom*:

> Even if the murder of millions could be described as an exception and not the expression of a trend (the atom bomb), any appeal to the idea of progress would seem absurd given the scale of the catastrophe.*
>
> [Interpolation] *Problem: what is the relation of progress to the *individual* – a question brushed aside by the philosophy of history. (Adorno, 2008b, p. 4)

The fact that Adorno interpolates *this* question, among many other questions that could have been formulated in light of the so-called absurdity of appeal to the idea of progress, should not be seen as mere coincidence and therefore has to be treated with utmost care. Adorno's emphasis on the relation of progress to the *individual* is striking to the extent that he diverges from that customary interpretation according to which the relation of progress has to be formulated in relation to the species-being of human beings, i.e. humanity. Expressing his endorsement of Walter Benjamin's polemic against the idea of progress in *On the Concept of History*, Adorno (1983-84) argues that to construct the telos of progress by hypostatizing its ontological carrier – humanity – can only proceed by setting aside the fact that humanity is still an ideal to be achieved (pp. 56-57). Repudiating this inherent tendency, he argues that it is progress itself which "would produce humanity itself, the perspective for which is opened in the face of extinction" (p. 57).

Sharing Benjamin's deep-seated frustrations, Adorno's criticism is directed at the proponents of scientific socialism and social democratic tradition, whose delimited conception of progress as mere improvement in the fields of technology, human skills and knowledge (the progress of technical rationality), paved the way for a perspective that was essentially complicit with the bourgeois order of things (Adorno, 2008b, pp. 145-146). In Adorno's view, the de-historicization of labor into man's "ontological" condition (according to Martin Jay, the "apotheosis" of labor) was one of the problems ensuing from such a limited conception of progress, not only sealing the supremacy of "humanity" over nature, but also forfeiting the question of the fate of nature in a society feverishly fixated on production (Jay, 1972, pp. 294-295). In having witnessed the evolution of Soviet communism into one gigantic agglomerate of bureaucratic-militaristic powerhouse, Adorno judged the

problem to be deeper and more endemic than one-dimensional analyses overstressing the discontents of capitalist relations of production. Just as in capitalist societies, the Soviet communist system relied on the efficient operation of technological and economic machinery, for which the efficient appropriation of human "resources" and exploitation of nature was of equally paramount importance. While the emancipatory function of reason spurred revolution and precipitated the downfall of the Tsarist regime, it was not long before these revolutionary ideals had come to be seen as superfluous by the logic of administration and instrumental rationality (Friedman, 1986, p. 187; Buchwalter, 1987, p. 300). In Adorno's eyes, these developments already signified the transformation of Russia into a "kingdom of necessity", a grim state of affairs exacerbated as the Soviet dialectical materialism idealized them as the conditions of the "kingdom of freedom" (Adorno, 2008b, p. 118). Weber's premonitions concerning the fate of instrumental rationality were proven to be sound, Adorno argued, for what had started as a unique Western phenomenon was now engulfing the entire world, tearing town cultural barriers and traditional values one after another.[117]

Certainly, the case of Russia was but only a single example in a rich list of occidental societies that were partaking in the race of technology. It adopted the same concrete technical means of domination imposed on nature in the name of economic efficiency, and dispensed with its critical, emancipatory spirit entirely as soon as it granted that the exploitation of human life was an inevitable must for the

[117] According to Adorno, the universal character of instrumental rationality was evincing that Spencer's "morphological hypothesis" lacked empirical verification. The so-called "soul" of particular civilizations were, in truth, powerless to withhold the irresistible power of rationalization and were unable to thwart the rate at which societies were succumbing to the dictates of technological exigencies. Hence Adorno (2008b) writes: "The Russians have become the Americans' keenest competitors in the most modern branches of technology. You can see something of a convergence towards a kind of universal standard at the level of technical rationality, and this is particularly marked in countries which had previously been excluded from what Germans think of as the pull of universal history" (p. 14). For Adorno's critical analysis of Spengler's morphological hypothesis formulated in The *Decline of the West*, see: (Adorno, 1997).

sake of industrial proficiency. According to Adorno, however, the pervasiveness of instrumental rationality, its *universality* as it were, was not simply attesting to the reduction of the idea of progress to technical mastery or technological developments. More importantly, it was imbricating with the question of the relation of progress to the individual, insofar as the complex, large-scale administration of things and human life were taking place in isolation from and often at the expense of the latter. Hence, the question of instrumental rationality – and by extension the understanding of progress *qua* technological development – has to be fleshed out within the context of its *sociological* implications. By the term *sociology*, I am referring to the latent and unconcealed devices of power operative in its scientific as well as governmental dimensions. As Adorno (2000) states plainly, "in this demand for control over society which is latent in it, sociology is really nothing than an agency of control conforming to the technocratic ideal, but which is now being extended beyond the mere outward management of the production apparatus to penetrate the communal life of human beings and finally the consciousness and the unconscious of human beings" (p. 135).

Here, I find it highly convenient to tackle this issue through Adorno's engagement with Auguste Comte, and not simply because we have already analyzed the latter in the first chapter of our thesis. Instead, the form and content of Comte's sociological method carries *in nuce*, in a micrological fashion, those properties which Adorno ruthlessly criticizes in the institutions, procedures, calculations and tactics of modern constellations of power and security. In Adorno's view, Comte played a pioneering role by conferring on sociology an exclusively scientific quality, and in so doing he wanted to dismantle the relationship between philosophy and its perennial query of ideal society (Adorno, 2000, p. 54). What society *ought to be* was no longer

supposed to be *the* question. Rather, the sociologist had to direct his attention on the observable phenomena, on the things as they stand, to uncover the laws that determine the relations of succession and resemblance between them within the context of the present *tel quel* – in reality *as it is*. According to Adorno (2000), notwithstanding obvious modifications and transformations in the method of social sciences, this basic premise operates behind an array of peddled ideas like practicality, pragmatism, and data-oriented research (p. 55). To insist on the possibility of changing the order of things is dismissed as "disguised theology", or even worse, such speculations are adjudged to be infested with the foul "chimerical air" of metaphysics. With the consecration of reality, Adorno exclaims, any theoretical argument "which earlier was described as utopian . . . is now regarded as old-fashioned, retarded, mere superstition" (Adorno, 2000, p. 45).

On the other hand, it does not seem implausible to suggest that Adorno's criticism of Comte springs less from this methodological/disciplinary genealogy of positivism than from his normative conception of society as a seamless totality. As a matter of fact, Adorno (2000) argues quite explicitly that Comte has not lost his relevance precisely because his conception of society valorized the very same principles that are still declared as supreme virtues by our existing society – social usefulness and productive work (p. 55). Anticipating Foucault's thesis in *Discipline and Punish*, Adorno notes that this dual emphasis on duty and productivity emerged in tandem with the necessity of maintaining sociological control over the masses. The knowledge of society proved to be immensely functional for the purpose of preserving and upgrading the established system. In a manner that concurs with the general argument of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno (2000) complains

unequivocally that "in this conception of a control by sociology, rationalization has taken the place of rationality" (pp. 134-135).

As we have seen in the first section, the impoverishment of rationality against rationalization keeps even pace with the process Adorno designated as Enlightenment's recoil into mythology. Thus, it is fairly plausible to surmise that in Adorno's view, the control of society as well as the spirit of conformity it endeavored to generate was intricately tied with this process. This argument gains credibility once recollected that Comte's model of the Positive state primarily served to curb the social contradictions that had been marring the stability of French society in the aftermath of the *ancien régime.* Propagating a social totality in which the differences between revolutionary utopians and counter-revolutionary royalists would finally be reconciled, Comte hailed his model as a therapeutic device that would finally bring about a much-needed *esprit d'ensemble*. Certainly, Adorno was aware that the spirit of togetherness/union which Comte so fanatically yearned for was an *abstract* unity, in some respects reminiscent of too many conservatives who were deeply worried by the emergence of new social and economic threats surfacing by the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Therefore, it should be pointed out that unless a close engagement in the deeper philosophical reasons behind Adorno's consistent emphasis on Comte is carried out, there is this unavoidable risk of missing the gist of Adorno's problematization. As will be seen shortly, getting hold of this essence is an important step in solving the riddle-quality of progress, to insulate and bring into foreground the kernel of truth still existent even when the concept of progress recoils into myth.

Unlike many commentators and thinkers of his day, Comte displayed unmistakable acumen in noticing that the orderly organization of society was impossible to be attained by flouting the unique social forces that had been emerging

and developing during the course of the nineteenth century. This was significant to the extent that, while famous French conservative thinkers such as Joseph de Maistre or Louise de Bonald correlated the plight of societal disorder with the catastrophic displacement of traditional society and monarchy, Comte was at the very least sympathetic to the development of industry and technical advancements and had come to realize the indispensability of social progress for any sensible and commonsensical institution of order. As Adorno (2000) correctly points out, Comte was ultimately an heir of bourgeois emancipation, and this made him particularly receptive to the fact that it was the bourgeois society which was being driven beyond itself in the face of grave economic and social predicaments (pp. 8-9). Yet for comprehending what impelled him as an heir of bourgeois society into playing an apologetic role on behalf of the bourgeoisie (Adorno, 2000, p. 55), the analysis has to pivot around Comte's unique systematization of the relationship between progress and order. This requires a close scrutiny of the dialectical interaction between the so-called dynamic and static laws of society respectively, which will help me to uncover and trace the conceptual history of progress and pave the way for its reinterpretation within the context of spiritual experience (*geistige Erfahrung*).

Closely examining Adorno's ideas on the static and dynamic categories of society is possible thanks to a relatively overlooked article originally published in 1961. It is hardly an exaggeration to note that at the centre of Adorno's attention lies Auguste Comte and the pitfalls of his syncretistic model, as the following passage intimates:

> Comte was the first to outline a program for turning sociology into a special discipline, for making it academically independent, and for converting it into a systematic and classificatory science. It is well known that he demanded that, "in sociology we must. . . make a sharp distinction, in the case of each

> political unit, between the study of the fundamental conditions of the existence of society, and the study of the fundamental laws governing the continued motion of the social body. (Adorno, 1961, p. 29)

In Adorno's view (1961), this peremptory classificatory model is based upon a fixed dualistic structure. On the one hand, there are social phenomena "reduced to primordial human needs and are assumed to fall under static categories and obey static laws; whereas modifications of these basic phenomena, that is, social forms created by special kinds of socialization, are thought to be dynamic" (p. 30). Designating the two universal principles of society – order and progress –, I showed in the first chapter how Comte's categorial demarcation actually helped him to unify these two isolated laws of society in the *abstract* plane of the Positive state. Thus, Adorno's critique could be said to be spurred precisely because of Comte's dogged reluctance in addressing the dialectical relationship between the static and dynamic categories. In other words, the separation of primordial human needs, which are supposed to be determined by nature, from history yields upon Comte's classificatory science a highly precarious foundation. Incapable of developing a critical self-reflexivity over the legitimacy of such division, Comte fails to acknowledge that needs are not simply determined by nature, but are themselves mediated historically owing to the fact that material factors such as the general state of production, its conditions and capacity also play a role in shaping and constantly modifying them (Adorno, 1961, p. 32). It is perhaps at this point than in others where Adorno (1961) elucidates in the most concise terms the affinity of Comtean positivism with the capitalist-bourgeois society: "To reduce the laws of our capitalist society without qualification to human needs, and to divide these laws according to these needs into static and dynamic ones, would be to give undue prominence to the satisfaction of needs which is nowadays a mere by-product of our economic interests" (p. 32).

It has to be underlined that while lashing out against the identification of social laws with human needs, Adorno's intention is not to be construed as an unsympathetic trivialization of the ongoing calamities arising from economic and social suffering. Rather, the "undue prominence" given to the satisfaction of needs is deemed problematical insofar as their mediation by the distinctive rules and interests of capitalist society is covered up to the point where they are simply taken for granted. While the historicality of needs is skated over, the principle of self-satisfaction alone becomes the credible compass of existence, ultimately evolving into a universalized logic of self-preservation dinned into individuals as the sole virtue of life. It is also with this step that the task of sociology is simply turned into the evaluation, categorization and manipulation of phenomena out there in the objective world, which are ready to be apprehended in their immediacy. Such a view contrasts irreconcilably with Adorno's conviction for whom the task of sociology *ought* to be the comprehension of incomprehensible which could be achieved, to a certain extent, by endeavoring to elucidate the advance of human beings into the inhuman (Adorno, 1970, p. 147). With Comte's sociology, this emancipatory potential of sociology is brushed under the carpet, as it were, for by presupposing the intelligibility of the world through these laws alone, the subject is assumed to be capable of penetrating the objectivity of society and grasp its essence (Adorno, 2000, pp. 137-138). The following statement articulated by Adorno applies with equal precision to the state of sociology under question: "In a mockery of all the hopes of philosophy, subject and object have attained ultimate reconciliation. The process is fed by the fact that men owe their life to what is being done to them." (Adorno, 1970, pp. 152-153).

Let us raise a number of questions before we proceed with our analysis: How does the disappearance of this historical dimension, through which the self-satisfaction of needs is embedded in the standing order of things, affect the relationship between the fundamental conditions of the existing society and the laws governing the motion of the social body? What does this process as a whole entail for the idea of progress? Is it feasible to speak of a conceptual transformation of progress in light of Comte's syncretistic systemology and his attempts to harmonize progress with the standing order of things? Last but not the least: Could this investigation actually pave the way for a unique conception of progress extricated from the field of mythology? In one of his unmistakably Hegelian moments, Adorno contends that the hypostatization of this categorial demarcation is bound to miscarry insofar as every "is", in its function as an indexical used to designate the existing state of things, contains an "is not", precisely because every "is" has an incorrigibly dynamic structure, i.e. everything that *is*, by virtue of existing, is something *that has become* (Adorno, 1961, p. 40).[118] For Adorno, the standing order of things contained as they are in the present, *hic et nunc*, will necessarily become something other than what they are due to the transience and ephemerality of things existing in time. It was precisely this radically corrosive or transformative force of time which Comte was aiming to arrest through his syncretistic system, by offering a unified and homogeneous social body (*l'esprit d'ensemble*) that could appropriate and harness history for the preservation of *status quo*. Yet Adorno's retort taps into the fact that the principle of dynamics negates the unifying and circumscribing tendencies of system-building, inasmuch as its inexhaustible futurity always presumes the possible

[118] For the difference between the Hegelian-Adornoian and Nietzschean concept of becoming, see fn. 96.

emergence of something new, a phenomenon that will not be explicable by a predetermined set of systematic tools (Adorno, 1973, p. 22).

Now, it was precisely this tension existing between the established order of things and its ultimately transitory nature, which Comte spent much effort to mitigate and domesticate for the sake of generating a social totality brought together under the Positive State. Nor should it be forgotten that according to Adorno (1961), this moment attests to the ideological standpoint of Comte, inasmuch as it testifies to the pacification of those forces that might have later precipitated the end of this precarious unity of society (p. 38). The tension in question is *suspended*, and this means, at the same time, that thinking crumbles in a self-destructing fashion before the very categories it had itself put into operation. As Adorno argues (1961) at one point, Comte's syncretistic model comes to overlap, rather ironically, with what he avowedly sought to distance himself from, namely, the standard metaphysical standpoint in which "dynamic elements are downgraded to the status of the accidental and viewed as mere embellishment of main categories" (p. 30). The significance of this argument derives from the fact that Adorno discerns a symptomatic affinity between this persisting metaphysical trope and the uncritical espousal of existing conditions, of reality *tel quel*. Addressing the subordinate status ascribed to dynamic and historical elements in the interpretation of phenomena, he claims the following:

> It is a well-known fact . . . that we are tempted to glorify metaphysically the static elements, and, in particular, the institutions, because of their alleged eternity, and to disparage, as changeable and accidental, the dynamic elements, and, thereby, that which gives concrete content to social change. Anyone who yields to this temptation will have that philosophical tradition behind him which identifies the essential with the permanent, and the merely phenomenal with the transitory. (Adorno, 1961, pp. 30-31)

In hindsight, there are strong indications in Adorno's elaboration that the preponderance of static elements over the dynamic ignites the process we have identified as the recoil of Enlightenment into mythology. Adorno (1961) notes over and over again that without historical consciousness, and without the mnemonic capacity of reason which plays a crucial role in providing insight into the transience of natural and historical phenomena, the consolidation of static forces will continue unhampered until a certain point, after which it will eventually rush towards its own destruction (p. 46). Contrary to Comte, Adorno argues that the valorization of static conditions cannot prevent or curb the so-called destructive tendencies in society, the actual contradictions that dynamically mould its contents, however intensive the efforts may be to render them invisible and passive. This is because "static conditions produce, by reason of their immobility, the symptoms of paralysis which precede the ruin of the static order, especially where the static order is surrounded by a world of change" (Adorno, 1961, p. 36).

I have perhaps given the impression of belaboring the point, yet this tension between the static and dynamic elements is hardly peripheral to the question at hand. Without this discussion, it will hardly be possible to fathom Adorno's intention in holding that the possibility of progress depends on its end. The "end" of progress connotes the end of progress *qua* concept insofar what is indicated by its "end" is the negation of the way in which the concept of progress is presumed to be an inherent law of society. Furthermore, the "end" of progress is tantamount to the extrication of concept from its mythological garment, and thereby taps into its potentially emancipatory function against the identitarian universe of instrumental rationality. In the last section, I will have the opportunity to explain in detail how this emancipatory function may crystallize, but suffice it to say for now that the *temporality* of progress

itself is structurated in such a way that the hope of reconciliation does not cease to linger, even when it is in purported unity with the principle of order. This means that the futurity of progress, which is encapsulated most conspicuously in the prefix *pro-*, cannot be entirely effaced from its field of signification. As Adorno underlines, the temporality of progress puts in with the empirical world, in the sense that *as concept* it presupposes this world to be surrounded by change. Otherwise, the wickedness of the world had to be eternalized in thought, and the Creation would have been regarded as the work of some Gnostic demon (Adorno, 1983-84, p. 58). The logical conclusion of this argument is twofold. First, progress distinguishes itself from the temporality of salvation on account of projecting to the future the promise of reconciliation. It is neither supra-historical nor does it seek to transcend the temporal continuum as in traditional Christian theology. This point is obvious enough and had already been elaborated in detail before Adorno. What confers on Adorno's interpretation of progress its originality is rather the mode in which he vehemently opposed the identification of history with progress. Comte's formalization of progress, which exists by virtue of being dovetailed with the order of capitalist society, perpetuates precisely this law of identity and in seeking to consecrate the standing system, he winds up arresting or covering up the radical futurity of the concept. By taking progress as an inherent law of society, by reducing it to an ontological property, Comte was actually suppressing these elements of emancipation and reconciliation with which the idea of progress had formed a specific historical constellation, at least prior to the dissolution of *ancien régime*. Shorn of this transformative impetus, progress degenerates into an idol or an abstract ideal which is refuted at the same time by the persisting evil in the world (Adorno, 1983-84, pp. 58-59).

Against this mythological conception of progress, Adorno puts forward the necessity of making an examination that will uncover the mediatedness of the concept of progress. This means, on the one hand, that the idea of progress could not have been conceivable in the first place without the facticity of social development. Modern pharmaceutics, to give an example, proves to be an undeniable improvement over traditional medicine, not simply with respect to efficiency and applicability but also on account of the benefits and services it provides to society *en masse*. And it is precisely this technological development and the respective melioration of social conditions, which enables the present to be differentiated from the past, often in accompaniment with the glorification of the former vis-à-vis the latter. By the same token, it is expected that future will hold more in store for the betterment of human species, an anticipation of the *promesse du bonheur*, which confers on the concept of progress its ineradicable futurity. Hence, reflecting on the mediatedness of the concept by the facticity of social development, Adorno (1983-84) accordingly notes that "if one sought, *mere philosophico*, to keep pure the idea of progress, to spin it out of the essence of time, then it would have no content at all" (p. 59). What Adorno intends to prove here can be grasped more lucidly if it is recollected in what ways groundbreaking researches in the field of biology redounded to and molded Comte's ideas on order and progress; and how he himself aspired to produce a scientific picture of society that would be level pegging with the prestigious status of natural sciences. In other words, the concept of progress attests the very facticity of social development, in the sense that its conceivability as such could be construed as the recognition and affirmation of the empirical and historical tangibility of progress.

Nonetheless, Adorno interjects that many a thinker pondering the nature of progress, including Comte himself, have chosen to dwell exclusively on the principle

of facticity or within the context of the movement of society. According to this viewpoint, progress should be identical to society insofar as it is only through the motion of society that progress is actualized, and *vice versa*, the structure of society could not have been preserved without this ameliorative and remedial function immanent to its formation. The worst outcome of this logic of identity, Adorno points out trenchantly, is nothing other than the repression of the concept's mediation by philosophy. Total immanence, which takes its cue exclusively from the realm of facticity, obscures the transcendent layer that has hitherto mediated the concept of progress (Adorno, 1983-84, p. 59). Indeed, the reduction of progress to factual reality and the concomitant deprivation of philosophy ends up conflicting, irreconcilably, with the essential purpose of Enlightenment, for which progress meant above all the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy. Adorno's following statement, which has to be recited at length, reveals that any unilateral and non-dialectical conception of progress – either through pure philosophy or in heed of mere facticity – is bound to fail catastrophically:

> Progress is not absorbed into society, and is not identical to society; as it is, society is at times the opposite of progress. Any philosophy worthy of its name was at the same time a doctrine of society; ever since philosophy surrendered without protest to social power, only then did it have to take care to separate itself from society. The purity into which it retreated is the bad conscience of its impurity - its complicity with the world. The concept of progress is philosophical in that it contradicts the movement of society while at the same articulating it. Social in origin, the concept of progress requires critical confrontation with real society. The moment of redemption, however secularized, cannot be erased from it. *The irreducibility of the concept to either facticity or the idea, suggests its own contradiction. For what is enlightening about it, the reconciliation with nature by calming its horror, is sibling to the enlightened moment of the domination of nature.* [emphasis added] (Adorno, 1983-84, pp. 59-60)

Here, the last part of the statement I have italicized could be associated with our earlier remarks regarding the potential dangers of instrumental *ratio*, and especially the *daemon* of identity which comes into view unless the self-enclosed totality and potential immanentism of reason is constantly held in check. For Adorno, the irreducibility of the concept to either facticity or the idea does not signify the haphazardness and arbitrariness of progress *qua* concept, but rather connotes its *truth*-content precisely because it functions as a mirror image reflecting the radical distortedness of social reality. In other words, the concept of progress will not be able to relate to the existing reality, nor will it be able to capture the essence of society without this very contradictoriness in question. Thus, when Adorno refers to the enlightened moment of the domination of nature as the *sibling* of reconciliatory reason, he does not mean that there are two antagonistic forces radically at odds with one another. Metaphorically speaking, the dominative aspect of reason is not to be conceived as a *doppelgänger*, as an entity which ruthlessly subordinates and masters nature *despite* and *against* the efforts of its benignant, reconciliatory other. One *moment* is sibling to the other only dialectically, which is to say that once thinking falls short of reflecting over its categories, it starts to be deprived of its reconciliatory potential and becomes complicit with reality *tel quel*.

In order to ward off this threat, the identification of reason with reality, what has bestowed upon the concept of progress its contradictory feature has to be accentuated rigorously. History proves that "every progress made by civilization has renewed together with domination that prospect of its removal" (Adorno &Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 40). Nonetheless, this prospect has not been fulfilled, and it is the tragic aspect of human history which, upon acute examination, reveals disconcertingly that suffering has not lessened in proportion to the growth of the

means for its abrogation. According to Adorno, it is precisely this failure of Enlightenment which shines forth so tragically with the concept of progress; and at the same time, it should be through the *critique* of its eventual congealment into myth that the unacknowledged and repressed *truth* of Enlightenment, its universal and categorical rejection of domination, can be revealed (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 40). Hence, progress *qua* myth pertains to the one-dimensional process through which reason seeks to differentiate itself from nature. In aiming to establish control over external and internal nature, it nips in the bud the very potential of reconciliation instigated by dynamic forces, distancing humankind from nature and pitting men against each other by exalting the logic of self-preservation into an invariant. Adorno sums up the corrosive effects this one-dimensionality as follows:

> By reducing the many to the one - by making everything in nature and society conform to the kind of reason it seeks to enthrone over nature - the dynamic turns into its very opposite: that which always the same, the static . . . In aiming at identity, the dynamic contracts, as it were, to autocracy. If it were to expand instead, it would bring about the gradual rise of diversity, which has been oppressed so far, or possibly liquated, to a position of equality. (Adorno, 1961, p. 47)

In light of our discussion so far, it will not be far-fetched to surmise that Adorno's plea for the "end" of progress stands above all for the "end" of a specific conception of progress, in which the dynamic is alleviated and diminished so as to fit smoothly with the static – the established reigning forces and institutions of society. As a matter of fact, this plea carries such a weight that in some instances it exhorts Adorno to compare Hegel with Comte, a very interesting move, given that Hegel's philosophy was conceived by Adorno to be one of the great, if not the greatest and shrewdest, exposition of the preponderance of the dynamic-dialectical forces over

their conservative-static counterparts.[119] Notwithstanding their antipodal philosophies, with Hegel being a metaphysician and Comte a self-declared anti-metaphysician, they come to an agreement in matters related to the control and arrangement of society, as well as the exaltation of social totality at the expense of the particulars (Adorno, 2000, p. 130). There is an "unconscious agreement", claims Adorno, for despite the fundamentally differing premises of their theories, both were aspiring to a system which could well abate the "destructive" tendencies within society. How was this dynamic element to be held in check? This was the pressing question they were endeavoring to resolve (Adorno, 2000, p. 12). Theoretical differences notwithstanding, Comte and Hegel had taken the state as the basic, indispensable part of the solution: A smoothly functioning entity which, after certain extensions and improvements, will ensure that the existing order of things are preserved (Adorno, 2000, p. 12).[120]

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[119]Here, I am relying on a statement where Adorno (1993) claims that "the content of Hegel's philosophy is the notion that truth cannot be expressed as a fundamental principle of this kind, an ur-principle, but is the dynamic totality of all the propositions that can be generated from one another by virtue of their contradictions" (p. 4, pp. 11-12).For an extensive analysis of Adorno's reading of Hegel, see: (Bernstein, 2004, pp. 39-50). On the other hand, Adorno never shied away from admitting that it was Hegel's philosophy of history and specifically his exaltation of the Prussian state, which intended to ensure the "identity of the identity and non-identity", and by propagating the supremacy of the universal over the particular stamped out this element of contradiction characterizing the totality of history. The state was a tour de force of Hegelian philosophy, argues Adorno (1993), a *necessary tour de force* for "otherwise the dialectical principle would have extended beyond what exists and thereby negated the thesis of absolute identity - and it is only absolute in that it is realized; that is the core of Hegel's philosophy" (p. 30). As Baumann correctly points out in her brilliant article, Adorno's critique depended precisely on this notion of absolute identity and Hegel's positing of one self-identical whole which was intolerant towards the complexity and individuality of the particulars: "Hegel's system, because it claims the absolute, reconciled unity in the spirit, is exclusive, and thus fails to provide unity. The identification of everything with the whole is 'untrue', not corresponding to the true nature of the particular, and hence repressive, denying the true particular its due. The whole is thus different from the particular entities it is supposed to contain. What Adorno is claiming here is that Hegel's concrete universal is abstract" (Baumann, 2011, p. 85). For a recent study of Adorno's interpretation of Hegelian totality and universality, see: (Vouros, 2014).

[120]Elsewhere, Adorno (1961) makes a similar observation: "Just as Hegel expected the state to smooth out the contradictions in society and to subdue the forces that, according to his own theory, sought to go beyond bourgeois society, so Comte, who was less aware than Hegel and the less critical of the real weakness of human reason, looked for salvation to a kind of sociology which would bring social contradictions under concepts that were consistent with each other and with themselves . . . Neither Hegel nor Comte was aware that a society which was splitting up into factions might be transformed, by making use of the dynamic forces in it, into a higher form – a form worthier of human beings." (pp. 37-38).

At this point, I would like to turn back to our earlier discussion regarding the idea of spiritual experience (*geistige Erfahrung*) and discuss whether it may convey the truth-content of progress by salvaging what undergoes a frantic repression during the identification of dynamic elements with their static counterparts. It should be obvious by now that the dynamic forces of history and society are not to be stigmatized due to their susceptibility to ideological appropriation, and that for Adorno, they are also elements with which the possibility of genuine reconciliation and emancipation crystallizes, in theory as well as in praxis. Thus, it is certainly possible to inquire whether the concept of progress can be considered from a radically different perspective, one that takes heed of its experiential content or strives to disclose the sedimented experience which has molded and circumscribed it. Differently expressed, whether we can find in the nucleus of the concept of progress its historicality, the historically concrete hopes and aspirations of human beings, and whether we can disclose the concept's embeddedness in objective reality and grasp its raison d'articulation should be the questions guiding our way from this point onwards. In the first place, it is obligatory to note that the benighted conception of progress, which amounts to a modality of thinking complicit with myth, fosters or at any rate preserves what we have earlier identified as withered/restricted experience. It is usually the case that progress confronts the particulars as an alien and omnipotent force, and it is precisely due to its objective proximity, its looming above the head of the particulars that it confronts them as fate, as a force which cannot be reckoned with and ultimately weathers (*wedere*) them down. This seems to be the underlying reason why Foster (2007) defines spiritual experience as "the disclosure of suffering as the truth about experience": Spiritual experience is therefore supposed to work in such a fashion that it will unravel the monotonous reproduction of

"nonspiritual experience" regulating and characterizing our everyday cognitive activity (p. 23). Insofar as spiritual experience depends on revealing the mediatedness of experience that is taken a priori and immediate via the cultivation of a sense of self-awareness (*Selbstbesinnung*), it is assumed that the concept will be liberated as if "coming out of a spell", a spell that has strongly bound it to standing reality (Foster, 2007, p. 22; Finney, 2008, pp. 101-103). The following statement by Foster (2007) elucidates the intimate connection between suffering and truth:

> Adorno's assertion that suffering is a condition of truth, I suggest, must be understood as claiming that truth appears as the inverted reflection of the disclosure of the distortions of the present in critical self-reflection. As Adorno puts this in Minimia Moralia, the "light of redemption" appears only in its revelation of the present as alienated, with its "cracks and crevices" fully disclosed. To state this in more secular terms: Adorno is saying that the revelation of the present as not fully rational is what opens up a distance between our concepts and an unconstrained, unmutilated knowledge of the thing. (p. 24)

It cannot be overemphasized here that by this unmutilated knowledge of the thing, Adorno does not picture a direct, immediate access to the *esse* of the concept, that is, the substratum of progress uncorrupted by experience and lies eternally same in the realm of ideas. As Adorno (1973) indicates, the truth of the concept could only be recognized in the contradiction between what the thing in question is and what it is claimed to be (p. 167).[121] Hence, unless the concept is interpreted in conjunction with the historical layers accumulated in its movement through time and brought to express the suffering arising from this contradiction, its truth-content will not be

[121] For Adorno, this contradiction is glossed over due to the lack of attention towards the temporality of concepts, their essentially fleeting and transitory quality. It is not difficult to surmise that such a shortcoming especially manifests itself in the employment of concepts such as nature, society, nation, etc. Their contents are and will ever be subject to infinite change and modification, determined by the historical period in which they are articulated. Adorno (2001) expresses this problem as follows: "And what could be described as the greatest paralogism of all in metaphysics, and as the crucial fallacy in traditional philosophy as a whole, is nothing other than the detemporalization of the meaning of concepts, which is produced by the way in which concepts are formed, but is attributed as an inherent property to that which they subsume" (p. 71).

grasped properly (Blechman, 2008, p. 183). If we may elaborate on Adorno's analogy mentioned above, the cracks and crevices require precisely these rays of light travelling through them in order to be manifested, for it is only through their illumining effect that the irrationality of the present is presented to our attention. As for the reason why Adorno opts for so religious an idiom as the "light of redemption", we may surmise that he has in mind the same dialectical logic Marx highlighted roughly a century ago in *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. While Marx declared religion to be an opiate, he expressed this with the overlooked proviso that religion is at the same the expression of real distress and also the protest against real, that is, material and tangible distress (Marx, 1975, p. 175). Correspondingly, piercing through the cracks and crevices formed on the surface of the present, Adorno's evocation of these rays of light alludes to that same hope yearning for the suspension of the present. In the last section, I will address in detail what Adorno intends to convey by the principle of hope. Suffice it to state here that in Adorno's view, the essence of hope cannot be insulated from its entanglement with the dialectic of violence and suffering, such that the light of redemption always also conveys the real, concrete effects of the long and uninterrupted history of domination. In this respect, the following passage gives some substantial clues as to whether Adorno finds some sort of affinity between the essence of hope and the sedimented truth-content of progress:

> The philosophy of history repeats a process which occurred in Christianity: the goodness which in reality remains at the mercy of suffering is concealed as the force which determines the course of history and ultimately triumphs. It is idolized as the spirit of the world or as an immanent law. In this way, however, history is transformed directly into its opposite, and the idea itself (which wanted to arrest the logical course of things) is distorted . . . Christianity, idealism, and materialism, which in themselves contain truth, are therefore also responsible for the barbaric acts perpetrated in their name.

> As representatives of power – even if of power for good – they themselves become historical forces which could be organized, and as such played a bloody role in the true history of the human race. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 224)

Undoubtedly, this passage bears crucial implications for the concept of progress as well. Adorno states quite unequivocally that the truth-content of concepts, including that of progress, will not be identical to the concepts that have been appropriated by the representatives of power insofar as the risk of losing the concreteness of concepts increases in proportion to the growth of instrumental rationality, i.e. the organization and utilization of concepts for the sake of preserving and fostering power. Differently expressed, once the ruling representatives of power enforce concepts to acquiesce with their interests, the truth-content retreats into inner recesses, undergoing a process of sedimentation that prevents at the same time no definitive homogeneous and internally cohesive concept-formation to take place. The sedimented truth-content constitutes, as it were, the last bastion standing against the relentless expansionism of myth. By enveloping the inviolability of historical experience which has initially molded and shaped the concept, it does not give in to a reality sacralized by myth and does not partake in its autarkic and self-identical representation. Rather, this sedimented strata embodies what has conferred on the idea of progress its historical possibility and rationality. It resists the tendency of plunging deep into irrationality precisely because in and through this sedimented layer could we gauge for whom the concept of progress had actually been rational (Adorno, 2008b, p. 41). It could be conjectured that while Adorno perseveringly advocates the irreducibility of ideas such as Christianity, idealism or materialism into the barbaric acts perpetrated in their name, he invites us to ponder the irrationality of human suffering caused by the Inquisition or the scale of violence perpetrated in the name of *bellum sanctum*. "A reversal of rationality into irrationality", argues Adorno (2008b), "arises

from the loss of this 'for-someone'", a loss that is immanent to the moment when concepts function irrespective of human beings, or when they simply turn against them (p. 41).

Similarly, Adorno's vexation regarding Comte's hypostatization of progress into a social invariant takes its cue from the loss of this element of "being-for-someone". The transformation of dynamic forces into a transfixed law of society obliterates the experiential basis of the concept and severs its link with its early negative function. As a matter of fact, it was precisely the negative potential of the concept of progress which had articulated the necessity of overthrowing the *ancien régime*, the integrated network of static forces whose elimination was inextricably linked with the *promesse du bonheur*. Adorno writes as follows:

> As long as the bourgeoisie was oppressed, at least in terms of political forms, it made use of the catchword "progress" to show its opposition to the prevailing static condition of society . . . Only when the bourgeoisie had taken over the decisive levers of power did the belief in progress degenerate into the ideology that ideological profundity accused the eighteenth century of fostering. The nineteenth century came up against the limits of bourgeois society; it could not realize in practice its own rationality, its own ideals of freedom, justice and humane immediacy, without risking the abolition of its own order. (Adorno, 2008b, pp. 159-160)

To inquire how any rational society will finally be able to fructify, and by what means an active resoluteness in eliminating oppression and suffering will come to be the common property of society, there are some questions Adorno claims to be missing in Comte's grand project. In this context, it has to be underlined once again that, for Comte, the fact that bourgeois society was being driven beyond itself was the very problem preparing the groundwork for his *Positive Philosophy*. For Comte, the question of progress was fundamentally about the future of a society in which he was living; and Adorno was interested in his perspective precisely because he

formulated this question in a manner that was congenial and accommodating, perhaps for the very first time, for those who had been holding the reins. Notwithstanding his genuine belief in progress, it was by his hands that the idea of progress was finally put on a leash, as the representatives of order loosened the chains and tightened them as they saw fit. In short, the *raison d'articulation* was eclipsed by *puissance d'articulation*. As progress became a concept seamlessly incorporated to the paradigmatic arsenal of bourgeois society, it also signaled the obfuscation of the historical essence of progress insofar as this incorporation took place by excising its critical function in expressing the contradictions and futural diremptiveness of society (Adorno, 2008b, p. 68).

Here, of course the famous conundrum inherent to the nature of capitalist-bourgeois society once again manifests itself. On the one hand, there is the ostracized notion of progress, which is duly swept clean of its emancipatory content and, on the other hand, the celebration and subsidization of technical/technological advancements as an incentive to accumulate more wealth. In the latter case, progress is equivalent to the machine that has surpassed the intelligence of man or the upgraded strike force of an inter-continental missile – no reflection is required to gauge the effects of this progress vis-à-vis the social totality in which such inventions have been made possible. According to Adorno (2008b), this inevitably leads to the untrammeled expansion of an irrational state where "everything advances within the whole, [but] only the whole itself fails to progress" (p. 150). The suspended movement of the whole and the reification of reality *tel quel* thins out the possible opportunities by means of which this false totality can be contested and destroyed. The recoil of reason into myth could therefore be taken to be synonymous with the poverty of progress, an impoverishment of such a scale that even harmless

speculation about the possibility of changing the world is put under reprobation. The following statement reveals the extent to which the abstract universal is able to feign itself independent of the individuals who are actually constitutive of this whole, and at the same suggests how propitiation and sacrifice, the implacable rudiments of mythology, percolates the structure of this totality:

> Once men have learned about the preponderance of the universal, it is all but inescapable for them to transfigure it into a spirit, as the higher being which they must propitiate. Coercion acquires meaning for them. And not without all reason: for the abstract universal of the whole, which applies the coercion, is akin to the universality of thought, the spirit. And this in turn permits the spirit, in its carrier, to be reprojected on that universality as if it were realized therein, as if it had its own reality for itself. (Adorno, 1973, p. 316)[122]

As if it had its own reality for itself . . . Adorno's allusion to the "as if" (*als ob*) character of the abstract universal of the whole caps off our discussion concerning the truth-content of progress: Once the element of "being-for-someone" vanishes into thin air, and once the concealment of the terminus *ad quem* and the total repression of historical experience sedimented in the concept is completed, it is only then that progress turns into irrationality and its anticipation of happiness comes to be eclipsed by universal havoc. Indeed, the implicit or explicit threat of violence serves as a bulwark against the very promise of a non-restrained, open and redeemed experience – just like in the famous tale of Kafka, wherein the unfortunate individual, despite his lifelong supplications for the right of entry into the Law, is continually rejected by the formidable guardian and finally dies out of desperation (Kafka, 2012, p. 127-129; Adorno, 1973, pp. 344-346). Adorno's following remark concerning the relationship

[122] The lack of self-reflexivity and the transformation of historical forces into "second nature" leads to "the danger of regarding as justified the supremacy of an objective power over human beings who always believe that they are in full possession of themselves and, because of their certainty on this point, are highly reluctant to admit the degree to which they are merely the functions of some universal" (Adorno, 2008b, p. 17).

between world spirit and human beings could be repeated verbatim in order to describe the relationship between the abstract notion of progress and humanity: "The reflexive concept "world spirit" is disinterested in the living, although the whole whose primary it expresses needs the living as much as they need it to exist" (Adorno, 1973, p. 304).

As I have hinted earlier during my discussion of the logic of self-preservation, the apathy of world-spirit towards the living is exacerbated by the fact that this state of affairs has come to a point where it is taken as the natural order of things – as *physei* rather than *thesei*. According to Adorno (2008a), "the mythic scientific respect of the peoples of the earth for the status quo that they themselves unceasingly produce, itself finally becomes positive fact: the oppressor's fortress in regard to which even revolutionary imagination despises itself as utopism and decays to the condition of pliable trust in the objective tendency of history" (p. 41). Thus, in failing to decipher why things are the way they are, by succumbing to the universal, prudish "reasonableness" of things, we end up in a nightmare of our own making. In a striking manner, Adorno describes this impasse as Hell (Adorno, 2008b, p. 150). Yet Adorno's perspective hints that the logic of Dante's *Inferno* has come to a stage where it persists only in an inverted form. It is not because we are in Hell that we have to abandon hope but rather it is because we have abandoned hope that we are imprisoned in Hell. In the following section, I will linger on the implications of this proposal within the context of Adorno's understanding of utopia, which, as we shall demonstrate, is intricately related to his critique of progress. Furthermore, I will inquire whether Adorno's discussion of utopic imagination taps into what he identified as the truth-content of progress, and demonstrate finally that the riddle of

progress cannot be solved unless the holistic rejection of the concept is abrogated for good.

4.3 Utopia as "genuine" progress?

Earlier, I referred twice to the dialectical dynamic lying beneath the pithy saying of Adorno, intimating that a genuine sense of progress becomes possible only when the concept of progress comes to its "end". As we have seen, the nature of this statement is categorically different from calling simply and curtly for the elimination of the idea of progress altogether. As I have tried to explicate, this is in part due to the multi-layered constitution of concepts, which shelter an incorrigible truth-content that requires the art of interpretation so that they can be decoded and resuscitated. In this respect, probing the truth of the concept not only amounts to the re-discovery of the historical ground of its possibility but aims to salvage its prior, pre-mythological rationality. Hence, Adorno's critique of the concept of progress is entwined with the material basis of its realization; and this entails the investigation of the historical conditions of its possibility as much as the factor of human affectivity. In its enunciative/performative dimension, the temporal organization of hope has this anticipatory quality, constituted in such a way that it does not give in to the present. In other words, when Adorno engages in the critique of progress, what he seeks to recuperate is the universally valid plea of happiness, and excavating and reinvigorating this tangible plea becomes the ethical undercurrent nurturing his philosophy.

Adorno's suspicion towards the identification of reality with idea – the *momenta* of synthesis – lingers behind his unwillingness to delineate what hope should strive for *in concreto*, or what political alternative should be identified as the

ultimate object of this hope. In refraining from nailing down once and for all the content and form of hope, Adorno seems to suggest that any positive representation of what is not-yet will be *malum in se*, as what corrupts the anticipatory openness of imagination. For Adorno, this form of positive representation gains widespread prominence in the modern era where the active hope for harmony and fulfillment are shorn of transcendental content. Accordingly, they are subjected to a rigorous systematization and become criteria to human aspiration, which simultaneously designates the immanent social conditions or history in general as the stage in which hopes will be consummated (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, pp. 88-89). Certainly, what Adorno finds problematical here is not the shifting emphasis from the transcendental to the immanent but rather the irrationality or the mythical nature of espousing the idea of progress in the midst of all actually existing (immanent) suffering, desolation and catastrophe. Besides, these social aspirations are designed, implemented and supervised by governing forces in operation, orchestrated in a grand scale by the hand of the state. The disenchanted and pacified principle of hope, Adorno seems to argue, contribute to the relentless atomization of human individuals for whom the aspiration to look after one's ownmost life, the principle of self-preservation, happens to be the only feasible thing to strive for in the first place. "Survival," writes Adorno in contrast to this view, "remains free from utopia" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 91). In other words, unless the content of hope is resistant to the logic of calculation and instrumentality, we are not able to exclude ourselves from the thinking patterns fostering and preserving domination as well as suffering in society. What then does Adorno mean by utopia? Is it really to be construed as his take on *eu*-topia, as his personal attempt to carve out a social space in which humanity will finally be redeemed?

Rummaging through Adorno's oeuvre for the purpose of finding a social blueprint for eutopia, for the good place that will purportedly eliminate the entire catalogue of injustices and suffering, will certainly prove fruitless. This is due to his aversion to the idea of social totality as such, which is generally posited and celebrated in various utopic projects, often in accompaniment with a lack of attention or interest towards the particulars. In this respect, the nature of Adorno's utopianism falls very much outside the definition provided by J. C. Davis, for whom utopias are always descriptions of an ideal society with an aim to produce a total, perfect and ordered social environment (as cited in Levitas, 1990, p. 164). It gets even more difficult if one probes the spatio-temporal aspects of his utopianism. The lack of any time frame or specific place – topos – in his utopic imagination makes it quite difficult to pinpoint what exactly this utopian element in his philosophy is. His utopianism seems to be equally untenable if one were to heed the definition provided by Karl Mannheim, for whom "utopias . . . are not ideologies in the measure and in so far as they succeed through counteractivity in transforming the existing historical reality into one more accord with their own conceptions" (as cited in Levitas, 1990, p. 68). Mannheim's definition is predicated upon a crude causality and in treating the act of transformation to be depending on pre-existing sets of conceptions, it falls short of addressing the materialist phenomenology of Adorno. The unmediated separation between mind and reality – the subject and the object – always carries the risk of idealism, and in this case, an idealistic ontology which glosses over the mutual determinacy of acting and thinking.

Despite these setbacks, however, there is another method which I contend is definitely more useful for getting hold of Adorno's utopianism. To analyze the meaning of utopias by their function, rather than by their content. For example,

Barbara Goodwin argues for the necessity of taking utopia as a particular kind of political theory, the function of which is to distance us from the present (as cited in Levitas, 1990, p. 175). This is a perspective shared by Sargisson (2007), who adds that the relationship between utopia and politics is supposed to be conceived symbiotically rather than disjunctively and pleads for a swift rapprochement between these two traditionally demarcated areas. Bauman (1976), on the other hand, argues that to think in a utopian way means to break habitual associations, "'to emancipate oneself from the apparently overwhelming mental and physical dominance of the routine, the ordinary, the 'normal'" (p. 11). As for the functions of utopia, he identifies four interrelated elements: a) the relativization of the present by the persistence of critique, with the aim of transforming the present predicaments of humankind, b) the interpolation of the question – what may I hope? – right at the heart of the social and historical conditions of one's existence, c) the relativization of future with the simultaneous "dispelling of the conservative illusion that one and only one thread leads on from the present", and d) and the elicitation of collective action for the purpose of dismantling present conditions (Bauman, 1976, p. 17). Another important scholar who has to be mentioned in this context is Moylan (1986), whose diligent elaboration of "critical utopias" served to disprove the popular yet intangible connection presumed between utopias and ideal commonwealths; between the negation of presently conditions on the one hand and the desire for a smoothly functioning order on the other. Critical utopias are not fully imagined: despite their very proximity on the horizons of imagination they are not to be construed as means to an end, that is, the end of totality (Sargisson, 2007, p. 37). Differently put, critical utopias elicit tenacious reflexivity, offer provisional locations/dislocations, and operate in an exploratory fashion (Levitas, 2007, pp. 55-57). If we may insert a side

note here with reference to the architecture of the city, critical utopias play the role of the *flâneur,* discovering and portraying the most immediate reality in its most creatively shocking way.

For the purpose of preparing the groundwork upon which I can discuss the correspondence of utopic imagination and the concept of progress, it shall be convenient to commence with the following quote:

> [The] only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption . . . Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light . . . Beside the demand thus placed on thought, the question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters. (Adorno, 2005, p. 247)

What makes this passage extraordinary (and I dare say, almost mystical) is the simultaneous expansion and contraction of the promise of redemption. It is caught up, as it were, in a magnetic field that induces the reader to contemplate redemption *both* with exhilarating hope *and* solemn skepticism. Yet the fleeting nature of this passage is not very much related to the magnetic force of redemption which, prickling deep-seated psychological elements, slowly overwhelms the imagination of the reader. Rather, its volatility stems from the fact that the *content* of this redemption is deliberately withheld. While Adorno refutes the conventional understanding of progress on account of its complicity with the present, he consistently veers away from providing any blueprints and is careful to not depict an *image* of future redemption. For Adorno, the idea of redemption has to be conceived in its *post*-religious context given that it is ultimately a demand placed on thought, and does not address the immediacy of feeling or intuition. In this sense, what Adorno designates as the standpoint of redemption is irreconcilably different from

the Heideggerian sense of redemption, insofar as the medium through which the authenticity of Dasein becomes a possibility depends on the call of conscience (Gewissenruf) – a call that is in fact *silent*.[123] For Adorno, the hypostatization of an existential or the postulation of a transcendental anxiety (*Angst*) is not simply a crypto-theological response to the culture of nihilism but more importantly it is a sublimated defeatism before the forces of the status quo – it is entwined with the self-assurance that there is nothing that can lead beyond reality *tel quel* (Brittain, 2010a, p. 170; Blechman, 2008, p. 187).

In order to comprehend this elusive promise of redemption in Adorno, it will be helpful if we remember our brief summary regarding the *function* of utopias: Utopias may well send us forth to what is *not-yet*, as they are *pro-missum*, but they are also very much *about* the present. They cannot be *silent*, precisely due to this engagement with the present. Adorno notes in one of his essays that "the power of which is to come reveals itself much more in the construction of the present" (as cited in Buck-Morss, 1977, p. 51). This emphasis on construction, however, should be treated with outmost care since Adorno is skeptical enough to foresee how any novel initiative towards the construction of genuinely new meanings are liable to be seized by the prevailing *ratio*. In this respect, it would be more appropriate to define the nature of this semantic process as one of *de-construction*. Surely, this will be a permissible interpretation given the crucial distinction between deconstruction and destruction. Whereas the act of thinking prevails in the former, the latter utilizes this

[123] According to Heidegger, the individuation of one's Dasein is predicated on understanding the call of conscience. This call introduces the fact of constantly being-guilty which consequently "brings the self back from the loud idle chatter of the they's common sense." As Adorno underlines in *Jargon of Authenticity*, even the preferred concept of "chatter" reflects Heidegger's unwillingness to tackle the social determinateness of this mode of communication. In other words, the ground upon which this so-called distracting and ungenuine mode of communication proliferates is strikingly left untouched. Heidegger later asserts that "this calling is a keeping silent". "Conscience only calls silently, that is, the call comes from the soundlessness of uncanniness and calls Da-sein thus summoned back to stillness of itself, and calls it to become still" (Heidegger, 1996, pp. 272-273).

very act for the sake of nullity. A deconstructive approach towards the present constitutes therefore the *standpoint* of redemption, forming the basis of a self-incurred, almost therapeutic estrangement from the mythological representation of reality. More significant, however, is Adorno's deliberate retraction from ascertaining once and for all what *content* utopias should embody. Even when he is most willing to offer a glimpse of his own perspective, we are told that utopia would be neither harmony nor univocality but a togetherness of diversity (Adorno, 1973, p. 149). In any case, Adorno's utopianism shows some striking parallels with Tom Moylan's "critical utopias": The unwavering resistance to any definite representation of utopic future takes place with an equally tenacious demand placed on thinking – the interruption of the normalized order of things. In agreement with Floyd, then, we may assert that for Adorno the moment of redemption is exclusively the *critique* of false totality as such (Floyd, 1993, p. 547).

To better capture the spirit of Adorno's statement, however, I need to dwell on the last sentence cited above. Adorno claims right after voicing the demand placed on thinking that the question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters! At first impression, this puts the reader into an uneasy impasse. If the creation of perspectives is called for in order to view the world from the standpoint of redemption, should it not be that the wager on the reality of redemption is resolutely held on to? From the perspective of Adorno, however, this question lets in from the backdoor what is shooed out of the main door. It resuscitates the theonomous argument as the authentic response to the reality of suffering and despair. To emphasize at the expense of the functional role of redemption its onto-theological substance becomes an anachronistic and anti-historical endeavor that balks at the theological discussions we touched upon in Chapter 2. Such an

undertaking "shifts attention away from the complexity of material reality through the deployment of concepts that mask society's internal contradictions and elusive nature" (Brittain, 2010a, p. 35; Boer, 2007, p. 429). In this respect, the idea of redemption should not be taken seriously, at least not seriously as those who propagate it for the sake of a real reconciliation with God. Here, of course, Adorno's protestations are permeated through and through by his suspicion of immediacy, for in order to arrive at a "positive" notion of religion one is obliged to take a "leap", a "leap" of faith which is tantamount to the negation of thought by thought itself (Brittain, 2010a, p. 51).[124]

To arrest thinking by the very faculty of thought is adjudged by Adorno to be the worst possible predicament in an age that is already under the sway of mythology. As he explicitly puts it in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, utopias have to "arrest the logical course of events", for they grow out of a "lack of respect for all that is so firmly rooted in the general suffering" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, p. 225). And this requires an acuity of thinking that will emphasize the potentiality of the present rather than an approach that is inclined to arrest the future in the form of casting utopias in picture. Imposing the image of God over the promise of redemption or the meticulous delineation of future with clear and predefined sets of social and political objectives causes utopic imagination to be contained and impoverished by the insidious process of reification. Once future becomes "real" in the form of taking a definite shape, the ecstatic aspect of utopia slowly disappears and congeals into the pre-existing patterns of thought. In light of this, consider the

[124] The philosophical significance of this "leap" is no trifle matter for Adorno, especially if one glances at Adorno's habilitation thesis, which problematizes Kierkegaard's retreat to interiority and his subsequent "leap" to God. According to Adorno, notwithstanding Kierkegaard's purpose to achieve a pure religion unadulterated by myth, he was unable to see that the locus of solution he proffered, namely, the inward realm as the core of existential faith, was itself a "myth" of bourgeois ideology (Boer, 2007, pp. 402-403).

statement extracted from the interview conducted with Bloch and Adorno. Affirming Bloch's statement that the essential function of utopia is a critique of what is present, Adorno offers the following observation:

> Yes, at any rate, utopia is essentially in the determined negation, in the determined negation of that which merely is, and by concretizing itself as something false, it points at the same time to what should be. Yesterday you [referring to Bloch] quoted Spinoza in our discussion with the passage, "Verum index sui et falsi" [The true is the sign of itself and the false]. I have varied this a little in the sense of the dialectical principle of the determined negation and have said, Falsum - the false thing - index sui et veri [The false itself is the sign of itself and the correct]. That means that the true thing determines itself via the false thing, or via that which makes itself falsely known. And insofar as we are not allowed to cast the picture of utopia, insofar as we do not know what the correct thing would be, we know exactly, to be sure, what the false thing is. (Bloch, 1996, p. 61)

Adorno's astute reconstitution of Spinoza's statement is crucial in terms of manifesting the poetic and heuristic nature of his utopianism. To take the *false* as the sign of the *correct* emphasizes the disruptive rather than the corrective/positive function utopias have to play. What is utopic concretizes itself as something *false* precisely because in its antithetical and negative configuration it cannot be incorporated into the matrix of reality. The present becomes a site of alterity and critique rather than that of prefiguration and transformation. A break instead of uninterrupted continuity organizes the temporal (dis-)relation between the present-at-hand and the indefinite future. In this respect, Adorno's utopianism fits into what McManus (2003) identifies as "fictive mode of utopic theorization": Not only is it characterized by an obstinate resistance to the spell of staticism, but it is also aware of how the radical disruptiveness of utopias could easily wind up getting jeopardized as soon as they are appropriated by institutional and legislative-substantive discourse.

Overlooking this fictive or poetic/heuristic nature of Adorno's utopianism might very well lead to some serious misinterpretations. One such case is the interpretation offered by Buchwalter. Although he discerns perceptively that Adorno's conception of redemption leans upon an apocalyptic rather than a proleptical mode of temporality due to the highly suspect possibility of universal happiness (*promesse du bonheur*), he argues consequently that this model of redemption is structurally not very much unlike to Heidegger's idea of overcoming (*Überwindung*), which is supposed to happen extra-historically, the promise emanating from a source that is outside the chronological history of catastrophe. Finally, he caps off these assertions by noting that the core of Adorno's critical theory is not materialistic but messianic (Buchwalter, 1987, p. 302-303). As a matter of fact, this conviction seems to have credence among some of the scholars of Adorno. It is also voiced, for instance, by Wellmer, who has claimed that Adorno's "light" of redemption does not spring from an inner-worldly source but that it issues "from a world that lies beyond, space, time, causality and individuation" (as cited in Pritchard, 2002, p. 293). Benhabib (1986), too, concurs with this perspective and argues in favor of reading the topos of utopia in Adorno's philosophy as an aesthetic project that aims to capture the non-discursive moment of truth by transcending history (p. 170). In short, this standpoint implies – contrary to my thesis – that there can be no point of contact between the utopianism of Adorno and his critique of progress. Another implication of this standpoint is this. The *critique* of progress is supposed to terminate the possibility of hope and redemption in history and thereby offers quasi-theological experience as the linchpin of utopic imagination.

Throughout this chapter, I have amply demonstrated that Adorno's *critique* of progress does not entail the wholesale negation of the idea progress but rather pivots

around its congealment into mythological jargon. Indeed, myth is the very process by which the historicality of ideas or things are obscured and bestowed with an appearance of naturalness (*Natürlichkeit*). In this respect, labeling Adorno's theory messianic not only attests to a grave misunderstanding of his thought but also proves to be immensely reductionist provided that messianic thought itself has multifarious representations due to a wide variety of irreducibly different religious theological formulations (Moltmann, 1969, pp. 133-134; Rust, 1953; Fredriksen, 1991; Clifford & Anatolios, 2005). It could be suggested, in opposition to Wellmer and Buchwalter, that Adorno's treatment of the messianic sublates the customary bifurcation inherent in the traditional conception of messianism. True, it taps into a *tension* enmeshed with the perennial disruption of life, yet this predicament will not be resolved by means of some extra-historical agency that is able to *interrupt* and define, *in statu termini*, the meaning of the course of world history.[125] This is quite obvious, for example, from Adorno's critical reservations about Benjamin's idea of redemption. For Adorno, resorting to a divine agency for the sake of the abrogation of mythic law is "undialectical" in the form of forgetting the historical groundedness of this plea. Worse, it could lead one to "either a quietist direction or towards a sanctioning of anarchic violence" (Brittain, 2010b, p. 48). As Brittain (2010b) accurately sums up:

> Adorno's messianic serves as a negative contrast against the already existing. It helps the philosopher recognize what ought not to be. Although the possibility of a better life remains elusive for Adorno, he insists that the signs of it are to be sought not beyond history but through attention to the cracks and fissures of damaged life itself. The concept of the messianic is meant to focus attention on the actualities of history, not to distract thought from it. (p. 51)

[125] Such a perspective boils down Adorno to the key figures of the twentieth century protestant theology, especially Paul Tillich and Ronald Niebuhr. See: (Iggers, 1958, pp. 222-223).

But then one may ask in response: Why is it that Adorno rather provocatively prefers to utilize a concept theological as messianic and not any other terminology that is not relatively antithetical to the experience of modern life? First, utilizing concepts ingrained in the very fabric of identitarian thinking and the rigid language of social sciences fails to convey the radical disruptivity coming into foreground with the light of the messiah. Insofar as the *essence* of the messiah is historically mediated – viz. refracting through the prism of the tangible experiences of the oppressed and downtrodden – the messianic light appears to be a glimmering trace, a poetic representation that withholds rather than exposes to view the majestic rays of divine illumination. As described elsewhere figuratively: "Adorno would open the apartment door barely a crack, letting in a sliver of light, just enough to reveal how broken and distorted the world really is" (Alford, 2002, p. 103). The door is not wide open inasmuch as in an epoch marked by the demise of God – the advent of nihilism – the idea of the messiah is not to be construed as a salvific force in-itself (*Ansichsein*). Adorno, whose allegiance to the tradition of *Bilderverbot* (the ban on the enunication of the infinite through finite means) is eloquently described by Pritchard, is at pains to separate the wheat of utopia from the chaff of iconolatry and positivism:

> A consciousness interpolating images, a third element, between itself and which it thinks would unwittingly reproduce idealism. A body of ideas would substitute for the object of cognition, and the subjective arbitrariness of such ideas is that of the authorities. The materialist longing to grasp the thing aims at the opposite: it is only in the absence of images that the full object could be conceived. Such absence concurs with the theological ban on images [*Bilderverbot*]. Materialism brought that ban into secular form by not permitting Utopia to be positively pictured: this is the substance of its negativity. At its most materialistic, materialism comes to agree with theology. (Adorno, 1973, p. 207)[126]

[126] In a similar vein, Adorno (2007) argues elsewhere that "a profane language could only approach the sacred one by distancing itself from the sound of the holy, instead of by trying to imitate it" (p. 8).

Thus, Adorno's objective is to save up the dialectical reserve contained in the historicality of this concept, the primary function of which is to cause a shock-effect or bring about a sense of alienation that will sever one's relation with the present order of things. By this twist, the messiah is longer expected to arrive on behalf of the weak and suffering at some indefinite point in future but emerges in the disjointed moment of now-time (*Jetztzeit*) as part of a poetico-heuristic stratagem that conveys the matter of the perennial disruption of life, the catastrophe of history, into the historically mediated consciousness of the individual.[127]

We might note consequently that a very prominent trope in the temporal structure of utopic thinking crystallizes in Adorno's exposition of the messianic light, namely, the dialectics of forgetting and remembering (Luz, 1993). Reflecting on the nature of utopic thinking in modern philosophy, P. Ricoeur has argued that "the idea is that we have forgotten something, and consequently our problem is not so much to invent as to rediscover what we have forgotten" (as cited in Luz, 1993, p. 359). Notwithstanding the obvious verity of this statement, we have to tread very carefully here since the nature of what is to be remembered or (re-)discovered makes a great deal of difference. Unlike Heidegger, for instance, Adorno does not consider forgetfulness (*Vergessenheit*) as a condition of *ontological indifference*, the

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For an extended and brilliant analysis of Adorno's indebtedness to the tradition of Bilderverbot, see: (Pritchard, 2002).

[127] The concept of *Jetzt-Zeit* intends to flout the homogeneous and empty framework of time that constitutes the temporal framework of the logic of progress (Benjamin, 1999, p. 252). Benjamin's preference to use this unusual word, rather than the customary term, *Gegenwart*, attests to his effort in establishing a novel sense of relation with the present. Although Adorno espouses this effort, it should not be overlooked that he is at loggerheads with Benjamin over the question of agency, that is, the identity of political subjectivity signified in this temporal reorientation (Adorno, 2008b, pp. 89-90). We well know Adorno's suspicion regarding the redemptive role ascribed to the proletariat by Georg Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness;* to his frustration, Adorno senses such tendencies in Benjamin's draft on Baudelaire. As Susan Buck-Morss (1977) underlines, Adorno was unwilling to treat the theory of class struggle as the essential element of dialectical materialism and "rejected the concept of dialectical development as an immutable law of history and nature" (p.61). In this sense, he expresses his concern over Benjamin's "de-dialecticized" formulations, especially in the statement – "Every epoch dreams its successor" – where the notion of *dream* and its collective orchestration by the "epoch" attests to a dangerously abstract theorization of utopia (Adorno, 1980, pp. 111-113). Also see: Wolin, 1981, pp. 84-90).

overcoming of which ensures the genuine possibility of authentic life (Adorno, 2007, p. 58). For Adorno, this condition is rather *historical indifference* in the sense that by attuning ourselves to the representation of history produced from the standpoint of the victors, the very tangible experiences of suffering and violence are deliberately kept at a distance, if not entirely removed from sight. In this respect, the messianic *light* not only serves to disenchant the spell of the present but it also disrupts the very structure that perpetuates historical indifference. To shed light on the brokenness and distorted state of present reality ipso facto destabilizes the customary mode in which the past is taken for granted. In other words, remembering takes an eminently political function inasmuch it amounts to liberating the past from the mythic yoke of the present. As a stratagem, therefore, the trope of the messiah fights against the subjective incapacity to imagine something completely different from the way things appear to us, including the past. It does not picture but rather activates the hope that there is a possibility to break what Adorno denotes as "blocked consciousness" (McManus, 2003, p. 4).

Perhaps Bloch's differentiation between two forms of remembrance could be beneficial for clarifying my point here. On the one hand, there is the Platonic notion of *anamnesis*, wherein the task of historical recollection is predicated on the existence of ancient or archaic Being that is already complete in itself and actively seeks to recover this prelapsarian unity. Bloch asserts even more strikingly that the authority thereby ascribed to this past generates a problematic dichotomy between hope and memory. The prioritization of this mnemonic capacity, accompanied by an implicit or explicit valorization of the past, discards future as a site of novelty, and at the same time, impoverishes the disruptive function of hope. Although Adorno does not specifically elaborate on this matter, his critical view regarding the function of

anamnesis can be garnered from his rebuttal of the "fundamental ontology" and its exaltation of Being:

> In the jargon, the word "Man" no longer relies on human dignity as idealism, in spite of the cult of historical figures and of greatness in itself. Instead, man is to have his powerlessness and nothingness as his substance; this becomes a theme in the philosophers in question. This powerlessness and nothingness of man is then transposed to into the pure essence of Man . . . Previously, the unbearable transience of a false and unsatisfied life was counteracted by theology, which gave hope of an eternal life. This hope disappears in the praise of the transient as absolute . . . As it runs in the jargon: suffering, evil, and death are to be accepted. [The public] is learning to understand their nothingness as Being, to revere actual, avoidable, or at least corrigible need as the most humane element in the image of Man. They are learning to respect authority in itself because of their innate human insufficiency. Although such authority now rarely calls itself god-sent, it still holds on to the regal insignia which once it borrowed from God the father. (Adorno, 2007, pp. 52-53)

In this sense, the "blocked consciousness" that Adorno heatedly bemoans finds a very habitable nature to promulgate through the jargon inasmuch it leaves unscathed the very social conditions that perpetuate this incapacity. The object of *anamnesis* – be it either the abstract concept of "Man" or "Being" – turns into, in the words of Adorno, "the ideology of dehumanization" for the solution it offers obscures if not deepens the crisis of human life in modern society (Adorno, 2007, p. 48).[128] Bloch's emphasis on *anagnorisis* addresses the problem of historicality that arises in the mnemonics of *anamnesis*. The latter fails to tap into the unique characteristic of each and every historical interval, thus adhering to a worldview according to which there can be nothing new – *nil novi sub anamnesi* (Jay, 1984, p. 238). V. Geoghegan reveals how the dialectical relationship between history and remembrance is

[128] Here one has to beware of the fact that Adorno criticizes how Heidegger formulates the concept of the they-self as a mode of existence that covers up the "truth" of the existential condition of Dasein. According to Adorno, the concept of the they-self remains abstract for it does not take heed of the determinateness of society, and in so doing loses sight of how the relations between the members of society are determined by the forces and relations of production.

preserved in *anagnorisis*. "In *anagnorisis*, memory traces are reactivated in the present, but there is never simple correspondence between past and present, because of all the intervening novelty. The power of the past resides in its complicated relationship of similarity/dissimilarity to the present. The tension thus created helps mould the new. The experience is therefore creatively shocking" (as cited in Luz, 1993, p. 364).

In light of this description, it would not be difficult to perceive the intended effect of shock (θαυμάζειν) in Adorno's introduction of the messiah right into the heart of secularized, disenchanted world of modernity. At a symbolic level, the image of the messiah plays a functional role in trying to redeem thinking from its constriction within the confines of actual reality. In Adorno's eyes, notwithstanding the obvious matters of conflict and disagreement, materialism comes to agree with theology precisely because they *refuse to capitulate* to the reality *tel quel.* Certainly, this testifies to a strikingly original interpretation, one that places emphasis on the negativity of metaphysical thinking and the *truth*-content of its aversion from the facticity of the world. It is no trifling matter for Adorno that metaphysics "points to a world behind the world we know" (Brittain, 2010a, p. 51; Adorno, 2001, p. 88). The transcendent nature of metaphysics, the incongruity of its thought-objects with the way things appear to us, should not induce us to suppose that metaphysics is not *of* our world. Quite to the contrary for the worldliness of metaphysics stems precisely from the tension between thinking and life in which the act of thinking takes place. As Adorno (2001) also remarks, "metaphysics arises at the point where the empirical world is taken seriously" (p. 18). Thus, the image of the messiah is to be taken with the same solemnity before the broken and distorted state of the world lest the unrealized potentialities in the midst of actuality vanish completely out of sight.

However crucial metaphysical experience may be, Adorno warns us that it should unfurl "as a perpetual criticism that is wary of its own ground". Metaphysics should simultaneously be a *thinking about* metaphysics, in the sense there has to be a constant vigilance over the fundamental assumptions of concepts as well as the entire metaphysical tradition. Adorno's objective then is not be construed as the resuscitation of metaphysics in its traditional form. He does not advocate for a "return" to a pure and isolated noumenal realm but rather calls for salvaging transcendent ideas from the immanent world within the context of temporal existence – in relation to the transience and ephemerality of human life (Tassone, 2004, p. 361). However vital metaphysics may be for breaking through the closed system of immanence, of that which is, its effect is destined to be nullified unless it is conceived in its *historicality,* as a constellation that reflects in a variety of shapes and formations the pertinent socio-historical forces at play.

It cannot be overemphasized that, for Adorno, the gravest philosophical mistake is to attribute a semblance of naturalness to that which is contingent on the formation and interaction of historical and social structures. This applies with equal precision to Adorno's interpretation of utopic theorization. Instead of political aspirations which often assume the form of a wish for immediate social gratification, the historical constellation of the idea of messiah is saturated with a dialectical relationship between the immanent and transcendent, i.e. between the present reality (what *is*) and the possibility of overcoming it (what *ought not to be*). The following statement by Adorno is revelatory in terms of demonstrating that without this dialectical tension, the wish-images of social harmony and homogeneity wind up reinforcing the very reality they purportedly negate in the first place.

> Abstract utopia is all too compatible with the most insidious tendencies of society. That all men are alike is exactly what society would like to hear. It considers actual or imagined differences as stigmas indicating that not enough has yet been done; that something has still been left outside the machinery, not quite determined by its totality. Politics that are still seriously concerned with such a society ought not, therefore, propound the abstract equality of men even as an idea. Instead, they should point to the bad equality today, the identity of those with interests in films and in weapons, and conceive the better state as one in which people could be different without fear. (Adorno, 2005, pp. 66-67)

It is striking that Adorno's problematization of the abstract nature of utopic theorization is reminiscent of his discussion concerning progress. Adorno notes that although the idea of progress primarily shouldered the antiauthoritarian principles of the Enlightenment and praised the utopian sparks emanating from the idea of reason, it had lost its "concreteness" precisely when it became synonymous with the superseding order (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008a, pp. 90-93). In this respect, whereas the idea of utopia may address the pitfalls of progress through the overhaul of the temporal structure of progress and introduce a novel mode of interrelation between past, present and future, it is not to be conceived as somehow immune to the distortive effects of myth. Any kind of utopic project that intends to dissolve the element of contradiction from the surface of their imagined worlds will be prone to such danger. Such projects include, among others, the images of reconciliation with nature through the relentless repudiation of technology or the exaltation of political organicism wherein the intrinsic value of society resides on the seamless integration of the particulars into the whole. For Adorno, utopia should be conceived as a togetherness of diversity rather than the celebration of homogeneity.[129] Thus, the *non-identity* of utopic thinking should be maintained at all costs, and especially at

[129] Adorno (1973) states correspondingly: "The reconciled condition would not be the philosophical imperialism of annexing the alien. Instead, its happiness would lie in the fact that the alien, in the proximity it is granted, remains what is distant and different, beyond the heterogeneous and beyond that which is one's own" (p. 191).

instances where the picture of positivity almost forces itself into consciousness. As I have tried to argue, it is not only the "coercive monopoly of dominant reality over appearance" which stifles the potential to rid oneself from the state of irrationality and myth, but also the coercive monopoly of reality over the appearances-to-come (Blechman, 2008, p. 183).

Before concluding, let me inquire critically whether it would be plausible in the eyes of Adorno to affiliate the spirit of *concrete* utopia with the essence of progress. As we have shown, the *critique* of progress is not fundamentally about the concept *per se*, but rather about its historical (re)-presentation and mythical transformation, which is carried out in order to reveal and reprimand the *abuse* of the concept. Insofar as utopic imagination suspends the present by interrupting the logical order of things, it imbricates with the truth-content excavated by the critique of progress. The dynamic forces, which necessarily prepare the development of ideas that can potentially tear asunder the hypostatized categories of reality, correspond with the negation of the present and scrupulous abstinence from the positive representation of future. Indeed, Adorno himself hints at some point that the idea of "genuine progress" has a sort of affinity or consonance with utopia (Adorno, 2008b, p. 154). And it is not very difficult to surmise that this genuineness hinges upon a thorough examination of the concept's history, which will unearth the emancipatory potential contained in it. Adorno notes that this potential could very well take a conspicuous form, as in the case of the *Jugendstil* or Art Nouveau movement, where the motif of decadence taps into the *essence* of progress and poses a striking contrast with the dominant tendencies of the day. Aesthetic and moral decadence becomes, in Adorno's words, "the mirage of progress that had not yet begun" (Adorno, 2008b, p. 155). Ideas such as remoteness from purpose or the striking negation of the principle

of self-preservation not only denounce the principal bourgeois virtue of social conformism but also embody the "the reverse image of the false instrumentality of a busy activity in which everything exists for something else" (Adorno, 2008b, p. 155).[130] In other words, the promise of happiness is disentangled from the "fashionable liberal formula of the greatest good of the greatest number" and is interlaced with the task of extreme individuation (Adorno, 2008, p. 155). It is important to stress that for Adorno this motif of extreme individuation in the *Jugendstil* movement does not end up with romantic solipsism or with retreat to interiority. On the contrary, it requires a great deal of courage and perseverance to cancel out the self-sustaining apparatus of the ego. For the purpose of conveying the radical aspirations of his understanding of progress, Adorno singles out an aphorism written by Peter Altanberg:

> Maltreatment of horses. This will only cease when the passers-by have become so irritable and decadent that, abandoning their self-control, they fall into a rage at the sight of such things and in their desperation commit crimes and shoot down the dastardly, cowardly coachmen . . . The inability to bear the sight of horses being maltreated is the act of the neurasthenic, decadent people of the future! Up to now, they have had just enough strength to enable them to mind their own business . . . (as cited in Adorno, 2008b, p. 155)

For Adorno (1973), therefore, the resistance to false totality, the very *arrest of happening*, moulds and nurtures the utopian particular that has hitherto been buried underneath the universal (p. 318). Given the affinity between concrete utopia and "genuine" progress, this negative *moment* should not be construed as a point that can be approximated to the linear upward progression of humanity. It does not partake in

[130] In this respect, utopias are supposed to overcome the limited experience of life which takes the form of "mere life": In current conditions, "the will to live finds itself dependent on the denial of the will to live: self-preservation annuls all life in subjectivity" (Adorno, 2005, p. 229) Hence, when Adorno asserts that 'survival remains free from utopia', we are to understand that the toil and hardships that characterize the standing reality are finally surmounted.

linearity since it bears in itself the historical forces and structures mediating it, which is bound to show irreducible differences in each and every epoch. It cannot be incorporated into a progressive conception of history to the extent that its uniqueness stems from the display of resistance, in the non-identity with the prevailing forces and the historiography of mastery and domination. Last but not least, the utopian particular will be resistant to the concept of humanity, especially if by humanity we understand a universal family of impoverished individuals partaking in "restricted/withered experience", acceding to the *naturalization* of powerlessness and displaying dogged complicity with the order of things. In this sense, to speak of progress is justified with the proviso that its auxiliary function for the preservation of order is categorically discarded. In the same vein, salvaging the *truth*-content of progress will be essential for any utopic theorization that aims to break free of our entrapment in the mythical society of today. The hope of redemption, which has gone amiss and is in need of urgent remembrance (in the form of *anagnorisis*), will be necessary to break through the totality of wretchedness Adorno deftly identified as Hell.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

In the exordium to *Specters of Marx*, Derrida (2006) underlines that learning to live, *finally*, in a fashion that will overcome the injustices of the present, entails a confrontation with ghosts. This confrontation, Derrida apprises us, emerges as the fundamental task of a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations which can simultaneously carry us "beyond the living present" (pp. xviii-xix). I am of the opinion that this hauntology is not limited to the specter of Marx and can very well be applied to the spirit or spirit(s) of progress, which I have attempted to communicate in this study. The idea of progress entered the stage of history and then exited. Does it hover about and break into the present? Can we hear its evanescent whispers? Will it re-enter the stage, like the ghost of Hamlet? Derrida (2006) noted in the same book that "this question [of 'where?', 'where tomorrow?', 'whither?'] *arrives*, if it arrives, it questions with regard to what will come in the future-to-come. Turned towards the future, going toward it, it also comes from it, it proceeds *from* [*provient de*] the future" (p. xix). The question of progress is suffused with a similar temporal configuration: While its futurity is embedded in the plea for genuine happiness and justice, it *also arrives* as a call from the future. Carrying the redeemed voices of humanity, rich and full of diversity, it urges us to act, to be happy – to be the *future* from which this very call arrives.

Insofar as they are taken as apparitions that break into the present for a short interval of time, specters are usually construed as exceptions to the normal order and course of things. This standard interpretation has a serious drawback, however, once reconsidered whether what is presupposed to be normal may in fact be a

rationalization of a prolonged state of crisis. According to Kompridis (2005), this consciousness of crisis, "of an awareness of things going, or having gone, terribly wrong", lies at the very heart of modernity and it is neither a contingent phenomenon nor an ephemeral time-consciousness (p. 3). Modernity induces or generates "crisis thinking" due to the distinct temporal tension inherent to its constitution, which is further aggravated by "suppressed possibilities" and the failure of rational hopes:

> Definitive of modernity is the position of the present as the site where new and old, contested pasts and possible futures, constantly collide with one another. That the present will be subject to crisis experiences arising from such disorienting collisions is an unavoidable consequence of this future-oriented stance: the more open to discontinuity we are, the more we have to wrestle with the problem of continuity. (Kompridis, 2005, p. 14)

This viewpoint is important for revealing that as the idea *par excellence* of the sense of continuity in modernity, the concept of progress cannot be insulated from the socially palpable effects of discontinuity. The discontinuous elements, whether they are instantiated by the infliction of violence or manifested in the perpetuation of social oppression, will inevitably clash with the normative undercurrent that nurtures the Enlightenment thinking and its vision of history based on historical continuity and progress. Regardless of the predominantly anticipatory and future-oriented temporality of progress, the past, with its woeful litany of sufferings, admittedly poses an insurmountable difficulty for the very future of the concept.

In a recently published book (the title of which curiously comes from the very statement of Adorno I brought into foreground in Chapter 4, viz. *The End of Progress*), Allen (2016) addresses these difficulties within the context of the second and third generation critical theorists, specifically through Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth. According to Allen, the *aporia* of progress is its historical

constellation with the language of oppression and domination, which has haunted two-thirds of the world's people over a century and functioned as an ideological justification of colonialism (p. 3). While second and third generation critical theorists have embraced historical progress, development and sociological learning for justifying and grounding their normative perspectives, they have remained oblivious to this *aporia*, overlooking the modes in which the idea of progress has been neatly incorporated into imperialist metanarratives (p. 4). From a post-colonial perspective, Allen contends accordingly that the idea of progress needs to be urgently *decolonized*, which requires the careful elaboration and demarcation of the "backward-looking" conception of progress and the "forward-looking" conception of progress.[131] Criticizing Habermas on account of his heavy reliance on the "backward-looking" conception, where progress is taken as a "fact", she calls for an urgent disentanglement that will pave the way for theorizing progress more as an "imperative" and less as a "fact" (p. 26, p. 228).

While I have some reservations regarding the tenability of drawing such a strict line between "backward-looking" and "forward-looking" conceptions of progress, I certainly acknowledge what Allen endeavors to point out by seeking to animate the futural and normatively empowering aspects of progress. I concur with Allen that no conception of progress that is based on an exclusively Eurocentric appraisal of historical values has any potential to offer a genuinely normative compass, that is, to convey progress as a universal "imperative". All in all, Allen's call for decolonizing the concept of progress has some undeniable affinities with the

[131] According to Allen (2016), the "backward-looking" conception of progress is oriented towards the past and is perched on "a judgment about the developmental or learning process that led up to 'us', a judgment that views 'our' conception of reason, 'our' moral-political institutions, 'our' social practices, 'our' form of life as the result of a process of sociocultural development our historical learning". The "forward-looking" conception, on the other hand, is oriented toward the future and sees progress as "a moral-political imperative, a normative goal that we are striving to achieve, a goal that can be captured under the idea of the good or at least of the more just society" (p. 12).

general purpose of this thesis given that the process of decolonization is supposed to lay the groundwork for a critical reappraisal of the concept of progress. What I sought to achieve, and reckon to be Allen's objective as well, is the *Rettung* of the concept. Gerard Richter has underlined with reference to the history of the word (*Wortgeschichte*) that *Rettung* envelops in sedimented form an "unruly dialectic" – a dialectic of saving/rescuing and ridding/removing. In other words, to save/rescue something, *retten*, "can signify both the rescuing and the ridding of something, as if in a dialectic that concerned itself with sustenance and undoing, support and demolition" (Richter, 2000, pp. 36-37).

Let me briefly revisit the arguments I have worked out in this thesis with these questions in mind. What is it that we should "demolish" with regard to our thinking about progress? What deserves to be saved or salvaged? And last but not least: How can the specter of progress re-enter the stage to countervail the normalized state of crisis? Certainly, Allen's postcolonialist sensitivities induced her to frame the question of progress within the context of inter-cultural encounters, with matters related to ideological pretexts facilitating the domination of "primitive" civilizations. For this reason, she was compelled to problematize the "backward-looking" conception of progress since this enabled the oppressors to forge their imaginary superiority and justify the domination of the "inferior" other. If Allen's analysis is normatively born out of the factual, historically rooted asymmetrical power-relations existing at a macrological scale, this thesis can be said to have a much more limited scope in the sense that the problematization of progress is attempted in the context of sociological developments intrinsic to the foundation and development of modern societies. In the words of Allen, I have tried to figure out exactly how progress, as a moral-political imperative in its forward-looking

dimension, began to be overshadowed by the conception of progress as a "fact", a development which occurred in tandem with the growing susceptibility of this concept to ideological appropriation.

In Chapter 2, I attempted to shed light on this crucial matter by circumscribing two ideal-types of progress, the purpose of which was to examine closely the ways in which the connection between moral progress and technical/material progress was circumscribed. I found out that the unilinear and highly scientistic conception of progress developed by Auguste Comte managed to skirt the tension between the moral development of humankind and the progress of civilization by hypostatizing the Positive state as a remedy for social anomie that surfaced after the dissolution of ancien régime. Aiming to cover up rather than address the social contradictions of commercial society, Comte exalted the virtues of social homogeneity and reprimanded negative elements or ideas that would have posed a threat to the well-being of his meticulously planned social unity preserved in the Positive state. With Comte, the idea of progress was indeed transformed into an ontological "dynamic" law of society and it was admissible only insofar as it consolidated social order or corresponded to the "static" law of society.

The hypostatization of progress as a law and its incorporation to the bourgeois order of things occurred in tandem with the repression of progress as an "imperative" and greatly impaired its futurity or forward-looking dimension. In contrast, I have shown that Immanuel Kant's two-tiered conception of progress, though developed decades before the consolidation of bourgeoisie and its distinct legal/institutional mechanisms, foresaw the potential or germinal contradictions of commercial society. It is significant that, whereas Comte attempted to realize the moralization of civil society in accordance with the principles of positive *état*, Kant

sought to carve out an alternative *topos inside* the judicio-civil society. Indeed, the designation of ethical community rather than civil society as the sphere in which moral progress can be thoroughly achieved as per the final end [*Endzweck*] of human beings is quite striking. It is certainly true that Kant neither envisaged nor pleaded for the overall transformation of civil society. Yet it should be granted that expecting such a move from Kant would be highly anachronistic in light of the social realities of his epoch, which was a hodgepodge of long-standing feudal elements and developing capitalist market relations. In any case, the moral progress of humankind entailed the transformation of human relations from a utilitarian, means-oriented modality to that of an end-oriented approach recognizing the normative values of dignity, autonomy and reason.

The dynamic or "future-looking" dimension of progress, which is upheld by Kant through the demarcation of moral progress from the progress of civilization, undergoes a tragic repression in Comtist codification of progress as an ontological *law* of society. As I have shown in Chapter 4, Adorno reads this conceptual reformalization as a sign of regression to mythology, a process by means of which reality *tel quel* in its multiple irrational and immoral dimensions are normalized. The reduction of progress to order and the downgrading of dynamic forces to static entities lays the ground not only for the mythological representation of society but also contributes in long-term to the repression of the truth-content of progress. In this respect, it could be stated that Kant and Adorno concur with regard to the normative value of truth contained in the concept of progress. They differ, however, with regard to the method through which this truth-content is to be communicated. For Kant, the ectypal form of ethical community, that is, the establishment of a rational church will be the basis on which moral progress can be authentically realized and experienced.

Adorno, on the other hand, refrains from couching this truth-content *positively* in consideration of the rate of social irrationality, which has made life practically impossible to be lived in a right fashion. In this respect, the truth-content of progress, on Adorno's account, can be seized only *negatively*, that is, by means of addressing and criticizing the ways in which the idea of progress has been made compatible with forces that produce and reproduce this irrationality. This methodological difference is pregnant to some significant outcomes. Insofar as Kant's idea of moral progress was immanent to civil society yet at the same time presumed to occur in a zone that is insulated from it, he ultimately conceded the inevitability of the logic of market relations. With Adorno, however, the normative truth-content of progress scintillates precisely when it negates the existing order of things, when its promise reaches well beyond the confines of our society. Certainly, this implies moving beyond or breaking free of objective reality which shows meager resistance, if any at all, against conditions that perpetuate evil and oppression. Adorno (2005) has famously formulated this moral quagmire by one of his typical epigrammatic statements: "Wrong life cannot be lived rightly" (p. 18).

This normative dimension of progress, which arises especially in the nature of the individual's relationship with social totality and in the facticity of coming into a world that is already determined by history, is a motif that has surfaced time and again throughout this thesis. I would like to open parentheses at this point regarding the general structure of Chapter 3, not only in order to carry out a brief assessment of the importance of Nietzsche's critique for the conceptual history of progress, but also to reexamine the contemporary relevance of his criticisms. First and foremost, it should be noted that Nietzsche's lifelong preoccupation with the phenomenon of nihilism was fueled by the very same time-consciousness distinctive to modernity,

such that the disappearance of what Nietzsche describes as the "center of gravity" [*das Schwergewicht*] of human beings signifies the deracination of the present. It refers to the tragic realization that truth, hitherto construed eternal and provided a sense of security by illuminating the here and now, is no longer capable of fulfilling this crucial function. In Nietzsche's view, the doubt over the meaning of existence or the suspicion about the fundamental worth of leading a morally upright life begins to take root as soon as a thoroughly historical interpretation of life-world or the ascendancy of "historical sense" nullifies the sanctity of truth and treats it as an epiphenomenon of history.

Perhaps the most vital intimation of Nietzsche's exhaustive analysis of nihilism is the disclosure of progress as a post-theistic and immanentist phenomenon. Ideas such as the telic composition of history, its imagined unity and arrangement, on Nietzsche's account, serve to replace the static and eternal conception of truth with a dynamic and inner-worldly one. More importantly, a teleological representation of history fits in perfectly with the social fabric expedient for herd-morality, where the individual is expected to conform to historical realities and display passive reception before the forces that allegedly act in their name. This point is crucial insofar as it appears to constitute the nexus between Nietzsche and Adorno, bringing them together on account of this anti-mythological vitriol brazenly celebrated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The anti-mythological element in this context is nothing other than the common stand against the contiguity of the idea of progress with the standing order of things.

In an excellent survey of the philosophical similarities and differences of Nietzsche and Adorno, Menke (2004) correctly notes that both thinkers were interested above all in "the question as to what meaning morality has for the

individual" within the setting of modern society (p. 305). He adds immediately that notwithstanding this common ground, Nietzsche aimed for the "liberation of the theoretical and practical potentialities of morality from their moral purposes for the sake of individual self-perfection", while Adorno sought to liberate "social virtues from the false models of reason and freedom", "empathizing with the damage and suffering occasioned by them" (p. 305, p. 312). This is an important nuance which allows us to distinguish Adorno's critique of progress from Nietzsche's insofar as the latter essentially aims to lionize the agonistic pursuit of the singular man *over* and *against* history. The *Übermensch* is Nietzsche's ideal of the sovereign man who distinguishes himself by seeing humanity in general and his contemporaries in particular *beneath* him. The implications of this standpoint is explicitly voiced by Ivan Soll as follows:

> Given his disregard for the "common good" and his defense of the value and inescapability of egoism, how can Nietzsche claim that "the philosopher", or anyone for that matter, should feel responsible for the "overall development of man" or even think that this is an important project? The answer to this puzzle lies in the fact that Nietzsche believes that "the overall development of man" is not to be measured by the "common good", the average level of well-being, or even the general level of nobleness, across humanity as a whole, but rather by the heights achieved by its most outstanding members. (2015, p. 168)

Add to this insight a growing number of invaluable studies that have strongly contested the post-modernist representation of Nietzsche as a pro-democratic and political thinker,[132] and we can see the reason behind Adorno's trepidations regarding the susceptibility of Nietzsche's philosophy to degenerate into another kind of myth. This myth is nothing other than the idea of a sovereign man whose ultimate impuissance vis-à-vis the historically determined social conditions is concealed

[132] See especially: Tongeren, 2008; Cominos, 2008; Taureck, 2008; Brobjer, 2008b; Sluga, 2015; Clark, 2015.

through the valorization of power-oriented relations and the establishment of new distinctions of rank and authority. As Taureck (2008) has underlined, Nietzsche is not really interested in redeeming social collectivity from the pangs of herd-mentality but rather insists on modernizing political ownership "by means of the successful disguise of possessive relations" (p. 202). Unlike Adorno's critique of progress, which was inextricably linked with the project of abolishing political ownership at a universal scale, Nietzsche's relentless rejection of progress originated from his conviction that it was incompatible with the idea of the sovereign subject spontaneously creating the new values of the future. In the words of Thompson (1994), his mistrust of a collective praxis based on a "philosophy with hammer and sickle" ultimately induced him to search for supermen who could practically engage in a "philosophy with a hammer" (p. 362).

Writing not long after the announcement of Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis, Fuller (1992) perceptively argued that the so-called triumph of liberal democracy and the transition to an ideologically homogeneous political world was in fact the reflection of a reawakened sense of the fundamental temporality of human existence. The "frozen dialectic" of Cold War was finally broken and a response was needed to account for the "flux and blur" of multiculturalism and aggravating social contradictions. Thompson was warning as early as 1994 that "the world is now entering what will be a period of immense turmoil in human affairs, the outcome of which is difficult to predict (1994, p. 364).For others like Mark Featherstone, who was writing in the germinal stage of political and social turmoil that ensued the climactic events of 9/11, Fukuyama's thesis contained a blatantly sinister content:

> The central idea of the end of history is not that there will be no more social and political change, but rather that there will be no more *radical* social and

> political change. Fukuyama's thesis is that we have reached the absolute idea, liberal capitalism, and that further social and political change will only be about the technical manipulation of this system . . . The central problem with this view is that it brackets out the consideration of capitalism and the unspoken principles that maintain this economic system, namely exploitation and competition. (2007, p. 112)[133]

In the end, the concealment of social contradictions seems to work harmoniously with a conception of history that has purportedly come to its culmination. This subtle move is all the more critical insofar as it tends to portray technological progress as an *a priori* element of neo-liberalism, contributing to the dissolution of its link with the normative content of progress, that is, the plea for ending social oppression in every conceivable way. We can now assert that Fukuyama's controversial thesis was partly the outcome of a modern temporal conundrum expressed by Kompridis: "the more open to discontinuity we are, the more we have to the wrestle with the problem of continuity". Fukuyama endeavored to mitigate the effects of this crisis via the rejuvenation of a Hegelian vision of history, which, rather than finding its consummation in the Prussian state, has come to fulfill its telos in the post-Cold War setting of international capitalism. It is a nonplussing fact that the theoretical eagerness to arrest the dynamic forces finds its disturbing counterpart in the apocalyptic vision of the Salafi jihadists and their distinctive celebration of the "end times" (Filiu, 2011; Büyükkara, 2015). We live in an epoch in which the tension between historical continuity and discontinuity has reached a stage that brings into mind, almost inevitably, the first half of the twentieth century. The intensification of economic inequalities and refugee crisis, widespread social discontent, cultural stagnation, and to top it all, the complete degeneration of political institutions, inflame despair and contribute to a global sense of disorientation. The global upsurge

[133] This viewpoint is shared by Skrimshire (2006) who points out to the fact that discourses of the end in general operate as "rhetorical tactics" for preserving an established order (p. 204).

in irrationality, ranging from fanatic obscurantism to xenophobic tribalism paint a pessimistic picture of the future that materializes slowly yet unremittingly before our very sight. The "end" of history has come to a tragic end.

Why not drop the concept of progress altogether? Has it not lost its relevance in light of the contemporary state of things and the impending catastrophe just around the corner? These questions shelter a valid and justified skepticism, which unless dragged to the very extreme, will uphold the distance between thinking and existence, the subject and the object, essential for any philosophical contemplation. On the other hand, I have tried to show that taking reality *tel quel*, as mere datum, in a positivistic fashion for validating the so-called untenability of progress, risks suffocating its repressed normative content – hence, my early reference to Derrida's hauntology. After all, Adorno's attempt to seize the spiritual experience (*geistige Erfahrung*) sedimented in the concept of progress is not a far cry from what is sought to be implied by the interruption of the present by ghosts (*Geist*). Besides, the historical baggage of the concept and its contradictory moments should not be treated as a pretext for its definitive abandonment. Rather, the potential liability of the concept to coordination with static forces (Comte) or its proneness to dynamic and normative arrangements (Kant) does not stem from a conceptual defect *per se*, but rather mirrors the contradictory essence of modern society.

In this regard, I find it not surprising that the tradition of critique emphasized the victims on whom social contradictions have taken their toll. In Nietzsche and Adorno, the concept of progress has been systematically addressed in the context of the relationship between individual and history. Nietzsche was certainly one of the first thinkers who problematized progress vis-à-vis its deceptive and potentially debilitating impacts, tracing its sublated theological niceties and the way they work

in the impoverishment of human personality. Yet his utter rejection of social progress and glorification of agonistic, warlike pursuit of self-overcoming defiant of moral and normative considerations overshadowed his justified concerns. Nietzsche's life in general, and especially his eventual breakdown at the sight of a mundane episode of animal cruelty, is a striking testimony to the way in which the fantasy of self-overcoming is tragically interlaced with suffering. In this sense, Adorno's critique of progress and his endeavor to correspond this critique with utopic theorization should receive its due attention.

Overcoming the normalized contradictions of our society cannot be achieved by the glorification of atomized singularities. The foremost theoretical task incumbent on a collective struggle aiming to realize the togetherness of diversity is the comprehension of this appeal's historicality. This thesis aimed to deal with this exigency by attempting the *Rettung* of the concept of progress.

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