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Historical Criticism without Progress:
Memory as an Emancipatory Resource for Critical Theory[1]

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ABSTRACT Postcolonial theorists have criticized the Frankfurt School for its reliance on forms of utopian thinking that build on teleological philosophies of history and Eurocentric narratives of progress. Although I am sympathetic to these concerns – voiced most powerfully by Amy Allen in *The End of Progress* (2016) – I contend that they overlook the extent to which the thinkers of the Frankfurt School theorize the past through the paradigm of collective memory, not stadial philosophies of history. This is true not only of the first generation of critical theory, but also of Jürgen Habermas, a frequent target of postcolonial critique. I argue that his recent work treats the past through the paradigm of collective memory as a fallible record of mistakes that should motivate social learning. Although Habermas and the Frankfurt School need to do more to extend these insights beyond Europe, their work contains the insights necessary to take this step.

KEY WORDS Frankfurt School, Jürgen Habermas, Philosophy of History, Postcolonial Theory, Progress

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Introduction

Methodology has become an increasingly salient issue within political theory in recent years. In contrast to politics and philosophy, which have long histories of epistemological disputes regarding proper research practices and procedures, "Political theorists are often silent on questions of method and approach" (Leopold & Stears, 2008, p. 1). This newfound attention to these issues has had a particularly large effect on the work of the thinkers associated with Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*) in Frankfurt given critical theory's long-standing desire to differentiate itself from "traditional theory" (Horkheimer, 1972) by developing an interdisciplinary methodology "guided by a practical, emancipatory interest" (Fraser, 2007, p. 322).[3]

The Frankfurt School seeks to achieve this goal through a synthesis of descriptive (empirical) research and proscriptive (normative) advocacy. The result is a methodology that proceeds in two operative stages. In what Seyla Benhabib (1986, p. 226) refers to as the "explanatory-diagnostic" moment, the critic seeks to understand and explain the underlying social and political pathologies of the present "on the basis of the most precise scientific methods" (Horkheimer, 1993, p. 9). With this foundation in place, the second

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[3] Critical theory and the Frankfurt School are both contested terms. In this paper, I adopt a narrower usage of critical theory to refer to the work of the thinkers associated with the Institute and their contemporary followers in Germany (e.g. Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth and Rainer Forst) and the United States (such as Thomas McCarthy, Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser, as well as Amy Allen, albeit in a somewhat more critical vein). Known collectively as the Frankfurt School, this tradition is rooted in the writings of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Friedrich Pollock, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin and the other scholars whose works were collected in the Institute's house journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, in the 1930s and early 1940s (see Allen, 2016, xi).

"anticipatory-utopian" phase leads the critic to chart paths for future emancipation from the pathologies identified by the preceding crisis diagnosis.

Despite the fact that the Frankfurt School can be treated as a unified tradition largely as a result of this shared methodological approach (see Löwenthal, 1980, pp. 77-79), there is little agreement on the details, especially regarding the second stage of critique (Kompridis, 2014, p. 2). While critical theory's commitment to utopian thinking is one of its key characteristics, many postcolonial thinkers have argued that its reliance on idealized visions of the future reproduce existing forms of domination based the Eurocentric narratives of progress (for example, see Chakrabarty, 2000; Chrostowska & Ingram, 2016). Most notably, Edward Said (1993, p. 278) laments the Frankfurt School's "blithe universalism," noting that "critical theory, despite its seminal insights into the relationships between domination, modern society, and the opportunities for redemption through art as critique, is stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-imperialist resistance, and oppositional practice in the empire."

Said's critique of the Frankfurt School is part of a broader encounter between European philosophy and postcolonial studies (Pitts, 2010; Chakrabarty, 2000; Persram, 2007). The strongest, most coherent statement of these concerns from within the Frankfurt School comes from Amy Allen. Building and expanding on Said's critique, she argues, "The problem, as I see it, arises from the particular role that ideas of historical progress, development, social evolution, and sociocultural learning play in justifying and grounding the normative perspective of critical theorists" (Allen, 2016, p. 3).

These worries lead Allen to look beyond the canon of the Frankfurt School for an alternate, broader conception of critical theory that relies on neither utopian visions of the

future nor Eurocentric notions of historical progress. Drawing inspiration from Theodor Adorno and Michel Foucault, she develops a form of social criticism that "defines emancipation negatively as the transformation of a state of domination into a mobile, reversible field of power relations…that does not rest on a positive vision of a power-free utopia" (Allen, 2015, p. 515). Although Allen critiques critical theory as a whole, she focuses more specifically on three of its most prominent exponents from the second and third generations of the Frankfurt School, namely Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, and Rainer Forst.

While I am sympathetic to her concerns, I argue that Allen's critique overlooks the extent to which Habermas has replaced teleological philosophies of history with a focus on the traumas preserved within collective memory. On my reading, Habermas – as well as much of postwar critical theory – has abandoned historical narratives of progress as a result of the European experience of two World Wars, the Great Depression, the rise of totalitarianism, and the atrocities of the Holocaust. I will not be able to defend my broader claim about the Frankfurt School here. Instead, I focus on Habermas as one example of how "the depth of their reckoning with the European legacy makes these thinkers indisputable interlocutors even for those who want to 'provincialize Europe,' in Dipesh Chakrabarty's famous phrase" (Benhabib, 2018, xvi). Insodoing I argue that Habermas's theory of memory is actually commensurate with the "negativism" and the critique of progress that Allen locates in the work of Adorno and Foucault.

Although Allen has placed an important challenge on the table, my position is that her argument is both insufficiently nuanced, in the sense that she does not pay attention to the increasingly important role that memory plays in postwar critical theory, and

misapplied in the case of Habermas. My basic thesis is that Habermas has developed a constructive understanding of remembrance that can act as a non-progressive, open resource for utopian thinking in the aftermath of historical ruptures. As a result of his personal experience of Europe's age of total war, Habermas agrees with Adorno that the events that occurred between 1914 and 1945 have – in Seyla Benhabib's (2003, p. 91) words – "created a 'gap' between past and future of such magnitude that the past…can no longer be told as a unified narrative." This rupture, which is preserved in collective memories across the European continent, thus presents an opportunity to create new, non-progressive narratives about the past that opens up possibilities for social innovation (see Verovšek, 2020). In this way Herbert Marcuse argues that "[t]he *recherche du temps perdu* becomes a vehicle of future liberation" (1955, p. 24).

Given Allen's claims regarding her desire to "decolonize critical theory," it is surprising that she does not draw on any non-European voices to buttress her argument. While this omission is problematic, I do not seek to correct it here. Instead, I devote my attention to Jürgen Habermas as a concrete example of the role that memory and learning from the past play within contemporary critical theory. Although I agree with Allen that Habermas's work in the 1970s built on a problematic evolutionary philosophy of history, I argue that in his recent work he has abandoned this position in favor of an understanding of the past that stresses collective memory and rupture as a way of learning from past mistakes without having to rely on progressive historical narratives.

In contrast to Allen, who stresses Habermas's early sociological theory, my reading is based primarily (though not exclusively) on the work that has emerged from his post-1990 political turn as well as his frequent interventions in the public sphere in his *kleine*

politische Schriften ("short political writings"). I argue over the past three decades he has increasingly moved away from a reliance on Eurocentric readings of history to justify his belief in progress. Instead, I contend that he has come to treat the past – particularly World War II – as a record of mistakes that can motivate social transformation. While I agree with Allen that Habermas (and the Frankfurt School as a whole) does indeed focus too much on Europe and the Holocaust and too little on the important issues of race, colonialism and empire highlighted by postcolonial theorists (see also Verovšek, Forthcoming), I contend that this oversight can be corrected by expanding the application of this critical theory of memory to include a more active engagement with Europe's history of imperial domination across the globe.

The body of the argument is divided into three parts. I start by summarizing Allen's critique of the Frankfurt School (I). I then develop my understanding of collective memory as a non-progressive resource for utopian thinking in the aftermath of historical ruptures by building on the work of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse (II). Lastly, I turn my attention to the crucial role remembrance plays in Habermas's political theory (III). Although he wants to maintain the possibility of social learning, I argue that Habermas's understanding of the past is firmly rooted in the paradigm of collective memory, not in stadial philosophies of history. I conclude by reflecting on the implications of this argument for the Frankfurt School's relation to postcolonial thought, as well as how critical theory's desire for "emancipation from slavery" (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 246) can continue to build on the concepts of progress and utopia while remaining sensitive to Allen's concerns (IV).

I. Critical Theory and Non-Utopian Emancipation

In *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* Allen presents a deep critique of the leading thinkers of the second and third generations of the Frankfurt School. Despite the differences between Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, and Rainer Forst – the three main targets of her analysis – she (Allen, 2016, p. 32) argues that their philosophies are unified the fact that "claims to broad-based historical learning and sociocultural development serve to underwrite the normative perspective of certain approaches to critical theory." In her view their reliance on such "backward-looking" conceptions of "progress as a 'fact'" is worrisome because this Eurocentric perspective is used to motivate critical theory's utopian faith in a better future (ibid., p. 11).

Allen problematizes this relationship by arguing that the idea of progress is bound up in with European legacy of global domination. Genealogically speaking, she is right to make this connection. After all, Immanuel Kant not only coined the concept of progress in the eighteenth century, but did so at the height of European imperialism while "also develop[ing] what is arguably the most systematic theory of race and racial hierarchy" (McCarthy, 2009, p. 26). Etymologically, the most faithful translation of *Fortschritt*, the German word usually rendered as progress, is "a step forward" or "a move beyond." The notion of progress is thus intimately bound up with the idea of a developmental ladder, "conjur[ing] the ghosts of stadial theories of history" (Vázquez-Arroyo, 2008, p. 451).

The European encounter with the supposedly "inferior," "primitive" peoples in the colonies contributed to the acceptance of the concept of progress and its political implications, including the infamous idea of the "white man's burden." Intellectually, the idea of progress is intimately connected to the philosophies of history produced during

the Enlightenment by Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and Karl Marx. These reflections led to the development of modernization theory in the twentieth century, which was inspired by the historical sociology of Max Weber. Allen (2016, 25) argues that the Frankfurt School's intellectual debt to Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Weber "expose[s] the normative perspective of critical theory as Eurocentric at best and, at worst, as obscuring the racialized aspects of European modernity and thereby reinforcing them."

Allen's analysis applies to Habermas, Honneth, and Forst in different ways. I will examine her claims about Habermas in greater detail below (see III). For now, it suffices to point out that Allen (2016, p. 3) groups Habermas and Honneth together as representatives of neo-Hegelian reconstruction, as they both "are committed to the thought that critical theory needs to defend some idea of historical progress in order to ground its distinctive approach to normativity and, thus, in order to be truly critical." Although their philosophies of history are not as overtly racist as Hegel's claims regarding the developmental primacy of the Germanic world over the Greek, the Roman and the Oriental, Allen notes that Habermas and Honneth both argue that contemporary practices are the result of a cumulative, potentially progressive learning-process. In line with much of postcolonial theory (see Young, 1990), Allen worries that "a certain vestigial remnant of the traditional philosophy of history remains in…the notions of sociocultural development, historical learning, and moral-political progress that inform Habermas's and Honneth's conceptions of modernity" (2016, p. 9).

Allen's critique of Forst's argument is somewhat different. Instead of drawing on a neo-Hegelian account of historical learning, Forst adopts a neo-Kantian strategy based on an autonomous account of practical reason. This approach does not rely on any

backward-looking notion of progress "as a fact." It raises other concerns instead. By building a single, universal conception of practical reason based on the European experience of Enlightenment, Allen follows James Tully (2008, pp. 148-9) in suggesting that this approach "cannot recognize and respect any other of the plurality of narratives, traditions or civilizations as equal yet different, and enter into a dialogue with them on equal footing."

While Allen shares this worry about the imperialism of the kinds of historical metanarratives Forst deploys, her concerns about this neo-Kantian approach to critical theory go even deeper. She argues that Forst's grounding of normativity in an abstract, noumenal space of reasons that is purportedly free of all power relations blinds him to "the role that power plays in constituting the space of reasons in the first place" (Allen, 2016, p. 149). Thus, in addition to reproducing an inherently Western account of reason, she contends that Forst also "adopt[s] a kind of political philosophy as applied ethics approach that sacrifices the methodological distinctiveness of critical theory" (Allen, 2016, p. 15).

In order to rescue critical theory from these pitfalls, Allen turns to Adorno and Foucault. Given Adorno's skepticism regarding the possibility of progress – which is rooted in his personal experience of war and exile during the early twentieth century – as well as his pivotal role in the foundation of the critical theory tradition, he is a natural point of reference for a negativistic, non-progressive form of emancipatory criticism. Writing the aftermath of World War II, Adorno (2006, p. 143) observes that "progress today really does mean simply the prevention and avoidance of total catastrophe. And I would say that, if only it can be prevented and avoided, that would be in fact progress."

Although Adorno's skepticism is biographically motivated by the symbolic image of Auschwitz, it is philosophically grounded in an immanent critique of *Fortschritt*. However, instead of rejecting progress *tout court*, Adorno explores the internal conceptual tensions within this concept. In *Negative Dialectics* he writes,

> Universal history must be construed and denied. After the catastrophes that have happened, and in view of the catastrophes to come, it would be cynical to say that a plan for a better world is manifested in history and unites it. Not to be denied for that reason, however, is the unity that cements the discontinuous, chaotically splintered moments and phases of history – the unity of the control of nature, progressing to rule over men's inner nature (Adorno, 1981, p. 320).

What Adorno finds objectionable in this philosophy of history is not its attempt to grasp the meaning of the past conceptually; instead, he rejects Hegel's desire to reconcile these events by giving them a teleological, rational purpose. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno criticize Hegel again along similar lines, noting that "by finally postulating the known result of the whole process of negation, totality in the system and in history, as the absolute, he violated the prohibition and himself succumbed to mythology" (2002, p. 18). The fact that Hegel posited a closed end of history is what makes the Enlightenment "totalitarian as only a system can be."

The concerns of postcolonial thinkers regarding Hegel's philosophy of history are driven by the realization that "its intent is that of a progressive teleology that traces the development of *Geist* and the realization of the idea of freedom in the European consciousness" (Vázquez-Arroyo, 2008, p. 454). Allen draws on Adorno to argue for negativistic notion of emancipation as the reduction of domination: "Central to Adorno's dialectical conception of progress is the idea that the belief in progress as a historical 'fact' – the idea that humanity has progressed in the past and that our present form of life

is the result of such progress – stands in the way of progress as a forward-looking moral-political imperative" (2016, p. 174). In other words, the claim is that the idea of historical progress stands in the way of the "anticipatory-utopian" task of critical theory.

In addition to questioning the role that progress can play in emancipatory criticism, Allen also expresses a deep skepticism regarding the Frankfurt School's methodological commitment to utopian thinking. She is concerned that "any and all visions of the good life on which emancipatory or anticipatory-utopian hopes may come to rest can be unmasked as dangerous illusions or even as tools of oppression and subordination themselves" (Allen, 2015, p. 514). This second, more substantive critique is inspired by Foucault's work on power. Although she acknowledges Foucault as an outsider in the tradition of critical theory, Allen (2016, p. 164) tries to integrate him into the Frankfurt School by arguing that he is Adorno's "other son." This move jives with Foucault's own observation that "the Frankfurt people had tried ahead of time to assert things I too had been working for years to sustain" (1991, p. 117).

Foucault's critique of power questions utopian thinking in two ways. First, his analysis of socialization shows that there is no "outside" of power. Instead of being "a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom or some multiple, inert matter to which power is applied, or which is struck by a power that subordinates or destroys," Foucault (2003, pp. 29-30) contends that identity construction is always already the result of a preexisting "power-effect." As a result, he argues that the goal of critique cannot be a utopia free of power relations. The best we can therefore hope for is liberation from existing states of domination where "an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a

field of power relations, immobilizing them and preventing any reversibility of movement" (Foucault, 1997, p. 283).

From a Foucaultian perspective, the inevitability of power relations makes utopian thinking inherently dangerous, since it builds on a "romantic ideal of freedom as autonomy" (Koopman, 2013, p. 172). In the second step, Foucault therefore conceives of liberation through an appeal to heterotopias, i.e. to sites of resistance where calcified states of domination can be "represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault, 1986, p. 24). His genealogical approach breaks historical narratives "by following lines of fragility…which open up the space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, that is of possible transformation" (1994, p. 127).

The vision of liberation that emerges from Foucault's work is narrower than that offered by the Frankfurt School's "anticipatory-utopian" form of social criticism. However, Allen agues that it both *more realistic*, because it does not make overly idealistic assumptions about the possibility of "socialization without repression" (Habermas), and *more radical*, since it does not link visions of the future to the past in the way that progressive philosophies of history are required to do. This model therefore offers a negative vision of emancipation in two different senses: "[1] it takes its normative bearings from the negative goal of transforming states of domination into mobile and reversible fields of power relations; and thus [2] it refrains from positing a concrete vision of a power-free utopia." As a result, Allen (2015, p. 525) argues, "Foucault preserves the anticipatory-utopian moment of critique but without falling into the trap of being too utopian or not utopian enough."

This model offers an interesting reinterpretation of the "anticipatory-utopian" moment of critique by drawing on resources from outside the canon of the Frankfurt School. Foucault's less ambitious form of utopianism is appealing in many ways. However, the problem with Allen's critique – as I see it – regards the relationship she posits between the past and social criticism. Although Allen seeks to develop a form of social criticism that decouples "backward-looking" conceptions from "forward-looking" imperatives, it is not clear that this is possible. After all, while Adorno and Foucault both reject what Allen calls "historical progress," they still rely on "progress in history," which Allen argues should be understood as "a specific domain as judged by standards that are themselves historically and contextually grounded" (Allen, 2016, p. 32).[4] As a result, the question is not so much about whether progress is forward- or backward-looking, but about how social criticism relates to the past (in terms of broad, universal meta-narratives or narrower, domain-specific standards rooted in immanent critique).

For example, even though Adorno criticizes universal philosophies of history, Antonio y Vázquez-Arroyo (2008, pp. 455, 461) argues that he also draws on "the critical significance of universal history as a narrative category" in order to gain a "more adequate understanding of both its utopian content and its historical complicity with domination." Similarly, both the critical impulses and the resources for the "newly thinkable" power relations Foucault theorizes come from his genealogical investigations into past states of domination. In other words, despite their supposed rejection of history

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[4] In this sense, both Adorno and Foucault still build on what Reinhart Koselleck "spaces of experience" rooted in the past to drive their future "horizons of expectation." See Koselleck, 1985.

as a critical measuring stick against which the present can be evaluated, both Adorno and Foucault actually end up drawing on the past for precisely this purpose.

These observations do not mean that Adorno and Foucault use history in the same Eurocentric and teleological ways that Hegel does. They do not. However, although Allen has placed her finger on an important problem, I do not think that Habermas's use of the past (or that of many other critical theorists, for that matter) is backward-looking in the problematic, universal sense that Allen criticizes. While I agree with Allen in rejecting teleological philosophies of history, I argue that backward-looking narratives based in collective memory can avoid the problems of "historical progress" while maintaining the benefits of thinking through "progress in history." Although I can only demonstrate this difference in reference to what I see as Allen's misreading of Habermas's mature theory, my comments on Habermas apply to much of the work in contemporary critical theory as well.

In the next section (II), I argue that the key is the shift away from comprehensive philosophies of history to the paradigm of collective remembrance. More specifically, I contend that the conception of memory developed by the theorists of the first generation of the Frankfurt School already contains many of the insights Allen seeks to retrieve from Foucault. I then turn to Habermas (III). My basic thesis is that insofar as Habermas does rely on the past to motivate his social and political thought, he does so through the lens of collective memory, not of neo-Hegelian, Eurocentric philosophies of history. Reading Habermas's recent work in this way brings him closer to Adorno and Foucault than Allen and other postcolonial critics realize. While this does not vindicate Habermas's lack of

focus on issues of race, empire and colonialism, it demonstrates that his approach to critical theory does have the ability to deal with them.

II. Memory and the First Generation of the Frankfurt School

Drawing on the path-breaking work of Maurice Halbwachs, in the postwar period scholars have increasingly come to recognize the importance of collective remembrance. This realization has led to a "memory boom" (Blight, 2009) that extends across the humanities and the social sciences. In *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925), Halbwachs argues that identities is not only socially rediscovered (*retrouvée*), but also socially reconstructed (*reconstruite*) by individuals within society. The social frameworks of *mémoire collective* not only give meaning to individual remembrance; they also influence contemporary events by shaping the historic imaginaries and analogies through which individuals and communities understand the present.[5]

While collective memory is crucial for creating frameworks of reference, it can also turn history into a Weberian "iron cage" by locking events into unbreakable chains of cause-and-effect. During normal politics communal life is defined by stasis. Established interests, institutions, habits and traditions make change difficult to achieve. Public understandings of the past play a stabilizing, conservative role as part of what Adorno (1966, p. 63) calls "unconscious memory" (*unbewußte Erinnerung*). It is precisely this teleological, determinative understanding of history that Horkheimer and Adorno emphasize in their critique of Hegel.

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[5] Although he was not directly associated with the Frankfurt School, Halbwachs collaborated closely with members of the first generation. He even helped to reestablish the Institute in Geneva as the *Societé Internationale de Recherches Sociales* (the International Society of Social Research) and supported its Paris branch after it had to leave Germany in 1933. He later also intervened to have Walter Benjamin released from the concentration camp at Nevers in 1940. See Jay, 1973, pp. 39, 197-8.

In the aftermath of Europe's age of total war, the thinkers of the first generation of the Frankfurt School were concerned about the potential of memory to lead to the repetition of past mistakes by driving individuals to repeat "cycles of hatred" (Minow, 2002). However, they also recognized it as an important resource for new thinking. Summing up this paradox, Adorno observes, "No timely tradition exists to be summoned, but if all tradition is lost, then the march into inhumanity begins" (Adorno, 1998, p.314).

In order to resolve this dilemma, the theorists of the first generation of the Frankfurt School developed a constructive conception of memory as resource for societal transformation (see Verovšek, 2020). While memory can reduce the autonomy of individuals and communities in the present, Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, and Marcuse all seek to deploy it as a constructive resource for social transformation (König, 2008, p. 165-9). Following Adorno (1998, p. 318), they argue for an active "working through of history" (*Geschichtsaufarbeitung*) that is achieved by maintaining "a critical relationship towards tradition as the medium of its preservation."

Within individual life histories and communal narratives of the past not all events are given equal weight. Unlike the linear understandings of time that undergird philosophies of history, memory endows certain events with particular and repeated meaning while silencing or forgetting others. Benjamin therefore distinguishes "everyday events" (*Erlebnisse*) from "authentic experiences" (*Erfahrungen*). Whereas *Erlebnisse* are the building blocks of quotidian life, he argues that *Erfahrungen* transform those who experience them. Unlike events, such experiences allow individuals to link their experiences of the past to their visions of the future. For Benjamin, *Erfahrung* "is less the

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product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data" (1977a, p. 159).

The desire to break the narrative bonds of tradition while maintaining the ability to learn from experiences led the Frankfurt School to develop the concept of a historical break or rupture (*Bruch*). In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940), Benjamin (1977b) argues that such ruptures shatter existing narratives and delegitimize progressive philosophies of history, allowing individuals to "wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it" (Thesis IV). Given their violent nature, such experiences make "the continuum of history explode" (Thesis XV). Despite their traumatic quality, these *Erfahrungen* are important because they free individuals from established understandings, allowing them to engage in new thinking by reconstructing the past in new ways.

This understanding of memory as a resource for what Allen calls the "newly thinkable" is decidedly non-progressive. On the contrary, it seeks revolutionary moments that turn back "[t]he storm…we call progress" (Thesis IX). Benjamin's reflections are echoed in Daniel Diner's (1988) concept of "civilizational breaks" (*Zivilizationsbrüche*), which are harrowing events that fundamentally challenge communal understandings of the past.

None of the thinkers of the Frankfurt Circle developed a fully-fledged "theory of storms" (Pensky, 2010) based on Benjamin's fragmentary reflections on the philosophy of history. However, like Benjamin, Horkheimer (1970) also reflects on the importance of memory in the aftermath of societal ruptures. In his late work he links memory to the ability to yearn for the "wholly other" (*das ganz Andere*). Horkheimer conceives of this

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as a process of rediscovery, where events are reinterpreted and given meaning within new narratives linking the past to the future.

Marcuse also deals extensively with the past. As he explained in 1937, "Critical theory has engaged with the past in such unheard of dimensions precisely because it cares about the future" (Marcuse, 1937, p. 126). By allowing individuals and communities to reimagine the relationship between the past and the future, memory serves as a critical resource for social transformation. Marcuse (1955, p. 24) argues that this temporal perspective is important because "the restoration of memory goes hand in hand with the restoration of the cognitive content of the imagination [*Phantasie*]." Imagination enables new thinking through the rediscovery and reevaluation of past experiences. However, it is also important because the "rediscovered past supplies the critical criteria" (ibid) that can be applied to drive change in the present.

Memory allows individuals to think beyond the limits imposed by existing institutions and forms of life. It is a form of utopian thinking precisely because it is not bound by the present, but exists in a creative temporal "nowhere." Marcuse concludes,

> Remembrance of the past may give rise to dangerous insights, and the established society seems to be apprehensive of the subversive contents of memory. Remembrance is a mode of dissociation from the given facts, a mode of 'mediation' which breaks, for short moments, the omnipresent power of the given facts (1964, pp. 101-2).

My admittedly brief reconstruction of the importance of collective remembrance that emerges from the postwar reflections of the Frankfurt Circle demonstrates that this tradition already contains the theoretical resources necessary to create a critical, non-progressive notion of emancipation. I argue that this "critical theory of memory" is not unlike the genealogies that Allen seeks in Foucault. Indeed, unlike progressive

philosophies of history, it is driven by the experience of catastrophe. Instead of assuming "a positive vision of a power-free utopia," it shows how existing forms of domination (*Beherrschung* in Horkheimer and Adorno's terms) can be transformed into "a mobile, reversible field of power relations" by breaking apart the seeming inevitability of existing historical narratives.

In the next section (III) I therefore turn to the work of Habermas, arguing that Adorno's *other*, "other son" – it was, after all, Adorno who brought Habermas into the Institute and supported his work in the face of Horkheimer's opposition in the 1960s – has an understanding of collective memory that is actually quite closer to that of his mentor. Although Habermas does seem endorse a theory of "straight time" committed to a progressive account of history in some of his early writings, I argue that collective memory and learning from catastrophe has come to play a crucial role in his recent work. In making this claim, I focus on his post-1990 political theory and the "short political writings" he has produced over the course of his career.

III. Memory in Habermas's Political Theory
As the leader of the second generation of the Frankfurt School, Habermas's philosophical project is defined by his attempt to save critical theory from "the pessimistic *cul de sac* in which Horkheimer and Adorno found themselves" after the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Calhoun, 1992, p. 5). Habermas (1987b, p. 227) has sought to achieve this goal by arguing that "freedom from repression, the goal of all revolutions since the eighteenth century, will remain a chimera as long as political will-formation is not based on the principle of popular discussion without domination." However, his strategy for grounding this communicative ideal has varied over time.

In his first book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1964), he sought to root his discourse theory in the eighteenth century bourgeois publicity (*Öffentlichkeit*) created in the *salons* of France, the German *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies) and English coffeehouses. Habermas argues that these spaces, which were located between the private sphere of economic production and the sphere of public authority represented by the state, gave birth to a "concept of the humanity that was supposed to inhere in humankind as such and truly to constitute its absoluteness" (Habermas, 1989b, p. 47) beyond the boundaries of class, profession or religion. Although this ideal of free discussion about affairs of public interest was later betrayed by a broader "structural transformation," whereby state institutions replaced reasoned discussion with the "manipulative publicity" of modern public opinion, he argues that this historical model can serve as a regulative ideal for critical theory.

In his later work, Habermas has turned away from this historical (one might even say genealogical) account of normativity. In his middle and late periods, Habermas's strategy has oscillated between two poles. The first is a neo-Hegelian approach rooted in the stages of childhood development identified by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, which he then applies to society as a whole. By contrast, the second seeks to ground normativity in the underlying nature of linguistic communication, which is obliged to recognize "the unforced force of the better argument."

In her critique of Habermas, Allen focuses on the former, i.e. on the evolutionary grounding Habermas used to justify communicative rationality in the 1970s. I agree with Allen that this approach is problematic for precisely the reasons she identifies. However, although both strategies are still present in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981),

Habermas (1987a, p. 314) has increasingly comes to favor the latter, that is, the universalistic approach justified "in terms of the capacity of responsible participants in interaction to orient themselves in relation to validity claims geared to intersubjective recognition."

In grounding normativity in this way, Habermas (1990a, p. 197) is self-consciously sensitive to Allen's concerns, noting that this approach compels him to "prove that my moral principle is not just a reflection of the prejudices of adult, white, well-educated, Western males." Far from accepting the Eurocentric notions of development that emerged from the Enlightenment, he rejects the modernization thesis, noting, "Viewed in terms of world history, Max Weber's 'Occidental Rationalism' now appears to be the actual deviation" (Habermas, 2008a, p. 116). Habermas (2001c) has also moved away from Kohlberg's terminology of "conventional" and "postconventional" identities, increasingly speaking in the political language of "national" and "postnational" forms of identification. Whereas the former categories are clearly developmental, the latter refer to historically contingent categories of political belonging (it is, after all, impossible *ex vi termini* to have a national or even a postnational identity before the development of the nation).

Habermas's recent strategy for grounding critical theory has thus increasingly come to rely on a transcendental claim about the nature of communication itself. Building on the insights of the analytic philosophy of language – as well as Martin Buber's distinction between I-It (*Ich-Es*) and I-Thou (*Ich-Du*) relationships – Habermas argues that an orientation to "mutual understanding" (*Verständigung*) is imbedded within communicative practice. He holds that "[a]s soon as we start communicating, we

implicitly declare our desire to reach an understanding with one another about something" (Habermas, 2001a, p. 93). This move allows him to get his discourse theory off the ground without relying on any "backward-looking" meta-narratives of historical progress.

This position also allows him to "validat[e] freedom's normative status for *emancipatory political theory*" (Roberts, 2017, p. 749) in a universalistic way based on the individual's "real interest in being free from domination" – i.e. the freedom to disagree and literally "be heard" within the practices that sustain subjugation. While Habermas tends to draw on European examples, his recent emphasis on "no-saying" (White & Farr, 2012) – i.e., on the ability of repressed communities and individuals to speak against dominant narratives that "look 'obvious' far beyond the ground where they have originated" (Chakrabarty, 2002, p. 43) – does potentially allow for universalistic narratives to be questioned "from below." Despite its role in justifying colonialism (which he acknowledges), Habermas thus seeks to preserve the critical potential of the Enlightenment as an emancipatory project while also allowing it to be questioned from the margins. In this sense, his position is not unlike that of Dipesh Chakrabrarty, who wants to simultaneously "provincialize" universalistic European humanism while also acknowledging the fact that it is "indispensable" insofar as it "has historically provided a strong foundation on which to erect – both in Europe and outside – critiques of socially unjust practices" (2002, p. 4).

Even though Habermas has largely abandoned the evolutionary philosophical grounding he developed in the 1970s, it is true that the idea of the Enlightenment still plays an important role in his thought. Allen (2016, p. 79) calls him out on this point,

arguing that the claim that this movement "represents a developmental advance over previous forms of life is doing a fair amount of justificatory, metanormative work" for Habermas. Insofar as this was the case, it would indeed be quite problematic and would raise the specter of Eurocentrism once more.

It is true that Habermas has often described himself as "a defender of modernity" (Passerin d'Entrèves, 1996, p. 13) and of Enlightenment values. However, *contra* Allen, I do not think that his endorsement of modernity and the Enlightenment does much justificatory work for his argument. This is visible in the fact that Habermas does not cite the progress brought about by these historical movements in the past as a reason to ground his faith in future progress (as Honneth arguably does).

Far from treating the Enlightenment as a historical achievement, Habermas instead speaks of it as "an unfinished project" (1996). In this sense Habermas treats the Enlightenment is a forward-looking ideal or "an imperative" whose values serve as an inspiration for emancipation in the future, not as a completed historical event that is supposed to ground the metanarrative of progress as a backward-looking "fact" (for more, see Outhwaite, 2018). Although he does endorse certain concrete historical changes that occurred in the past – such as "the transition from classical international law to what Kant saw as the 'cosmopolitan condition'" (Habermas, 2006, p. 19) – these examples are domain-specific examples of what Allen calls "progress in history," not broad, universal meta-narratives of "historical progress" that serve to justify his theory.

I expand on this point when I turn to Habermas's shift away from affirmative teleological philosophies of history towards the paradigm of collective memory as a source of critique. Before making to this argument, however, I first briefly address

Allen's claim that Habermas's theory relies on the problematic construction of a power-free utopia. Although I contend that Habermas's mature political theory does not rely on Eurocentric historical narratives to justify his faith in progress in a backward-looking manner, this still leaves Allen's second critique open.

At first glance Habermas's vision of communication driven by the "unforced force of the better argument" may indeed rely on precisely the kind of power-free utopia that worries Allen. Habermas (1987a, pp. 323-4) admits that "the critique of validity claims carried out from the perspective of the participant cannot ultimately be separated from…the mixing of power claims and validity claims." Allen (2008, pp. 135-6) takes advantage of this concession to question whether claims of power and validity can be separated at all.

It may well be true that such a separation may not be possible either in practice or on a conceptual level. However, this does not mean that we cannot distinguish between *better* and *worse* arguments, i.e. between cases where the overlap between power and reason is lower or greater. It also does not mean that this ideal is illegitimate as standard of theoretical evaluation. Habermas is merely calling on those engaged in discourse to "question their motives, look at the genealogy of their beliefs, ask what interests their arguments serve" (Geuss, 1981, p. 26). In this sense, his work is in keeping with the immanent "ideology critique" (*Ideologiekritik*) of Adorno and the first generation of the Frankfurt School. Although the ideal of "popular discussion without domination" may be impossible to conceive of even in the abstract, it can still serve as part of an emancipatory social and political theory. Simone Chambers (1996, p. 207) points out that even if we can never fully overcome various forms of domination, "we must [still] find a way of

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talking with each other as equals about the elimination of systemic inequality."

Despite his increasing reliance on a transcendental grounding for communicative action, the past still plays an important role in Habermas's post-1990 political theory. However, insofar as he does look for evidence of empirical learning processes, this search is limited to discrete domains of social and political life and is decidedly non-teleological. In his temporal vision, Habermas has moved from history to collective memory. Instead of relying on a fully-fledged philosophy of history, he therefore draws on catastrophic, shared memories of the past to call for change in the present. If I am right, then Habermas's forward-looking, negativistic vision of history is actually fairly close to Allen's account of "progress as a forward-looking moral or political imperative" (2016, p. 97).

In contrast to Allen, I argue that Habermas and the first generation of the Frankfurt School share a common understanding of Europe's age of total war as an important historical break. Although Habermas is a generation younger than his predecessors, he also attributes an epoch-forming significance to the experience of the Nazi regime. Surveying the physical, moral and political ruin of Germany in 1945 Habermas knew that his homeland would have to learn from this tragedy. Looking back on this crucial moment, he notes, "[T]he rhythm of my personal development intersected with the great historical events of the time" (Habermas, 1992, p. 77).

As a result of these experiences, Habermas has reflected extensively on the possibilities for social learning that are contained within "Benjaminian moments" (Benhabib, 2012) of rupture. Using his terminology, rupture can be understood an experience that disrupts the "more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background

conditions" (Habermas, 1984/1987, p. I.70) that underlie the unthematized lifeworlds (*Lebenswelten*) of individuals within linguistic and cultural communities. By breaking up existing narratives of progress, these moments allow novel ideas to come to the surface.

Such experiences of rupture – Habermas often adopts the idiom of a "caesura" (*Zäsur*) – play an important role in his understanding of history. Far from relying on progress, Habermas (2001b, pp. 26-37) writes that after the experience of the Second World War individuals and communities have to "learn from catastrophe." This shift from progress to learning has real political – as well as philosophical – implications. He argues that after the horrors of National Socialism, German "patriotism cannot hide the fact that in Germany democracy has taken root in the motives and hearts of the citizens…after Auschwitz – and in a way only through the shock of the moral catastrophe" (Habermas, 1990b, p. 152). This postwar experience shows that identity can be reformed and rebuilt by reflecting on "the better traditions of our history, a history that is not unexamined but instead appropriated critically" (Habermas, 1989a, p. 234). This kind of learning from disaster requires full engagement with the tragedies and traumas of the past, not silencing or repression.

The desire to learn from history while avoiding the pitfalls of the organic conceptions of history and peoplehood propagated by the Nazi regime is what leads Habermas to seek an "active remembrance – working through [*aufarbeiten*] the past and hoping for a better future" (in Matuštík, 2001, p. 10). In making this point, Habermas explicitly echoes Adorno by adopting the language of *die Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*. Like his mentor, he (2008b, p. 18) argues, "After the revelations concerning Auschwitz, nothing could be taken at face value." By thematizing institutions

and traditions that had previously been taken for granted the past can help to expand social perceptions of what it is possible to achieve.

As an imperative, Habermas argues that these caesurae not only reengage the cognitive capacity for enlarged thought; they also provide important motivational impetus for the transformation of communal life. For instance, he notes that critical theory's interest in the trajectory of postwar Europe was "spurred by…[a] concern with the past." This anxiety draws on the emotional "the fear of a political relapse." For Habermas (2008b, pp. 17, 21) – as for many of his predecessors in Frankfurt – the memory of the Nazism thus serves a "negative point of reference" that expanded their cognitive capacities and motivated them to pursue change.

Habermas's commitment to grounding normativity within the paradigm of memory also helps to clarify his calls for Germans – and postwar democrats more broadly – to abandon classical nationalism in favor of "constitutional patriotism" (*Verfassungspatriotismus*). Although this form of belonging, which seeks to ground pride in one's homeland in a felt commitment to the rational procedures of the democratic state, is often criticized for being too formalistic and empty of content, it actually does not assume that all national differences and allegiances will disappear into a homogenous global "postnational identity."[6] Far from being empty or abstract, the "passionate rationality" (Sternberger) of a truly constitutional patriotism is rooted in the particular historical experiences of different peoples, who have to reflect upon and critically "filter" their traditions through the negative reference points of their past communal crimes (Auschwitz in the German case, slavery in the American, etc.). Building on both Adorno

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[6] I would like to thank Cristina Lafont for alerting me to this point.

and Benjamin, Habermas argues that this form of collective *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* aims to do justice to the dead through remembrance and a "consciousness of atonement" (*Sühnebewußtsein*). As a result, constitutional patriotism binds specific communities together through their "anamnestic solidarity" – i.e., through their collective task of remembering the dead and ensuring that they do not repeat their past crimes – not through pre-political characteristics like birth, nationality or ethnicity.[7]

The practical-political implications of using memory in this way can also be seen in the "Historians Debate" (*Historikerstreit*) of the mid-1980s. In this controversy, Habermas sought to preserve the critical potential of 1945 as defining moment in German history. He objected to the political implications of the attempts of conservative historians to normalize the Nazi past, fearing that attempts to "bring the curtain down on the past" by subsuming the crimes of the Third Reich into a narrative of the violent twentieth century would allow the ideas that had led to these crimes to resurface, thus also inhibiting social critique in the future. He (Habermas, 1989a, p. 193) therefore argues that Germans must maintain their critical perspective towards the past by "maintaining a clear awareness of a break [*Bruch*] with our more sinister traditions."

Habermas argues that the memories of Europe's age of total war have further political implications, most notably for the development of the European Union (EU). From its beginnings in the 1950s, the European project has built on the desire to secure peace in Europe after the horrors of World War II and the divisions wrought by the Cold War. Habermas (2005, p. 12) has sought to use the negativistic memories of a "bellicose past [that] entangled all European nations in bloody conflicts" to justify the development

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[7] For more on constitutional patriotism, see (Müller, 2007); (Müller, 2000), 93-98.

of the EU as a postnational political community. He argues that instead of building on national differences, a common European identity can be formed by learning the importance of respecting human rights, abiding by the rule of law and refraining from violence from past mistakes that were made on the continent (see Verovšek, 2012).

It is certainly possible to contest this interpretation of the legacy of World War II and the Holocaust in Europe. In his "Discourse on Colonialism," Aimé Césaire (1972, p. 3) argues that blaming Nazism for European barbarism is a mistake, since "before they were its victims, [Europeans] were its accomplices…they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them." Given Habermas's emphasis on the centrality of the Holocaust for German memory and intellectual culture, he would agree with this claim.

Habermas would disagree, however, with Césaire when he argues, "Whether one likes it or not, at the end of the blind alley that is Europe, I mean the Europe of Adenauer, Schuman, Bidault and a few others, there is Hitler." Habermas has no desire to whitewash the crimes of colonialism or the fact that Nazism had its roots in the barbarism that before the Second World War "had been applied only to non-European peoples" (Césaire, 1972, p. 3). However, despite its problems, he sees the European project as an attempt – inadequate though it may be – to come to terms with Europe's historical legacy. Reflecting back on "the experience of 1945 and after," Habermas (1992, p. 126) notes that in addition to his rejection of nationalism and violence, he retained something else, "namely that things got better. Things really got rather better. One must use that as a starting-point too."

Although this admission is backward-looking in a sense, it does not look to the past in a triumphalist, teleological manner. Instead, he wants to use it as the foundation for

progress as a forward-looking imperative for change. Although Habermas does not often

address Europe's need to atone for its crimes of empire beyond the continent directly, he

argues that the understanding of history given by a focus on collective memory gives

Europeans the "chance to *assume a reflexive distance from themselves*" which –

combined with "the growing distance of imperial domination and the history of

colonialism" – should allow them to "learn from the perspective of the defeated

to…support the rejection of Eurocentrism" (Habermas & Derrida, 2003, p. 297).

Taken to its logical conclusion, his argument about the politics of memory suggests

that Germany ought to show the same commitment to remembrance for its mass killings

of the Herero people of Namibia (Anderson, 2005) – which it only acknowledged in 2016

(Brady, 2016) – as it has to the Nazi genocide during World War II.[8] Although he should

do more to draw out the implications of his position beyond the crimes committed on the

European continent, Habermas's mature notion collective memory conceives of the past

as a process of moral-practical learning from catastrophe that is does not rely on

narratives of progress, but instead creates imperatives for the future (for more on this

critique of Habermas's understanding of collective memory and its relationship to

Europe, see Verovšek, Forthcoming). Far from the backward-looking, teleological

philosophies of "historical progress" posited by Kant, Hegel, and Marx, I have shown

that Habermas's mnemonic conception of the past is far more similar to what Allen calls

"progress in history."

IV. Concluding Remarks and Implications

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[8] I would like to thank a reviewer from this journal for making this point and directing me
to this case.

In this argument I have defended Habermas from the accusation that his work is based on overly utopian visions of the future that build on "backward-looking," Eurocentric notions of historical progress. Although his work in the 1970s did indeed build on the theories of childhood development put forward by Piaget and Kohlberg in a problematic manner, his more recent writings have moved away from this reliance on stadial philosophies of history to motivate his utopian faith in progress. While Habermas's political theory and his "short political writings" still draw on the past, Habermas (and critical theory more generally) has moved from the paradigm of history to that of collective memory. As a result of this shift, his notion of temporal "learning-processes" is decidedly negativistic and non-utopian.

While her argument may well apply to Honneth and Forst, I think that Allen errs in attributing it to Habermas, as well as to contemporary critical theory as a whole.[9] Far from relying on problematic philosophies of history, I argue that Habermas's emphasis on the ability of collective memory and rupture to further social criticism by thematizing aspects of social life that had previously been taken for granted resonates with important points made by postcolonial scholarship. For example, Chakrabarty (2000, 45) makes a similar argument in pointing out that engaging critically with the historical ideas that legitimize the modern Western state and its "attendant institutions" actually forces political theory to return to "categories whose global currency can no longer be taken for granted." On my interpretation, therefore, Habermas's work should not be seen only in opposition to postcolonial thinking, but also as a potential complement to it.

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[9] Although I can see how Honneth's work may indeed exhibit some of the worrying features of a teleological neo-Hegelianism, I am skeptical of Allen's claims vis-à-vis Forst. However, due to constrains of space I cannot resolve these issues here.

Much like the first generation of the Frankfurt School, I argue that Habermas has drawn on the negative memories of Europe's age of total war to help justify his faith in progress "as an imperative" or a "forward-looking" task for politics in the present. In this sense, his understanding of the past and the meaning of utopian thinking are closer to his predecessors in the first generation of the Frankfurt School than most scholars are prepared to recognize. There are many reasons why this similarity is overlooked, but the issue of methodology is particularly important. The more fragmentary, aphoristic forms of critical theory adopted by Foucault, Adorno, Benjamin and the rest of the founders of critical theory certainly make their rejection of all narratives of historical progress more immediately obvious than Habermas's more systematic approach.[10]

In Isaiah Berlin's (1953) terms, the systematic Habermas is clearly a hedgehog. By contrast, many of his colleagues in the first generation are more fox-like in their focus on philosophical blind-spots and constellations of ideas, rather than grand narratives and unified theories. However, this difference in intellectual disposition should not mask the similarity of the conclusions drawn by these thinkers. Despite their differences in philosophical approach, from a methodological point of view what is important is that all of these thinkers reject stadial philosophies of history, approaching the past through the paradigm of collective memory instead.

A greater understanding of the role that memory and rupture play within critical theory as a whole also has the potential to address some of the broader concerns raised not only by Allen, but by postcolonial theory as a whole. Said (1993, p. 278) is right to point out that critiques the Frankfurt School "is stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-

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[10] I would like to thank Amy Allen for alerting me to the possible substantive theoretical implications of these differing methodological approaches.

imperialist resistance, and oppositional practice in the empire." However, on my reading this is more a sin of omission that of commission. Habermas and his colleagues in the first generation of the Frankfurt School have indeed focused too much and too exclusively on the Holocaust and the crimes committed by Europeans against other Europeans on the European continent.

To a certain extent this somewhat parochial emphasis on Europe is understandable, given that their move from philosophy of history to the paradigm of collective memory was motivated in large part by their experience and the remembrance of total war. Insofar as collective memory builds on "a felt knowledge of recent events" (Kateb, 1998, p. viii) created by formative, "authentic experiences" in the life of the individual (see both Benjamin, 1977a, p. 159; Gadamer, 2004, p. 86), there is a certain logic to the idea that Europeans would focus first and foremost on traumatic events and atrocities that they themselves experienced. Such a perspective is also in line with the Frankfurt School's emphasis on "lived experience" (Adorno quoted in Strydom, 2013, p. 154), which both provides the critical theorist with the impetus for critique and "objectively afford[s] contemporaries privileged access to the structures of the social world" (Habermas, 1984/1987, p. II.403).

However, despite their coherence, these considerations should not let Habermas and the rest of the Frankfurt School off the hook for overlooking the European legacy of racism, imperialism and colonialism. Said and Allen are both right to call critical theory out on this point. However, if my argument about crucial role that memory and a conception of progress "as an imperative" play in critical theory is correct, the insights Adorno, Habermas and others have drawn from the Holocaust can and should help

Europe and Europeans to recognize and acknowledge their colonial crimes by applying the model of "learning from catastrophe" (2001b, pp. 26-37) that emphasizes "anamnestic solidarity" (see Pensky, 1989) with the victims in their erstwhile colonies, i.e. with the dead who "are really slain" (Horkheimer quoted in Benjamin, 1999, p. 471).

Extending the insights drawn from collective remembrance of the Holocaust to Europe's broader colonial project – as well as the role that Enlightenment thinking and European philosophy played in furthering this imperial domination (McCarthy, 2009) – will require a significant amount of work. However, there are substantive points of contact within recent scholarship that should help this process along. For example, Timothy Snyder (2018, pp. 75, 74) has argued that over the course of "the Second World War, Europeans applied colonial principles to one another" in the sense that "imperial power does not recognize the political entities that it encounters…and so it destroys or subverts them while claiming that they never existed." Insofar as Germany can recognize the atrocities it committed in East-Central Europe as colonial crimes, it might help the Federal Republic and Europe as a whole to acknowledge their colonial atrocities beyond Europe as well. Just as the Frankfurt School played an important role in shaping postwar memory in Germany and Europe through public interventions by Adorno and Habermas, it is the task of contemporary critical theory to build on these commitments and extend their scope to incorporate racism, empire and colonialism.

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