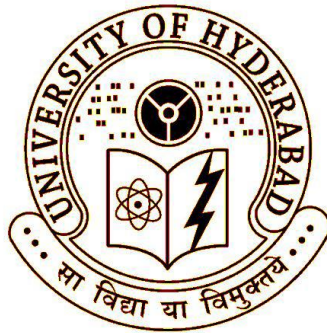


**From Karl Marx to Stuart Hall: A Critical Theoretical Review of Marxist
Sociology of Culture**

*A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the award of the*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
SOCIOLOGY**

**BY
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled, **From Karl Marx to Stuart Hall: A Critical Theoretical Review of Marxist Sociology of Culture** is being submitted by the undersigned (ANINDITA BORAH, 17SSHL04) under the guidance of Dr. V. Janardhan, at the Department of Sociology, School of Social Science, University of Hyderabad and this work has not been submitted for a degree or diploma, at any other University.

Place: University of Hyderabad

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **From Karl Marx to Stuart Hall: A Critical Theoretical Review of Marxist Sociology of Culture** submitted by **ANINDITA BORAH** (17SSHL04) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy in Sociology is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance which is plagiarism free dissertation. The dissertation has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Part of this thesis has been presented in the following seminar:

(2018). “Folk Music, Commodification and Sociology of Culture: A Critical Study of Assamese Bihu Song”, in the 44th India Sociological Conference on *Reconstructing Sociological Discourse in India: Perspectives from the Margins*, held on December 27,28 and 29, at St. Philomena’s College (Autonomous), Mysuru.

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INTRODUCTION

Marxism is a body of doctrine, often understood and oft-quoted as a philosophy, based upon the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels¹. Marxism, as a theoretical approach, is primarily centered on mode of production in the process of social change. Though economy and class category is the core of Marxist theoretical tradition, culture occupies a peripheral place in Marxist analysis.

This study is an endeavour to understand the Marxist interpretation of culture. In doing so, the study is conducted in two parts: Firstly, it tries to put forth a systemic analysis of the understanding as well as the interpretation of culture of several acclaimed classical and contemporary Marxist theorists such as, Karl Marx, Gyorgy Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall and so on. Secondly, this study comes under Sociology of Culture. Instead of focusing merely on the meaning and definition of culture, it is an effort to throw light on its broad spectrum including its production and consumption as well as to decipher the diverse contours and its significance in social reality.

Further, the study attempts to understand and analyze the relevance of Marxist approach to culture in contemporary world. Several critics had argued that Marxism as a method to study political, social, economic and cultural structure became irrelevant in the course of time, particularly, after the collapse of Soviet Bloc and spawning of Capitalism in China and Vietnam. It heralded the 'Crisis of Marxism' or 'Death of Marxism'. Yet such elucidation is difficult to fathom. Nevertheless, Marxism, as theoretical tradition, also got challenged in the phase of postmodernism and post structuralism. This all results in the need for the reconstruction of Marxist theory, and the most important steps made, in this regard, by a new chapter called post Marxism.

¹ Both Marx and Engels did not use the term Marxism. Marx feared that the use of such term would marginalize his ideas and supporters by encouraging the view that they were a sect centered on Marx. Marx and Engels preferred terms such as *critical materialist socialism*, *critical and revolutionary socialism*, or *scientific socialism*. It is worth mentioning in this context Marx's remark quoted by Engels. Marx purportedly said, "What is certain is that I am not a Marxist," a comment intended to distance Marx from some of the ideas and groups in France claiming to be Marxist and indicative of his distaste of such labels in the first place (Walker and Gray, 2007)

It is worthwhile to note that Marxism reviles capitalism both in its form and structure. However, with the advent of globalization and neoliberalism, the nature and structure of capitalism has also undergone palpable transformations. Therefore, it's indispensable to understand the degree to which the Marxist Theoretical Framework can provide satisfactory explanations to the multifarious cultural puzzles and unravel the cultural quagmire prevailing in the contemporary society. This also undergirds the objective of our study.

Research Objective

The primary objective of our study is to understand *how culture has historically been understood and deployed in Marxian social and political theory.*

It is paramount to understand that Marxism generally emerged as an economic-political philosophy rather than a framework for cultural analysis. In fact, as a philosophy of history (later known as historical materialism), it provides an account of social change with different mode of productions; however, it discussed extensively the capitalist mode of production. In so doing, Marx and Engels propounded the theory of class struggle, that is, between capitalist class and working class. Therefore, Marxism centrally brought to fore the theory of bourgeoisie and proletariat, including the critique of capitalist structure and its associated exploitation, class conflict and provides an account for revolution. However, in doing so, Marxist theorists accommodated the cultural elements in their study, though as a superstructure. Therefore, this study is an attempt to understand historically, the concept of culture in Marxist tradition.

Methodology

This study is primarily a theoretical research work. Therefore, I have conducted the study on the basis of the review of various existing literature covering the gamut of sociology of culture and those having nexus with related disciplines such as cultural studies, cultural anthropology, and so on. These literatures include various articles, journals, books, and web resources.

Since the objective of this study is how culture has, historically, been understood and deployed in Marxian social and political theory, I have reviewed various primary as well

as secondary works on Marxist understanding of culture. Here, primary works refer to the pivotal works of key Marxian theorists, such as Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Gyorgy Lukacs, and Theodor Adorno. Secondary works refer to the works of other theorists which lend impetus for furthering the development of Marxian approach to culture.

Limitations

Albeit our dossier provides a systematic account of Marxist interpretation of culture, there are certain limitations which may punch holes with regard to certain aspects. At first, I have included the views of several Marxian theorists from classical to contemporary in our work. Nevertheless, the critiques of all the theorists could not be unearthed; hence there is a possibility of skipping some important opinions and views, inadvertently, which may have significance in our study. Secondly, since it is a theoretical review, the researcher has to relied more on primary works; however, majority of our references for this study is ascribed to the secondary works. Lastly, it is well-nigh impossible to do justice to the mammoth and far- flung review of Marxian interpretation of culture and the capacity to compile and concretize the whole journey of Marxism on culture.

The term ‘critical’ or ‘critique’ generally refers to the analysis or assessment of a work or a book or a theory, giving opinions and inferences on the same. Merriam Webster dictionary defines the term ‘critique’ as “a careful judgment in which you give your opinion about the good and bad parts of something (such as a piece of writing or a work of art)”. This study is a critical theoretical review of Marxist interpretation of culture. Therefore, here, I have taken a critical outlook in analyzing how culture has been understood in Marxian theory. Throughout the study, I have used the term ‘*classical Marxism*’ to denote the period from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to the Marxism of Second and Third international.

Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into four chapters. A brief outline of each chapter is given below:

The first chapter (Culture and Social Theory) discusses the definition of culture, the

theoretical status of culture in sociology and the disciplinary distinction between sociology of culture, cultural sociology and cultural studies. It also briefly discusses various sociological perspectives on culture. A brief discussion on 'culture, agency and structure' is presented in the last part of the chapter.

The second chapter (Classical and Western Marxism) discusses the classical Marxist understanding of culture, and the rise of western Marxism. It discusses the contributions of Classical Marxist theorists - Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, Karl Kautsky, Georgi Plekhanov, Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky and Mao Zedong and Western Marxist theorists - George Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, and Louis Althusser. Western Marxism is also elaborated in the third chapter through Frankfurt School and British cultural theorists.

The third chapter (Frankfurt School and Birmingham School) is concerned with the discussion on Frankfurt school and the emergence of cultural Marxism which led the path for the development of a new discipline called cultural studies. The key theorists of Frankfurt school include Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas. The contributions of British cultural theorists - Raymond Williams, E. P Thompson and Stuart Hall are also discussed in this chapter with a brief introduction to the Birmingham School of cultural studies.

The fourth chapter (Marxist Sociology of Culture: A Critical Appreciation) provides a critical appreciation on the Marxist approach to culture. This chapter, therefore, discusses four key themes which we feel, relevant in the discussion on Marxism and culture. The critiques on the autonomy of culture, art as a revolutionary tool, culture as ideology and the recent issue of cultural commodification, globalization and late capitalism also form part and parcel of our discussion.

CHAPTER ONE

Culture and Social Theory

Theorizing 'culture' has gone through transformation along with the change in the trajectory of social theory. Though the term culture was not, directly apparent, in classical social theory, the question of culture was either analyzed or understood through its various constituents such as ideas, values, rituals and so forth. This kind of implicit study of culture has later become the concern for its reinvention in academia. As a result, culture as an object of enquiry, or the explicit study of culture, has gained attention during the period of 1960s and 1980s, with the arrival of 'cultural turn' across disciplines. Indeed, this new cultural turn provides a platform where culture is studied with all its forms, from meaning – making to the production and consumption of culture. Stuart Hall (1997) defines 'cultural turn' in a succinct way. To him, this new movement arose both in its substantive and epistemological manifestations; the former is apparent in terms of the empirically evident development of media, technology, economy and most significantly in the process of globalization and the latter is about the philosophical break from Marxism to post-structuralism, emphasizing on language or culture in particular. Thus, a reinvention to the study of culture gives birth to a new multidisciplinary perspective to cultural analysis, which encompasses culture with its multifaceted nature as well as its social implications (cited in Edwards, 2007).

The concept of culture

In humanities and social sciences, the term culture is considered as a vague and slippery as it has various meanings and connotations. As a result, it creates difficulties as well as confusion among scholars since it is difficult to define culture in a univocal sense. Raymond Williams, a Welsh cultural critic, remarked: "culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language ... because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct systems of thought"(Williams, 1976/1983:87).

Most of the scholars have provided various definitions on culture, yet there is no unanimity among scholars regarding the definition of culture. In the early 1950s, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, two American anthropologists (1952) collected a range of

academic definitions of culture, mostly anthropological definitions. In this context, Apte, in his book *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (1994: 2001), states:

Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s (still) no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature. Much of the difficulty in understanding the concept, characteristics and definition of culture stems from the different usages of the term as it was increasingly employed in the nineteenth century (cited in Lebron, 2013).

Phillip Smith in his book, *Cultural Theory: an Introduction* (2001) briefly outlines the history of the idea of culture. Smith states that from the sixteenth to nineteenth century the term culture began to apply to the improvement of human mind and learning of personal manners. Later, it was used to differentiate between two words: cultured and uncultured person. At the same time period, the term culture was also used synonymous with the term 'civilization', a value laden term which was associated with the improvement of society. For instance, the European culture of that time and the Barbarism of Africa, which indicated a line of difference between the former and the latter by considering one as civilized and the other as uncivilized. The basis of this division was primarily technological differences as well as lifestyle including manners and customs. Smith argues that later, culture began to refer to the spiritual development, in contrast to the material changes, with the rise of Romanticism. Smith also shows how the concept of culture conveyed the meaning of tradition and everyday life in the late nineteenth century with the emergence of Romantic nationalism. As a result, people have begun to use concepts like 'folk culture' and 'national culture' (Smith, 2001).

Considering the complexities of defining culture, Raymond Williams (1976/1983) has given three predominant usages on the basis of the historical shifts of the term 'culture'. Hence, the term culture refers to: firstly, the intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual development of a person or a whole society; secondly, various artistic activities, including movie, art, and painting; and lastly, the whole way of life, including customs, beliefs of a person, group or a society.

The above first and second usages of the culture are highly value laden and elitist in nature. And these definitions are evident in the works of literary critic and aesthetes

Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin and F. R. Leavis. Smith argues that the works of these theorists considered culture as “work of high art which could educate, edify and improve those who came into contact with them” (Smith, 2001:2). As Arnold states: “culture was a pursuit of total perfection by means of getting to know...the best which has been thought and said in the world....culture is, or ought to be, the study or pursuit of perfection...sweetness and light...an inward condition of mind and spirit” (cited in Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952:29). Likewise, the German concept ‘*kultur*’ also has similar connotations, equating culture with civilization and intellectual and artistic development of a society. This kind of elitist perspective and high culture was later criticized by theorists, notably the works of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E. P. Thompson. In contrast to the elitist perspective on culture, the third usage, that is, “culture as whole way of life” (Williams, 1983) shows “culture is found everywhere and not just in the high arts or in Western civilization” (Smith, 2001:2). This definition, later, became the central to anthropological studies.

Sociology and Culture

Though culture has been the central concept of anthropological studies, sociological studies also focus on the concept of culture. In fact, sociologists, like anthropologists, see “culture as the whole way of life of a group or people” (Williams, 1983). However, anthropology and sociology are not only the two disciplines who engaged in the study of culture; obviously there are other disciplines. Among the social science disciplines, historical studies, cultural psychology, and cultural studies are the major field to devote their attention to culture. Apart from Social Sciences, culture is also studied within various humanities disciplines, for instance, philosophy, linguistics, English and so forth. Nevertheless, what makes sociology of culture different from other disciplines is their object of study, method and especially a sociological interpretation (Wray, 2013).

Like other social scientists, sociologists also find notoriously difficult to define the term culture. Spillman (2002) argues that the problem with the definition of culture is that although culture attribute to study the “whole way of life of a group of people” in sociology, it also creates confusion as scholars have taken that to mean different things. For instance, different scholars might emphasize different analytic dimensions of

meanings and value, customs, practices, rituals, worldviews and so on. Since meaning and interpretation are active and fluid process, a definite list of cultural elements is not possible. Therefore, Spillman (2002) opines that the confusion, ambiguity and complexity associated with the definition of the term ‘culture’ can be resolved only if we consider culture as meaning making process. In this way, culture can be viewed both “as a specialized realm and an attribute of groups” and it can include all the elements (such as values, practices, rituals, principles, artifacts) which constitute to be the important parts of culture. This approach to culture is central to the domain of cultural sociology.

Sociology of Culture and Cultural Sociology

In this section, I would like to discuss briefly about how culture becomes a part of sociological analysis. I will also discuss the challenges of the theoretical status of culture in sociology and how the domain of sociology of culture is distinct from cultural sociology.

Unlike anthropology, culture occupied a peripheral place in mainstream sociological theory till early twentieth century. As Spillman put, “culture remained a residual category full of analytic confusion till the twentieth century in sociological thought”(2002:5). Though classical social thinkers like Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Karl Marx included the cultural dimension in their study (for instance, Marx notion of ideology, Durkheim’s idea of ritual, symbol, Weber’s studies on social action attach with subjective meaning), their understanding of culture, unlike anthropology, did not make a cultural theory. This created a problem in the discipline of sociology which always seeks the help of anthropology in the matter of definition, explanation and examples of culture. (ibid)

As a result, during 1970s and 1980s, sociologists have begun to devote attention to culture “as a way of reframing sociological thought”. In this context, Diana Crane (1994) opines that the conventional sociology of culture (American Sociology), as influenced by classical sociological theory and social anthropological perspective, conceive culture as peripheral to their study. In fact, she argues that sociology of culture till 1970s and 1980s discussed culture implicitly. For instance, Neil Smelser, in his book *Theory of Culture*

(1992), examines, “selective formations of culture during the past one hundred years” primarily from classical theory and anthropology (cited in Crane, 1994:2). His analysis shows that the classical sociology and anthropology conceived culture as norms, values, beliefs, and customs of a group or a society. This aspect of culture, as stated by Wuthnow and Witten (1988:1-50) is “an implicit feature of social life....constituting the underlying assumptions and expectations on which social interaction depends”.

Thus, till 1970s and 1980s, sociological study of culture was of implicit nature or only focused on unrecorded aspect of culture (Crane, 1994). Therefore, there was a need for reframing the notion of culture in sociological thought by giving priority to both recorded and unrecorded aspect of culture and establish an explicit study of culture within the discipline. For this reason, it was only during 1970s and 1980s, sociology of culture expanded and reinvented with the coming of new interpretive turn across humanities and social sciences. This new sociology of culture had taken a multidisciplinary perspective (including anthropology, history, political science, feminist studies, and ethnic studies, post-structuralist theory in France and cultural studies group in Britain) to the analysis of both recorded and unrecorded culture (ibid).

The above discussion was only about how culture is reinvented in sociological thought, especially from sociology of culture approach. However, it is worthwhile to discuss the debate between two distinct fields, that is, sociology of culture and cultural sociology within the discipline of Sociology. The central point to this debate is the role of culture in sociological analysis.

Emergence of Cultural Sociology

Although sociology of culture is the dominant field to study culture under the discipline of sociology, cultural sociology emerged as a new paradigm to this dominant tradition. Indeed, this new cultural approach challenges the conventional sociological models of analyzing culture, which holds that culture is dependent on the social structure. The new approach has also revised the conventional sociological view of culture ; that is; culture as elitist or artistic activities (for example, art, music, literature), and brought into a new cultural paradigm which includes all sophisticated to the mundane activities and elements of our daily social life and practices.

Hence, it encompasses a broad view in defining culture. Moreover, cultural sociology also conceives culture as a bridge between structure and agency. The main aim of this new approach is to critically analyze the conventional sociological models and theories and establish a new understanding of the role of culture in social life. The development of this new field has been seen with the growing cultural sociological research, especially in the establishment of research institutes, for instance, Yale University Centre for Cultural Sociology, which is founded in 2004 and the popularization of this field had especially seen in 2007 with the launch of UK Journal *Cultural Sociology* (Back et al. 2012).

Jeffrey Alexander, Ronald Jacobs and Philip Smith, in *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology* (2017), argue that the domain of cultural sociology emerged due to two reasons: the first was the demise of Parsonian Functionalism² and the second was the cultural turn. Cultural Sociologists argue that Parson's assumption, that is, social system function through common value pattern is excessively conservative and it ignores the dynamic interrelationship between structure and agency. In Parson's theory, as Smith put, "culture is implicated in the construction of an 'over socialized' human actor or a 'judgemental dope' who has internalized values and norms and who perform their social role in a robotic way" (Smith, 2001:33-34). This critique is mostly evident in the works of symbolic interactionist, ethnomethodologist and phenomenologist. Adding to Mills' and Gouldner's critiques, David Lockwood asserts that Parson's normative functionalism assumes culture as "purely integrative, system-maintaining functions" (ibid: 33). Against Parsonian cultural explanation, borrowing from French structuralism and post-structuralism, this new tradition offered a new resource for thinking about meaning-centered cultural analysis.

Another reason for the emergence of cultural sociology was the 'cultural turn'³, which began during 1960s across social science disciplines. This turn is also known as 'linguistic or interpretive turn'. The cultural turn has brought a new analysis or interpretation of culture, which conceive culture not just a product of class relations or any ideological domination of the ruling class. In contrast, the new cultural analysis

² For more details on the critique of Parsonian Functionalism see Alvin Gouldner(1970) and C W Mills (1959).

³ The emergence of Cultural Sociology is strongly influenced by the 'Cultural Turn', see David Chaney (1994)

encompasses a different view of culture where individuals and groups are the active agents in the production of culture. Thus, this new arena of analysis focuses on the '*everyday production of culture*', at the same time; it also accords importance to individual actor in that production process (Giddens, 1991, Chaney, 1996 and Back et al. 2012).

While sociological studies on culture had gained attention in Britain and Europe during 1960s, sociologists in United States devoted their attention to culture only in the late 1980s. Indeed, till 1988, the American Sociological Association did not form any department of culture. Although there are differences in various aspects about sociological studies on culture in Britain and United States⁴, the main focus here is the debate between sociology of culture and cultural sociology in United States (Back et al, 2012).

During late 1980s, a section of sociologists began to study culture by “focusing on organizational structure and other material forces which shape the institutional production of culture”. Prominent sociologists to this movement include Diane Crane, Howard Becker, Paul DiMaggio, Wendy Griswold, and Richard Peterson. They conceive “culture as an object of production and consumption, which is shaped and explained by other social conditions” (ibid). For instance, Howard Becker, in his book *Art Worlds* (1982/2008), argues that any art activity is a group activity, it depends on the organizational structure, including individual artist, audience, suppliers of materials, distributors, all who can help in the production of final art work. The scholars working in this field are also influenced by the works of Pierre Bourdieu, emphasizing on class and status in the production and consumption of culture. This production of culture approach later came under the domain of sociology of culture. This approach mainly emphasized on the role of structure, resources in determining the production of a specific cultural product. This cultural tradition tended to ignore what we call the meaning centred analysis, that is, how an individual make meaning of their everyday social activities (ibid).

⁴ Sociologists in Britain and United States, differs from each other in the cultural analysis, which later turned into two distinct field of cultural analysis: Sociology of culture and cultural Sociology, See Back et al, 2012.

Therefore, in contrast to sociology of culture, a group of scholars in United States started to devote their attention towards meaning centred social analysis. This new tradition is later known as cultural sociology approach. This tradition of sociological approach is influenced by the works of Immanuel Kant, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. This approach holds that “each culture has its own distinctive understanding of what fits into each category. What is regarded as ‘special’ in one cultural context could be regarded as not at all special in another, and vice versa” (Inglis, 2005). Therefore, this approach privileged meaning-centred social analysis. Ann Swidler and Jeffrey Alexander are the two central figures of this approach.

Ann Swidler (1986) conceives culture as a ‘*pragmatic toolkit*’ (consisting of symbols, ideas, stories, and worldviews) which helps an individual to guide their specific action in specific context. In other words, culture provides individual habit, pattern and behavior to guide their day to day activities in a certain way. However, Alexander (2003), focusing on the autonomy of culture, argues that the social meaning is not pre-determined by organizational structure or class relationship or any external forces, in contrast, social meanings are context specific. Alexander criticizes the sociologists who failed to give autonomy to culture. However, to Alexander, the problem here is that sociological description to social phenomenon is ‘thin’ (a term used by Clifford Geertz). Therefore, he argued for a ‘strong program’ in cultural sociology (cited in Back et. al. 2012:27). Therefore, in the essay, “The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Elements of a Structural Hermeneutics” (2003), Jeffrey Alexander and Philip Smith proposed a two stage model for a stronger cultural sociology. As they put:

What is needed here is a Geertzian ‘thick description’⁵ of the codes, narratives, and symbols that create the textured webs of social meaning. The contrast here is to the ‘thin description’ that typically characterizes studies inspired by the weak program, in which meaning is either simply read off from social structure or reduced to abstract descriptions of reified values,

⁵ Influenced by hermeneutics tradition and interpretivist perspective, cultural sociology committed itself to ‘thick description’ (a term used by as by Clifford Geertz). Both Alexander and Swidler considered it as the starting point for cultural sociology. Clifford Geertz (1973) described the idea of thick description in the following way: “*Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning*” (Geertz 1973: 5)

norms, ideology, or fetishism . . . *[Only] after the internal pattern of meaning has been reconstructed . . . does it become possible to discover in what ways culture intersects with other social forces, such as power and instrumental reason in the concrete social world*(Alexander and Smith 2003: 13–14)

Arguing for a strong cultural sociology, Alexander and Smith (2003) state that “sociologists need to treat meaning on its own terms, before considering the relationship between culture and society” (cited in Back et. al. 2012:27).

The cultural sociology in United States not only attacked the sociology of culture approach; however, their resistance is also towards British cultural Studies. The cultural sociologists (in United States) argue that British Sociologists conceive culture as a product of class relation, and emphasizes on the hegemonic relations and ideology behind those cultural artifacts. Most importantly, British Cultural studies see the production of social meaning from specific class, in this way, this tradition align cultural resistance with class resistance (ibid).

Thus, we have seen that sociology of culture, cultural sociology and cultural studies are three distinct mode of inquiry in the area of cultural theory. However, the present study mainly centred on the field of sociology of culture. Next section will discuss various sociological perspectives on culture.

Sociological Perspectives on Culture

In this section, I would like to give a brief account of various sociological approaches to culture. Although in sociology, culture refers to a whole way of life of a group of people, depending upon their theoretical orientation; different sociologists see culture through different lenses.

Functionalist Perspective

Functionalism is one of the major sociological perspectives which hold that society is stable and orderly system with interrelated parts; where each part has specific functions which contribute to the stability and smooth functioning of the system as a whole. It

holds that different parts of society are, primarily the institutions of society like family, education, economy and all, dependent on each other.

Emile Durkheim, an early proponent of functionalist school of thought, posited that culture played a key role in social functioning by providing shared norms and values that bound people into groups, and groups into societies and thereby culture plays a vital role in keeping the social system stable and productive. Durkheim argued that culture maintains these functions through collective representations and classificatory systems. For Durkheim, “collective representations are symbols and rituals which express values and meanings common for a social group and classificatory systems are ways in which social life are regulated and ‘wrongs’ and ‘rights’ are established” (Smith,2001:11). Through the idea of ritual, symbol and sacred, Durkheim tried to show the collective sentiments among people which is essential for the functioning of society (ibid).

Later, functionalism was developed by Talcott Parsons which is known as Structural-functionalism. He developed a systems theory approach, borrowed from cybernetics, where he viewed culture as an implicit feature of social life. He opines that culture provides moral underpinnings for human behavior and social action. For Parsons, culture is a vital feature of human life through which human can communicate with each other and maintains stability of social system. However, structural functionalism was criticized for ignoring role of actor in the social change process (Wray, 2013).

Conflict Perspective

Conflict theory is another important perspective in sociology which emerged 1950s and 1960s as a response to structural functionalist perspective. In contrast to functionalism, conflict theory focuses on the struggle in social life where there is a continuous conflict between classes to control over scarce resources. The classical pioneer of this approach was Karl Marx. Marx saw social conflict aligned with his theory of class struggle and economic determinism which is later (in twentieth century) known as Marxist tradition. This tradition viewed culture as a set of ideas and beliefs that sustain the power of dominant classes, as Marx and Engels (1932) wrote “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas”. Later, Marxist thinkers belong to Frankfurt School such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer focus on repression of individual critical faculty

in modern society. In the late nineteenth century, the work of British Cultural theorists, notably Raymond Williams led conflict theorists to take a deeper interest in culture, seeing it not just as a reflection of class ideologies, but as one of the arenas where class struggle occurred. This school shows that the working class people had culture too, and they often used their cultures as symbolic weapon to fight back against the elite and middle classes. With this shift, culture was seen not only as an explicit product of class struggle, but also as a force that could potentially create oppositional identities and counter-cultural movements (Wray, 2013)

Interpretive Approach /Symbolic Interactionism

Max Weber, the founder of interpretive sociology, advocated a *Verstehen* approach to social analysis and suggested that human actors should be thought of as active and meaning driven. He was decisively influenced by the German Hermeneutic tradition; especially by Wilhelm Dilthey. Like Durkheim, Weber also viewed religion as core component of culture. His work on *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/1958) is one of the best known works in the arena of cultural theory.

Drawing upon Weber's interpretivist approach which gives importance to subjective meaning of social actors, Symbolic interactionism views interactions between individuals and groups as the building blocks of society. Influenced by the philosophy of George Herbert Mead and George Simmel, symbolic interactionist emphasize on human interaction and day to day life of people. The key theorists of this school include Herbert Blumer and Erving Goffman. In their works, Blumer and Goffman show how meanings are interpreted by different persons from different point of view, hence, symbolic interactionist focuses on the interpretative meaning attached with each and every social act. Therefore, symbolic interactionism holds subjective meanings at the core of their analysis. Thus, for symbolic interactionism as "culture is a set of symbols and meanings about the world".

However, while functionalism and conflict theory are lenses that bring into sharp focus the objective social facts and constraints of the social world (i.e., structure), the lens of symbolic interactionism emphasizes on human action (that is, agency) and its associated subjective meanings. Symbolic interactionist theory continues to inspire cultural

sociologists today because it provides concepts and methods that render meaning-making visible for analysis and interpretation (ibid).

Culture, Structure and Agency

The structure-agency dualism is still a problem in sociological theory. Some branches of sociology (such as structuralism, functionalism and Neo-Marxism) stress *the structural significance on human action*; other branches of sociologists (for instance, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism) *devote priority to the actor*. Margaret Archer (1988) has pointed out that “the problem of structure and agency has rightly come to be seen as the basic issue in modern social theory” (1988:ix).

Nevertheless, there are some sociologists who seek to examine the interrelationship between structure and agency. In the late twentieth century scholars, notably, Anthony Giddens, Margaret Archer, Pierre Bourdieu, Jurgen Habermas, Norbert Elias were concerned with the interrelationship between structure and agency. Giddens’ theory of structuration claims that “agency and structure cannot and should not be thought of as separate forces, but rather as a duality existing in a dialectical relationship to one another. The two are indiscernible and coexisting in all forms of human activity” (cited in Ritzer, 2015:5).

Margaret Archer (1982) throws light at the linkages between agency and structure. She considers the difference between culture and structure as a conceptual one. To Archer, the term ‘culture’ refers to the non material phenomena and ideas, in contrast to the structure, which she defines as material phenomena. She believes that the two are not interchangeable but largely intertwined in the real world. Archer theory mainly focuses on morphogenesis, or the process whereby intricate interchanges in the system lead not only to change in the overall structure of that system but also to an end product of structural elaboration (Ritzer,2015).

Archer’s theory was developed as a critique to Giddens’ view on structuration. In contrast to Giddens, Archer believes that agency and culture are indeed separate entities and that denying this separation denies the possibility of examining the effects of one upon the

other (ibid). As She put “culture is the product of human agency but at the same time any form of social interaction is embedded in it”(1988:77-78)

Though these theorists differ in their approaches, the major concern of their work is to conceive culture as a bridge which binds agency and structure. Wray in his book *Cultural Sociology: An Introductory Reade (2013)*, explains the dynamic relationship among culture, structure and agency in the following way:

Culture can be seen as the soft tissue that connects muscle (action) to bone (structure). Culture is the ligament, tendon, and cartilage of the social body. Without it, agency would be disconnected from structure, and structure from agency. When culture (connective tissue) ages and hardens into a durable shape, it is more or less indistinguishable from structure (bone). When it is new and flexible, it is more or less indistinguishable from agency (muscle). At a quick glance, muscles, bones, and connective tissues seem very distinct from each other, but when studied under a microscope, one discovers that they are composed of the same basic building blocks- cells. Something similar happens when sociologists study culture, structure, and agency. In most cases, we have no trouble distinguishing them from one another, but at times, a great deal of confusion arises from the difficulties of drawing precise lines between them (Wray, 2013:xix).

Critical Summary

The area of cultural theory or cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field which engaged in the study of the nature of culture and its implications in our social life. Raymond Williams’ definition of culture “as whole way of life of a group or a society” has become core of all disciplines across social sciences and humanities. This definition provides us with a democratic view on culture, removes the hierarchical division and distinction associated with the term culture. The analytical distinction between sociology of culture and cultural sociology has shown that the former provided a macro level of analysis of culture, that is, the organizational structure and its influence on the production of culture, and the latter encompasses both micro and macro level of analysis, by defining culture as meaning- making process.

CHAPTER TWO

Classical Marxism and Western Marxism

This chapter will first discuss classical Marxist understanding of culture and then move towards Western Marxism. The term ‘Classical Marxism’ denotes the Marxism, initiated with the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, till the Marxism of Second and Third International⁶. This tradition of Marxism is also referred to as ‘Orthodox Marxism’ or ‘Scientific Marxism’. Though the writings of classical Marxists had a very dim view on culture or its various forms, classical Marxist understanding of culture is essential to grasp the whole Marxist intellectual journey on culture. In this chapter, therefore, we are going to discuss some of the prominent Classical Marxist theorists such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Karl Kautsky, Georgi Plekhanov, Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky and Mao Tse-Tung.

Karl Marx (1818–1883)

Karl Marx was one of the greatest minds of Victorian era whose revolutionary ideas are still inspired the intellectual community as well as the socio-political movements of contemporary time. Karl Marx was born in Trier, Prussia in a Jewish middle class Family. Marx was very young when his father, Heinrich, converted to Christianity (Lutheranism) for some security reasons. Marx’s intellectual life began when he went to University of Bonn to study Law. Apart from law, Marx also studied history, philosophy and language at the University. Marx completed his doctoral degree from the University of Jena in 1841. He also studied at the University of Berlin. During his studies in Berlin, Marx was greatly influenced by Hegel and the Young Hegelians. Marx also worked as a journalist for some years. But due to his radical political views, he was being accused of treason and exiled by the Prussian government. Although Marx was from Germany but he spent most of his intellectually productive years in Paris, Brussels and London. He died in 1883.

⁶ Though Classical Marxism basically denotes the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels never accepted the connotation Marxism. It is basically the followers of Marx, who gave the name of classical Marxism to the era of Marx and Engels, see Walker and Gray(2007)

In the arena of cultural theory, Marx was regarded as ‘anti-cultural theorist’, based on his socio-political writings (Smith,2001:6). Nevertheless, though Marx wrote seldom on culture, his theory of historical materialism provides a materialist outlook on culture.

During his young age, Marx was keenly interested in poetry and drama. During the early years of university, Marx studied literature and aesthetic along with philosophy and law. However, the social chaos and conditions made him think in a more philosophical way. Indeed, in later periods, Marx abandoned his poetry in favor of philosophy (Solomon,1979). In the University of Berlin, Marx’s intellectual life was heavily influenced by the writings of G W F Hegel⁷. Later, he became one of the members of young Hegelian and was critical to his master at later period. His starting point is to understand the basis of history in materialistic term in contrast to Hegel’s interpretation of history in idealistic term. Hegel or other idealists till nineteenth century failed to incorporate in their analysis that the changes in culture and all other form of thoughts is influenced by the material dynamics. In other words, culture, religions are dependent on the economic aspect of a society. This material dynamics in cultural analysis is the core of Marx’s theory (Best, 2011).

Both Marx and Engels advocated the materialistic interpretation of history. In contrast to Hegelian philosophy of idealism, argues Marx, social change can only be understood through how human beings involve in the production process, that is, how they produce their material needs, rather on what they think or imagine. Thus, to Marx, economy (that is, mode of production) is the real driving force of history.

Thus, economy is the base of the society which includes forces of production and relations of production. Cultural, social and political institutions forms the superstructure of the society, that is, institutions like religion, law, literature are all built on top of the base, that is, the economy. Marx contends that individual’s ideas and beliefs are nothing but part of the production process. That is, for Marx, material life shape ideas, ideas do

⁷ G.W F Hegel ((1770-1831) was a German philosopher. Like Plato, Hegel was an idealist and emphasized the importance of mind and mental products over material world. In the arena of cultural theory, Hegelian philosophy provides an idealistic outlook to culture, unlike Marx’s materialistic approach to culture.

not shape material life. Therefore, a radical change in the economic structure of a society led to a radical change in the entire superstructure. As Marx wrote, in his Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859/1970),

In the social production which people carry on, they enter into relations that are defined, indispensable, and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real base, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond defined forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness (Marx, 1859/1970:20-21).

Marx contended that the superstructure grows out of the base, and reflects the interests of the capitalist class. In other words, both Marx and Engels looked at culture which serves the interest of a particular class at particular historical period. In *German Ideology* (1932), they write: “*The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force*”(Marx & Engels, 1932:64)

Therefore, for Marx, culture in capitalist society operates as dominant ideology. Phillip Smith (2001) lists out certain characteristics of the dominant ideology: Firstly, it reflects the views and interests of the capitalist or bourgeoisie which are accepted by subordinated class as legitimate ideas and beliefs. Secondly, it grows out of the economic relations of production; hence, these serve the interest of bourgeoisie. Thirdly, it provides a distorted view of reality. Therefore, the working class lives in state of false consciousness. Fourthly, it creates commodity fetishism, in which, the social constructed things (wage labour, and commodity), seem natural and inevitable.

Though Marx has trivialized culture as epiphenomenon in capitalist society, his early writings *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript* of 1844 (1932/1964) had given a more culturally sensitive vision of social life. As a humanist, Marx, like his contemporary theorist Matthew Arnold, emphasized on the “antithesis between cultural value and

modern capitalist civilization” (Milner, 2003:50). However, both Marx and Arnold differed in their analysis, while the former focused on production of culture, the latter drove his attention to cultural consumption. Marx argued that in the capitalist production, alienation occur at different level, for instance, exploitation of workers, separation of fellow workers, and so forth. Therefore, Marx made a distinction, conceptually, between alienated and unalienated labour. For him, labour, in a capitalist production, is nothing but a mere commodity while unalienated labours are regarded as ‘species being’. Here, the term ‘species being’ includes the humanness of humanity, constituted by our capacity for conscious, collective, creative production (Milner, 2003; Smith, 2001). In fact, Marx conceptualized the notion of unalienated labour to denote the artistic, intellectual activity, as he put: “Animals produce only according to the standards and needs of the species to which they belong, while man is capable of producing according to the standards of every species...hence man also produces in accordance with the laws of beauty” (Marx, 1975:329). Thus, for Marx, in capitalist society, the antithesis between culture and civilization was seen as the antithesis between unalienated labour and capitalist commodification process.

Period of Orthodox Marxism or Economic Determinism

After Marx’s death, a group of his followers continued his theory of dialectical materialism. However, these followers turned Marx’s theory into a theory of economic determinism⁸. This generation of Marxism, during Second and Third International, were known as ‘Orthodox’ or ‘Scientific’ Marxism. Marx’s theory of historical materialism, no doubt, based on the argument that economy is of prime importance which determine all other superstructure (politics, religion, culture and so forth) in the society. Though Marx considers economy as the paramount importance in a capitalist society, as he termed it as base, he did not seem to take a deterministic position in his dialectical analysis. In fact, for Marx, dialectic operates through mutual conflict and contradictions among the various

⁸ Economic determinism is a doctrine which holds that economic aspects of social totality determine its non economic aspects. Though based on Marx’ model of base and superstructure, there is a problem between Marxian theory and Economic determinism, which has not yet come to end. For more details about the debate between Marxism and Economic determinism, see Resnick and Wolff, 1982.

sectors in a society. In contrast to Hegel's dialectic, as Marx carried in his theory of materialism, theorists (like Friedrich Engels, Karl Kautsky) of Second and Third International developed a new interpretation on dialectic. In his book, *Anti Duhring* (1878) Engels argued that dialectic is natural law and therefore every society went through a process of dialectic, therefore, revolutionary transformation from capitalism to socialism is inevitable. In other words, it is just like a gravitation pull, whether we want or not, there will be revolutionary transformation from capitalism to socialism (Callinicos, 1976).

Following Engels, Karl Kautsky and others, in the early twentieth century, emphasized on the objective nature of dialect. It means the evolution of human society occurs through natural law. As Boucher(2014) commented:

Marxism was a scientific politics that revolutionized history just as Darwin had radicalized nature. It formulated general laws of history that demonstrated a unilinear process of social evolution, which ascended through a historically necessary sequence of modes of production, culminating in a communist society (Boucher, 2014:48).

Based on Marx's base and superstructure model, the Orthodox Marxists believed in the dialectical relationship between base and superstructure and reduced it to a simplistic and mechanistic understanding. In so doing, they overlooked the relative autonomy of culture and other superstructure as compared to economy. Orthodox Marxists formed a mechanistic and vulgar Marxism where the issue of art, religion, politics, and ideas are simplified and trivialized in the process of class struggle (Best, 2011).

Friedrich Engels (1820-1895)

Friedrich Engels began his career as a poet and literary critic. Indeed, his first published work was "The Bedouin", a poem, in the *Bremisches Conversationsblatt*. However, like Marx, he subordinated his poetic interest to politics. Engels wrote numerous works of his own, most notably *The Condition of the Working Class* (1845), *Anti-Dühring* (1878), *Dialectics of Nature* (1878–1882), and among others. As a friend and political collaborator, Engels coauthored many books with Marx, most notable are -*The German Ideology*, *the Holy Family* and *The Communist Manifesto*. After Marx's death, Engels

became the leading authority on Marx's ideas. However, he was criticized for oversimplifying or sometimes distorted Marx's theory, giving positivist character to Marxism particularly as espoused by the Second International. Though Engels differed from Marx in his interpretation on dialectic, it was only about the method, but he shared the same political philosophy as stated by Marx (Walker and Gray, 2007).

Engels was born in Barmen, Prussia. Coming from a wealthy family, Engels supported Marx financially in later years of his life. Engel's father was a businessman associated with cotton- textiles mills in Barmen. He wanted Engels to join the family business, but Engels' revolutionary zeal disappointed them. Engels was influenced by the writings of Hegel and began to writing newspaper articles, most of them were about the ills of industrial capitalism. In 1841, he joined military service in Prussia Army. He published various essays in *Rheinische Zeitung* anonymously, especially about the poor conditions of working class. However, he met Marx in 1842. After meeting Marx, Engels extensively engaged with the publication of socialist writings.

Engels played a vital role in codification, systemization and simplification of Marxism and thus established it as a political doctrine. His works reduced the philosophy of dialectic to the methods of natural sciences. Same path was later followed by Karl Kautsky. It led to the evolution of Economic Determinism and built the foundation for Scientific Socialism that run till fourth International. However, Engels positivistic interpretation overlooks the aspects of culture and like Marx, he, too, considers culture as ideology of ruling class and as superstructure.

As an aesthetic lover and literary critic, Engels was critical towards bourgeoisie art forms. Georgi Plekhanov (1978:5-53) stated that "Engels was a realist aesthetic. Engels, like Zhdanov, criticizes bourgeois modernism (Cubism) as decadent," (Milner, 2014:54). In his letter to Margaret Harkness, Engels defines realism as "besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances"(Solomon,1979:67).

Karl Kautsky (1854-1938)

Karl Kautsky was the well known follower of Engels ideas on dialectic. In fact, he was the leading theorist, after Engels's death, of scientific socialism. He involved in the German Marxist Movement and was recognized as the leading figure of the Second International. In 1883, Kautsky was the first who founded the first Marxist journal *Die Neue Zeit*. Like Engels, Kautsky also reinterpreted Marx's theory and gave it a rationalist and scientific outlook. He believes that the path to capitalism to socialism is inevitable.

Kautsky was born in 1854 in Prague. He studied history, economics and philosophy at the University of Vienna. His political activism began in 1875 when he joined the Austrian Social Democratic Party. Kautsky Marxism dominated the European Marxism for two decades. Kautsky writing was polemical of Leninism and he opposed to Eduard Bernstein's for his reformist approach towards Marxism. Apart from his polemical writings, Kautsky had a deep interest in visual art, influenced by his father. He published a lot of writings on art. For instance, "Development in Art", "Art and Society", "The Material situation of the artist and its influence upon Art" and so forth (Solomon, 1979:114).

The above theorists belonged to German Marxism; now we will move towards the scenario of Russian Marxism and Chinese Marxism. Russian and Chinese Marxism, based on the deterministic model of base and superstructure, had trivialized culture in the process of class struggle, or in other words, focused on the political possibilities of culture.

Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918)

Georgi V. Plekhanov was regarded as the 'father of Russian Marxism' (Walker and Gray,2007). Lenin and Plekhanov initially worked together under the same political philosophy, however, in 1905, Plekhanov took the side of Mensheviks⁹ against the

⁹ The term Mensheviks refers to the faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party led by Yuri Martov and Paul Axelrod that opposed Vladimir Ilich Lenin at the second party congress in 1903. At the congress the main point of difference between Lenin's followers (the Bolsheviks) and the Mensheviks was the latter's advocacy of a broad party membership in opposition to the former's position favoring a narrower, tightly organized and disciplined active membership. The Bolsheviks (from the Russian for majoritarians) gained a majority on the party's Central Committee which gave the Mensheviks their name from the Russian word *men'shinstvo* meaning the minority. Menshevism also

Bolsheviks¹⁰, and became increasingly critical of Lenin and his party for their ‘unprincipled’ activities and for having attempted a revolution in 1917 in “violation of all the laws of history” (ibid: 236). To Plekhanov, Marxism is a world view and holds that economy is the base which determines all other superstructures (ibid)

Apart from his political and economic writings, Plekhanov book *Art and Social Life* (1912) can be said as the major influence on Russian Marxism. A key figure to the Marxist aesthetic theory, he linked the theory of historical materialism to art. As Solomon wrote: “Plekhanov’s primary significance for Marxist aesthetics lies in the intelligent application of the deterministic aspect of Marxism to the genesis of art and art forms” (Solomon, 1979:120). In *Art and Social Life* (1912), he argues that art is more than its aesthetic value and it has specific function in society. His view on art rejects the notion of art for art’s sake which, he believes, would isolate art from political and economic reality. For Plekhanov, “artistic form as a kind of superstructure, and artistic content as its material base, that is, the value of a work of art is determined, in the last analysis by its content” (Plekhanov,1957).

Plekhanov argues that artistic content should be the realistic representation of our material life. Thus, realism refers to the accurate depiction of social reality; it is not simply a literary convention to create illusions of our social reality. Hence, the value of an artistic work can be measured only if it can depict a genuine picture of our social reality. As Plekhanov remarks: “when a work distorts reality, it is a failure” (ibid: 63). Therefore, culture is seen as “the mirror of social life” in Plekhanov’s work. (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2008:197)

came to be associated with the view that a bourgeois democratic revolution would have to take place in Russia and a period of capitalism would have to occur before the conditions were ripe for the socialist revolution (See Walker and Gray,2007).

¹⁰ The name Bolsheviks derives from the Russian word *bol'shinstvo* meaning the majority, and refers to the faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party led by Vladimir Ilich Lenin that achieved a majority on the Central Committee of the party at its 1903 congress. The opponents of Lenin at this congress came to be known as the Mensheviks. Bolshevik was officially used in the party title in 1917, and continued in subsequent party name changes until 1952. The term is often used loosely to refer to supporters of Lenin or to Russian communists more generally. Under Lenin Bolshevism was associated with the notions of the vanguard party and democratic centralism; under Josef Stalin it came to be linked to policies of socialism in one country, rapid industrialization, a collectivized agricultural sector, and centralized state control (See Walker and Gray,2007).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Plekhanov aesthetic theory had neither political intention nor power. While Plekhanov views art as the true reflection of society, Zhdanov holds that “artist is an engineer of the human soul, educating the working classes and portraying reality in its revolutionary development” (ibid:197). It is under the Zhdanovism, that Zhdanov linked art with official Soviet Marxism. Zhdanov, at the Soviet Writer’s Congress (1933), had announced soviet literature as one of the rich and revolutionary literature compared to the literature across world. He had given the credit to Soviet writer for “correctly and truthfully depict the life of our Soviet country” (cited in Milner, 2003:55). At the same time, like Engels, Zhdanov criticized bourgeoisie literature as decadent. In his words: “bourgeois literature...is no longer able to create great works of art... Characteristic of the decadence and decay of bourgeois culture are the orgies of mysticism and superstition, the passion for pornography” (cited in Milner, 2003:55).

V. Lenin (1870-1924) and Proletkult Movement

Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, popularly known as Lenin, was the most prominent figure of Russian Marxism. He was the leading person behind the Bolsheviks fraction of Social Democratic Party in Russia and became the head of the first communist state all over the world.

Lenin was born in Simbrisk. His mother, Alexandrovna was an amateur pianist. Lenin, not at least influenced by his mother, had a keen interest in music. He played both Piano and violin. He was a great music lover. In this context, his sister Maria wrote: “Music had too powerful an effect on his nerves, and when they were upset, as was the often the case in the turmoil of life among the émigrés abroad, it affected him badly” (cited in Solomon, 1979:164). However, Lenin sacrifices his music aesthetic for the revolutionary demand of the masses.

Though he was popularly known as political activist, he also contributed to Marxian theory. Lenin’s theoretical view, influenced by Marx, was later known as Leninism¹¹ or

¹¹ Leninism, or Marxism-Leninism, is the philosophy of V Lenin who adds to Marxism a theory of imperialism, part system and its applicability in Russian Conditions. Leninism includes Marx basis philosophy, including dialectical materialism, class struggle, scientific laws of history and society. Stalinist, Maoist and Trotskyists are the Marxist who influenced by Lenin.

Marxism-Leninism. He had shown the applicability of Marxian theory in Russian condition, emphasizing on imperialism, party system and class conditions in Russia. Lenin believed in democratic centralism and dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin argues that Marx has only shown the spontaneous class consciousness of workers, and did not include the class struggle faced by the whole society at large. Unlike Marx, Lenin believes in the vanguard party system with dedicated professional revolutionaries. Lenin idea of democratic centralism rests on the notion that each and every decision of the party will be taken on a democratic basis, including masses. In Lenin words, “freedom of discussion, unity of action” (cited in Walker and Gray,2007:186-187). However, his whole idea of democratic centralism later became centralism at the expense of democracy.

Proletkult

During the Bolshevik regime, the Soviet communism gave rise to a movement for Proletariat Culture, or in short, *Proletkult*. A few Russian Socialists believed that art can be a means to awaken revolutionary potentials of proletariat. Proletkult, as the word indicates, refers to a movement of proletariat to create their own culture in the sphere of literature, drama, music and so forth. The leading and authoritative figure behind this movement was Anatoly Lunacharsky¹², a member of Left Bolshevik.

Proletkult movement was started and expressed in school clubs, literary studio, theater, musical studio, and group singing and dancing were encouraged, among others. However, later it has been noticed that literature, music, theatre were all encompasses monotonic feature, not reflecting the principles of Proletkult. The only domain of artistic work in which one can find at least an echo of the fundamental principles, as stated by the leaders of the Proletkult movement, is in the poetry. In those works, one can find a number of fundamental aspects which are of interest, for instance, the tragedy of class

¹² During Third international (1919-1943), all delegates to the international met at the invitation of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Proletkult for the purpose of organizing a world Proletkult movement. In that meeting, an International Bureau of Proletkult was formed and Lunacharsky became the president of that Bureau. The principles of this Bureau were: the organization of the Proletkult movement in all countries; and extended preparations for a World Congress of the Proletkult. In the terms of this announcement, the proletarian culture is regarded primarily as another weapon in the hands of the proletariat for its class struggle against the bourgeoisie (see Pasvolsky,1921).

struggle, the situation of work, domination of capitalist towards workers, among others (Pasvolsky, 1921 and Mally, 1990).

Another Russian Marxist Leon Trotsky (1923) also asked for necessity of a proletarian culture in the new proletariat regime, and breakdown of the control of soviet party over artistic work. However, Trotsky provided a pessimistic view towards proletariat culture. Linking history with the creation of artistic forms or activity, he wrote:

One cannot turn the concept of culture into the small change of individual daily living and determine the success of a class culture by the proletarian passports of individual inventors or poets. Culture is the organic sum of knowledge and capacity which characterizes the entire society, or at least its ruling class. It embraces and penetrates all fields of human work and unifies them into a system. Individual achievements rise above this level and elevate it gradually (Trotsky, 1923).

Trotsky holds that the formation of independent proletariat culture is not possible. Comparing bourgeois art forms with proletariat, he provided a pessimistic view for the creation of proletariat culture. As Trotsky wrote:

Does such an organic interrelation exist between our present-day proletarian poetry and the cultural work of the working class in its entirety? It is quite evident that it does not. Individual workers or groups of workers are developing contacts with the art which was created by the bourgeois intelligentsia and are making use of its technique, for the time being, in quite an eclectic manner. But is it for the purpose of giving expression to their own internal proletarian world? The fact is that it is far from being so. The work of the proletarian poets lacks an organic quality, which is produced only by a profound interaction between art and the development of culture in general. We have the literary works of talented and gifted proletarians, but that is not proletarian literature. However, they may prove to be some of its springs (ibid).

Trotsky view was opposed by Lunacharsky and Bukharin. In this context, Issac Deutscher in his book *The Prophet of Unarmed* (1959) said, “Trotsky treated the proletariat dictatorship as a cultural vacuum and viewed the present as a sterile hiatus between a creative past and a creative future” (cited in Solomon, 1979: 190-191).

Though Trotsky was pessimistic about a new proletarian culture, he asked for total autonomy of artistic work under Soviet Union. Unlike Trotsky, Lenin was hostile towards the development of proletarian culture. As he put: Proletkult is “an organization where

futurists, idealists, and other undesirable bourgeois artists and intellectuals added the minds of workers who needed basic education and culture” (ibid:164). Lenin emphasized on adult education and had a negative attitude towards Proletkult movement, which he regarded as non Marxian. In fact, Lenin wanted to focus on the general literacy and organization of library. Under his regime, the autonomy of Soviet art was rejected.

Thus, the autonomy of artistic work was disregarded by the Soviet Union. However, under the regime of Joseph Stalin and Zhdanov, Soviet art had given paramount importance, with emphasizing on socialist realism¹³. Indeed, art or artistic activity was seen as a tool for political use. Like Soviet Marxism, Chinese Marxism, under the authorship of Mao, also used art or artistic activity for political purpose.

Mao Zedong (1893-1976) and Cultural Revolution

Mao Zedong was the key figure of Chinese Marxism. His ideas are later known as Maoism¹⁴ or Mao thought. Like Lenin, along with political activism, Mao was also a theoretician. Under his regime, new economic policy was introduced, for instance, Great Leap Forward¹⁵. His regime was characterized by New Democracy, One hundred Flowers campaign and Cultural Revolution. Mao believed communist revolution as a continuous process, in order to stave off capitalist ideas. After the failure of Great Leap Forward Policies, Mao asked for Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution in 1966. It was ostensibly an attempt to revitalize the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ; indeed, Mao

¹³ Socialist Realism, also known as Zhdanovism after the figure in the Stalinized Communist Party of the Soviet Union associated with making this the official aesthetic and cultural policy of the Soviet Union from 1935 until its demise, (Anshen,2017)

¹⁴ Maoism is the unofficial term for Mao thought or the ideas and politics of Mao Zedong. The principal themes are an emphasis on voluntarism, dialectical philosophy especially the theme of contradictions, a class analysis that focuses on the attitudinal aspect of class identity and on the revolutionary role of the peasantry, a revolutionary theory incorporating the notions of guerrilla warfare and “encirclement,” and a commitment to democratic centralism and the “mass line.” Maoism has been popular among Third World Marxists, for example the Shining Path (Walker and Gray,2007).

¹⁵ Great Leap Forward was one of the China’s economic initiative adopted in 1958. This was an attempt to rapidly increase production while moving away from the Soviet five-year plan model. It involved decentralization of economic decision-making, more emphasis on light industry and agriculture, and the creation of communes and small-scale local units of production. An example of this was the attempt to set up backyard furnaces throughout China in place of huge industrial ones. The Great Leap Forward was not a success. It failed to produce sustained increases in production, often saw the quality of goods produced decline and required coercion to implement. It was abandoned in the early 1960s (Walker and Gray,2007).

tried to get rid of his opponents from Chinese Communist Party. The Cultural Revolution, thus, involves the supporters of Mao's ideas (Walker and Gray, 2007).

In the Cultural Revolution, Mao included the young generation of China, and formed a Red Guard. Indeed, this was a mass student led movement against the old Chinese culture. During 1966 to 1976, this revolution attempted to purge the old Chinese culture which includes: old ideas, old habits, old customs and old culture. During this revolution, art forms such as posters were used to awaken the masses. As opposed to old customs, old culture, old habits and old ideas, modern Chinese posters of recent genre were used, as a means of mass communication and distinct form under the directorship of CCP. These posters were mounted in public places and sold in stores. Lincoln Cushing (2007) has pointed out that during cultural revolution, art, posters in particular, were guided by several principles, for instance, "rejection of Western and Chinese Classical rejection of art for art's sake and developing artwork from previously disenfranchised social strata and region" (Cushing, 2007). Like public art in post revolutionary Soviet Union, these posters were created to serve the masses. In the words of Mao:

Revolutionary Culture is a powerful revolutionary weapon for the broad masses of the people. It prepares the ground ideologically before the revolution comes and is an important, indeed essential, fighting front in the general revolutionary front during the revolution (cited in Cushing, 2007:7).

Moreover, Mao's main aim was to awaken masses for revolution and realizing them the implications of Marxism in China. As he remarked:

Our literary and art workers must accomplish (their) task and shift their stand; they must gradually move their feet over to the side of the workers, peasants, and soldiers, to the side of the proletariat, through the process of going into their very midst and into the thick of practical struggles and through the process of studying Marxism and society (cited in Cushing, 2007:7).

Western Marxism: A Short Introduction

Western Marxism was developed, in the beginning of twentieth century, mainly as a reaction against the 'Vulgar Marxism' of Second and Third International. It is widely popular among other forms of Neo Marxism for its contribution to cultural theory. The

prominent thinkers of this Marxist tradition include George Lukacs, Karl Korsch, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Perry Anderson and many others. These Marxist theorists were influenced by Classical German Sociology, for instance, Hegel's dialectic and Marx's humanism. This generation of Marxist thinkers is also known as Hegelian Marxist.

Western Marxists were extremely critical of orthodox Marxism and scientific socialism who dominated the Socialist Revolution during Second and Third International. If we look at the Marxism during Second and third International, led by the Marxists like Bukharin and Kautsky, we can easily say that it reduced Marxism to economism. These Marxists thinkers emphasized on the base and superstructure model where capitalist economic system determines the entire superstructures including culture, education, and religion. Western Marxist scholars were disagreed with Scientific Socialism where it is believed that social change is governed by the law of nature and there is no role of human actor and their consciousness. Western Marxist claim that orthodox Marxists were so much obsessed with objective and external character of social change that they forgot that it is only human actors who, with their conscious actions, can bring the real change in a society. Western Marxists saw this as orthodox Marxism as its entire stress on the base (Callinicos 1976, Kolakowski, 1978c).

Thus, Marxism during that period was only about studying laws and abstract theory like physics and other natural sciences, and did not give attention to the practical side of social change. Western Marxist hold the view that there is no Marxism without practice, therefore, what we need is a dialectical unity (*praxis*¹⁶) between theory and practice. Karl Korsch (2012) argues that Marx's and Engel's work was also the product of the unity between practice and theory where they were successfully combined revolutionary practices of proletariat with the theoretical development of bourgeois science.

¹⁶ Praxis generally refers to action or activity. However, Marx used the term to refers to the free, universal and self creativity activity through which man creates (makes, produces) and changes (shapes) his historical, human world and himself; an activity specific to man, through which he is basically differentiated from all other beings. In this sense man can be regarded as a being of praxis, 'praxis' as the central concept of Marxism, and Marxism as the 'philosophy' (or better: 'thinking') of 'praxis'. See (Bottomore, 2001:438).

Following the strong trend of subjectivism (unity of subject and object), Hegelian Marxism argued that it is not always possible to see the objective social reality from a bourgeois subject position; we need proletariat subject too to understand it. This generation of Marxist renounced objectivism, scientism and economism and propounded a new philosophy where culture, subjectivity and ideology critique were given importance. Thus, as opposed to orthodox Marxism, they had given importance to relative autonomy to culture, in other words, they transformed Marxist attention from economy to cultural theory. In this context, Perry Anderson wrote: “Western Marxism as a whole... came to concentrate overwhelmingly on study of *superstructures*... It was culture that held the central focus of its attention” (Anderson,1976:6-75)

Phillip Smith (2001:37) in his book *Cultural Theory* outlines some important features of Western Marxism:

- This generation of Marxists attempt to explain cultural phenomena within a Marxian framework. In doing so, they show how culture plays an autonomous and vital role in the regulation of social life under a capitalist society.
- It rejects that revolution is inevitable, as stated by Marx, make ideology as crucial in their cultural analysis.
- In this tradition of Marxism, one can find the humanist elements like consciousness, freedom, subjectivity, collective association, alienation, creativity and so forth. The thinkers are influence by Marx’s *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript of 1844*.

Gyorgy Lukacs (1885-1971)

Gyorgy Lukacs was widely viewed as literary theorist, historian, critic, aesthetics whose contribution to Marxists theory is influential. His book *History and Class Consciousness* (1971) is regarded as the founding text of Western Marxist tradition.

Gyorgy Lukacs was born in 1885 at Budapest, Hungary. He came from a wealthy Jewish family and studied in various places like Berlin, Budapest, Heidelberg and Moscow. He was awarded three doctorate degrees (Political Science, Law and Philosophy) in the course of his studies. It was only during his high school days, he developed a keen interest in literature, art and drama. Lukacs died in 1971 in Budapest.

The important feature of Lukacs theory is that he interpreted Hegel's philosophy of dialectic with Marx's concept of reification and commodity fetishism. Apart from Marx and Hegel, Lukacs was also influenced by the writings of George Simmel, Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey. Lukacs writings are considered as vital sources of cultural Marxism as he was successfully rediscovered and promulgated Karl Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript*.

In his pivotal work *History and Class Consciousness* (1971), Lukacs describes how capitalism has touched each and every dimension of our social life, including culture, law, and education. In the era of twentieth century, argues Lukacs, human values and activity have no place but subsumed under the commodity relations with a monetary exchange value. As a result, the social world is getting impoverished and losing its authentic meaning. In other words, capitalism transformed the social world into a dehumanized world where human beings become mere 'things' subject to social forces beyond their control. Drawing on Marx's analysis of wage labour, Lukacs paints a gloomy picture of social life: "the workers fate is typical of society as whole in that this self-objectification, this transformation of a human function into a commodity reveals in all its starkness the dehumanized and dehumanizing function of the commodity relation" (Lukacs, 1971:92).

Lukacs criticizes the principle of modern rationality and calculability which embraces every aspects of social life. To Lukacs, reification¹⁷, which can be linked to the process of commodification¹⁸, has led to a world where people have false perception towards social life. It helps in building a market structure where people become uncritical of market exchange. As a result, they start to believe that commodity is something external and independent of them. Hence, in the capitalist system, labourer forgets that commodities

¹⁷ Reification is the act (or result of the act) of transforming human properties, relations and actions into properties, relations and actions of man-produced things which have become independent (and which are imagined as originally independent) of man and govern his life. Also transformation of human beings into thing-like beings which do not behave in a human way but according to the laws of the thing-world. Reification is a special case of alienation, its most radical and widespread form characteristic of modern capitalist society. See, (Bottomore, 2001:463).

¹⁸ Commodification can be considered as one of the salient features of modern capitalist system whereby every aspects of socio-cultural life including human labour are turned into commodity. In contemporary times, capitalism has expended its domination through the commodification of culture. See, (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1972).

are result of their own human interactions and labor in the economic sphere of production and reproduction (as cited in Smith,2001). Lukacs takes this idea of commodity fetishism, which Marx restricts in the economy, and apply it to society at large. Lukacs holds that capitalism reaches a stage where human actors feel every social structure, (not only economy) is out there, objectively existing independent of their subjective will (Kolakowki, 1978c, Ritzer, 2015). As a result, people's consciousness about social life was fragmented or incomplete as they failed to grasp the totality of capitalist economic system and became unaware of the effect on them. As a part of Western Marxism, Lukacs rejected the economism and placed his focus on human actor or agency. He asserts that capitalism turned the social world in such miserable place, exchanging human relations; therefore, what we need to get emancipation is a sense of class identity, class consciousness on the part of working class. Therefore Lukacs writes: "History is at its least automatic when it is the consciousness of the proletariat that is at issue" (Lukacs, 1971: 208). The revolution will come only through self awareness of the working class and realization of the ideological effects on them (radical art, culture, and education). The working class people should have a correct understanding of social and historical reality (Smith,2001).

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to note that Lukacs' writings on socialist realism were both theoretically and politically complicit with Zhdanovism. On the one hand, he supported the modernist art forms and great bourgeoisie realists like Balzac, Tolstoy and Thomas Mann, and rejected the idea of socialist realism as espoused by Zhdanov. On the other hand, he also gave critical remark against literary modernism. As he wrote: "modernism leads not only to the destruction of traditional literary forms, it leads to the destruction of literature as such" (cited in Miner, 2003:63-64).

However, Lukacs *History and Class Consciousness* inspired the Frankfurt School theorists immensely. As Milner (2003) points out: "From Lukacs the School inherited a stress on the notion of totality, a rejection of both science and scientific socialism as partial and detotalizing, and a sense of the truth value of theory as related to its social role, initially as theoretical companion to the working class, always as in itself emancipatory. They inherited also Lukács's quasi-Weberian notion of reification" (2003:64)

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)

Antonio Gramsci was one of the influential Italian Marxist theorists. Along with Georgy Lukacs, Gramsci is considered as the forefront of Hegelian Marxists. His interpretation of Marxism had provided a revision to orthodox Marxism as well as suggested an alternative to Leninism.

Gramsci was born in Sardinia, Italy in 1891. In 1911, he won a scholarship to study in Turin University where he was influenced by the Italian idealist philosophy and the writings of Benedetto Croce in particular. In 1913, he joined the Italian Socialist Party. Since 1913, he was extensively involved in socialist writings for socialist publications. He also helped in the publication of socialist weekly called *Ordine Nuovo* in 1919 which supported the factory council movement in Turin. Hence, in 1921, he was successful in establishing the Italian Communist Party. However, in 1926, he was imprisoned by Mussolini fascist regime and spent his remaining life in prison. His book *Prison Notebooks* is one of the remarkable contribution to Marxian theory. Gramsci's writings inspire both School of Humanist Marxism and Eurocommunism (Gray and Walker, 2007:125-126).

Gramsci's Marxism rejects the two claims of Orthodox Marxism: economic determinism and laws of history. For him, economy, alone, cannot determine all other superstructures in a straightforward way and the revolution is not inevitable. He argues that revolution cannot occur without the consciousness of the subordinated or oppressed class. In this context, Edgar Sedgwick state that "a belief in economic determinism and the inevitability of revolution is, for Gramsci, akin to a religious belief in salvation or predestination"(2002:87). Hence revolution involves the total emancipation of the oppressed class, a radical change in their social practices as well as in their ideas or consciousness. Revolution is a process where the oppressed classes can change their status as mere object to the agents of making history (cited in Edgar and Sedgwick, 2002). Like Karl Korsch, Gramsci believes that Marxism is a "philosophy of praxis", which combines intellectual activity with practical moment of the class struggle which, in turn, provides the oppressed class a self understanding as well as self consciousness of their position. In contrast to Lenin Vanguard Party System, Gramsci suggests the role of

intellectual in the struggle, that is, he argues that all classes should have their body of intellectuals who helps them in expressing their actual experiences (ibid).

Antonio Gramsci's main contribution to cultural theory is his concept of cultural hegemony. In simple words, it refers to the domination by one group on another through cultural means such as ideas, beliefs, values, worldview, and so forth. In his *Prison Notebooks* (1929-33/1992) Gramsci argues that the capitalist class maintains its power not only through force or coercion, but also through consensus whereby people give consent to the powers that oppress them and considered it as legitimate and unalterable. He argues that consent to the domination of ruling class is achieved by the transmission of 'dominant ideologies'¹⁹ which are created in the sphere of civil society. Gramsci makes a distinction between political society and civil society. Political society is the domain in which one can locate the hegemony of the state through its political apparatus whereas civil society is the domain where the more invisible forms of power are located through the institutions of education, culture and religion. Therefore, using the intermediate sphere of civil society, the capitalist class sustains its hegemony and power over the working class. Gramsci also claims that state is not an independent entity; it is an instrument of class domination. In other words, state represents the interest of bourgeoisie (cited in Smith, 2001).

Therefore, Gramsci states that what proletariat need is a revolution through cultural means, that is, there is a need to develop a new culture of proletariat (which is a composite expression of their dominant ideas and consciousness) which led to the end of cultural hegemony of bourgeoisie. However, Gramsci also states that the new revolution through cultural means is only possible with the help of intellectuals who would facilitate an understanding of relationship between politics and the economic system to the common people. To Gramsci, intellectuals are autonomous and independent of any class, but functionaries of superstructure. He differentiated between two kinds of intellectuals. On the one hand, organic intellectuals, created by each social class "give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function" (cited in Milner, 2003:66). On the other hand, traditional intellectuals are "categories of intellectuals already in existence... which seem

¹⁹ Dominant ideology consists of ideas, beliefs, and worldviews of the capitalist class.

to represent...historical continuity”(ibid:67). Gramsci argues that it is the organic intellectuals, including scholars, engineers, scientist, philosopher, who can lead their class in their fight against dominant hegemony.

However, the problem here is that organic intellectual also can form a hegemonic bloc. It is the alliance among industrialist, aristocrats and petty bourgeoisie. This group was held together by hegemonic ideology that incorporated the aspects of nationalist and common sense thinking and used this to paper over divergent interest and class locations. Therefore, there is a need to create a solidaristic bloc with the help intellectuals, specially the socialist ones to challenge the hegemonic ideas and beliefs. It is the alliance among subordinated class, for instance, peasants and workers (Smith, 2001). Gramsci made a distinction between war of position and war of movement on the battlefield of political struggle. He contends that proletariat should take war of position, rather a war of movement, which will be the correct strategy to fight against hegemonic bloc. This war will be through the cultural and ideological institutions. Gramsci’s concept of ideology and hegemony were later inspired the New left theorist, notably, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall.

Louis Althusser (1918-1990)

Althusser was a key French Marxist theorist, popularly known for developing a new intellectual tradition called structural Marxism. Rejecting the humanist interpretation of Marx, Althusser contends that Marxism is a science. He argued that there is a radical break between Marx’s early humanist writings and his later scientific writings. Althusser termed this transformation in Marx’s work as ‘epistemological break’²⁰. However, Althusser regarded Marx’s scientific writings as intellectually superior as compared to his humanist writings. Later, he developed an innovative structuralist reading of Karl Marx.

²⁰ Louis Althusser assert that Marx’s writings can be divided into two parts: pre 1848 and of 1848 writings. While the former writings are characterized by human nature, alienation and self realization and after 1848, Marx writings are mainly about the scientific law of history and society where he overlooked the role of human consciousness. Althusser called the separation of young Marx writings from mature Marx, as ‘epistemological break’ (See, Bottomore, 2001 and Walker and Gray,2007).

Althusser was born in Birmandreis, Algeria. After attaining education from Lyon and Paris, he became Professor of Philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure. He played a vital role in Catholic youth movement in the 1930s and imprisoned in a German prison of war camp during World War II. Later, he joined the French Communist Party in 1948. His intellectual life later turned him into depression and a stage of mentally unstable. His most significant contributions include *For Marx* (1965), *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971), *Essays in Self-Criticism* (1976), and *Reading "Capital"* (1970 with Étienne Balibar).

Althusser rejected the traditional Marxist model of base and superstructure. He denounces the economic determinism view, and wanted to give autonomy to the superstructure. He argues that in a capitalist society, economy, ideological, political and cultural structure all have determinant role. While Marx holds that economy determine the entire superstructure of a society, Althusser contend that superstructure had a relative autonomy from the base. The superstructure could also have its own impact upon the social life. However, Althusser states that the reciprocal relationship between the base and superstructure ultimately lead to a state where economy is the determinant factor. He termed this as "determination in the last instances"(Althusser 1971:135)

Althusser argues that superstructure (ideological, cultural and political) helps to sustain the power of capitalist class. Indeed, Althusser, like Gramsci, argues that the state and legal systems all are "the machines of repression which enables the ruling class to ensure their domination over the working class" (ibid: 137). In his essay, *Lenin Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971), Althusser contends that state produces necessary conditions for the reproduction of capitalism in two ways: Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). While the former is functioned through coercion, the latter is functioned through the production of illusion about the system or people's consent. RSA include police, military, law which are used to crush protest or break strikes or suppress Left wing insurgencies and ISA include school, church, media and so forth which are used to create a false representation of society, rather a true understanding of the capitalist system. In this context, Althusser wrote: "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real condition of existence" (ibid:162). Althusser contends that ISA plays a vital role in propagating an illusory

subject position to the oppressed class as against the formation of their objective self identity in a capitalist system. As he put: “all ideology has the function....of constituting concrete individuals as subject”(ibid:171).

Critical Summary

Classical Marxist theorist were overemphasized the role of economy in the process of social change and overlook the role play by the superstructure, especially culture. They refer culture to the values and ideology of the dominant class whom they branded as Bourgeoisie. Thus, the classical Marxist theorists weighted ideology from a single dimension. In other words, they failed to incorporate the dualism of ideology, that is, the ideological essence through which the bourgeoisie gain hegemony over the working class as well as its constructive ethos through which it can usher in a revolutionary ideology. This is explicitly discussed by Antonio Gramsci.

How ideology operates to sustain power of the dominant class in a capitalist society can be compared with power structure or control of individual in a total institution. Althusser argues that capitalist structure, through ideological apparatus (including cultural practices), control the individual. In fact he adds that individual subjectivity in a capitalist society, the way he/she acts in day to day life, is controlled by the structure. In the same way, Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman argue, rather than focusing on the reproduction of ideologies, how the power structure in a total institution is maintained by controlling ‘the self’ of an individual. In total institutions like prison, boarding school, people abide by certain rules and regulations, as formed by the authority of that institution. Power operates in both the cases, but one can hardly visualize it in capitalist society as compared to a total institution.

In classical Marxist understanding of culture, one can find two shortcomings. Firstly, classical Marxists (basically Soviet Marxists) were obsessed with the creation of a ‘proletariat culture’, hence, they overlooked the socio-historical conditions or forces in the creation of a culture, as Raymond Williams discussed. As Leon Trotsky said, proletariat culture can never be separated from bourgeoisie culture. In this context, we can take the example of Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, as discussed by

Fredrick Jameson. This is an example of postmodern culture which has the element of both modern and postmodern architecture.

Secondly, Soviet Marxists approach to art, that is, partisanship of artistic activity had curtailed the freedom of artists and neglected the aestheticism of an art work. Politicization of art can be one of the functions of an artist or an artistic activity; however, there are other functions such as pleasure or entertainment purpose. For instance, folk song or dance of a society, this serves for entertainment or specific purpose like festival in that particular society.

CHAPTER THREE

Frankfurt School and Birmingham School

The Frankfurt school denotes a group of German intellectuals associated with the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. This institute was founded in the early 1920s. However, with the coming power of Nazi Germany, the school was dispersed, and it had moved to the United States. In fact, one can claim that the development period of the school can be linked to the rise, victory, or fall of Nazism. Most of the prominent members of this school belonged to the middle-class Jewish family (for instance, Adorno and Benjamin), therefore, the school's focus of study, more or less, has been influenced by the origin of their members. Nevertheless, in 1945, the School moved back to Germany²¹.

The major theorists of Frankfurt School are Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas. In the works of Frankfurt School thinkers, one can find a common theme about their "critique of modernity" and "methodological stands towards rationality" (Smith, 2001:42). The School is popular among academics and especially given attention because of its diverse research interest, in several academic disciplines, for instance, empirical sociology, musicology, philosophy, social psychology, psychoanalysis, history, the Soviet economy, literature and law. Although the School is very much diverse in their research interest, the core theme of their research is the "critical re-appraisal of Marxist thought" (Smith, 2001:42). Moreover, the theorists of Frankfurt school wrote extensively on cultural phenomena such as mass culture, popular culture, and literature, and provide an account of exploitation and domination in contemporary capitalism.

Popular for its critical re-appraisal of Marxism, there was some kind of shifts in the focus of the School over the period of time. In the beginning of the formation of the School (or basically known as the Institute for Social research), Carl Gunberg (1861-1940), known

²¹ For detail overview of Frankfurt School see Kolakowski (1978c:341)

as the father of 'Austro Marxism' (Jay, 1973), became the first director of the institute. Under his directorship, the School's focus of study was based on orthodox and scientific Marxism (Jay 1973; Antonio 1983). Some of the major works of the institute, under the directorship of Grunberg, were: Henryk Grossmann's *The Law of Accumulation and Collapse in the Capitalist System* (1929), Karl August Wittfogel's *Economy and Society in China* (1931), Friedrich Pollock's *Experiments in Economic Planning in the Soviet Union 1917-1927* (1929), among others (Bottomore, 2007). Under the directorship of Max Horkheimer, the School had gone through a significant change in their focus of study. Under the directorship of Horkheimer, the School thinkers propounded a critical theory of society. To put it another way, the thinkers proposed for a critical outlook to study social phenomena. The School emphasized on human emancipation and freedom in the modern or late capitalism which is different from the earlier concept of emancipation of working class or proletariat. (Bottomore, 2007) Indeed, Max Horkheimer was the most notable person in developing the basis of critical theory, distinguished from traditional theory²².

Frankfurt School theorists were mainly influenced by the ideas of George Lukacs and Karl Korsch, especially the concept of reification. They also influenced by the ideas and philosophy of G.W. F. Hegel, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. They were associated with criticism of mass culture, (in the same way as Nietzsche) and degradation of culture due to technology and influence of mass media; and popular culture (Kolakowski, 1978c). The School developed a Hegelian Marxism appropriate for the situation of modern society. The Frankfurt thinkers criticized the economic determinism for giving too much attention to economy and neglecting other realms of social life, for instance, culture and polity. However, in their ideology critique, the School focused on new forms of domination in the cultural realm such as the production of cultural products, and mass media in the modern world. Frankfurt school thinkers, later,

²² In his essay "Traditional and Critical Theory" (1937), Max Horkheimer distinguished critical theory from traditional theory. He argued that the traditional theory is influenced by philosophy of positivism or empiricism i.e. they have a legacy of natural science. Critical theory does not support the study of the society from purely external standpoint and thus has something to do with transcending the rationality and individual purpose (Bottomore 2007).

developed a new Marxist tradition called Cultural Marxism. We will discuss cultural Marxism in more detail in relation to British Cultural Studies.

Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969)

Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno is widely known as philosopher, sociologist and musicologist. He was one of the leading figures of Frankfurt school, and his works on popular culture and music is considered as classic work in those fields. He was influenced by the works of Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche and Western Marxist theorist such as Lukacs.

Adorno was born in Germany in an affluent Jewish Family. Adorno's mother was a professional singer, and of Italian decent. At least not influenced by his mother, he was keenly interested in music, indeed, he learnt piano under Alban Berg. Adorno was born to a Jewish family in Germany. Apart from having keen interest in music, he studied philosophy and psychology at University of Frankfurt and later became its professor of Philosophy. He fled to England, when Hitler came to power. In 1938, he joined the Institute for Social Research in New York. However, Adorno and other members of the institute came back to Germany after World War II.

Adorno's major publications include: *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (co-authored with Max Horkheimer), *The Authoritarian Personality* and *Negative Dialectic*. Adorno's writings are basically a critique of commodity production in contemporary capitalism and its impact on culture.

Adorno and Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1979), show the adverse side of Enlightenment. They argue that enlightenment period was supposed to be marked by human freedom, emancipation and promote critical thinking, but it turned into a period of repression of human freedom and critical thinking. Instead of promoting reason, rationality and critical thinking, Enlightenment has brought the instrumental control of our social life through bureaucratic, ideological or technological forces. In this way, it both limits human freedom and represses critical faculty and helps the capitalist class to sustain its power over the oppressed class.

Adorno and Horkheimer had a different point of view regarding modern capitalism, notably from the work of George Lukacs. Lukacs discussed the commodification relation and commodity production, by taking consideration into two classes, capitalist and working class, based on classical Marxist theory. Adorno and Horkheimer, however, sought the struggle in contemporary capitalism, not only between two classes, rather it rooted in the production process, especially the production of cultural artifacts, such as films, music (cited in Edgar and Sedgwick,2002)²³.

In the essay, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (1979) Adorno and Horkheimer argued that, modern capitalist society is characterized by the increasing commodification of culture. As a result, cultural products are became a crucial medium of ideological domination which helps in maintaining the capitalist order. Adorno and Horkheimer coined a term called ‘Culture Industry’. According to them, this is a type of industry where cultural products (song, movie, art) are manufactured. Like every industry, the aim of culture industry is profit making. To sustain the profit at high level, the products of culture industry follows a production line approach, i.e., the market demand and supply determine the production and distribution of cultural products. In doing so, the production process operates through the principles of rationalization, calculability and standardization. Therefore, there are two features of culture industry products: homogeneity and predictability. As Adorno and Horkheimer (1979) wrote:

As soon as the film begins, it is quite clear how it will end, and who will be rewarded, punished, or forgotten. In light music [popular music], once the trained ear has heard the first notes of the hit song, it can guess what is coming and feel flattered when it does come. . . . The result is a constant reproduction of the same thing (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979:125-134)

²³ As Edgar and Sedgwick (2002) has put it: “while Lukacs retained faith in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat, so that he found in the standpoint of the proletariat a supposedly objective point from which to criticize capitalism, Adorno lacks this faith. Traditional class distinctions are no longer relevant, for all human beings are alike integrated into the ‘totally administered’ capitalist society through commodity exchange, bureaucracy, and through what he calls the culture industry” (2002:1).

In fact, Adorno points out that the entertainment industries like Disney, Sony Pictures are guided by bureaucratic mentality (means- end rationality), which results in the loss of artistic value of a cultural product (cited in Smith,2001). In other words, art is no longer autonomous, but is rather became commodity of the economic relations of production. Adorno and Horkheimer also had a critical view on the role of mass media and advertisement in our everyday life. According to them, advertising uses commercials, magazines, posters to attract the public towards the products of culture industry and ascribe the connotation of ‘coolness’ to it (Adorno &Horkheimer, 1979).

In his critique of television, Adorno, in his “How to look at television” (1991) argues that television has destroyed the human capacity to think. As Adorno and Horkheimer put: “No independent thinking must be expected from the audience” (1972:137). Analyzing the psychological effect of television on its audiences, Adorno claims:

The effect of television cannot be adequately expressed in terms of success or failure, likes or dislikes; approval or disapproval. Rather, an attempt should be made, with the aid of depth-psychological categories and previous knowledge of mass media, to crystallize a number of theoretical concepts by which the potential effect of television – its impact upon various layers of the spectator’s personality – could be studied. It seems timely to investigate systematically socio-psychological stimuli typical of televised material both on a descriptive and psychodynamic level, to analyze their presuppositions as well as their total pattern, and to evaluate the effect they are likely to produce it We can change this medium of far-reaching potentialities only if we look at it in the same spirit which we hope will one day be expressed by its imagery (Adorno,1991:136-151).

Adorno (2005) asserts that the cultural industry products are sold for its exchange value and not for its use value. To him, the increasing commodification has resulted in a market structure where the exchange value of a commodity is given precedence over its use value. Moreover, the greater emphasis on the exchange value of a commodity, sometimes, results in the loss of its use value. In the essay, “On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening” (2005), Adorno points out that music is a product of culture industry and therefore, produced solely for profit motive. He sees music as a commodity in which use value has been replaced by exchange value in contemporary times. Adorno posits that it is this exchange value which creates ‘enjoyment’ in music.

Therefore, in this way, Adorno, like Benjamin and Marcuse, questioned the authenticity of culture industry products.

Both Benjamin and Adorno had an elitist point of view while criticizing the modern forms of cultural products. However, Adorno's elitist orientation made him distinguish between elite culture and popular culture. Adorno claims that popular culture are superficial, trivial, manipulative and pernicious, he particularly attacks jazz music and popular film. On the other hand, his orientation towards avant-garde modernism is for the most part appreciative (cited in Smith, 2001). Popular music, he contends, is "hears for the listener", and requires no level of acquired listening skill, but on the art music part, requires a level of appreciation comes through sustained listening practice. Although it is not explicitly state in Adorno's work but his work implies that while popular music are accessible to mass audience, art music is mainly consumed by elite educated people (cited in Bennett and Rogers, 2016)

Adorno asserts that with the growth of capitalist market all over the world, popular music is nothing but a commodified object in contemporary times. There is nothing authentic about popular music; indeed, its musical techniques were borrowed from nineteenth century classical music (Adorno & Leppert, 2002). However, Adorno's orientation towards popular music was refuted by the later theorist and it is the British Cultural theorists, notably Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. Indeed, British Cultural theorist has focuses on "political validity of popular culture" (cited in Smith, 2001:47)

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)

Popularly known as cultural critic, aesthetic and essayist in the area of Cultural theory, Walter Benjamin is one of the prominent members of Frankfurt school. Walker and Gray described him as "possibly the most important cultural theorist within the Marxist tradition" (Walker and Gray, 2007:24).

Walter Benjamin was born to a Jewish family in Berlin. He studied philosophy and language in Freiberg and Munich respectively. He had shown a keen interest in books and passion for artistic objects since his childhood. In the early 1920s, he started writing

prolific essays and became a prime member of the “German Left-wing avant-garde” (Smith, 2001:44) His intellectual life was heavily affected by Nazism. He left Berlin when Nazis came to power and travelled around Europe, especially Paris, and Portbou and Spain (Roberts, 1982).

Benjamin’s most important writings include *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, *Illuminations*, and *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Benjamin’s work can be seen as a contestation with many of the theorist of the School, especially Adorno and Lowenthal (Edwards, 2007). However, at the same time, his work also influenced them in a significant way. Since he was influenced by German Idealism, Jewish Mysticism, Romanticism and Western Marxism ideas, one can find his writings, both aesthetic pleasure as well as intellectually significant . Edgar and Sedgwick (2002) have divided Benjamin works into three parts. To them, the early works of Benjamin had shown the influence of Jewish Mysticism, for instance, his essays on language and literature; his works during post First World War shows a form of Marxism under the influence Bertolt Brecht. It includes, his study of nineteenth century Paris, focusing on Baudelaire. In his later stages of life, his work return back to the Jewish Mysticism and had shown a relationship between Jewish Mysticism and Marxism. One of the remarkable works of Benjamin’s early writings includes his interpretation of Goethe’s novel *Elective Affinities* and also the *Trauerspiel*. His interpretation of *Trauerspiel* is the most remarkable work in English literature and it is considered as a difficult essay to understand (ibid: 26).

Benjamin was a friend as well as a collaborator with Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), a German Theatre artist. Benjamin collaborated with most of his work, including playwright and creating radio play. Hence, both Brecht and Benjamin, based on their experience, argued that films, radio, photographs are not only created for entertainment purpose, but also an instrument for social change. Indeed, we can claim that most of his writings have a close connection with the ideas of Brecht, especially the essay “Author as Producer” (1937:1978). In this essay, Benjamin drew a relationship between artistic production and politics. Drawing upon historical materialism, he said the artistic and literary activities are part of the mode of production. The techniques used in producing

those work of art or writings can represent specific political orientation. Therefore, he claims that artistic and literary activity can never be autonomous and isolated from political arena. Instead, the artist or cultural creators should turned films, theatre into a forum of political discussion and enlightenment. Artistic work can never simply for audience pleasure and entertainment (Edwards, 2007).

Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936/1973) is the most influential essay in cultural theory. In this essay, Benjamin's central focus was the impact of technology on art. Benjamin criticizes the modern art forms, especially photography and cinema. He contends that in contemporary capitalism, technology has destroyed the auratic quality of art work. According to Benjamin 'aura' refers to the authenticity or originality of an art work which cannot be reproduced. He provided instances of various art forms with their auratic quality in pre-capitalist society. As Smith has pointed out "in pre-capitalist society, the productions of cultural products were shot through the rich texture of meaning. They are the organic products of social relation and invested with a spiritual and sacred character..... They might be the object of a cult (as in a medieval religious icon) or be understood as in some ways connected with genius, authenticity and creativity"(cited in Smith, 2001:43). To Benjamin, the auratic quality of a cultural product indicates its cult value. But with the coming of photography and films, art is created or produced only for masses. Hence, the value of art depends on the display of the work of art in public. It is the exhibition value of art. Thus, Benjamin lament that the auratic quality of art had faded with the shift from cult to exhibition value in twentieth century capitalism. As Benjamin wrote: "The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity.....That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art" (ibid: 43).

Like Adorno and Horkheimer, Benjamin claims that artistic products, in modern capitalism, are become standardized and routinized, which results in mass distribution and possession of art work. Adorno had discussed the psychological effect of cultural commodity on consumer, in a similar way, Benjamin discusses the psychology of consumers in distinguish between traditional and modern art forms. Benjamin holds that the traditional work of art is experienced mainly through distanced contemplation. In contrast, modern cultural forms such as photographs, TV shows and film do not allow for

contemplation. Reception of art now normally happens in a state of distraction, especially in the case of film (Smith, 2001). Moreover, Benjamin put: “the public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one” (Benjamin, 1973:234).

However, unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, Benjamin (1973) was optimistic about the critical and rational thinking of audience. As he put, “the culture industry also produces rational and critical consumers able to dissect the ideological meaning hidden inside a cultural text and performances, much as sports fans learn to analyze and criticize sports events” (cited in Edwards, 2007). Benjamin’s optimistic view on mass media products led to a debate with Adorno, who had a pessimistic view on mass culture²⁴. However, for Benjamin, capitalism will “ultimately . . . create conditions which would make it possible to abolish capitalism itself” (ibid: 219).

Benjamin was concerned with capitalist modernity, especially, in modern city, where strangers, goods and appearances become central to human activity. In his book *Arcade Project* (1982) Benjamin shows “the relationship between consumer sites, consumer behavior and urban form” (cited in Smith, 2001:44), providing an impressionistic account of nineteenth century Paris. He had argued that Parisian arcade that emerged during the 1820s and 1830s transform the concept of space and social relationship. He had given an account of *flaneur*²⁵, which appeared with the development of capitalist architecture like shopping mall, and department store. As he put: capitalist “made use of *flaneur* in order to sell goods” (Benjamin, 1997:170).

²⁴ Adorno and Benjamin debate: Susan Willis (1991) describes whereas Adorno locates meaning in the mode of production (how a cultural text is produced determines its consumption and significance), Benjamin suggests that meaning is produced at the moment of consumption; significance is determined by the process of consumption, regardless of the mode of production.

²⁵ ‘*flaneur*’ is crucial figure of modernism. A *flaneur*, or stroller, walks the anonymous spaces of the modern city experiencing the complexity, disturbances and confusions of the streets with their shops, displays, images and variety of persons. It is used by Baudelaire (1964), Simmel (1978) and Benjamin (1997). See (Barker, 2008:183).

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979)

Marcuse was considered as the ‘*guru*’ of the New Left in Europe. Though he also involve in the critique of modernity and rationality, his works are differed from other Frankfurt School thinkers in certain respects. For instance, he incorporates Freudianism in the theory of Marxism.

Marcuse was born in Berlin. He has his root to an upper- middle class Jewish family. He served for German Army during World War I and worked as an assistant for Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Before joining the Institute for social Research, he moved to the United States when Nazis came to power. However, he remained in United States although other members of the School came back to Germany in 1949. During 1942 and 1950, he worked with United States Government for the Office of Strategic Services and then for the State Department. Later, he taught philosophy in Brandies and University of California. He remained in the United States until his death in 1979.

Marcuse major publications are: *Eros and Civilization*, *Reason and Revolution*, *Soviet Marxism*, and *One Dimensional Man*, which is quite popular as well as influential among these. Marcuse’s works were greatly influenced by G. W F Hegel, Sigmund Freud and primarily the writings of young Marx.

In *Eros and Civilization* (1955) Marcuse, drawing upon Freud’s concept of human instincts, argues that human history is the history of human repression, that is, in every stage of human civilization, there was a repression of human instincts. However, Marcuse, unlike Freud, considered the repression of human instincts as occurred in the society with scarcity, rather considered it as universal. Hence, the repression of human features or instincts is historical, social and cultural, not only biological as Freud said. However, Marcuse contends that the repressive society also produce conditions to end repression. As human instincts are socially and culturally conditioned, they are subject to change. Marcuse distinguished between two types of repression of human instincts: basic repression and surplus repression. While, he argues, basic repression of human instincts is necessary for smooth functioning of a society; surplus repression is the result of domination of one group by another. He argues that capitalist society is characterized by surplus repression. That is, the capitalist class dominates the working class which results

in a transformation from pleasure principle to reality principle. In other words, working class are conditioned or socialized in a certain way to perform in accordance to performance principle or prevailing form of reality principle. That is what the capitalist system demands the workers to perform, there is no place for their subjectivity or humanity in that system, in Marx's words, the capitalist system produce alienated labor (Marcuse, 1955).

His book *One Dimensional Men* (1968) provides his critique of science and technology. In this book, Marcuse examines how capitalism operates through new forms of alienation and repression and external control over individual in both United States and Soviet Union. He rejected idea that technology is neutral; instead, he sees technology as a means of domination in contemporary capitalism. To him, technology is another tool in the hands of capitalist, by which, they can invent new, pleasant and more effective ways of social control. In his words: "Technology, no matter how 'pure', sustain and streamlines the continuum of domination. This fatal link can be cut only by a revolution which makes technology and techniques subservient to the needs and goals of free men" (Marcuse, 1969:56).

He argues that modern technology, particularly television, suppresses the actor's individuality and inner freedom. As a result, individuals lose their critical thinking capacity and their views forms what Marcuse called as "One Dimensional Society". As Marcuse put:

with the control of information, with the absorption of individuals into mass communication, knowledge is administered and confined. The individual does not really know what is going on; the overpowering machine of entertainment and entertainment unites him with the others in a state of anaesthesia from which all detrimental ideas tend to be excluded (Marcuse, 1968: 104).

Moreover, Marcuse points out that the capitalist system sustains its power over the masses through satisfying the false needs and prevents to form more fundamental desires. As Marcuse put:

satisfying the false needs, capitalism sustain its order "the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry [the culture industry] carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers

more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood . . . it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life – much better than before – and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe (ibid:7-26)

Like Benjamin and Adorno, Marcuse also questioned the authenticity of cultural industry products. Indeed, he argues that culture industry threatens the radical potential of authentic culture and as a result what remains of “the antagonism between culture and social reality through the obliteration of the oppositional, alien, and transcendent elements in the higher culture by virtue of which it constituted another dimension of reality. This liquidation of two-dimensional culture takes place not through the denial and rejection of the ‘cultural values’, but through their wholesale incorporation into the established order, through their reproduction and display on a massive scale” (Marcuse, 1968: 58).

Though Marcuse was skeptical about the transformation from capitalism to socialism via revolution as stated by Marx, he hope that the capitalist exploitation or repression can be suppressed by inculcating critical and radical thinking to those who are the victims or oppressed by the capitalist system (ibid:60-62).

Jurgen Habermas (b.1929)

Habermas was quite influential figure of Second Generation of Frankfurt School. Like other Frankfurt School theorists, Habermas writings include the critique of capitalism and instrumental reason. However, his works differ from Adorno and Horkheimer in certain respects. His work can be considered as ‘reconstruction of historical materialism’. In his work, one can find the taste of hermeneutics, and linguistic philosophy and centrally the social interaction (or communication activity) among individuals (Walker and Gray,2007)

Habermas was born in Dusseldorf. He attained his study from University of Gottingen and completed his doctoral degree from the University of Bonn. He had keen interest in

history, philosophy, psychology and German literature. He opted Journalism from 1954-56 and later worked as an assistant to Theodor Adorno from 1956-1959. He joined as a professor of philosophy and sociology at the University of Frankfurt in 1964. In 1971 Habermas left Frankfurt to become the director of the newly formed Max Planck Institute for the study of the Conditions of Life in the Scientific- Technical World at Sturnberg, Bavaria.

Habermas major influential writings include: *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, *Toward a Rational Society*, *Theory and Practice*, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Legitimization Crisis*, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, *Theory of Communicative Action*, and *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. In these and other works he explores a number of themes including how the Enlightenment turned from a source of emancipation to one of barbarism and enslavement, and, linked to this, the role of science and technology in society and the conditions necessary in society for rational discussion.

In his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Habermas shows the rise of public sphere in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeoisie society. He argues that public sphere, mediates between public and private interest, provided the common people to form their opinions, views, arguments or engage in political debates and discussion. Moreover, for the first time in history, bourgeoisie public sphere, stood between civil society and state, enable the common individuals or groups to form their public opinion as opposed to state power or to the dominant or powerful section which were coming to shape bourgeoisie society (cited in Edwards, 2007:55-56). He points out that coffeehouse was core location of public discussion where people could meet and discuss as well as exchange their views and ideas. Another aspect of public sphere was the rise of print media through which common ordinary people can share their views (Smith,2001).

However, Habermas argues that with the rise of industrial capitalism in nineteenth century, there is a drastic transformation from “liberal public sphere to media dominated public sphere”. In contemporary time, public sphere is controlled by larger bureaucratic organizations which serve their interest. It is evident in the work of Adorno and

Horkheimer (especially in their analysis of culture industry). They showed how bureaucratic corporations have taken over the public sphere and turned it into a site from rational discussion to manipulative consumption and create passive audience. In this way, public opinions are now-a-days, nothing but based on the manufactured opinions of media experts or polls rather than emerging from rational debate and discussion (Smith, 2001, Edwards,2007).

While developing his *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) Habermas borrows young Marx concept of species being and human potential. However, he criticizes Marx for not distinguishing between work (for instance, labour, purposive- rational action) and social interaction (for instance, communicative action, symbolic). However, Habermas' main focus was on communicative action. He defines communicative action as:

the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of *reaching understanding*. In communicative action participants are not primarily oriented to their own successes; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can *harmonize* their plans of action on the basis of *common situation definitions* (Habermas,1984:286).

To him, human are generally communicative in nature and through rational communication, human can attain freedom and emancipation. Unlike Adorno and Horkheimer pessimistic view on Enlightenment, that is, reason and scientific knowledge brought instrumental control of social life and sustain the capitalist domination and oppression; Habermas has attempted to salvage the Enlightenment project by redefining the concept of reason. In doing so, Habermas argues that communicative reason can be a tool for human emancipation (Habermas,1984).

Habermas assert that modernity brought freedom to individual, however; it also results in a society characterized by impersonal relationship and alienation. In the capitalist modernity, commodification and bureaucratization, characterized by instrumental rationality, has withered substantive values like equality, human solidarity, democracy and so forth. Another ill of modernity, as discussed by Habermas, is the domination of system world over life world. Through these two theoretical model, he depict a picture

where system world (consists of state, capitalism, large bureaucratic organizations) have colonized the life world (consists of solidarity, family, community, face to face relation) in constant and progressive manner. Habermas, moreover, asks: why rational communication²⁶ is not possible in modern system world? The answer is: money and power has dominated the system world in such a way that liberal communication as a part of public debate has disappeared, or in other words, it is only for the capitalist interest (cited in Smith, 2001).

Nevertheless, Habermas is optimistic about the revitalize of life world, to fight against the system world of commodification and bureaucratic organizations. Hence, he believes in communicative rationality (domination free communication) which includes “honest and informed debate between individuals and which is free from the distorting constraints of ideology and power” (ibid:51). For Habermas, human liberation and emancipation can be achieved only if we can eliminate all the obstacles in the path of rational communication, not all of which are located in the production process (Walker and Gray, 2007).

Advent of Cultural Marxism

Frankfurt School theorist has brought a radical change in the tradition of Marxism. Rejecting the postulates of the orthodox Marxism, this new tradition employed Marxian framework to understand the various cultural forms, their production and consumption. The writings of Frankfurt school theorists, indeed, have given autonomy to culture in contemporary capitalism. Since the School emphasizes on the cultural dynamics of capitalism, it open up a new theoretical orientation in the arena of cultural theory known

²⁶ Analyzing the structure of communication, Jurgen Habermas argues, there are four stages at which the speaker can be challenged by their listener. First, the speaker can be challenged as to the meaningfulness of what he or she says. Second, the truth of the utterance can be questioned. Any utterance will assume certain facts about the world, and these assumptions may be mistaken. Third, the speaker's right to say what he or she says (or to speak at all) may be challenged. (For example, one may question a person's authority to make a particular assertion, or his or her right to make a request or issue an order.) Finally, the sincerity of the speaker may be questioned (so that the speaker may be accused of lying, being ironic or teasing, for example). Therefore, communication follows a model of Ideal Speech Situation where anyone can challenge or question the speaker. However, this model of ideas speech situation is not applicable in our everyday conversation due to power differentials (See Edgar and Sedwick, 2002).

as Cultural Marxism. Cultural Marxists, influenced by the idea of Frankfurt school, provide a critical outlook on culture and ideology and their operation in society. It rejects the notion of dominant ideology as stated by Marx and Engel. Cultural Marxism, instead, stimulate a deep, critical analysis of the production of culture and ideologies within our societies (Jamin,2018).

Specifically in 1960s, the time when Marxism was at peak, cultural Marxism flourished in Europe and other Western countries, and developing a need to understand the various cultural artifacts (its production, consumption, reception) and its socio-historical context, at the same time, need to question the political and ideological significance or effects of the same. Following this tradition, various cultural theories including Ronald Barthes, Galvano Della Valle, Terry Eagleton, Fredrick Jameson and others across the globe continue the tradition of cultural Marxism.

However, the remarkable offshoot, influenced by cultural Marxism, was the British cultural Studies. As Kellner (2005) put “traditions of cultural Marxism are thus important to the trajectory of cultural studies and to understanding its various types and forms in the present age”. In the beginning of 1950s, theorists like Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and E. P Thompson started analyzing the conditions of working class in Britain. Later in 1964, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was formed, by Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall, which provide a multidisciplinary institutional base to cultural studies (Barker, 2008).

The Birmingham School of Cultural studies: An Introduction

The Birmingham School for Cultural Studies or Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was founded by Richard Hoggart. However, Stuart Hall is considered as the key person to give this school as institutional base. Although the theorists of this school (Hoggart, Williams, Thompson, and Hall) are part of British Cultural Studies, there is some point of departure from the same in their analysis of popular culture. In other words, this school was emerged as a response to Leavisism²⁷.

²⁷ Leavisism is a form of literary studies right after the name of F. R Leavis (1895-1978). See, During (2001).

The history of British Cultural Studies can be traced back in Post-war (Second World War) Britain in terms of revival of capitalist industrial system, establishment of welfare state and Western Power's unity in opposition to Russian Communism that led to the advent of a New Britain. In the words of Turner: "this was a culture where class was said to have disappeared, where postwar Britain could be congratulated for its putative discontinuity with prewar Britain, and where modernity and the Americanization of popular culture were signs of a new future. The British culture was subjected to keen scrutiny in an attempt to understand the myriad changes that brought about in cultural, political and economic paraphernalia" (Turner, 2005).

During late nineteenth and early twentieth century, F. R Leavis, and others in British academia, influenced by the works of Matthew Arnold, were worried about the expansion of popular culture in Post War Britain (During,2001 and Turner,2005). During this time, there was mass production and distribution of popular art forms such as novels, popular magazines, popular songs and television, which had become the concern of the 'culture and civilization' tradition²⁸. F. R. Leavis and other literary critics opposed this new form of culture, that is, the Americanization of popular culture and analyzed its moral and aesthetic value. The earliest critic to popular culture was presented in a literary journal called *Scrutiny*. F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson' and Q. D. Leavis, analyzing advertisement and popular fiction respectively, published *Culture and Environment* in 1933) and *Fiction and the Reading Public* in 1932. T. S. Eliot's *Notes towards a Definition of Culture* (1948) also attacked the new classless culture. These literary critics condemned popular culture and consider these art forms as anti-British and questioned the moral and aesthetic value of popular art forms (ibid). This approach to mass culture and popular culture seemed to be elitist, which neglect the notion of "culture as the everyday life of ordinary people" (Williams,1976). Indeed, this approach, led by Mathew Arnold and F. R Leavis in particular, patronized the culture of ordinary people and considered it as 'other culture' (Bennett1981).

²⁸ See Matthew Arnold 's *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (1867—1869).

Leavisism dominated Britain Academic Circle in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Turner, 2005). This elitism was seen as legitimate and natural as the supporter of this elitism shared the same class background. Since pre war Britain had restricted the entry to education system, this elitism, propounded by the theorists from elitist class, had sustained for a long time. However, after War, Britain had experienced an expansion of educational opportunities, irrespective of class. As a result, a large number of boys and girls, from lower middle or working class background, admitted to the colleges and universities. Therefore, post war Britain had opened up a new intellectual tradition as reaction against the earlier elitist intellectual tradition. Both Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams belonged to working class background, involved in the critique of the elitist approach to culture which neglects the role of popular culture. Their writings, in fact, recast the examination of popular culture during 1950s and 1960s (During 2001 and Turner,2005).

Williams and Hoggart work emerged as opposition to the works of aesthete and literary critic T. S. Eliot and F. R Leavis. Leavis and Eliot had opined that “study of culture should be all about the examination of great works of high culture” (Smith, 2001). In their works, they trivialized the importance of popular culture. This kind of elitist perspective also found in Adorno’s study of Jazz Music. William and Hoggart, however, paved a new way to study culture, ascribing importance to popular culture as well as working class culture.

Richard Hoggart (1918-2014) was the first director of CCCS where the British cultural studies established as a domain of study. In his book *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), he explores the changing nature of English working class from 1930s to 1950s. This book can be considered as part of his autobiography in which he explained the experiences of working class. Here, Hoggart (1957) investigates how a “changes in working class culture....in particular as they are being encouraged by mass publications” (Smith:2001). Outlying a overview or life style of working class, including the everyday life- home, family religion and folk and oral tradition, Hoggart argues that the older element and attitude of working class culture has disappeared or challenged in the new forms of mass culture, for instance, “newspaper, paperback novels, glossy magazines and new form of

entertainment like the juke box” (cited in Smith, 2001). Seeing this impact as destructive or pernicious, Hoggart writes: “the mass of talented commercial writers ensures that most people are kept at a level in reading at which they can respond only to the crudely imprecise, the expected, the primary, the most highly colored” (Hoggart,1957:197).

Raymond Williams (1921-1988)

Raymond Williams was widely known as cultural critic and an influential figure of New Left. He wrote extensively on literature, culture, politics, mass media, which is still significant for Marxist cultural theory. His works are considered as influential in the field of cultural studies.

Williams was born in 1921 in Wales. He was a professor of Drama at the Cambridge University from 1974-1983. He worked as an adult tutor and studied at the University of Oxford on Scholarship. Like Hoggart, Raymond Henry Williams came from a working class background and wrote on the theme of “lived experience of working class culture and a commitment to democracy and socialism” (Barker, 2004: 207).

Williams’ major contribution to cultural theory include: *Culture and Society, the Long Revolution, Marxism and Literature* and among others. His book *Culture and Society*(1971), was considered to be immensely influential in the development of cultural studies as a discipline. Through this book, he attempted to provide a systematic and chronological way to think the idea of culture and how it has changed across time in respect to various social, political and economic circumstances. For instance, he writes: “the history of the idea of culture is a record of our reactions, in thought and feeling, to the conditions of our common life”(Williams,1971:285). Thus, Williams’ definition “culture as whole way of life” provides a democratic account of culture.

Differentiating working class culture from middle class, he argues that the former is the “basic collective idea, and the institutions, manners, habits of thought, and intentions which proceed from this and the latter is the basic individualist idea and the institutions, manners, habits of thought, and intentions which proceed from that” (ibid). He also gave an account of the achievement of working class culture:

The working class, because of its position, has not, since the Industrial Revolution, produced a culture in the narrower sense. The culture which it has produced, and which it is important to recognize, is the collective democratic institution, whether in the trade unions, the cooperative movement, or a political party. Working-class culture, in the stage through which it has been passing, is primarily social (in that it has created institutions) rather than individual (in particular intellectual or imaginative work). When it is considered in context, it can be seen as a very remarkable creative achievement (ibid,314).

Though Williams accept Leavis' call for a common culture, his work can be differentiated from Leavis in certain grounds. As Storey (2009) put: "the difference between Leavisism and Williams on this point is that Williams does want a common culture, whilst Leavisism wants only a hierarchical culture of difference and deference" (2009:48).

While *Culture and Society* provides an anthropological enquiry into the idea of culture, the publication of Williams' *The Long revolution* provided a shift towards a sociological approach to understand culture. This book provides a radical revision necessary to lay the basis for a non-Leavis' study of popular culture. In this book, Williams observe the complex organization of culture as whole way of life. He, hence, contends that to understand the culture of a particular society, we need to understand a community of experience in which the culture was lived. This community of experiences is what William calls 'structure of feeling'. To him, the structure of feeling is constituted of shared values of a particular group or community. Smith (2001) points out that the term structure of feeling is "elusive in that it attempts to capture the particular mood or flavor of a given culture and the ways that this experienced by people at a particular moment in history" (2001:153-154). Williams argues (1961) that documentary culture only ever allow us to make an understanding of a 'lived culture' with its distinctive 'structure of feeling'. As he put: "The significance of documentary culture is that, more clearly than anything else, it expresses that life to us in direct terms, when the living witnesses are silent" (1961:49).

Another influential work *Marxism and Literature* (1977) has shown a turn in Williams' theoretical orientation, that is, Marxist theorists (especially Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser) influence upon him. Moreover, Williams argues that the importance of the

concepts of hegemony and ideology in cultural analysis. Later, he developed the cultural materialism approach which challenged the orthodox Marxist model of base and superstructure and argues that “culture is entwined with (not simply determined by) the economic and political structures and experiences of life” (Barker, 2004). This book has been considered as ground work to set theoretical base for the Birmingham School in 1980s.

E. P Thompson (1924-1993)

Edward Palmer Thompson was a British Historian and Marxist theorist. Committed to socialism and communism, Thompson was a key figure in the anti-nuclear movement in Britain and Europe during the period of 1950s to 1980s. Thompson academic and intellectual work, unlike Raymond Williams, were not confined only within the discipline of cultural studies, indeed, his classic book *The Making of English Working class* (1963) put him at the forefront of British social history (Walker and Gray, 2007). This book has also implications for other disciplines like popular culture, sociology, anthropology, ethnography, and so forth.

E. P Thompson was born in 1924 in Oxford. During World War 2 Thompson served in the Royal Army in Italy and Africa. After that, he had earned his bachelor degree in history from Cambridge University. He had joined as an extramural Lecturer in University of Leeds in 1948 and then taught in the University of Warwick. In 1942, he joined as a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. However, he left the party in 1956 over the Soviet invasion of Hungary. He was died in 1993.

Unlike Williams, Thompson analysis of culture was developed within the tradition of Marxism (Turner, 2005). Thompson argument was similar to William in certain aspects. For instance, Both Thompson and William opposed the base and superstructure model and economic determinism to ascribe importance to culture. Both believe in human agency, lived experience, subjective experience and humanism. “Culture, for both men, was a lived network of practices and relationships that constituted everyday life, within which the role of the individual subject had to be fore-grounded” (ibid: 55-56). However, unlike Williams, Thompson not only defines culture as a “whole way of life”, but reframe

as “struggle between the ways of life”. To Thompson, “culture was constituted by the friction between competing interests and forces, mostly located in social class” (ibid: 56).

The Making of the English Working Class is a classic example of ‘history from below’. Thompson emphasizes the centrality of ‘experience’ of the English working class in the formation of an industrial capitalist society. Storey (2009) has summarized the main theme of Thompson’s book in the following way:

This book details the political and cultural formation of the English working class by approaching its subject from three different but related perspectives. First, it reconstructs the political and cultural traditions of English radicalism in the late eighteenth century: religious dissent, popular discontent, and the influence of the French Revolution. Second, it focuses on the social and cultural experience of the Industrial Revolution as it was lived by different working groups: weavers, field labourers, cotton spinners, artisans, etc. Finally, it analyses the growth of working class consciousness evidenced in the corresponding growth in a range of political, social and cultural, strongly based and self conscious working-class institutions (cited in Storey, 2009).

For Thompson, “social class was a process where individuals developed a shared class consciousness as moral actors, selecting their beliefs and conducting themselves in response to social circumstances thrust upon them” (Walker and Gray,2007:312). This sat in direct opposition to the determinism of structuralist Marxism which was influential at that time. Thompson opposed the Marxist Structuralist tradition, especially the structuralist school of thought espoused by Louis Althusser. His book *The Poverty of Theory* (1978/1995) strongly condemned the structuralist tradition for ignoring concrete historical events in explaining change (Walker and Gray, 2007). Thompson believed in theory through practice. According to Thompson, class is a historical phenomenon created or constituted on the basis of social relations and experiences. E.P Thompson critique of structuralist, later, turned into the debate between structuralism and culturalism²⁹.

²⁹ The debate between structuralism and culturalism is one of the basic issues in cultural studies. See Turner,2005

Stuart Hall (1932-2014)

Stuart Hall was the leading figure in the development of British Cultural Studies as a separate domain of study. He was the director of CCCS for the period of 1968 to 1979 after Hoggart left the directorship.

Hall was born in 1932 in a middle class Jamaican family. He studied at Merton College at the University of Oxford on scholarship. Hall also worked as an adult educator tutor. He became the editor of *New Left Review* in the late 1960s. Hall was the professor of Sociology at the Open University till his retirement in 1997. He was the most popular British intellectual who frequently appearing on radio and television. He had written a huge number of essays on politics and culture. His major publications include: *Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse*, *Television as a Medium and its Relation to Culture*, *Resistance through Rituals*, *The Hard Road to Renewal Questions of Cultural Identity and Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

Hall was influenced by his predecessors and at the same time one can see the influence of Gramsci and Althusser in his work. Indeed, the influence of Marxism on Hall's work has led a new tradition in British cultural Studies. As Turner (2005) wrote:

During his decade as director Hall oversaw a tremendous expansion in the theoretical base and intellectual influence of the CCCS. The structuralist enterprise could be said to find its focus there, and the development of both the ethnographic and the media studies strands in cultural studies is clearest there. Cultural studies' development of its distinctive combination of Althusserian and Gramscian theories of ideology and hegemony owes a significant debt to the CCCS and Hall's own work (Turner, 2005:59).

Hall's notion of structuralism, influenced by the work of three figures: Levi Strauss, Ronald Barthes and Louis Althusser, is found in his essay "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms". In this essay, he discussed the divide between culturalism and structuralism. In his critique of Thatcherism³⁰ in Britain, Hall shows the ideology and Hegemonic power of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Barker, 2004:82).

³⁰ Thatcherism was the political and economic policies of Margaret Thatcher when she was Britain's Prime Minister during 1980s. Some British people think that Thatcherism was good for British economy because of the emphasis it placed on private enterprise, privatization, a reduction in inflation and government spending and the idea that people should help themselves rather than relying on the State to help them. An opposite view is that Thatcherism led to loss

Though Hall was associated with Marxism, he opposed Marx's reductionism, that is, "culture as a passive, secondary, reflection in order to stress its active, primary, constitutive role in society" (Procter, 2004). In other words, as opposed to 'Orthodox Marxism' who believed that economic activity can bring change in cultural superstructure, Hall shows the impact of cultural activity on economic production. In so doing, Hall shows how culture organizes everyday life of people.

Unlike his predecessors, Hall deconstructed the idea of popular culture. In the book *Popular Art*³¹ Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel attempted to break the conventional disparities between organic culture of pre industrial period in Britain and contemporary mass culture. As they quote:

This is a perspective that has produced a penetrating critique of industrial society but as a guide to action it is restrictive. The old culture has gone because the way of life that produced it has gone. The rhythms of work have been permanently altered and the enclosed small-scale communities are vanishing. It may be important to resist unnecessary increases in scale and to re-establish local initiatives where we can; but if we wish to re-create a genuine popular culture we must seek out the points of growth within the society that now exists (Hall and Whannel 1967: 38).

To theorize the artistic qualities of various popular art forms, Hall and Whannel distinguishes between popular and mass culture. According to them, popular culture borrows elements from folk culture, and mass culture does not. "The typical art of the mass media today is not continuity from, but *a corruption of* popular art, they say. Mass art has no personal quality but, instead, a high degree of personalization" (ibid: 68). However, this view is later rejected on the basis of aesthetic judgments (as various popular art forms are repetitive in nature) (Turner, 2005).

of Britain's Traditional industries, increasing the gap between rich and poor, more people without jobs and resulted in a period where many British people came to care less about each other than about making money. (Oxford dictionary, 2011)

³¹ Hall's book *Popular Arts*, though related to the tradition of culture and civilization, was free of the nostalgia and organicism of Leavisite texts, even of the diluted variants found in *The Uses of Literacy and Culture and Society*. Hall and Whannel attempted to analyze 'what is good or bad in popular culture' break way from the Leavisist tradition (See Turner, 2005).

Hall was also critical of media and its production of ideological messages. Like Gramsci and Althusser, Hall argues that media messages create a false image of reality, making the audiences believe that the “issues that have been problematized were instead naturalized as simply normal part of the way the world is- as an aspect of reality” (Smith, 2001:155). In his essay “Television as a Medium and its Relation to Culture”, Hall discussed the centrality of television as a part of popular culture. His use of semiotic approach can be seen in his essay called “Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse” where Hall developed a theory on the interpretation of media messages.

In the early years of his life, Stuart Hall basically engaged with the works such as media, subculture and its resistance practices, public construction of political power in Britain. However, in his later period, he analyzes the issues of representation and identity (Turner, 2005). As a Black British, Hall, along with Jefferson, published the book *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post- War Britain*, where they discuss the intersection between race and imperialism in contemporary time (Hall and Jefferson, 1976).

Post Marxism

During 1960s and 1970s, a group of intellectuals have argued that the traditional Marxist model, based on class distinction, is inappropriate in the phase of emerging identity issues or cultural recognition on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity and so forth. These groups of intellectuals, known as Post Marxists, have attempted to revise the tenets of Marxism so that it can be suitable for the contemporary issues. The most notable Post Marxists are Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Post Marxist does not reject Marxism, but they wanted to transform Marxist theoretical tradition by borrowing theoretical developments from post structuralism, feminism, and post modernism and so forth. It is worthwhile to discuss the distinction between two terms: *Post-Marxist* and *Post-Marxist*. In this context, Mouffe and Laclau (2001) wrote: “if our intellectual project in this book is *post-Marxist*, it is evidently also *post-Marxist*” (2001:4).

Storey (2009) defines the two terms as follows: “To be *post-Marxist* is to leave behind Marxism for something better, whereas to be *post-Marxist* is to seek to transform Marxism, by adding to its recent theoretical developments from, especially, feminism,

postmodernism, post-structuralism and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Laclau and Mouffe are more post-*Marxist* than they are *post-Marxist*” (2009:83). Storey argues that culture studies is post Marxist, since the discipline, following the Marxist theory of ideology and hegemony, includes the study of protest movements of sexual minorities, ethnic communities, antinuclear movement and so forth. He states that the post Marxism turn in cultural studies is evident in Hall’s work. The scope of cultural studies, under the directorship of Stuart Hall, expanded in terms its research interest to other issues like gender, ethnicity, and not restricted only to class category. Indeed, Hall had critical of the relation between Marxism and Cultural Studies. As Hall (1992) observes:

There was never a prior moment when cultural studies and Marxism represented a perfect theoretical fit. From the beginning . . . there was always-already the question of the great inadequacies, theoretically and politically, the resounding silences the great evasions of Marxism – the things that Marx did not talk about or seem to understand which were our privileged object of study: culture, ideology, language, the symbolic. These were always-already, instead, the things which had imprisoned Marxism as a mode of thought, as an activity of critical practice – its orthodoxy, its doctrinal character, its determinism, its reductionism, its immutable law of history, its status as a metanarrative. That is to say, the encounter between British cultural studies and Marxism has first to be understood as the engagement with a problem – not a theory, not even a problematic (1992:279)

Ellen Woods (1986) remarks that Laclau and Mouffe work focused on the linguistic, text and discourse, they detach ideology from its material base and ultimately dissolves “the social altogether into ideology or discourse”(1986:47). Laclau and Mouffe hold that “there are no such things as material interest but only discursively constructed ideas about them” (ibid:61). In contrast to traditional Marxists view class as objective entity, post Marxists see class in its subjective and discursive terms.

Laclau and Mouffe holds that the traditional Marxist model emphasized only on class struggle, however, in recent times, such theoretical framework will not be applicable when polyphony of voices raise for their specific identity and representations. An individual carries not only a single subject position, but multiple subject positions. Therefore, the Marxist model should emphasize not only on the emancipation of the proletariat, but the emancipation of a wide range of voices that are oppressed and

discriminated. As a result, in the hands of Post Marxist, Marxian theory has been decentered and detotalized, since the main aim of Post Marxist is not only the emancipation of proletariat , rather emancipation of the whole society (Laclau and Mouffe,2001). Thus, Mouffe and Laclau argue that what we need in contemporary time is radical democracy, rather focusing on individual democratic rights; they propose to “create a new hegemony, which will be the outcome of the articulation of the greatest number of democratic struggles”³². It will include the struggle of antiracist, anti capitalist, antisexist and so on (Eder,1990). This will be radical and plural democracy. As Laclau and Mouffe put:

The alternative of the Left should consist of locating itself fully in the field of the democratic revolution and expanding the chains of equivalents between different struggles against oppression. *The task of the Left therefore cannot be to renounce liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy. . . .* It is not in the abandonment of the democratic terrain but, on the contrary, in the extension of the field of democratic struggles to the whole of civil society and the state that the possibility resides for a hegemonic strategy of the Left (Laclau and Mouffe,1985:176).

This radical democracy will not only abolish capitalism but eliminate other social inequalities. Thus in contrast to the traditional Marxian class inequalities, post Marxism see inequality in a broader framework with an interest of the whole.

Critical Summary

Frankfurt School theorists had brought the analysis of aestheticism or aura of art work which Classical Marxist failed to incorporate in their analysis. The modern technology (such as reproduction technology) has destroyed the originality of art work, as Frankfurt school theorists argued. For instance, the coming of electronic music or digital music technology has changed the concept of creation of music, and its associated originality or

³² See, Mouffe,1988

creativity also got challenged, hence copyright becomes serious issue in contemporary times.

British cultural theorists, no doubt, have initiated the importance of popular culture studies which Frankfurt theorist neglected. In fact, popular culture becomes a major concern of study under this discipline till today. However, in doing so, one can argue that British cultural theorists had neglected the study of high culture, or they have given more importance to popular culture than high culture.

Frankfurt school theorists have shown the role of advertisement in selling the products of culture industry. However, it is also true that advertisement, rather than selling products, impact upon the consumption pattern in our daily life.

CHAPTER FOUR

Marxist Sociology of Culture: A Critical Appreciation

Since my objective throughout this research is to understand how culture has been understood and deployed in Marxian Social and Political theory, therefore, in this chapter, I would like to discuss some key themes within Marxism, which we think, are relevant in the recent studies in cultural theory. These are:

1. How Marxist theorists have viewed autonomy of culture in the framework of social formation?
2. How culture has been defined in Marxist tradition?
3. How does Marxist interpret 'Art as revolutionary'?
4. To what extent Marxist Cultural tradition can be relevant in the phase of globalization and postmodernity?

Autonomy of Culture

In Marxist cultural analysis, theorists have been dealing with the issue of autonomy of culture. In addressing this issue, we are going to look at *how Marxist theorists have viewed autonomy of culture in the framework of social formation?*

Karl Marx attempted to challenge the traditional way of separating culture from other social, political economic realm. In other words, Marx opposed the idealistic approach to culture which sees culture as an ideal realm of thought and meaning independent of social dynamics or the vicissitudes of history. This approach was prevalent in the writings of Plato to Hegel, who failed to incorporate the political and economic significance of culture. Culture cannot be separated from the other realms and it is constituted in specific social-historical context, in accordance to the changes in the material and political aspects. In this context, Louis Dupre deconstructs the universal biases and ahistorical and asocial ideology of idealism, "the very concept of culture as a realm of values independent of social-economic structures, into which man withdraws from his daily occupations, is an ideology that could only arise in a compartmentalized society"(Adamson,1985:32). In contrast, Marx developed a materialistic philosophy

which sees culture as a “social and historical product that changes in relation to shifting material dynamics”. As Marx and Engels (1859/1970) wrote “it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (1859/1970:21). This materialistic approach to culture, however, overlooked the autonomy of culture and viewed as epiphenomena over the economy, which is the base.

It is apparent that, culture was considered as an epiphenomenon, in other words, as a feature of social formation which are necessary for the existence of dominant mode of production. This mode of production is the real foundation of society, including culture, which forms part of the superstructure. Thus, for Marx, economic structure shapes the cultural superstructure.

After Marx, this materialistic approach to culture was continued by the classical Marxist tradition and also in Soviet Marxism which hold that each and every social phenomenon can be explained by economic aspect. This is the point where the cultural studies tradition criticizes Marx for emphasizing more on the economic aspect and neglect the cultural aspect. It is not denying that economic analysis can provide explanation for an understanding of any cultural phenomena. But it cannot be self sufficient. Cultural phenomena should be analyzed on the basis of its own logic, rules, development and so forth (Cited in Barker, 2008:56-57). Therefore, there is a need to understand culture from a multidimensional perspective. However, the main debate, on the question of autonomy, is not between Marxism and cultural studies, but the main opposition is towards the political economy approach³³. Cultural studies mainly criticize the political economy approach enshrined in Marxism.

However, it is important to note that Karl Marx did not support entirely classical political economy approach; he was a critic of classical political economy. As Janice Peck(2006) states:

³³ For more details about the debate between political economy and cultural studies, see Grossberg (1995) and Garnham (1995).

The idea that all human societies are composed of empirically distinct areas or levels whose relationship consists in a hierarchy where one level (that is, 'the economic') causes or determines the character of all the others did not originate with Marx. Classical political economy forwarded this view in positing the existence of unvarying economic laws and extrapolating from those a notion of human nature as essentially self-interested and competitive. In his critique of political economy, Marx took issue with this universalization of what were actually historically specific features of capitalism. Political economy, he argued, had mistaken the distinct characteristics of a capitalist mode of production for timeless, natural laws and thereby took for granted what it should have taken as a problem to be analyzed (2006:106)

To Marx, the new features of capitalism, different from non capitalist society, is what the constituents of the mode of production are in new capitalist society, that is, the forces of production and relations of production, which Marx termed as economic structure of society. It is the most distinctive body of institutions found in new capitalism. In this context, Maurice Godelier(1986) argues that in pre-capitalist society there was no distinctive economic institution as Marx said, but the mode of production includes all kinship, religion, which together contributed to the production and reproduction of the social relations of production. He argues, "when one attempts to isolate the economic structure in pre-capitalist societies, one is obliged to examine those social relations which Marxists class as superstructures" (1986:138).

However, Marxist cultural theorists, Raymond Williams and Maurice Godelier, seek to maintain that there is a connection between symbolic and material aspect in every social activity. Rejecting Marx base and superstructure model, Godelier (1986) argues, "a society has neither a top nor a bottom, and it is not a system of superimposed levels. It is a system of relations between human beings" (ibid:128). Godelier contend that ideas cannot be separated from social relation and there is always a material element involved in human action or social relation. As Godelier (1986) argues,

as consciousness, the use of both the human body and the material means implies the application of a complex set of representations, ideas and idealities: representations of the goal, the stages, and the effects of activities which we call labour but which rarely appear as such in a good many primitive or pre-capitalist societies. And these representations

themselves connect up with rules governing the manufacture of tools, with bodily attitudes and, needless to say, at a deeper level, with indigenous conceptions of nature and humankind's relations with it. We thus find inside all humankind's material activities upon nature a complex set of mental realities whose presence and intervention are essential if this activity is to occur at all (ibid:131-132)

In a similar way, Williams criticized crude materialism of political economy and crude idealism of cultural studies approach. For Williams(1977), "the problem with conceiving the world as a collection of parts (that is, 'economy' and 'culture' and so forth), whether from a materialist or idealist position, is that these are in practice indissoluble: not in the sense that they cannot be distinguished for analytical purposes, but in the decisive sense that these are not separate 'areas' or 'elements', but the whole, specific activities and products of real men" (1977:38).

Williams conceives society as a totality where each practices- economic, social, and political and ideology affect and can influence each other. Hence, for Williams, "culture is both constitutive and expressive of a social totality of human relations and practices" (cited in Barker,2008:57). Williams discussed the relation between economic and cultural through setting limits or what he called variable distance of practices. For Williams, the autonomy of any practices depends on the distance or degree from one practice determines the other. As Chris Barker put "a closer a cultural practice is to the central economic relations, the more they will directly determine it. The further cultural practices are away from the core capitalist production process, the more they can operate autonomously. By this reasoning, individually produced art is more autonomous than mass produced television"(ibid:57).

Althusser, in contrast to Williams, made a different view on social formation. As a structural Marxist, Althusser see how various elements of a structure are linked or articulated with each other. He rejected what Williams said social formation as a totality of which culture is an expression. For Althusser, social formation is a complex structure of different instances or practices. That is, the different instances (economic, political, cultural) together form the social formation in a specific period. Althusser, further, points out that total autonomy of any practices is not possible since each practice having its own specificity. However, he granted economic practices as having 'determination in the last

instance'. That is, culture practice is relatively autonomous from the economic. Althusser provided an example of feudal society where the politics is the dominant instance, not economic. However, it was the economic mode of production which determines that politics is the dominant in that society (ibid:57).

Althusserian over-determination which rejected economic determinism and held that each practices of a social formation has its own specificity and articulated in different or complex ways, has lasting significance for cultural studies. As Hall(1977) put "we must think a society or a social formation as ever and always constituted by a set of complex practices; each with its own specificity, its mode of articulation; standing in an uneven development to other related practices"(1977:237).

Culture as Ideology

It is apparent that 'ideology' has been the corner stone of the Marxist cultural tradition. In fact, one can see the revision within Marxism in analyzing the concept of ideology. In the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, ideology denotes dominant ideology that is the ideas and beliefs of the ruling class. In *German Ideology* (1932), they wrote: "*The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas*". Thus, for Marx, ideology functions in two ways to maintain the capitalist hegemony. Firstly, dominant ideas are the ideas of the capitalist class. Secondly, dominant ideology helps in creating a false perception of the market system. That is, dominant ideology is false consciousness³⁴.

Marx notion of dominant ideology later became the concern for Western Marxism. The major question arises around the notion of ideology, as Chris Barker (2004) put, "why capitalism, which was held to be an exploitative system of economic and social relations, was not being overthrown by working class revolution. In particular, the question asked was whether the working class suffered from 'false consciousnesses, that is, a mistakenly bourgeois world-view which served the interest of the capitalist class" (2004:97). In this

³⁴ I have mentioned the characteristics of dominant ideology in the second chapter (see the second chapter).

context, Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, in his book, *Prison Notebook*, asserts that dominant hegemony operates not only by force or coercion, but passively through spreading their ideology. In twentieth century, Gramsci shows how mass media, education, church helps in maintaining the capitalist order. He showed the transmission of ideology in day to day life of people, through practices, and moral conduct. Gramsci also shows how the transmission of ideology of dominant class helps to form hegemonic bloc. Another Marxist, Louis Althusser, like Gramsci, believe in transmission of ideology through ideological apparatus in a capitalist society. However, to him, ideology is not about what people think or conceive about the world but how they act. Ideology, consists of day to day practices, constitute individual as a subject and constrain him or her to function in a specific way in a capitalist society (ibid).

While Gramsci and Althusser shows the transmission of ruling ideology through mass media, school, and religious institutions, Frankfurt School theorists Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin and Marcuse primarily focused on the ideological domination in the sphere of mass culture. In so doing, one can argue that Marxist theorists had overemphasized the analysis of ideological message hidden in products of cultural industry such as films, art, and music. To Adorno and others Frankfurt theorist, the ideology hidden in the products of culture industry destroy audiences critical thinking capacity, in other words, audiences views are governed by, what Marx calls as ‘false consciousness’. Unlike Marx, Gramsci and Althusser, Frankfurt school theorists analyzed the psychological effect of mass culture on audiences. They argue that in the dehumanizing world of twentieth century, people have lost their critical thinking towards capitalist system. As Adorno wrote: “No independent thinking must be expected from the audience” (1972:137). Though Adorno and Horkheimer had a pessimistic view towards the development of human critical faculties, Benjamin was highly optimistic.

Nevertheless, while the Frankfurt school theorists, except Benjamin, shows ideological domination of culture industry products in a unidirectional way, from capitalist to subordinate class, British Cultural theorist, Stuart Hall (1980), in his model of “Encoding and Decoding”, contends that a media message can be interpreted by different audiences in different ways. An audience perception towards an art is also depends on their socio-economic surroundings. As Bourdieu states, different groups have different taste in

music, food, art and so on. He shows how taste is socially determined. (cited in Smith 2001).

The reception theory of media communication challenges Gramsci's view that mass media by spreading dominant ideologies, helped in rise of Fascism in Italy. Instead, the reception theorist, Paul Lazerfield shows that the radio and print media had very little impact on the voting behavior. It was only the opinion leaders (for instance, head of the household, community figures) who can receive the message and interpret the message and shape the meaning that others made from them. That is, it is a two way communication process. However, Lazerfield model was later criticized by Gitlin (as cited in Smith, 2001). As Gitlin (1978) said "media cannot tell people what to think, but it can tell what to think about" (ibid: 170). In this context, one can think about the influence of facebook in the American Presidential Election in 2016.

Art as Revolutionary

In Marxist social and political theory, art has been considered as a vital tool for socialist revolution. Though the Marxist theorists (Marx, Engels, Lukacs, Plekhanov, Lenin and others) had aesthetic taste, however, it was the socio-economic chaos and tension which led them to think art away from its aestheticism.

In Marxist theory, the notion of 'art is revolutionary' came out during the Russian Revolution. During Russian Revolution, the Marxists theorists (as well the activists) had a utilitarian approach towards art. Rather considering 'art is for art's sake', Soviet Marxist theorists (including Lenin, Zhdanov, Stalin) believed that the artistic work is the reflection of the social life and therefore, art should reflect the interest of the proletariat. As Zhdanov argued that "writer are the engineers of the human soul", and soviet literature is created on the interest of the proletariat, interest of the creation of a socialist state" (cited in Deimatre, 1966). These Marxist theorists mainly emphasized on the partisanship in literature.

The partisanship in literature, rejected the autonomy to artistic work, later turned into what we called 'socialist realism' under the rule of Stalinism³⁵. The socialist realism

³⁵ The term "Stalinism" refers both to the nature of the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin's rule and to the interpretation of Marxism sanctioned by Stalin and promulgated by the Soviet Union while he was in power. Never official terms,

holds that soviet literature should portray the working class interest and helps in promoting socialist ideology. This cultural policy not only restricted within Soviet Union, but later it was mandated upon artists, writers and other countries which looked to the Soviet Union as a centre of Socialism. In the same way, Mao also emphasized on the partisanship in art during the Cultural Revolution.

The implications of socialist realism went against the freedom of writer to write or act. As a result, many left literary theorist opposed the policy of socialist realism, notably Ehrenburg, Sartre, and the German poet Engenberger. In this context, Georgi Luckas wrote: “writers as well as the poet must conform to the historic vocation of the party, but their influence will be felt only if they work freely and are conscious of their own responsibility” (ibid:267).

The supporters of socialist realism not only involved in the creation of a new proletariat literature, (here, Proletkult is the best example), at the same time, they tried to separate proletariat culture from the bourgeoisie. For instance, Zhdanov and Engels both argued that bourgeois literature is decadence. However, such statement is not correct in the sense that, the creation of art form is linked with socio-historical conditions. As Leon Trotsky depicts, “One cannot turn the concept of culture into the small change of individual daily living and determine the success of a class culture by the proletarian passports of individual inventors or poets. Culture is the organic sum of knowledge and capacity which characterizes the entire society, or at least its ruling class”(Trotsky,1923). Sartre, the literary critic, also argues that “socialist realist literature should not be isolated from bourgeois literature or even non realist literature. In his opinion, it was through the preservation of bourgeois civilization that the socialist writers of the West became socialist”(Deimatre,1966).

The revolutionary art refers to neither imposing party dogma in the creation of art nor separating art on the basis of class. The socialist realism of traditional Marxist saw revolutionary potential of art in accordance to history of law. For them, art can contribute

“Stalinism” and “Stalinist” gained currency only after Stalin’s death and, particularly, after his denunciation by Nikita Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. Both terms have tended to be used in a derogatory way to describe a repressive, dictatorial and totalitarian regime and a crude, dogmatic ideology. (Walker and Gray,2007)

the working class revolution by reflecting the socio-economic conditions of the society. This view is criticized by the Frankfurt School theorists. The Frankfurt school theorists do not overlook the revolutionary potential of art work, but they deny the classical Marxist view of art that mere reflection of the social-economic conditions. Now the point is: how do artistic works reflect the reality? Frankfurt School theorist mainly concerned with the mass cultural production in twentieth century which creates illusions about real and unreal. As Murphy (1983) wrote: the traditional Marxist aesthetic “view of art cannot produce the inspiration necessary for an oppressive regime to be overcome. This is particularly the case in today's technological world, which tends to create the illusion that the entire world operates in accordance with uniform laws which all but eliminate the possibility of taking an oppositional stance to the dominant reality”(1983:277)

Therefore, Frankfurt school theorists and Marcuse in particular, believe that the artistic activity should be alienated from the prevailing oppressive reality. The question is how? For Marcuse, proletariat should be self-transcendent of the oppressing system. The revolutionary potential lies in the actualization of the aesthetic dimension of everyday life. For Marcuse, good art is the art of *Lebenswelt* (life world), it is created on the basis of human experiences without any a priori or objective standard which might use to produce them (ibid).

Like art or artistic activity, music has also revolutionary potential. British cultural theorists have shown the importance of popular music in the counter-culture movement. The creations of certain popular music, for instance, rap music, rock music and so on, are actually part of the counter-culture movement. The lyrics as well as the tune of those songs carry a sense of protest.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to note that the music of the counterculture (for instances, rap, rock, metal music) can be revolutionary potential, however, at the same time, it can also helps in the growth of capitalist market system. This can be exemplified through the following example:

Bob Marley, for example, had international success with songs articulating the values and beliefs of Rastafari. This success can be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, it signals the expression of the message of his religious convictions to an enormous audience worldwide; undoubtedly for many of his audience the music had the effect of enlightenment,

understanding and perhaps even conversion to, and bonding for those already convinced of, the principles of the faith. On the other hand, the music has made and continues to make enormous profits for the music industry (promoters, Island Records, etc.). What we have is a paradox in which the anti-capitalist politics of Rastafari are being articulated in the economic interests of capitalism: the music is lubricating the very system it seeks to condemn; that is, the politics of Rastafari are being expressed in a form which is ultimately of financial benefit to the dominant culture (i.e. as a commodity which circulates for profit (2009:85).

Thus, the ideological struggle in the capitalism articulated in such way that though we are trying to oppose the system, in turn, our activity helps in sustaining the system (ibid).

Culture, Globalization and Late Capitalism

In the era of globalization, capitalist market system has spread across world. In the words of Sklair (2002), capitalism in today's world is transnational capitalism, characterized by transnational corporations, transnational class, and culture-ideology of consumerism. Transnational corporations refers that capitalism has moved away from being an international system to a globalizing system which is not restricted to any specific territory or state. Transnational capitalist class refers to the idea that in the capitalist globalizing system, class is not in the traditional Marxist sense, who owns the means of production. Rather, here capitalist class has divided into various fractions (for instance, corporate, state, technical and consumerist) and accordingly, they have different work area where they can exert their power. Lastly, through cultural products, the ideological control of the capitalist system over the people across globe has increased dramatically. Here, advertisement and media play vital role in influencing people towards consumer goods and thus, creating a consumer culture (cited in Ritzer,2015).

Another consequence of transnational capitalism is that it results in cultural imperialism. It refers to the effect of the distribution of Western mass media throughout the world. As Berger(1995) Put: "the mass media of the United States spread bourgeois values and thus indoctrinated people, particularly those in the Third World, with capitalist ideology. This, in turn, makes it easier for these people to be exploited and prevents the development of class solidarity and consciousness concerning what is really going on in their

societies”(1995:61). It is similar with the concept of Mcdonaldization³⁶. It is the spreading of American culture and western values (through fast food restaurant, clothing brands, and so on) to the third world countries. It leads to what we call ‘cultural homogenization’. For instance, if we got to any shopping mall in both Bangalore and Delhi, we will see the certain common brand of cloths (like LEVIS, Vero Moda,), footwear (Adidas, Nike) fast food restaurant (MacDonald, Dominos). It implies that the world culture is becoming similar that is homogenize. This process of cultural homogenization is called by Ritzer as Macdonalization of Society.

Therefore, in contemporary time, capitalist system maintains its power and control through by spawning cultural logic. In his “Postmodernism: the Cultural Logic of Late capitalism” (1984) Fredric Jameson contends that capitalism continues to exert its power over the masses in the era of postmodernity, spawning a new cultural logic, that is, postmodernism. He draws an interrelationship between capitalism and postmodernism, as he put: “every position in postmodernism in culture.....is at one and the same time, and necessarily, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today” (1984:55)

Following Ernest Mandel, Jameson identified three phases of capitalism: first is the market capitalism, (analyzed by Marx), second is the imperialist stage (analyzed by Lenin) and third is the late capitalism, labeled by Mandel and Jameson. Jameson argues that we are in the stage of last capitalism, that is, multinational capitalism is characterized by the increasing range of commodification. However, Jameson, following a base-superstructure model, sees the relation between economic structure and culture in the following way: market capitalism with realist culture, monopoly capitalism with modernist culture and multinational capitalism with postmodern culture (Jameson,1989).

³⁶ According Ritzer (2015) *Mcdonaldization* is the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society, as well as the rest of the world. The nature of the Mcdonaldization process may be delineated by outlining its five basic dimensions: efficiency, calculability, predictability, control through the substitution of technology for people, and, paradoxically, the irrationality of rationality. It is based on the Weber’s idea about the rationalization of West. See (Ritzer,2002).

Jameson outlines some features of postmodern culture. Firstly, postmodern culture is superficial and depthless. He used the term ‘simulacrum’³⁷ to analyze the postmodern cultural product. Second, postmodern cultural products are characterized by lack of emotion and affect. Third, Jameson argues that there is loss of historicity in postmodern cultural products which result in “random cannibalization of all styles of the past” (Jameson, 1984:65-66). Fourthly, Jameson argues that postmodern culture is dominated by reproductive technologies rather than productive technology.

Jameson argue that in late capitalism, people are becoming unable to comprehend the nature of multinational capitalism which continuously repress our consciousness and critical faulty. Jameson illustrates an example of postmodern architecture, that is, Hotel Bonaventure in downtown Los Angeles. He said that the hotel is a combination of both modernist and postmodernist architecture. The outside of the hotel building modernist architecture, consist of reflecting glass towers. The interior of the hotel depicts postmodern architecture. Jameson points out that there is no place called lobby or central place in the hotel, therefore, people unable to find the exit or entrance. It is designed in such a way that people have difficulty in getting their bearings in the hotel lobby. The lobby is what postmodernist call as an example of hyperspace³⁸. He used this example of the hotel lobby as a metaphor to shows our inability to grasp the working of multinational capitalism which suppress our cognitive faculties as well as our ability to navigate the capitalist system. However, as a Marxist theorist, Jameson says that to live in the era of late capitalism, we people need develop cognitive map to understand postmodern cultural artifacts (Jameson,1989). Cognitive map is similar to what Marx called class consciousness. “Cognitive mapping in reality was nothing but a code word for ‘class consciousness’...only it proposed the need for class consciousness of a new hitherto undreamed of kind, while it also inflected the account in the direction of that new spatiality implicit in postmodern” (1989:387).

³⁷ Simulacrum, a key term associated with postmodern theory, is a copy of a copy. Jameson (1984:66) describes simulacrum as “the identical copy for which no original ever existed”.

³⁸ Hyperspace, another term associated with postmodern theory, is a confusing form of space where modern conception of space are useless in helping us to orient ourselves (Ritzer,2015).

Unlike other postmodernist, Jameson, therefore, shows the relevancy of Marxist theory in the period of post modernity. He argues that in the era of explosively growing multinational capitalism, Marxist theory can give the best theoretical explanation.

Critical Summary

The above mentioned four themes (autonomy of culture, art as revolutionary, concept of ideology, cultural logic of late capitalism) can be considered as the core of Marxist cultural tradition. However, each theme cannot be explained or separated from the other, since all are intertwined in the capitalist system. Though Marxists theorists have provided different analysis of culture, their main attempt remains same, that is, the critique of capitalism and human emancipation and liberation.

CONCLUSION

The basic canon of Marxism, that is, the critique of capitalism and human emancipation remains same throughout the whole Marxist intellectual journey as I have discussed in the previous two chapters. However, Marxist theorists (classical to western Marxism) have their own interpretation of culture based on their socio-political surroundings as well as various historical circumstances and developments through which they have confronted.

Throughout our study, it has been seen that Marxist cultural tradition (from classical to contemporary time), has gone through a transition in the analysis of culture. Indeed, in the whole study, we have seen how orthodox classical Marxist gave low priority to culture and confined it to only ideas or ideology of dominant class and how later Marxist thinkers set this in right direction by giving priority to the autonomy of culture.

Marxist cultural tradition is mainly concerned with relationship between culture and power, at the same time, class category (proletariat-bourgeoisie) is the kernel of this analysis. Since its inception, Marxist cultural tradition has primarily zeroed in on the class conflict and discounted the other social facets which may have significance in the study of power struggle. In the current epoch, umpteen numbers of movements and agitations ensued due to the causes rooted in racial discrimination, gender inequality and even ethnicity. This can be exemplified by the LGBT movements, feminist movements and the Dalit movements that triggered in several parts of the world in different times. Protection of Identity and Cultural recognition were de facto demands of the dissenters. Hence, Marxist notion of power is irrelevant in the context of new social movements. Power is not in the hands of capitalist, but power is ubiquitous, as Michel Foucault said.

Therefore, Marxism, as a theoretical framework, has confronted several criticisms in contemporary era. The economic factor, which Marxism accorded unparalleled importance to, cannot be the sole and sufficient reason behind the social change. Any change in the society or the social order is co-existential and incidental to the change in the related cultural, political and religious belief system that, in turn, forms the superstructure in the society. Yet Marxist thinkers are of the view that all forms of social biases and disparities stem from the economic inequality. Even the Marxist Feminists

consider economic inequality as the primary factor behind oppression of women in the capitalist world. It can be gleaned from the above that Marxism has not accorded enough credence to the other glaring attributes such as gender, race, and ethnicity that may sway the supremacy of economic inequality and may have unleashed an enduring influence in the class struggle. Hence, these factors are ought to be taken into account.

As the broad doctrine of multiculturalism as well as cultural relativism is gaining more popularity across the world, the scope of Marxism in accommodating and amplifying these tenets will undoubtedly call into question. Therefore, these predicaments in Marxism need to be nuanced and the vacant pigeonhole needs to be filled up. It demands for a renewed perspective for concretizing the absolutistic apprehensions.

Nevertheless, one has to acknowledge that the present era is not about growing identity and cultural recognition issue, but it also results in cultural imperialism and cultural homogenization. In the era of globalization and neo liberalization, the expansion of capitalism facilitates the blossoming of cultural imperialism, homogenization of consumer culture that can be explained and understood only through Marxist Framework. With the advent of modern technology, capitalism has metamorphosed into multinational form to maintain its power and hegemony.

Now, the biggest challenge ahead is to identify and unearth the hidden exploitations and ideological domination, which Frankfurt school theorists have tried to answer. What we need here is critical thinking or cognitive mapping (in Fredrick Jameson's words) to understand the capitalist exploitative system. This critical thinking against the system will only come through debate and discussion or through communicative rationality.

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