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Self-mastery and Universal History: Horkheimer and Adorno on the Conditions of a Society ‘in Control of Itself’

At the beginning of their jointly authored *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno proclaim that “the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 25; 2002: 1). This statement implies a clear rejection of any type of progressive narrative that detects in humanity and its history a general tendency towards a fundamentally better condition. Rather, technological progress and the advance of reason have led the human race to the brink of disaster. All that remains, deprived of all optimistic assumptions, is the idea of an objective historical tendency that dominates individuals and is moving towards an ever more complete whole or totality, though not one in which social antagonisms are resolved and values such as freedom are realized. In *Negative Dialectics* Adorno later explicitly rejects the essentially affirmative picture of human history found in the type of universal history associated with philosophers such as Kant and Hegel, while not denying the existence of an objective historical tendency that unites various moments of history:

Universal history must be construed and denied. After the catastrophes that have happened, and in view of the catastrophes to come, it would be cynical to say that a plan for a better world is manifested in history and unites it. Not to be denied for that reason, however, is the unity that cements the discontinuous, chaotically splintered moments and phases of history – the unity of the control of nature, progressing to rule over human beings, and finally to that over their inner nature. No universal history leads from savagery to humanity, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb. (Adorno 1970: 314; 1973: 320; translation modified)

Although this dismal picture marks an explicit rejection of the idea of a universal history as it was understood in the age of classical German philosophy, I shall argue that Horkheimer and Adorno in fact leave some room for the hopes associated with this idea, however faint these hopes may have become in modernity. This room for hope relates to something that Adorno says in a lecture in which, as in the passage quoted immediately above, he speaks of a form of progress that leads from the slingshot to the atom bomb. Although this type of progress is said to be “completely inimical to the progress of freedom, to the advance of the autonomy [*Selbstmächtigkeit*] of the human species” (Adorno 2001: 20; 2006: 12), Adorno suggests that

the development of human history need not, after all, be understood purely in terms of humanity's increasing capacity to bring about the physical destruction of both itself and the world that it inhabits, when he states that the particular character that progress has so far assumed "will be the mark of all historical movements as long as there is no such thing as what we might call a human race, that is to say, a society that is conscious of itself and is in control of itself [*ihrer selbst mächtig[er]*]" (Adorno 2001: 20; 2006: 12; translation modified). This claim leaves room for the idea that *if* society *were* to become conscious of itself, and *if* it *were* to take control of itself along with the technological means at its disposal, history might take another, better course. The course that history happens to have taken is thereby viewed as an ultimately contingent one. The possibility that history might take another course to the one that it has actually taken is, in fact, required to make sense of what Horkheimer and Adorno say about one of their main intentions in writing *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "Critical thought, which does not call a halt before progress itself, requires us to take up the cause of the remnants of freedom, of tendencies toward real humanity, even though they seem powerless in face of the great historical trend" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 13; 2002: xi).

The possibility that history might take a different, more humane course to the one that it has taken invites the following question: What are the conditions of the 'society that is conscious of itself and is in control of itself' of which Adorno speaks? In what follows, I shall be mainly interested in the question of what it would mean for a society to be in control of itself. My explanation of this point is nevertheless essentially related to the idea of a society that is conscious of itself, for I shall argue that one condition of such a society is the form of subjectivity whose genesis Horkheimer and Adorno seek to describe by means of their interpretation of the story of Odysseus. To this it may be objected that Adorno especially is unremittingly critical of the notion of self-mastery in the form of a self-legislating reason as exemplified by the Kantian model of autonomy on account of its repressive character and how it represents nothing more than internalized coercion (see Adorno 1970: 231, 252-253, 256-257, 267-269; 1973: 232, 255-256, 260-261, 270-273; see also Günther 1985). The dialectic of enlightenment itself is said to be explicable in terms of how Kant's notion of autonomy in particular aims to be completely self-grounding, in the sense that the self is determined by nothing external to itself and requires, therefore, a metaphysical freedom that is defined in terms of the absence of any independent antecedent cause that determines the will to act (Shuster 2014).¹

There are two points I want to make in response to this type of objection. First of all, regardless of the extent to which Adorno is critical of rational self-mastery, he needs the idea

of it to make sense of the notion of a society that is in control of itself, for how could a society be in control of itself when its individual members were not in some way in control of themselves? Secondly, closer attention should be paid to two key considerations: (1) the context in which self-mastery is exercised, and (2) the end in accordance with which it is exercised. In both cases, we shall see that the relevant form of self-mastery does not involve a complete self-grounding. This is because the exercise of self-mastery is in part determined by the needs of individuals and society, needs which are themselves historically determined, and in a better society this self-mastery will accordingly be exercised partly in response to the needs of others.

The possibility of a society that is in control of itself will be shown to require not only the existence of the capacity to exercise self-mastery in appropriate contexts and in accordance with appropriate ends, but also the view of history as something that is essentially contingent and therefore open to the possibility of the establishment of a better, more humane condition. I shall argue that the idea of the essential contingency of history as a condition of the possibility of a genuinely progressive society marks a decisive difference between Adorno's view of history and the idea of universal history as it appears in classical German philosophy. At the same time, the contingent development of the capacity for self-mastery, as portrayed in Horkheimer and Adorno's interpretation of the story of Odysseus, is itself one necessary condition, if not the only one, of the kind of free society that forms a central part of the final end of universal history.² This capacity for self-mastery is, in particular, a condition of effective interaction with nature with a view to the satisfaction of material human needs. Horkheimer and Adorno characterize this interaction in a negative fashion in so far as it involves the domination and repression of nature. It is acknowledged, nevertheless, that in Adorno's case the achievement of autonomy requires liberation from the struggle to satisfy material needs. This will itself require the establishment of a society in which the drive for self-preservation loses its existing irrational form through a transformation of society that is made possible by technological developments and the development of the capacity for self-reflection of a critical kind (Cook 2011: 49-50, 108-110).³ These claims can be thought to presuppose the existence of a society that is in control of itself, and thus of individuals who are in control of themselves. In what follows, I seek to make this presupposition more explicit and to clarify its nature.

This essay falls into four main parts. In the first part I set out the essential features of the idea of a universal history with reference to a text that Adorno singles out because for him it exemplifies the idea that the totality, namely, humankind or society, preserves itself by means of social antagonism, namely, Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan*

Purpose (Adorno 2001: 74-75; 2006: 50). In the next two sections I show how the form of subjectivity that Horkheimer and Adorno associate with the figure of Odysseus must be regarded as a necessary condition of the development of a genuinely free society, despite the fact that in the case of Odysseus it is accompanied by repression and the domination of others, and that in this respect Horkheimer and Adorno's interpretation of the story of Odysseus contains echoes of some central features of Kant's conception of universal history. Finally, I shall show how the absence of any end which determines the course of history marks an essential difference between Adorno's view of history and Kant's idea of universal history. The element of contingency which is thereby introduced nevertheless leaves room for the possibility of something which is central to Kant's idea of universal history, namely, the claim that the course of history is not incompatible with the idea of progress, despite all evidence to the contrary. One might say, then, that Adorno's rejection of a central feature of universal history is required to rescue the possibility of hope in the emergence of a better world in the face of the course that history has in fact taken since the end of classical German philosophy.

1. What is universal history?

In *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* Kant entertains the possibility of explaining the seemingly confused and random series of individual actions that we encounter in the history of the human species in terms of "a steadily advancing but slow development" of the human being's "original capacities" (Kant 1900-, 8: 17; 1991: 41). The capacities in question are associated with reason, and they cannot be developed fully in individuals but only in the species as a whole over a long and potentially indefinite period of time. By unwittingly furthering the development of the human species through their actions, individuals realize something intended by nature and thereby unconsciously promote an end which, even had they known about it, cannot be assumed to be one they would have shown any interest in furthering. Nature is here held to be purposive not only in its parts, in the sense that the development of original human capacities in accordance with an end of nature takes place at the individual level, but also in terms of the whole, that is, the species.

Antagonism plays a central role in this story of the development of certain original human capacities of the species as a whole, for it explains how this development takes place irrespective of that which individuals happen to desire and to will. Two factors here combine not only to promote the development of the relevant capacities, but also to bring about the existence of conditions in which their full development can take place. On the one hand, there

is the unsociability of human beings, which consists in their desire to be independent and to order everything in accordance with their own views and ends. On the other hand, there is human sociability, which consists in the desire to associate with other members of the human species, for it is only in this way that individuals can feel themselves to be truly human by developing their distinctively human powers. While the element of sociability makes social relations necessary, the element of unsociability means that these social relations will be essentially antagonistic ones. Yet this social antagonism is itself necessary, not only because it forces individuals to develop their original capacities in competition with others, but also because it gives rise to human evils which eventually compel human beings to introduce legal and political arrangements that are conditions of a higher form of human existence. These arrangements are ‘a society in which *freedom under external laws* would be combined to the greatest possible extent with irresistible force’ (Kant 1900-, 8: 22; 1991: 45), and a law-governed international order. In the latter case especially, one can see how for Kant the transition to a higher form of human existence in accordance with a hidden intention of nature (*Naturabsicht*) is driven by practical necessity:

Nature has ... employed the unsociableness of men, and even of the large societies and states which human beings construct, as a means of arriving at a condition of calm and security through their inevitable *antagonism*. Wars, tense and unremitting military preparations, and the resultant distress [*Noth*] which every state must eventually feel within itself, even in the midst of peace – these are the means by which nature drives nations to make initially imperfect attempts, but finally, after many devastations, upheavals and even complete inner exhaustion of their powers, to take the step which reason could have suggested to them even without so many sad experiences - that of abandoning a lawless state of savagery and entering a federation of peoples in which every state, even the smallest, could expect to derive its security and rights not from its own power or its own legal judgement, but solely from this great federation (*Foedus Amphietyonum*), from a united power and the law-governed decisions of a united will. (Kant 1900-, 8: 24; 1991: 47)

The transition to a law-governed society represents the move from a state of barbarism to one of culture and paves the way for the transition to “a *moral* whole,” as opposed to a merely “*pathologically* enforced social union,” that is to say, a union based simply on the desire for self-preservation (Kant 1900-, 8: 21; 1991: 45). With the emergence of a global legal order

“the highest purpose of nature, a universal *cosmopolitan existence*, will at last be realised as the matrix within which all the original capacities of the human race may develop” (Kant 1900-, 8: 28; 1991: 51).⁴ In both cases there is the exercise of self-discipline or self-mastery, in that human beings of their own accord subject themselves to law. This subjection to law is not freely exercised in the strict sense of an autonomy that is purely self-grounded, however, for it is necessitated by the limitations of human nature and the constraints that it generates in an antagonistic social context, leading Kant to describe the type of self-discipline in question as an “enforced art” (*abgedrungene Art*) (Kant 1900-, 8: 22; 1991: 46). Nevertheless, once it has been employed as a matter of necessity, this capacity for self-discipline can be further developed through the repeated exercise of it, and in the way it can come to determine in an increasingly adequate way the social, legal and political framework which is a condition of culture and the full development of original human capacities in the species as a whole.

On the basis of what has been said above, it is possible to identify the following essential features of the idea of a universal history:

(1) Something good (for example, the full development of original human capacities, civil freedom and global peace) is held to result from something that is morally deficient or is even morally evil (for example, moral vices such as envy and greed, or the miseries occasioned by war) when viewed from the higher moral standpoint that is eventually attained. This is to assume the existence of a human good or several such goods to which otherwise undesirable features of human nature and the human condition serve as the means.

(2) The good in question is an end that can only be realized by the species as whole, but not by individual human beings.

(3) This good is progressively realized unintentionally by human beings acting from other ends, and it is thereby unconsciously produced by them. It is, in fact, initially something that human beings are compelled to realize as a matter of practical necessity.

(4) This good – in Kant’s case a ‘moral’ whole in which original human capacities are able to develop fully - is an end that determines the course of history and gives it meaning at the same time as it is a result of the historical process that it determines (it is, in other words, both cause and effect). Thus, on the one hand, this good must be

thought to exist independently of the historical process through which it is realized, if only in the form of an 'idea', and, on the other hand, it is produced by this historical process and could not, therefore, exist in its absence.

(5) Given the existence of such a final end, we can also assume the existence of an intention and plan of nature which, once comprehended, makes the course of human history intelligible to us and provides it with meaning, in that the course that history has taken no longer appears as a succession and conjunction of merely chance events that are largely characterized by "folly and childish vanity, and often of childish malice and destructiveness" (Kant 1900-, 8: 17-18; 1991: 42). Rather, these events and the human actions that bring them about at the same time as they form part of them can be understood in terms of an end whose realization they help bring about.

(6) In virtue of (5), the material provided by history as an empirical discipline can be organized in accordance with the idea of an intention of nature that is in the process of being gradually realized in the course of history in such a way as to open up a "comforting prospect" (Kant 1900-, 8: 17-18; 1991: 52) capable of satisfying certain fundamental human needs and interests, especially the need to find meaning and grounds for hope in history.

In what follows, I argue that features (1) - (3) of the idea of a universal history can be detected in Horkheimer and Adorno's interpretation of the story of Odysseus, and that these features have to do with the emergence of a self that is capable of exercising the self-mastery which is a necessary condition of a better society. The mastery which the self exercises in relation to itself in this particular context functions, however, as an instrument of domination, and there is nothing to say that it will not continue to function in this way. For this reason alone, features (4) and (5) of the idea of a universal history are absent. Although this appears to entail the absence of feature (6), in that there would no longer be any comforting prospect that allows us to regard history as being in some way meaningful and a source of hope, I shall argue that the rejection of (4) and (5) introduces an element of contingency and thereby the possibility of a free society. This opens up the possibility of some hope for the future, however faint it may have become since the idea of universal history found in classical German philosophy was first developed.

2. Odysseus and the birth of subjectivity

According to Horkheimer and Adorno's interpretation of the story of Odysseus's travels, the Sirens represent the "lure of self-abandonment" that Odysseus consciously resists (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 58; 2002: 27). As we shall see, the self-abandonment in question amounts to a form of self-dissolution, and the lure of it is explained in terms of the "irresistible promise of pleasure" contained in the Sirens' song (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 56; 2002: 25). Self-dissolution would mark the return to a primal condition and to the prehistory of which Odysseus encounters various representatives on his travels, and with which he must struggle in order to preserve himself during these travels. This threat of self-dissolution presupposes the existence of a self. This is not only because there must already be a self that is dissolved, but also because the consciousness of time, including that of a mythical past, requires the existence of a unified self that is reflectively aware of itself as that which persists throughout all the changes and experiences that it undergoes. Horkheimer and Adorno suggest that this unified self was the result of a painful process shaped by a practical necessity that demanded of Odysseus ever greater self-discipline in the face of the temptation presented by the promise of a return to his own prehistory. This process is an ultimately contingent one, however, in that the practical necessity in question arose from a state of affair that need not have existed, and there is accordingly no appeal to some kind of hidden intention of nature. The following two statements, the first of which specifically refers to the struggles undergone by Odysseus on his travels, relate to these points:

In the multitude of mortal dangers which he has had to endure, the unity of his own life, the identity of the person, have been hardened. (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 55; 2002: 25)

Humanity had to inflict terrible injuries on itself before the self – the identical, purpose-directed, masculine character of human beings – was created, and something of this process is repeated in every childhood. (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 56; 2002: 26)

Odysseus's adventures form, then, parts of a process whereby a unified self is first constituted, and for this reason the story of his travels can be described as a tale of the birth of subjectivity. This process involves developing and exercising the capacity for self-mastery, since the more unified the self becomes, the greater becomes the need to repress the urge towards self-dissolution and the desire to experience the pleasure promised by this self-dissolution.

The need to repress the urge towards self-dissolution is illustrated by the episode with the Sirens. On the one hand, Odysseus has the first-order desire to hear the Sirens and experience the intense pleasure that the dissolution of his own self would bring. On the other hand, he has the second-order desire to remain a unified self that is master of itself. This second-order desire and, more especially, the possibility of satisfying it, presuppose the capacity to exercise self-mastery in the face of powerful, more immediate desires. In the case of Odysseus, the exercise of this capacity is exemplified by how he orders his men to tie him to the ship's mast, to plug their ears, and then to row, while he does nothing but listen to the Sirens' song. Although Odysseus is only able to resist the lure of the Sirens' song by subjecting himself to physical impediments, it was his own decision to be bound to the mast. Given that it was based on foresight and knowledge that at a future point in time his first-order desire would eventually win out over his second-order desire to preserve the unity of his own self, this decision also presupposes the consciousness of time and the ability to make temporal calculations.

The self-mastery achieved and exercised by Odysseus comes at a price, however, for he must sacrifice his natural impulses – and thereby dominate nature within himself – in order to preserve himself as a unified self. This self-preservation is of a psychical as well as purely physical kind. We should, in fact, view the desire for self-preservation in the first sense as developing on the basis of the desire for self-preservation in the second sense, because otherwise it becomes impossible to explain how even in a minimal sense there could have been a self that Odysseus sought to preserve during his travels. This self then became an increasingly unified psychic self in the course of his struggles with representatives of his own pre-history. In other words, the self-disciplined, unified self that would be dissolved if Odysseus were to succumb to the lure of the Sirens' song is originally the unintended result of repeated efforts to preserve himself as an individual organism in the face of various dangers to his own physical survival. Once constituted, however, the preservation of the self as a psychic entity becomes an end in itself. This attempt to preserve the self comes at the price of the loss of everything which invests life with meaning and value, and thereby makes life worth preserving, because

[t]he human being's mastery [*Herrschaft*] of itself, on which the self is founded, practically always involves the annihilation of the subject in whose service that mastery is maintained, because the substance which is mastered, suppressed, and disintegrated by self-preservation is nothing other than the living entity, of which the achievements of self-preservation can only be defined as functions – in other words, self-preservation

destroys the very thing which is to be preserved. (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 78; 2002: 43)

What is more, the preservation of the self is not simply a matter of the domination of one's own nature, but also a matter of the domination of others, resulting in a situation in which human beings "purchase the increase in their power with estrangement [*Entfremdung*] from that over which it is exerted" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 31; 2002: 6).

The disciplined, unified self that is exemplified by Odysseus prefigures the capitalist in that we have a self which is capable of deferring gratification with the aim of organizing and overseeing the production process for its own benefit. Odysseus prefigures the capitalist also in that he gets others to work for him – he orders his men to tie him to the ship's mast, to plug their ears, and then to row, while he does nothing except listen to the Sirens' song. Correspondingly, his men prefigure the proletariat in that they have no control over what they do, they are tied to the performance of a repetitive activity (rowing) that requires the suppression of their real desires, while through their labor they reproduce the life of the person who does not labor but instead enjoys the Sirens' song as an aesthetic experience (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 57; 2002: 26-27). Thus the story of Odysseus illustrates the dialectic of enlightenment by showing how the emergence of the rational, autonomous self which is typically associated with enlightenment, and is required by it, results in domination of and alienation from one's own nature and other human beings, instead of resulting in the freedom of humanity as a whole to which enlightenment reason aspires.

Does this entail, however, that self-mastery is intrinsically bad, or is it, rather, good or bad depending on the context in which it is exercised and the end in accordance with which it is exercised? As I have already remarked, Adorno's notion of a society that is 'in control of itself' appears to require some degree of self-mastery, given that it is difficult to see how a society could be in control of itself when its individual members were not in control of themselves. This is not to say that self-mastery is the *only* condition of such a society, nor that a genuinely free society would be one in which freedom is exclusively identified with rational self-determination. I shall later argue that Adorno himself appears to accept the need for rational self-determination when it comes to securing the material conditions of a free society in such a way as to avoid establishing relations of domination between human beings. First, however, I shall provide some further grounds for thinking that an outright rejection of the self-mastery exercised by Odysseus would conflict with the idea of a free society which is 'in control of itself' by spelling out what the self-dissolution promised by the Sirens' song would

actually mean for humanity. I argue that some indications of what it would mean are provided in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*,⁵ and that these indications show that for Horkheimer and Adorno the loss of a self that is capable of self-mastery could not represent a solution to the problem of domination and alienation to which the development of this same self has given rise.

3. Self-mastery or self-dissolution?

Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* exhibits its own 'dialectic of enlightenment'.⁶ Nietzsche constructs an argument for the necessity of an 'artistic' tragic culture on the basis of the alleged historical failure of a Socratic rationalism, to which the term 'enlightenment' could be fittingly applied. This rationalism is characterized by its a fanatical belief in the power of science to understand the very being of things and to improve the world by means of the knowledge it has gained. Yet, as Nietzsche describes in the following passage, in attempting to transform the world in accordance with this belief, this Socratic rationalism encounters its own limits:

[T]he imperturbable belief that thought, as it follows the thread of causality, reaches down into the deepest abysses of being, and that it is capable, not simply of understanding existence, but even of *correcting* it. This sublime metaphysical illusion is an instinct which belongs inseparably to science, and leads it to its limits time after time, at which point it must transform itself into *art*. (Nietzsche 1999a: 99; 1999b: 73)

At a theoretical level this belief in the power of science is an illusion because the phenomenal world is mere appearance and science has only this world as its object. It is also an illusion at the practical level, because this world view's promise of equality and universal happiness generates expectations of "earthly happiness" even in "the very lowest levels of our society" that cannot be satisfied. Rather, this form of culture itself depends on the existence of a slave class, and so to abolish such a class would be to abolish itself (Nietzsche 1999a: 117; 1999b: 86-87). Thus, one might speak of a dialectic of enlightenment in the sense that this optimistic, rationalistic form of culture seeks to retain its conception of itself and its fundamental aims in the face of its own experience of their inherent limits, thereby becoming subject to that which it proclaims itself to be fighting against, namely, error and illusion. Nietzsche, however, views this dialectic as having a positive outcome, in that "the insatiable greed of optimistic knowledge" turns "suddenly into tragic resignation and a need for art," thereby giving rise to a new tragic culture (Nietzsche 1999a: 101-102; 1999b: 75). This new culture will repair "the

loss of a mythical home” brought about by an abstract Socratic form of culture which is forced to adopt its content in a haphazard way from other cultures, and the rebirth of tragedy will therefore necessarily be accompanied by ‘the *rebirth of the German myth*’ (Nietzsche 1999a: 145-147; 1999b: 108-109).

This rejection of a formal rationalistic culture in favor of a culture based on myth lends *The Birth of Tragedy* the appearance of a counter-enlightenment text that exemplifies both the idea of an aesthetic renewal of mythology and Nietzsche’s understanding of myth as the other of reason, whose authority it opposes and replaces with the experiences of a “de-centered subjectivity” freed from all cognitive, techno-practical and moral constraints (Habermas 1987: 94). The experiences in question concern the self-dissolution and self-oblivion that Nietzsche associates with “Dionysiac stirrings, which, as they grow in intensity, cause subjectivity [*das Subjective*] to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting” (Nietzsche 1999a: 29; 1999b: 17). Just as worship of the god Dionysus is associated with intoxication (*Rausch*) and loss of individual identity, the Dionysian drive represents the urge towards a primal unity in which individuality is dissolved, and which Nietzsche describes as an “intoxicated [*rauschvolle*] reality, which has just as little regard for the individual, even seeking to annihilate, redeem, and release him by imparting a mystical sense of oneness” (Nietzsche 1999a: 30; 1999b: 19). The psychological separateness from others that we feel is thereby dissolved, and the loss of individuality in this way promises to overcome our alienation from other human beings.⁷ It also promises to overcome our alienation from nature, because it consists in giving oneself up to a natural urge and to a natural force that exists throughout nature: “[N]ature, alienated [*entfremdete*], inimical, or subjugated, celebrates once more her festival of reconciliation with her lost son, humankind” (Nietzsche 1999a: 29; 1999b: 18).

Given that Horkheimer and Adorno’s interpretation of the story of Odysseus seeks to highlight how alienation from others and alienation from nature are essentially connected with the emergence of subjectivity, and how the experience of self-dissolution described by Nietzsche promises to overcome both forms of alienation, it might be tempting to identify their position on how alienation can be overcome with Nietzsche’s one. This way of overcoming alienation would come at an obvious price, however, for the value placed on the loss of individuality implies that the lives, feelings and ends of human individuals are worthless in themselves, and that acts of cruelty and wanton destruction in the name of the affirmation and celebration of our communal nature and our unity with nature more generally would be justified. Nietzsche himself counters the Dionysian drive with an Apollonian drive, which he associates with order, measure, beauty of form and individual identity, and he regards this

second drive as equally essential to the rebirth of tragedy and the new culture associated with it.⁸ Like the Dionysian drive, this drive is a natural one that is expressive of a fundamental human need, and it tempers the Dionysian drive, which Nietzsche himself describes as “barbaric” (Nietzsche 1999a: 40-41; 1999b: 27-28). Yet Nietzsche associates this Apollonian drive with dream, appearance and illusion, whereas the Dionysian drive is associated with a “mysterious primordial unity” (Nietzsche 1999a: 30; 1999b: 18), a “hidden ground of suffering and knowledge” (Nietzsche 1999a: 40; 1999b: 27), and “the innermost core of things” (Nietzsche 1999a: 103; 1999b: 76). Such claims suggest that the Dionysian drive ultimately represents something more real, and that by succumbing to it individuals discover their ‘true’ nature, whereas the Apollonian drive constructs an artificial ‘reality’ that is designed to protect human beings from the force of the more primitive Dionysian drive in accordance with their need to find order and meaning in existence. With Horkheimer and Adorno this need for an ordering activity that establishes a stable self-identity is, I shall now argue, even more apparent.

If, as I have suggested, the type of experience promised by the Sirens’ song is similar in kind to the experience of self-dissolution that Nietzsche associates with the Dionysian drive, Horkheimer and Adorno’s interpretation of the story of Odysseus would, in fact, appear to describe one of the necessary conditions of a society which is “in control of itself,” namely, the emergence of a self that is capable of exercising self-mastery. It is difficult to see, therefore, how the self-dissolution and self-oblivion that would result from succumbing to such a drive could for them represent a satisfactory way of overcoming the alienation and domination that accompanies the emergence of a unified self, when a society that is “in control of itself” and “conscious of itself” represents a necessary condition, if not the only one, of a genuinely free and humane society. Rather, the absence of a unified self that is capable of exercising self-mastery would be incompatible with the idea of such a society simply in virtue of the fact that this idea requires that each member of society is conscious of him- or herself as a member of the same society. This requirement by itself rules out a situation in which individual self-awareness would disappear to merge in some kind of immediate, unreflective communal self-awareness. Indeed, this type of situation would make it impossible for society to be in control of itself, given that this self-control presupposes that its individual members can, in accordance with their consciousness of themselves as social beings as well as discrete entities, organize society in such a way that it is no longer determined by blind, objective forces, whether they be natural, economic or social ones. What is more, given that a self which is capable of exercising self-mastery has now emerged, the refusal to take the further step of making this exercise of self-mastery subject to reason brings with it the following danger identified by

Adorno: “A will detached from reason and proclaimed as an end in itself, like the will whose triumph the Nazis certified in the official title of their party congresses – such a will, like all ideals that rebel against reason, stands ready for every misdeed” (Adorno 1970: 240; 1973: 242).

One might say, then, that Horkheimer and Adorno’s interpretation of the story of Odysseus describes the emergence of something that from one angle is to be viewed as a human misfortune because it is a source of alienation and domination, while from another angle it must be viewed as a necessary condition of the possibility, if not the actual existence, of a distinctive human good. This human good is a society whose members are not subject to blind, objective forces but are instead able to make themselves independent of such forces in virtue of their collective ability to determine their conditions of life with the aid of critical reflection. We would then have feature (1) of the idea of a universal history – the notion that something good results from something that is morally deficient or even morally evil - while feature (2) – the idea that the good in question is an end that can only be realized by the species as whole – is also present, because the good in question is of a social kind and by its very nature can only be collectively realized. Next, the condition of this good – if not the good itself - is initially produced unintentionally as a matter of practical necessity, namely, through the type of process exemplified by Odysseus’s struggle with forces associated with a mythical prehistory from which he himself has emerged as a unified self. To this extent, feature (3) of the idea of a universal history – the idea that some human good is progressively realized by human beings acting from other ends and as a result of practical necessity - is also present. The emergence of subjectivity and the development of the capacity to exercise self-mastery are contingent, however, in that they depend on events and states of affairs that need not have occurred or existed. For this reason, there are no grounds for introducing the idea of a final end that nature intends and a hidden plan of nature that determines the course of history. Features (4) and (5) of the idea of a universal history are therefore absent.

The presence of certain features of the idea of a universal history may appear less surprising when one considers the following claim that Horkheimer and Adorno make in connection with the figure of Odysseus:

Even Odysseus is a sacrificial victim, the self which incessantly suppresses its impulses ... Nevertheless, he is sacrificed ... for the abolition of sacrifice. His lordly [*herrschaftliche*] renunciation, as a struggle with myth, is representative of a society which no longer needs renunciation and domination [*Herrschaft*] – which becomes

master of itself [*die ihrer selbst mächtig wird*] not in order to do violence to itself and others but for the sake of reconciliation. (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 79; 2002: 43; translation modified)

This claim suggests that, under different conditions, human beings who have sacrificed themselves as purely natural beings by becoming self-disciplined selves can be reconciled with each other, as opposed to remaining caught up in antagonistic social relations. Self-mastery is therefore not bad in itself. Rather, it is good or bad depending on its role in society and the end in accordance with which it is exercised. If the end is mere self-preservation, the dominance of others and the accumulation of capital, self-mastery is bad. It is nevertheless good if its end is a free society “in control of itself”, in which individuals are reconciled not only with each other but also with their own nature, in the sense that they are able to satisfy certain natural impulses by enjoying forms of expressive freedom within the constraints generated by the need to organize society in such a way that its members are no longer determined by blind, objective forces, whether they be natural, economic or social ones.

In the next section I shall focus on a particular way in which rational self-mastery forms a necessary condition of a free society that relates to the material conditions of such a society. At the same time, the significance of the absence of features (4) – (5) of the idea of a universal history identified above will become clearer, as will the extent of the absence of feature (6) - the idea that the material provided by history as an empirical discipline can be organized in accordance with the idea of an intention and plan of nature that is in the process of being gradually realized in the course of history, thereby providing human beings with a sense of meaning and grounds for hope.

4. Self-mastery and the material conditions of a free society

Adorno does not rule out the idea that, despite all appearances to the contrary, “the possibilities of freedom within a state of unfreedom are growing” (Adorno 2001: 250; 2006: 181). He discusses this idea in connection with the historical determinism which holds the view that the actualization of such possibilities depends on the factual matter of whether or not historical conditions are ripe enough. In other words, the actualization of these possibilities depends on the existence and coming together of various causal factors, and in the absence of any one of these factors, or in the event of their failure to come together in the required way, a possibility will not, in fact, be actualized. Against this type of theory Adorno argues that one would then be able to judge the ripeness of historical conditions only after an event had taken place or only

after a state of affairs had come into existence. This is to exclude the possibility that an event *could* have taken place, or that a state of affairs *could* have come into existence, even if it did not in fact do so. This is because the notion of possibility is oriented solely towards that which already is, lending the given an appearance of inevitability. Thus, in seeking to avoid “abstract possibility,” this viewpoint overcompensates by introducing “an abstract impossibility after the fact in which people try to persuade us on quite general grounds that a failure to achieve something proves that it was not possible” (Adorno 2001: 251; 2006: 181-182; translation modified). In contrast, recognition of the ultimate contingency of whatever happens to be the case constitutes an absolute condition of a critical social consciousness that remains free in the sense of possessing the ability to think that things might be different in the future from how they happen to be at the present time, for theory “can shift the excessive burden of historical necessity only if this necessity is known as the appearance [*Schein*] that has become reality, and historical determination is known as metaphysically contingent” (Adorno 1970: 317; 1973: 323; translation modified).⁹

Adorno illustrates how the possibility of a freer, more rational society exists at the present time using the example of “the state of human powers and the state of technology which represents an extension of human powers that have been multiplied through the growth of material production” (Adorno 2001: 251; 2006: 182; translation modified). Technology is here held to represent a development of human powers (for example, a machine that mechanically pumps water imitates the human activity of pumping water with the aid of a lever, and, as a human invention, it is also a product of human powers) together with an increase in them (a machine that automatically pumps water is more efficient and productive than is the human activity of pumping water with the aid of a lever). These productive forces have now developed to the point at which they have the potential to free all human beings from the material want that makes the current state of the world a condition of unfreedom. Material want does this by compelling people to conform to the demands of an economic and social system that dominates them, as when they are forced to work simply in order to survive, or when they themselves accept the existence of the material deprivation from which they suffer in the belief that there is no alternative but to accept it. Freeing human beings from material want is, therefore, a necessary condition of a genuinely free society which, if actualized, would have far-reaching consequences, since if “want could actually be eradicated in earnest, repression and oppression would become superfluous” (Adorno 2001: 252; 2006: 182; translation modified). At the same time, the possibility of freeing all human beings from want, even if they have not been freed from it as a matter of fact, demonstrates that the current state of affairs is something contingent.

Material want and the unfreedom it generates are not, therefore, by any means necessary features of future human societies, even if the current state of affairs suggests otherwise.

On the basis of the claims that he makes in relation to the material conditions of a free society, Adorno must be held to think that in this society people would nevertheless to some extent have to labor to produce the means of satisfying their material needs, even though the development of technology would reduce the amount of time and effort required to do so. This situation will demand rational control over the production process and human interaction with nature. We are therefore faced with the following question: What are the conditions of freeing human beings from material want in a way that is compatible with the idea of a genuinely free society, despite the element of necessitation involved in having to labor to satisfy human needs? One possible (if partial) answer to this question concerns how the production process by means of which humans beings interact with nature should be organized with the aim of meeting society's material needs in a way that avoids alienation and domination. Leaving aside the question as to how this might be done, the need to organize the production process effectively already implies the need for some degree of rational self-mastery on the part of any individuals involved in this process. These individuals will nevertheless not be subject to domination in the way that they are in capitalist society precisely because they themselves determine how the production process is organized, which requires having conscious control over themselves as opposed to being subject to uncontrollable impulses. Within the production process itself the exercise of self-mastery will also be required, for it is difficult to see how each person involved in this process would otherwise be able to perform his or her tasks within it effectively, as opposed to submitting repeatedly to the urge to enjoy some momentary pleasure or to experience some fleeting form of intense intoxication instead of continuing with the task in hand, especially when this task is a physically or mentally challenging one.

The idea that self-mastery exercised within the workplace is a condition of a free society, at least in so far as the material needs of this society is concerned, can be further illustrated on the basis of the following passage concerning the coercive nature of the introduction of an industrial form of labor:

[A]// labour had to learn how to work in a manner suited to industry, i.e. in a rhythm of regular unbroken daily work which is entirely different from the seasonal ups and downs of the farm, or the self-controlled patchiness of the independent craftsman. It had also to learn to be responsive to monetary incentives. British employers then ... constantly complained about the 'laziness' of labour or its tendency to work until it had

earned a traditional week's living wage and then to stop. The answer was found in a draconic labour discipline (fines, a 'Master and Servant' code mobilizing the law on the side of the employer, etc.), but above all in the practice where possible of paying labour so little that it would have to work steadily all through the week in order to make a minimum income. (Hobsbawm 1962: 49-50)

The production process in its capitalist form is here described in terms of a type of discipline that has a purely external source.¹⁰ *Self*-mastery can therefore be said to represent a step towards a freer condition because the agent concerned - in association with others and with a view to their needs as well as his or her own needs - imposes constraints upon him- or herself, as opposed to having them imposed upon him or her by another agent. Moreover, the fact that the capitalist production process and its organization is coercive in character does not mean that the activity of producing goods with a view to satisfying society's needs *must* be of such a nature, and that, like Odysseus's men, the workers "despite their closeness to things, cannot enjoy their work because it is performed under compulsion, in despair, with their senses forcibly stopped" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 58; 2002: 27). Rather, the development of human powers and the means of production may have together already rendered coercive practices in the production process unnecessary. All that would therefore remain is to organize the production process in a way that allows for the actualization of this possibility.

A possibility of this kind would appear to be sufficient for Adorno who, as we have seen, warns against the dangers of allowing the idea of historical necessity to foreclose the possibilities that are held to be available to humankind at any particular time. An element of necessitation would nevertheless remain in so far as human beings must still labor to satisfy their material needs. This does not entail, however, that the relations between the human beings who are engaged in material production to meet society's needs must themselves be of a coercive kind. One is here reminded of Marx's distinction between the realm of necessity (*Reich der Notwendigkeit*), in which work appears as an externally imposed activity based on natural necessity, and the realm of freedom (*Reich der Freiheit*), in which the development of human powers regarded as an end itself begins, but which depends on the realm of necessity in the sense that it itself has certain material conditions. Marx maintains that the "true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself" first begins beyond the sphere of material production. Yet he also states that this sphere nevertheless allows for some freedom in so far as socialized human beings, "the associated producers," regulate their interaction with nature in a rational way by "bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated

by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature” (Marx 2004: 795; 1991: 959). There is here an element of freedom because the associated producers exercise conscious, collective control over the forces of production as opposed to being dominated by these forces and by any other external power that determines what they do and how they do it. As we have seen, this self-direction must be thought to depend on the capacity of individuals to exercise rational self-mastery. Here, then, we have “a society that is conscious of itself and is in control of itself” with respect to its material conditions, and in which the beginnings of the realization of the following hypothetical situation described by Adorno can be detected: “If the social process of production and reproduction were transparent for the subjects, if the subjects determined that process, they would no longer be passively buffeted by the ominous storms of life” (Adorno 1970: 260; 1973: 263). The more precise nature of this society and its organizational structure must be left open, however, if the range of possibilities open to humankind is not to be prematurely restricted to ones that human beings are able to imagine at the present point in history.

For Adorno, then, a state of affairs in which individuals exercise rational control over both themselves and the production process with the aim of meeting society’s material needs is not ruled out by the present state of society, despite appearances to the contrary. Rather, two of the fundamental conditions of such a state of affairs are already in place: the development of the productive forces and the capacity of the individuals who employ these forces to exercise rational self-mastery and self-determination in such a way as to organize and employ them effectively as opposed to being dominated by them, and in such a way as to avoid the purely external form of discipline which characterizes the capitalist mode of production. This possibility is, moreover, to be explained in terms of the contingency of the factors that have together resulted in the existing state of affairs. Indeed, the possibility in question reveals the contingency of this state of affairs itself. This element of contingency, which is essential to explaining the possibility of a genuinely free society, is threatened, however, by the idea of an end that determines the course of history and by the existence of an intention and a plan of nature which can be inferred from such an end. Although this explains why Adorno must reject certain features of the idea of a universal history, it does not entail the complete rejection of the attempt to understand history in such a way that, despite all the indications to the contrary provided by the course of history up to the present day, some grounds for hope in a better, more humane state of affairs remain, however faint this hope must now be. This room for hope depends on the same contingency that prevents us from finding any meaningful, teleological

pattern in human history. Thus, Adorno's rejection of certain features of the idea of a universal history is integral to his own attempt to make room for a progressive notion of history that extends beyond the possibility announced in his claim that at the present time "the thwarted possibility of something other has shrunk to that of averting catastrophe in spite of everything" (Adorno 1970: 317; 1973: 323).

It must be said, however, that Adorno's only partial rejection of the idea of a universal history raises problems of its own. As I have shown, his and Horkheimer's interpretation of the story of Odysseus explains the emergence of one necessary condition of a society whose members are not subject to blind, objective forces, but are instead able to make themselves independent of such forces in virtue of their collective ability to determine their conditions of life with the aid of critical reflection. This necessary condition is the capacity for rational self-mastery. To this extent, Horkheimer and Adorno retain a central feature of the idea of a universal history, namely, the notion that something good may result from something that is morally deficient or even morally evil. As we have just seen, however, this rational self-mastery is far from being a sufficient condition of a free society. Rather, another condition is the technological progress which now allows material needs to be satisfied in a non-coercive way. Does this mean, then, that the capitalist mode of production, in so far as it has enabled the fuller development of the productive forces, was historically necessary? If so, the coercion and misery associated with capitalism must be viewed as an evil out of which something good might emerge at some point in the future. The following statement made by Marx concerning this mode of production and capitalism's necessary role in the fuller development of the productive forces of society would then appear valid:

Yet it squanders human beings, living labour, more readily than does any other mode of production, squandering not only flesh and blood, but nerves and brain as well. In fact it is only through the most tremendous waste of individual development that the development of humanity in general is secured and pursued, in that epoch of history that directly precedes the conscious reconstruction of human society. (Marx 2004: 89; 1991: 182)

Adorno, however, is critical of the idea that such suffering can be justified (Adorno 2001: 66-72; 2006: 43-48), and by locating the birth of subjectivity in a mythic age, he and Horkheimer avoid making the self-mastery required to secure the material conditions of a genuinely free society into something that had to be produced by means of the coercive practices characteristic

of the capitalist period of the development of the productive forces. Nevertheless, in the absence of any clear explanation of how material scarcity could be avoided in the absence of the capitalist phase of history, or how the fuller development of the productive forces is not in fact a necessary condition of a freer and more humane *modern* society, one may wonder whether Adorno does not unintentionally endorse the idea that the suffering which capitalism has caused, and continues to cause, is ultimately a necessary moral evil that can be justified in terms of what it serves to make possible in the future.

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¹ An objection that might here be offered is that, if Horkheimer and Adorno’s retelling of the story of Odysseus and his travels is meant to illustrate the dialectic that forms the object of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and the dialectic in question is to be explained in terms of a specifically Kantian idea of autonomy, then the self-mastery exercised by Odysseus must exemplify this Kantian form of autonomy. Yet, as we shall see, their retelling of this story must be regarded as ill-suited to illustrating the dialectic of enlightenment understood in terms of this Kantian notion of autonomy, because Odysseus exercises self-mastery on the grounds of certain second-order desires and material interests. There does not, therefore, appear to be an obvious drive towards self-grounding in the sense that an agent’s actions lack any antecedent cause which operates independently of pure practical reason. There may be a self-grounding in the restricted sense that the desires that determine Odysseus to exercise self-mastery are his own desires. Yet this is arguably not what Kant means by autonomy of the will as “the property of the will by which it is a law to itself (*independently of any property of the objects of volition*)” (Kant 1900-, 4: 440; 1998, 47; emphasis added), for in the case of the self-mastery that is exercised by Odysseus the will would still be

determined by a property of the object of volition, namely, by how it promises to satisfy the desire which motivates the agent in question to act.

² Even in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* there is said to be a progressive element that results, however, in a tension between the idea that the outcomes of this dialectic are ultimately contingent ones, thereby allowing room for an alternative development of enlightenment, and the idea that these outcomes are necessary in virtue of the nature of enlightenment, an idea which favors a form of conservative cultural criticism and a negative philosophy which identifies history with a process of decay (see Brunkhorst 2000). I intend to show that there is, in fact, no such necessity at work in history for Adorno, since for him there is an essentially contingent dimension to all historical events and developments.

³ Cook attempts to link this transformation of society to ecological concerns by showing that Adorno entertains the possibility of a non-dominating relation to nature that is established by a non-instrumental and non-identitarian form of rationality. Although I shall not argue this point in this essay, rational self-mastery might be considered to be a necessary condition of such a relation, in that moderating the demands that human beings make on nature, given the acquisitive character of many of their current desires, requires not only the existence of this capacity but also the exercise of it.

⁴ This is not to say that at this stage, and especially the one immediately before it, antagonism itself ceases. In the case of a law-governed state, Kant is clear that antagonism remains and is merely kept within certain bounds, for we have "a society which has not only the greatest freedom, *and therefore a continual antagonism among its members*, but also the most precise specification and preservation of the limits of this freedom in order that it can co-exist with the freedom of others" (Kant 1900-, 8: 22; 1991: 45; my emphasis). Indeed, this antagonism remains a condition of the development of original human capacities. Even in the case of a law-governed global order, we have only the discovery of "a law of equilibrium to regulate the essentially healthy hostility which prevails among the states and is produced by their freedom" (Kant 1900-, 8: 26; 1991: 49).

⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno engaged with Nietzsche's philosophy throughout their writings, including *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in which he is regularly mentioned. See Rath 1987. *The Birth of Tragedy* is not, however, singled out in Rath's essay as it is here.

⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno state that like "few others since Hegel, Nietzsche recognized the dialectic of enlightenment" and that "he perceived in enlightenment both the universal movement of sovereign mind, whose supreme exponent he believed himself to be, and a 'nihilistic' life-denying power" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 67-68; 2002: 36). The dialectic in question is explored in the Second Excursus, in which enlightenment reason, through its relentless critical unmasking of ideals or values, is deprived of all substantive content, leaving everything at the mercy of given power relations. Thus enlightenment reason undermines itself by destroying the ideals and values which it itself proclaims. This is somewhat different to the 'dialectic of enlightenment' that I attribute to Nietzsche here.

⁷ "Now, hearing this gospel of universal harmony, each person feels himself to be not simply united, reconciled or merged with his neighbour, but quite literally one with him ... Singing and dancing, man expresses his sense of belonging to a higher community" (Nietzsche 1999a: 29-30; 1999b: 18).

⁸ When Nietzsche speaks of a feeling of joy at the destruction of the individual two things therefore need to be remembered. First of all, he is speaking of a joy connected with an aesthetic experience, not a political one, as is shown by the claim which soon follows that "we take pleasure in the negation of the hero" (Nietzsche 1999a: 108;

1999b: 80), that is to say, the tragic hero. Secondly, this aesthetic experience is equally shaped by the Apollonian drive, and the individual cannot, therefore, be viewed as completely succumbing to the Dionysian drive. Rather, there is an order to this aesthetic experience that would be lacking if someone were to succumb only to this drive. Indeed, the notion of an aesthetic experience of the Dionysian drive presupposes the existence of an aesthetic subject and, as a consequence, the fact that the complete dissolution of the self has not taken place. In a similar way to Nietzsche, who identifies the Homeric epic as an Apollonian art form, Horkheimer and Adorno associate the Homeric world with an intelligible order, describing it as a world “charged with meaning” which “reveals itself as an achievement of classifying reason, which destroys myth by virtue of the same rational order which is used to reflect it” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 67; 2002: 35-36).

⁹ Adorno criticizes historical materialism for not going far enough in this direction because of its insistence on the historical necessity of social antagonism, which it explains in terms of a theory of economic determinism. This is because the historical course taken by the development of the productive forces and the relations of production that arise on the basis of these forces is made into both the necessary and the sufficient condition of a social revolution that will inaugurate the new society that constitutes “the happy end” of history, an end that is in this way viewed as immanent to history. Thus the possibility of a better society is made to appear smaller, in that both the development of social antagonisms and the development of the means of production are necessary conditions of it. It must appear even smaller, moreover, in the wake of the actual course that history has taken, given that the historical experience of communism is one in which a revolution at the purely economic level in the form of the introduction of a planned economy has not been accompanied by the overcoming of social antagonism. Rather, political domination has survived despite this economic revolution, thereby giving antagonism the appearance of an inevitable feature of social relations (Adorno 1970: 315-316; 1973: 321-322).

¹⁰ The idea that self-mastery is a condition of the modern production process in its capitalist form is implicit in the following passage from what is arguably the most famous and influential work of classical political economy, Adam Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*:

A man commonly saunters a little in turning his hand from one sort of employment to another. When he first begins the new work he is seldom very keen and hearty; his mind, as they say, does not go to it, and for some time he rather trifles than applies to good purpose. The habit of sauntering and of indolent careless application, which is naturally, or rather necessarily acquired by every country workman who is obliged to change his work and his tools every half hour, and to apply his hand in twenty different ways almost every day of his life; renders him almost always slothful and lazy, and incapable of any vigorous application even on the most pressing occasions (Smith 1976: Vol. 1, 19).

Smith’s main concern in this passage is to highlight the inefficiency that results from the same person performing more than one type of work as opposed to the greater efficiency achieved by means of a strict division of labor. When he describes the worker as being “seldom very keen and hearty” as he begins to work, Smith nevertheless implies that self-mastery is needed to overcome this aversion to work. It is not clear what is cause and what is effect, for Smith could be taken to mean that having repeatedly to change occupations renders people “slothful and lazy,” and that a division of labor might by itself lessen this aversion to work. Yet it is difficult to see how being reduced to limited, mechanical tasks would result in the replacement of the indolent, inefficient and

undisciplined worker described above, and even the independent artisan who must exercise some self-discipline but is not tied to one particular task, with the self-disciplined worker required by a strict division of labor. Rather, this discipline is likely to require a purely external source, so that it is not a matter of genuine *self*-mastery, as indeed appears to have been the case historically judging from the passage from Hobsbawn's *The Age of Revolution* that I quoted earlier. Thus, one can see how overcoming the division of labor might be viewed as a necessary condition of a free society, though perhaps allowing workers to determine how the production process should be organized might be sufficient in the right conditions to remove the need for a purely external form of discipline.