Introduction

It is extremely disturbing that in liberal democracies, where at least most people are not deprived of the means of education, issues that enjoy overwhelming scientific consensus are still widely denied. It is alarming that seventy-four million American voters[1] cast ballots for a man who shamelessly and repeatedly mocked scientific authorities, including most of those who work within the state apparatuses. It should be shocking that we need to argue for the usefulness of vaccines, as opposed to prayers. Merely thinking about the fact that a sizable portion of the population in the richest and most powerful liberal democracy believe that the world is about ten thousand years old, missing the actual number by nearly five hundred thousand times, is a symptom of something catastrophic in terms of the prospects of enlightenment. Given all this, strong criticism of anti-enlightenment institutions, ideologies, and movements is urgently needed.

Critical Theory's prime significance can be clearly placed against this particular backdrop. There have been various orientations and schools of thought within what has been known as Critical Theory. My main focus is the spectrum that is associated with the Frankfurt School's first generation because the other variations, whether in the institutions that claim the legacy or other, less commercial associations within the academy, often philosophically do not retain the dialectical, or Marxist-materialist, framework, which, I think, is indispensable for a theory whose production of concepts is sensitive to marginalization and is capable of reflecting the epistemology of the marginalized.

Rather than reproducing and perpetually normalizing the dominant mode of perception, which is the perception of the dominant groups, Critical Theory problematizes the violence inherent in the prevalent order. It is inclined to uncover the embedded violence in what the dominant mode of

perception perceives as order. To quote Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, "If negative dialectics calls for the self-reflection of thinking, the tangible implication is that if thinking is to be true—if it is to be true today, in any case—it must also be a thinking against itself. If thought is not measured by the extremity that eludes the concept, it is from the outset in the nature of the musical accompaniment with which the SS liked to drown out the screams of its victims" (1973, 365). This critical negativity, however, does not and cannot stem from a moral decision, including the moral choice of taking the side of the marginalized because making such a choice does not necessarily entail epistemological emancipation from the dominant mode of perception. One would still perceive the world positively and within the parameters of positivism or another (less or more disguised) form of metaphysics. The point is to produce knowledge despite the oppressive order and through perceiving the world under those very existing conditions of oppression. This does not mean living under conditions of oppression in their immediacy is sufficient or even necessary; in this sense (i.e., in terms of the framework of negativity) what matters the most is not the material but the materialist experience, not the empirical but the political interpretation of the empirical within the critical philosophy of history.[2] That is also to say, it is the materialist philosophy's frame of reference that negatively shapes and historically contextualizes critique as a revolutionary praxis. As chapters 2, 5, and 6 show, such a critique has an immediate emancipatory influence precisely because it is a praxis that aims to reclaim the subject's place as an active creator of and in both history and the social space. It is through this critical negativity that alienation, as the experience of unfreedom, becomes raw material in the production of a collective space of freedom.

There cannot be a possibility of a progressive spatial production without a systematic spatial deconstruction of the regimes of signification that, through their normal function, reproduce marginalization and perpetually naturalize it. Therefore, perceiving the prevalent order from the standpoints of the marginalized bodies and conceiving history from the viewpoint of the excluded are imperative for Critical Theory's power of negation and, thus, emancipatory capacity. Critique can be the locus where creative resistance partakes in the composition of theory, and the latter, through amplifying the emancipatory voices of the marginalized, defies the imposed regime of truth that has been silencing the victims while exploiting their suffering however possible to fortify the prevalent order of social hierarchicalization and spatial segregation, thereby perpetuating a totalitarian system that dictates material and knowledge production. The materialist philosophy and the dialectical

method are essential for a critical theory that aims to (1) challenge the epistemological totalitarianism that fictionally includes all only to disguise its actual exclusion of the vast majority who are objects rather than subjects of knowledge production and (2) problematize the moral hegemony that has metaphysicalized various forms of social privilege primarily at the expense of the subclasses within the subaltern, or those Walter Benjamin called "the hopeless ones" (2004, 356).

One of the main merits of Critical Theory, as this book tries to show, concerns epistemic politics of emancipation. Critical epistemic politics, in this sense, is an essential condition of the principle of negativity. This is compatible with Benjamin's theses "On the Concept of History" (2006c), whereby he emphasizes the state of being oppressed and thus experiencing history as a constant state of emergency while at the same time denoting the revolutionary subject as a historical materialist who is motivated by a fidelity to the sufferers of the past and present, not by the promised land of communism in the future.

Adorno too maintained a position of negative epistemology in every aspect of his philosophical, political, and pedagogical projects. Expressing this, he states, "We may not know what absolute good is or the absolute norm, we may not even know what man is or the human or humanity—but what the inhuman is we know very well indeed. I would say that the place of moral philosophy today lies more in the concrete denunciation of the inhuman, than in vague and abstract attempts to situate man in his existence" (Adorno 2000a, 175). There is a continual line of this dialectical negativity that connects Marx's materialism to Critical Theory as advanced by the Frankfurt School's émigrés. At every turn, from the letters of young Marx (1967, 212) to the surviving notes of Benjamin (2004, 356), the negative imperative comes across clearly. Both the urge for taking uncompromising political stances and the motive for philosophizing the world amid overwhelming crises are rooted in a negative genealogy. This is also what makes this tradition potentially cosmopolitan and capable of housing experiences and works of dissent from Asia, Africa, and Latin America as vital concretizing forces for the project's emancipatory objective.

The truth is that European fascism had long been at work in Asia, Africa, and the Americas before the multiple heads of the same beast, of European fascism, brought destruction and death to Europe. For instance, Aimé Césaire (2001), Frantz Fanon (1994), Walter Rodney (1972), Chinua Achebe (2009), and Abdulrazak Gurnah (2020), through various genres of writing, provide clear insights into (what should be called) European fascism

in Africa during times long before the emergence of the term "fascism" at the end of World War I. What the British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Belgian, and German governments had been committing outside Europe was not qualitatively different from the Nazi crimes in Europe. Hence, expanding the historical and spatial scope of Critical Theory makes it more Benjaminian, more Adornonian, and even more Marxian than the version that was formed from the moment of Marx and Engels to the moment of Benjamin and Adorno. It should be revived and further revolutionized by making it more faithful to the epistemic politics of the margins. This book is an attempt in that direction.

Granted Critical Theory does not concern itself with articulating particular solutions for most of the social and political issues it problematizes, but in terms of the central question of why the enlightenment has lapsed back into irrationality and violence, Critical Theory's answer is quite tangible, albeit without violating the negativity principle central to its dialectical approaches. The answer is that the enlightenment could not and will not fulfill its emancipatory objectives as long as it, the enlightenment project itself, is manipulated by the privileged, as long as rationality is rendered a mere instrument for fortifying domination. Each historical setback is only more barbaric, irrational, and catastrophic than the prior one especially for the powerless, silenced, and marginalized. Of course, the privileged sustain their own ideologies of nativism, hierarchy, and antagonism, such as nationalism, and their own institutions, such as the nation-state. Therefore, the very defenders of the enlightenment, in societies that are shaped by domination, are the spokespersons of its perverted myths and mystified perversions. By claiming the universalist doctrine of the enlightenment, often unknowingly, they universalize tribalism; by denouncing the marginalized Other in the name of the enlightenment, they push the enlightenment further into the abyss of primordial phobias, including xenophobia. Of course, the principles of the American and French enlightenment are universal, but then that universality was fought for in St. Domingue more eagerly and unanimously than in France or the United States, both of which, in fact, soon after their respective revolutions became a haven for imperialist, colonial, and bourgeois agenda shamelessly expanding the spheres of enslavement of the oppressed in the name of freedom of the few. Just as the human individual as a right holder and a free subject was about to be born, in that very birthplace, humanity was systematically reduced into an entitlement based on race and class. Today, the same remains to be true: universal emancipation is fought for more desperately and more unanimously in the

margins of the margins while the centers of class monopoly, tribalization, culturalization, and racialization continue to claim it. Of course, there has also been a continual monopoly of patriarchy on subjecthood, to which women were denied any real claim even in the cases of those who had the privileges of class and/or race because like the rest they were defined in homogenizing collective terms. The persistence of patriarchal hegemony in knowledge production renders feminist epistemology (Harding 1986; Flax 1987) equally essential for reviving the revolutionary foundations of Critical Theory. Indeed, feminists are at the center of the reconstruction of the revolutionary subject in several contemporary movements such as the Naxalite (Roy 2011), the Rojava movement (Bengio 2016; Tax 2016; Hosseini 2016; Knapp, Flach, and Ayboga 2016), the Zapatistas (Mentinis 2006; Klein 2019), Idle No More (Morris 2014; Nicolescu 2018), and Pussy Riot (Gessen 2014; Tolokonnikova and Žižek 2014).

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This book is motivated by a sense of urgency as extremism has been on the rise from the Indian subcontinent to the Middle East and from Eastern Europe to Brazil. It draws attention to the ongoing emancipatory struggles in the margins and induces international lessons from them in hope of building a broader, stronger, and more inclusive democratic front in polit-ical, intellectual, and educational arenas. The book helps students, intellec-tuals, scholars, educators, and opinion makers to unlearn false assumptions that are rooted in our epistemic blind spots of privilege. Putting my maxim of learning via *unlearning* at work, this project presents in-depth discursive analyses exposing prejudices embedded in everyday discourses and practices. At the same time, it concretizes lessons we need to learn from the margins for both consistently expanding the scope of emancipation and effectively critiquing exclusionary systems and movements. Thus, this interdisciplin-ary project will help its reader to (1) problematize totalitarian modes of perception and (2) use marginalized philosophies of resistance to negate totalitarianism.

Chapter 1 tries to problematize the totalitarian nature of the dominant modes of knowledge production and spatial experiences under capitalism. The chapter uses the concept of "spatial aura," as I have theorized it pre-viously (2019d), and critically analyzes examples of spatial production in cafés, museums, and university campuses to expose mechanisms of exclusion through inclusion. This idea is further developed in chapter 4, which is a

critique of culturalism and the ways in which the culturalized Other, the marginalized, is denied personhood under the new regime of what I call cultural absolutism or absolute relativism. Absolute relativism is a totalitarian regime of manipulation that fictionally represents all via its spectacles and exhibitions but practically alienates all via totalizing the principle of exchange. It technically mediates unrestricted communication but technologically depoliticizes even what used to be (per Habermas [2015]) bourgeois public sphere. It discursively claims democratic recognition of diversity but spatially demolishes all differences, denying the marginalized a place as soon as s/he dares to claim personhood.[3] As Žižek put it, "The Other is just fine, but only insofar as his presence is not intrusive, insofar as this Other is not really other" (2008b, 41).

The Other is welcome and even encouraged to celebrate the mass-produced identity imposed on them. The Other is alienated through an identity that is meant to define them negatively in relation to the identity of the dominant. At the same time, that mass-produced identity is meant to de-subject the Other because it is molded according to an essentialized and generalized image that has nothing to do with any person or group of people. The very celebrations of diversity in this setting of commercialism, mass production, and mass consumption are founded according to a perception that reduces the individual Other to a unit representative of a collective that is, in turn, assumed to be a homogeneous entity composed of identical units. Ultimately, in everyday social spaces, the Other is compelled to feel out of place simply because the essentialization had already exiled them prior to their actual presence. The very spatial production denies the subject personhood, and this is often intensified through the visual (mis) representation (e.g., flags, imagery that is supposed to symbolize diversity, etc.). The body becomes a subject of its own sharp awareness, perceiving its own movement as a spatial intrusion and stillness as a spatial wound. In fact, the body as a space is also invaded by the alienating imposed identity. The categorical essentialization, spatial alienation, and colonization of the body have been committed through material relations of domination but always with the aid of ideological methods of indoctrination, such as culturalization and the culture industry.

Under the new absolutism, differences are conceived according to the dominant modes of perception, and then each conceived difference is mass-produced according to the dominant modes of knowledge production. Describing the culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno state, "Something is provided for everyone so that no one can escape; differences are hammered

home and propagated. The hierarchy of serial qualities purveyed to the public serves only to quantify it more completely" (2002, 97). The moment the marginalized Other decides to perform any subjectivity, contradicting the identity that had been racially conceived, culturally perceived, and commercially mass-produced, they are swiftly and democratically deported from the public space. If the person somehow manages to retain their individual voice from drowning and demands some sort of justice, groups of public opinion makers might, without any sense of irony, accuse the person of promoting "cancel culture." Again, without any sense of irony, those whose very political activities are in direct opposition to freedom, such as neo-Nazi groups or certain authoritarian state-controlled media, express grievances about the right to free speech. Similarly, denialists who often deny anything from basic logical propositions to well-established scientific facts constantly make up conspiracy theories and absurd narratives while shamelessly accusing their liberal opponents of making up "fake news" and "alternative facts."[4] However, these absurdities are symptoms of a much deeper crisis, some of which critical theorists from Marx and Engels to Horkheimer and Adorno anticipated.

Chapter 2 addresses the question of fascism in today's world while arguing for a critical theory of fascism. The Eurocentric approaches to fascism studies are inseparable from the culturalist mode of perception. However, for the sake of critically analyzing normalized discourses and other forms of racist practices, it was essential to divide the work in terms of problematizing blind spots and omissions in several fields of study as well as various examples of articles, books, and official documents. Arguably, the most challenging aspect of Critical Theory is the task of transforming language as an ideological institution of power while, as a matter of course, critical theorists have nothing but language itself at their disposal for achieving that task. To put this paradoxical challenge in a question form, how can critical theorists ensure that they do not reproduce the dominant mode of perception through their use of linguistic formulas that are inherently bound to reproduce the relations of domination? In other words, if certain discourses and linguistic practices have been advanced as apparatuses of ideological domination in the interest of the privileged, how can those who are adamant to take the side of the marginalized establish a form of theory that is negative as a discourse and negating as praxis?

As of the time of writing this book, the best method I could come up with is one that starts with problematizing the totalitarian space that encapsulates our everydayness, including leisure, consumption, work, production,

daydreams, and so on. This is reflected in the structure of this book, with chapter 1 aiming to problematize a space in which we are not only unfree but also unaware of our unfreedom. Referring to other critical theorists and my previous work, I argue that this is precisely what makes neoliberal capitalism by far the most advanced form of hegemony. It seems in a population that lives under a despotic regime, most people have no illusion about the fact that they are politically unfree. This very awareness has resulted in inventing new spaces, albeit in the margins, for resistance and for exercising some form of political, social, intellectual, and aesthetical freedom. It should be clear that I, undoubtedly, prefer the worst liberal democracy over the best despotic regime, but the difference, or the contrast to which I am pointing, has nothing to do with my personal preferences; nor am I trying to equate between a regime that executes people for their political views and a system that respects its citizens' human rights and freedoms. Obviously, there is a world of difference between the two, and those differences must not be ignored under any pretext. What I am alluding to is two different forms (and tools) of the exercise of power in despotic regimes versus liberal democracies. The comparison has to do with two forms of technologies of power: an older and underdeveloped form of totalitarianism that aims to impose unlimited control via coercion if not sheer horror versus a more advanced one that utilizes means of hegemony. Examining the spatial implications of this difference is a main focus in my work.

Inspired by the Frankfurt School's interdisciplinary investigations of fascism, I argue for a critical theory of fascism for conceptualizing the term to make it useful for critical analyses in various spatiotemporal contexts. The debate about the validity and invalidity of various generic and historical definitions of fascism has been dominating much of the scholarship. There is still a sense of scholastic obligation to return to the first historical models of fascism at least in terms of developing definitions, whether historical or generic ones. The orthodox scholarship has constrained the conceptual capacity of the term by relying on Mussolini's Fascism and Hitler's Nazism as the main, if not only, standards for determining what should or should not be considered "fascist." The chapter serves as both a revisit of Critical Theory's approaches to the problem of fascism and the conceptualization of fascism as what I call "ideology form." This critical conceptualization avoids the common oversight that amounts to attributing a philosophical worldview to fascist movements. It also avoids a fallback into Eurocentrism and other forms of reductionism and essentialism, which seems to be a serious problem in fascism studies. In short, I argue that fascism, except when it is

capitalized, does not designate a particular ideology or philosophy. Rather, it should be used in reference to a form of ideologies, each with different specific content depending on the historical and spatial contexts in which it emerges.

In chapter 3, the critical analysis of aspects of fascism as an ideology form is continued while refuting the common elitist accounts that blame "the masses" for the rise of fascism. The chapter proposes and argues for a different concept, namely, "mobomass," both to avoid the misleading implications of defining fascism as a "mass" movement and to advance a more effective theory for diagnosing and analyzing fascist phenomena wherever and whenever they may occur. There is a long tradition of bourgeois mobilization of the masses and then blaming the masses for what goes wrong. However, the chapter also makes the correlation between anti-proletarian politics and fascism clearer, and in doing so, the chapter refers to Hannah Arendt and the Frankfurt School.

Chapter 4 is a continuation of the same line of problematization but with a focus on the culturalist mentality and culturalist practices because today's dominant form of racism is culturalism. "Culture" is a pseudo-concept even though it has become a dominant paradigm in the humanities and social sciences. Where it exists, it is inherently political, ideological, and unstable, reflecting the existing social conflicts, yet when it appears discursively in reference to any non-White Other, it is used in order to depoliticize and mystify their affairs and racialize them. In this and other works, I revisit the problem of culturalism as one of today's most common means of ideological hegemony that perpetuate social inequality on various sociopsychological and geographical levels.

By this point the book will have addressed several aspects, mechanisms, examples, and frames of Othering, all of which are characteristic of new forms of racism and absolutism. Concrete reappropriations and applications of Critical Theory from the viewpoint of the marginalized are the focus of the final two chapters. Chapter 5 is a critique of positivism as a pseudo-antipode of superstition, arguing that, if anything, there is a historical and strategical unity between the two. Here too the critique is concrete, as opposed to abstract; the chapter begins with an overview of the similarities between religious and positivist claims of "enlightenment" in their respective identification with the dominant, thus furthering the normalization, legitimization, and eternalization of the processes of the totalitarian exercise of power. Chapter 6 is a more direct but at the same time broader critique of the dominant modes of knowledge production and the dominant modes

of perception. In conclusion, the chapter reaffirms that when Critical Theory is reappropriated from the perspective of the marginalized, it becomes even more Benjaminian and more Adornoian in terms of its fidelity to the struggles of the marginalized.

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By way of concluding this introduction, let us consider an objection that, among other possible objections, could be posed against this project. It is understandable for a reader of this book to indicate that most of the thinkers to whom I refer are European. If it is the marginalized who have the potential epistemic power for emancipation, how come this book invests mainly in a group of European thinkers, from Marx and Engels to Horkheimer and Adorno? One of the most ambitious philosophical objectives of this book is precisely the falsification of today's normalized identitarianism, including the nationalist frame of reference. Without even having to engage in biographical accounts of thinkers such as those mentioned above, this book tries to help its readers to unlearn those dominant, and false, modes of perception, signification, and classification. For the sake of brevity, here it suffices to state the following. Every critical thinker I have relied on, from Marx and Engels to the Frankfurters, was extremely marginalized, in many cases made stateless, and in Benjamin's case even denied not just a place in European universities but also a place to exist. What interests me in this book is their works. It is those very works that are adamantly negative and unapologetically in solidarity with the victims of racism, actual and potential forms of fascism, and capitalism as a global system of marginalization. On that note, the mentality that attributes the enlightenment to Europeans unwittingly renders the enlightenment devoid of its emancipatory cosmopolitan essence. In fact, it is precisely the adoption of such racist lenses, which falsely reduce inclusive projects that were the product of multitudes, that is responsible for turning the project into a nightmare over and over again starting from the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution through the twentieth century and continuing to our day. Attributing the enlightenment project exclusively to Europeans is not different than attributing writing and laws exclusively to Mesopotamians. In fact, going by the dominant racializing/culturalizing mentality, the enlightenment itself would be impossible when the Chinese, Indian, Central Asian, and African earlier inventions in various fields of knowledge are excluded. It is ironic that the same professed right

holders of the human civilization, examples of whom are mentioned in the epilogues of this book, are in the first row of the reproducers of exclusionary discourses, ideologies, and regimes of political economy. Somehow, the heirs of the same nationalism that denied every critical thinker from Marx to Benjamin the right of citizenship want us to believe that those thinkers are part of the (racially defined) European legacy.

Politically, in late 2021, none other than the head of one of the notorious surviving totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, Alexander Lukashenko, put the European Union into a basic test, in which the European political leadership failed badly. Simply by turning the tables, Lukashenko proved that his regime's suppression of protesters, journalists, and opposition figures fades in comparison to the European Union's treatment of refugees, not only in the Mediterranean Sea but also on the Polish border. That treatment amounted to a collective death sentence to refugees whose only fault, one could argue, was that they had indeed believed in the European legacy and claims regarding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In fact, many of the victims who were left to die in the cold, including an unknown number of Yezidis who had already been brutalized because of both the construction of states invented by Western colonialism in twentieth century (e.g., Iraq and Syria) and then the partial or near-complete destruction of the same states by Western (neo)liberalization in the twenty-first century.

The system of power relations and the regime of knowledge production, as we learn from Foucault, are inseparable. In the American news industry, often when protests of Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Antifa are mentioned, almost habitually some sort of looting and destruction takes up part of the report—so much so that even the self-proclaimed sympathizers of BLM got into the habit of including a renouncement of violence and looting whenever they mention their supposed support for the movement (as in, "I support BLM, but I am against violence"). These implicit apologies further assert the false accusations against BLM.

How do these kinds of false accusations and assumptions become a normal part of the truth in the first place? For the answer, we should learn to critically examine the prevalent modes of perception, which, as we will discover, are structurally tilted and thus functionally discriminatory from the very first step of the process, that is, at the stage of collecting sensory data. This means the distortion takes place from the very first moment of forming what will be constituting "information." The objective placement of

the sensors is tilted. Objectivity itself is unconsciously predetermined, so it will inevitably generate data that are against the interests of the marginalized. This institutionalized slope is not a matter of bad intentions from the side of, say, reporters, journalists, or teachers. In fact, the slope is undetectable, impossible to realize, within the natural capacity of our perception (but "natural" must be read as *sociohistorically naturalized*). Objectivity is measured according to the standards of the dominant, which means all the recognized standards. We may not know what the standards of the silenced would be like simply because they are silenced. Given this and the fact that we do not experience their experiences, phenomenologically the experiences of the marginalized are ruled out in the depiction of the reality. And we should keep in mind that what we call "reality" is necessarily a *depiction* of the world out there, as opposed to *the world out there*. "The reality" as a discursive entity is, therefore, always already a distortion of truth. By virtue of being constructed on the basis of a selective system of fact-collection, it cannot represent the full truth. The missing parts of truth are missing because the objective sensors are simply incapable of recognizing them. The unrecognizable slope in the placement of objectivity, therefore, inevitably results in an unrecognizable distortion of truth. The truth regime serves falsehood, not truth. What we call truth here and now would certainly be false in a world without marginalization. What we call society is only a false image of what is out there. The same is true in the case of what we call nature, history, culture, and so on.

A broken bank machine wins more media time than the injured bodies of the protesters. Yet, when the Proud Boys, Boogaloo militias, and other similar right-wing groups attacked the US Capitol building in Washington, DC, one of the most typical statements by reporters was something along the lines of "I am shocked," or "I would've never imagined something like this." What makes so many genuinely liberal, diversity-loving, and well-educated opinion makers associate the marginalized with violence even if the movement in question is incredibly peaceful, as BLM has been? What kept these same opinion makers from anticipating an attack such as the one on January 6, 2021, despite repeated and multiple violent assaults on people and public institutions by White supremacists? Have we not repeatedly seen that those who claim to represent a higher civilization, those who want to *make it great again* from the Nazis to today's extreme right in the United States, are the same ones who never fail to *destroy it again*? As I will show in chapter 3, fascists might be a minority in today's West, but

fascist enablers cannot be assumed to be a negligible minority in terms of numbers. What I term "liquid sentimentalism" seems to have made entire sectors of the academy more concerned about the use of the term "fascism" than the possibility of the rise of fascism. Liquid sentimentalism is at least partly to be blamed for today's state of affairs whereby liberal democracies in the West have come under serious threat, not to mention the endless destructive wars by the United States that left entire societies from Afghanistan to Libya at the mercy of Islamists and the various regional gangs from human traffickers to smugglers of crude oil.

To sum up, this book questions the premises implied in the normalized racist language that is perpetuated in institutions of the nation-state and the elites that are behind the fetish of cultural commodities. It is an attempt to revive and revolutionize Critical Theory by reconceptualizing its fidelity to the epistemic politics of the margins and thereby draw more attention to the emancipatory movements of the marginalized. Considering the essential contributions of the German émigrés of the 1930s who have become known as the first generation of the Frankfurt School, Critical Theory was advanced in the margins at the hands of outcast thinkers who were nonetheless unapologetically critical of the relations of domination. Their simultaneous critique of positivism, instrumental rationalism, and superstitions places them among the most unwavering philosophers of universal emancipation. In the works of Benjamin, Pollock, Kracauer, Horkheimer, Adorno, Löwenthal, Marcuse, and Fromm, the target of critique is one and the same: the totalitarian essence of instrumental reason and the discriminatory regimes of truth that render modernity an extension of the Dark Ages.

To Critical Theory, the enlightenment is both the ultimate problem and the only hope going forward; both the soil on which fascism continues to grow and the philosophical sphere within which anti-fascism must take shape; both the curse of historical marginalization imposed on the colonized and the liberation enterprise the marginalized must own. Using the language of Critical Theory and aiming to reclaim the cosmopolitan project of emancipation to the revolutions of the margins, this book speaks from the viewpoint of the marginalized. It shows that most of the actual defenders of the emancipatory aspects of the enlightenment project have always been in the margins while the elites of the dominant groups not only invented the pseudo-concept of "race" but also engineered, rationalized, and justified countless acts of mass enslavement and genocide on every continent. Incorporating critique of political economy and historiographic

research conducted by other critical scholars such as Walter Rodney (2018) and Fernando Grüner (2020), this project draws attention to the fact that the first authentic revolution of universal emancipation took place in the margins while the American Republic and the French Republic continued to practice extreme and violent discrimination across classes and geographies.