

# *Analysis of Hartmut Rosa's Critical Theory of Social Acceleration*

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**Abstract:** As human beings enter post-modern society, social life is highly fluid and tends to accelerate constantly, and therefore acceleration has become an issue of focus for various disciplines. This paper first explores the main components of Frankfurt School critical theorist Hartmut Rosa's theory of social acceleration: the connotation of acceleration theory, the inner mechanism, the way to produce new alienation, and the way to solve alienation, and summarizes and sorts out the theoretical results. Secondly, this paper compares the ideas of Rosa with those of the first three generations of Frankfurt School philosophers to find out the similarities and differences between Rosa and the Frankfurt School. Finally, the paper presents a critical view of the solution "resonance" proposed by Rosa to the acceleration of capitalist society and proposes a solution based on the Marxist position. It attempts to make a preliminary exploration of how to transcend the phenomenon of capitalist acceleration in order to better understand the secret of social acceleration.

**Keywords:** Hartmut Rosa, Frankfurt School, social acceleration critique.

## **1. Introduction**

As one of the core concepts of social critical theory, "speed" has gradually come into the field of academic circles. As early as 1977, Paul Virilio published his book *Speed and Politics*, in which he proposed "Dromology". In recent years, the "School of Critical Social Acceleration Theory", represented by Hartmut Rosa of the University of Jena, has advanced the critical study of speed. His works such as *Beschleunigung*, *Beschleunigung und Entfremdung*, *Welbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Beschleunigung*, and *High-Speed Society* have been published. *High-Speed Society* attracted a group of Western left-wing scholars, including John Urry, William E. Scheuerman, and Klaus Dorry. Their focus on this theme has turned "speed" into an important direction or turn in social-critical theory.

Rosa's critical theory of social acceleration provides us with a new way of thinking in analyzing, diagnosing and treating social crises, but expecting to build adaptive stability and empathy to counteract them is not a real solution. We need to explore the limits of Rosa's theory by placing "acceleration" in the context of the logic of capital in the context of historical materialism and implanting it in Marx's vision. This is by no means a theoretical preference, but a test of whether this theory can really hit the inner requirements of the "facts" of modern society itself.

## 2. Overview of Hartmut Rosa's Social Acceleration Theory

### 2.1. The Connotation, Driving Factors, and Internal Mechanisms of Social Acceleration

“Everything is accelerating”, the social life, politics, work, study, love, leisure, etc. in the era of digital capitalism are all characterized by “speed”. According to Klaus Dörre, the eternal dynamics of the capitalist system are precise “acceleration” and are rooted in the process of competing interests.[1] On the relationship between acceleration and modern society, Henry Adams, Simmel, Dewey Carl Schmitt, and others have illustrated. However, social acceleration is not simply an increase in workload within a certain time limit, as we think of it in our daily lives. So, what is the meaning of social acceleration in the context of social critical theory? According to Rosa, it can be confirmed in the following ways.

First, the acceleration within society is reflected through technological acceleration. Today, the globalization of transmission, communication, and production can be accomplished through “input and output (I/O) acceleration technology”. This is undoubtedly the “acceleration of technology”. It is in this sense that the central intention of Paul Virchow's speedology is “social acceleration”. In essence (i.e. anthropologically), this acceleration is also remarkable in that the “priority of space over time” in human understanding seems to have been reversed: the globalization of the Internet age has led to the conception of time as a means of compressing or eliminating space. In other words, our habit today of describing space in terms of time rather than distance is such that “space begins to lose its importance in the late modern world, processes and developments cease to be localized, and places begin to become ‘non-present’ without history, identity or relations.” [2]

The second is society's acceleration. Society's attitudes, values, fashions, lifestyles, social relations, class, birth background, and social language all reflect acceleration. Rosa commandeers Hermann Lübeck's work. Rosa uses Hermann Lubbe's central concept of the “compression of the present” to summarize this social change. For Lubbe, the “past” is defined as no longer valid, the “future” as not yet in effect, and the “present” as a period time in which experience and expectation coincide; Rosa also argues that “Social acceleration is defined by the decaying reliability of experience and expectation”[3] If this attitude of “living in the present and forgetting the past” is still difficult to be confirmed empirically, Rosa also proposes three forms of acceleration: intergenerational in early modernity, generational in classical modernity, and intra-generational in late modernity. In other words, such changes can be seen through the examination of life between generations. For example, “in pre-modern societies, a father's occupation is inherited by his son and maintained; in classical modernity, the structure of occupations changes from generation to generation, and sons (or daughters) are free to choose their occupations, but generally speaking, this is a lifelong choice; in late modernity, occupations are no longer lifelong, and jobs change more frequently than in the previous A social form”[4]

The third is the acceleration of the pace of life. This is a form of acceleration that seems to be in paradox with the first two. Although on the surface, society is accelerating, people feel an increased lack of time. We can illustrate this with the help of Jonathan Crary's 24/7: Late Capitalism and the End of Sleep: time is beginning to become more and more of a rarity, the time has become the new form of control in the age of capitalism, and our time is increasingly filled with all kinds of electronic videos.[5] Rosa comments on this by saying that the important boundaries between day and night, public and private, activity and rest, work and leisure are disappearing. “Sleep is no more! Capitalism has murdered sleep! More appropriately, sleep is wearing out in the minute ticking of the clock”[6]. In Rosa's own words, to do what we have to do well, we have to be able to have 48 hours a day, or even more, to accomplish our tasks, and therefore, we always feel that time is running too fast.

How do this social acceleration and the sense of "acceleration" that it brings to people come about? In Rosa's view, the first external driver of social acceleration is the economic motivation of capitalism. The most classic understanding of time in capitalism is that "time is money", in which time becomes the basic way of disciplining people. The second impetus for acceleration is the "cultural engine", which, in Rosa's view, is related to the intertwining of "death" and "happiness" in modernity. "On the one hand, "by speeding up the options of enjoying the world fully, the 'faster life' makes it possible to narrow the gap between the time of the world and the time of life itself. can become smaller"[7], i.e. to increase the "the thickness of life". Nowadays in our lives, "a good life is a life that is filled" has become the belief of life. On the other hand, the humanistic concept of education, which is promoted in modern times, believes that the good life lies first and foremost in developing the talents and potentialities that the subject possesses to the fullest extent possible, thus driving the widespread belief that social acceleration is a natural consequence. Therefore, if we want to realize the possibilities of human beings as much as possible, to transcend as much as possible the limitations brought by a stage or an event, then "acceleration" is undoubtedly the "only strategy" to make the gap between infinite time and the existing individual life choices infinitely close. ". The third driving force is the "engine of social structure". This is closely related to the "functional differentiation" of society. The social activities of modern man are often divided into multiple tasks. A professor, for example, has to teach classes, undertake research, and spend time with his family and society, so he has to "shift" irregularly between activities. Nowadays, it is more about "sequencing activities for oneself in the here and now", and time is branded with the fluid nature of modern society.

However, Rosa argues that the latter two of the three should not be explained by "reducing" them to the first impetus, as traditional Marxists argue. Even in the case of the first impetus, he does not explain the acceleration in terms of the production sphere as the fundamental impetus. He clearly states that "I believe that the drivers of acceleration in modern society are not explained by the domain of economic capitalism"[8] The relationship between the three is oriented towards a "parallelism" that works together for the acceleration of modern society, which is one of the ideas promoted by contemporary radical thinking. According to Rosa, "each of these three principles of acceleration is the primary engine in the corresponding field of acceleration". For example, technological acceleration within society is more often driven by the "economic engine"; while the "cultural engine" becomes the main driving force for the acceleration of the rhythm of life; as for the "social structure engine" The "social structure engine" contributes to the acceleration of society as a whole.

## **2.2. Reasons for Alienation Due to Social Acceleration**

Does the acceleration of society mean the progress of society? Does it mean that people have enriched their lives through such acceleration? Since the 18th century, acceleration, growth, and innovation have been regarded as the qualities of progress. Thus, "social acceleration is seen as the driving force of history," meaning that life becomes better and better through "social acceleration. For example, material scarcity can be overcome by economic growth, and the lack of time can be compensated by rapid technology. In Rosa's view, for about 250 years, parents have been convinced that their children will have a better life than they do in the future. But after the twenty-first century, in a society, it calls late modernity, this idea of "progress" has been changed and has become a necessary structure, a requirement to prevent us from being left behind. If a country does not accelerate, it will not be able to maintain social stability, and people will begin to experience unemployment, factory closures, declining incomes, and political institutions will begin to lose legitimacy.

This social acceleration is already a manifestation of alienation. Why does the acceleration of society lead to "alienation"? Rosa argues that this can be clarified in the following five ways.

One is the alienation of the relationship between humans and space. For Rosa, the core connotation of alienation is the structural distortion of the relationship between the self and the world, where humans necessarily embody a subject that inevitably feels the extension of the world as spatialization and itself as a spatialized orientation. However, this natural closeness is separated in modern society. Giddens' "disembedding" gives us the most graphic explanation of the modern change of space: "Disembedding refers to the social relations that reconstruct their social relations from an inherently interactive territorial context and across an infinite range of space and time that 'draws' itself out." [9] Of course, for Rosa, he argues that this "deterritorialization" of modernity does not necessarily make For Rosa, of course, he argues that this "decontextualization" of modernity does not necessarily make "spatial alienation" necessary, but only a possibility. Spatial deterritorialization often brings about the "alienation" (estrangement) of intimacy, because once people are removed from a space, they constantly encounter new areas of strangeness. Similarly, as social technology accelerates, people need to be constantly familiar with new objects; thus, they are no longer interested in their individual characteristics, but simply in knowing how to manipulate them. Whereas we might have used something for decades to the extent that we had an "affinity" with its various characteristics, this is naturally lost in the present, as "social acceleration creates a greater mobility and separation from material space, which further alienates it from our material environment". [10]

The second is the alienation of human-object relations. Rosa argues that things are to be divided into at least two categories: those we produce and those we use or consume. The objects we live and work with construct our identity to some extent. However, as society accelerates, the repetitive repair of "things" seems to become less necessary, and it becomes clear that repairing "things" is increasingly expensive compared to producing them. Today, when "things" break down, people more often choose to replace them with a new one, i.e., they decisively discard the old ones so that they are no longer part of our lives. When this becomes the dominant or only mode of relating to the world of things, it leads to our "alienation" from the world of "things". In essence, this mode becomes dominant as society accelerates.

Third, it accelerates the alienation of people's actions. The opposite of alienation is a sense of being "at home," such as living in a particular place, with a particular person, or by a particular act. But on the one hand, with the acceleration of technological production, we are becoming more and more alienated from the sense of being at home; on the other hand, we seem to have less and less time to know enough about what we are trying to do, and the information overload makes us lack a deeper understanding of information. More importantly, "what people do is not what they want to do", and people find that while society is accelerating, the time for their "core business" is shortened, and time may be taken up by other things, i.e. In other words, what people are doing is becoming more and more diverted from the original plan. According to Rosa, this alienation "comes from a logic-driven by competition and acceleration. Because in a structured world driven by speed, we tend to seek short-term aspirations rather than projects that take a long time to achieve, only to find out that many of them are "false needs. In this way, we often forget what we want to do and who we want to be. In other words, people are dominated by various to-do lists, engaged in quick-fix pleasure consumption or activities, and end up losing what they value.

The fourth is the alienation from time. Rosa starts this discussion by defining the difference between "time of experience" and "time of memory". In the sense of experiential time, one experiences a day equally, but if one feels happy and receives many new, pleasant and exciting things, then the day passes quickly; but more often, one may feel that the day is particularly long (time of memory). Thus, the short time that runs quickly inexperience may translate into a long time in memory, i.e., the relationship between the two is often reversed. In the postmodern media world, the "length" of time inexperience is being replaced by a new form. This new form is one in which even

though time in experience flows particularly quickly, very little remains in memory. It is in this new activity of temporal experience that we absorb only "isolated" fragments of action or experience, without leaving a trace of memory in our minds. In an accelerated society, the actions or experiences that people spend their time performing are becoming more and more fragmented, just as we seem to do a lot of things to make our lives seem rich and meaningful by going through the motions of an accelerated society from morning to night; but, on the contrary, these actions are isolated from each other, leaving our memories blank.

Fifth is the alienation of the self from the other. Social acceleration also has a segregating effect on social relations as a whole, i.e., the relations between actors. More importantly, it leads to the erosion of commitment, separating or isolating people from the time and space of their own lives, from their actions and experiences, from the things that accompany their lives and work, etc. Previously close relationships are distorted and fragmented so that the relationship between self and other is structurally "damaged."

Based on the above five kinds of alienation, Rosa develops a critique of social acceleration. His critique is grounded in his core concept of "resonanz," an alternative social quality that is opposed to alienation. In his new 2016 book *Resonanz: Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung*, Rosa makes it clear that he does not see "slow living" as a solution to accelerated social alienation, but rather focuses on the world relations distorted by social acceleration. In his book, he clearly states that he does not consider "slow life" as a solution to the accelerated alienation of society, but rather focuses his vision on the distorted relations of the world by the acceleration of society, and uses "resonanz" to get rid of the alienated relations to obtain a perfect social state. "Resonanz" is a mutual response to people, objects, nature, art, and even our bodies or our senses, in which our senses are truly linked to the other. For an accelerated society, it is imperative to focus on how we should seek "resonanz", that is, how we can rebuild this "resonant" relationship.

According to Rosa, the restoration of the "resonanz" relationship requires sufficient time as a basic condition, so that time can be used and used to construct a solid social relationship. But the existence of such sufficient time seems unlikely at the moment, as Welty asks: does this mean that we have to wait for the day when we have enough time or give up other things to add to our time? Of course, this is not necessary for Rosa, who pushes resonanz more towards a "subjective" tendency. Rosa calls this attitude "Dispositionale Resonanz", which means that we can enhance or create this will of ours, so that we may produce the conditions of resonance. He also believes that each person has this "axis of resonance" and that although the social relations of the system are already present and alienated, each of us can restore the resonance.

### **3. Comparative Analysis of Hartmut Rosa's Theory of Social Acceleration and the Frankfurt School**

As a member of the Frankfurt School, Hartmut Rosa's theory naturally shares commonalities with the Frankfurt School but also has its originality. After summarizing Rosa's theory of social acceleration, it is necessary to compare it with the theories of other critics of the Frankfurt School. Our analysis and general examination of Rosa's critical theory of social acceleration focus on two aspects: first, the logical relationship between the theory and the lineage of the Frankfurt School; second, how his theory enriches, builds, and surpasses the previous critical theory of the Frankfurt School.

### 3.1. Points of Inheritance and Similarities

With the change of the times, the Frankfurt School's critical theory has changed and turned dramatically: from the traditional civilizational criticism to the linguistic turn to the political-ethical turn. In the following, we will analyze what are the similarities behind these turns.

#### 3.1.1. Comprehensive Research Methodology - Interdisciplinary Theoretical Research

First of all, both Rosa and the previous representatives of the Frankfurt School adopted an integrated research method and conducted interdisciplinary theoretical research. Although the previous philosophy attached importance to criticism, it emphasized more on rationality and discernment more, focused on logical thinking, and sought to transcend social reality into pure metaphysics. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School, on the other hand, is internalized in the social process and is critical of the existing social and cultural philosophies. From the Frankfurt School's Horkheimer and Adorno's "Dialectic of Enlightenment," the critique of popular culture, Marcuse's "One Dimensional Man," Habermas's ideological critique, and Interaction rationality, we can see that the Frankfurt School combines philosophy, psychology, sociology, and cultural studies. The Frankfurt School intersects the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, sociology, culture, and political science, breaking the isolation and one-sided division of labor among them and integrating the relationship between them. It also provides a complete perception of the capitalist industrial society from a more delicate perspective. The latest generation of Rosa has continued this tradition by integrating the disciplines of economics, political science, and sociology to analyze the phenomenon of acceleration and alienation in the present era. Although the Frankfurt School has been fragmented, its representatives have passed away, and its theories have lost their former glory, its basic direction and original intention have not changed at all.

#### 3.1.2. Concern for the Dilemma of Human Alienation - the Humanistic Position

Since the 20th century, there have been two kinds of value orientations: humanism, which is based on human existence, and scientism, which believes that social processes are inevitable and perfectly regular. The humanist position of the Frankfurt School originated from Marx's theory of legal criticism. From his youth, Marx aspired to fight for the happiness and liberation of all mankind. He was always at the forefront of his time, building a new world by criticizing the old one. In the *Philosophical Manuscripts on Economics of 1844*, Marx focused on the logic of capital, ruthlessly criticized and indicted the oppression of the working class by the capitalist economy, the destruction of the ecological environment and ideology in multiple dimensions, and sought to pursue a fair and just society. The Frankfurt School believed that the exposure of the despicable facts of capitalism and humanitarian concerns permeated Marx's philosophy. Fromm comments: "Marxism is a humanism that aims at the realization of the various potentials of man. .... Marx was concerned with man, and his goal was to liberate him from the domination of material interests, from the prison of bondage that his arrangements and actions had created for himself. The goal was to free man from the domination of material interests, from the prison of bondage that his arrangements and actions had created." [11] Alienation is an important element of the Frankfurt School's social-critical theory, a powerful ideological weapon for criticizing capitalist society. Like Lukács, they opposed Engels and Lenin's weakening of Marx's philosophy into science and positivism, arguing that this understanding of Marxist philosophy had completely deviated from the original Marxism. Reconstructing historical materialism and pointing out the limitations of natural dialectics were the primary goals of the Frankfurt School, which believed that Marx's critical theory should start with political economy.

The cultural criticism of the Frankfurt School covers nature, society, language, philosophy, psychology, science, technology, etc. It always focuses on the alienation of human reality, starts from the predicament of human existence, insists on the humanist position to carry out technical-rational criticism, mass culture criticism, personality-psychological structure criticism, and ideology criticism, and gives the Hegelian concept of alienation and Marx's concept of alienation a contemporary connotation. Among them, the cultural and ideological critique is the core of the critical theory.

The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research was founded in the early 1920s, with Rüstow as its first director. Horkheimer took over as the director of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research in 1930. Horkheimer was the true founder and founding father of the Frankfurt School. His "Traditional Theory and Critical Theory" not only pointed out the fundamental differences between critical theory and traditional theory but also opened the glorious era of critical theory of the Frankfurt School. The orientation of critical theory is the combination of social theory and practical activities. Horkheimer has been adhering to the credo of Marx's Syllabus on Feuerbach: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the problem is to change it." [12] His critical theory is dedicated to focusing on the existential dilemma of human beings and the nature of human beings in modern life, calling on human beings to reflect on existing things and states, to think critically, promote the subjective initiative of human beings, and to the goal of critical reason: "to reconstruct society on the basis of a non-oppressive relationship between man and man, to treat man as a conscious something as well as a self-controlled subject of social reality, while restoring him to his subjective position in the evolution of human society." [13] The ancient Greek Logos was transformed into technical rationality, i.e., the spirit of Enlightenment, after being processed by Descartes' formulaic and quantifiable traditional theory. The Enlightenment spirit focuses on the supremacy of reason, opposes authority, replaces myth with knowledge, and brings into play the essential power of the subject in the practical activity of transforming nature. However, the spirit of Enlightenment goes to its own opposite in real life: on the one hand, technical rationality forces the subject-subject relationship into a subject-object relationship, and the relationship between human beings and human beings becomes the relationship between human beings and things, and human beings are measurable, value-creating and wealth-creating. On the other hand, after the return of the Enlightenment spirit, the subject not only confirmed its own power, but also intensified its persecution of nature, and human beings themselves were severely injured and lost their freedom, and nature and human beings were alienated at the same time. While the Enlightenment shattered the myth and freed reason from its shackles, it also dug its own grave.

In Dialectic of Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno direct their criticism of the mass culture in capitalist industrial society. Popular culture is not a popular culture that serves the masses, but a one-way culture that has been commodified and lost its inner resistance. While art and culture are supposed to be creative and irreproducible and to lead human minds to be active and express their individuality, commercialized mass culture has completely lost these cultural characteristics and has become an appendage of capitalist society. The aesthetic nature of mass culture has been reduced, and with it the production process of uniformity and unlimited reproduction, the work is downgraded to a product, and the appreciation of art is reduced to commodity fetishism. After heavy physical and mental labor, human beings need entertainment and recreation, and mass culture can relieve the exhaustion of mechanical labor, and also sap the inner turmoil and resistance of human beings, who are three-dimensional, living beings suppressed to become flat, dull machine parts, unconsciously identify with the capitalist labor model and life model, replace thinking with pleasure, replace satisfaction with deception, indulge in the present, and lose the dimension of resistance and criticism. We lose the dimension of resistance and criticism, and day after day we are self-hypnotized and self-

deceived, not feeling miserable but happy. Affirmative thinking defeats negative thinking, giving rise to a totalitarian context in modern industrial society.

Fromm launched a study of the psychological mechanisms of modern man's escape from freedom. Although medieval humans could not fully know themselves, individuals had a relatively stable outlook at birth due to the profound primitive bondage of nature and a more traditional way of life, and the social class structure ensured all certainty: with the Renaissance and Reformation movements, the old social order was broken, competition and individualism prevailed plus the expanding scope of interaction, modern people felt less secure, and the lifeworld was all of this has led to three typical self-avoidance mechanisms of modern man: sadistic and masochistic authoritarianism, destructive desire, and mechanical convergence. These three mechanisms all belong to the active abandonment of the self, not to develop one's independence, and the pseudo-self takes its place. As a result, he lamented: "The problem of the 19th century was the death of God, the problem of the 20th century is the death of the man. In the 19th century, impersonality meant cruelty; in the 20th century, it means schizophrenic self-alienation. The danger of the past was that man became a slave; the danger of the future is that man may become a robot." [14] In Habermas's eyes, science and technology play an ideology-like role. Starting from Horkheimer's critique of technical rationality, Habermas argues that science and technology, while enhancing the productivity of society, leap to become a new ruling force. Unlike the traditional ideology of politics, the domination of science and technology not only has a defensive function but also a concealing and penetrating one, dissolving human subjectivity and reflexivity. Here the ideology undergoes alienation and has a false nature. At the same time, facing the crisis of late capitalism and overcoming the defects of instrumental rationality and historical materialism, he demands the establishment of a discourse ethics system to rationalize the act of interaction, ensure the truthfulness, equality, and normativity of interaction between the two parties, and reach a rational consensus.

In response to the pluralistic value orientation of Western capitalism and the pursuit of fairness and justice, Honneth strives to construct his own political ethical system, a theory of recognition, to address new issues of justice, distribution, and ethics in the context of multiculturalism.

Rosa, who studied under Honneth and belongs to the Frankfurt School, also observes the state of human existence and psychological experience in the context of the new era. He identifies five alienated states of human existence in the 21st century amidst the vortex of rapid social development, where people are always doing things that are not out of their heart's true will. The Frankfurt School has been influenced by Marx's alienation theory and believes that the state of alienation described by Marx gradually spreads from the political and economic fields to all corners of society, culture, and life, and expands from partial alienation to universal alienation.

To sum up, the first three generations of the Frankfurt School theorists and Rosa all focused on the state of human existence in social reality, combined metaphysics with metaphysics, and adhered to the humanist position of Marxism.

### **3.1.3.No Subversion of the Capitalist Framework - Compromise**

The Frankfurt School was initially founded with the mission to criticize the real dilemma of human existence as its material. Their critical theories initially had extremely strong social insight and relevance. Horkheimer and Adorno made radical criticism and attacked industrial civilization, but the subsequent application and unfolding of critical theories in practice were not powerful enough. Marcuse combines Marx's theory of alienation with Freud's psychoanalysis and analyzes Schiller's aesthetics to envision a non-repressive way of being. This way of existence requires two things: first, to turn work into a pastime. The act of labor is generally alienated in capitalist industrial society, and the act of labor is not enjoyable but repressive. How then can the repressive nature of labor be changed?



Labor must be freed from the rule of instrumental rationality and sublimated to sensuality and freedom. The second is to sublimate sexual desire to love desire. From the mere desire for procreation to the desire for the love of the whole personality. In short, Marcuse wants to rely on stimulating the power of sensuality to resist the repression of human beings by rational civilization.

In addition, Marcuse resists the capitalist system and its one-way culture in the form of the "Great Cultural Rejection. This great refusal is the total resistance to an industrial society, a rejection of economic models, political domination, consumer control, and ideological domination. In the conclusion of *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse writes: "Beneath the conservative public base are the vagrants and outsiders who live at the bottom, the exploited and persecuted of different races and colors, the unemployed and unemployable. They exist outside the democratic process; their lives are the most immediate and realistic demand for an end to intolerable living conditions and institutions. Therefore, even if their consciousness is not revolutionary, their opposition is revolutionary." [15] Marcuse had high hopes that the "New Left", those who lived at the bottom and did not share in the "sweetness" of capitalism and the university students who were intellectuals, could be the revolutionary driving force. The reason is that only those who are exploited and persecuted in a capitalist society can realize the cruelty of society and are more capable of catalyzing the desire for revolution; in the 1960s, the rebellion of young students showed Marcuse the dawn of the revolution. Young students had knowledge and culture, that had not yet been eroded by industrial civilization, and had a budding critical spirit. But the vagabonds were incapable of bearing the revolutionary burden and had only negative pessimism; gradually the young students entered society and returned to the middle-class group, enjoying the rich capitalist life and being ruled by consumption, forgetting all about the revolutionary goal. Thus, Marcuse's plan to find a revolutionary subject failed.

On the path of transcending alienation and pursuing a free state of existence, Fromm believes that the three typical psychological mechanisms of escape are undesirable for human beings when facing the real world and that they can only develop a full personality in survival activities by working with love, giving full play to their own and others' individual characteristics, and actively realizing their personal potential. A rational combination of love and reason is able to reject alienation and realize his idea of humanitarian values.

Habermas advocates the elimination of technological alienation by replacing the place of labor in the socio-historical process with interaction. In his view, labor and interaction are the basic means of human existence, but labor is an instrumental act, while interaction is an act of understanding and agreement between subjects using linguistic symbols and is superior to labor. Labor embodies the relationship between man and nature, i.e., the relationship between conquest and subjugation; interaction embodies the relationship between subjects, which is more significant for the overall development of human beings. Inter-subjective relations take precedence over subject-object relations, and subject-object relations are subject to free inter-subjective relations. Labor indeed occupies a decisive position in the early stage of human social development and human survival, and human beings distinguish themselves from animals through labor. With the continuous development of the spirit of human rationality and the acceleration of the civilization process, the act of interaction is increasingly expanded. Interactional rationality focuses on morality in the world of life. In Western philosophy, rationality has always been at the core, from Plato, Aristotle to Kant, from a priori rationality to theoretical rationality, practical rationality and aesthetic rationality in the three critiques, the scope of rationality has been narrowed, specified, and one-sided, until it has developed to the modern instrumental rationality which has been utilitarianized and secularized. Labor under the guidance of instrumental rationality leads to the irrationality of interaction, the destruction of human intersubjective relations, the transformation of human relations into relations of things, and the colonization of the living world. In response to this situation, Habermas tries to use symbols or speech

to regulate human behavior, rebuild the rationality of interaction, avoid linguistic misunderstandings, make the two parties of interaction reach a consensus, demand the truthfulness, fairness, and sincerity of interaction, i.e., comprehensibility, and two subjects use language or symbols on an equal and non-coercive basis to talk frankly and deal with interpersonal relations, international affairs, and faith issues in an understanding and tolerant manner. Although Habermas took an alternative approach and tried to fill the gap of normative absence in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, he did not succeed in overcoming the colonization of the living world and even retreated from the original radical position of the Frankfurt School retreating on the path toward reformism and compromise. Moreover, the search for discursive consensus and the establishment of a community of interaction and the hope to overcome the crisis of capitalist industrial civilization in this way have utopian and idealistic tendencies.

Honneth, as a senior disciple of Habermas, has the same moral and ethical normative character in his theory of recognition and the reconstruction of the rationality of interaction. By reducing his critical theory to questions of recognition and justice, Honneth can be said to have not gone beyond Habermas's framework of intersubjective interaction, but merely substituted discourse with the experience of recognition and contempt in everyday life. Both Habermas and Honneth ignore the economy, the starting point of Marx's critique of capitalist society, and instead focus their fire on criticizing the moral and ethical defects of capitalism, exaggerating the role of morality in social development and weakening the radical and aggressive nature of both critical theories.

By Rosa's time, the degree of compromise deepens. Resonance is the answer to overcoming alienation that he gives in his new book *Resonanz: Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung*. Resonance means that the individual harmonizes the rhythm of the body and the rhythm of society on the same frequency. It is clear that alienation, although the object of criticism in his case, is also a law that has to be obeyed. If one bows to the reality of social speed and actively adapts to it, making oneself one with alienation and producing harmony, human beings will no longer feel abandoned by speed. All feelings of maladjustment and abandonment are simply a lack of resonance. Strictly speaking, resonance is not ideal as a solution to alienation, not a way to get rid of it, but rather a means to better succumb to it. It is not a critique, but more like a compromise with a reality that is powerless to change.

It is easy to see that neither the early critics of the Frankfurt School nor the later figures broke through the framework of capitalism and did not carry out reforms of the fundamental system, but only social-level improvements, with no intention to change the capitalist social system and its order. At the same time, the passion and intensity of criticism gradually receded.

## **3.2. Points of Differences**

### **3.2.1. Tendency Toward Optimism**

Taking the concept of alienation as a benchmark, the early critical theorists of the Frankfurt School attacked the rise of instrumental rationality in the context of developed capitalist society and portrayed the existence of alienation in capitalist society in general from four aspects: the critique of technical rationality, the critique of popular culture, the critique of character psychology and the critique of ideology. On the whole, the early critical theories of the Frankfurt School show a pessimistic tendency.

The Dialectic of Enlightenment rejected the spirit of Enlightenment, popular culture, and ideology, made the first systematic criticism of industrial civilization, made pessimistic predictions about the future development of civilization, and used such pessimism to analyze the relationship between man

and nature and to look into the future of human civilization, pioneering the pessimistic Romantic critique of civilization in the history of the Frankfurt School. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno pessimistically point out that the Enlightenment has degenerated into a myth and reason has gone irrational, that the development of technology and social progress has been accompanied by the degeneration of human nature, and that "the increase in economic productivity has, on the one hand, laid the foundation for the world to become more just and, on the other hand, has given the machine and the social group that holds it absolute power over the rest of the population domination over the rest of the population. .... The proliferation of accurate information and the popularity of boring games, while increasing the talents of man, also make him more stupid." [16] Horkheimer and Adorno believe that the cultural industry is a product of modern industrial civilization and that the cultural industry blurs refined art and vulgar art, and that the culture, philosophy, economy, and art of the whole society are transformed by the cultural industry, which deceives and manipulates people mentally and makes them lose their ability to criticize and reflect on the existing society, and are anesthetized and become one-way people, defending the existing society. And the conclusion of their reflection on culture as critical theorists is that civilization and regression follow each other, and as long as there is civilization, there will be regression. By denouncing the cultural industry and industrial civilization, they declared the bankruptcy of the myth of the Enlightenment. The Frankfurt School criticized the cultural industry and belittled the progress and vitality that the development of technological civilization had brought to humanity. With a desperate, pessimistic attitude toward the development of human civilization and science and technology, their critique was thus negative.

In addition, Jürgen Habermas's critique of science and technology as an ideology is also techno-pessimistic in nature. He combines science and technology with politics, emphasizing that science and technology actually function as political domination. Science and technology on the one hand greatly contribute to the leap in the productivity of capitalist society, "science and technology are the first productive force"; on the other hand, it is a covert, apolitical form of social domination exercised by capitalism. Science and technology make man a slave of industrial civilization, a shackle that confines him and acts negatively on his psychology and society. Habermas reveals the complicity of capital and technology in the all-around repression of man, but to some extent exaggerates the negative effects of science and technology. The early theorists of the Frankfurt School were rejecting the social acceleration triggered by science and technology, and the theory showed a strong pessimism.

Whereas in Hartmut Rosa's critique of accelerated social alienation, although meticulous, his theory clearly shows an optimistic trend.

### **3.2.2. A new Perspective of Critical Theory**

In the past, the Frankfurt School's analysis of the alienation problem started from certain aspects such as technology, culture, and mass psychology, while Rosa's social acceleration research is deep into the whole social context, paying attention to the accelerated movement of reality, considering social acceleration as the overall manifestation of modernization, and making a more comprehensive analysis of technology, social life, and psychology. The reason why this paper says that his critique has a macroscopic and all-round analysis is that his critique begins with a temporal perspective, where time is actually the active existence of man, not only the measure of his life but also the space of his development, which gives his theory a generative vision. He begins his book by suggesting that it is the institution of time that controls and dominates modern society. Time, as is well known, is a philosophical category that denotes the form of existence of material movement, with objectivity and infinity. Time is not only a quantitative measurement or passage but also a qualitative social and cultural context. "Time compression" is an important concept proposed by David Harvey, a famous

American neo-Marxist, in his "The Postmodern Condition". He uses this concept in an attempt to show that "the history of capitalism has been characterized by an acceleration in the pace of life, while at the same time overcoming spatial barriers to the extent that the world sometimes appears to be intrinsically collapsing toward us." Geographical limits are broken, space is constantly compressed, and time becomes an enduring measure, more elastic and flexible. Many speed researchers have come to see time as an indispensable element, and Rosa has seen that social acceleration or change is more vividly and accurately illustrated in terms of time, hence the title of his work, *Acceleration: The Changing Structure of Modern Time*. His critical theory of social acceleration describes what is basically a fundamental change in the structure of social time in the process of modernization. We live in and are regulated by a powerful temporal regime. Speed studies from a temporal perspective have been variously addressed, and Rosa was not a pioneer or groundbreaker, but he was the first among the critical theories of the Frankfurt School.

Through a comparative analysis of Rosa's critical theory of social acceleration and the theories of the main representatives of the Frankfurt School, this paper finds two transcendences of the theory to the Frankfurt School theory and three commonalities between the theories. Like the first three generations of Frankfurt School theorists, Rosa takes alienation theory as a starting point, is situated in humanistic concerns, and tends to think about social life. Due to the different backgrounds of the times in which capitalist society has undergone drastic changes, the theory favors optimism and keeping up with the times; compared with the previous three generations of the Frankfurt School, his theory is more in line with the common fate of contemporary society, providing us with a unique perspective for studying His theory is more in line with the common destiny of contemporary society than the previous three generations of Frankfurt School, which provides us with a unique perspective to study the theory of Frankfurt School and helps us better grasp the theoretical direction of Frankfurt School after the 21st century.

#### **4. Critique of the Theory of "Resonance" and Measures to Accelerate Beyond Capitalism**

The "social acceleration" that leads to the alienation of society as the population to reconstruct social theory is undoubtedly one of the important ways to activate social critical theory. However, Rosa's last subjective attempt to solve this alienation with a "tendentious resonance" is too abstract, and the root of the theory lies in the fact that in his exploration of the acceleration of capitalist society, he ignores or obscures the constructive dimension of capital on "spiritual consciousness. In his exploration of acceleration in a capitalist society, he neglects or obscures the constructive dimension of capital on "spiritual consciousness," and denies that acceleration is intrinsic to the logical value-added of capital. In this way, acceleration "retreats" from a political issue and becomes a psychological and cultural issue. How can the phenomenon of capitalist acceleration be viewed rationally and rationally from Marx's perspective, and how can it be transcended?

In contrast to the early Frankfurt School's rejection of the rapid development of technology and capitalism, Marx believed that the problem should be tackled head-on. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx points out that the bourgeoisie, which relies on a powerful and constantly accelerating productive force to defeat feudalism, contains in equal measure an element of opposition to itself: the proletariat and the force of acceleration, a weapon that combines with the proletariat to become its own gravedigger, turning the weapon against itself. The wave of constant acceleration of the bourgeoisie is nevertheless unable to resist continuous progress, and when acceleration exceeds a certain limit, the high speed of overload inevitably results in the demise of the bourgeoisie. The modern accelerationist wave is precisely an attempt to accelerate the speed of development within capitalism, to support it negatively and pejoratively, and ultimately bring about its demise. As Marx said in 1848 about free trade: "Free trade has caused the disintegration of past nationalities and

brought the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to its zenith. In short, the free trade system accelerates the social revolution. Gentlemen, and only in this revolutionary sense am I in favor of free trade." [17] What he wanted to show was the acceleration of the process that led to the overthrow of capitalism and thus to radical social change.

Buried in the accelerated process of capitalism are the conditions and inevitability of its own demise. What Marx advocates here is not the abandonment, the destruction of all existing material achievements, but the continuous transcendence of capitalism beyond its own limits, the realization of a movement against itself within its own framework and thus towards its end. The capitalist mode of production is not perfect, and therefore the necessity of the emergence of a form of production different from the capitalist mode of production is needed at the present time, different from the capitalist cutting off the totality of man, but not a regressive idyll of the natural economic mode of production either, also capable of expanding production on the basis of the development of all previous wealth, increasing the productivity of labor and not impeding the development of the present. It must symbolize freedom, represent the common good of all humanity, and achieve a transcendence of the contradictions inherent in capitalist production. Only the breaking of the capitalist mechanism in an accelerated movement can trigger the birth of the next social link, and that next link is communism. Only communism can overcome the evils of modernization and achieve human liberation and freedom.

How to criticize capitalist society but also transcending the capitalist society's accelerating loop has long been a major philosophical dilemma. Marx's critique of capitalism can serve as a helpful source of information and inspiration in this regard. Capitalist society has been soaring all the way, pushing the pace of production and the speed of social growth to extremes, but also subjecting humans to psychological and material oppression and exploitation, and robbing them of their freedom in the process. We propose strategies to get capitalism to the limit of acceleration in this paper by understanding Marx's theory. This, however, requires further interpretation and investigation.

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