

# 104 學年度中央大學英文系碩士班甄試入學考試

## 【筆試試題】

共 2 頁(採雙面印刷)

**In “Free Time,” Adorno uses the popular movement of “Do it yourself” (the DIY) as an example to show the complexities involved in the pursuit of “productive free time.” Please give an example of how DIY as a “pseudo-activity” is both something that is “called for” and yet is “not really desired at all” at the same time.**

The reason why people can actually do so little with their free time is that the truncation of their imagination deprives them of the faculty which made the state of freedom pleasurable in the first place. People have been refused freedom, and its value belittled, for such a long time that now people no longer like it. They need the shallow entertainment, by means of which cultural conservatism patronizes and humiliates them, in order to summon up the strength for work, which is required of them under the arrangement of society which cultural conservatism defends. This is one good reason why people have remained chained to their work, and to a system which trains them for work, long after that system has ceased to require their labour.

Under prevailing conditions it would be erroneous and foolish to expect or to demand that people should be genuinely productive in their free time; for productivity—the ability to bring forth something that was not already there—is the very thing which has been eradicated from them. At best what they then produce in free time is scarcely better than the ominous hobby—the imitation of poems or pictures which, given the almost irrevocable division of labour, others could do better than these amateurs (*Freizeitler*). What they create has something superfluous about it. This superfluosity makes known the inferior quality of the product, which in turn vitiates any pleasure taken in its production.

Even the most superfluous and senseless activity undertaken in people’s free time is integrated in society. Once again a social need is at work. Certain forms of service, in particular domestic servants, are dying out; demand is disproportionate to supply. In America only the really wealthy can afford to keep servants, and Europe is following close behind. This means that many people carry out activities which were formerly delegated. The slogan “do it yourself” latches onto this as practical advice.

However, it also latches on to the resentment which people feel towards mechanization, which unburdens people, without—and not the fact itself but only its current interpretation is a matter of dispute—their having any use for the newly acquired time. Thus, once again in the interests of certain specialized industries, people are encouraged to perform tasks, which others could do more simply and more proficiently for them, and which for this very reason, deep down, they must despise. Actually, the idea that one can save the money one spends on services, in a society based upon the division of labour, belongs to a very old level of bourgeois consciousness; it is an economy made from stubborn self-interest, an economy which flies in the face of the fact that it is only the exchange of specialized skills which keeps the whole mechanism going in the first place. William Tell, the obnoxious paradigm of absolute individuality, proclaimed that the household axe spared the need for the carpenter—indeed a whole ontology of bourgeois consciousness could be compiled from Schiller’s maxims.

“Do it yourself,” this contemporary type of spare time behaviour fits however into a much more far-reaching context. More than thirty years ago I described such behaviour as “pseudo-activity.” Since then pseudo-activity has spread alarmingly, even (and especially) amongst those people who regard themselves as anti-establishment. Generally speaking there is good reason to assume that all forms of pseudo-activity contain a pent-up need to change the petrified relations of society. Pseudo-activity is misguided spontaneity. Misguided, but not accidentally so; because people do have a dim suspicion of how hard it would be to throw off the yoke that weighs upon them. They prefer to be distracted by spurious and illusory activities, by institutionalized vicarious satisfactions, than to face up to the awareness of how little access they have to the possibility of change today. Pseudo-activities are fictions and parodies of the same productivity which society on the one hand incessantly calls for, but on the other holds in check and, as far as the individual is concerned, does not really desire at all. Productive free time is only possible for people who have outgrown their tutelage, not for those who under conditions of heteronomy, have become heteronomous for themselves.