



## CHAPTER II

### ERICH FROMM

#### Anthropological Assumptions

Fromm distinguishes human existence from animal existence and concurrently discusses the origin and development of society. He sees human nature developing in an evolutionary process. Man emerges out of a primate unity with nature; he is a "freak of the universe" for as he begins to become human he disrupts the original harmony of his pre-human state. Animals are not conscious and thus respond instinctually. They are in a natural relationship with their environment. Once man begins to gain consciousness, he becomes aware not only of himself but also of his separations from nature and other men. According to Fromm, the history of the development of man and society is a history of increased separation, of increased individualization and ultimately of increased alienation. Discussing the parallels between the development of the individual child and the historical development of the species of man and society, Fromm tells us that as the child grows he begins to separate himself from his environment and develops an awareness of his individual existence. He develops a self. The development of the child is a dialectical process. It is at once a movement towards individual freedom and an increasing isolation, an "aloneness."



The child becomes more free to develop and express its own individual self unhampered by those ties which are limiting it. But the child also becomes more free from a world which gave it security and reassurance. The process of individuation is one of growing strength and integration of its individual personality, but it is at the same time a process in which the original identity with other is lost and in which the child becomes more separated from them (Fromm, 1941:46).

Paralleling the development of the individual child is the development of man as a species and the development of human society. Fromm tells us that "Man emerges from the prehuman stage by the first steps in the direction of becoming free from coercive instinct" (1941:47). He characterizes the entire history of man as a process of growing individuation and growing freedom. Man separates himself from his original unity with nature. Eventually man separates himself from unity with society, becoming increasingly less attached to clan, tribe, religion, and so on.

We see that the process of growing human freedom has the same dialectic character that we have noticed with the process of individual growth, on the one hand, it is a process of growing strength and integration, mastery of nature, growing power of human reason and growing solidarity with other human beings. But, on the other hand, the growing individuation means growing isolation, insecurity, and thereby, growing doubt concerning one's own role in the universe, the meaning of one's life and with all that, a growing feeling of one's own powerlessness and insignificance as an individual (Fromm, 1941: 51).

Thus, he begins his anthropology with the dual assumptions of the essential relationship between human existence and both freedom and alienation. Fromm not only tells us that "human existence and freedom are from the beginning inseparable" (1941:48) but also that:



To transcend nature, to be alienated from nature and from another human being, finds man naked, ashamed. He is alone and free, yet powerless and afraid. The newly won freedom appears as a curse, he is free from the sweet bondage of paradise, but he is not free to govern himself, to realize his individuality (1941:50).

Thus it seems that freedom and alienation are dialectically related and arise out of man's existential condition of existence. Man has evolved out of nature, to be human means to break with the original harmony between species and environment. Once the break has occurred, human development is marked by man's quest for a new unity or harmony.

Fromm's conception of human nature is neither biological nor sociological. Although he discusses man's underdeveloped instincts and the social development of human nature, although he explicitly states that "man's biological weakness is the condition of human culture", he does not support what he calls "sociological relativism." That is, man's nature is not a blank sheet upon which society writes:

The point of view taken here is neither a biological nor a sociological one if that would mean separating these two aspects from each other. It is rather one transcending such dichotomy by the assumption that the main passions and drives in man result from the total existence of man, that they are definite and ascertainable, some of them conducive to health and happiness, others to sickness and unhappiness (Fromm, 1955:22).

Thus, Fromm agrees with Marx that man has underdeveloped instincts.

Fromm tells us that "as man transforms the world around him, so he transforms himself" (1955:22). For Fromm, however, the social transformation of self is dependent on a basic nature of man.

"But just as he can transform and modify the natural materials around him according to their nature, so he can only transform and modify



himself according to his own nature" (1955:22). This basic nature, man's raw material, has developed from the universal social conditions of man; that is, it is directly related to his existential condition of freedom and alienation.

Man's development is marked by a quest to find a new unity, a new harmony, to find a relatedness to the world which will allow him to avoid his aloneness, to transcend his alienation. Alienation is not only natural but also the primary motivating factor of life. It is the source of man's basic needs.

Man is driven to overcome the inner split, tormented by a craving "absoluteness", for another kind of harmony which can lift the curse by which he was separated from nature, from his fellow men and from himself (Fromm, 1947:41).

In The Same Society (1955:35-75) Fromm discusses five basic needs of man: the need for relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, identity, and a frame of orientation. They all arise out of man's existential condition. They all can be seen as an effort to transcend alienation. Man, Fromm tells us, could not stand to be torn from his primary union with nature unless he could "find new ties with his fellow men which replace old ones, regulated by instinct" (1955:35). "The necessity to unite with other living beings, to be related to them is an imperative need on which the fulfillment of man's sanity depends" (Fromm, 1955:35). Thus, relatedness is man's primary need and this need is best realized through love. The failure to fulfill man's need for relatedness can result in narcissism, a secondary and regressive adaptation to the human condition. The second primary need is the need for transcendence.



Man can do more than simply live in nature, he can transcend nature, he can influence the nature of his environment through his creativity. Unable to create, however, man will destroy. Destruction is a form of transcendence and again a secondary adaptation. The third basic need of man is for rootedness. Man's existential condition of freedom and alienation makes man long for roots, makes man long to be part of the universe. Again he can reverse back to natural roots of family (incest), tribe, nature or he can create new roots through the universal brotherliness of man. In his discussion of "rootedness — brotherliness vs. Incest" Fromm spends more time in explaining the "natural" desire of man to regress, or what he elsewhere calls escape, than he does on an explanation of the alternatives of brotherliness. This is unusual for in all other cases the "negative" alternative is always presented as a secondary adaptation, that is a response to the failure of the more positive and more natural primary need of man. If one were unfamiliar with Fromm, one might assume that repression or escape were the more natural or primary need of man. The fourth basic need of man is for a sense of identity. Left alone in the universe, he must find out who he is or else regress to "herd conformity." And finally, the fifth basic need of man is the need for a frame of orientation — that is a meaning system that explains his existence in the universe. Frames of orientation such as religion can be "better" or "worse," rational or irrational according to the extent to which they take into account an accurate understanding of "man's nature."

Although man's humanness begins with his existential and dialectical conditions of freedom and alienation it is not fully



realized until a final synthesis, that is, until alienation is transcended. Man begins his humanness with alienation and becomes fully human only with its elimination.

There is only one way he can take: to emerge fully from his natural home, to find a new home, one which he creates by making the world a human one and by becoming truly human himself (Fromm, 1955:25).

Man in his present state is not fully human. Human for Fromm, like health for Freud, is an ideal. Man has two choices, to progress to full humanity or to regress into natural harmony. Explaining his social psychological equivalent of Marx's alternatives — Socialism or Barbarism, Fromm tells us:

We are never free from two conflicting tendencies, one to emerge from the womb, from the animal form of existence to a more human existence, from bondage to freedom; another to return to the womb, to nature, to certainty and security (1955:27).

Theoretically, there are two solutions. Fromm, however, makes it clear that the regressive alternative necessitates failure. In a sense the life and death instinct of Freud have been translated into a universal existential dilemma.

If man is not yet human he does have human potential. To better understand the exact nature of that potential it is best to examine Fromm's conception of the "productive orientation." A "productive orientation", he tells us, "is the aim of human development and simultaneously the ideal of humanistic ethics . . . . Productiveness is man's ability to use his powers and to realize the potential inherent in him" (1947:83-4). The human "powers" according to Fromm, are: in the realm of thought, reason; in the realm of feeling, love; and, in the realm of activity, creativity or productive work. Because



of his power to reason, man tries to make sense of his existence. He develops a meaning system or frame of orientation and devotion, but as we have said before, there are better and worse meaning systems according to the extent to which they coincide with the "natural" development of man. Love for Fromm is by definition the reunion of separation, the overcoming of alienation. Love, he tells us "is the experience of union with another person, with all men, and with nature under the conditions of realizing one's sense of integrity and independence" (1955:37). There are regressive forms of union, that is, love in which you lose your individuality, i.e., go back to the womb. And, there are progressive forms of union, or true love. True love can only spring from a love of mankind; it is a state of existence in which "the paradox happens that two people become one and remain two at the same time" (Fromm, 1955:37). Thus it seems that love arises from alienation and is synonymous with transcending that alienation. Productive work whose prototype, Fromm tells us, is art and crafts is another way to transcend alienation. Although in some respects, Fromm's conception of the work process resembles Marx's the alienation to be transcended in Fromm is clearly arising from man's existential position in the universe and not from a class society.

In the process of work that is, the molding and changing of nature outside of himself, man molds and changes himself. He emerges from nature by mastering her; he develops his powers of cooperation, of reason, his sense of beauty. He separates himself from nature from the original with her, but at the same time unites himself with her again as her master and builder. The more his work develops, the more his individuality develops (1955:159) (emphasis mine).



Essentially related to Fromm's hypothesized "process of humanization" is his distinction between freedom from and freedom to. Man's original break with nature is conceived of by Fromm as a freedom from instinctual necessity. As we become increasingly more individuated, we gain freedom not only from nature but from traditional authority, family, clan and guild as well. Thus man is left alone in the universe, both free and alienated: separated from nature, from society, not knowing his own identity or his relationship to other men, and looking for ways to escape from freedom. This escape from freedom, or if you will, from alienation, is the origin of all anti-social behavior. Its manifestations are narcissism, sadomasochism, destructiveness, automatic conformity, and incest (in Fromm's larger sense of the word meaning going back to family, clan, nature). All means by which man attempts to escape from freedom. On the other hand "If human freedom is established as freedom to, if man can realize himself fully and uncompromisingly, the fundamental cause for his a-social drives will have disappeared" (Fromm, 1941:296). What then is the meaning of freedom in its positive sense, of freedom to? "Positive freedom . . . is identical with the full realization of man's individual potential, together with his ability to live actively and spontaneously" (Fromm, 1941:88).

Fromm's categories are beginning to collapse. Freedom in the positive sense is the same as productivity. "Productiveness," if you recall, "is man's ability to use his powers and to realize the potential inherent in him" (Fromm, 1947:83-4). While the productive orientation is the nature man should have to be human. The goal of psychoanalysis for Fromm becomes that of making the individual human.





The goal of psychoanalysis, Fromm tells us is to make the unconscious conscious. The unconscious, however, is no longer the id of the individual patient, but the experience of universal humanness.

When we free ourselves from the limited concept of Freud's unconscious . . . then Freud's aim, the transformation of unconsciousness into consciousness (id into ego) gains a wider and more profound meaning. Making the unconscious conscious transforms the mere idea of the universality of man into a living experience of the universality; it is the experiential realization of humanism (Fromm, 1968:187).

Making the unconscious conscious is to make the individual productive or free. It is to make sure the individual is relating to the world through the productive orientation.

The full awakening to reality means, again speaking in psychological terms, to have attained a fully "productive orientation." That means not to relate oneself to the world receptivity, exploitativity, hoardingly, or in the marketing fashion, but creatively, actively (in Spinoza's sense). In the state of full productiveness there are no veils which separate me from "not me" (Fromm, 1960:116).

The unconscious of the individual is not the individual's unconscious at all but rather the "universal" consciousness of man. To open up the unconscious is to open up man's true -- universal -- nature, a nature that is neither biologically given nor socially produced but that stems from man's existential condition. Human nature doesn't exist except in a goal which can be described as productivity, love, consciousness or freedom. The goal of humanness will only be reached when man has transcended his existential condition, when he has established a new unity between man and man, between man and nature. Finally, the goal of humanness or self-realization is essentially related to ethical norms and values, as we have already seen:



A productive orientation, is the aim of human development and simultaneously the ideal of human ethics (Fromm, 1947:83).

Neurosis itself is in the last analysis, a symptom of moral failure (Fromm, 1947:viii).

Good in humanistic ethics is the affirmation of life, the unfolding of mass power. Virtue is responsibility toward his own existence. Evil constitutes the crippling of man's power; vice is irresponsibility toward himself (Fromm, 1947:20).

Thus humanness and virtue are synonymous. Good is what is good for man, ethics rests on psychology. Fromm's "scientifically" established nature of man is simultaneously a "scientifically" established system of justice. He calls it humanistic ethics.

#### Marx-Freud Synthesis

One strongly suspects that Fromm himself considers a large proportion of his work to be a synthesis of Freud and Marx. We deal here, however, with only those works whose primary intention was a theoretical synthesis between the two masters.\* Fromm begins his essay "The Method and Function of An Analytic Social Psychology" (1970:137-163) published three years after Reich's "Dialectical

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\* Essentially Fromm's attempt at a theoretical synthesis can be found in the book entitled Beyond the Chains of Illusion, My Encounter with Marx and Freud (1962) and an essay entitled "The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology" first published in German in 1932 and not appearing in English until 1970, when the subtitle, "Notes on Psychoanalysis and Historical Materialism" was added. Also extremely relevant to the theme of theoretical synthesis is another essay, first published in German in 1934, entitled "The Theory of Mother Right and Social Psychology." These last two essays can be found in a collection of Fromm's essays entitled The Crisis of Psychoanalysis (1970). I highly recommend this collection to anyone interested in Fromm, and/or the Freudian left. In many respects it is his most scholarly endeavor.



"Materialism and Psychoanalysis" (1972:11-27) by establishing the similarities between the methodology of Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis, he tells us, is both materialist and historical. It is based on a theory of instincts and it studies how instincts develop in society. That is it studies the interaction between the individual's material reality, i.e., his instincts and the material social reality. Psychoanalysis, Fromm claims:

. . . has taught us to understand the individual's instinctual structure in terms of his life experience to see how the former has been influenced by the latter — the active and passive adaptation of the biological apparatus, the instincts, to social reality is the key conception of psychoanalysis, and every exploration into personal psychology proceeds from the conception (1970: 141).

Presenting the reader with the central contradiction between historical materialism and psychoanalysis, Fromm tells us that historical materialism views consciousness as an expression of social existence while psychoanalysis sees it as determined by instinctual drive (1970:143). Can this contradiction be reconciled in such a way that the psychoanalytic methods can enrich historical materialism? Psychoanalysis can be used to understand "psychic traits common to the members of a group, and to explain those common psychic traits in terms of shared life experiences" (Fromm, 1970:144). By life experience, Fromm continues, we mean the socio-economic situation, Fromm calls psychoanalysis, so used, analytical social psychology.

Thus analytical social psychology seeks to understand the instinctual apparatus of a group, its libidinous and largely unconscious behavior, in terms of its socio-economic structure (1970:144).

Psychoanalysis can help dialectical materialism by explaining one important material condition, the nature of man; and explaining



how that material condition can be changed in various socio-economic settings. Man's instinctual apparatus is not only a natural, material reality, but an essential part of the sub-structure of society. This last point is left undeveloped. Fromm simply says:

The realm of human drives is a natural force which like other natural forces (soil fertility, natural irrigation, etc.) is an immediate part of the sub-structure of the social process (1970:187).

By locating human nature in the material sub-structure, Fromm clearly points out its importance for Marxists. "Knowledge of this force," he tells us, "is necessary for a complete understanding of the social process" (1970:157).

Understanding the nature of man is important to Fromm for still another reason. We cannot, he tells us, say something is humanistic unless we have a fair idea of what it is to be human. What Marx and Freud have in common, is that they both, "assumed that man's behavior is comprehensible precisely because it is the behavior of man, of species that can be defined in terms of its psychic character" (Fromm, 1962:29). That their conceptions of the nature of man are considerably different, Fromm fails to point out. In Beyond the Chains of Illusion, Fromm proceeds by presenting Marx and Freud's conception of the nature of man. He does not, as we saw in Reich, compare them, point up their differences and make a re-interpretation of one or the other, to make a synthesis possible. He simply states their diverse conceptions as if they were clearly not incompatible. This is accomplished initially by not mentioning



Freud's assumption of man's naturally aggressive and destructive nature.\*

In his discussion of the evolution of man, Fromm tells us that "Freud like Marx sees the development of man in evolutionary terms" (1962:33). He proceeds to present the theory of the primal herd and the Oedipus complex and to give a very brief overview of his conception of the dialectical progression of history. He tells us the difference between Marx and Freud is that Marx had, "unbroken faith in Man's perfectability and progress" and Freud "was a skeptic" (1962:37). Fromm here admits that on the subject of human motivation, "Marx and Freud find themselves furthest apart" and that "there is an insoluble contradiction between their two systems" (1962:38). Unfortunately, although he proceeds to discuss how both authors conception of human motivation has been distorted, he fails to discuss the contradiction between their two systems.

Discussing mental health, Fromm tells us that both Marx and Freud's conception is similar because for both, the healthy man is independent man. Fromm proceeds to discuss just exactly what Freud and Marx meant by independence. To Freud independence was emancipation from parents by the incorporation of the father's system of commands and restrictions. That is, to Freud independence is self-sufficiency and conformity. For Marx independence is rooted in transcending nature and in creating and re-creating ones own

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\* Although Fromm does in the end discuss Freud's death instinct, he does not mention it in the chapter entitled "the concept of man and his nature" the chapter in which he first discusses Marx and Freud's conceptions of the nature of man (see Fromm, 1962:27-38).



environment in a social process. Man is not self-sufficient but, by nature, social. Furthermore, what distinguishes man from the animals is man's liberation from instincts. He has the capacity for free, creative, purposeful labor. That is, he doesn't have to follow nature or society but can create and re-create both nature and society through his labor. Thus for Marx, independence is neither self-sufficiency nor conformity. Although Fromm himself presents information that indicates that Freud's independent man is not at all the same as Marx's independent man, he appears to be unaware of his own implications. He insists on maintaining that, "The aspect in which Marx' and Freud's picture of healthy man coincides is that of independence" (1962:65).

Not only is there a similarity in Marx and Freud's conception of mental health, but according to Fromm there is also a close connection between alienation and neurosis. Fromm tells us that there is a "close connection between the phenomenon of alienation and the phenomenon of transference" (1962:52). Explaining that connection he says:

The neurotic, grown-up patient is an alienated human being; he does not feel strong, he is frightened and inhibited because he does not experience himself as the subject and originator of his own acts and experiences. He is neurotic "because" he is alienated. In order to overcome his sense of inner emptiness and impotence, he chooses an object onto whom he projects all his own human qualities: his love, intelligence, courage, etc. By submitting to this object, he feels in touch with his own qualities; he feels strong, wise, courageous and secure. To lose the object means danger of losing himself. This mechanism, idolatric worship of an object, based on the fact of the individual's alienation, is the central dynamism of transference, that which gives transference its strength and intensity. The less alienated person may also transfer some of his infantile experience to the analyst, but there would be little intensity in it. The



alienated patient, in search for an in need of an idol, finds the analyst and usually endows him with the qualities of his father and mother as the two powerful persons he knew as a child. Thus the "content" of transference is usually related to infantile patterns while its intensity is the result of the patient's alienation (1962:52).

When Fromm says he is "neurotic because he is alienated" that is, alienation is causing neurosis, he is not using either the Marxist definition of alienation nor the Freudian definition of neurotic. Can alienation in the Marxist sense -- that is being out of control of one's labor and thus one's environment and one's self, be the cause of neurosis in Freud's sense -- that is, poor psycho-sexual development that could begin at birth with one's instinctual makeup and is continued during early infancy with socialization in the oral and anal stages? Can a two year old child in the anal stage already be alienated? Clearly Fromm's definition of alienation and neurosis are considerably different from those of Marx or Freud's. We will examine those differences more closely in our next section on departure from Marx and Freud.

In his discussion of the evolution of society Fromm develops an interesting synthesis derived from the anthropology of Freud on one hand and of Marx, Engels and Reich on the other. Fromm discusses the attraction of matriarchy theory for Marxists; for it underlines the transient nature of bourgeois society and outlines the connection between patriarchy and a class society. In this discussion, Fromm goes beyond Engels but not beyond Reich. He essentially repeats Reich's discussion of the Oedipus complex and the importance of patriarchy in the maintenance of a repressive social structure. Without once mentioning Reich Fromm tells us:



This society is based, to an important degree, on specific psychic attitudes that are particularly rooted in unconscious drives; and these psychic attitudes effectively compliment the external coerciveness of the governmental apparatus. The patriarchal family is one of the most important loci for producing the psychic attitudes that operate to maintain the stability of class society (1970:124).

Pointing to the importance of sexual repression Fromm tells us:

Sexuality offers one of the most elementary and powerful opportunities for satisfaction and happiness. If it were permitted to the full extent required for the productive development of the human personality, rather than limited by the need to maintain control over the masses, the fulfillment of this important opportunity for happiness would necessarily lead to intensified demands for satisfaction and happiness in other areas of life. Since the satisfaction of these further demands would have to be achieved through material means, these demands in themselves would lead to the breakup of the existing social order (1962:126).

And, if there be any doubt left as to whether Fromm has read Reich, he tells us:

The development of the "genital character" is conditioned by the absence of sexual restraints, which impede the optimal development of a person. /Genital character is in quotes but not footnoted/ (1970:126).

Fromm proceeds to develop the concepts of the patriarchic and Matriarchtic complex. He discusses the Oedipus complex in a somewhat Reichian manner. That is, he discusses the effort of patriarchy on the formation of the character structure of the child. Fromm's emphasis is however, somewhat different from Reich. He is concerned with love and not sex and thus he underlines the importance of and the effect of the conditional nature of parental love. He compares the effect of patriarchy to the unconditional love of matriarchy:

Summing up, we can say that the patricentric individual — and society — is characterized by the complex of traits in which the following are predominant: a strict super-ego, guilt feelings, docile love for paternal authority,





desire and pleasure at dominating weaker people, acceptance of suffering as a punishment for one's own guilt, and a damaged capacity for happiness. The matricentric complex, by contrast, is characterized by a feeling of optimistic trust in mother's unconditional love, far fewer guilt feelings, a far weaker superego, and a greater capacity for pleasure and happiness. Along with these traits there also develops the ideal of motherly compassion and love for the weak and others in need of help (1970:131).

Fromm tells us that the patricentric structure was the psychic force behind capitalism and at the same time it produced conditions that would allow for the development of a matricentric social structure. In his own words:

While patricentric structure had been the psychic driving force behind the economic achievements of bourgeois-Protestant society, at the same time it produced the conditions that would destroy the patricentric structure and lead to a renaissance of a matricentric one. The growth of man's productive capacity made it possible, for the first time in history, to visualize the realization of a social order that previously had only found expression in fairy tales and myths, an order where all men would be provided with a material means necessary for their real happiness with relatively little expenditure of individual effort in actual labor, where men's energies would be expended primarily in developing their human potential rather than in creating the economic goods that are absolutely necessary for the existence of a civilization (1970:134).

This essay first published in 1934, presents the very same theme that Marcuse begins to develop in Eros in Civilization, published in 1955. Patriarchy-Capitalism has allowed for the development of material wealth which will in turn allow for the end of alienated labor. In Fromm's terms a return to matriarchy.



### Sociological Theory: Methods and Implications for Praxis

Although Fromm is often criticized by psychologists for reducing everything to sociology, his conception and analysis of society is more often based on biological, anthropological, philosophical or ethical assumptions than on sociological assumptions. Clearly he believes that his scientifically established humanistic ethics yield value judgments and establish norms of conduct that are objectively valid for all men at all times. Fromm rejects "sociological relativism."

Man is not a blank sheet of paper on which culture can write . . . . Human evolution is rooted in man's adaptability and in certain inductible qualities of his nature which compel him never to cease his search for conditions better adjusted to his intrinsic needs (1947:23).

Fromm calls his approach to the analysis of society "normative humanism":

The approach of normative humanism is based on the assumption that, as in any other problem, there are right and wrong, satisfactory and unsatisfactory solutions to the problem of human existence. Mental health is achieved if man develops into full maturity according to the characteristics and laws of human nature. Mental illness consists in the failure of such development. From this premise the criterion of mental health is not one of individual adjustment to a given social order, but a universal one, valued for all men, of giving a satisfactory answer to the problems of human existence (1955: 22-3).

The healthy society, like the healthy individual, is one that develops according to the "laws of human nature".

To speak of a sane society . . . makes sense only if we assume that there can be a society which is not sane, and this assumption, in turn implies that there are universal criteria for mental health which are valid for the human race as such, and according to which the state of health of each society can be judged (Fromm, 1955:21).



Thus, Fromm's analysis of society is an ethical one based on his assumption about the nature of man. As we have seen, he derives his assumptions about the nature of man from man's supposedly universal human condition, or if you will, man's existential dilemma.

If society is to be analyzed from the point of view of its being conducive to the natural human development of man, we must ask certain fundamental questions about the relationship between the nature of man and the nature of society. In proposing man's five basic needs: relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, identity and a frame of orientation, Fromm proposed a "good" or progressive and a "bad" or regressive means to realize those needs. That is, as stated earlier, there can be relatedness or narcissism, transcendence through creativity and production or through destruction, rootedness through universal brotherliness or through incest, a sense of identity through individuality or through herd conformity, a frame of orientation that is rational or irrational. Further he suggests that the "good" means are more natural to man while the "bad" means are merely secondary adaptations resulting from the impossibility of a more primary response. Why Fromm deems one response as more natural than the other seems to come from his Hegelian assumption that self has an inherent urge to become what it potentially is. Along with this evolutionary progressive assumption about the nature of man, Fromm seems to make a similar assumption about the nature of society. Discussing the condition of man in contemporary society, he tells us:



Any regression today from freedom into artificial rootedness in state or race is a sign of mental illness, since such regression does not correspond to the state of evolution already reached and results are unquestionably pathological phenomenon (1955:72).

Thus, it seems that society has come of age. It has reached a stage in its evolutionary developments which necessitates the progressive fulfillment of man's basic needs.

Contemporary society and contemporary man are judged by the same criteria. Mental health for the individual, Fromm tells us,

is characterized by the ability to love and to create, by the emergence from incestuous ties of clan and soil, by a sense of identity based on one's experience of self as the subject and agent of one's powers, by the grasp of reality inside and outside of ourselves, that is, by the development of objectivity and reason (1955:69).

Similarly, a healthy society:

furtherman's capacity to love his fellow men, to work creatively, to develop his reason and objectivity, to have a sense of self which is based on the experience of his own production powers. An unhealthy society is one which creates mutual hostility, distrust, which transforms man into an instrument of use and exploitation for others, which deprives him of a sense of self, except inasmuch as he submits to others and becomes an automaton (1955:72-3).

Both society and the individual are sick or healthy according to the extent to which they allow for the progressive fulfillment of basic needs. If however the progressive fulfillment of basic needs is natural to the development of the individual, why do individuals become unhealthy or neurotic; that is, why do they regress to lower biological-moral levels? Fromm's answer seems to be that a sick society causes a sick character structure and thus sick individuals. How then did we get sick societies? His answer to that question is more than confusing, it is blatantly contradictory. He tells us



that one studies society the same way one studies the individual for all society is made up of is individuals.

If instinctual life and the unconscious were the key to understanding human behavior, then psychoanalysis was also entitled and competent to say something about the motives underlying social behavior. For "society" too consists of living individuals, who must be subjected to the same psychological laws that psychoanalysis discovered in the individual (1970:142) (emphasis mine).

Further, the cure for social pathology is the same as for individual neuroses.

If this chapter is to discuss . . . methods of cure, we had better . . . ask ourselves what we know about the nature of cure in cases of individual mental diseases. The cure of social pathology must follow the same principle, since it is the pathology of so many human beings, and not of an entity beyond or apart from individuals (1955: 273).

Fromm's description of a healthy society makes it clear that no society has even been healthy. But why? If society is only made up of individuals and if "social pathology is the pathology of so many human beings and not an entity beyond and apart from individuals," then he is rejecting the idea that society or the social system is an entity or unit subject to its own laws. By denying the existence of an "entity beyond or apart from individuals" Fromm is left with nothing but individuals, only individuals can be sick. But how is that possible since man, especially at this stage of the evolutionary process, is presumed to be naturally healthy. There seems to be only one explanation. Although we are historically at a stage of development where man must choose a new transcendence, where man must choose the progressive rather than regressive answers to human development, many are not so choosing, many men are still escaping from freedom. There has always been "awakened ones" who,



way ahead of their times, have preached the norms of humanistic development, men like "Iknaton, Moses, Kung futse, Leo-tse, Buddha, Isaiah, Socrates, Jesus" (Fromm, 1955:69). Man must have faith in himself and in his fellow men and follow the "awakened ones" on the path of human development. At the very end of The Sane Society Fromm poses the choice as one between robotism and humanistic communitarian socialism (his name for the good of society), and tells us that man's faith must overcome fact!

Most facts seem to indicate that he is choosing robotism, and that means in the long run, insanity and destruction. But all these facts are not strong enough to destroy faith in man's reason, good will, and sanity (1955:315) (emphasis mine).

We are, of course, still left with the question of why man is choosing robotism when that is an "unnatural" choice. To explain this Fromm jumps from his idealistic nominalism into a structural analysis of society. Society now very much becomes an "entity beyond and apart from individuals."

Each society is structuralized and operated in certain ways which are necessitated by a number of objective conditions. These conditions include methods of production and distribution which in turn depend on raw materials, industrial techniques, climate, size of population, and political and geographical factors, cultural traditions and influences to which society is exposed. There is no "society" in general, but only specific social structures which operate in different and ascertainable ways. Although these social structures do change . . . they are relatively fixed at any given historical period, and society can exist only by operation within the framework of its particular structure. The members of the society and/or the various classes or status groups within it have to behave in such a way as to be able to function in the sense required by the social system (Fromm, 1955: 79).

Having specifically rejected sociological relativeness, he hypothesizes a conception of character structure that is "the dynamic adaptation



of human needs to the particular mode of existence of a given society" (Fromm, 1941:278). He proposes without any reference whatsoever to Reich, that the family is the basic socializing agent of society, creating the character structure that is necessary to a particular society:

The character of the child is molded by the character of its parents in response to whom it develops. The parents and their methods of child training in turn are determined by the social structure of their culture. The average family is the "psychic agency" of society . . . (Fromm, 1955:124).

Fromm tells us that socially developed character is the means society uses to maintain social order. Through the development of social character, the individual

. . . acquires that character which makes him do what he has to do . . . . The social character internalizes external necessities and thus harnesses human energy for the task of a given economic and social system (Fromm, 1941:283; also see 236-7).

It seems that, in spite of the fact that he refuses to view man as a "blank sheet upon which society writes," the good society makes good men and the evil society makes evil men.

Fromm like Reich, examines the relationship between identity and the social structure, often it seems in an effort to locate sources of social change. He comes up with two distinct answers. In Escape From Freedom he argues that energy which produces social change is generated by tension between new economic conditions and an older social character structures. That is, he suggests a kind of character lag, to account for tensions in society. Social character formed in childhood can be out of phase with new economic development. In Man for Himself and The Sane Society he gives us



the concept of inherent psychic needs to account for tensions. When a society fails to afford progressive satisfaction of the basic needs, man will react against that society and reform or overthrow it. Man's need for transcendence drives man to seek even better solutions to the problems of his existence.

In examining the internal structure of a society of a particular historical period, Fromm's analysis or methodology is never clear. This, I think, can best be seen in his analysis of 20th century capitalism. He freely borrows from the language of Marx. Using such terms as use value, exchange value, alienation (now with a second and apparently more Marxist meaning), fetishism of commodities, he begins his analysis of capitalism. He does not, however, give us a class analysis of society. He jumps from a discussion of use values and exchange value to a discussion of the process of rationalization without either identifying the sources of his discussion or the change in his units of analysis. In fact, it soon becomes clear that he is not really analyzing capitalism at all but rather discussing the horrors of modernization. In so doing he freely borrows, very often without citation, from the classical works of Marx and Weber. He summarizes several contemporary critiques of the modern world, combining Mills, Reisman, Gehlen and Huxley, he talks about the mass society, the mass media the new middle class, the "other directed" modern man (Fromm, 1955). He tells us that the problem is capitalism but he fails to more specifically identify its source in the economic substructure. Although his second use here of the word alienation is much closer to Marx than his earlier more Hegelian use of alienation to describe an existential





condition; in his hands the rigor of Marx's categories collapses. He discusses use value and exchange value but not exploitation. He seems to say that alienation is the same as idolatry, bureaucratization, and compulsive consumption. He talks about alienated authority and alienated conformity. Finally he tells us that the prototype for productive labor is the artist and the craftsman. It is clear from his discussion of bureaucratization, quantification, routinization, and abstractification, that the enemy is not capitalism at all, but the industrial revolution. Although the tradition on the left, taking its example from Marx, has been to blur the line between analysis and ideology, between social scientist and social activist, in his discussion of society, there is in Fromm very little that can be called original sociological analysis. His methodology fluctuates between a psychologism that analyzes society in terms of individual psyches, and a structural analysis which is an unclarified combination of Reich, Marx, and Weber, to mention only a few (Fromm, 1955). The prescriptive implication for social change follows the very same ambiguity; however, in the end, Fromm seems to opt for individual faith and individual therapy.

#### Departures from Freud

There is a great distance between Fromm and Freud; a distance wide enough to make one question Fromm's classification as a psychoanalyst or even as a "Neo-Freudian revisionist" (Marcuse, 1955:238). Although Fromm uses Freudian sounding categories, Fromm, like Reich, disagrees with Freud on almost all major issues. They disagree on their: conception of the nature of man, theory of



instinct, conception of the unconsciousness, theory of neurosis and mental health, conception of sex and love, analysis of religion, theory of society, conception of the relationship between man and society. Fromm either rejects Freud outright or transforms him beyond recognition. Schaar describing the distance between Fromm and Freud, tells us:

It is certainly true that Fromm has carried on a one-sided argument with Freud for something over a quarter of a century, but an argument which embraces values Freud shunned, start from premises he rejected, accepted types of evidence unknown to him, employs methods he denied and leads to different conclusions on all the basic issues ought to be called what it is -- opposition and not revision, revolt and not reform. Fromm is a revisionist of Freud in about the same degree, if not the same direction that the Prince of Darkness was a revisionist of the Prince of Light (1961:7-8).

The humanist position, Fromm tells us, is that "there is nothing higher and nothing more dignified than human existence" (1947: 13). Unquestionably Fromm's work is marked by an unmitigated faith in man. As we have already seen his very definition of human nature implies an ideal that is at once inherent in man and not yet fully achieved. One very much gets the flavor of Hegel in that it is man, in his process of becoming, that is God. The distance between Freud and Fromm on human nature needs little elaboration. One can, I believe, justifiably claim that Fromm's "theory" of human nature is simply an elaborate explanation for his unmitigated faith in the inherent goodness of man. One can make a similar charge against Freud. Freud's theory of a death instinct often appears to be his theoretical explanation for his almost unmitigated conviction in this inherent evilness of man. In Freud's theory, man is faced with using his destruction and aggression instincts against others or



turning them against oneself. The result: "Civilized Society is perpetually menaced with disintegration through this primary hostility of men toward one another" (Freud, 1961:86-87).

Fromm not only entirely rejects Freud's death instinct, he clearly puts little emphasis on man's biological or instinctual nature.

Although there are certain needs, such as hunger, thirst, sex, which are common to man, those drives which make the difference in men's characters, like love and hatred, the lust for power and the yearning for submission, the enjoyment of sensuous pleasure and the fear of it, are all products of the social process. The most beautiful as well as the most ugly inclinations of men are not of a fixed and biologically given nature . . . . (1941:227).

He assumes man has a biologically given nature but views that nature as relatively unimportant. He uses Freudian sounding categories but completely denies the existence of the libido; and, perhaps most importantly, effectively denies the importance of sexuality by never dealing with it. Although his critics have accused him of offering a sociological analysis of human nature, Fromm is openly critical of such analysis, calling it "sociological relativism." Fromm agrees with Freud that man does have a basic nature, but it differs from Freud's conception in both origin and substance. As we have already seen, the substance of man for Freud is a biological tension between the sexual and the aggressive while the substance of man for Fromm is an existential tension between freedom and alienation. Freud's man originates in a biologically given, inherited nature, Fromm's man comes out of the universal human condition. What marks the transition from animal to human for Fromm is a freedom from instinctual necessity that is accompanied by an



awareness of self. Thus, Fromm's conception of the nature of man is not, strictly speaking, either biological or sociological. It is perhaps philosophical. While Freud stressed the similarities between man and animals, Fromm develops his theory on the basis of the differences. He concentrates on the development and evolution of consciousness and the resulting existential dilemmas. For both Fromm and Freud man has a basic nature and that basic nature is acted upon by society, through the process of socialization. It is there that the similarity ends.

The process of socialization was understood by Freud as a process of restraining, reducing and sublimating physiological desires. The superego which emerges as a product of parental authority, derives its power from the redirection of aggressive instincts toward the self. Fromm's analysis changes this picture entirely. Fromm is not concerned with the evolution of physiological processes, he is concerned with the evolution of consciousness. For Fromm the appearance of human self-awareness created new needs whose only physiological roots are in the capacity for consciousness. It is man's consciousness that interrupts man's unity with the universe; that gives man not only an awareness of self but also a sense of isolation that leads him to a compelling need to achieve "a new relatedness to man and nature after having lost the primary relatedness of the pre-human stage" (Fromm, 1955:viii). Thus according to Fromm man searches for both meaning and unity and develops his five basic human needs.



It is interesting to note how Freud's instincts eros and thanatos as well as his conception of incest have been translated into Frommian language. Eros becomes our need for relatedness, our need for love, "the experience of union with another person, with all men and with nature under the condition of retaining one's sense of integrity and independence" (Fromm, 1955:37). Fromm is telling us to "love thy neighbor," a dictum that Freud found to be utterly repressive. To Freud, aim-inhibited love was a societally fostered ideology whose goal was the repression or at best the sublimation of our natural sexual desires. Fromm has in fact stood Freud on his head. He takes issue with Freud for "seeing in love exclusively the expression or sublimation of the sexual instinct, rather than recognizing that the sexual desire is one manifestation of the need for love and union" (Fromm, 1956:35). Marcuse has claimed that Fromm's theories are merely ideological reflections of bourgeois society and as such fail to reflect real societal conditions. To prove this claim he bids the reader to compare Fromm's sermon of love with Freud's more realistic analysis.

**FROMM** Genuine love is rooted in productiveness and may properly be called, therefore, "productive love." Its essence is the same whether it is the mother's love for the child, our love for man, or the erotic love between two individuals . . . certain basic elements may be said to be characteristic of all forms of productive love. These are care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge.

**FREUD** There is no longer any place in present-day civilized life for a simple natural love between two human beings. . . . the man almost always feels his sexual activity hampered by his respect for the women and only develops full sexual potency when he finds himself in the presence of a lower type of sexual object . . . (Marcuse, 1955: 240-1).



Throughout Freud's tone remains both pessimistic and critical while Fromm's overall tone, in spite of his critiques of capitalism, is optimistic and almost romantically idealistic. Capitalism may be bad but Fromm has faith in the individual; he has faith that in the end love will conquer all.

Fromm has translated Thanatos or the death instinct into man's capacity for destructiveness but destructiveness is neither an instinct nor a basic need. The basic need is for transcendence. Transcendence for Fromm, is the need not to accept our existence passively but to actively participate in its development. Man can meet his need for transcendence through either creativeness or destructiveness, however:

Destructiveness is a secondary potentiality rooted in the very existence of man, and having the same intensity and power as any passion can have. But -- this is the essential point of my argument -- it is only the alternative to creativeness. Creation and destruction, love and hate are not two instincts which exist independently. They are both answers to the same need for transcendence, and the will to destroy must arise when the will to create cannot be satisfied. However the satisfaction of the need to create leads to happiness; destructiveness to suffering, most of all, for the destroyer himself (Fromm, 1955:42).

Clearly we have moved far from Freud. Man has the capacity for destruction but it is not basic to his nature, it only arises when "The will to create cannot be satisfied" and finally it does not lead, as in Freud, to happiness but rather it leads to suffering. While Freud defines happiness as the sudden fulfillment of instincts and identifies man's aggression or destructiveness as an instinct, thus making it clear why destructiveness brings pleasure, Fromm fails to explain why destructiveness leads to suffering and why particularly "for the destroyer himself."



Finally, in developing his five basic needs Fromm reinterprets the incest taboo and the Oedipus complex. The incest wish becomes in Fromm, not an expression of sexual desire but an expression of a desire to escape from freedom. That is, it is an escape back to the womb back to mother, warmth, and unity or back to the ties of traditional society, back to clan or tribe or its modern manifestation, the nation. "Nationalism is our form of incest, is our ideology, is our insanity" (Fromm, 1955:60). In Fromm's reinterpretation of the Oedipus complex, he tries to "translate it from the sphere of the sexual into that of interpersonal relations" (1950:79 and 1951:231-5). Fromm tells us that the Oedipus complex is not universal, that the rivalry between father and son does not occur in societies where strong patriarchal authority does not exist and that ties to the mother are not necessarily sexual. As Fromm explains the Oedipus complex:

The struggle against paternal authority is its main theme and the roots of this struggle extend far back into the ancient struggle between the patriarchal and the matriarchal system of society, family and religion (1955:42-62).

Freud had interpreted neurosis and the Oedipus complex as a result of a conflict between man's biological passion and the "reality" as represented by parents and society. Fromm regards both the Oedipus complex and neurosis as an expression of a conflict between man's natural strivings for increased freedom and particular social arrangements that frustrate those strivings and lead to secondary adaptations. In both Freud and Fromm the conflict is within man. In Freud, society has been internalized in the form of the superego. In Fromm increased freedom brings increased isolation and thus,



the possible tendency to regress to less free and less isolated states. For Freud, however, the tensions within man and between man and society were inevitable. At their very core social arrangements are based on repression. Civilization begins with the incest taboo. For Fromm it is particular forms of social arrangements that prevent self-fulfillment, that prevent freedom and independence and thereby develop in man a destructive capacity. Thus in a society that does not frustrate freedom, in a sane society, there will be no Oedipus complex, there will be no superego, for man will have no destructive passions that need to be suppressed. Even more importantly, there will be no unconscious. For Fromm the goal of therapy is to make the unconscious conscious, but not in the limited manner of Freud.

The most characteristic element in the psychoanalytic approach is, without any doubt, its attempt to make the unconscious conscious -- or, to put it in Freud's words, to transform id into ego (Fromm, 1950:95).

When we free ourselves from the limited concept of Freud's conscious . . . then Freud's aim, the transformation of unconsciousness into consciousness ("Id into Ego") gains a wider and more profound meaning. Making the unconscious conscious transforms the mere idea of the universality of man into a living experience of the universality; it is the experiential realization of humanism (Fromm, 1950:107).

Once the unconscious becomes conscious, man will be in touch with his true self, he will have the "experiential realization of humanism." Given the proper social conditions, there is no longer any reason why man should not remain in both true and full consciousness.





In a manner similar to the way he translates Freud's conception of instinct into a conception of human needs, Fromm translates Freud's theory of character from the oral, anal and genital to the receptive, exploitative, hoarding, marketing and productive. Freud had pointed out certain observable character types as representing fixation at certain stages in the individual's psycho-sexual development. In Fromm's translation, the libidinal development of character is completely ignored. Although Fromm's character types are somewhat reminiscent of Freud's. The receptive character seems to be somewhere between the oral character and the masochist; while the exploitive reminds one of the sadist; the hoarding and marketing both have characteristics of the anal character; and the productive is clearly related to Freud's genital character. Fromm's types however are completely social in origin. Fromm tells us that his types are not developed around libidinal organization, but around specific kinds of relatedness to the world.

By rejecting the universality of the Oedipus complex, Fromm rejects Freud's proposal that certain familial relationships are universal and thus independent of the social structure. When Fromm declares the family to be "the psychic agency of society" he is saying that family patterns are essentially related to socio-economic patterns in the larger society. The family of a given society produces in its offspring a character structure functional to that society. Thus, he explains in great detail why the dominant social character of the 19th century capitalism was exploitive and hoarding, while the dominant social character of 20th century capitalism is receptive and marketing (Fromm, 1955:76-184).



The difference between Freud and Fromm on the relationship between the individual and society is profound. For Freud civilization is achieved at the price of institutional renunciation, of repression and neurosis. Civilization tames man's innate destructiveness and channels man's sexuality into "higher" pursuits, but the price is discontent. For Fromm, it is society that brings out man's destructive capacities and conversely it is society that can allow for his productive development. According to Fromm, society has now reached a stage of development where the social arrangements conducive to the development of productive character is possible. In Fromm's view, society goes through a course of development analogous to the growth of the individual; societies, like individuals, and can be regressive, i.e., not sane. Thus, it seems that the achievement of man's "real" nature somehow awaits the achievement of a sane society.

Fromm's lack of clarity becomes particularly disturbing when we examine his conception of neurosis. For Fromm, neurosis comes from alienation. It is not as in Freud, the result of a conflict between id and ego, between an unconscious desire for pleasure and the restraints of reality that originate in a particular psycho-sexual stage of development and manifests itself in a symptom. To Fromm the neurotic is one who is not his true self, that is, one who is not productive. "The mentally healthy person is the productive and unalienated person" (Fromm, 1955:24). Neurosis and alienation seem to be used interchangeably and both are essentially moral questions. "Neurosis itself is in the last analysis a



symptom of moral failure" (Fromm, 1947:viii). Fromm criticizes Freud's theory for being amoral.

Did Freud recognize the moral factor as a fundamental part of his model of man? The answer to this question is the negative . . . . Freud's explanation leads to a relativization of all moral norms . . . . Good is what the internalized authority commands, and bad what it prohibits (1970:52-3).

For Fromm what is human, is good, moral, healthy, progressive and productive. What is bad, neurotic, alienated and regressive is unhuman. However, what is unhuman is also a human reaction, that is, it is an alternate reaction of man. If man cannot be creative, he will be destructive. One cannot help but to agree with Marcuse when he classifies Frommian thought as "the power of positive thinking" (Marcuse, 1955:239).

#### Departure from Marx

Despite the immensity of Fromm's departures from Freud, if I were forced to classify Eric Fromm as either a Marxist or a Freudian, I would have to call him a Freudian. Interestingly if Fromm himself were asked to make the same classification, there is little doubt that he would call himself a Marxist. Clearly he pays Marx the greatest homage: "I consider Marx, the thinker, as being of much greater depth and scope than Freud" (Fromm, 1962:12). While Fromm is often openly critical of Freud, he is rarely critical of Marx.

He interprets Marx in such a way that his own theory appears to be a direct out-growth of Marx's theory. Thus we are told that Marx's "philosophy is neither idealism nor materialism but a synthesis:



humanism and naturalism" (Fromm, 1961:11). Fromm does not merely assert his interpretation of Marx, but quotes liberally from Marx (both early and late) to support his assertion. For example, he quotes the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, "Naturalism or humanism is distinguished from both idealism and materialism and at the same time constitutes their unifying truth" (1961:9). It is my contention that in spite of the fact that Fromm quotes Marx to indicate the source of many of his own categories, he is not a Marxist, a Neo-Marxist, or even a revisionist; that, on all basic issues his theories are in opposition to Marx. Let us proceed by comparing Fromm and Marx on their conceptions of: the nature of man; the nature of society; methodology; implications for praxis; and the nature of the future Communisms.

As we have seen, Fromm most frequently identifies his position as humanist. In Man for Himself he associates his viewpoint with humanistic ethics, in The Sane Society he calls himself a normative humanist and in Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis he talks about humanistic psychoanalysis. In Man for Himself Fromm defines humanism:

Formally, it is based on the principle that only man himself can determine the criterion for virtue and sin, and not an authority transcending him. Materially, it is based on the principle that "good" is what is good for man and "evil" what is detrimental to man; the sole criterion of ethical value being man's welfare (1947:12-13).

Schaar however claims that, "Fromm's humanism is really naturalism in disguise . . . . Naturalism, regards goodness as inherent in nature and evil as the result of deviation from nature . . ." (1961: 18). Schaar labels Fromm a naturalist because man does not himself



make the criteria for good and evil but only discovers it in his own nature. Thus man does not determine the road toward human fulfillment, he merely discovers it. According to Hammond, "Fromm seeks to overcome the tension between naturalism and humanism in a way fundamentally Hegelian and Marxist" (1965:41). The self, according to Fromm, has an inherent urge to become actually what it is potentially. The motivation behind this striving is alienation, which comes from the fact that human consciousness entails a separation from nature and other men. Fromm here is clearly closer to Hegel than to Marx. Alienation to Fromm is necessarily connected to man's movement away from the Garden of Eden. It is an alienation that arises from human consciousness. It is not fundamentally connected to the exploitation of labor or to a class-based society.

Fromm continually reiterates that Marx, unlike contemporary, relativistic sociologists, had a conception of the nature of man. That conception distinguishes between human nature in general and its individual historical manifestations. It is from that distinction that Fromm himself develops his work. Part of that work is the analysis of basic human nature, giving rise to his elaboration of man's five basic needs. The other part is an examination of the socially created manifestation of human nature giving rise to his conception of social character. There is however a fundamental difference between Marx and Fromm. Marx's conception of the nature of man is a minimal and rather sociological conception. In developing his conception of human nature, species being, Marx distinguishes man from other animals. Man's consciousness is not the source of his alienation but rather gives man the capacity to control his environment;



that is, man is not tied to nature, to instincts, but has the capacity to create and recreate nature with his labor. Man controls his environment with his labor and it is his material environment that determines his nature. Further, according to Marx, men make history but they do not do it alone, when they arrive there is already a material environment, a means and relations of production. Thus although man is at the center of Marx, it is man that is very much defined by history. The economic substructure is both the driving force of history and the primary factor in the creation of identity. I cannot see how one can be a Marxist and reject this last statement as Fromm clearly does. To Fromm the primary force of history is man's basic nature derived from his universal existential condition; that is from his movement from an original unity with nature to an awareness of self or consciousness. It is consciousness that makes man both free and alone. It is consciousness that causes alienation, not class oppression. History is interpreted as an effort on the part of man to deal with his existential dilemma. Man's basic "problem" is his alienation from nature caused by consciousness and his effort to overcome that alienation through a higher transcendence. Clearly this is not alienation as in Marx. Alienation for Marx has a material base. Man is alienated from himself, not in touch with, or out of control of self, because he is out of control of his environment. When he is forced to sell his labor he is no longer in control of his material environment, and thus he no longer determines his own nature. In Marx alienation and exploitation are essentially tied together. For Fromm alienation is rooted in man's consciousness. The cause of increased alienation is



not economic conditions nor the exploitation of labor but man's own fear of freedom. This fear of freedom developed historically as man becomes increasingly individuated, increasingly separated from nature and from society. For Fromm both the "problem" and, as we shall see the solution, lies within the individual.

Fromm claims that man's most basic human need is the need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness. He interprets Marx as saying that, "because I am a man I am in need of men" (1970:66). Clearly that is what Fromm is saying but not what Marx said. "Because I am a man, I am in need of men" is a tautological statement that is not worthy of Marx. Marx explains that man is in need of men because they are an essential part of the social-material environment. Consciousness is not individual but developed in relation to social existence. Further, to control environment man must act in conjunction with others. Thus communal action is essential to end alienation. How different this is from saying that it is good for men to act communally because such action is in accordance with the true nature of man! Fromm tells us that because we are men we are conscious of our separation from other men and nature. We strive in our consciousness to do away with the objective separation. We can choose life, which according to Fromm means both increased freedom and a transcendence of loneliness or we can choose death which is an escape from freedom and a regression to a less human state. While Fromm touches on one of man's essential existential dilemmas he manages to escape its tragic implication. He "has faith" that man will choose freedom while simultaneously transcending isolation. In the tradition of translating his own theories into Marx's, Fromm tells us:



Perhaps the most decisive question in Marx's psychology is whether a man, class or society is motivated by the affinity to life or to death (1970:72).

Fromm thus makes Marx into a moralist. Fromm tells us that for Marx, man is alienated because he "is not what he ought to be, and that he ought to be that which he could be" (1966:47). "Alienation then, is, for Marx, the sickness of man" (Fromm, 1962:48); finally, "the concept of alienation is, in non-theistic language, the equivalent of what in theistic language would be called 'sin': man's relinquishment of himself, of God within himself" (Fromm, 1962:46). Alienation is a "sin" because man is not being his natural self. He ought to be what he could be. We must conclude that for Fromm man is by nature good. Alienation is bad because man, living in an alienated state, is not living up to his human potential -- his ability to overcome his existential isolation. Although I would agree with Fromm's interpretation of Marx as a moralist, and agree that his sociological theory is to some extent, perhaps to a large extent, based upon a positive conception of the nature of man, I must protest when the concept of alienation (which in Marx had a good deal of theoretical clarity) is translated into meaning anything that is bad. While a value judgment may have motivated Marx's theoretical construction of the concept of alienation, it remains in Marx a useful analytical tool. It is not simply an unavoidable existential condition, man's "sin" or "sickness."

Fromm and Marx have an entirely different perspective about the nature of society. Marx was a materialist, a dialectician, and a class theorist. He looked at the forces and relations of production, tracing the dialectic development of class conflict that





gave rise to new economic stages. Fromm is an idealist and a moralist and his theories do not recognize class struggle. He looks at mass society as the inevitable result of the evolutionary development of a market economy brought about by the industrial revolution. Although he claims that the enemy is capitalism, he concentrates on tendencies that are inherent in modern life rather than in the capitalist economic system per se. He discusses the problems of bureaucratization, quantification, routinization and abstractification, and it is clear from those discussions that he has confused modernization with capitalism. His perspective is mass society, not class society. In his second use of the concept of alienation (which in some ways is closer to Marx than his rather Hegelian conception of existential alienation) Schaar tells us that Fromm, "liberates alienation from the confines of a class analysis" and uses it to indicate the pathology of modern society (1961:78).

Marx's class conflict is translated by Fromm into a "destruction of illusion." However from Fromm's perspective, he remains within a Marxist tradition. For Fromm, like Marcuse, Marx's concept of consciousness is the most essential part of his theory of revolution. "For Marx the aim of life is liberation from bondage, and the way to this aim is the overcoming of illusion" (Fromm, 1962: 109). Fromm asks: "How can man attain the goal of freeing himself from illusion?" Fromm answers: "Marx thought this goal could be achieved by reform of consciousness" (1962:111, emphasis mine). He continues by providing the reader with a long excerpt from Marx that is meant to substantiate his claim that Marx was primarily interested in a "reform of consciousness." Fromm quotes Marx:



The reform of consciousness consists exclusively in the fact that one lets the world become aware of its consciousness, that one awakens the world from the dream it is dreaming about itself, that one interprets its own actions to the world . . . our motto must be: reform of consciousness, not through dogmas but by analyzing the mystical self-confused consciousness, whether it has a political or a religious context (1962:111-2).

Clearly Fromm, in spite of his great effort to support his thesis, has distorted Marx. The essential connection between theory and praxis for Marx lies in the fact that consciousness is a product of praxis, of life in the real world. Consciousness, Marx stated in his second thesis on Feuerbach, could not be refined and developed without praxis.

The question of whether human thinking can reach objective truth -- is not a question of theory but a practical question. In practice, man must prove the truth . . . (Easton, 1967:401).

But it is precisely the alternation of Nature by men not solely nature as such which is the most essential and immediate basis of human thought, and it is in the measure that man has learned to change nature that his intelligence has increased (Engels, 1964:1964:234).

One could never have simply a reform of consciousness. Consciousness and activity, consciousness and labor are dialectically related. For Marx and Engels, truth, justice and virtue are not unchanging and universally existent. They are historically developed categories of consciousness, which, like all elements of consciousness, are in a dialectical relationship to an ever changing material reality.

One is always conscious of the necessary limitations of all acquired knowledge, of the fact that it is conditioned by the circumstances in which it was acquired (Engels, 1941:67).

But men, Marx tells us in German Ideology developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking (Easton, 1967:409).



As we have seen, for Fromm both truth and virtue are unchanging and universally existent. They are not dependent on a historical-material reality but rather are dependent on an unchanging human nature. What is good is in accordance with the nature of man. What is evil is contrary to that nature. For Fromm, however, our scientifically devised knowledge of man's nature can be used to determine both our social and our moral norms. In fact in the same society moral and social norms are the same. Science cannot only bring us a truth that transcends particular historical conditions, but also a morality that does the same. This is an interesting combination of positivism and mysticism and reminds us of Durkheim's similar search for an objective morality.

The founders of the great religions are for Fromm the pathfinders for humanity. Marx's revolutionary proletariat has now become a small bond of religious "awakened ones." The source of their consciousness clearly is not, as in Marx's proletariat, the material conditions of their existence:

This concept of mental health coincides essentially with the norms postulated by the great spiritual teachers of the human race. This coincidence appears to some modern psychologist to be a proof that our psychological premises are not "scientific" but philosophic or religious "ideals." They find it difficult, apparently, to draw the conclusion that the great teachings of all cultures were based on rational insight into the nature of man, on the conditions for his full development. This latter conclusion seems also to be more in line with the fact that in the most diverse places of this globe, at different periods of history, the "awakened ones" have preached the same norms, with none or with little influence from one upon the other. Ikhnaton, Moses, Kung Futse, Lao-tse, Buddha, Isaiah, Socrates, Jesus have postulated the same norms for human beings with only small and insignificant differences (Fromm, 1955:69). (emphasis mine).



Although Fromm admits that some religions may be regressive, he postulates that others offer the correct answer to the problem of human existence.

The other pole of religion is represented by all those religions which seek the answer to the question of human existence by emerging fully from prehuman existence, by developing the specifically human potentiality of reason and love and thus by finding a new harmony between man and nature — and between man and man (1960:92-4).

How far this is from Marx who could never see an answer to the problems of existence as existing in belief alone, let alone in a religious belief!

Although at certain times Fromm adopts a more structural and Marxist perspective, at other times his perspective is quite clearly, and it seems self consciously, nominalist. Fromm tells us "What holds true for psychology holds true also for sociology" (1962: 153). Social development and social change is interpreted here as coming from the individual. Each individual has an inherent urge for self-realization. Man can do what he wants to do. Thus life or death, socialism or barbarism, progression or regression all are individual possibilities. Revolutionary praxis now becomes individual therapy. The therapist can help the individual make the correct choice. According to Fromm, individual therapy can lead to the productive realization of the personality, and so can Zen Buddhism. The aim of therapy, is to make the unconscious conscious, to transform "the mere idea of the universality of man into a living experience of this universality, it is the experimental realization of humanism" (Fromm, 1960:107). Thus it seems, that therapy, in spite of capitalism, can accomplish a reform of consciousness. The other means by which man can come to true consciousness is love.



Love is active penetration of the other person in which my desire to know is stilled by union. In the act of fusion, I know you, I know myself, I know everybody -- and I "know" nothing. I know in the only way in which knowledge of that which is alive is possible for man -- by the experience of union, not by any knowledge our thought can give. The only way to full knowledge lies in the act of love; the act transcending thought, it transcends words (Fromm, 1956:27-32).

Putting aside for a moment the fact that Fromm's language is often that of a religious mystic and not that of a social scientist, it is clear from the above examples of love and therapy that Fromm's solutions, his praxis, if you will, is on the level of the individual. To the extent that Fromm concerns himself with the structure of consciousness it can be said that he adopts a phenomenological method. To the extent that Fromm concerns himself with the reform of consciousness, it must be said that his approach is ethical or religious. In his discussion of Marx's conception of communism, he quotes Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, "Communism as such is not the aim of human development." "What then is the aim?" Fromm asks. Fromm answers: "Socialism for Marx was, as Paul Tillich put it, "a resistance movement against the destruction of love in social reality." "Socialism, for Marx," Fromm continues, "is a society which permits the actualization of man's essence, by overcoming his alienation" (1961:58-61). Socialism is no longer an economic system. It is a state of awareness where the unconscious has been made conscious and where man is in touch with his universal nature and able to love productively. "Marx's concept of socialism is a protest, as is all existential philosophy, against the alienation of man". (Fromm, 1961:63) (emphasis mine).



Marx then is an existentialist concerned with the alienation arising from man's existential condition and not as some might have thought, from class oppression and exploitation. Finally, Marx is a moralist, whose "Socialism is the realization of the deepest religious impulse . . . . Marx's atheism is the most advanced form of rational mysticism, closer to Meister Eckhart or to Zen Buddhism than are most of those fighters for God and religion who accuse him of 'godlessness'" (Fromm, 1961:64-5).\*

While Marx was reluctant to outline his conception of the future communist society, Fromm spends a good deal of time outlining his proposal for the "good" society. For Marx, communism was a reality of the future, and any hypothesis about it in the present would necessarily be utopian. Fromm's projected socialism is not developed out of Marx but rather out of what he calls "communitarian socialism," based upon Owenists, syndicalist, and anarchist models. I would go so far as to say that Fromm's projection of a good society is not necessarily socialism. His suggestions do not significantly change either the economic base of capitalism nor its moral values. What he is really proposing is a change in consciousness. Explaining how attractive the job of waiter and cab-driver would be if only it were not associated with low status and low income, Fromm tells us:

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\* An example of the closeness between Meister Eckhart and Marx is explained in a footnoted quotation from Marx in which Fromm contends that Marx's statement that, "Poverty is the passive bond which leads man to experience a need for the greatest wealth, the other person" is similar to Meister Eckhart Sermon "Blessed are the Poor" (Fromm, 1961:34-5). Clearly Marx's famous statement "Religion is the opium of the people" comes out of just such religious beliefs as "Blessed are the Poor"!



Let us take another example: that of a waiter in a restaurant. This job could be an exceedingly attractive one for many people, provided its social prestige were different. If permits of constant inter-personal intercourse, and to people who like food, it gives pleasure to advise others about it, to serve it pleasantly, and so on. Many a man would find much more pleasure in working as a waiter than in sitting in his office over meaningless figures were it not for the low social rating and low income of this job. Again, many others would love the job of a cab-driver were it not for its negative social and economic aspects (1955:262).

The problem of labor under capitalism for Marx, is clearly not one of status and, as Fromm himself has indicated, it is not centered around wages. Marx tells us:

An enforced raising of wages . . . would therefore be nothing but a better slave salary and would not achieve either for the worker or for labor human significances and dignity (Easton, 1967:298).

For Marx, the important factor is that once man sells his labor power he is no longer in control of his environment. Fromm tries to lead us to believe that the important factor is how one views the job. The goal is a reform of consciousness and this reform seems to be taking place at that level alone. The parallel between "brainwashing" and a "reform of consciousness" becomes only too evident in Fromm's unfortunate example of the housewife and the maid:

Let us compare a housewife who takes care of the house and does the cooking with a maid who is paid for doing exactly the same work. Both for the housewife and the maid, the work in its technical aspects is the same, and it is not particularly interesting. Yet it will have an entirely different meaning and satisfaction for the two, provided we think of a woman with a happy relationship to husband and children, and of an average maid, who has no sentimental attachment to her employer. To the former, the work will not be drudgery, while to the latter it will be exactly that, and the only reason for doing it is that she needs the money paid for it. The reason for this difference is obvious: while the work is the same in its



technical aspects, the work situation is entirely different. For the housewife it is part of her total relationship to her husband and children, and in this sense her work is meaningful. The maid does not participate in the satisfaction of this social aspect of the work (1955:262-3).

The aim of Fromm's reform is to do away with alienation.

To accomplish this, the significant factor in the economic realm he tells us, "is not ownership of the means of production, but participation in management and decision making" (1955:281). To this end, Fromm outlines a program of co-management with worker participation. Co-management does not do away with private property, but instead, "The owner or owners of an enterprise would be entitled to a reasonable rate of interest on their capital investment" (1955:282). How far this is from even the early Marx who said:

Wages are a direct result of alienated labor and alienated labor is the direct course of private property. The downfall of one is necessarily the downfall of the other . . . . Private property is, therefore, the product, the necessary result of alienated labor, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself (Easton, 1967:299).

As a means of convincing the reader of the feasibility of his plan, Fromm tells us that his ideas are more than acceptable to conservative industrialists and the chairman of the board of United States Steel.

Even an industrialist as conservative as the protagonist of profit sharing in industry, J. F. Lincoln, proposes, as we have seen, that the dividends should not exceed a relatively fixed and constant amount, and that the profit exceeding this amount should be divided among the workers. There are possibilities for workers' co-management and control even on a basis of present-day conditions. B. F. Fairless, for instance, the chairman of the Board of United States Steel Corporation, said in a recent address (published in a condensed form in the Readers Digest, November 15, 1953, p. 17) that the three hundred thousand employees of United States Steel could buy all the common stock of the corporation by purchasing 87 shares apiece,





all at a total cost of \$3,500. By investing \$10 (per week) apiece which is about what our steel workers gained in all of the outstanding common stock in less than seven years." Actually, they would not even have to purchase that much but only part of it in order to have enough of the stock to give them a voting majority (Fromm, 1955:282).

Fromm's acceptability to conservatives is not at all surprising, for, in spite of his claims to the contrary, Fromm's proposals for social change are well within parameters that are acceptable to capitalism. He clearly is not a Marxist!



### CHAPTER III

#### HERBERT MARCUSE

##### Anthropological Assumptions

Eros and Civilization is a brilliant theoretical analysis of Freudian psychoanalysis viewed in the light of Marxist Sociology. Unfortunately Marcuse often fails to distinguish between Freud and his own Marxist reinterpretation of Freud. It is, of course, true as Robinson points out, that the fact that, "Marcuse never mentioned Marx's name in the book was an extraordinary feat of legerdemain" (1969:201). It is also true that it is this very feat that makes Eros and Civilization extremely difficult to read. One must constantly stop to ask oneself where both Freud and Marx end and Marcuse begins. This problem is nowhere made more clear than in Marcuse's discussion of Freud's conception of the nature of man.

Marcuse tells us that "all psychoanalytic concepts (sublimation, identification, projection, repression, introjection) connote the mutability of the instincts" (1955:12) and that "Freud's individual psychology is in its very essence social psychology. Repression is an historical phenomenon" (Marcuse, 1955:15). Thus the transition from the pleasure principle to the reality principle is no longer a universal transition made necessary by the intrinsic conflict between the nature of man and the nature of society. In Marcuse's eyes instincts are "mutable," that is, the nature of man changes historically and the transition from the pleasure principle



to the reality principle is a transition that not only takes place within a given historical place and time but more importantly is a transition that is made necessary by past and present historical conditions. According to Marcuse, men must forsake the pleasure principle when they must conform to society's rules. Rules are instituted because of the necessity to work. Marcuse quotes Freud:

Society's motive in enforcing the decisive modification of the instinctual structure is thus economics; since it has not means enough to support life for its members without work on their part, it must see to it that the number of these members is restricted and their energies directed away from sexual activities on to their work (1955:16).

Marcuse admits that, "the notion that a non-repressive civilization is impossible is a cornerstone of Freudian theory" (1955:16). He also insists on the validity of Freud's generalization "that a repressive organization of the instincts underlies all historical forms of the reality principle in civilization" (1955:31). Simultaneously, Marcuse is openly critical of Freud because his conception of the reality principle "makes historical contingencies into biological necessity" (1955:31).

The external world faced by the growing ego is at any stage a specific socio-historical organization of reality, affecting the mental structure through specific societal agencies or agents. It has been argued that Freud's concept reality principle obliterates this fact by making historical contingencies into biological necessities: his analysis of the repressive transformation of the instincts under the impact of the reality principle generalizes from a specific historical form of reality to reality pure and simple. This criticism is valid, but its validity does not vitiate the truth in Freud's generalization, namely, that a repressive organization of the instincts underlies all historical forms of the reality principle in civilization (1955:31).



A brilliant example of dialectical reasoning, Freud was at once right and wrong, historical and unhistorical.

If he /Freud/ justifies the repressive organization of the instincts by the irreconcilability between the primary pleasure principle and the reality principle, he expresses the historical fact that civilization has progressed as organized domination (Marcuse, 1955: 31-2).

Thus, while the seeds for a socio-historical analysis existed within Freud's theory, it was necessary for those seeds to be more fully developed. It is with this in mind that Marcuse distinguished between repression and surplus repression; between the reality principle and the performance principle.

(a) Surplus Repression: the restrictions necessitated by social domination. This is distinguished from (basic) repression: the "modifications" of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization.

(b) Performance Principle: the prevailing historical form of the reality principle (1955:32).

Marcuse claims that the fundamental fact that lies behind the reality principle is scarcity; that is, what is fundamentally important about the reality principle, to Marcuse, is the fact that the struggle for existence takes place in a world too poor to satisfy human needs without instinctual renunciations.

In Eros and Civilization, Marcuse accepts Freud's conception of the instinctual duality in man. He accepts the late Freud's contention that man's basic biological conflict is a conflict between Eros and Thanatos, life and death, sex and aggression. However, for Marcuse, Thanatos, the death or aggression instinct, only appears in the space made available by the withdrawal of libidinal



energy, for the work process. According to Marcuse, the primary motive for life is pleasure through instinctual gratification. Unfortunately, because of scarcity, the struggle for existence necessitates the repressive modification of instincts. Thanatos seems to be viewed by Marcuse as a secondary adaptation of man's instinctual structure to the material condition of scarcity. This destructive manifestation of instinct will, however, disappear as the social necessity for instinctual renunciation disappears. That is, man's dual nature has arisen out of the historical necessity of his life and will change as that historical necessity changes. The desire for his own death, his aggression toward himself and others, comes out of the pain of his life and will cease when there is no longer any pain. In Marcuse's own words:

The death instinct operates under the Nirvana principle: it tends toward the state of "constant gratification" where no tension is felt -- a state without want. This trend of the instinct implies that its destructive manifestations would be minimized as it approached such a state. If the instinct's basic objective is not the termination of life but of pain -- the absence of tension -- then paradoxically, in terms of the instinct, the conflict between life and death is the more reduced, the closer life approximates the state of gratification. Pleasure principle and Nirvana principle then converge. At the same time, Eros freed from surplus-repression, would be strengthened, and the strengthened Eros would, as it were, absorb the objective of the death instinct. The instinctual value of death would have changed: if the instincts pursued and attained their fulfillment in a nonrepressive order, the regression compulsion would lose much of its biological rational. As suffering and want recede, the Nirvana principle may become reconciled with the reality principle. The unconscious attraction that draws the instincts back to an "earlier state" would be effectively counteracted by the desirability of the attained state of life. The "conservative nature" of the instincts would come to rest in a fulfilled present. Death would cease to be an instinctual goal (1955:214-15).



In Marcuse's reinterpretation of Freud's primal family analysis of the origins of civilization, the necessary connection between sexual repression and civilization becomes translated into the not always necessary connection between disciplined labor and civilization. Thus it seems that the primal father in constricting the pleasure of the sons, "prepared the ground for progress through enforced constraint on pleasure and enforced abstinence; he thus created the first precondition for the disciplined 'labor force' of the future" (Marcuse, 1955:56). Thus Marcuse, like Reich, links sexual repression to economic subordination. The end of the necessity of economic subordination, or in Marcuse's own words "social domination" will bring an end to unnecessary sexual repression. In Marcuse's hands civilization and the nature of man have become historical categories indicating not only what was and what is, but also, what can be.

Marcuse appears to be simultaneously accepting Freud's conception of the nature of man as Eros and Thanatos and Marx's conception of the nature of man as species being. In Marcuse's conception, man seeks pleasure through fulfillment of his biologically given sexual desire. The historical necessity of labor brings about the repression and sublimation of sexual activity. In an effort to avoid pain and relieve frustration, the present form of the death instinct emerges. However, if one links the nature of man to historical forces then man's nature depends upon how those forces develop historically.

What man can be in a given historical situation is determinable with regard to the following factors:



the measure of control of natural and social productive forces, the level of the organization of labor, the development of needs in relation to possibilities for their fulfillment . . . the availability, as material to be appropriated, of a wealth of cultural values in all areas of life (Marcuse, 1968:73).

The essence of man for Marcuse is not only what he is, but also what he can be.

The essence of man is understood in connection with those tendencies which have as their goal a new form of social life as the "Idea" of that which practice must realize. Considered this way, the image of man represents not only what can already be made of man today, what "in itself" can already be today, but also -- and this is the polemical demand theory raises by means of this concept of essence -- the real fulfillment of everything that man desires to be when he understands himself in terms of his potentialities (1968:72-3).

Man's essence, Marcuse believes, can progress from appearance to reality. That is, man's essence is a potential ideal that ought to be realized. The present appearance of human nature is limited while the future ideal is a full reality.

In making this demand of the essence of man, theory points the way from the bad current state of humanity to a mankind that disposes of the goods available to it in such a way that they are distributed in accordance with the true needs of the community. Here men would themselves take on the planning and shaping of the social process of life and not leave it to the arbitrariness of competition and the blind necessity of reified economic relations (Marcuse, 1968:73).

Appearance ends and truth-reality begins when man acts in accordance with his true needs. These emerge for man when there is an end of alienated labor, when men "themselves take on the planning and shaping of the social process of life." True needs cannot be predetermined because they are tied to the future, to be realized only through historical acts.



How are men to realize the end of alienated labor as long as they are tied to false needs? Marcuse's answer is ambiguous: "Political radicalism . . . implies moral radicalism, the emergence of a morality which might precondition man for freedom" (Marcuse, 1969:10). Does man create the morality or does the morality create the man? In his essay entitled "A Biological Foundation for Socialism?" Marcuse seems to hypothesize an organic basis for this morality; that is, morality comes out of man's basic nature.

Prior to all ethical behavior in accordance with specific social standards, prior to all ideological expression, morality is a "disposition" of the organism, perhaps rooted in the erotic drive to counter aggressiveness, to create and preserve "ever greater unities" of life. We would then have, this side of all "values," an instinctual foundation for solidarity among human beings — a solidarity which has been effectively repressed in line with the requirements of class society but which now appear as a precondition for liberation (1969:18).

In the very next paragraph Marcuse seems to reverse the direction of causality. He proposes that morality rather than coming from man's nature, in fact, creates man's nature.

To the degree to which this foundation is itself historical and the malleability of "human nature" reaches into the depth of man's instinctual structure, changes in morality may "sink down" into the "biological" dimension.<sup>1</sup>

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1. I use the terms "biological" and "biology" not in the sense of the scientific discipline, but in order to designate the process and the dimension in which inclinations, behavior patterns, and aspirations become vital needs which, if not satisfied, would cause dysfunction of the organism. Conversely, socially induced needs and aspirations may result in a more pleasurable organic behavior. If biological needs are defined as those which must be satisfied and for which no adequate substitute can be provided, certain cultural needs can "sink down" into the biology of man. We could then speak, for example, of the biological need of freedom, or of some aesthetic needs as having taken root in the





organic structure of man, in his "nature," or rather "second nature." This usage of the term "biological" does not imply or assume anything as to the way in which needs are physiologically expressed and transmitted (Marcuse, 1969:10).

Although Marcuse appears to be proposing simultaneously that morality comes from biological needs and biological needs arise out of morality, he merely mentions the former proposition (I suppose as a dialectical possibility) but spends a considerable amount of time on an analysis of the consequences of the latter proposition, i.e., his emphasis is on biological needs arising out of morality. Thus he concludes with

Reich:

In this way, a society constantly re-creates this side of consciousness and ideology, patterns of behavior and aspiration as part of the "nature" of its people, and unless the revolt reaches into this "second" nature, into these ingrown patterns social change will remain "incomplete," even self-defeating (1969:11).

Capitalist society creates needs whose "satisfaction reproduces life's servitude" (Marcuse, 1969:15). "Liberation presupposes change in the biological dimension, that is to say, different instinctual needs, different reactions of the body as well as the mind" (Marcuse, 1969:17).

People cannot reject the system of domination without rejecting themselves, their own repressive instinctual needs and values. We would have to conclude liberation would mean subversion against the will and against the prevailing interest of the great majority of people (Marcuse, 1969:17).

Marcuse is not entirely unaware of the circular nature of his reasoning. New needs or at least liberation from old needs is necessary before we can change society, while a change in society is necessary to produce a change in socially created needs. In Marcuse's own words:



This is the vicious circle: the rupture with the self-propelling conservative continuum of needs must precede the revolution which is to usher in a free society, but such rupture itself can be envisaged only in a revolution — a revolution which would be driven by the vital need to be freed from the administered comforts and the destructive productivity of the exploitative society, freed from smooth heteronomy, a revolution which, by virtue of this "biological" foundation, would have the chance of turning quantitative technical progress into qualitatively different ways of life (1969:18-19).

Unfortunately we are left unclear as to just how this "biological foundation" is to be laid.

What is important for our purposes in this section is Marcuse's conception of the nature of man. It would seem that for him man has instincts that are derived both from his own biological nature and from the social process. His most basic biological instinct is Eros, the seeking of pleasure through sexual gratification. His less basic need (in the sense of biological necessity) is the death instinct, which develops out of the necessary sublimation of sexuality. In addition to Eros and Thanatos there are those cultural needs that "sink down" into the biology of man and become his nature. Thus, for Marcuse man is born with a biological nature, but one which is extremely malleable. It can be socially created and recreated. When he talks about an "aesthetic morality," insisting on "freedom as a biological necessity" he most often appears to be saying that freedom can and should be a socially created, biological necessity.

#### Social Theory: Methods and Implications for Praxis

In Marcuse's hands Marx's call for an end of alienated labor becomes translated into the goal of the abolition of labor.



For Marcuse man's primary motive is happiness to be achieved only when man is free from the constraints of material necessity. Again we can see Marcuse's Freud-Marx synthesis. The primary motive behind human existence is happiness or pleasure. But in Marcuse's Marxian interpretation pleasure cannot be achieved without freedom; that is, freedom from the constraint of private property, of a class society, and alienated labor. In Marcuse's own eyes his position is perfectly consistent with both Freud and Marx. According to Marcuse, one of Freud's basic assumptions is that:

The "struggle for existence" (that is, for the "satisfaction of the great vital needs") is per se anti-libidinal in so far as it necessitates the reagentation of the instinct by a constraining reality principle. It must be noted that Freud links libido not merely to the satisfaction of the great vital needs but to the joint human effort to obtain satisfaction, i.e., to the work process (1955:194).

Marcuse then proceeds to quote Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents:

. . . experience has shown that in cases of collaboration libidinal ties are regularly formed between the fellow workers which prolong and solidify the relations between them to a point beyond what is merely profitable (1955: 195).

Thus, it seems that although work can be libidinal, as long as there is class based alienated labor, the repression of instinct is necessary.

Man is neither happy nor free. Only with the abolition of alienated labor can man gratify his instinct, and be both happy and free.

The abolition of the negative ordering of labor, alienated labor as Marx terms it, is hence at the same time the abolition of the proletariat.

The abolition of the proletariat also amounts to the abolition of labor as such. Marx makes this an express formulation when he speaks of the achievement of revolution. Classes are to be abolished "by the abolition of private property and of labor itself." Elsewhere, Marx



says the same thing: "The communistic revolution is directed against the preceding mode of activity, does away with labor" (Marx (1954) is paraphrased in Marcuse, 1970:292).

What Marcuse really means when he calls for the abolition of labor is "a change in the character of work."

The problem of work, of socially useful activity without (repressive) sublimation can now be restated. It emerged as the problem of a change in the character of work by virtue of which the latter would be assimilated to play — the true play of human facilities (Marcuse, 1955:195).

Marcuse's Freudian interpretation of Marx is in many ways more radical and more utopian than his fellow Marxists. It is a great deal more than the rearrangement of property relations or even a new economic system.

Communism, with its "positive abolition of private property", is thus of its very nature a new form of individualism, and not only a new and different economic system, but a different system of life. Communism is "the real appropriation (Aneignung) of the essence of man by and for man, therefore, it is man's complete conscious . . . return to himself as a social, that is, human being." It is the "true solution of man's conflict with nature and with man, of the strife between existence and essence, reification and self-determination, liberty and necessity, individual and genus" (Marx (1954) is paraphrased in Marcuse, 1970:286).

For Marcuse communism means an end to man's determination by the economic forces of the substructure, an end to the control of life by material necessity. With the conquest of material necessity man is freed from labor, he becomes free, to be happy.

Thus economic freedom would mean freedom from the economy — from being controlled by economic forces and relationships; freedom from the daily struggle for existence, from earning a living (Marcuse, 1964:4).

There must be more than an economic revolution, there must be a cultural revolution, a revolution in consciousness, a revolution



within man himself. Man must be free to realize his essence. Man must be free to become fully human. Marcuse, unlike his fellow Marxists, concentrates on transcending economic forces. His analysis, therefore, most often deals with culture, with morality, art, consciousness and ultimately with human happiness.

Marcuse's social science is guided by a method which he clearly distinguishes from both positivism and historical relativism. It is a method that is aware of the historical productions of reality but which is self-consciously interested in the transformation of that reality, in finding the weakest link, the source of conflict, the contradictions and most importantly, the vehicles for change. It is a method that he sometimes calls dialectical materialism and sometimes critical theory. By his own assessment, his method is both more negative and more utopian than traditional Marxism. Clearly he places more weight than most Marxists on what he calls "the power of negative thinking," that is, the importance of theoretical critique in bringing about social change. Marcuse contrasts what is true with that which is merely actual: "The dialectical definition defines the movement of things from that which they are not to that which they are" (1964:141). Marcuse's critique of positivism in Reason and Revolution and of scientism in One Dimensional Man is that contrary to its claim social science is not at all value free; it clearly has a conservative bias. The authoritative language of science raises the present historical reality to the status of the universal, the legitimate, and finally the inevitable. The intellectual tradition of science has made the blind worship of "the fact"



combined with "mathematical formalism" to inhibit any genuinely critical understanding of the world (Robinson, 1964:182).

For Marcuse science and technology are empirically and conceptually linked: "The principles of modern science were a priori structured in such a way that they could serve as conceptual instruments for a universe of self-propelling, productive control; theoretical operationalism came to correspond to practical operationalism" (Marcuse in Macintyre, 1970:95). Science and technology are part of a rational, self-perpetuating and oppressive social structure.

In other words, technology has become the great vehicle of reification -- reification in its most mature and effective form. The social position of the individual and his relation to others appear not only to be determined by objective qualities and laws, but these qualities and laws seem to lose their mysterious and uncontrollable character; they appear as calculable manifestations of (scientific) rationality (Marcuse, 1964:169).

One must overcome the present "reified" social structure.

"The world of immediate experience -- the world in which we find ourselves living, must be comprehended, transformed, even subverted in order to become that which it really is" (Marcuse, 1964:123).

Marcuse is careful to distinguish his conception of social theory, his methodological perspective from metaphysics.

It is opposed to all metaphysics by virtue of the rigorously historical character of the transcendence. The "possibilities" must be within the reach of the respective society. They must be definable goals of practice. By the same token, the abstraction from the established institutions must be expressive of an actual tendency -- that is, their transformation must be the real need of the underlying population. Social theory is concerned with the historical alternatives which haunt the established society as subversive tendencies and forces. The values attached to the alternatives do become facts when they are translated into reality by historical practice. The theoretical concept terminates with social change (1964:xi-xii).



Marcuse embarks upon the project of examining the "reified social structure" of contemporary industrial society. He looks at "established society" with a goal toward uncovering the "historical alternatives." His objectives are clearly stated: an examination of the established society; the uncovering of subversive tendencies; the establishment of theoretical alternatives grounded in historical possibilities; and finally, the realization of these theoretical alternatives through political practice. Negative thinking, the conceptualization of alternative realities is a prerequisite for the establishment of an alternative reality.

"All liberation" Marcuse tells us in One Dimensional Man, "depends on the consciousness of servitude" (1964:7). How does one develop a consciousness of servitude? For Marx this consciousness emerges from economic deprivation, from the objective material conditions of the proletariat. What happens when the vast majority of the proletariat does not live in economic deprivation? Is the proletariat then not enslaved? Clearly the answer to the question for both Marx\* and Marcuse is no. However, the relative prosperity of the workers of modern capitalism, while not an indicative of their freedom, is an indication of the success of capitalism. Capitalism has simultaneously limited economic deprivation for a majority of the working class in the industrialized west while further enslaving it.

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\* "An enforced raising of wages . . . would therefore be nothing but a better slave salary and would not achieve either for the worker or for labor human significance and dignity" (Easton, 1967: 298).



The system delivers the goods. It keeps the individual involved wanting and indeed needing the goods that it delivers. Reminiscent of Reich

Marcuse tells us:

The emergence of . . . [The consciousness of servitude] is always hampered by the predominance of needs and satisfactions which to a great extent, have become the individual's own (1964:7).

Man's needs Marcuse argues, are first conditioned by society and then satisfied by it. The reason for dissent and protest is removed as the individual becomes the passive instrument of a dominating system.

According to Marcuse, society is socializing the individual into false needs. "'False' [needs] are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery and injustice" (1964:5). Marcuse does not directly tell us what true needs are. He discusses the difficulty of realizing true needs in an environment of "effective and productive domination" (1964:6), and suggests somewhat apologetically, the possibility of resocialization by an intellectual elite. In One Dimensional Man, Marcuse does not make clear who this elite may be or why they would be more likely to have a consciousness of true needs. One would guess however that their greater consciousness comes from their ability to do critical theory. It is clear although not explicitly stated, that when Marcuse talks about true and false needs he means the false need for material goods as opposed to the true need for freedom. The technology of advanced industrial society is so rational and so successful in delivering the goods that one does not stop to question the necessity of those goods and the psychological sacrifices made to attain them.





The impact of progress turns reason into submission to the fact of life, and to the dynamic capability of producing more and bigger facts of the same sort of life. The efficiency of the system blunt the individual's recognition that it contains no facts which do not communicate the repressive power of the whole (Marcuse, 1964:11).

Conflict is further muted through the apparent obliteration of class differences. There is a universal identification with the norms, values and goals of the established order.

If the worker and his boss enjoy the same television program and visit the same resort places, if the typist is as attractively made up as the daughter of her employer, if the negro owns a cadillac, if they all read the same newspaper, then the assimilation indicates not the disappearance of classes, but the extent to which the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the establishment are shared by the underlying population (Marcuse, 1964:8).

With the continued decline in the influence of the family on the socialization process of the child, one dimensional thought is directly and systematically promoted: first through the educational process, the adolescent peer group, and the economically controlled mass media; later, through the requirements of job performance (whether it be the mechanized assembly line or white collar slavery (Marcuse, 1964:25), the bipartisan nature of politics, and the unification of interests of business vis a vis the public. The modern man has a "happy consciousness" and believes that "the real is rational and that the system delivers the goods" (Marcuse, 1964:84). This suppression of alternatives, this one dimensional consciousness is particularly evident in the public's passive acceptance of the Orwellian reality reflected in such contemporary uses of language as "the clean bomb," or "harmless fall out" (Marcuse, 1964:88-9). Thus modern society with its capacity to provide freedom



from material want (a precondition for freedom according to both Marx and Marcuse) has not, in fact, brought expanded freedom. On the contrary, prosperity has been instrumental in increasing servitude, obliterating the consciousness of oppression, and fostering identification with an exploitative social system. Man has no consciousness of his oppression. Although he is "satisfied to the point of happiness with the goods and services handed down to him by the administration" (Marcuse in Macintyre, 1970:73), he is not really happy because he is not really free. Modern man lives in a society that has increased the need for parasitical and alienated functions: for advertising, public relations, and planned obsolescence. Although the men of modern industrial society have an ever expanding leisure time, it is a leisure that is not theirs. It is programmed, packaged and sold; a leisure that is administered by business and politics. Marcuse clearly agrees with other Marxists that no significant distinction can be made between the public and private sphere. If man has no control of the basic conditions of his working life, he cannot be free in his leisure.

How and when, then, is man to become free? What are the forces and sources of social change? When Marcuse proposes the possibility of transcending materialism, does he mean being free from material necessity or does he mean a state of existence where reason creates reality and not reality reason? What are the prospects for liberation in a materially successful totalitarian state where the individual is programmed to give up freedom in exchange for security and affluence? How, when, where, through what means, what class, what political party can Marcuse's vision of the



possible be realized? What is Marcuse's vision of the possible? What are the historical alternatives and where are their roots in the actual historical conditions? Marcuse does not satisfactorily answer these questions. His answers, as well as his analyses of the possibility and source of their realization, have changed over time.

Marcuse suggests in Eros and Civilization that the technological development of society has now reached a point whereby the abolition of labor and with it the end of the performance principle and the liberation of sexuality is an imminent possibility. In One Dimensional Man Marcuse outlines the causes for the failure of this possibility to be realized. He is here very pessimistic about the potential for revolutionary change and suggests that there is only one chance, quickly indicating that it is, "nothing but a chance".

. . . the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and the unemployable. They exist outside the democratic process . . . (1964:256).

They might turn to revolutionary action. In Essays on Liberation published five years after One Dimensional Man Marcuse is still very tentative about the possibilities and vehicles for radical change but he is persistently analyzing and reanalyzing in an effort to answer these essential questions.

Where the traditional laboring classes cease to be the "gravediggers" of capitalism, the function remains, as it were, suspended, and the political efforts toward change remain "tentative," preparatory not only in a temporal but also in a structural sense. This means that the "addressees" as well as the immediate goals and occasions of action will be determined by the shifting situation rather than by a theoretically well-founded and elaborated strategy. This determinism, direct



consequence of the strength of the system and the diffusion of the opposition, also implies a shift of emphasis toward "subjective factors." The development of awareness and needs assumes primary importance (1969: 53).

Radical change in consciousness is the beginning, the first step in changing social existence: emergence of the new subject (1969:53).

Marcuse's analysis is becoming increasingly less structural. He is now more than ever discussing social change in terms of a qualitative change in the individual. He is now talking about a new sensibility, a new biological nature of man, a new consciousness.

But the construction of such a society presupposes a type of man with a different sensitivity as well as consciousness: men who would speak a different language, have different gestures, follow different impulses; men who have developed an instinctual barrier against cruelty, brutality, ugliness . . . . The imagination of such men and women would fashion their reason and tend to make the process of production a process of creation. This is the utopian concept of socialism which envisages the ingression of freedom into the realm of necessity, and the union between causality by necessity and causality by freedom. The first would mean passing from Marx to Fourier; the second from realism to surrealism" (Marcuse, 1969:21-2).

Marcuse's stress on subjective factors of consciousness, memory and creativity as the center of change is not entirely new. In an essay entitled "Philosophy and Critical Theory" originally published in Germany in 1937, Marcuse said: "In order to retain what is not yet present as a goal in the present, fantasy is required" (1969:154). In Eros and Civilization he had suggested that memory might function as a device for the realization of a non-repressive order. Finally, throughout his work his most consistent analysis of the social function of art, is that it is an



alternative form of reality which provides us with a revolutionary potential.\* Art maintains itself in separation, in opposition to the reality of one dimensional society. Marcuse stresses the importance of subjective factors in revolutionary change and continues to reiterate that, "revolution is not on the agenda" because "the subjective and objective factors do not coincide" (1969:56). That is, the industrial proletariat that could be the objective base of a revolution has no subjective revolutionary consciousness, while "the nonconformist young intelligentsia" has a revolutionary consciousness but no objective base upon which to make a revolution (Marcuse, 1969:56). The transition from the present non-revolutionary situation to a pre-revolutionary situation is only possible with a "weakening of the global economy of capitalism" and an "intensification and extension of political work" (Marcuse, 1969:57).

While Marcuse mentions both the ghetto population and the student movement as rebellious forces he is careful to point out that they are not in and of themselves revolutionary forces. However, in his discussion of the student movement he characteristically contradicts himself, or at a very minimum confuses the issue by claiming that revolutionary theory is itself transcendence and that perhaps the student can make the revolution.

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\* In "Affirmative Character of Cultures" Marcuse gives a different and contradictory analysis of the social function of art. He here views art as a repressive pacification of revolutionary desires (1969:88-134).



The groundwork for building the bridge between the "ought" and the "is," between theory and practice is laid within theory itself. Knowledge is transcendent (toward the object world, toward reality) not only in an epistemological sense -- as against repressive forms of life -- it is political. Denial of the right to political activity in the university perpetuates the separation between theoretical and practical reason and reduces the effectiveness and the scope of intelligence. The educational demands thus drive the movement beyond the universities, into the streets, the slums, the "community." And the driving force is the refusal to grow up, to mature, to perform efficiently and "normally" in and for society (Marcuse, 1969:61-2).

The elitist implications of One Dimensional Man are more expertly stated in his latter writings, where the majority are portrayed as so effectively controlled by the system that they cannot possibly understand the truth. What is really needed Marcuse maintains, is an intellectual elite to guide the cultural revolution toward the establishment of true needs.

In Counterrevolution and Revolt (1972) Marcuse is still clearly grappling with the problem of who will make the revolution. Although he hypothesizes several sources of social change, the emphasis is clearly on the individual.

No qualitative social change, no socialism is possible without the emergence of a new rationality and sensibility in the individuals themselves: no radical social change without a radical change of the individual agents of change (1972:48).

He clearly points out the necessity for a dialectic between individual and social change, a "dialectic of liberation" and states that when he stresses changes in the individual he does not mean to imply bourgeois individualism. However bourgeois or not he is clearly emphasizing individual change and its manifestations in personal relationships. "The images and values of a future free society must



appear in the personal relationships within the unfree society" (Marcuse, 1972:49). Marcuse calls for an "emancipation of the senses" (1972:68). He seems to be saying that the need for freedom is rooted in the nature of the man of the future, that is, it is in the nature of a man whose senses have been liberated. "The emancipation of the senses would make freedom what it is not yet: a sensuous need, an objective of the life instincts" (Marcuse, 1972:71). Telling us that "the individual emancipation of the senses is supposed to be the beginning, even the foundation, of universal liberation, the free society is to take root in new instinctual needs" (Marcuse, 1971:72). He asks

How is this possible? How can "humanity", human solidarity as "concrete universal" (and not as abstract value), as real force, as "praxis" originate in the individual sensibility; how can objective freedom originate in the most subjective facilities of man? (Marcuse, 1972:72).

Unfortunately Marcuse does not answer these questions. What he tells us is that for the abolition of capitalism we must not only change the economic sub-structure, we must also emancipate consciousness, that is, change the instinctual structure of man.

The individuals themselves must change in their very instincts and sensibilities if they are to build, in association, a qualitative different society (Marcuse, 1972:74).

How is this to occur? What is going to be the primary force for change in the dialectic between the individual and the social structure-- the economic substructure, or the ideological super-structure, changes in material conditions, in the means and relations of production or changes in critical theory and individual consciousness? Certainly



Marcuse is not as completely an idealist as his critics in the structural school of Marxism would have it. It is the productive capacity of advanced capitalism, changes in technological and automotive capacities that have laid the material foundations for further changes in the means and relations of production. Indeed, capitalism contains within it the seeds of its own negation. Marcuse however, in trying to determine why that negation has not been realized concentrates on the subjective, on: consciousness, senses, memory, imagination, instinct; on individual change. In the end he leaves us without satisfactory answers as to how either individual change or structural change will occur.

#### Theoretical Synthesis: Marx and Freud

Those of us who are familiar with the language of Freud and Marx have already seen the bases for a Freud-Marx synthesis in the discussion of Marcuse's anthropological assumptions. Marcuse underlines the economic dimension of sexual repression, scarcity. To build civilization man must work. There is therefore a necessary connection between civilization and sexual repression. Marcuse is here accepting Freud's thesis that all activity other than sexual is sublimation, and that it is necessary to curb sexuality to build society. He is, however, adding to this general proposition the historical-economic dimension of scarcity. Men must work because of the historical condition of scarcity. Further, when Marcuse talks of sexuality, he means it in the broadest possible sense. Unlike Freud, he does not see genital sexuality as the goal of maturity and normality.





Marcuse talks of "genital tyranny," that is, the tyranny that forces the concentration of sexuality in one part of the body, the genitals, in order to leave the rest of the body free for labor. According to Marcuse, then, civilization begins with work made possible by sexual repression and genital tyranny. Marcuse tells us that the work with which civilization originates is alienated labor or what he calls social domination. In Engels writings also, civilization begins with social domination or alienated labor. Primitive communism existed at the barbarian stage of development, and civilization begins with class domination.

In Marcuse's Marxist interpretation of Freud's primal family, the father enforces sexual repression, and thereby sets the stage of history for socially necessary productive labor. Because of the historical condition of scarcity, labor is necessarily alienating. Unfortunately, Marcuse's reinterpretation of Freud leaves the reader unclear as to whether the father enforced sexual repression in order to establish socially necessary productive labor or if productive labor was the unintended result of a sexually motivated action. Put more simply, was it the father's intention to extract labor from his sons or was it his intention to maintain his sexual monopoly over his wife and daughters? Even more important than the father's subjectively experienced intention is the fact that we are left unclear about whether the primary forces in the historical development of man were economic or sexual.

As we have seen, Marcuse's conception of man's nature is simultaneously similar to those of Freud and Marx. According to Marcuse, man has a biologically given nature of Eros and Thanatos



which immediately becomes modified upon exposure to society.

"The result of this modification is gratification which is inhibited, delayed, and vicarious but also secure, useful, and relatively lasting" (Marcuse, 1970:7). Marcuse also believes that cultural needs can "sink down" into the biology of man (1969:10). Although Marcuse sees cultural needs in primarily economic terms, he is not as careful as most Marxists would be to keep sub-structural forces separate from, and primary to, super-structural forces.

The two major concepts that Marcuse develops in Eros and Civilization both constitute an attempted Marx-Freud synthesis. This is, of course, evident from their names alone: Surplus Repression and The Performance Principle. Surplus Repression refers one immediately to Freud's conception of repression and Marx's surplus value. The Performance Principle makes one recall Freud's conception of the reality principle and Marx's conception of alienated labor. The motive behind their formulation was to bring out the inherently (according to Marcuse) historical dimension of Freudian categories. Surplus Repression denotes the relationship between sexual repression and economic and political domination. It denotes the different quantitative levels of repression necessitated by social domination. Surplus Repression is clearly a conceptualization that is similar to Reich's notion of the necessary connection between sexual repression and a cohesive social order. The most obvious difference is that Marcuse is allowing for the necessity of some degree of repression even in a society that is not organized around "social domination." The analogy to Marx's conception of surplus value is also clear. While



surplus value is the quantitative measure of the exploitation of labor, surplus repression is the quantitative measure of the distortion of instincts. Marcuse's thesis: A great deal of sexual repression is made necessary, not by civilization itself, but by the particular historical forms of civilization. In this way Marcuse leads us away from the necessary connection between civilization and repression. Freud's distinction between the pleasure principle and the reality principle corresponds, roughly to unrepressed and repressed behavior. Marcuse's conception of the Performance Principle corresponds to a condition of surplus repression. The Performance Principle is the particular historical reality that requires surplus repression. It requires surplus repression in order to achieve social domination.

In his effort to add a "biological" dimension to Marxist theory, Marcuse arrives at a Marx-Freud synthesis that in very many ways parallels the theories of Reich. Marcuse explains that in order to maintain the existing social structure, a careful effort must be made to continue to develop a particular "instinctual structure."

In the advanced capitalist countries, the radicalization of the working classes is counteracted by a socially engineered arrest of consciousness, and by the development and satisfaction of needs which perpetuate the servitude of the exploited. A vested interest in the existing system is thus fostered in the instinctual structure of the exploited, and the rupture with the continuum of repression -- a necessary pre-condition of liberation -- does not occur. It follows that the radical change which is to transform the existing society into a free society must reach into a dimension of the human existence hardly considered in Marxian theory -- the "biological" dimension in which the vital, imperative needs and satisfactions of man assert themselves. Inasmuch



as these needs and satisfactions reproduce a life of servitude, liberation presupposes changes in the biological dimension, that is to say, different instinctual needs, different reactions of the body as well as the mind (Marcuse, 1969:16-17).

Needs in an unfree society are,

Permeated with the exigencies of profit and exploitation. The entire realm of competitive performances and standardized fun, all the symbols of status, prestige, power, of advertized verility and charm, of commercialized beauty -- this entire realm kills in its citizens the very disposition, the organs for the alternative: freedom without exploitation" (Marcuse, 1969:17).

Thus we see that society, through its power to determine the nature of sublimation and repression creates in man a biological structure that is conducive to the maintenance of the oppressive social structure. Marcuse outlines the factors in the "dynamics of instincts" that are "decisive for the maintenance of the labor process." Through the repressive modification of sexuality, the individual is made ready to be used as "an instrument of unpleasurable but socially useful labor." Labor and not sexuality becomes the occupation of life. The original instincts are so distorted that the content of life is no longer gratification, but work. Thus, society develops through sublimation (Marcuse, 1970:21).

Unlike Reich, Marcuse does not see the family as a key factor in this process. Marcuse traces the "technological abolition of the individual" to "the decline in the social function of the family" (1955:87). Formerly the family socialized and educated the individual. Consequently, the development of ego and superego were very personal experiences developed through a struggle with individual mothers and fathers.



Now, however, under the rule of economic, political and cultural monopolies, the formation of the mature superego seems to skip the stage of individualization. The genetic atom becomes directly a social atom. The repressive organization of the instincts seems to be collective, and the ego seems to be prematurely socialized by a whole system of extra-family agents and agencies. As early as the preschool level, gangs, radio and television set the pattern for conformity and rebellion; deviation from the pattern is punished not so much within the family as outside and against the family. The experts of the mass media transmit the required values; they offer the perfect training in efficiency, toughness, personality, dream and romance. With this education the family can no longer compete" (Marcuse, 1955:88).

The psychological dimension of the alienation of labor, the "automatization" or "corporealization" of the ego and the super ego manifest themselves in the behavior of the individual, in the "frozen traits and gestures, produced at the appropriate occasions and hours" (Marcuse, 1955:94). According to Marcuse, consciousness now performs a new role: "Consciousness increasingly less burdened by autonomy, tends to be reduced to the task of regulating the coordination of the individual with the whole" (Marcuse, 1955:94). Thus, the history of the development of man, Marcuse tells us, has been marked by a decline in the function of the family and an accompanying decline in the social differentiation of the individual.

Marcuse indicates that existing historical conditions can give rise to an end of alienation and repression. Increases in the products of labor have opened up the possibility of a reversal in the socially compelled relationship between labor and pleasure. "The excuse of scarcity, which has justified institutionalized repression since its inception, weakens as man's knowledge and control over nature enhance the means for fulfilling human needs with a minimum of



toil" (Marcuse, 1955:84). The development of technology -- of automation, undermines the need for alienated labor, and thus the need for social repression. The performance principle has established the pre-condition for its own abolition, making way for a "non-repressive sublimation." That is, there is an economic foundation for the end of alienated labor and the beginning of a free reign of sexuality. What then would happen to labor? According to Marcuse, labor would now become gratifying. Labor becomes "non-repressive sublimation" when it too, is a form of erotic release. "If work were accompanied by a reactivation of pregenital polymorphous eroticism (i.e., if there were an end to genital tyranny) it would tend to become gratifying in itself without losing its work content" (Marcuse, 1955:215). Thus, we have seen that in Eros and Civilization Marcuse has: (1) Connected the repression of pregenital sexuality with the economic need for exploitation and alienation (genital tyranny makes the individual concentrate on genital pleasure so that the rest of the body is "free" for labor): (2) connected sexual repression to social domination and distinguished between legitimate and illegitimate repression; and (3) pointed to the historical possibility for "instinctual liberation", that is, an end of alienated labor and the beginning of erotic play.

We can in some ways view the later One Dimensional Man as an attempt to account for the failure of the analysis presented in Eros and Civilization. That is, why has there not been an end of the performance principle? Why, when there has been an apparent ease in sexual repression, has there not been an end of alienated labor and a repressive social order? Marcuse claims that the sexual



liberation of advanced industrial societies has not been instinctual liberation at all, but rather what he terms "repressive" or "institutionalized desublimation." Again, Marcuse produces a concept that borrows from the perspectives of both Marx and Freud. Sexual energy is now being used in a new way. While, because of technology, there is no longer as much need for sublimation, there is still, because of capitalism, a great need for social control. Thus, there has been a change in the social use of instinctual energy. It is no longer sexual repression per se, but rather "institutionalized desublimation, a vital factor in the making of the authoritarian personality of our time" (Marcuse, 1964:74). Society has allowed desublimation, but sexual expression is socially conditioned and controlled and essentially unsatisfying. "The organism is thus being preconditioned for spontaneous acceptance of what is offered" (Marcuse, 1964:78).

To some extent Marcuse is tying repressive desublimation to technological society and not to capitalism. He tells us there has been a "de-erotization of the environment."

For example, compare love-making in a meadow and in an automobile, on a lovers' walk outside the town walls and on a Manhattan street. In the former cases, the environment partakes of and invites libidinal cathexis and tends to be eroticized. Libido transcends beyond the immediate erotic-genic zones — a process of non-repressive sublimation. In contrast, a mechanized environment seems to block such self-transcendence of libido. Impelled in the striving to extend the field of erotic gratification, libido becomes less "polymorphous" less capable of eroticism beyond socialized sexuality, and the latter is intensified (1964:73).

However, Marcuse also connects repressive desublimation to the commodity relationship of advanced capitalism. "Sexual freedom"



becomes a commodity that is controlled by the market.

Sex is integrated into work and public relations and is thus made more susceptible to (controlled) satisfaction. Technical progress and more comfortable living permits the systematic inclusion of libidinal components into the realm of commodity production and exchange (Marcuse, 1964: 75).

Marcuse explains that while the range of what is socially permissible or even desirable in sexual activity has widened, satisfaction has decreased. "The pleasure principle is reduced -- deprived of the claims which are irreconcilable with the established society. Pleasure thus adjusted, generates submission" (Marcuse, 1964:75). Finally, Marcuse concludes this section by telling us that with old fashioned sublimation, the individual maintained an unconscious desire to satisfy repressed instincts, thus preserving the need for liberation and leaving open the possibility for individual-social change. With repressive desublimation, the individual no longer has an unhappy unconscious and thus a potentially unhappy consciousness, he has only a happy consciousness. Thus, the modern "sexual liberation" of advanced capitalism is viewed by Marcuse as more dangerous than the older forms of sexual repression.

If the reader is uneasy with the apparently unsystematic nature of this presentation of Marcuse's attempted Marx-Freud synthesis, the uneasiness is well founded. Although Eros and Civilization is clearly a Marxist interpretation of Freud, and although since Eros and Civilization Marcuse has freely used the language of both Marx and Freud, he has never frontally attacked the obvious problems presented by such a synthesis, as have both Reich and Fromm. He has never confronted and attempted to answer the





obvious contradiction between a Freudian and a Marxist perspective. He has never clearly and systematically separated himself from Freud, Marx or Reich. Hence, any effort to reproduce Marcuse's Marx-Freud synthesis is indeed a difficult one.

#### Departures from Freud

It is difficult to systematically separate Marcuse from Freud in spite of the fact that Marcuse himself makes some effort to do so.\* When Marcuse uses Freudian categories there is often a great distance between his conception of the "reality" they describe and Freud's. With Marcuse, even more than with Reich and Fromm it is most difficult to decide where interpretation ends and distortion begins. When reading Marcuse one is grateful for those occasions when he is careful to indicate his own interpretations, revisions, or outright transformations of Freud. Unfortunately, he is not always so careful. He freely uses Freudian categories while simultaneously making great revisions in Freudian theory. He indicates clearly that he is adding an historical dimension to Freud, but is considerably less clear as to how this dimension changes the functioning of the id, ego and superego. He indicates the changing function of the family and the decline in its importance in advanced industrial society, but he fails to indicate what a great revision

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\* Marcuse maintains a dialogue with Freud indicating the historical changes that have led to the "obsolescence" of certain Freudian concepts. See in particular Eros and Civilization, Five Lectures, p. 1-61, and One Dimensional Man, p. 56-84.



this is of Freudian theory. He completely fails to discuss the impact of removing Freud's central concept: the Oedipus Complex. He changes the meaning of sublimation and almost obliterates the meaning of repression. In Eros and Civilization he talks about "The images of Orpheus and Narcissus reconciling Eros and Thanatos" (1955:149). While Freud using the same Greek myth of Narcissus discussed (in "On Narcissism") not the reconciliation of Eros and Thanatos, but the possible reconciliation of the sexual instinct with the self-preservation instinct.\* The point to be made here is not that Freud and Marcuse had different interpretations, or that Freud was right and Marcuse wrong. As Robinson, Marcuse's most sympathetic critic, says in relationship to another but similar issue (Marcuse's misinterpretation of Freud's concept of guilt) the point to be made is that, "Marcuse did not explicitly acknowledge the manner in which his own analysis diverged from Freud's" (1969:216). His revisions all aimed at analyzing his way out of the necessary connection between civilization and discontent. Thus where Reich and Fromm seem particularly interested in saving us from the liberal assumption of the inherently negative nature of man, Marcuse seems more concerned with saving us from the liberal assumption of the inevitable compromise of life.

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\* It is Ernest Jones' contention that because of Freud's fascination by dualism, and because of his reconciliation of the former opposing instincts of sex and self-preservation, through his discovering that the latter could be sexualized, Freud sought another polar element to enable him to reassert his dualism. Thus, Freud established the unreconcilable conflict between Eros and Thanatos.



Marcuse is opposed to the other Freudian revisionists on the Left because they have abandoned the central, if unpleasant elements of Freudian theory. He accuses them of arriving at a liberal, watered-down and an essentially uncritical sociology. Robinson claims that Marcuse begins "by accepting Freud's most extreme, and apparently most pessimistic psychological assumptions: the unparalleled importance of sexuality, the primary significance of the unconscious and repression, and, finally, the hypothesis of a death instinct" (1969:201). Let us proceed by examining to what extent Marcuse has accepted these psychological assumptions and to what extent he has transformed them.

While it is true that Freud considered an instinct to be "a borderline concept between the mental and the physical" (1924: 64), he certainly would not have agreed that this instinct could be conditioned by social forces to the extent Marcuse does in positing a "biological need for freedom or peace" (Marcuse, 1969:10). In Freud's conception, the instincts of Eros and Thanatos gave rise to a quantitative amount of internal energy that, while modified by external social conditions, had a biological need for release. This is considerably different from Marcuse's conception of instincts and biological need. When Marcuse discusses instincts, he does not stress an internal, biologically given libidinal energy, but rather talks of the malleability of "human nature" and tells us that "changes in morality may 'sink down' into the biological," becoming a second nature. Hence he gives us a sociological definition of biological instinct (1969:10).



Freud, while indicating the social conditioning of instincts, clearly stressed the internal biological (in its usual scientific sense) dynamic. A basic Freudian assumption is that man, left unhampered by the restraints of society, would live for the pursuit of pleasure. Pleasure, for Freud, is the sudden satisfaction of instinctual needs, a complete release of sexual and aggressive energies, unhampered by society or by ego or superego. Pleasure is not a social or existential need, it is a physical need that is the result of the build up of libidinal energies that must be released. Once man is in society, this physical build up of energy is channeled into socially necessary activity — hence society affects, modifies and conditions man's original physical nature. Writing critical theory, doing art, or building bridges are not instinctual activities. The rewards they give are not equal to the rewards of instinctual fulfillment. Thus, for Freud it is not the fact that man is exploited and alienated which leads to the necessary connection between civilization and discontent, it is that living in society requires activities that are other than instinctual. Any civilization, according to Freud, no matter how advanced, automated, or communistic, requires the curtailment of instinctual activities for two basic reasons: (1) man's energies are libidinal — inborn, instinctual, sexual and aggressive — but most activities are not instinctual and hence involve a redirection of libidinal



energy, sublimation.\* (2) Man has within him an ambivalent nature, and that ambivalence is expressed in his relationship with society. That is, in Freud's estimation, civilization is at once the result of man's nature and requires a modification of it.

Civilization is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind. Why this has to happen, we do not know, the work of Eros is precisely this. These collections of man are to be libidinally bound to one another. Necessity alone, the advantage of work in common, will not hold them together. But man's natural aggressive instinct, the hostility of each against all and all against each, opposes this programme of civilization. This aggressive instinct is the derivative and the main representative of the death instinct which we have found alongside of Eros and which shares world-dominion with it. And now, I think, the meaning of the evolution of civilization is no longer obscure to us. It must present the struggle between Eros and Death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction, as it works itself out in the human species (Freud, 1961:69).

In Marcuse's own estimation, Freud did not view these basic conflicts as historically conditioned. Yet Marcuse depicts these conflicts as "confined to a specific period and social structure" rather than viewing them as universal, eternal or fatal.

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\* I emphasize most activities are not instinctual because after 1914 Freud rejected his earlier contention that man's basic instinctual ambivalence was between the sexual instinct and the self-preservation instinct. He now contended that man's self-preservation instinct was itself libidinal and that the basic ambivalence in man's nature was the sexual and life instinct (Eros) on one side and aggression and death (Thanatos) on the other. Thus according to the early Freud (before 1914) self-preservation activities were instinctual.



Freud tells us that the basic instinctual drives of human nature are controlled and repressed in the interests of the authority of the father, both in the history of mankind and in the history of the individual. Phylogenetically, in the primal horde, the father monopolized the sexual rights of the woman and enforced sexual renunciation on the sons. After killing the father to regain their sexual rights, a combination of remorse (because of their love for the father) and self-interest (because of their realization of the inevitable generational repetition of the act) induce the sons to institute a social regulation for sexual activity -- the incest taboo. Thus, organized society begins with sexual repression. Ontogenetically instinctual repression begins early in childhood. Full maturity is not reached until the child overcomes the desire for the parent of the opposite sex, and this is not achieved until the authority of the father is internalized through the development of the superego. Thus, for Freud, both the foundation of civilization and the development of the mature and un-neurotic individual is dependent upon the successful resolution of the Oedipus complex. The ego and the superego are developed in the individual through parental supervision, guiding the child from the pleasure principle to the reality principle. The ego, or self, seeks to mediate between the social demands of the external institutional environment and the instinctual demands of the internal biological id. The superego or our internalized parental control is the part of self that assumes the same attitude toward the self that parents previously assumed toward the child. Hence, it is our social (parental) conscience and, its weapon is guilt.



Marcuse claims that "Freud's theory comprehended the past rather than the present, a vanishing rather than a prevalent image of man, a disappearing form of human existence" (1970:45). He tells us that the "free space" of the individual's psychic processes has today been greatly narrowed down. There has developed a "reification and automatization of the ego," which is the "psychic correlate of the social overpowering of the opposition" (1970:15-18). This automatized ego seems to be the direct result of the decline in the function of the family.

The second change is the strengthening of extra-familial authority. The social development that has dethroned the individual as an economic subject has also reduced, to an extreme degree, the individualistic function of the family in favor of more effective powers. The younger generation is taught the reality principle less through the family than outside the family; it learns socially useful reactions and ways of behaving outside of the protected private sphere of the family. The modern father is not a very effective representative of the reality principle, and the loosening of sexual morality makes it easier to overcome the Oedipus complex: the struggle against the father loses much of its decisive psychological significance. But the effect of this is to strengthen rather than to weaken the omnipotence of domination. Precisely insofar as the family was something private it stood against public power or at least was different from it; the more the family is now controlled by public power, that is, the more the models and examples are taken from outside it, the more unified and uninterrupted becomes the "socialization" of the young generation in the interest of public power, as a part of public power. Here too the psychic space in which independence and difference could emerge is limited and occupied (1970: 14-15).

Thus, according to Marcuse, Freud's universal and biological situation of the ego and superego developing at the expense of the id and in a struggle with the father, and ultimately in struggle with each other, is an historical situation which has already come to an end.



Rejecting completely Freud and Reich's thesis of the family as society's primary agent of socialization, that is enforcing necessary repression and sublimation, Marcuse upholds the family as it existed in earlier stages of history as a source of "individualism" and a place where "the private stood against public power."

Now, however, under the rule of economic, political, and cultural monopolies, the formation of the mature superego seems to skip the stage of individualization: the generic atom becomes directly a social atom. The repressive organization of the instincts seems to be collective, and the ego seems to be prematurely socialized by a whole system of extra-familial agents and agencies. As early as the preschool level, gangs, radio, and television set the pattern for conformity and rebellion; deviations from the pattern and punished not so much within the family as outside and against the family. The experts of the mass media transmit the required values; they offer the perfect training in efficiency, toughness, personality, dream, and romance. With this education, the family can no longer compete. In the struggle between the generations, the sides seem to have shifted; the son knows better; he represents the mature reality principle against its obsolescent paternal forms. The father, the first object of aggression in the Oedipus situation, later appears as a rather inappropriate target of aggression. His authority as transmitter of wealth, skills, experiences is greatly reduced; he has less to offer, and therefore less to prohibit. The progressive father is a most unsuitable enemy and a most unsuitable "ideal" — but so is any father who no longer shapes the child's economic, emotional, and intellectual future (1955:88).

Marcuse is talking not only about the "automatism of the ego" (1970: 13) but also of the "automatism of the superego" (1955:85). The result is that the individual is "mentally and instinctually predisposed" to accept the prevailing political and social necessities (1970:51).

When Marcuse tells us that we are becoming "instinctually predisposed" to accept political and social necessity, he is clearly not talking of the instinct of the id, he is talking about





the socially created "instincts" of the ego and superego. He tells us in Eros and Civilization that the "ego has shrunk to such a degree that the multiform antagonistic process between id, ego and superego cannot unfold themselves in their classic form" (1955:90). I would go several steps further and say that in Marcuse's analysis there really is no distinction between id, ego and superego. Instincts are socially created, the ego and superego have been automatized, there is no struggle with the father, no Oedipus complex, no struggle between the parts of self. Indeed there are no parts of self. Man has no individual self, he is directly formed by society. The ego has shrunk. What has become of the superego? For Freud it contained man's repressed instincts and emerged from the struggle with father. Now that instincts are socially formed and there is no longer a struggle with father, how is the superego formed? What is the distinction between id, ego and superego? There is, of course, nothing wrong with doing away with the concepts of id, ego and superego. The problem remains that Marcuse does not do away with them. He uses them continually.

Marcuse is brilliantly sloppy. He plays with words. Sometimes it is with an ironic sense of humor as in his "power of negative thinking" or in the game he plays with the word materialism, talking about transcending materialism and using the word simultaneously in its philosophical-epistemological sense and in the more common sense of material needs. Sometimes he is deliberately misleading and tells us he is going to be so. As when he redefines the word instinct (in a footnote) in an essay on Freud and proceeds to use the word both



in its Freudian sense of Eros and Thanatos and in its Marcusean sense of socially created needs (Marcuse, 1969:10). He thus creates by expanded definition, a unity between himself and Freud. Or when in a book that is supposed to be a "philosophical inquiry into Freud" he tells us lightly and briefly (in the introduction) that he is redefining the word repression:

"Repression" and "repressive" are used in the non-technical sense to designate both conscious and unconscious, external and internal processes of restraint, constraint, and suppression (1955:7).

With this new definition, repression as a concept can overlap with exploitation, alienation and repression in Freud's sense. Repression in the Freudian sense of the word consists essentially of preventing ideational representations of instinct from becoming conscious. Put differently, it is the activity which bars from consciousness unwarranted id impulses. If one does away with this "technical" definition of repression, what then happens to the unconscious?

Sometimes Marcuse deliberately misleads us, but fails to inform us that he is doing so, as in his discussion of sublimation, desublimation and repressive desublimation. For Freud sublimation is a "displacement of the libido," a shifting of "the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world" (1961:26). For Freud, the desublimation would be a directing of libidinal energies back to instinctual aims. We could not talk about "desublimated language" or art (as Marcuse does) unless we were using Marcuse's and not Freud's definition of instinct. When Marcuse talks about institutionalized or repressive



desublimation, he is talking about the organism "being preconditioned for the spontaneous acceptance of what is offered" (1964:74). Marcuse is using his definition of instincts and his definition of repression and thus his conception of sublimation does not even resemble that of Freud.

There is a very ambiguous relationship in Freudian theory between freedom and happiness. Happiness or pleasure is the unrestrained fulfillment of instinct. Thus, in some sense the pleasure principle represents freedom because it is free from social restraints. But in another sense, man is not free because he is tied to instinctual, biological necessity. Perhaps man is not yet human, for where the pleasure principle rules, the ego has not yet been developed. That is, man has no self-conscious self. One could say that, for Freud, liberation is liberation from the hold of the instinctual desires of infancy and fixations resulting from the unsuccessful encounters of those desires with the external world. This form of liberation depends on the development of the ego, that is, on the acceptance of the reality principle and the end of the sovereignty of the id; "where id was, ego shall be" is perhaps Freud's most frequently quoted statement.

For Marcuse there is a necessary connection between freedom and happiness. Man must be free to do what he wants, and what he wants to do is to express his sexuality. Marcuse's conception of both sexuality and happiness is considerably different from Freud's. When Marcuse discusses the "progress from the human animal to the human being" he also discusses "the progression from the necessity of mere instinctual gratification, which is not really enjoyment, to



the reflective behavior and mediated enjoyment characteristic of and particular to man" (1970:35; 1955:35). When Marcuse discusses sexual liberation, he discusses liberation from "genital tyranny." That is, man should be set free to engage in what Freud would consider the infinite sexuality of the neurotic. According to Marcuse, when man is free from alienated labor, he will be free to express his sexuality; he will be happy. He talks about the artist through art, and the intellectual through critical theory, beginning a "systematic desublimation of culture." For Freud artistic and intellectual activities are forms of sublimation and a desublimated culture is of course a contradiction.

It is clear that Marcuse's conception of the relationship between the nature of man and the nature of society is also quite different from Freud's. According to Marcuse, work in the new society will be erotic play and morality will no longer require repression of sexuality, but rather will be an expression of sexuality.

Prior to all ethical behavior in accordance with specific social standards, prior to all ideological expression, morality is a "disposition" of the organism, perhaps rooted in the erotic drive to counter aggressiveness, to create and preserve "ever greater unities" of life. We would then have, this side of all "values," an instinctual foundation for solidarity among human beings -- a solidarity which has been effectively repressed in line with the requirements of class society but which now appear as a precondition for liberation (Marcuse, 1971:10).

In Freud's conception, culture and morality are built through sublimation; that is why a desublimated culture is a contradiction. Further, Freud was greatly pessimistic about the possibility of maintaining communal ties. He ridiculed universal brotherhood and



pointed out the irrationality of loving thy neighbor. Freud analyzed the individual's communal feelings as either aim inhibited love (i.e., repressed sexuality) or a throwback to infantile helplessness (1961: 49-50; 12-15). According to Freud, civilization is built on the repression of both sexuality and aggression. Sexuality must be repressed or sublimated so that one can proceed to build civilization:

The tendency on the part of civilization to restrict sexual life is no less clear than its other tendency to expand the cultural unit. Its first, totemic, phase already brings with it the prohibition against an incestuous choice of object, and this is perhaps the most drastic mutilation which man's erotic life has in all time experienced. Taboos, laws and customs impose further restrictions, which affect both men and women (Freud, 1961:51).

Discussing man's instinct for aggression or death Freud tells us:

Men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him (1961:58).

In consequence of this primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration. The interest of work in common would not hold it together; instinctual passions are stronger than reasonable interests. Civilization has to use its utmost efforts in order to set limits to man's aggressive instincts and to hold the manifestations of them in check by psychic reaction-formations. Hence, therefore, the use of methods intended to incite people into identifications and aim-inhibited relationships of love, hence the restriction upon sexual life, and hence too the ideal's commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself -- a commandment which is really justified by the fact that nothing else runs so strongly counter to the original nature of man (1961:59).



According to Marcuse, the death "instinct" could be greatly modified with the liberation of Eros.

The perpetual restrictions on Eros ultimately weaken the life instincts and thus strengthen and release the very forces against which they were "called up" -- those of destruction (1955:40).

Marcuse implies that with an elimination of a repressive society we could greatly reduce or even perhaps eliminate the death instinct.

The death instinct is destructiveness not for its own sake, but for the relief of tension. The descent toward death is an unconscious flight from pain and want. It is an expression of the eternal struggle against suffering and repression. And the death instinct itself seems to be affected by the historical changes which affect this struggle (1955:27).

Thus it seems that if we could eliminate the need for a "relief of tension," that is, if there were no longer any need to flee from pain (because reality was no longer painful) the death instinct could be all but eliminated. One may have to adjust to reality, but that reality need not necessarily be in conflict with pleasure or happiness, that is, the reality principle has been, but may not always be, the performance principle. Elimination of the performance principle would, it seems, eliminate the death instinct.

When Marcuse says that reality does not necessarily have to be in conflict with pleasure, he does not mean pleasure in the Freudian sense (i.e., the sudden satisfaction of instincts). For Marcuse, pleasure or happiness is connected to freedom, freedom from exploitation and alienation. The freedom of men to realize their true needs. When Marcuse discusses needs or instincts what he means, as we have seen, is socially created needs. Reality can give man pleasure because it can lead to the fulfillment of man's true needs.



But man's needs, according to Marcuse's own analysis, are socially created. We are again running around in a circle. What happens when society fulfills the needs it has created? Is man then free and happy? Not necessarily, for it could be a case of "repressive-desublimation."

We have here a highly advanced stage of civilization where society subordinates the individuals to its requirements by extending liberty and equality -- or, where the reality principle operates through enlarged but controlled desublimation. In this new historical form of the reality principle, progress may operate as a vehicle of repression. The better and bigger satisfaction is very real, and yet, in Freudian terms, it is repressive inasmuch as it diminishes in the individual psyche the sources of the pleasure principle and of freedom: the instinctual -- and intellectual -- resistance against the reality principle (Marcuse, 1970:57-8).

We are back again to Marcuse's thesis that man in advanced industrial society may be happy but he is not free, and if he is not free he cannot really be happy. While it is true that human needs are socially created and that society has been very successful in creating needs, it is also true that society has created in man the wrong needs. "We have created a deep rooted 'organic' acceptance of people to a terrible but profitably functioning society" (Marcuse, 1969:17). This successful socialization of the wrong needs is repressive. To undo the repression or rather to redo it, we must repress man's present needs in order to develop his true needs.

Massive socialization begins at home and arrests the development of consciousness and conscience. The attainment of autonomy demands conditions in which the repressed dimensions of experience can come to life again; their liberation demands repression of the heteronomous needs and satisfactions which organize life in this society. The more they have become the individual's own needs and satisfactions, the more would their repression appear to be in all



but fatal deprivation. But precisely by virtue of this fatal character, it may create the primary subjective prerequisite for qualitative change — namely, the redefinition of needs (Marcuse, 1964:245).

The question of who is to repress false needs and liberate true needs is raised by Marcuse, but no final answer is given. The question of what man's true needs are is also raised. Marcuse seems to be saying that the most basic need is for freedom. He proposes an "aesthetic morality" and insists on "freedom as a biological necessity." He says that human freedom is "rooted in human sensibility" and that the emancipation of our senses will make freedom a human need. This apparent contradiction is another example of Marcuse's brilliant dialectical reasoning.

Human freedom is thus rooted in the human sensibility: the senses do not only "receive" what is given to them, in the form in which it appears, they do not "delegate" the transformation of the given to another faculty (the understanding); rather, they discover or can discover by themselves, in their "practice," new (more gratifying) possibilities and capabilities, forms and qualities of things, and can urge and guide their realization. The emancipation of the senses would make freedom what it is not yet: a sensuous need, an objective of the Life Instincts (Eros) (1972:71).

Marcuse's vision is for a society that does away with a great deal more than social class. His vision is an organized social structure that gives birth to individuals who are creative, independent and free; a socialization process that does not require repression or conformity; a civilization without discontent. Is that a possibility or an irreconcilable contradiction? Freud and Marcuse disagree.





### Departures from Marx

Marcuse's conception of the nature of man is based on accepting and redefining both Marxist and Freudian categories. As we have seen, while Marcuse talks about Eros and Thanatos, his conceptualizations are considerably different from Freud's. The same is true of his discussion of true and false needs, this time in relationship to Marx. Marx tells us in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts that in the capitalist system:

Every man speculates upon creating a new need in another in order . . . to place him in a new dependence, and to entice him into a new kind of pleasure and thereby into economic ruin (Easton, 1967:189).

According to Marx, once man is alienated, out of control of his environment through his labor, he is also out of control of himself. Those who control production also control reason. That is, those who are in control of production also control ideology and thereby control the consciousness of men. Once man is alienated, both his mind and his body are easily exploited. Man develops false consciousness. Marx discussed false needs throughout his work. For example in Capital, Volume I, in a section entitled "The Fetishism of Commodities" Marx discussed alienation and reification and its effect on the identity of individual men. Men have become commodities to themselves and others, "their own social action takes the form of the actions of objects, which rule the producer instead of being ruled by them." While implicitly or explicitly maintaining a conception of false needs throughout his work, Marx rarely discussed true needs. According to Marx, man's true needs, man's real nature, man's species being will emerge when there is a classless society --



when men determine their own environment unhindered by class oppression. Marx was careful, however, to distinguish himself from the crude materialism of Feuerbach. It is not that a changed environment will bring about a changed nature of man. Man and his environment, Marx tells us in his third "Theses on Feuerbach," are dialectically related.

The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances, and that the educator himself needs educating. Hence this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one is superior to society (In Robert Owen, for example).

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice (Feuer, 1959:244).

Marcuse's emphasis is entirely different. He is constantly trying to distinguish true from false needs and to determine who has the right to institute true needs. Marx, not even the early Marx of Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, would ever pose the question in such moral terms. It is not a question of who has the right but rather which group of people are in a structural position to engage in "revolutionizing practice" and thus to change themselves and their society simultaneously. For Marx the question of the general character of the social order and that of the fate of the individual were inseparable. He remained throughout a materialist, albeit, a dialectical materialist; and, as such he clearly placed explanatory primacy on the social order. For Freud social phenomena were to be explained according to the characteristics of human



nature, and Marcuse is right in the center of Marx and Freud. That is why he views social change as a circular problem. The social structure cannot be changed until man has a different nature, but man cannot have a different nature until there is a change in the circumstances within which his nature is created, that is, until there is a change in the social structure. In Marcuse's own words:

For new, revolutionary needs to develop, the mechanisms that reproduce the old needs must be abolished. In order for the mechanisms to be abolished there must first be a need to abolish them. That is the circle in which we are placed, and I do not know how to get out of it (1970:80).

For Marx it was men who make the revolution, men who find themselves in a particular structural position. It was their structural position that enables them to attain class consciousness, to organize and fight. For Marcuse, who hesitantly points to the intellectuals to guide the revolution, it is not their structural position but their individual superior capacity to reason, to do critical theory, that gives them the ability to guide the revolution. Further, he often suggests that we need a revolution in needs first. It is totally alien to a Marxist perspective to consider a change in the nature of man as possible prior to a change in the nature of society.

Psychoanalysis cannot offer political alternatives, but it can contribute to the restoration of private autonomy and rationality. The politics of mass society begin at home, with the shrinking of the ego and its subjection to the collective ideal. Counteracting this trend may also begin at home: psychoanalysis may help the patient to live with a conscience of his own and with his own ego ideal, which may well mean — to live in refusal and opposition of the Establishment (Marcuse, 1970:60).



Thus, according to Marcuse, the guardians of truth could be the psychoanalysts, who could help man overcome "mass" society through a revolution that begins at home. The emergence of a new social structure, Marcuse tells us, "presupposes a new consciousness" (1972: 45). The question remains how does one develop a new consciousness? For an answer Marcuse continually jumps from the intellectual to the psychoanalyst, from the student movement, to the black urban ghetto.

What is important for our purposes is that neither Marx nor a vast majority of Marxists, past or present, would put causal priority on consciousness. Man's consciousness does not come from a cosmic force, from pure reason. Man's consciousness is essentially related to man's material environment. An essential part of man's material environment is other men, thus consciousness is a class phenomena. Those who are in a similar objective situation will eventually develop an awareness or consciousness of their situation. They will become not merely a class-in-itself but a class-for-itself. I think it is only fair to mention that Marcuse's bias in favor of subjective factors is clearly a reaction against the lack of psychological sophistication, as well as the ideological rigidity, of many rhetorical Marxists. Marcuse's effort to place man at the center of Marx, to present both sides of a dialectical process, to open up and explore the psychological portion of the dialectic, is perhaps a necessary rounding out of Marx. Further, Marcuse does discuss the "dialectics of civilization." That is, the dialectic between the individual and the social, making clear that he is aware, "of the brute fact that, in an unfree society, no particular individual and no particular group can be free." Such an awareness,



"must be present in every effort to create conditions of effective refusal to the establishment" (Marcuse, 1972:49). It is just such an awareness, however, that he seems often to lose.

It could be said that a search for the biological foundations of socialism is an un-Marxist pursuit.\* I do not agree. I do believe, however, that one is guilty of destroying both Freud and Marx as well as contaminating language when one talks, as Marcuse does, of a "vital biological need for peace." Of course if one keeps in mind that what Marcuse really means by biological need is a socially created need, it is then possible to remain at least generally within the framework of both Marx and Freud.\*\* Marcuse unfortunately carries his "biological foundation" to the point of being a-historical. It is a completely a-historical and un-Marxist conception of reality to talk about a "primary distinction between beautiful and ugly, good and bad -- prior to all rationalization and ideology," or to discuss a morality based on instinct (Marcuse, 1969:32). Marcuse begins to emerge as a naturalist. Whatever comes from nature, whatever is natural is good. Therefore, society should be organized around what is natural. Distinguishing himself from Marx on this point Marcuse tells us:

The relation between nature and freedom is rarely made explicit in social theory. In Marxism, too, nature is predominantly an object, the adversary in man's "struggle with nature," the field for the ever more rational

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\* See *An Essay on Liberation* by Herbert Marcuse, particularly an essay entitled, "A Biological Foundation for Socialism?" (1969: 7-22).

\*\* Freud's aim-inhibited love might be called a socially induced need for peace.



development of the productive forces. But in this form, nature appears as that which capitalism has made of nature: matter, raw material for the expanding and exploiting administration of men and things. Does this image of nature conform to that of a free society? Is nature only a productive force -- or does it also exist "for its own sake" and in this mode of existence, for man?

In the treatment of human nature, Marxism shows a similar tendency to minimize the role of the natural basis in social change -- a tendency which contrasts sharply with the earlier writings of Marx. To be sure, "human nature" would be different under socialism to the degree to which men and women would, for the first time in history, develop and fulfill their own needs and faculties in association with each other. But this change is to come about almost as a by-product of the new socialist institutions. Marxist emphasis on the development of political consciousness shows little concern with the roots of liberation in individuals, i.e., with the roots of social relationships where individuals most directly and profoundly experience their world and themselves: in their sensibility, in their instinctual needs (1972:61-2).

According to Marx man's freedom is based on transcending nature both in himself and in his environment. According to Marcuse, man's freedom (essentially tied to man's sexuality) is based on a return to nature both in himself and in his environment. It is clear that Marcuse is looking back longingly when he asks: "Compare love-making in a meadow and in an automobile, on a lovers' walk outside the town walls and on a Manhattan street . . ." (1964:73).

Marcuse's discussion of the nature of man further departs from Marx in his belief in the final abolition of labor and the resulting unification of the so-called sexuality and work instincts. Marx does not discuss the abolition of labor, he discusses the abolition of alienated labor. The technological advancement made possible by capitalism is for Marx a prerequisite for the abolition



of alienated labor. Although it is clear that for Marx labor in a communist society would be totally, perhaps unrecognizably different from labor in a capitalist society, it is equally clear that he did not, at any time, foresee the abolition of labor. It is man's capacity for labor, for free creative, purposeful labor, that distinguishes man from other animals; that enables man to create and re-create himself and his environment. Animals are tied to instinctual necessity. Only man, with his consciousness, can create and re-create the "whole of nature."

To be sure animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwelling places, like the bees, beavers, ants, etc. But the animal produces only what is immediately necessary for itself or its young. It produces in a one-sided way while man produces universally. The animal produces under the domination of immediate physical need while man produces free of physical need and only genuinely so in freedom from such need. The animal only produces itself while man reproduces the whole of nature (Guddat, 1967:294-5).

A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees in this, that the architect raises his structure in his imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labor process we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement (Marx, 1967:241).

Marx stressed man's liberation from instinctual necessity and his resulting capacity, manifested through labor, to change nature and thus to change his own human nature. Marcuse stresses man's liberation from labor and his resulting capacity to return to his true, instinctual self, Eros. In all fairness to Marcuse it must be pointed out that when he calls for the abolition of labor and the establishment of erotic play what he really means is



the abolition of bourgeois conception of labor and not labor per se (1970:78). Perhaps Marcuse's failure to distinguish between labor and alienated labor is tactical, in that he may feel that the bourgeois conception of labor is so thoroughly ingrained in us that one must talk about an entirely new phenomenon. Nonetheless the less it is clear that for Marcuse the most essential part of man is his sexuality. "Work that has contributed so essentially to the development of man from animals is originally libidinous" (Marcuse, 1970: 20). The "repressive modification of sexuality makes the organism free to be used as an instrument of unpleasurable but socially useful labor" (Marcuse, 1970:21). Thus Marcuse links sexual repression and alienated labor giving causal primacy to sexual repression. When Marx discussed man's alienation from himself, he was talking about man's alienation from his capacity for free creative, purposeful labor. Labor, how men subsist, and the way they relate to each other in production, had causal primacy. When Marcuse discusses man's alienation from himself he is talking about man's alienation from his sexuality. Sexuality, the degree and nature of sexual repression, has causal primacy. Marcuse accepts Fourier's notion of a transformation of work into pleasure and develops his own conception of "nonrepressive sublimation." In a supreme effort to unite a modernized, Americanized, conception of Freud and Marx, to tie together nonrepressive sexuality and nonalienated labor, Marcuse claims that "Freud's last theoretical conception recognizes the erotic instinct as work instincts — work for the creation of a sensuous environment" (1969:91). Whether or not it was Freud's





last conception, it is clearly Marcuse's conception.

Marcuse's transformation of work into playful erotic activity is a good deal more utopian than the future envisioned by either Marx or Freud. For Marx the goal was freedom, to be achieved through the free expression of labor; an impossibility in a class-based society. For Freud the goal was happiness, to be achieved through the free expression of sexuality; an impossibility in a civilized society. For Marcuse the goal is freedom and happiness to be achieved with the liberation of sexuality and the transformation of work into erotic play.

In Marcuse's theoretical system, happiness, sex, work as erotic play, creativity, imagination, and art all seem to merge. It is difficult to distinguish the meanings of "artistic sensibility," "aesthetic morality," or "desublimated language." What is clear is that they all mean "the good life." What is equally clear is that both in his sloppy use of language, and in his symbolization of and projections for "the good life," Marcuse is a considerable distance from Marx. Marx took great pains to clarify his concepts so that he could expose ideology. Further Marx's discussion of "the good life" was a discussion of socialism and communism as economic systems. For the most part he steered clear of discussing the morality, the art or the language that those economic systems would give birth to.

Finally, in our discussion of the differences between Marx and Marcuse's conception of the nature of man, let us briefly examine Marcuse's qualified acceptance of the death instinct.



I am in complete agreement with Robinson that "Marcuse felt the need for some conceptual means with which to come to terms with 20th century violence, and Freud's death instinct fulfilled that need ideally" (1969:212). However, what is most interesting about his acceptance of the death instinct as an explanatory concept is, that it forced the arrow of causality in a direction leading from the individual to the society. Further, no matter how much Marcuse qualified his acceptance of a death instinct, and no matter how much he changed the definition of instinct, he was still accepting a primary ambivalence in man's nature, an ambivalence between Eros and Thanatos, sex and aggression, life and death.

Assuming that the Destruction Instinct (in the last analysis: the Death Instinct) is a large component of the energy which feeds the technical conquest of man and nature, it seems that society's growing capacity to manipulate technical progress also increases its capacity to manipulate and control this instinct, i.e., to satisfy it "productively" (Marcuse, 1964:79).

Thus, according to Marcuse, basic to man's nature is the destruction or death instinct, which separates man from man but which provides the energy for technological development. We have now, however, reached a point in our technological development where society is capable of manipulating and controlling this destructive instinct, "to satisfy it 'productively'." Leaving aside Marcuse's failure to explain how this destructive instinct can at first be technologically productive and not productively satisfied, let us proceed to compare Marcuse's conception of the basic nature of man and the relationship between man and society, to Marx's conception. According to Marx, basic to man's nature is his capacity for free, creative, purposeful



labor. In order to fully realize this man must work with other men to control his environment. Man's identity is essentially related to this activity. Thus, species being implies an essential unity between man and man, i.e., an essential community between men. Let us return briefly to Marcuse. According to Marcuse, progress is based at least in part, on man's destructive instinct, i.e., on the separation of man from man. Marcuse has thus departed from Marx: (1) in his acceptance of death or destructive instinct which separates man as basic to the nature of man; (2) in his placement of causal primacy on the individual rather than on the social structure.

Marcuse's emphasis on the subjective over the objective, on the personal over the economic, has had tremendous implications for his conception of praxis and his estimation of the role of critical theory. Clearly his conception of praxis cannot be separated from what his Marxist critics would call his idealist epistemology. Again and again he begins on the level of the individual. Calling at various times, for a "liberation of the senses" (1972:72), "a radical sensibility" (1972:63-4), "a rebellion of biology" (1969:5), "an aesthetic morality" (1969:28), "the liberation of fantasy and memory" (1969:154-5), and finally, a "utopian realist revolution" (1970:63-4; 1969:22) Marcuse tells us that we must pass "from Marx to Fourier" and "from realism to surrealism" (1969:22). He further states that:

The individual emancipation of the senses is supposed to be the beginning, even the foundation, of universal liberation, the free society is to take roots in new instinctual needs (1972:72).



Marcuse talks about art as a form of transcendence and sees it as a catalyst for revolution.

In contrast to the Marxian concept, which denotes man's relation to himself and to his work in capitalist society, the artistic alienation is the conscious transcendence of the alienated existence -- a "higher level" or mediated alienation (1964:60)

and

The traditional images of artistic alienation are indeed romantic in as much as they are in aesthetic incompatibility with the developing society. This incompatibility is the token of their truth. What they recall and preserve in memory pertains to the future: images of a gratification that would dissolve the society which suppresses it. The great surrealist art and literature of the "Twenties and Thirties" has still recaptured them in their subversive and liberating function (1964:60).

Marcuse's conception of art is essentially Hegelian. It was Hegel's view that art belonged to a period in which the difference between the ideal and the actual was such that art, committed to the manifestation of the ideal, was essentially non-naturalistic. Hegel seemed to claim that the realization of the ideal would, in fact, leave art formless. Marcuse's conception of "artistic alienation" as "the conscious transcendence of the alienated existence" is not far from Hegel.

Marcuse sees other possible catalysts for revolution in the radical denial of the establishment existing within the hippie and black subcultures. Particularly noted is their desublimation of language. Marcuse tells us that "Those political manifestations of a new sensibility indicate the depth of the rebellion, of the rupture with the continuum of repression" (1969:36); and that "surrealistic forms of protest and refusal (can) spread throughout



the movement, (and) this apparently insignificant development may indicate a fundamental change in the situation" (1969:30). Marcuse looks toward the student movement, telling us that unfortunately they are "still reluctant (if not simply refusing) to 'admit' that on the campus, it has its own base in the infrastructure itself" (1972: 55). Many Marxists would disagree with Marcuse. Marxists tend to view students and hippies as nonrevolutionary and petty-bourgeois and many members of the black ghetto as lumpen-proletariat or as upwardly mobile petty bourgeoisie; these more traditional Marxists see the source of revolutionary change in either the activities of the proletariat and/or an awakening "new middle class" who, they say, are in a structural position comparable to that of the old proletariat. Marcuse nonetheless, acclaims himself a Marxist who is merely "widening the materialistic base" (1972:59-78).

Marcuse holds critical theory in very high esteem. He often seems to imply that the mere conceptualization of a particular historical possibility is more than half the battle.

The groundwork for building the bridge between the "ought" and the "is," between theory and practice, is laid within theory itself. Knowledge is transcendent (toward the object world, toward reality) not only in an epistemological sense -- as against repressive forms of life -- it is political (1969:61-2).

Marcuse, in his praise for the "power of negative thinking" seems to be much closer to the left Hegelians than to the Marxists. Left Hegelians viewed critical theory as a guide for the transformation of material reality, and wanted to transform reality to meet the requirement of reason. Marx and Engels were very critical of the abstract philosophy of the left Hegelians, as well as the utopian



predictions of many early socialists, including Fourier. One could not, according to Marx, build a revolution on fantasies, one had to look for contradictions in the material conditions of life. Engels, after discussing the idealism of the Left Hegelians and the utopian socialism of men like Owen, St. Simon and Fourier, explained a materialistic treatment of history as "a method founded on explaining man's 'knowing' by his 'being' instead of, as heretofore his 'being' by his 'knowing.'" Thus:

. . . socialism was no longer an accidental discovery of this or that ingenious brain, but the necessary outcome of the struggle between two historically developed classes — the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Its task was no longer to manufacture a system of society as perfect as possible, but to examine the historico-economic succession of events from which these classes and their antagonism had of necessity sprung, and to discover in the economic conditions thus created the means of ending the conflict. But the socialism of earlier days was as incompatible with this materialistic conception as the conception of nature of the French materialists was with dialectics and modern natural science. The socialism of earlier days certainly criticized the existing capitalistic mode of production and its consequences. But it could not explain them, and, therefore, could not get the mastery of them. It could only simply reject them as bad. The more strongly this earlier socialism denounced the exploitation of the working class, inevitable under capitalism, the less able was it clearly to show in what this exploitation consisted and how it arose. But for this it was necessary (1) to present the capitalistic method of production in its historical connection and its inevitableness during a particular historical period, and therefore, also, to present its inevitable downfall; and (2) to lay bare its essential character, which was still a secret (Feuer, 1959:89).

It seems clear that in his emphasis on the function of art, his estimation of the role of critical theory, his call for a turn toward utopian and surrealist ideals, and finally, his emphasis on individual subjective change preceding structural, economic



change, Marcuse is not employing the materialist methodology so crucial to Marx and Engel's work.

Marcuse is, of course, being perfectly consistent when he proposes an intellectual vanguard for revolutionary change. After all, if art and critical theory pose revolutionary alternatives, why not have the artist or the intellectual guide the revolution. This would simply

. . . mean replacement of the present ruling elite by another; and if this other should be the dreaded intellectual elite, it may not be less qualified and less threatening than the prevailing one. True, such government, initially, would not have the endorsement of the majority "inherited" from the previous government — but once the chain of the past governments is broken, the majority would be in a state of flux, and, released from the past management, free to judge the new government in terms of the new common interest (Marcuse, 1969:70).

If one's perspective begins with individual change, one cannot escape the question of indoctrination and one cannot escape its elitest consequences.

Moreover, to the degree to which liberation presupposes the development of a radically different consciousness (a veritable counter-consciousness) capable of breaking through the fetishism of the consumer society, it presupposes a knowledge and sensibility which the established order, through its class system of education, blocks for the majority of the people (Marcuse, 1972:32).

If you recall, Marx in his third thesis on Feuerbach warns us against dividing men into two groups; those who mold and those who are molded. It is clear that Marcuse has not heeded the warning.

Marcuse's analysis of advanced industrial society is not primarily a class analysis. He discusses the effect of science and technology and the apparent obliteration of class distinctions.



He seems to be much more directly concerned with mass society than with class society. For example, it seems that in Marcuse's view it is not capitalism that determines technology, it is technology which determines the nature of capitalism. For Marx, science and technology do not in and of themselves constitute a system of domination. It is the exploitation of labor by capital which determines the nature of science and technology, and which makes them into instruments of domination and exploitation. Marcuse himself points out that in Marxist theory "the social mode of production, not techniques is the basic historical factor" (Marcuse, 1964:154). However, it is Marcuse's opinion that in contemporary society the mode of production is no longer the basic historical factor.

Today, domination perpetuates and extends itself not only through technology but as technology, and the latter provides the great legitimization of the expanding political power, which absorbs all spheres of culture (1964:158).

Technology has transformed domination into administration. "The capitalist bosses and owners are losing their identity as responsible agents; they are assuming the function of bureaucrats in a corporate machine" (Marcuse, 1964:32).

In Marcuse's analysis, the class character of capitalist production does not significantly hinder technological development (as Marx's labor theory of value would imply). Technological development apparently has succeeded in doing away with the manifestations of class divisions.

If the worker and his boss enjoy the same television program and visit the same resort places, if the typist is as attractively made up as the daughter of her employer, if the Negro owns a Cadillac, if they all read the same newspaper, then this assimilation





indicates not the disappearance of classes, but the extent to which the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the Establishment are shared by the underlying population (Marcuse, 1964:8).

The result is the obliteration of class consciousness, "An overriding interest in the preservation and improvement of the institutional status quo unites the former antagonist in the most advanced areas of contemporary society" (Marcuse, 1964:xiii). Marcuse further claims that, "the reality of the laboring classes in advanced industrial society makes the Marxian 'proletariat' a mythological concept" (1964:189). In advanced industrial society class oppositions no longer have revolutionary potential.

Marcuse tells us that advanced industrial society has succeeded in determining not only socially necessary occupations and skills, but also individual needs and aspirations. It "obliterates the opposition between private and public existence, between individual and social needs" (1964:xv). This obliteration originates not in class divisions but rather in a "totalitarian technology." "Technology serves to institute new and more effective and more pleasant forms of social control and social cohesion" (Marcuse, 1964:xv). Totalitarian technology is "spreading to the less developed and even the preindustrial areas of the world" and it is "creating similarities in the development of capitalism and communism" (Marcuse, 1964:xvi). The enemy is thus no longer really capitalism but technology. When Marcuse discusses the possibility of the Third World's developing independent social and political forms, his pessimism derives from his belief that the underdeveloped countries will need to develop just that technology which is the source of domination in the advanced countries. Similarly,



when he criticizes the Soviet Union, it is not primarily because it has transferred the private ownership of capital into state ownership, but rather because it too is dominated by technological rationality.

In his examination of American capitalism in One Dimensional Man, Marcuse continually points out its economic as well as its political success. He paints a picture of stabilization and integration.

These changes in the character of work and the instruments of production change the attitude and the consciousness of the laborer, which become manifest in the widely discussed "social and cultural integration" of the laboring class with capitalist society. Is this a change in consciousness only? The affirmative answer, frequently given by Marxists, seems strangely inconsistent. Is such a fundamental change in consciousness understandable without assuming a corresponding change in the "societal existence?" Granted even a high degree of ideological independence, the links which tie this change to the transformation of the productive process militate against such an interpretation. Assimilation in needs and aspirations, in the standard of living, in leisure activities, in politics derives from an integration in the plant itself, in the material process of production. It is certainly questionable whether one can speak of "voluntary integration" (Serge Mallet) in any other than an ironical sense. In the present situation, the negative features of automation are predominant: speed-up, technological unemployment, strengthening of the position of management, increasing impotence of the position of management, increasing impotence and resignation on the part of the workers. The chances of promotion decline as management prefers engineers and college graduates. However, there are other trends. The same technological organization which makes for a mechanical community at work also generates a larger interdependence which integrates the worker with the plant. One notes an "eagerness" on the part of the workers "to share in the solution of production problems," a "desire to join actively in applying their own brains to technical and production problems which clearly fitted in with the technology." In some of the technically most advanced establishments, the workers even show a vested interest in the establishment -- a frequently observed effect of "workers participation" in capitalist enterprise (1964:29-30).



Capitalist society dominated by technology has succeeded, not only in increasing production, but also in adopting social relations to its technology and thus has produced an integrated populace. Its success allows "the progressive enslavement of man by a productive apparatus which perpetuates the struggle for existence" (Marcuse, 1964:144), and completely nullifies the existing historical alternatives.

Because of capitalism's successful integration of the worker, Marcuse views the transformation from capitalism to socialism as an unlikely event. According to Marx, capitalist accumulation led necessarily to a decline in profitable investment for a growing sector of capitalists and finally, to crisis and depression devastating enough to lead to the overthrow of the capitalist system. Paul Mattick, a contemporary Marxist economist, claims that capitalism does indeed show signs of decay. He sees them in the necessity for government intervention in private enterprise which, he says, necessarily leads to a declining rate of capital formation.

Notwithstanding the long duration of rather "prosperous" conditions in the industrially-advanced countries, there is no ground for the assumption that capital production has overcome its inherent contradictions through State interventions in the economy. The interventions themselves point to the persistency of the crisis of capital production, and the growth of government-determined production is a sure sign of the continuing decay of the private-enterprise economy. To arrest this decay would mean to halt the vast expansion of government-induced production and to restore the self-expansive powers of capital production; in short, it implies a reversal of the general developmental trend of twentieth-century capitalism. As this is highly improbable, the State will be forced to extend its economic inroads into the private sectors of the economy and thus become itself the vehicle for the destruction of the market economy. But where the State represents private capital, it will do so only with great hesitation and against growing opposition on the part of private capital. This hesitation may be enough to change the



conditions of an apparent "prosperity" into conditions of economic crisis (1972:21-2).

Marcuse recognizes a conflict between the private and public sectors. He sees contradictions within capitalism. He does not, however, see these contradictions exploding into a new historical stage.\*

In spite of his pessimism, Marcuse does present us with an historical alternative to capitalism. Marcuse tells us that automation, which "would turn work-time into fringe-time and free-time into full-time . . . cannot be realized within the (existing) political and economic institution; . . . it would mean, plainly, the final catastrophe of the capitalist system" (Mattick, 1972:57). But it seems that Marcuse is contradicting himself somewhat. As we have seen, Marcuse has claimed that modern technology "transcends" the capitalist mode of production. That is, that it is no longer capitalism but technology which is the main source of our oppression. Further, technology has insured the continued "success" of capitalism. Thus, technology is simultaneously viewed as the cause of oppression and the source of capitalist success, as well as the solution, the means through which both capitalism and oppression can end. If automation is proposed as the alternative to capitalism or more explicitly the technological means through which capitalism will end, then it seems we must say that capitalism, as a mode of production,

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\* Marcuse's pessimism about the possibilities for socialism has declined somewhat in the essays he has published since One Dimensional Man. See An Essay on Liberation, p. 82-3 and Counter Revolution & Revolt, p. 42-3.



"transcends" technology. That is, capitalism determines the degree to which technology can develop and brings about the contradiction necessary for its own demise. Capitalism brings about the potential for complete automation, but cannot realize that potential within the capitalist mode. This more Marxist analysis leaves in question Marcuse's previous statements giving causal primacy to technology. If one has been following the logic of Marcuse's analysis, one must ask why we could not have full automation under capitalism? Why could not a small minority with the privilege and power to run the machines thus control the environment and leave the rest of us with a carefully programmed "free" time? Certainly this possibility fits perfectly with Marcuse's conception of "repressive desublimation." Automation would not then mean an "historical alternative" to capitalism, but rather a new stage within capitalism. To pose the question in more Marxist terms one must determine whether the unhampered growth of technology (as part of the capitalist mode of production) can be accommodated within capitalist relations of production or whether it constitutes a contradiction to be resolved only by historical transition. Clearly, technological growth to the point of full automation would be seen, by those who accept Marx's Labor Theory of Value, as an impossibility under capitalism. However, Marcuse most often appears to reject Marx's Labor Theory of Value (1964:28).\* If Marcuse claims that automation

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\* I must point out that although Marcuse seems to reject Marx's Labor Theory of Value in One Dimensional Man he seems to accept Marx's Labor Theory of Value in Five Lectures (1970:66).



leads to the negation of the capitalist mode of production, it is incumbent upon him to point out the sources of contradiction.

He does not.

The explanation for this can perhaps be found in the fact that Marcuse rejects Marx's conception of a law-governed and thereby predictable transition from capitalism to socialism. Let us compare Marx and Marcuse on this point.

**MARX** Capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of nature, its own negation (Marx, 1967 in Marcuse, 1941:317).

**MARCUSE** It would be a distortion of the entire significance of Marxist theory to argue from the inexorable necessity that governs the development of capitalism to a similar necessity in the matter of transformation to socialism (Marcuse, 1941:317).

It is Marcuse himself who has just quoted Marx. Thus we can assume that Marcuse finds Marx to be one of those who is guilty in distorting "the entire significance of Marxist theory." Marcuse equates the realm of necessity with the period of history which is governed by laws, and takes it to be a necessary condition of free action that its course should not be so governed (Macintyre, 1970:38). Thus, for Marcuse socialism is the successful transcendence of law-governed material existence. If Marcuse is a materialist at all, he is a very reluctant and strange one, a materialist who hopes to transcend reality with reason, and to bring about a world of total freedom.

It must be said finally that to some extent Marcuse's analysis is in agreement with some theorists that he would consider far to his political right. Marcuse is careful to distinguish himself from those contemporary theorists who see all advanced



industrial societies as fundamentally alike (Marcuse, 1961:xi).  
However, when he argues that conflict has been basically eliminated  
in advanced industrial society, he is repeating part of the case  
made by Bell in The End of Ideology and Lipset in Political Man.  
Both see the working class as essentially domesticated, bought  
off by consumer society. All three, therefore, view the classical  
Marxist doctrine of class conflict as inapplicable to modern society  
(Macintyre, 1970:75).