



CHAPTER IV

COMPARISONS

Introduction

What to me is most surprising in my examination of Reich, Fromm and Marcuse is how rarely they engage each other in serious dialogue and how readily they deprecate each other. Marcuse calls Fromm a liberal and Fromm calls Marcuse a mystic. Both fail to appropriately recognize Reich for his pioneer work, often dismissing him in one or two critical sentences. This appears even more unusual when we consider that all three men were contemporaries, of German extraction, writing first in Europe and later in America, and very often analyzing the same theoretical and political issues. At least during their European period all three men considered themselves dedicated radicals, if not always orthodox Marxists. And that they were all seriously interested in a systematic study of the work of Freud and other psychoanalytic writers, as well as the work of Marx.

It is clear from our discussion of their anthropological assumptions, that all three men went to some lengths to discover, explain, and analyze the nature of man. To their minds, to deal with the nature of society, more importantly to deal with the possibilities for and nature of a future socialist society meant one first had to deal with the nature of man. What was missing in Marxist theory was



a social-psychology, an understanding of man's nature and of the relationship between the nature of man and the nature of society. How was it possible that a large proportion of the proletariat in Europe embraced fascism? How could false consciousness be explained? Why did the Soviet Revolution end in Stalinist terrorism and a growing bureaucratic class? Why was it that the seeds of Socialism were everywhere yielding to fascism or state capitalism?

All three men develop their analyses on basically positive assumptions about the nature of man. This left them in somewhat of a dilemma. How then could they explain the oppressive nature of past and present social structures? Even more importantly, on what basis could they predict social change? How could the socialism of the future be achieved? Basically their conceptions of the nature of man are neither Freudian nor Marxian. Perhaps more accurately they are both Freudian and Marxian to some extent, and in different ways. After much thought, extensive reading, and some debate, I have come to the conclusion that their conceptions of the nature of society are not Marxist. Their analysis is not primarily a class analysis (in spite of their claims to the contrary); and does not deal with the primacy of the substructure, i.e., the means and relations of production. Their tendency is to concentrate on identity, consciousness, morality, culture and art. Clearly their emphasis on superstructural elements is an attempt to "round out" Marx and to counteract the undialectical analysis of many rhetorical Marxists. The result, however, is much more a humanistic social philosophy than a Marxist sociology. In common with the Marxists,





however, all three disavow a value-free social science, and attempt to use their theoretical tools to help establish a better society. When they discuss the oppressive nature of society, they most often refer to capitalism, but as one reads them closely it becomes increasingly clear that (with the possible exception of Reich during his Marxist period) they are not in fact critiquing capitalism, but rather are analyzing the dehumanizing effects of advanced industrial society on the quality of human existence. Their analysis deals with technology, bureaucracy, mass society, and alienation in the widest and most un-Marxist sense of the term. Whether it is Reich's conception of an idealic original matriarchy, or Marcuse's conception of the independent individual that was the product of the once powerful patriarchy family, or Fromm's looking back longingly to a rebirth of craftsmanship, we can see that to some extent they all suffered from a romantization of the past.

Nature of Man

Reich and Marcuse begin by accepting Freud's conception of man's original nature as based on sexual instinct. Both view sexual activity as liberating and communal. Unlike Freud, they see sexual fulfillment as a realizable possibility in civilized society. Although Marcuse claims to accept Freud's theory of a death instinct, he does in fact, as we shall see, do away with it on grounds similar to Reich's. Reich rejects Freud's anti-social conception of man's basic nature as well as Freud's conception of a biologically based anti-social unconscious. According to Reich, man's original biological nature, which is sexual (and it seems



social) is altered through a sexually repressive socialization process which is necessary in order to maintain an authoritarian social structure. Capitalist society necessitates the development of a neurotic character structure — the development of a passive, docile authoritarian personality that will support an oppressive and exploitive social structure. Thus, according to Reich, the anti-social nature of man's conscious activity and man's unconscious mind, that is, man's aggressive, perverted and neurotic nature, is due to a lack of instinctual gratification. It is due, in other words, to sexual repression.

While Marcuse claimed to accept Freud's basic instinctual nature of man, i.e., Eros and Thanatos, sex and aggression, life and death, he is in effect saying something that is very similar to Reich. Marcuse tells us that the death instinct will disappear when the social necessity for the instinct disappears. That is, for both theorists Thanatos or the death instinct is seen as a secondary adaptation of man formed because of social necessity. "As suffering and want recede . . . death would cease to be an instinctual goal" (Marcuse, 1955:214-15). Both Marcuse and Reich essentially accept the same part of Freud's conception of the nature of human instincts, and of Marx's concept of the nature of species being. Both accept that man biologically seeks pleasure, the fulfillment of sexual desires. Both accepted that man's basic instinctual nature adapts to historical necessity. Both see man's nature developing in an historical and dialectical process.

While Reich and Marcuse stress the natural, instinctual, sexual nature of man, in Fromm's view man is a "freak of the universe."



As man becomes increasingly more conscious, he not only becomes aware of himself, but also of his separation from nature, other men and eventually from clan, kin and the institutions of society. Fromm begins his anthropology with the dual assumption of the essential connection between human existence and both freedom and alienation. As man becomes aware of himself, and of his separation from nature, other men and society, he is simultaneously more free and more alienated. For Fromm alienation and freedom are part of man's universal existential condition and the basis of human needs. Man's nature is developed in a social process, but its base or core is his existential condition.

For Reich and Marcuse man's nature is developed in a social process, but its base or core is instinctual. Reich combines Freud and Marx in his quest for an end of both sexual repression and capitalism. Create an individual who is not sexually repressed, and you have an individual who will not accept his own exploitation. You have a free man. Marcuse agrees with Freud that the primary motive of man is happiness. He gives happiness a rather Marxist interpretation when he essentially connects it to freedom. Man cannot be happy unless he is free. For Marcuse, freedom is freedom from the constraints of material necessity (which he sees as the cause of sexual repression). Fromm with Marx, underplays the importance of instinct in human development and discusses the difference between man and the animals. "As man transforms the world around him, so he transforms himself" (Fromm, 1955:22). But this social transformation of self is dependent upon man's basic nature which arises out of his uniquely human and universal dilemma — freedom and alienation. Man's development, man's basic



needs, man's movement toward freedom depend, according to Fromm, on his ability to successfully transcend his alienation. Fromm thus understands man's nature not in terms of instinct but in terms of his relation to the world; but the basic condition of man's relation to the world is as fixed in Fromm as man's basic condition of instincts are in Reich and Marcuse.

All three theorists see human nature, not in the actual nature of man, but in man's human potential. Man is not what he is but what he can be. Human nature becomes a potential ideal that ought to be realized. Reich's genital character, as the ideal type of non-neurotic man, is very similar to Fromm's desexualized ideal type of non-neurotic man, which he calls, the man with a productive orientation. Reality begins, for our three theorists, when man acts in accordance with his true needs. Although each of the three theorists has a somewhat different conception of what man's true needs are, all three see them developing in an historical context. What remains to be done then, is an analysis of the historical context that has distorted man's basically positive nature; as well as an analysis of the historical context which will allow man's true nature to emerge — man free from material necessity, man free from sexual repression, man free from the alienation that accompanies human freedom.

The Nature of Society; Implications for Methodology and Political Praxis

Marcuse's analysis is clearly based on a thorough reading of Reich to whom he gives little to no credit. He dismisses Reich



for simplistically advocating sexual liberation as an end in itself. It is clear that Reich does not simplistically advocate a sexual liberation. Reich carefully works out the connection between sexual repression, an authoritarian personality, and an oppressive social structure. Further, Reich is emphatic about the necessity of avoiding (and critical of Fromm for failing to avoid) the conservative bias of using psychoanalytic explanations to understand social forces. He wants to use psychoanalysis to explain what he considered to be the irrational behavior of the oppressed classes, that is, their support of their own oppression. Reich looks for sociological explanations of sexual repression. If sexual repression creates neurotic personalities, as Freud pointed out, then why does society support it? What function does sexual repression serve for society? Reich's answer is that a sexually repressive socialization assures the perpetuation of an authoritarian state. It is in the family that the psychic structure of capitalist man is formed. It is the patriarchal family that is the backbone of capitalism. The family is a factory for the production of authoritarian ideology. It is "the patriarchal family which creates in children a character structure which makes them amenable to the later influence of the authoritarian order" (Reich, 1945:xii-xiii). Reich is not simply advocating sexual liberation, he is pointing out the connection between the family and the state, and by so doing, he develops not only a theory of social change, but also a direction for revolutionary praxis. One must not look only at social class, but also examine more closely the patriarchal family, the sexual repression of



women and children, and its connection to the maintenance of an authoritarian social structure.

Marcuse criticizes Reich for not distinguishing between different types of repression and thereby not recognizing the "historical dynamics of the sex instinct and their fusion with the destructive impulses" (Marcuse, 1955:218). Clearly, this is an unfair accusation. Reich has tied both the origin and development of sexual repression to economic exploitation, both in his theory of the original transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, and in his theory of the social function of sexual repression. Further, he discusses the destructive impulse as directly related to the historical conditions that necessitated sexual repression. Marcuse's theoretical connection between sexual repression and historical conditions, made in Eros and Civilization, was clearly indicated by Reich several years earlier (Reich, 1969 and 1970).

Marcuse goes beyond Reich, however, when he pinpoints the historical conditions that made necessary the connection between sexual repression and civilization, and he goes one step further when he points out the historical conditions which will make sexual repression unnecessary. In Marcuse's analysis, the technological advancement brought about in the advanced stages of capitalism has led to a material abundance that can end scarcity. This material abundance establishes the theoretical possibility for an end of alienated labor (which was instituted because of scarcity) and which required sexual repression. We must conform to a reality principle, but it does not necessarily have to be a reality that demands what he calls a "performance principle." That is, it is no longer necessary



to have a reality that requires alienated labor and sexual repression. If sexual repression was instituted, as Marcuse claims, because of the necessity of labor, then the automated technology of advanced capitalism can bring about an end of sexual repression and alienated labor. Marcuse conceptually clarifies some of the theoretical analysis that is implicit in Reich. That is, while Reich ties sexual repression to historical necessity, Marcuse gives us a language with which to understand that connection. He distinguishes the reality principle from the performance principle. Not all historical reality demands sexual repression. Marcuse appears to accept the necessity of some sexual repression with his concept of surplus repression. Marcuse and Reich are not as far as is apparent. Reich tells us that the genital character (Reich's un-neurotic man) can be sexually fulfilled while successfully sublimating in his work; Marcuse talks about a future society where work becomes erotic play.

Reich and Marcuse clearly part ways in their analysis of the function of the nuclear-patriarchal family. According to Reich, the family is the backbone of capitalism. It is the place where the individual is socialized into accepting and even supporting his own exploitation. For Marcuse the family in an advanced industrial society has an ever declining function. Socialization is now taken over by the school, the media, and the state. The result is an "'automation' of the superego" and the "technological abolition of the individual" (Marcuse, 1955:85-7). The old Oedipus struggle between parent and child allowed for the individualization of the individual. Since the family in modern



society serves so few functions, there is no longer a necessity to struggle with father. The child then "skip(s) the stage of individualization" (Marcuse, 1955:88) and is directly socialized by the state. Let us note in passing, that Marcuse who claims to accept Freud's sexual nature of man, gives us here a rather asexual interpretation of the Oedipus complex. It is also interesting that he criticizes Fromm for doing the very same thing (Marcuse, 1955:217-253).

While Reich, during his Marxist period, concentrated his analysis on the family, sexuality and character structure, Marcuse after writing Eros and Civilization, concentrates his analysis on advanced industrial society and its effect on consciousness. In One Dimensional Man, Marcuse tries to explain why the possibility for an end of alienated labor has not been realized and why the sexual revolution has not led to the end of repression as Reich predicted. Again we see Marcuse developing an analysis that has its seeds in Reich. "All liberation," Marcuse tells us, "depends on the consciousness of servitude" (1964:7). Advanced industrial society, although apparently allowing sexual liberation, is most successful at keeping people unaware of their own repression by socializing them into wanting and, indeed needing, the goods it delivers. Man is socialized into "false needs"; that is, those needs that are superimposed on the individual by particular interest (Marcuse, 1964:5).

Fromm, in his discussion of man's basic needs, always poses two alternatives, a progressive and a regressive mark for solving man's existential dilemma. It is, it seems, mode in accordance



with man's basic nature to take the progressive alternative. Fromm, in essence, presents us with an ideal for man's potential nature and in so doing, is close to both Reich and Marcuse. He finds himself in a bind similar to Marcuse's, that is, trying to explain the origin and perpetuation of a "sick" society. Like Marcuse, Fromm claims that we are at an historical stage of development where man can be free. Why then are so many men still choosing to "escape from freedom"? Fromm spends some time discussing the "awakened ones," who are ahead of their time and who have preached the norms of humanistic development. While for Marcuse the "awakened ones" are the intellectuals and the students who can develop a critical theory that can be used to help negate the actuality of the oppressive reality, for Fromm, they are men of religion and philosophy, such as Ikhnaton, Moses, Confucius, Leo-tse, Buddha, Isaiah, Jesus and Socrates (Fromm, 1955:69). Overcoming alienation for Fromm seems to require, most of all, a leap of faith. In spite of the fact that it is more natural for man to take the progressive road toward humanness, it seems that most men are "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" (Fromm, 1955:315, emphasis mine). For both Marcuse and Fromm the goal of humanness is essentially related to ethical norms or morality.

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

MARCUSE Prior to all ethical behavior in accordance with specific social standards, prior to all ideological expressions,



morality is a disposition of the organism, perhaps rooted in the erotic drive to counter aggressiveness, to create and preserve "ever greater unity" 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 appears as a precondition for liberation (1969:10).

Reich, Marcuse and Fromm all present us with a positive conception of the nature of man and a negative conception of the nature of industrial society and its effects on man's nature. Only Reich, however, points in the direction of political praxis. Marcuse and Fromm leave us running around in an analytical circle. Fromm's methodological perspective is confusing and contradictory. At times, he tells us that to understand society we must understand the individual, since society is comprised of individuals and only individuals. This means that if we accept his positive assumption of the nature of man, we are left wondering why we have a sick society. When Fromm uses a more structural analysis, he proposes without any reference to Reich that the family, as the agent of socialization in society, creates a character structure that is necessary for the perpetuation of a capitalist society. Fromm develops the concept of social character; indicating that individuals of a particular historical period acquire those character traits that are most important for the perpetuation of that particular social structure. Thus, although he rejects sociological relativism, he seems to connect human nature to historical conditions.

Reich, Fromm and Marcuse all look at the relationship between the individual and society in order to pinpoint the possible sources of social change. Reich, using a structural perspective,



concentrates his analysis on the family and sexual socialization in an attempt to explain false consciousness. Fromm fluctuates between a perspective that explains social institutions in terms of the psychology of individuals and a more structural perspective that is very similar to Reich. Marcuse while insisting he is using a structural and even Marxist perspective, simultaneously tells us that we must first have a revolution in the biological nature of man. Reich's analysis leads us in a direction for revolution praxis: the break-up of the patriarchal family (as we know it), an end of sexual repression, liberate women and children. Fromm seems to leave us with very individual answers to social problems: one must have faith in spite of the facts, one must believe, one must love. Marcuse's analysis by his own admission leaves us chasing our political tails. 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 (Marcuse, 1969:18).

Theoretical Synthesis

Reich begins his synthesis by explaining how Freud, like Marx, has a materialistic and dialectic approach to the analysis of the human situation. Freud is materialistic, claims Reich, because he starts with the material nature of man, i.e., the need for sex and food. He deals with instinct and the libido and tries to place psychology on an organic-material basis. Even the stages of



socialization in Freud have to do with the material activities of the child; the oral and the anal, being of course, the two most undeniable examples. Reich rejects the death instinct as an "idealist deviation" which clearly has conservative overtones. Reich traces the dialectical relationship between natural instincts and social environment in the development of the child. He interprets Freud's description of the child developing in the social environment of the patriarchal family as another example of the Marxist position that social existence determines social consciousness. Reich explains that while Marx concentrated on the dialectic within society, thus arriving at class conflict, Freud concentrated on the dialectic within the individual, arriving at psychic conflict. Just as class conflict or the very existence of socio-economic classes is not inevitable, psychic conflict caused by the contradiction between man's basic nature and man's socialized nature, is not inevitable. There is no inherent contradiction between man and society; just as there is no inevitable contradiction between man and man. Both are historical conditions. In an attempt to solidify his synthesis, Reich raises the question of causal primacy. How can we reconcile Marxism with the psychoanalytic concept that, work, socially productive labor, is merely sublimated libidinal energy? His answer is that sexual repression is made necessary by the imperative of socially productive labor. However, desperately trying to maintain a primarily Marxist perspective, he insists that the "libido process is secondary to social development and dependent upon it" (Reich, 1972:46). Thus, sexual repression comes from historical-economic forces. He concludes by establishing the



the need for a theoretical synthesis between Marx and Freud. Marxism does not explain the failure of the oppressed classes to make a revolution, perhaps psychoanalysis can.

Fromm in an essay published three years after Reich's attempted synthesis, begins his synthesis by telling us that both psychoanalysis and Marxism are historical perspectives. Psychoanalysis is based on a theory of instinct and explains how instincts develop historically in a social-interactive process between individual and society. Like Reich, Fromm raises questions about the central difficulties in establishing a theoretical synthesis between Freud and Marx. Telling us that historical materialism views consciousness as an expression of social existence while psychoanalysis views consciousness as determined by instinctual dynamics, Fromm asks, can these two positions be reconciled? His answer is that psychoanalysis can help us "to know the psychic traits common to members of a group, and to explain these common psychic traits in terms of shared life experiences" (Fromm, 1970: 144). Labeling psychoanalysis "analytic social psychology" he tells us:

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

Obviously the definition of instinct used here assumes a social meaning. Fromm perhaps even more than Reich has historicized Freud's conception of the nature of man; for Fromm, unlike Reich,



ignores the concept of human instinct in the body of his analysis.* Fromm tells us that psychoanalysis can help us to understand an important material factor, human nature and proceeds (without adequate explanation) to place human nature within the economic substructure. Neglecting to discuss the differences between Marx and Freud's conception of the nature of man, Fromm tells us that both Marx and Freud were humanists; both believed that man's behavior is comprehensible because it is the behavior of man. In a similarly careless manner, Fromm tells us that Marx and Freud had the same conception of healthy man, that is, both viewed healthy man as independent man. Yet it is clear from his own explanation of Marx and Freud's conception of independence that the two men had very distinct if not antithetical views on the matter (see Chapter II, Section 3, above). When Fromm tells us that man is "neurotic because he is alienated" he is not using Freud's definition of neurotic nor Marx's definition of alienated. Finally, in Fromm's interpretation of the importance of the patriarchal family in perpetuating an oppressive social structure, he is repeating an argument made first by Reich, but removing the central importance of sexuality.

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

*It is left to Marcuse to explicitly spell out a social definition of instinct, which he does with his discussion of how social norms "sink down" into the instinctual structure (Marcuse, 1969:10).



for producing these psychic attributes that operate to maintain the stability of class society (Fromm, 1970:124).

We must conclude that Fromm's synthesis between Marx and Freud offers us very little that is new.

Marcuse also basically follows Reich's lead in his theoretical synthesis of Marx and Freud. He conceptually clarifies Reich's historical interpretation of the reality principle with his conception of the "performance principle." Although it is somewhat unclear, Marcuse appears to agree with Reich that sexual repression was instituted because of the necessity for productive labor, adding that when we overcome scarcity, we will no longer need sexual repression. He, like Reich, places great importance on sexual liberation. However, unlike Reich or Freud, Marcuse defines sexual liberation in its widest possible sense. This can best be seen in his discussion of the tyranny of genital sexuality. Marcuse is against the administered "sexual liberation" of advanced industrial society and an advocate of polymorphous perversity. Marcuse, with Reich and Fromm, makes the point that an oppressive social structure is maintained through the manipulation of the instinctual structure.

In the advanced capitalist countries, the radicalization of the working class is counteracted by a socially engineered arrest of consciousness, and by the developed satisfaction of needs which perpetuate the servitude of the exploited (Marcuse, 1969:16-17).

As we have already seen, Marcuse parts ways with Reich, Fromm and Freud in that he does not view the modern family as a significant factor in this process. In his discussion of the historical



conditions that can end private property, Marcuse talks about "nonrepressive sublimation," again, reconceptualizing an idea that began with Reich (Reich, 1972:186-87). In One Dimensional Man, Marcuse discusses "repressive desublimation" a kind of updated Marx-Freud-Reich synthesis. Technology has allowed for desublimation, but capitalism necessitates that it be socially controlled. Thus, sexuality is more frequently expressed, but it is expressed in a carefully programmed way. With this concept, Marcuse is perhaps saving Reich's central thesis from appearing obsolete. It is not simply having more opportunity for sexual activity that will free the individual from an authoritarian social structure. It is possible to have sexual repression in the midst of a so-called "sexual revolution."

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, 1965:75).

Thus, Reich, Fromm and Marcuse base their Marx-Freud synthesis on: (1) the necessity of providing Marx with a social-psychological dynamic by which to explain the absences of working class consciousness and socialist revolution, and (2) the dialectical, material and historical nature of both perspectives. They accomplish this in somewhat different ways. Reich dismisses the death instinct and thereby Freud's negative conception of the nature of man, and interprets Freud's biologically based theory as a materially based theory. Fromm essentially does away with instinct entirely, concentrating on the interaction between man's universal dilemma



of freedom and consciousness and a given socio-historical structure. Marcuse relegates the death instinct to a secondary adaptation, conceptually clarifies Reich's historicization of Freudian theory, and analyzes the qualitative and theoretical difference between a commercialized sexual "sell" and a polymorphously perverse sexual freedom.

Departures from Freud

We will now attempt a comparative examination of the ways in which Reich, Fromm, and Marcuse depart from Freud. Both Reich and Fromm explicitly state their positive conception of the nature of man. Reich accepts the Freudian concept of man as having an original sexual nature and then proceeds to define that nature both more positively and more narrowly than Freud. That is, Freud saw a conflict within man's sexual nature and viewed man's sexuality in very broad terms (e.g., oral, anal); while Reich sees sexuality as positive and communal and defines sexuality in very narrow terms, (i.e., genital sexuality). Further, Reich rejects outright Freud's death instinct as an idealist deviation. Fromm, with Reich, has unmitigated faith in human nature. But for Fromm, unlike Freud or Reich, that nature is not primarily a sexual one. Fromm claims to reject both the biological and the sociological interpretation of human nature and sees man's nature as coming from his universal existential condition. While Freud and Reich tend to stress the similarities between man and animals, Fromm develops his theory on the basis of the differences.



Fromm, with Marcuse (and to a lesser extent Reich), concentrates on the evolution of human consciousness. Fromm and Marcuse do not totally reject the death instinct, but translate it into a secondary adaptation. According to Fromm, man's destructive nature is expressed when society blocks his more natural need to transcend through creativity. Marcuse claims to accept both Eros and Thanatos, but on closer examination, his conception of instinct is very far from Freud's. With Reich, he accepts the importance of sex, going even beyond Freud he defines sexuality in its broadest possible sense. With Reich and Fromm, Marcuse views the death instinct as a secondary adaptation. His analysis is here closer to Reich. Because of the social necessity to work, sexual repression is instituted and the death instinct emerges. As we have seen, all three men do away with the necessary connection between civilization and discontent. All three accomplish this essentially by adding an historical dynamic to Freud's conception of civilization.

In Marcuse's analysis, along with the decline in the importance of the family there is a decline in the importance of the Oedipus complex -- the central element in Freud. Reich and Fromm also underplay the universal importance of the Oedipus complex by giving an historical interpretation to the patriarchal family. Fromm interprets the incest wish as a desire to escape from freedom, a desire to return to the womb. All three men reinterpret, sometimes to the point of obliteration, the Freudian categories of id, ego and superego. In Fromm, Eros is an asexual need for relatedness, and Thanatos a secondary adaptation of man toward destructiveness, brought forth when society blocks his more basic need for transcendence. The ego, for Fromm is man's



simultaneous need for independence and relatedness, and the superego seems to have vanished. Reich maintains two of the three concepts — the id and the ego, as we have seen, relegating the death instinct to a secondary adaptation and clearly favoring the id over the ego. He often seems to interpret the ego as a neurotic character armor we build to protect us from society. Marcuse does away with all three — the id, the ego and the superego. He changes the concept of instinct to mean socially created needs; and in his discussion of the decline of the importance of the nuclear family as an agent of socialization, he dims the line between ego and superego, talking simultaneously of an automatized ego and an automatized superego (Marcuse, 1970:13; 1955:85).

All three men reinterpret Freud's concept of neurosis. Although Reich, like Freud, has a concept of neurosis closely associated with sexual repression and sublimation, Reich, unlike Freud, concentrates on genital sexuality and contemporary sexual conflict. To Reich, sublimation is not necessarily a substitution for sexual activity. In fact, orgasmic gratification can reinforce productive labor (Reich, 1972:187). Thus, Reich foreshadows Marcuse's concept of non-repressive sublimation. Fromm and Marcuse totally change Freud's conception of neurosis. For Fromm, the neurotic person is not true to himself. Neurosis comes from alienation. Both neurosis and alienation are for Fromm moral categories. "Neurosis itself is in the last analysis a symptom of moral failure" (Fromm, 1947:viii). For Fromm and Marcuse the neurotic is one who is not living in accordance with his true needs. We are not here dealing with a conflict between the individuals'



sexual needs and his unconscious inhibitions; we are dealing rather with a conflict between socially created "false needs" and real or true, human needs. Thus, Fromm and Marcuse, more than Marx or Freud base their analysis on a moral conception of human nature.

Freud, Reich, Fromm, Marcuse and, of course, Marx are each in their way trying to analyze the meaning of human existence and the possibilities for pleasure, happiness and freedom. Reich is often ridiculed for his simplistic utopia — complete orgasm. What he was saying, however, is that the inability to enjoy complete orgasm is not the cause (of unhappiness or an oppressive society), but the symptom. He was acutely aware that one could not treat just the symptom, but had to deal with the structure that gave birth to it. For Fromm, man will not be happy until he learns to deal with his freedom — i.e., his isolation in the universe. Freedom and happiness are essentially related. Happiness is the human transcendence of isolation and alienation. For Marcuse also, freedom and happiness are essentially related but in a different manner. In order to be happy, man must be free, and he will be free when there is no longer any necessity for alienated labor and thus no longer any necessity for sexual repression. Of course, for Freud, there was no possibility for a desublimated culture, since culture was built on sublimation. Perhaps one was free and happy in a state of nature where the pleasure principle reigned. One cannot be free or happy in the reality of civilization.



Departures From Marx

Reich, Fromm and Marcuse all depart from Marx, most obviously in their conception of the nature of man. Reich does not, as does Marx, celebrate man's liberation from instinct and his resulting capacity to freely develop in society. He does not base his faith in man on the belief that human nature is a social process in which man himself participates. Reich's faith in the nature of man is based on his belief in man's natural, biological and sexual nature. It is thus a pre-social conception of human nature. Similarly, Fromm puts his faith in man's natural nature. It is not man himself who produces himself and his environment, who sets the criteria for himself and his society. The criteria already exists in man's universal existential condition. When Reich and Fromm talk about man's alienation from himself, they are more often than not talking about a concept of alienation that is completely foreign to Marx. In Reich's case man is alienated from his natural, sexual self. In Fromm's case, it is an alienation brought about by the unavoidable and universal condition of human existence. Marcuse's conception of man's nature is also different from Marx's, but in a different way. While he sometimes talks about socially formed "instincts", at other times he seems to accept the primacy of sexuality. Most importantly, Marcuse views work or labor as a secondary and repressive adaptation. It is in Marcuse's call for an end of labor that we can best see his distance from Marx. (For more detailed discussion of the point see Chapter III, Section 5 above).



In their conception of the nature of society all three men put considerable stress on superstructural elements: on identity, consciousness, ideology, culture, family. It is my belief that it was Reich (during his Marxist period) who remains closest to a Marxist theoretical frame. He consistently tries to maintain an historical, dialectical and materialistic perspective. He always upholds the primacy of structural analysis, while Marcuse and Fromm often seem to advocate a psychological methodology and an individual political praxis. Fromm often views society "as made up of individuals and only individuals;" while Marcuse often calls for a revolution in biology and consciousness as the first and most essential element for revolutionary change. Thus we find both Marcuse and Fromm looking for "awakened ones" to lead us to a "biological" change. Marx, of course, always viewed consciousness as a social product, and although revolutionary change was tied to a revolutionary consciousness both were tied to class action. Further, although Marx was a dialectical materialist, he was a materialist who always maintained the primacy of structural analysis. In the last analysis, it must be said that both Fromm and Marcuse confuse capitalism with industrialization and modernization. Their analysis is an analysis of mass society and not class society. Finally, their projections for the future have little to do with a Marxist perspective. In the case of Fromm, his ideal society could clearly be achieved within a capitalist economic framework. In the case of Marcuse, there is considerable doubt as to whether or not his conception of an ideal society could be



achieved at all. The late Marcuse is no longer talking about economic systems but about an existential state of freedom achieved within an "aesthetic morality." Many would question whether this kind of freedom could be achieved within an organized social structure. Which leads us somewhat sadly back to Freud.



CHAPTER V

THE NEW LEFT

Intellectual Roots of the Idea of Modernization

It is the task of the sociology of knowledge to understand the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises (Berger, 1967:4; Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Schutz, 1958; Luckmann, 1973). It is no accident that what I have called the "synthesis of liberation" should reach the peak of its popularity in America in the 1960's. That having been said, it is, however, no small task to analyze the social situation that made this synthesis both a plausible reality and a desired goal. We encounter several problems common to the sociology of knowledge perspective. At what point does one say that a social situation began, ended, or changed? How does one specify exactly which people in which particular social situations adhered to the thought and practice of the New Left? Finally, although one can with relative ease indicate what people do, it is considerably more difficult to indicate what they are in fact thinking. What is clear is that much of the ideology of the New Left reflects both a modern consciousness and an anti-modern bias. We will begin then with a brief look at the forces of modernity.

Originally, it was through the economic system of capitalism that industrialism and with it, modern social structures developed. Much of sociological analysis from Marx to the present has examined



problems associated with the change from traditional society to industrial society, and later, to advanced industrial society, post modern society and post-capitalist society.

The difference between the early stages of industrial society in Europe and its historical predecessor was not just due to a change in the personnel of social position, it was due above all to the simultaneous abolition of a system of norms and values which guaranteed and legitimated the order of pre-industrial society (Dahrendorf, 1959:5).

Rank in pre-industrial society rested on tradition, i.e., on the norms and values of the culture. Legitimacy of one's position was as much a product of the past as the present and was more a product of one's culture than of one's self. Discussing the security of traditional duties, Tocqueville tells us that in aristocratic communities:

All citizens occupy fixed positions, one above another. The result is that each of them always sees a man above him whose patronage is necessary to him and below himself another man whose cooperation he may claim (1945:105).

In contrast, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat had no tradition of legitimacy; no system of duties and obligations that integrated them into a meaningful whole.

They [the bourgeoisie and the proletariat] were characterized solely by the crude indices of possession and non-possession, of domination and subjection. Industrial capitalists and laborers had no "natural," no traditional unity as strata. In order to gain it, they had to stabilize and create their own traditions. They were, so to speak, nouveaux riches and nouveaux pauvres, intruders in a system of inherited values and messengers of a new system. And for these strata, bare of all tradition and differentiated merely by external, almost material criteria, the concept of "class" was first used in modern social science (Dahrendorf, 1959:6).

It was Marx who made the concept of class a central unit of analysis. It was Marx who as perhaps the first prophet of



modernity, was first to insist that it is men who make history. Men can control their own destiny. Men, through class consciousness and class action, can free themselves from alienation, and can end their own exploitation. Marx gives us a very sociological conception of the nature of man. Man's consciousness is formed through social processes. "Consciousness does not determine life, but life determines consciousness" (Easton, 1967:418). On the other hand men are not passive reflections of historical circumstances. Men are not only created by their material environment, they also create their material environment. Marx tells us in his famous third thesis on Feuerbach that "circumstances are changed by men" (Easton, 1967:401). Marx maintains throughout his writings a dialectic between free will and social determination, between the individual and the social. It is a dialectic that emerges with modern society. The question of to what extent men form their society and to what extent society forms men can only emerge with the waning of traditional society, when status is no longer determined by history but by "such crude and fluid indices" as capital.

With Max Weber we have a marked distinction between capitalism and industrialism. The industrial revolution has been accompanied not only by the advent of capitalism but also by the advent of bureaucracy. That capitalism is organized around rational bureaucratic efficiency does not mean that they are one in the same thing. Gerth and Mills have pointed out that Weber's concept of rational bureaucracy is formulated as an alternative to the Marxist concept of class struggle (1949:49). Weber sees not class struggle, but rather the growing process of rationalization, and



with it rationally organized bureaucracies with their specialized functions and functionaries, as the central dynamic of history. Clearly, Weber was the first to see a mass society inhabited by "other-directed organization men", for it was he who said of the newly emerging modern man, "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart, this nullity imagines that it has attained a look of civilization never before achieved" (1958:175). Weber thus connects bureaucracy to rationality and the process of rationalization to a mechanized, depersonalized and oppressively routinized world. Rationality is viewed as inimical to personal freedom. He sees a process of "disenchantment of the world" in which magic has been displaced and in which science has become a most inadequate replacement for religion. We can see in Weber, as we saw in Marx, a tension between individual freedom and social determination. With the process of modernization we see the creative, unique, spontaneous capacities of the individual confined to a bureaucratically organized institutional structure. According to Weber, modernity, although it enhances equality, is opposed to individuality. Man freed from traditional culture is now wed to the mechanics of technology and bureaucracy. As Gerth and Mills have pointed out, by placing the historically unusual in the hands of a charismatic leader, Weber has placed an aristocratic emphasis on elites. The common man oppressed by the routinization of bureaucracy does not express his own spontaneity, creativity or freedom, but is left merely to follow the spontaneity and creativity embodied in the charismatic leader (1946:63). Finally, with the inevitable routinization of charisma, Weber (like Marx) comes down on the side of social



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determination. Weber, however, again with Marx, is critical of that social determination. Hence, we can see in both men an emerging modern consciousness.

For Weber socialism would not be a solution, but a magnification of the problem for it would "complete in the economic sphere what had already happened in the political sphere." "Socialization of the means of production would merely subject an as yet relatively autonomous economic life to the bureaucratic management of the state" (Mills, 1949:49). One has only to look at the numerous systems of state capitalism arising under the name of socialism to see just how accurate was Weber's prediction.

The Rise of the Private Sphere

Etzioni (1968) has suggested that in America the period since the end of the Second World War may be thought of as a post-industrial or post-modern era. It is a period that has been marked by a phenomenal growth of technology; a period marked by an unprecedented capacity for both production and consumption. There has been an increase in the complexity of organization and an accompanying decrease in the individual's understanding of the institutional mechanisms as a whole. Neither understanding nor commitment is essential to technological production. What is essential to technological production is performance, efficient performance achieved by conforming to specified rules and regulations. Further, there has arisen a new middle class who in some ways resemble the class which Marx called the proletariat. Mills discusses the



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transformation of America from a country of small farmers and self-supporting businessmen whose ownership of property brought a certain amount of independence to a country of salaried white collar workers who had neither property nor, for the most part, skill, but sold instead their personalities (1951). Hence, Mills describes the social structural changes that have given rise to what Riesman called "the other directed personality" (1950) and Whyte had labeled "the organization man" (1954). One result of the growing complexity of the social structure coupled with the necessary conformity of job performance was the loss of meaning within the public sphere and the increasing differentiation of and reliance on the private sphere (Berger, et al., 1973; Luckmann, 1967).

The generation born shortly after the end of World War One was the first generation to have to face the impact of a post-modern society. Their parents, the first modern generation to emerge from the Victorian Era, had lived in or emigrated to an America inhabited by independent businessmen and landowners and guided by the principles of laissez-fiare capitalism. Faced with a world that could no longer be understood or explained by the values they had inherited from their parents, this first generation of post-moderns faced the impact of post-industrial society by strictly adhering to the rules and regulations of the system, and by entering what Kitch and Mayer have called an "egotistic cognitive stage" (1975). There was increasingly a retreat to the private sphere. Not only was this generation facing an increasingly difficult-to-understand public sphere, but they had also lived through a depression and a



world war. They were anxious to return to normalcy. Women left the jobs they had held during the war and happily entered into domesticity, the *Femine Mystique* and Dr. Spock having provided them with full-time jobs. Men began or resumed their careers with an eye toward the stability and security that the war and the depression had so rudely interrupted. During this post-World War Two era, the erection of a private sphere was not, I believe, self-conscious; nor was it as fully developed as it was to become in the 1970's. There was not at this time a self-conscious "playing the game" while at work and "doing your own thing" while at home. Further, the private sphere was then dominated by the family and not by the self. Those who were erecting this private sphere did so in part as a means by which they could hold on to the values of their parents, that they could no longer apply to the world of corporate capitalism. Erection of a private sphere was also a means by which the individual could avoid experiencing himself completely as he was defined in the public sphere (Berger, *et al.*, 1973). These people, many of whom were to be called hypocrites by their children, still preached and believed they were living by many of the same basic values as their parents. As A. Greil, with the help of A. Schutz (1967:348) and G. H. Mead (1934) has pointed out, rules of relevance (i.e., what we consider important and the way in which we consider it) are not figured out by an individual; in spite of the fact that they appear self-evident, they are in fact taught to him. There is a socialization process mediated by significant others who have themselves learned a "self-evident" relevance system by the same process. Consequently, there is often a gap between personal values and public



reality (Greil, 1974). Thus, we have young adults, of the post World War Two era who reflect the values of their parents while adjusting to a reality quite remote from their parents; adjusting by a predominantly unconscious separation between the private and public sphere.

The children of these young adults, themselves part of a post World War Two baby boom, came of age in the 1960's, and viewed their parents adjustment as hypocritical. The college youths of this period were confronted with a social structure to which no one appeared committed and which demanded no commitment (Keniston; 1965) and with parents who preached the values of commitment. The complexity and segmentation of modern life has led to a pluralization of life worlds both in the public and the private spheres, making the creation of an overarching symbolic universe increasingly more difficult (Berger et al., 1973; Luckmann, 1967). Accompanying this is a condition of unprecedented prosperity, social and geographic mobility and individual freedom, especially among the children of the middle and upper middle class. Raised in the child-centered family of Dr. Spock, with no economic responsibilities until past adolescence, this generation of young Americans are protected from the public sphere for an unprecedented length of time (Berger, et al., 1973; Keniston, 1968). These young Americans have been socialized into the values of the private sphere, the values of commitment shared by their parents and grandparents. Further, they have become used to being treated as unequally valuable persons. They have come to believe fully in the modern contention of a self-realized,



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self-created identity. Berger describes beautifully the double bind of modernity in which they find themselves when he tells us:

Modern childhood is marked by values and by a consciousness that are emphatically personalistic. Modern bureaucracy, by contrast has an ethos of emphatic impersonality. Put simply, an individual shaped by modern childhood is most likely to feel oppressed by modern bureaucracy (1970: 37).

Kenneth Keniston has pointed out that the affluence of the post World War Two era has produced families that have brought their children up to be idealistic about creedal American values (1968). At the same time that these children were being socialized into creedal American values, there has been a decline in the overarching symbolic meaning of the society (Berger, et al., 1973; Luckmann, 1967). Put differently, society has entered into what Rieff has called an anti-creedal era (1966). Children so socialized are understandably dismayed and outraged when they encounter what Mayer and Kitch have called "a value-free society" (1974). The child-centered family has produced individuals who value independence and personal freedom and who believe in creedal American values and who when they enter into adulthood are faced with a segmented, highly impersonal and apparently meaningless public sphere.

As both Berger (1973) and Keniston (1968) have pointed out, the affluent post-modern society has given rise to a new stage in the life cycle of man. Unprecedented prosperity combined with the extended necessity for advanced education, and the increasing reluctance of people to pass from their child-centered homes into the adult world has led to the stage of youth. Youth exists in a situation that Keniston (1968) describes as psychological adulthood



and sociological adolescence. Youth, while psychologically adults, are nonetheless not tied to the institutional requirements of adulthood, that is to say, to work and the family. This generation born after World War Two, the first generation to live their entire lives in a post-modern society, a generation that experienced unprecedented material wealth and personal attention was also the first generation to experience a youth marked by the abilities of adulthood, without its responsibilities. Part of the post-war baby boom, these youngsters entered American colleges in unprecedented numbers. During their extended stays in these age-segregated educational institutions, there first arose what has come to be known as "the youth culture." Once established, the youth culture had an almost mystical hold on its participants. Leaving the university, and even more importantly passing out of the youth culture, meant leaving their freedom behind. Keniston, talking of the young radicals who led Vietnam Summer tells us "Although many doors are open to them they lack the will to enter any of them, fearing that once inside they will be trapped and robbed of their freedom to change and be themselves" (1968:268). These youths were unwilling to stake their identities on the meaningless roles to be found in the public sphere. They feared becoming like their parents whose separation between the public and private sphere was viewed as hypocritical and whose concentration on a stable and secure existence they deemed boring. They did not want that existence, not because they were opposed to growth and planning and progress per se (as Berger, et al., 1973 have implied), but rather because they were opposed to the unquestioned acceptance by



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the "value-free society" of the idea that "progress is our most important product." Finally, the youth culture was anti-authoritarian and anti-institutional; repulsed by bureaucratic organization and superstitious of leadership, it preferred the spontaneous, the mystical and the unorganized.

Emerging out of the youth culture, student activists shared with it a modern emphasis on individuality, spontaneity, personal style as well as an anti-modern or perhaps post-post modern bias against bureaucratic organization (Berger, 1970). They differed from other members of the youth culture, however, in their serious commitment to a political movement for social change. By acting on the values learned in the private sphere, these young radicals hoped to do away with the hypocritical and destructive separation between a private and a public world. All evidence indicates that at no time during the 1960's were student radicals in a majority (Keniston, 1965; Reid, 1966; Peterson, 1966; Theodori, 1969; Sale, 1974). Student protestors were generally better than average students concentrated in the humanities and social sciences. They came, for the most part, from upper middle class families with liberal political views. A disproportionate number of students came from Jewish families and a disproportionate number were drawn from economically and socially privileged groups. These were the children of those who had prospered from the affluent society without directly participating in technological production; they were most likely to have lived in the highly protected private sphere of the child-centered families (Alken, Demerath, & Marrwill, 1966; Flacks, 1967; Lyonns, 1965; Sommers, 1965; Watts & Whittaker, 1966; Westby &



Braungart, 1966; Katz, 1967; Keniston, 1968). It is likely that their parents not only espoused liberal and humanitarian values, and sent their children to the most progressive of schools, but that in spite of their monetary success, they themselves possessed a consciousness of marginality that gave them an empathy toward minority groups. For these children of the upper middle class, children of relatively "new money," detached from traditional duties and obligations, affluence was taken for granted. The drive to get ahead made little sense. The meaning of life had to be sought elsewhere.

Factors Influencing the Rise of the New Left

Although the student who entered college in the mid-1950's had profited from both the affluence of a post-war economy and the protection of the child-centered home, the lack of political activity, on and off the college campuses, was notably evident. If we portray the New Left as both a result of and response to modernity, then it is not difficult to understand why it was so intensely felt in America, the country in which modernization had progressed the farthest. Nor do I think it is difficult to understand why the rejection of middle class life should be led by the economically, socially and psychologically secure children of the upper middle class. The question that remains still unanswered is the question of why in the 1960's and not in the 1950's, and apparently not in the 1970's. Historical accident? Perhaps. Many reasons have been offered for the inefficiency of the American Left in the 1950's,



including the integration of the labor movement; the cold war; the Red-baiting of McCarthy at home and Stalinism abroad. Yet in both the literature of sociology and in the popular media there began to emerge an analysis that was critical of the conformity, anonymity, and meaninglessness of American life. Clearly the most influential critique of American society was C. W. Mills, The Power Elite (1959). During the 1930's the critics on the Left were able to identify the oppressors and their victims with relative ease; the oppressor was the capitalist; the victims, the workers. Yet by the mid-1950's the workers had benefitted enough from post-war prosperity to predominantly identify with the middle class, and hence they failed to have a working class consciousness. Had the complexity and prosperity of advanced industrial society merely hidden the clash between the oppressed and the oppressor or had that clash actually disappeared? Most Americans believed the latter. Mills' The Power Elite (1959) gave evidence of the former. It provided the New Left with an enemy.

What were the immediate historical conditions that gave rise to the New Left? It is impossible to select one or several events as the sparks for the New Left movement. Yet there is an historical environment in which a movement grows. Further, although we will here concentrate on America, we must remember that the New Left was a movement that originated in England and flourished in an international community. Hence any explanation concentrating on historical events surrounding the growth of the New Left in the United States is not a sufficient explanation for the movement as a whole.



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With this in mind, we shall proceed by attempting to understand the historical climate in America in the 1960's.

On the national scene there was the election of President John Kennedy. Kennedy represented not only youth but the reawakening of the possibility of public virtue. Kennedy's famous "ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country" was for many a renewal of hope. Perhaps complacency and powerlessness were not inevitable. Perhaps the values youth had been taught could become a reality. Perhaps they could close the gap between the public and the private sphere. On the international scene there was the seizure of power in Cuba by Castro accompanied by the growing United States opposition to him, an opposition that was highly publicized throughout the 1960's. Castro and his men were not only young and outnumbered by their enemy, but had been portrayed by several young and intellectually powerful academics as having successfully executed a revolution against a tyrant who had been supported by capitalists, particularly America's United Fruit Company, in exchange for allowing the exploitation of the land and labor of Cuba (Sweezy, 1960; Mills, 1960; Zeitlin, 1963). The distance between America's stated values and her political action were dramatized by her support of Batista and hostility to Castro. The history of North America's record in South America was being studied by the growing number of students that were entering the college campuses in the 1960's. With the Missile Crisis of October 1962, many began to question whether the promise of Kennedy was to be fulfilled. Ambiguity turned to anguish with his assassination in 1963 (Diggins, 1973). Yet Kennedy had, even if only for a



brief historical moment, upset the environment of apathy and for some (particularly members of the black community) overturned feelings of powerlessness.

Clearly one of the most influential historical triggers to the growth of the New Left in America was the Civil Rights Movement. It was in the realm of civil rights that the most glaring distance between private values and public action were evident.

In 1960, in Greensboro, North Carolina, four black students stepped up to a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter and quietly asked to be served. Three years later four black children died in the dynamiting of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1961 Robert Moses, a northern student steeped in Camus, treaked alone into the deepest and most violent parts of the south to register black voters. Three years later the bodies of slain civil-rights workers James Cheney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were found in an earthen dam in Mississippi. There were the unifying events for a new generation whose demand for public morality was answered with murder (Diggins, 1973:155).

If Mills provided the New Left with a villain, it was the civil rights movement and Michael Harrington's The Other America, published in 1963, that provided it with victims. To their shock and dismay, the affluent generation discovered that their own prosperity was not universally shared (Keniston, 1968:131). The children of the most liberal element of the population were taught in their progressive schools about an "invisible poor" that was hidden from their prosperous but barren suburban view.

Finally, there was the Vietnam War. It was a war perpetuated by the United States for reasons that had nothing to do with the health and welfare of the Vietnamese people. It was a war that had never been declared, and that was to be escalated by President



Johnson soon after his election as the peace candidate. Vietnam was to increasingly require human sacrifice; not "merely" of the Vietnamese people, but of American men of every social class. An immoral war and an extensive student draft were two important factors in the radicalization of American youths.

The Ideology of the New Left

Around these events grew the American New Left. There is little doubt that there was a New Left in the United States in the 1960's. What this New Left was all about, or if it still exists, is somewhat more difficult to determine. We intend to look at the similarities in the situation that individuals shared, in order to understand the establishment of common modes of organizing knowledge (Greil, 1974). That is, we will look for a shared social situation and cognitive style in order to better understand a common attraction to New Left ideology. To attempt to discuss the ideology of the New Left is no small task. There was very little unity between the various organizations, programs and ideological statements which formed the phenomenon usually referred to as "the movement." Organizational policy, program and ideology changed considerably over the course of the 1960's. Further, while we will here be concerned mainly with the rhetoric of the New Left and its appeal, and not with its practice, it is important to keep in mind that although it is theoretically possible to separate ideology from practice, it is not a separation that exists in reality. Finally, there is the problem of whose ideology — the ideology of the leadership or the ideology of the rank and file. It is not true, as



is often assumed in the literature of social movements, that the ideology of the leadership is the same as the ideology of the rank and file. Because of the limitations of time, we will here concentrate on the ideology of the New Left as stated by its leadership and academic documentors, Left, Right and Center. The information presented here was gleaned from a wealth of secondary sources (Bacciocco, 1974; Berman, 1968; Hale, 1966; Diggins, 1973; Draper, 1965; Flacks, 1967; Genovese, 1966; Lasch, 1966; Reich, 1970; Roszak, 1964; Sale, 1973; Tesdori, 1969, etc.), and from my own following of the national news media and participation in the movement throughout the course of the 1960's.

One could say that what was old in the New Left was Marx and that what was new was Freud and the plausibility of a synthesis between the revolutionary promise of both Marx and Freud. The rhetoric of the New Left was clearly a product of a modern consciousness. It held up above all the importance and possibility of individual freedom; it believed that life held infinite possibilities. Socialized into the creedal American value of equality and facing a highly fragmented and impersonal world, the young radicals who espoused this ideology searched also for the establishment of community and the experience of fraternity.

What is the promise of Marxism that has made it, for over a century, an incomparably powerful political and intellectual force? Although strongly critical of both the theory and the practice of the Old Left here and abroad, rejecting its asceticism, its elitism and its ideological rigidity, the New Left was nonetheless, strongly attracted to the spiritual promise of Marx. Marx preached



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that poverty was not the fault of the poor but of the system, of the economic and political system he called capitalism.

The work of Marx taken as a whole is a savage, sustained indictment of one alleged injustice; that the profit, the comfort, the luxury of one man is paid for by the loss, the misery, the denial of another (Mills, 1962:3).

Marx pointed out however, that it is not only the poor who are alienated, but also the rich. We respond to ourselves and to others as commodities. Every feature of modern life, private and public has been corrupted by the profit motive. The very distinction between private and public is the result of alienation. Men can control their own environment and thus their own identities through their labor. "For Marx, the supreme meaning and law of historical development lies in the birth of human freedom" (Dahrendorf, 1959:28). Man is the only animal that has the capacity for free, conscious purposeful labor. Hence, man is the only animal who can tame nature, control his own environment and create his own identity. Man has the capacity for freedom. Man can establish his own life; he can create and recreate his own identity. Marx had unmitigated faith in man's capacity for both freedom and community. Once man has established the classless society, there will be no alienation, no exploitation, no private property, and hence there will be no relationships of authority. The state will wither away. There will be no coercive social structure. Man will be free. Marx promises us what Berger has called a "redemptive community" (1974:28) and what Rieff has called a "commitment therapy" (1966:71). That is, Marx promises us individual salvation through participation in a community.



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"The particular appeal of Marxism," Berger tells us, "is due in important measure to its capacity for mythological synthesis" (1974:26). Marx, particularly the young Marx, failed to adequately deal with some of the very contradictions that become exaggerated in the New Left. Marx promises us: community and individuality; the use of the technocracy of advanced industrial society without a centralized, coercive authority or alienated labor. Berger (1974) points out that Marxism represents a synthesis between the modern and the counter-modern; between science (i.e., the modern) and socialism (community — the counter-modern). Marxism represents a synthesis between the modern concept of individual freedom, the idea that man is free to create his own environment, and his own identity, and a counter-modern quest to establish a community. However, while Marx's conception of community is counter-modern, it is not the community of primitive societies. It is not maintained at the sacrifice of individuality but rather is a community that would allow true individuality; that is to say, an individuality that can be expressed because of the security of community and that is not based on material possessions. This is not a reactionary conception of community.

Marxism, however attractive, seemed to most young radicals to be hopelessly antiquated. Its theory was too creedal and too deterministic for their post-modern sensibilities. Viewed from the perspective of the Old Left, the New Left was subjective, mystical, idealistic and moralistic. It lacked both discipline and analysis. The New Left however, viewed Marxist ideology with its almost rhetorical statements as either hopelessly outdated or inapplicable to the



American situation. Furthermore, Marxist ideology was seen as repressive to individual freedom of thought, creativity and style. According to Marx, individual freedom had to await the coming of socialist community. Not even the most committed of student activists believed that revolution was an imminent possibility in America. Nor was it in the style of these post-modern youths to wait. Freudian ideology held out the promise of individual liberation, even in the midst of an oppressive social structure. Further, it was much more plausible to the consciousness of a post-modern to begin with the individual rather than with an emphasis on a meaningless "abstract" society.

Freudian theory, Phillip Rieff has told us, is "the most successful, and certainly the most subtle, of contemporary ideologies of self-salvation" (1959:361). The promise of Freud is that the individual can, through analysis, open up his unconscious. Man can discover his own repression, find out what he wants apart from the demands of culture. We can see here the modern notion of an essential self that transcends the confines of socially demanding roles. The individual can discover himself and release himself. He can emancipate himself from his sick community. "What is needed is to free men from their sick communities. To emancipate man's "I" from the communal "we" is "spiritual guidance" in the sense Freud could give to the words" (Rieff, 1959:362). There is here a glorification of the natural, the unstructured, the sexual over the artificial, the mechanical, or the cultural. Rather than urging its members to wait for some future utopia while living the



life of a disciplined, ascetic revolutionary of the Old Left, the New Left placed its emphasis on the here and now: "Liberate yourself, release yourself from the artificial confines of culture. Open up your unconscious, do away with your superego, the revolution begins with your own freedom." There is here, of course, the totally un-Marxist (I must add unsociological) assumption that the individual can change himself without a structural change in society. Predominant is the belief that if enough individuals liberate themselves, the revolution will peacefully follow: "Make love not war." We can easily see how this distorted combination of Marx and Freud, what I have called a synthesis of liberation, would be exceedingly attractive. The combination of Marx and Freud points us toward a search for the truth, the end of false consciousness, the end of repression and exploitation; freedom from the confines of an authoritarian state, freedom from the manners and prohibitions of culture and freedom from inherited inhibitions. Promised is a community inhabited by expressive, creative, uninhibited individualists. This will be a community without private property or coercive authority, where technology replaces unhappy labor; and where the individual will no longer be degraded by poverty or absorbed in property. The individual will be free to be what he can be.

The plausibility of this utopia can, I believe, be best understood within the context of modern consciousness. The modern individual believes in the possibility of creating his own life and his own identity. The modern individual believes that he need not submit to any power other than his own individual limitations. Of this consciousness Philip Rieff has said, "modern men believe they



are gods" (1970:xviii). The modern individual believes that he should be free to establish his own goals, create his own philosophy, live in his own life style. In consciousness III Charles Reich tells us, "the individual self is the only true reality" (1970:242).

Clearly what was new about the New Left was Freud, not Marx, or more exactly, the combination of the promise of Marx with the promise of Freud. "From the beginning the New Left defined political issues as personal issues. How does one achieve personal integrity, authenticity in a mechanized bureaucratized, dehumanized society?" (Lasch, 1966:180). An extreme example of a Marx-Freud synthesis that resembled neither Marx nor Freud can be seen in Sherry Weber's essay "Individualism as Praxis." She tells us:

The revolt of the life instinct is the beginning of a praxis toward a goal. Praxis is focusing on and will have to continue to focus on experience (Breines, 1970: 25).

At present, organizing the working class, Weber tells us, would be a "misdirected use of energy which in effect serves the death instinct" (Breines, 1970:25). She suggests instead political praxis as "therapeutic intervention." Among Weber's suggestions for political praxis as therapy is sex, travel, music and vegetarianism, all of which are portrayed as means by which one can wage the revolutionary struggle. We have here once again the phenomena of revolution beginning with the self.

The many more serious syntheses between Marx and Freud can be seen, I believe, as attempts to stop the excesses of Freud, with Marx. That is, these syntheses can be seen as attempts to stop a complete retreat into the private sphere, and within the



private sphere into the self. Indeed it is possible to view the ideology of the New Left as an attempt to prevent what Rieff has called the "tyranny of psychology;" that is, the legitimacy of self as the highest concern. Student radicals understood (although they did not give it their approval) the withdrawal of the bohemian and hippy element of the youth culture. The hippies viewed the public sphere as doomed, believing that the best they could do was to salvage, discover and enhance the self. The consciousness of the young radical was clearly closer to the consciousness of the hippies than to the disenfranchised black and poor with whom they were to try to make alliances. Yet they were terribly conscious of not giving in or giving up. Going in either the direction of their parents or the direction of the hippies was to be avoided.

We are limiting our discussion of the ideology of the New Left to the dominant themes of the radical student movement that reflect an underlying acceptance, consciously or unconsciously, literally or symbolically, of a Marx-Freud synthesis. This means that we will concentrate on the ideology of the New Left in the early years of the 1960's -- for it was during this period that it was most heavily influenced by our synthesis of liberation. We are not here using ideology, as is common among some social scientists, in a pejorative sense. We are using ideology in a Mannheimian sense to mean simply the worldview of a group of people (in our case radical American students) located in a particular time (the decade of the 1960's, particularly the early 1960's) and space (the upper middle class) in history. Clearly reflecting a



modern consciousness, student radicals had a strongly anti-creedal bias. As one time SDS president Tom Hayden indicated, they relied "more on feel than on theory" (Diggins, 1973:165). Student activists, products of a rapidly changing post-modern society, had a tendency to emphasize process and personal style over and above content and long range goals (Howard, 19k5). The existential act of rebellion was seen as "therapeutic" in and of itself. It was one way of not giving in to the pervasive modern feeling of powerlessness.

Against whom and what can the citizen rebel in post-industrial society, where the forces his life depend on do not take the form of simple economic structure but are joined in a complex, diffused system which imbues every facet of social life and organization. The first stage of the struggle for liberty in advanced modern society is neither economic nor political but concerns the very preservation of man's humanity and individuality in the face of the invisible, omnipresent dictatorship of forces which tend to integrate and assimilate all elements (including the human one) into the system.

Thus, to transcend the established order means, on the most basic level to reject the structures of anti-freedom. To react in moral terms means to set a mechanism in motion in the area where the citizen is most strongly repressed: his morality itself. To adopt a pattern of behavior and a life style which do not conform to those of the majority means demonstrating externally the reconquest of one's individual autonomy (Teodori, 1969:39-40).

Even with this, the most political offshoot of the youth culture, social change was not viewed primarily in social terms. Activists tended to view political activity as essential to the development of their own identities (Keniston, 1968:188). Political goals were often experienced and expressed in psychological terms. "I want to teach people to be people" is how one young



activist expressed her own political goals (Keniston, 1968:37). Further participation in the movement meant being part of a community. "The movement means being involved with other people, not being alone, being part of a meaningful group" (Keniston, 1968:32). We could, in fact, say that the movement itself was a material expression of a Freud-Marx synthesis. It provided for the individual at once an "identity workshop" (Klap, 1969 and Berger, 1970), and a community; it allowed him to at once creatively express himself and work for the establishment of a new social structure. To use the language of Rieff, the New Left can be seen as a kind of commitment therapy strongly influenced by a modern-Freudian consciousness.

For the better part of the 1960's there was among the young radicals of the New Left, a pervasive refusal to accept any all-inclusive ideology. Anti-ideological, political praxis emphasized tactics, not programs. Not surprisingly there was a strong emphasis on face to face relations; organization was viewed as bureaucratic and authoritarian. Where organization was necessary young radicals understandably preferred the equality and anti-bureaucratic structure of a participatory democracy. This preference was further justified by C. W. Mills' analysis of the Power Elite, which was an explicit critique of the political pluralism the liberals proclaimed. It was clear to these young radicals that representative democracy was not working. They were not only suspicious of bureaucracy but also of leadership of any kind. Robert Moses, one of the original SNCC organizers, eventually left the south and changed his name so that he would not have undue influence. SDS, by all accounts already decentralized to the point of anarchy, eventually did away



with the office of the presidency in order to avoid elitism (Sale, 1974). Participatory democracy became the slogan of the New Left. Rejecting a vanguard party as elitist, the New Left proposed instead that a direct method of self-government at all levels replace delegated authority and responsibility. Although never explicitly stated, the goal seemed to be not only the abolition of the division of political labor between leaders and those who carry out policy, but also abolition of all bureaucratic organizations of society.

What Keniston has called "protest prone institutions" (1968) -- large universities demanding academic excellence but little institutional allegiance -- become the home of the political activities of student radicals. These universities attracted large numbers of upper middle class youths who were to create their own "youth culture." For many it was the first time that they had left the protected private sphere of the family. It was perhaps their first total exposure to an institution in the public sphere. It was this institution that was to help them make the highly questionable transition to adulthood. It was the university that was to help them adjust to an adult world they did not like. It was here that radical student organizations were born. It was here that analysis of the student as the new proletariat was to gain favor.

Students are the "trainees" for the next working class and the factory like multiversities are the institutions which prepare them for their slots in the bureaucratic machinery of corporate capitalism. We must stop apologizing for being students or for organizing students. Students are, in fact, a key



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group in the creation of the productive forces of the super-technological capitalism . . . No individual, no group, no class is genuinely engaged in a revolutionary movement unless their struggle is a struggle for their own liberation (Teodori, 1969:68).

Here we have the theme of the student as a new working class coupled with the theme of revolution and liberation beginning with self. The multiversity, as it came to be called, was viewed as a microcosm of the society at large. "In our free speech fight at the University of California" writes Mario Savio, a well known student leader, "We have come up against what may emerge as the greatest problems of our nation — depersonalized, unresponsive bureaucracy" (Hale, 1966:249).

First the southern civil rights movement and later grass roots organizing among the northern poor, both white and black, was to provide the student radical not only with a meaningful cause (for clearly America had here failed to keep her promise), but also, they believed, with a political ally. If the student activists were free by virtue of their affluence, allowed to study in universities without the constraints of adult roles, the ghetto poor were free by virtue of their poverty. Disenfranchized, unemployed or underemployed, they were seen by the student activist as free from the constraints of a technological and bureaucratic society. In the consciousness of the student radical they were free to express their humanness; they were free to be creative and live communally rather than follow the middle class American ethos of conformity and competition.

At the beginning of the 1960's the New Left had the tone of a highly individualistic moral revolt. Freedom was associated



with rebellion and non-conformity to the adult culture. The rhetoric of the New Left in the early 1960's stressed "authenticity," "human independence," "self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding and creativity" (Hale, 1966:72). The New Left saw itself as equally distant from both the political praxis of the Old Left and the reformism of the liberal middle class. In fact for all their anti-liberal rhetoric the values and programs of the early New Left were exceedingly liberal. Perhaps reflecting more of the liberalism of laissez-faire capitalism than corporate capitalism, "persons who lean to the left politically" radical Tom Hayden tells us, were committed to "the general ideals of western humanism, particularly the freedoms of speech, thought and association" (Hale, 1966:6). Early political programs were organized around the application of pressure to the more liberal groups in the nation. SNCC emerged with a southern voter registration program and died soon after the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party failed to be seated in the 1964 Democratic Presidential Convention. The civil rights movement gave birth to black power and many young radicals found themselves not only shut out of the black movement but embarrassingly the object of black rage. Grass roots organizing among the northern white poor was not only frustratingly slow, but presented the young radical with a day to day existence that pointed up the contradiction inherent in his position. The poor, radical ideology proclaimed, should be able to define for themselves the condition of their own existence. However, given the opportunity, the poor would most likely choose exactly what the radical was rejecting, a secure and affluent middle class existence. In February of 1965 the "peace



president" Lyndon B. Johnson began to escalate the Vietnam War, and to enlarge the draft. Radical student activity began to concentrate on the issue of the Vietnam War.

Beginning to separate itself from liberal reformism, the New Left increasingly defined itself as anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist, and together with the black power movement increasingly identified itself with the forces of the "third world." SDS declared the Vietnam War immoral and imperialistic, and expressed its allegiance with the nations of the third world. Formerly issue-oriented, spokesmen for the New Left began to build theoretically weak links between issues. Mario Savia connects Mississippi and Berkeley:

Last summer I went to Mississippi to join the struggle there for civil rights. This fall I am engaged in another phase of the same struggle, this time in Berkeley. The two battlefields may seem quite different to some observers, but this is not the case. The same rights are at stake in both places -- the right to participate as citizens in democratic society and to struggle against the same enemy. In Mississippi an autocratic and powerful minority rules, through organized violence, to suppress the vast, virtually powerless, majority. In California, the privileged minority manipulates the University bureaucracy to suppress the students' political expression. That "respectable" bureaucracy masks the financial plutocrats: that impersonal bureaucracy is the efficient enemy in a "Brave New World" (Hale, 1966: 249).

Dale Johnson connects the Cuban and campus revolution:

To a remarkable degree there are ideological similarities between the Cuban and Campus revolutions. Both Cuban and Campus rebels are strong dissenters, firm in their convictions and willing to speak out and act militantly in spite of the mighty coercive powers of the American state. Both are pragmatic, always putting first things first, with rarely an eye to ultimate ends Organizations form almost overnight to work on specific questions -- civil liberties, academic freedom, ROTC, the death penalty, civil rights Most important, their motivating ideologies are neither socialism --



Marxian or otherwise -- not liberalism, although they combine elements of both. Rather, the ideology of both the Barbudos of Cuba and the campus revolutionaries is a refreshing combination of humanism and rationalism. The Fidelista knows the meaning of misery and exploitation, of disease and illiteracy, of unemployment and squalor in the midst of plenty, of graft and corruption -- he has lived it; the campus rebel, lacking the Cuban experience, nonetheless feels it -- it violates his sense of values (Berman, 1968:137).

As far from empirical reality as these theoretical connections may seem, as distant as upper middle class American student radicals may be from the peasants of the third world or the ghettoed poor of America, the consciousness of the young radical activist during the decade of the 1960's sees in each case the forces of freedom (the movement) confronting the forces of oppression (the system). The movement made up of the young, the human, the primitive, the real, the alive, the sexual, and valuing freedom, spontaneity, individuality, community and love confronts the system, mechanistic and bureaucratic, ruled by the power elite, valuing profit and above all else, negating human existence. Viewed in this way one cannot only understand but perhaps even sympathize with the ideological links of the New Left.

The Decline of the New Left

The quiet of the New Left in the 1970's is difficult to understand. If one views the New Left as a legitimate response to profoundly important issues, one is faced with the reality that the issues have not disappeared. American racism, poverty and



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imperialism have certainly continued. The C.I.A.-supported coup in Chile is as dramatic an example of American imperialism as the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. Yet our campuses have remained silent. And, if one views the New Left as a product and response to modernization, then one is forced to recognize that the forces of modernity have certainly not receded.

A recounting of events adds to our understanding but does not explain completely. The civil rights movement became black power; and black power was for a while anti-white and anti-semitic. This meant a lack of unity between white and black radicals, a loss of funding for the black movement, and a significant increase in government repression. The search for a unified ideology that would help launch long-range programs and counteract the highly individual and anti-organizational biases of the New Left helped to move the New Left farther to the left. As the New Left moved farther to the left sectarian divisions arose that led to endless arguments and meetings. As the New Left became more outspoken and radical, there was a loss of liberal funding and an increase in government repression. The Left began to splinter. Some became Maoists, others preferred Trotsky, others bored with the endless ideological bickering became hippies or yippies; still others cut their hair and threw themselves vigorously into the McGovern Presidential campaign. The anti-organizational, anti-bureaucratic and anti-leadership biases proved highly destructive to New Left organizations. SDS, in 1969, highly disorganized, was successfully infiltrated by Maoist Progressive Labor (Sale, 1974). For many students Progressive Labor represented the worst of the Old Left, ascetic to an extreme



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and ideologically rigid, their tendency was to view sex as capitalistic, long hair as narcissistic, and interest in self as bourgeois individualism. SDS crumbled. What remained was an extremist terrorist group called the Weathermen. The rank and file of the New Left in the 1960's proved to be basically more distrustful of the Old Left than of the liberal establishment.

The youth of the 1970's are not shocked by poverty or racism. They accept it as part of the American way of life. The power elite thesis reached the best seller list in the 1970's with no apparent impact. Many young people of the 1970's more or less share the consciousness of the student radical of the 1960's. What they no longer share is the moral outrage. Cynicism, and "the tyranny of psychology" is pervasive. If the synthesis of liberation has failed, it is the promise of Marx that has receded and not the promise of Freud. With a total acceptance of Freud, we have an end to the "romantic" notion of a positive community (Rieff, 1966). The youth of the 1970's self-consciously and cynically "play the game" while in the public sphere while trying to "do their own thing" in the private sphere. The self, as Berger, et al. have explained (1973), is the only reality they can count on. One does not any longer believe in right or wrong, good or bad. Tragedy and corruption seem to belong to an antiquated morality. As activity becomes increasingly therapeutic, it is judged by the extent to which it works, is useful or makes one feel good. One no longer expects to be a hero but rather get by, to be realistic, to act in ways that bring the most rewarding and least costly consequences to the self. There is no longer anything that is sacred (Rieff, 1966). In the 1970's the



dialectic between the individual and the social has been severed. We no longer believe in the social. The individual believes, in false consciousness, that he can separate himself from the public sphere and be protected from it by his self-styled private sphere. There is now nothing beyond the self. Even sacrifice within families is a thing of the past. We are now in the age of the selfish parent. The self is the last frontier and with the help of guides (therapists) we spend an endless amount of time exploring it (Rieff, 1966). This is indeed the "age of psychological man" (Rieff, 1966).



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