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## **Psychoanalysis and Marxism: Fromm and Marcuse's debate over the intermediation between basis and superstructure**

John Perperidis

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Hello, I'd like to thank the conference's committee for giving me the chance to present this paper today. I will not refer to the work and lives of Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse due to the time limit of a conference presentation.

Both of them tried, within the 20th century, to combine Marx's social theory with Freud's psychoanalysis. This attempt was not entirely new to them since the first one to publicly try this combination was Wilhelm Reich. Such attempts were made to the basis that Marx's theory ought to include a most humane aspect, to include, therefore, humans as they are and not only social forces. The human being as it is, was to be found by what Freud introduced to human history. Although, what each of these thinkers thought of psychoanalysis, was to affect the way they interpret Marx and what later became their own Freudian & Marxist social theory. How can differentiated approaches over the Reality Principle produce differences over the intermediation between Marx's economical basis and superstructure? How can one argue about the connection between economical mechanisms and ideology by utilizing as tools the Freudian developmental stages or the sublimation defense mechanism of the psyche? And, of course, how Marcuse and Fromm's theories which are based to Freudian elements in order to add a more humane aspect to Marx deal with the problem of ideology as false consciousness. These are some key questions to which I will try to answer with this paper, while outlining the differences of the two thinkers' interpretations of the Freudian theory. The texts to which I refer are basically for Fromm the "Crisis of Psychoanalysis" a text written in 1970, the "Marx's Contribution to the Knowledge of Man" and "Psychoanalytic Characterology and its Relevance for Social Psychology". For Marcuse the main text is "Beyond the Reality Principle", along with some chapters of "Eros and Civilization".

One of the most crucial differences between the two thinkers is their understanding of Reality Principle. We can understand that this aspect of their theories is of great importance only by the fact that Marcuse's whole attempt is to go "Beyond" this Reality Principle. I will explain what this "Beyond" means later on. Fromm suggests that he follows Freud concerning the Reality Principle, that this principle is a basic ability for humans in order for them to watch the reality and protect themselves from satisfying every pleasure instinct. Man finds himself bound within social structures to the forces of which he is being reconciled or opposed. These recon-



ciliations or oppositions are what Fromm called “Social Character”. He gives an example: “a martial society will produce a social character to which aggressive instincts will have been incorporated”. This is where Marx and Freud are connected for Fromm. The two Freudian notions, the two basic principles, that of pleasure and that of reality are not in comparison to each other but the second is a modification of the first. The economical basis, along with the superstructure produce specific characters with specific psychological elements. The reality principle, this ability of man to adapt, is connected with the social reality. These two command, let’s say, the repressions of man. That is how, Fromm argues “the general humane energy is being modified into special energy which is being used from the society for his own function”. So, Fromm concludes, “what is being repressed depends on the social character’s system and not the reality principles” as Marcuse would say and we will discuss this later. Fromm goes further by arguing that Marcuse confused the notion of repression itself. Repression as we’ll see is of much importance for Marcuse, and Fromm accused him of using it by its common meaning (that of oppressing something) and not the Freudian one (repelling something from the conscious). The most important element of Fromm’s theory, which is connected with the above mentioned, are the developmental stages from which the elements of the character arise and which become the elements of the social character. I will not analyze Freud’s developmental stages here, that does not concern this paper. What we may find interesting is the use of the character elements from Fromm in order for them to become social. He gives the example of the early capitalist society. He says that “the typical format of the Libido of the capitalist is being characterized by an intense of the anal Libido”. Sublimation for Fromm is just a transformation of the sexual instincts into something else. In order to conclude with this result he begun by analyzing the economic circumstances, the religion, the morale and many more factors of that society. For Fromm, “a complete socio-psychological research ought to begin with the economic facts and show how Libido adapts to these facts”. That’s what his characterology is about. And that is how Marx and Freud are combined in his work. And of course Fromm draws on both of them in order to refer to a potential solution of social problems. From the one hand, Marx’s scientific materialism, which means his attempts to clarify and resolve the false consciousness –meaning the ideology. And from the other, Freudian psychoanalytic treatment which tries to set free the patient from his unconscious instincts while making “Ego where id is”. Adapting processes always take more time than economic changes. That is why, for Fromm, it takes longer for the ideological superstructure that creates the characteristics of the psyche to change. Nevertheless, with his social character, Fromm means, broadly speaking, something like the Zeitgeist which is based on sexual instincts and elements of the development of the stages of the child.

I’ll continue with Marcuse and his approach over the connection of Marx and Freud. It is more difficult to unlock Marcuse’s thinking due to his more philosophical influences. In order to understand what this “Beyond” (the Reality Principle) means, one should be aware of Kantian theory, of Schiller’s approach to Reason and Senses through their free game, Hegel’s dialectics, and of course his approach to Marx and Freud. I can’t analyze all of these in depth here, but I will try to outline the basic concepts of Marcuse’s thought. Marcuse finds in Marx’s work the fruitful soil in order to speak for freedom. But freedom couldn’t be achieved without referring to inner impulses and unconscious drives of human. However, before reaching that point in his



theory, Marcuse receives from Kant, something which he finds in Marx as well but in other form, the kingdom of Freedom and the kingdom of necessity. I will not discuss here, what each of these two are for Kant. Apart from that, he receives the kantian imagination, which in Kant's Critique of Judgment is what reconciles the Pure Reason with Practical one. From that point, along with all the influence of Kant on romanticism through his approach to imagination, Marcuse receives the "Natur als Kunst" (nature as a work of art) meaning to live like in a work of art. To achieve this, one ought to receive satisfaction from everything, but not with the hedonistic meaning. This satisfaction received from everywhere was not for Marcuse what he was accused of, meaning free sex everywhere. It is something deeper. Through imagination Kant managed to reconcile the two Kingdoms. But Kant couldn't have included labor in his theory. That was something that Marx did. Marcuse finds in Marx's work these two Kingdoms as the Kingdom of necessity: Work and the Kingdom of freedom: free time. For the Marx of Das Kapital, freedom can be achieved through the reduction of work time and increase of free time, meaning free activities and more. But Marcuse was raised as a philosopher and political thinker within the time of mass culture and other such social phenomena and knew that the increase of free time does not necessarily entails freedom. Although there are elements in his theory which show acceptance towards many Marx's thesis, Marcuse tried to exceed Marx using Freud. One final step before reaching the Freud point in Marcuse's theory, in order to fully understand what this "beyond" is, is Hegelian dialectics. Marcuse tries to exceed every contradiction (let's say the contradiction between the Kingdom of freedom and that of necessity or the contradiction between the Reality Principle and that of Pleasure) with Hegel's dialectical method. Within the Hegelian system, every thesis or anti-thesis that is being exceeded (aufgehoben) is not cancelled and thrown away but lives on within the next thesis that is being created through the battle of the previous contradiction. That is why "Being" let's say, the first thesis in Hegel's Philosophy of Science encloses the Absolute Idea (the last synthesis of this work) as potential and vice versa, the Absolute Idea encloses Being as a living exceeded element. This is what Marcuse attempts to achieve with all the contradictions he meets. In Kant he found the attempt to combine the two Kingdoms in the sensibility of the transcendental consciousness. In Marx he found the Kingdom of freedom in need of escaping the Kingdom of necessity, Labor. But he himself, as a true Hegelian, knew that freedom can be achieved only dialectically. Through Labor Marcuse attempted to speak of freedom. Through the free game (as Schiller would have said) of sensibility and Reason, or in more proper words for Marcuse and his whole attempt, "Beyond" with the notion of Hegelian exceed (Aufhebung) "the Reality Principle". This is where he reaches Freud. What Kant and Schiller thought of as sensibility in contrast with Reason, Marcuse knew as unconscious drives and Libido. But how did he manage to make a social theory from that? What does beyond reality principle really mean? The Kantian teleological judgments which set an external convenience and refer only to the usefulness regarding achieving a purpose, are being transformed through the psychoanalytical approach to the performance principle. This principle affects the reality principle in order the latter to oppress the pleasure principle and this is what Marcuse names as over-oppression. This is the result when the reality principle is formed under the affection of the performance principle (meaning that one ought to be productive for the status quo whatsoever). Marx's Kingdom of necessity, meaning Labor is, we could say, the Reality Principle, which oppresses the needs of the Libido of man that stream through the pleasure principle by pushing man towards work.



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From the other side, the free game of sensibility and Reason which shapes the new human type (the social man as Marx used to write in his philosophical manuscripts) is rendered as a modification of the relation between the Reality and Pleasure principles, or in other words, a re-sexualisation of the reality principle under the light of the pleasure principle. This results in a Hegelian *Aufhebung* of the contradiction and establish of a new form of human's experience of the world. This is how Marcuse attempts to reconcile Marx's social theory with Freud's theory of the human psyche, meaning, to introduce the free game within the working time of man or in psychoanalytical terms, to render Labor as something from which man can satisfy their Libido, to make Labor more humane. This new type of man, will not be oppressed by the Reality principle and its aim for performance and usefulness because he'll experience work as a game, something from which he is able to receive satisfaction. Man will not be sublimating due to the over-oppressive repressions that civilization sets. This is Marcuse's answer to the approach that freedom or satisfaction may be achieved after work. No, for the Hegelian Marxist Marcuse work is a place for satisfaction as well as free time. The Reality Principle that governs the West world and civilization tends to leave no space for satisfaction within the working hours. The fact that the reality principle is something social that affects the human psyche, and not one of its capabilities to defend itself, is one of the most crucial differences between Marcuse and Fromm. For Marcuse, the over-oppression of the impulses of the Pleasure Principle will stop when this principle will have affected the anthropological type of man, and he will be found in another relation to his body and to the world. The game between man's capabilities and the satisfaction of his vital needs is not a means for his life, but his life itself. Having modified his relation to the world, this new type of man will re-evaluate the meanings of the world and that is what Marcuse means in his book *Reason and Revolution* regarding language: that language along with its meanings will be also re-evaluated in order to become the language of the Big Negation. This negation takes place within the kingdom of necessity, within the reality principle and shape the whole life of man. This is how freedom may be achievable for Marcuse. So Marcuse does not suggest the annihilation of civilization or as Fromm accuses him, the regression to previous savage stages and the lust for sadistic pleasure or masochism. The fact that Marcuse is led to a modification of the pleasures of some developmental stages before the repression and sublimation is not a regression to a non-civilization stage. What Marcuse attempts is an *Aufhebung* of the inner contradictions of today's civilization in order for him to become less oppressive for humans. Marcuse is basically based on Freud's theory of civilization while Fromm is a clinical psychoanalyst who accepts only clinical data. That is their most important difference. Each one's social theory is differentiated because of this crucial point.

Thank you very much for your attention