Marcuse's Subject

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Kyle T. Jones

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by

KYLE T. JONES

has been approved for
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and the College of Arts and Sciences by

Judith Grant
Professor of Political Science

Robert Frank
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
ABSTRACT

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Marcuse's Subject

Director of Thesis: Judith Grant

This thesis is an exegesis of the Subject in Herbert Marcuse’s published work. In this regard, I use Marcuse’s Subject as a representation of the concepts he gleans from his diverse theoretical engagements in the history of political thought. I focus on three of these engagements and explain his conception of the Subject in each respectively. The first chapter explains the Subject that arises out of his critiques of the German Idealists (in particular, Kant and Hegel). The second chapter focuses on the Subject that arises out of his ambitious Freudian-Marxism that he develops in *Eros and Civilization* (1955). The third chapter explains the Subject in his magnum opus, *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), which represents a culmination, if not, theoretical synthesis of the previous theoretical pursuits described in the first and second chapters. By explaining Marcuse’s Subject, this thesis hopes to provide the reader with the conceptual apparatus to pursue further studies in determining what, if any, contributions Marcuse could offer political theorists today.
DEDICATION

For Kylynn

If you ever happen to wonder what kept your uncle

awake at night,

may these pages provide you with a

partial answer.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere thanks to my readers, Judith Grant, Susan Burgess, and Loren Goldman. It has been such a privilege to work with these outstanding mentors, and I look forward to the prospect of one day becoming their colleague in this field. Of course, I wholly recognize that I have miles to go before I could parallel their intellectual prowess. The same could be said of Nicholas Kiersey and Debra Nickles, who deserve my unending gratitude for always inspiring and aiding me in my academic pursuits. I cherish their mentorship and friendship.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will explore critical theorist Herbert Marcuse's (1898-1979) dialectical analysis of advanced industrial society by focusing on his account of the Subject, or the individual in advanced industrial society. By engaging with Marcuse's account of the Subject we can glean insights with his overarching political theory, which has widely been neglected in contemporary literature and even discussions of critical theory.

The first chapter discusses the theoretical framework of understanding the Subject that Marcuse builds upon and critiques in his later work. This theoretical framework is inherited from his engagement with the two most prominent philosophers of German Idealism, Immanuel Kant and Georg Friedrich Hegel. I show that Marcuse’s critical theory of the Subject hinges on his analysis of Kant and Hegel’s dialogical philosophies of ‘reason.’ Reason, as it appears in Kant and Hegel, is one of Marcuse’s chief theoretical preoccupations because it explains the ways in which, “as the developing and applied knowledge of man—as ‘free thought’—was instrumental in creating the world we live in.”¹ Kant and Hegel’s philosophies of reason provide Marcuse with his dialectics’ arsenal and purpose. Reason comes to be seen as the “undialectical element in Hegel’s philosophy”² just as Kant’s “transcendental construction of experience”³ lacks historicity and thus a dimension of the political reality the subject must confront. When ‘reason’ reaches this stalemate in Marcuse’s analysis, it becomes an unresolved contradiction, a dimension of the Subject to be developed and unpacked, in short, the theoretical boundary to be overcome. As such, the German Idealists provide the impetus for

¹ Marcuse (Beacon: 1968 [1960]), 69.
² Ibid.
Marcuse to demonstrate dialectically how and why, “Reason, and Reason alone, contains its own corrective.”

Examining Marcuse’s engagement with German Idealism’s theories of rationality and experience underscores the ways in which the Subject is neither the starting point nor the end-point in his analysis: Marcuse's Subject arises out of his dialectical engagement with Hegel and Kant and thus carries over into his engagement with Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis. Before continuing into an exploration of his Freudian engagement, the first chapter concludes by detailing how the Subject arising out of his engagement with Hegel and Kant relies on a particular characterization of essential, existential conditions that will later inform his political theory.

The second chapter will explore the Subject that emerges from Marcuse's Freudian-Marxism. The chapter will zero in on Marcuse's Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (1955). I explain how Marcuse places psychoanalysis in a dialectical relation with Marxism with his account of the Subject. Marcuse engages with Freud’s central thesis in Civilization and its Discontents (1930) that the development of an ego (of a Subject) requires the social repression of its instinctual desires. Freud’s thesis proposes a substantial tradeoff for the Subject. The repression of the Subject’s desires not only insures her survival, but also the benefits of a civil society, such as the production and mutual exchange of goods and services. Marcuse adopts Freud’s theory of the instincts for symbolic purposes but simultaneously critiques and defends one of Freud’s central concepts, the reality principle.

Marcuse (Beacon: 1968 [1960]), 69.
The most unremitting critique of any theory for Frankfurt School thinkers was that it was not dialectical, and thus ahistorical. Freud’s reality principle, the necessary external, existential limitations on the Subject's desires, garnered such a critique and Marcuse’s project in EC attempts to reconcile this impasse. Marcuse defends the principal implication of Freud’s reality principle (i.e., its being necessarily repressive and, as such, it is a mode of domination) and critiques the reality principle by historicizing it. Marcuse historicizes the reality principle by arguing that existential repressions of the Subject's desires have changed throughout time and space. Historicizing the reality principle, for Marcuse, thus necessarily historicizes modes of repression. Marcuse concurs with Freud that a basic repression is needed for the development of the Subject, but certain forms of repression change over time and thus prove to not be an ontological necessity for its development. The unnecessary forms of repression that change throughout time and space are what Marcuse calls surplus-repression. The introduction of this concept allows Marcuse to develop a theory of historical change that hinges on a radical subjectivity. Historical change is understood in Marcuse’s analysis as a Subject’s rebellion against a reality principle at a particular moment in time and space. The source of this rebellion is the subject’s desire for the gratification of its repressed instincts, what Marcuse calls “eros.”

Marcuse’s construction of a philosophy of history with Freud’s theory of instinctual drives negates dominant tenets of orthodox Marxism. Whereas the

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3 Adorno's chief criticism, for example, of Walter Benjamin's renowned essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility" was that it was not dialectical enough. There has been much scholarship on Adorno and Benjamin's correspondence and, in particular, this criticism. See, for instance, Hannah Arendt (1969), “Walter Benjamin, 1892–1940”, pp. 12-14; and Karen S. Feldman (2011). This criticism is not unique, of course, to the Frankfurt School members; it was also prevalent in Lukács and Hegel.
revolutionary Subject for historical change for Marxism is the proletarian class.\(^6\)
Marcuse’s agent is the individual Subject eroticizing her relations and actions by
developing and cultivating a new sensibility.\(^7\) Yet the replacement of a universal class
with a particular Subject is not so much a gesture of debunking Marxist theory as one
might suspect. Marcuse maintains the historical nature of Marxism and insists that the
nature of the revolutionary subject has changed since the days of Marx and Engels’
formation. As Douglas Kellner (1984) notes:

Marcuse’s position, which he continued to develop in the 1970s, has rather
important consequences for radical politics. He continually affirmed that the
industrial working class today is no longer equivalent to Marx’s proletariat,
which is a historically specific concept derived from an earlier stage of capitalist
development, and argued that the category of immiseration is no longer the
crucial criterion delineating the revolutionary subject.\(^8\)

Marcuse’s critique of the proletariat and the working industrial class, however, does not
pit him against or beyond Marxism. Despite his being “probably the most tenacious and
unyielding critic of the Marxian concept of the proletariat as the privileged revolutionary
subject,”\(^9\) his work should be seen as a continuation and historical modification of
Marxist dialectics. Marcuse does not forsake the central mechanism of Marxist dialectics
(i.e., class struggle); rather, Marcuse’s formation of a new revolutionary Subject is an
intellectual attempt to avoid rendering the components of Marxian theory ahistorical.\(^10\)

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\(^7\) “The new sensibility,” Marcuse explains, “expresses the ascent of the life instincts over aggressiveness
and guilt [and] would foster, on a social scale, the vital need for the abolition of injustice and misery”. See,
\(^8\) Kellner (University of California: 1984), 303.
\(^9\) Ibid., 305.
\(^10\) Kellner quotes Marcuse during an interview entitled “The Question of Organization and the
Revolutionary Subject” with Hans-Magnus-Enzensberger as saying, “The Marxian proletariat carries the
features of the English industrial workers of the middle of the 19th century. The rising level of wages, the
increasing power of the unions and the workers’ parties have transformed that proletariat into a working
In a similar vein, Ben Agger defends Marcuse’s political theory against those who “paint him, critically or enthusiastically, as a theorist who has moved ‘beyond’ Marxism.” One of these critical painters is Alasdair MacIntyre who, among other theoretical objectives, attempts to determine whether “Marcuse succeeds in ridding himself of his pre-Marxist standpoint.” This determination, however, misses the contribution and overall objective in Marcuse’s political theory when it comes to Marxian dialectics. As Agger explains:

To move beyond Marxism implies that one abandons class struggle as the motive force of historical transformation. It also implies that one abandons Marx’s aim of the dealienation of labor and its transformation into creative praxis. Marcuse does none of these things, although he is hazy enough about Marx to have opened the way for such readings. *Marcuse can be more fruitfully read as a Marxist who argues that class struggle—and this is genuinely beyond Marx—must spring today from individuated foundations.*

What this chapter ultimately demonstrates is the central importance Marcuse gives to the Subject (as the individual instead of the proletarian class) in historical transformation. His Freudian analysis of the Subject enables him to give an account of the ways in which class struggle emanates and informs life instincts. Thus, Marcuse arrives at a Freudian-Marxism characterized by a radical subject’s class struggle.

The chapter concludes by sketching Marcuse’s overarching political theory, which is essentially a dialectics for social transformation that is influenced by particular political objectives. I return to the Kantian and Hegelian borrowings which inform his

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11 Agger (Northwestern University: 1992), 88.
12 See MacIntyre (Viking: 1970), 58.
13 My emphasis, Agger (Northwestern University: 1992), 89.
conceptions of the Subject’s liberty and autonomy and explain how they operate in his
Freudian-Marxist paradigm.

Marcuse's political thought does not end in his ambitious (sometimes seemingly
poor) attempt to synthesize Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis. Thus, the third
chapter will explore the 'dimensional Subject' to further delineate Marcuse's political
theory and potential critical imports. Marcuse's Freudian-Marxism afforded him a
symbolic theory to explain the ways in which capitalist alienation can exist outside of the
productive process--that is to say, for example, apart from the factory, coal mine, or
textile mill--and how it is instinctually constituted in the subject's psyche. This theory,
nevertheless, creates a web of difficulty when it comes to explaining the when and how a
subject becomes a radical Subject. When the Subject is instinctually constituted by class
struggle, how could one theoretically maintain the possibility of ending that class
struggle? How is an alternative to advanced industrial society possible at all?

Marcuse’s Freudian-Marxism leads him to construct a haunting account of
advanced industrial society and its capacity to thwart radical alternatives. Again, these
radical alternatives must spring from the subject’s desire (i.e., from eros). Despite the
enormous potentiality Marcuse decries to the Subject for becoming a radical agent for
social transformation, he must also, by deduction, discuss why individuals often do not
cultivate new needs in their relations and thus why social transformation is often
hindered. Marcuse’s political theory takes a turn from a radical optimism to a sobering
pessimism when he writes about the predominant Subject of advanced industrial society,
the one-dimensional man. Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) attempts to unravel
the "hypnotic definitions and dictations"\textsuperscript{14} of advanced industrial society and the ways in which alternatives to this society are ideologically thwarted, if not repressed, by the subject herself. The third chapter will be concerned with explaining the nature of the one-dimensional Subject versus the two dimensional Subject. There are two dimensions to the human condition for Marcuse; or, at least, dialectical thought splits reality into two dimensions. Dimensionality is the epistemological result from employing the dialectical method. 'Dimensions' are treated as signifiers with their own meanings and constraints on what is known and what is possible to become known.

In this chapter I adopt Kellner's understanding of the one-dimensional and the two dimensional in the analysis of the Subject. The one-dimensional is meant to describe the pre-existing societal practices, values, institutions, and so on. The two dimensional is the conflict and tension that exists between the society as it is and society as it ought to be. One-dimensional man (the one-dimensional Subject) assumes the pre-existing institutions, norms and behaviors as legitimate and rational. The optimism of an erotic Subject that Marcuse detailed in \textit{EC}, his notions of the isolated and radical potential of the instinctual structure (\textit{eros}) as the source for a radical politics is hindered in his account of the subject in \textit{One-Dimensional Man}. As Marcuse writes, advanced industrial society "claim[s] the \textit{entire} individual" and there is "an immediate identification of the individual with \textit{his} society and, through it, with the society as a whole."\textsuperscript{15} Marcuse stresses "his" in this assertion to underscore that the Subject realizes his needs and interests in the society as it \textit{is}. His needs and interests are not autonomously realized;

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{14} Marcuse (Beacon: 1971 [1964]), 14.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{15} Marcuse (Beacon: 1971 [1964]), 10.
\end{flushleft}
they are provided for him. There is, essentially, no need, no desire to imagine an alternative society. The absence of this need renders dialectical thought, the bi-dimensional, obsolete. As Marcuse explains:

[T]he 'inner' dimension of the mind in which opposition to the status quo can take root is whittled down. The loss of this dimension, in which the power of negative thinking--the critical power of Reason--is at home, is the ideological counterpart to the very material process in which advanced industrial society silences and reconciles the opposition. The impact of progress turns Reason into submission to the facts of life, and to the dynamic capability of producing more and bigger facts of the same sort of life.\textsuperscript{16}

In Hegelian language, one-dimensional society renders the Subject into an object.\textsuperscript{17} There is no distinction between subject and object, ought and is, or even theory and praxis. As Kellner succinctly explains:

In Marcuse's usage the adjective 'one-dimensional' describes an epistemological distinction between signifying practices that conform to pre-existing structures, norms and behaviour in thought and practice, and 'bi-dimensional' thought which appraises values, ideas and behaviour in terms of the possibilities that transcend the established state of affairs.\textsuperscript{18}

Marcuse contends that advanced industrial society, as a one-dimensional society, is a "progressive stage of alienation"\textsuperscript{19} whereby the subject's 'true' needs are substituted for prescribed needs. In such a society, people see the realization of their needs and interests by conforming to the pre-existing structure. Eros is not repressed, but it is instead irrationally and falsely realized in the instruments, commodities, norms, etc., that perpetuate misery and toil. "[P]eople recognize themselves in their commodities," Marcuse explains, "they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home,

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., pp. 10-11.
\textsuperscript{17} Kellner's explanation of the Hegelian influence in One-Dimensional Man is certainly worth reviewing. See, Kellner (University of California: 1984), pp. 235-240.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 235.
\textsuperscript{19} Marcuse (Beacon: 1971 [1964]), 11
kitchen equipment." As a Subject in capitalism, for Marcuse, alienated labor and class inequality sustain a "comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom". The last chapter offers some concluding reflections on Marcuse's Subject. In particular, I focus on Marcuse's answer to a question he proposes at the beginning of his analysis in *ODM*, "how can the people who have been the object of effective and productive domination by themselves create the conditions of freedom?" It shouldn't come as a surprise that Marcuse places his bet on dialectical thought. "[T]he dialectical process," he writes, "involves consciousness". This consciousness, for Marcuse, consists in:

- recognition and seizure of the liberating potentialities. Thus it involves freedom. To the degree to which consciousness is determined by the exigencies and interests of the established society, it is 'unfree'; to the degree to which the established society is irrational, the consciousness becomes free for the higher historical rationality only in the struggle against the established society. The truth and the freedom of negative thinking have their ground and reason in this struggle.

The source of dialectical thought, for Marcuse, is imagination. His political theory maintains a hope for the Subject's imaginative potential. "The willful play with fantastic possibilities, the ability to act with good conscience, *contra naturam*, to experiment with men and things," he writes, "testify to the extent to which Imagination has become an instrument of progress." Citing French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, Marcuse writes that with this testament, "one can thus hope for the power to render the

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20 Ibid., 9.
21 Ibid., 1.
22 Ibid., 6.
23 Ibid., 222.
24 Ibid.
imagination happy." But there is a caveat to this hope, and though it is often considered *One-Dimensional Man* 's pessimistic stamp, I conclude this chapter by underscoring the way in which it serves as, perhaps, Marcuse's harshest critique of Western philosophy.

We need, in short, a new mode of imagination. The imagination that could serve as the "*a priori* of the reconstruction and redirection of the productive apparatus toward a pacified existence" cannot be, Marcuse contends, "the imagination of those who are possessed by the images of domination and death."

The subject's imaginative potential hinges on a *particular* kind of philosophy. The imagination of a pacified existence, of an existence without alienated labor and unnecessary human suffering requires, for Marcuse, a philosophy that is not predicated on death. In an interview with Frederick Olafson, Marcuse launches this critique against his former teacher and renowned philosopher, Martin Heidegger:

> If you look at [Heidegger's] view of human existence, of being-in-the-world, you will find a highly repressive, highly oppressive interpretation. I have just today gone again through the table of contents of *Being and Time*....'idle talk, curiosity, ambiguity, falling and being thrown-into, concern, being toward death, anxiety, dread, boredom' and so on. Now this gives a picture which plays well on the fears and frustrations of men and women in a repressive society--a joyless existence: *overshadowed by death and anxiety*.

The realization of an alternative society is at the mercy of, according to Marcuse, "an essentially new historical Subject." This Subject must be a "life without fear," a life acting and thinking "toward an ever more peaceful, joyful struggle with the inexorable

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26 My translation, "On peut alors espérer...pouvoir rendre l'imagination heureuse." See, Ibid., 249.
27 Ibid., 250.
28 Ibid.
29 In Feenberg and Leiss (Beacon: 2007 [1977]), 121.
30 Marcuse (Beacon: 1971 [1964]), 252.
31 Ibid., 250.
resistance of society and nature.\textsuperscript{32} Such a life is rendered possible by what Marcuse calls the Great Refusal: the subject's rejection of the prevailing society in its totality. "The fact that [one] start[s] refusing to play the game," Marcuse writes, "may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period."\textsuperscript{33}

Marcuse is quick to note that, however, "[n]othing indicates that it will be a good end."\textsuperscript{34} Critical theory, Marcuse notes, "possesses no concepts which could bridge the gap between the present and its future."\textsuperscript{35} Though it lacks these concepts, critical theory eschews the charlantanism of the status quo and maintains that freedom, as Marcuse writes, "[is] a real potentiality, a social relationship on whose realization human destiny depends."\textsuperscript{36} Because of its defense and maintenance of dialectical thought, on negative thinking, and its commitment to the realization of a liberated society, it gives its allegiance, according to Marcuse, to those who have perished without such hope.

Concluding his analysis of one-dimensional society, Marcuse quotes Walter Benjamin, "It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us."\textsuperscript{37}

My analysis concludes by offering some general reflections on Marcuse's Subject; perhaps, better stated as his Subjects. It is my hope that the Subject in these essays rejuvenates an interest in Marcuse's contributions to Critical Theory. For too long has his contributions remained dormant, untaught, and understudied. Though he may be considered a voice of past struggles in the 1960s and 70s, his Subject has an enormous

\textsuperscript{32} In Feenberg and Leiss (Beacon: 2007 [1972]), 243.
\textsuperscript{33} Marcuse (Beacon: 1971 [1964]), 257.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 143.
\textsuperscript{37} Marcuse (Beacon: 1971 [1964]), 257.
potential to speak to the Subject of advanced industrial society today. For if anything proves accurate in Marcuse's contributions, it is perhaps the old story he recounts that, as political theorists, we ought to find a way to complete:

The old story: right against right--the positive, codified, enforceable right of the existing society against the negative, unwritten, unenforceable right of transcendence which is part of the very existence of man in history: the right to insist on a less compromised, less guilty, less exploited humanity.38

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38 Marcuse (Beacon: 1969), 71.
CHAPTER 1: THE RATIONAL SUBJECT

[A] social situation has come about in which the realization of reason no longer needs to be restricted to pure thought and will. If reason means shaping life according to men's free decision on the basis of their knowledge, then the demand for reason henceforth means the creation of a social organization in which individuals can collectively regulate their lives in accordance with their needs.

-Herbert Marcuse

This chapter sketches the rudiments of the Subject in Marcuse's critical theory.

Marcuse's political project, viz. giving an account of a radical subjectivity, commences with an engagement with the German Idealists--in particular, an engagement with Immanuel Kant and Georg Hegel. Broadly speaking, his engagement with the German Idealists is concerned with theoretically transitioning from Kant and Hegel's rational subject, which arrives at theoretical principles of autonomy and freedom vis-à-vis reason, to the radical subject, which makes the concrete conditions for the realization of these principles possible vis-à-vis praxis. We'll examine this transformation by first laying the philosophical groundwork; that is, explaining the German Idealists' philosophical terrain as Marcuse understands it, and then we'll examine his critique and how he arrives at a radical subject.

Plato's Final Footnote

The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.

-Alfred Whitehead

Reason is, for Marcuse, the "fundamental category of philosophical thought...[the only one that has] bound itself to human destiny." But it wasn't until the German

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39 Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), pp. 141-142
41 Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 135.
Idealists, according to Marcuse, that reason gave philosophy its critical, transformative potential. What drove reason to this critical, transformative status was a belief that the world was not *already* rational and, thus, it was necessary to *rationalize* it.\(^{42}\) When the world is eventually *rationalized*—that is to say, brought into accord with the dictates of reason—it will no longer stand in opposition to the subject—it will be transformed from inauthentic to authentic Being.\(^{43}\) In this regard, reason "represents the highest potentiality of man and of existence."\(^{44}\) In German Idealism, Marcuse understands reason as both the means and end for man's understanding the nature of the world and bringing it into accord with his desires, needs, and so on.\(^{45}\) This philosophy of reason—that is, when reason is the substance of authentic Being—is idealism.

Marcuse stresses that the introduction of idealism's rational ontology was the beginning of a *critical* philosophy. The opposed, material world was subsumed to the mercy of the rational Subject. Whatever stood in opposition to reason, whatever was deemed *irrational* was an obstacle to be reconciled—reason demands reconciliation with the unreasonable. As Marcuse notes, reason served as the judge of the world and its

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\(^{42}\) Of course, the dividing line between the Left and Right Hegelians was the interpretation of Hegel's phrase in the *Philosophy of Right*, "Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig. [What is rational is real, and what is real is rational]" For the quote above, see Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 136, for the Hegel reference in this note see, Hegel's Preface in *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Suhrkamp: 2000).

\(^{43}\) Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), pp. 135-136.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 136.

\(^{45}\) See Marcuse's explanation of German Idealism in "Philosophy and Critical Theory" (Beacon: 1968): For when reason is accorded the status of substance, this means that at its highest level, as authentic reality, the world no longer stands opposed to the rational thought of men as mere material objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*). Rather, it is now comprehended by thought and defined as a concept (*Begriff*). That is, the external, antithetical character of the material objectivity is overcome in a process through which the identity of subject and object is established as the rational, conceptual structure that is common to both. In its structure the world is considered accessible to reason, dependent on it, and dominated by it. (136)
meaning in a "critical tribunal." It is in this understanding of the rational Subject that Marcuse credits idealism for giving an account of a free Subject. Inquiry, judgment, and examination require freedom. In light of this, freedom is the exercise of reason: freedom is the very power to exercise judgment, comprehension, and examination of the world and of the self's goals, wants, and needs. "[S]uch an examination and judgment," Marcuse writes, "would be meaningless if man were not free to act in accordance with his insight and to bring what confronts him in accordance with reason." Marcuse found the identification of reason and freedom in Hegel's subject. For Hegel, a Subject sustains itself in a coherent unity while simultaneously being a relational formation of contradictory forces. Marcuse explains that Hegel's subject "denotes not only the epistemological ego or consciousness, but a mode of existence...that of a self-developing unity in an antagonistic process." What renders man an authentic Subject (i.e., what distinguishes him from a rock or plant) is that he has the "power of self-realization". Self-realization is the consciousness of being. It is to comprehend what one is and what one can or is to become (what Marcuse conceives of as the subject's potentiality) and to realize what one can become (i.e., to make one's potentiality into reality). For Hegel, the essence of the Subject's existence is "the process of actualizing

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46 Ibid., 136.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 9.
[one's] potentialities, of molding his life according to the notions of reason."\textsuperscript{51} To reiterate the point described above, molding one's life according to notions of reason presupposes freedom. In this vein, freedom is necessary for the realization of reason in the world and comprehension of this realization (i.e., reason) is one of the essential ways freedom is to be meaningful at all. But freedom and the realization of reason would be completely meaningless without any relation to phenomena--that is, without any relation to the 'given' world. Thus, Marcuse writes that, "Nature...becomes a medium for the development of freedom."\textsuperscript{52}

When nature is considered the medium through which freedom is exercised and reason is realized, reason (and freedom for that matter) is the historical manifestation of the Subject throughout time and space. The life of reason is the history of man's "continuous struggle to comprehend what exists and to transform it in accordance with the truth comprehended."\textsuperscript{53} The comprehension of reason and the historical process of its realization is what Hegel calls \textit{Geist} or Spirit, for which humans are a medium. History is thus understood as the unfolding of reason, the development of man to higher stages of comprehending and changing the world to a world of his own. As such, understanding history as reason's realization, as unfolding Spirit, is to discover and understand "one whole and one truth: the reality of freedom."\textsuperscript{54}

The identification of reason and freedom is not only the nucleus of Hegel's philosophy but also Hegel's conclusion to philosophy itself. In a very broad

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 10.  
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
characterization, Marcuse understands the entire history of the philosophical tradition as an attempt to discover and understand vis-à-vis reason the transhistorical truth of existence (that is to say, to comprehend truth itself). Marcuse cites Hegel's conclusion to this tradition, "Philosophy teaches us that all properties of mind subsist only through freedom...[t]o speculative philosophy belongs the knowledge that freedom is that alone which is true of mind." Hegel is the last chapter in the philosophical project, or at least, for Marcuse--to borrow a locution from Whitehead, Hegel is Marcuse's final footnote of Plato. Philosophy's task, for Hegel, is complete.

Hegel's conclusion is Marcuse's starting point in an attempt to move from philosophy to social, critical theory. As this section will explain, the German Idealists were concerned with giving an account of an objective subjectivity. Kant and Hegel were both attempting to understand the objective nature of cognition, of reason itself. Furthermore, the impetus of German Idealism was to delineate what, if anything, the subject could know to be true. The previous section had concluded with Hegel's understanding of the only truth of reason (i.e., freedom). Marcuse, on the other hand, is not so much interested in discovering the "True." Rather, Marcuse wants to give an account of a radical subject; that is, a subject who does not accept the facts of the world and instead questions the 'way things are', for, as Marcuse explains, it is from a critical stance, a negative stance, that one can become radical. For Marcuse as it was for Marx, to be radical means to question the hegemonic understanding of reality itself and to change it in accordance with one's desires for gratification. It is only in the understanding

55 qtd. in Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), pp. 136-137
56 See, e.g., Marx's 11th Thesis of Feuerbach, "The philosophers of the world have thus far only interpreted the world. The point, however, is to change it." See, Marx and Tucker, (Norton: 1978 [1924]), 145.
of the world to be irrational that makes a rational subject demand changing the status quo. Discovering the "True" may have ended the philosophical tradition, but Marcuse constructs a social, critical theory to contend that it is not yet the culmination or end of history.

*From Rational to Radical*

The renowned Western Marxist György Lukács characterized Immanuel Kant’s “Copernican Revolution” as the origin of modern philosophy’s self-imposed, overarching task to explain how the world is not “something that has arisen (or e.g. has been created by God) independently of the knowing subject…[and] conceive[s] of it instead as its own product.” This characterization of modern philosophy is central to Marcuse’s understanding of German Idealism’s critical import. Marcuse believed that philosophers had perverted Kant’s importance by interpreting it as nothing more than a turn from the object to the subject and, as such, Kant’s and later Hegel’s doctrines are deemed as pure subjectivism. This interpretation, however, undermines German Idealism’s critical significance whereby reason is not a purely subjective category; rather, reason is the means by which the subject is an autonomous agent in the objective world. In this vein, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* is, as Theodor Adorno writes, “concerned less with the subject, the turn to the subject, than with the objective nature of cognition.” As Adorno points out, Kant’s positing reason as the judge at its own tribunal presupposes the

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57 This characterization of modern philosophy is not unique to Lukács; it should come to no surprise that this also comes from Marx.
58 Lukács (MIT: 1972 [1968]), 111.
59 Adorno (Stanford: 2002 [1959]) also argues this, perhaps more clearly in “Lecture One: Methods and Intentions,” 2.
60 Ibid., 1.
autonomous (in its etymological sense\textsuperscript{61}) “I”, the sovereign Subject, an “empirical individuality.”\textsuperscript{62} Reason, therefore, not only renders the Subject capable of cognizing the world of things, but also renders the Subject as an objective, \textit{critical} agent who in and of herself possesses the means (i.e., reason) to establish her own conduct in the objective world instead of relying on sources outside of herself (like divine revelation, for example). This objective account of the critical Subject is among the many Kantian borrowings in Marcuse’s political theory.

Kant’s sovereign Subject in the world of things, however, only approximates an objective account of subjectivity. This is where Marcuse (along with Adorno) turns to Hegel.\textsuperscript{63} Marcuse and Adorno\textsuperscript{64} mark the significant difference between Kant and Hegel in terms of Lukács’ concept of reification. Reification makes the “the step from Kant to Hegel”\textsuperscript{65} possible whereby the assertion that “[s]elf-consciousness is the essence of things” can be signified as \textit{the} turn from “critical to absolute idealism.”\textsuperscript{66} To better understand Kant’s shortcoming, we must briefly review his distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal.

\textsuperscript{61} Kant’s autonomy adheres to its literal meaning in Greek, \textit{αὐτός} (self) and \textit{νόμος} (law).
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{63} Though Adorno and Marcuse draw from Hegel, they engage with his ideas very differently. As I stress above, they both differentiate between Kant and Hegel in terms of Lukács’ concept of reification. Their Hegelian analyses differ, however, when one considers the role of totality. As Martin Jay observes, Marcuse was more indebted to Lukács’ Hegelian-Marxist paradigm. Jay explains Marcuse and Lukács’ “utopian telos” as the “reconciliation, harmony, the \textit{Aufhebung} of contradictions.” Adorno, on the other hand, came to challenge Hegel’s thesis that, “The True is the whole,” throughout his works--most notably in \textit{Negative Dialectics} (Continuum: 1995 [1966]). Nevertheless, Marcuse was drawn to, what Richard Bernstein observes as, “[t]he most fundamental, powerful…theme in Hegel’s philosophy…the promise and fulfillment of reconciliation (\textit{Versöhnung}).” See, Bernstein (Cambridge: 1991), 293, see, Jay (University of California: 1984), 223. Also, “Preface,” in \textit{Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit} (Oxford: 1977), 11.
\textsuperscript{64} Adorno (Stanford: 2002 [1959], 204.
\textsuperscript{65} Marcuse (Beacon: 1968 [1960]), 112.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
Empiricism's dominance as well as the legacy of the Scottish historian, David Hume, prompted Kant to retrieve human experience\textsuperscript{67} from its characterization as nothing more than that which can be inferred of the objective world through sense-experience.\textsuperscript{68} For Kant, the empirical turn renders morality and religion, pure principles of reason, void of any practical worth.\textsuperscript{69} To dispute this proposition, Kant’s analysis posits a permanent gulf between the phenomenal and noumenal; that is, things as they are in themselves and things as they appear to be in sense-experience. This distinction allows Kant to accuse empiricism’s sense-experience as mistakenly affirming the appearance of things as the reality of things; that is, equating the noumenal with the phenomenal. By making this philosophic move, Kant maintains the possibility of transcendental ideas like freedom, God, morality, and so on, strictly because there are no scientific criteria to adequately refute them. Establishing these transcendental ideas as theoretical possibilities achieves two, yet equally important, outcomes. On the one hand, it salvages morality from being an empty, meaningless endeavor; on the other hand, it inhibits one from establishing declaratory dogmas of the world’s true nature. Although Kant’s epistemological formation articulates the limitations of a purely speculative reason in that it can never penetrate the noumenal (because knowledge is entirely dependent on the mind’s ontological categories like space, quantity, cause and effect, and so on), the capacity for

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\item Better stated as the experience of rational beings.
\item For a far better explanation of Kant's preoccupation with empiricism, see Loren Goldman (2012), "In Defense of Blinders: On Kant, Political Hope, and the Need for Practical Belief".
\item Kant writes, “On the side of empiricism in determination of the cosmological ideas, or the antithesis, there is first, no such practical interest from pure principles of reason as morality and religion carry with them. Mere empiricism seems rather to take all power and influence away from both.” See, Kant (Cambridge: 1998), 499.
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individuals to act in accordance with the noumenal as moral agents or adherents to transcendental ideas, nevertheless, gives reason a *practical* function and worth. These theoretical outcomes aside, the shortcoming that Hegel comes to capitalize on is Kant’s great divide between the phenomenal and noumenal: Hegel argues that the two are not independent of each other; instead, they are in a *necessary* relation to one another.\(^70\) Both Adorno and Marcuse contend that Kant’s divide between the phenomenal and noumenal, the subject and the object (along with Kant’s philosophical project which is primarily concerned with, as Adorno explains, “ground[ing] permanent existence in the idea that the rules of thought…are immutable,”\(^71\) ) reifies the world; that is, the “poles of knowledge are drawn further and further apart.”\(^72\) Kant cannot conceive of any historical dynamism of the world’s phenomena. Rather, the subject in Kant’s account of the external world always fails to obtain any knowledge of an unchanging, “true” reality (i.e., the noumena). The “true” nature of things exists outside the subject and, in this regard, the world’s objects, to borrow a locution from Marx, seemingly take on a life of their own.\(^73\) Thus, reification is when the objective world becomes distinct from the subject and, as such, “what in the social world seem to be the relations of things and ‘natural’ laws that regulate their movement are in reality relations of men and historical forces.”\(^74\) As I mentioned above, like Adorno, Marcuse differentiates Hegel’s idealism from Kant’s primarily in that the former “attempts to show that man can know the truth only if

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\(^70\) “Hegel had the brilliant insight that the two spheres that point in two different directions in Kant—the world of phenomena and the world of noumena, which is separated by one of those trenches so familiar in Kant—stand in a necessarily reciprocal relation to each other.” In Adorno (Stanford: 2002), 209.

\(^71\) Ibid., pp. 114-115.

\(^72\) Ibid., 115.


\(^74\) Marcuse (Beacon: 1968 [1960]), 112.
he breaks through his ‘reified’ world.” When Kant separates the world of things from the subject, the “world is an estranged, untrue world” and it becomes increasingly difficult within this ideological illusion for man to “recognize himself and his own life ‘behind’ the fixed form of things and laws.” This recognition is imperative for any notion of historical change or political practice, for, as Marcuse notes, “with [it] goes the doing.” The subject can only become a meaningful political agent by her recognition that she has the capacity to act autonomously (Kant’s theoretical import) within it and actually change the external, objective impediments on this autonomy (Hegel's import).

Marcuse places his theoretical hope of breaking the spell of reification more in Hegel than in Kant, however. The recurring theme of almost every one of his published works is Hegel's determinate negation, which Marcuse takes to be the most critical aspect of reason and the "central category of dialectic". In short, determinate negation explains how a dialectic can unfold--the negation of a thesis does not eliminate it completely. For example, though two office chairs may be qualitatively different (one has wheels and the other does not, for example) and negate each other because they do not have the same qualities, they still retain a positive element, which is that they are unified in the concept of chair (this simply means, despite their differences, they're both chairs).

Moving away from banal examples, Marcuse's dedication to Hegel's determinate negation is most eloquently explained in his preface to *Reason and Revolution: Hegel*

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75 Hegel does not coin the term “reification.” However, Marcuse and Adorno glean Lukács concept from Hegel’s analysis of observing reason [*beobachtende Vernunft*]. See, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (trans. A.V. Miller), pp. 139-185. For the quote above, see, Marcuse, Ibid.
76 Marcuse (Beacon: 1968 [1960]), 112.
77 Ibid.
78 Marcuse (Beacon: 1968 [1960]), vii.
Marcuse characterizes his overall objective in R&Rs as an attempt "to make a small contribution to the revival, not of Hegel, but of a mental faculty which is in danger of being obliterated: the power of negative thinking." Restating the themes I discussed in the first section of this chapter, Marcuse understands Hegel's concepts arising within the Idealist topography of a contradictory world—such as the irrational world in which "the unreasonable becomes reasonable," where "unfreedom is the condition of freedom," and so on. For Marcuse, the dominant mode of thought in his time obscured this contradictory world and rendered the Subject a passive agent, receiving and affirming the state of affairs rather than critiquing and doubting them (the latter gives way to the possibility to reject them, whereas the former maintains their illusory ontological status). Hegelian jargon aside, what Marcuse is driving at is that the subject ought to approach the world negatively—that is to say, rather than affirming the political and social assurances that we live in a 'free' world, one ought to be doubtful. The reason for which the subject, or we, for that matter, ought to assume a negative stance towards any state of affairs is not necessarily so that we automatically stand opposed to advanced industrial society (or any social order) but rather so that there is a recognition of potentialities that cannot exist otherwise. We ought to act, in short, as though freedom has yet to be realized rather than act and think as though it has been already, so that new potentialities for a free society can be contemplated and deliberated over and possibly achieved.

79 Marcuse (Beacon: 1969), vii.
80 Ibid.
Perhaps I have used the example of 'freedom' unfairly. To restate what I explained in the first section regarding Hegel's identification of freedom as a transhistorical truth of the subject's existence in terms of negation is to further elaborate Marcuse's trouble with Hegel's "Idealism by default". Freedom is the perpetual negation of an unfree world; it is "essentially negative: existence is both alienation and the process by which the subject comes to itself in comprehending and mastering alienation." To speak of a 'free' world would be to speak of the subject's 'mastering alienation' in such a way that it would bring about "a state of the world' in which the individual persists in inseparable harmony with the whole". Hegel, Marcuse observes, "relegat[es] [freedom] to the realm of pure thought" because of his skepticism of the possibility of achieving such a free world.

Determinate negation is "critical logic", but, Marcuse writes, "whatever liberation it may bring is a liberation in thought, in theory." Marcuse concedes that the separation between theory and practice is an unavoidable product of an unfree society, but he maintains an optimism (not often found among the Frankfurt School members) that "theory may help to prepare the ground for their possible reunion".

_Reason's Stalemate and Critical Theory_

Critical theory's interest in the liberation of mankind binds it to certain ancient truths. It is at one with philosophy in maintaining that man can be more than a manipulable subject in the production process of class society.

-Herbert Marcuse

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81 Ibid., ix.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., xii.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 153.
In reviewing Marcuse's engagement with the German Idealists, we can now begin to understand the Subject that concerns his critical theory. As the previous sections have explained, the Subject in German Idealism is a rational being whose existence requires or, rather, is defined by freedom, and Marcuse's critical theory attempts to preserve these universal characteristics in critical theory. As he writes, "[this] Universality gives [rationality and freedom] an almost revolutionary character". It is revolutionary in character because of its notions of equality; that is, that all subjects have the capacity to be rational, autonomous, and free. Philosophy, nevertheless, "cannot make them concrete." For Marcuse, the values that occupied the German Idealists had been, as Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss explain, "well explicated in conceptual terms in the tradition of Western philosophy, but...philosophy seemed incapable of envisioning how they might actually be realized in social life." What occupies Marcuse's formulation of a social, critical theory is at once giving a theoretical account of how the abstract "bourgeois" ideas of freedom, rationality, and autonomy are real possibilities insofar as they can be put into social practice in contemporary society. When the ideals remain abstract, Marcuse not only thinks that philosophy loses its transformative power (i.e., bringing about radical change in realizing these potentialities) but also that they serve a repressive character. Douglas Kellner (1984) explains Marcuse's understanding of these ideals becoming more abstract and serving forms of repression:

Marcuse thinks that these philosophies and ideals tend to become more abstract and formal ideologies which the bourgeoisie uses to legitimate and mystify social conditions...Marcuse believes there are conservative-conciliatory tendencies in

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89 Ibid., 152.
90 Ibid., 153.
91 Feenberg and Leiss (Beacon: 2007), xxi.
bourgeois philosophy...which primarily function to conserve the bourgeois order of private property, possessive individualism, the unrestricted market, and the right to accumulate unlimited capital.\(^92\)

In this vein, Marcuse has the same theoretical objective found in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), which in part argued that the ideals and concepts of the Enlightenment--viz. the characteristics of the subject in German Idealism--were never realized in advanced industrial society and may be impossible to realize. As they write at the outset in *Dialectic,* "Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity."\(^93\) The ideals of the Enlightenment--namely self-determination, freedom, and so on--were not realized because their concrete realization had been replaced with their abstractions. With the advent of advanced industrial society, the emergence of capitalism and its repressive social structure (i.e., class society), philosophy--in particular, the concepts of the Enlightenment that philosophy had proclaimed to discover--assumed a repressive character.\(^94\) In Marcuse's understanding, the revolutionary components, the critical aspects of German Idealism, had been absorbed into bourgeois society to ideologically obscure socially unjust, repressive *material* conditions. "Philosophy," Marcuse writes, "made its peace with man's determination by economic conditions".\(^95\) The subject's self-determination, or autonomy in Kantian parlance, became a hegemonic ideology of individualism.

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\(^92\) Kellner (University of California: 1984), 117.
\(^93\) Horkheimer and Adorno (Stanford: 2002), 1.
\(^94\) "Philosophy] has allied itself with repression." See, Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 153.
\(^95\) Ibid., 153.
Adorno and Horkheimer explain this phenomenon and introduce their culture industry thesis, which is meant to describe the mass-production of conformist ideology, wherein the individual realizes himself in the existing structure of society and comes to regard it as just, free, and rational. Adorno and Horkheimer maintain, however, that the autonomous, free individual in advanced industrial society is only an illusion:

In the culture industry the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standardization of the means of production. He is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned. Pseudo individuality is rife....[t]he peculiarity of the self is a monopoly commodity determined by society; it is falsely represented as natural....Individuation has never really been achieved.  

The Frankfurt School's critical theory thus understood two aspects of advanced industrial society. On the one hand, it championed liberatory philosophies of the Enlightenment--that is, liberating the individual from superstition and dogma and affirming individual autonomy. On the other hand, advanced industrial society used these abstract liberatory notions to congeal the repressive state of affairs (i.e., class inequality, alienated labor, and so on). Advanced industrial society is simultaneously philosophically progressive and materially reactionary. Therefore, critical theory, in the Frankfurt School's formulation, is immanent critique, which, as Kellner explains, "confronts ideology with social reality." Critical theory is concerned with demonstrating the ways in which the social reality of advanced industrial society fails to serve the interests of its subjects and also maintain bourgeois conceptions of freedom, rationality, and autonomy as abstract fictions.
The ideals of freedom have remained ideological abstractions, but they are, for Marcuse, ideals to be defended and used oppositionally against the prevailing society. "If freedom is man's ability to determine his own life without depriving others of this ability," Marcuse writes, "then freedom has never been a historical reality--to this very day."99 With the advent of freedom never becoming a historical reality, it is thus a potentiality against which advanced industrial society ought to be measured. At this point, however, we have to re-question where the very idea of freedom spawns from, especially if we are to speak of it in an unfree society.

The simplest and most obvious answer to this question is the Subject. As the previous sections of this chapter explained, the German Idealists (in particular, Hegel) explained how reason presupposed freedom. Though Marcuse agrees with this analysis of freedom, he and the Frankfurt School nevertheless acknowledged how reason served counter-liberatory purposes when it became instrumental.100 Horkheimer explains instrumental rationality in terms of means and ends: instrumental reason is only oriented towards achieving an end without deliberating on the value of ends. The classic example of the horrors of instrumental reason are Mussolini's trains always running on time. Reason, in this form, does not critique or philosophize its own ends and thus often affirms and accepts the social organization as it is despite its being freely exercised. Alexandre Kojève, in his lectures on Hegel, launched a similar critique against German Idealism when he said, "The man of Reason, when he doesn't philosophize recognizes the reality

100 See, Horkheimer (Continuum: 2004 [1947]), in particular chap. 1.
of the world: he accepts it without wanting to change it. Thus the Frankfurt School, including Marcuse, acknowledged that a theoretical account of an alternative society, a liberated society wherein the ideals of the Enlightenment are realized, cannot be based on reason that does not critique or exercise reason on itself. From this theoretical gap, Marcuse began to creatively engage with theories of the Subject--from Freud's psychoanalysis to hedonistic theories of pleasure and sensuality--and how the Subject arrives at a rational conception of freedom that is married with the Subject's deliberation of potentially valuable, desirable ends.

Despite the many critiques of 'reason' (especially in its instrumental manifestation), Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer never abandoned reason's liberating potential for the Subject, and he always returns to reason in all his diverse theoretical engagements. Although he sought to give an account of freedom in other human spheres (such as happiness), reason would always come back and render us, in Nietzsche's characterization, our own guinea pigs. An example of this is found in one of Marcuse's earliest essays, "On Hedonism" (1938). This essay provides much insight into Marcuse's later theoretical preoccupations. It is also an essay that exemplifies his dedication to the Hegelian paradigm.

Similar to Hegel's conclusion to philosophy, one of Marcuse's central claims in "On Hedonism" is that, "Happiness, as the fulfillment of all potentialities of the

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101 My translation, see, Kojève (Gallimard: 2000 [1947]), 81.
103 Kellner correctly observes that "On Hedonism" was Marcuse's first engagement with "needs, sensuality and happiness, which was [sic] to be a major focus of his later philosophy." See, Kellner (University of California: 1984), pp. 119-120.
individual, presupposes freedom: at root it is freedom."\textsuperscript{104} Marcuse conceives of happiness as the satisfaction of the subject's needs, wants and desires. Logically, then, the \textit{act} to pursue these potentialities, to realize them, requires freedom. As Kellner explains, "without the freedom to satisfy one's needs and to act in self-fulfilling ways, true happiness is impossible."\textsuperscript{105} Marcuse's thesis is not simply gesturing at Hegel, but also an attempt to jab at the idealist tradition \textit{in toto}.

In its bourgeois conception (i.e., in the Idealist conception and in advanced industrial society), freedom rejects happiness--which Marcuse equates with pleasure. "The attempt to include happiness in the autonomous development of the person is abandoned," Marcuse writes, "and a virtue is made out of abstract freedom that accompanies social unfreedom."\textsuperscript{106} Marcuse's philosophical culprits or whipping boys in this vein are Kant and Fichte. In their formulations, the subject's autonomy was contradicted by the contingency of pleasure.\textsuperscript{107} The subject's autonomy is contradicted when her happiness is contingent upon external sources, thus debasing her autonomy and very capacity to act morally. Whether or not this critique is accurate of Kant and Fichte's positions,\textsuperscript{108} Marcuse nevertheless sought to dispute the apparent lack of conceptualizing

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\textsuperscript{104} Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 180.
\textsuperscript{105} Kellner (University of California: 1984), 120.
\textsuperscript{106} Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 181.
\textsuperscript{107} Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 181.
\textsuperscript{108} Although I'm sidestepping this debate, I would like to briefly address it. It's fair to assume, even though he doesn't cite it, Marcuse is critiquing Kant's position on pleasure in the \textit{Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals}. If this work is the only purview informing Marcuse's understanding of Kant and pleasure, we could lend some leniency to his critique. However, much thanks to Loren Goldman for directing me to some scholarship (as well as the direct passages in Kant) that has emerged in the last several decades (well after Marcuse's death) addressing Kant's understanding(s) of pleasure. A brief passage in \textit{Critique of Practical Reason} as well as a brief passage in \textit{Theory and Practice} hints at a happiness that arises out of following the moral law; that is, a 'moral feeling', a happiness linked with pure reason, independent of sensual (even erotic pleasure) which \textit{would} jeopardize the subject's autonomy in Kant's formation. This moral pleasure is now well-discussed among Kant scholars. See, e.g., Morrison (Ohio University: 2008), in
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freedom and rationality (autonomy to be more precise) in tandem with pleasure and happiness. For Marcuse, if rationality can be realized in a *real* form (such as in the social arrangement of labor, production, and so on), this also means that happiness is a *real* potentiality rather than an abstract idea or subjective fantasy. In answering what constitutes *real* happiness, Marcuse contends that *real* happiness can only exist in a *rational* form of society. Thus, drawing the connection between happiness and rationality becomes ever more paramount:

> With the development of social antagonisms the connection of happiness with knowledge was obscured. The abstract reason of isolated individuals is certainly powerless over a happiness abandoned to contingency. But this very social development has also brought forth the forces which can once again bring about that connection.\(^\text{109}\)

In Marcuse's view, happiness not only presupposes freedom, but also the *knowledge* of what to freely pursue in order to achieve happiness—in short, the subject must have knowledge of her *true* interest. The subject in advanced industrial society, however, takes the existing societal structures, norms, and so on, as her own *true* interest, when the prevailing *irrational* social system (that exacerbates drudgery, toil, inequality, and so on) would actually not serve any subject's *true* interest and thus thwart *real* happiness. As Kellner explains, "it is impossible for most people to be truly happy in the present society, not only because of the obstacles to freedom and happiness in the labour particular chap. 2; on 'moral motivation', see Guevara (Boulder Westview: 2000); also see Barbara Herman's "Rethinking Kant's Hedonism" in Byrne, Stalnaker, Wedgwood (Bradford Books: 2001); or even Boyson (Cambridge: 2012) in chap. 1, which offers an interesting overview of literary theorists' preoccupations with Kant's aesthetics (in particular, Kant's seven-page account of pleasure and the beautiful in *Critique of Judgment*) as well as her brief account of historians and philosophers' attempts to "shift the image of Kant's 'dry' formalism, focusing on the way in which his ideas of reason are embodied and the richness of his discussion of feeling and affect" in the "Introduction," 15. For the passages in Kant paraphrased above, see, *Critique of Practical Reason* 5:80 and *Theory and Practice* 8:283.\(^\text{109}\) Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 195.
system, but because the system's dominant pleasures are false and restrictive of true happiness and freedom." As Marcuse will explain in his later work (One-Dimensional Man [1964]; cf. An Essay on Liberation [1969]) the subject in advanced industrial society sees her self-realization in the commodities and in consumer culture; the subject has, therefore, assumed false needs, false desires, and false happiness. To solve this riddle of domination, Kellner explains that Marcuse returns to reason's critical power:

Reason must define true needs and the real interests of the individual and society, and must attack the prevailing false needs and repressive interests of the individual's happiness.

Happiness and unhappiness are thus in part social affairs that can be influenced by social practice.\(^\text{111}\)

We have reached the earliest formulation of Marcuse's critical theory. The implications of happiness being 'social affairs that can be influenced by social practice' are such that the social organization of society must be arranged in a manner conducive to the individual's gratification of her desires. The subject must rationally arrive at what and how objective forces shape, constrain, and even hinder her happiness. Therefore, even though reason, rationality, freedom, and autonomy have been matters of speculative reason (in German Idealism and in advanced industrial society) Marcuse returns to reason's radical potential to actually change the objective arrangement of social affairs and realize a rational social setting, but this setting is dependent upon a rational and radical Subject that seeks to achieve real happiness. If advanced industrial society, the rise of National Socialism, or German Idealism offer us anything, according to Marcuse,

\(^{110}\) Kellner (University of California: 1984), 121.

\(^{111}\) Ibid.
it is the recognition that "Reason itself is at stake".\textsuperscript{112} Part of critical theory's project then is to,

\begin{quote}
\text{driv[e] Reason itself to recognize the extent to which it is still unreasonable, blind, the victim of unmastered forces. Reason, as the developing and applied knowledge of man--as 'free thought'--was instrumental in creating the world we live in. It was also instrumental in sustaining injustice, toil, and suffering. But Reason, and Reason alone, contains its own corrective.}\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}

In the Marcusean spirit of guarding against abstractions, we must recognize that whenever Marcuse speaks of reason and its corrective, critical potential, he is ultimately speaking of the Subject. German Idealism had provided Marcuse with the concepts that, in his view, ought to be defended. The best defense for them, according to Marcuse, is not that they remain in incomprehensible metaphysics or in the heads of armchair philosophers; rather, the best defense is to theoretically defend the \textit{idea} that these ideals can be realized in the Subject's existence. The Subject is the only possible agent for such realization: the ideals of men and women are not to be realized by anything other than themselves. The difficulty that arises in the reified world of advanced industrial society is the Subject's affirmative reasoning and belief in an illusory, meaningless happiness--a happiness that satisfies itself with commodities that were produced by alienated labor, a common euphemism for the servitude of most for relatively few comfortable conformists. The pervasive conformity of the current state of affairs (at least in Marcuse's time), spawning in part from the decline of reason's negativity, is what Marcuse early on (1938) referred to as 'affirmative culture' of which he described its 'real miracle' succinctly:

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This is the real miracle of affirmative culture. Men can feel themselves happy even without being so at all. The effect of illusion renders incorrect
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\textsuperscript{112} Marcuse (Beacon 1968 [1960]), xii.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., xiii.
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even one's own assertion that one is happy. The individual, thrown back upon himself, learns to bear and, in a certain sense, to love his isolation. In its idea of personality affirmative culture reproduces and glorifies individual's social isolation and impoverishment.114

Affirmative culture would later be developed in depth in Marcuse's One-
Dimensional Man (1946). What must be momentarily noted here, however, is that affirmative culture produces a particular Subject. Marcuse thus maintains the modernist impulse (found in Adam Smith and even in Karl Marx) that theory is to concern itself in understanding the changing subject throughout time. The Enlightenment's legacy, in short, was not just the production of ideas and ideals that float above us in Plato's world of forms, but ideals that have nevertheless informed, shaped, and molded a Subject to act, believe, and behave radically different than any other before him. The Subject's actions as well as ideals for a rational society have been corrupted, nevertheless. Critical theory's impetus is thus an attempt to offer some theoretical corrective, one that Marcuse hopes could transform into meaningful, radical action. It is to understand what and who we are, what and how we act that must be the first steps in realizing what and who we can become.

These themes, all concerning the Subject, will recur in Marcuse's published work, but, as we shall see, Marcuse engages with them in a variety of different, sometimes creative and controversial ways. One creative and controversial way is Marcuse's engagement with Freud's theory of the instincts in Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (1955) and it is to this engagement we now turn.

114 Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 122.
CHAPTER 2: THE EROTIC SUBJECT

Psychoanalysis elucidates the universal in the individual experience. To that extent, and only to that extent, can psychoanalysis break the reification in which human relations are petrified.

-Herbert Marcuse\textsuperscript{115}

Marcuse's work made it possible to read Marx differently.

-Terrell Carver\textsuperscript{116}

The previous chapter focused on the Subject arising out of Marcuse's engagement with the German Idealists. Most of this engagement occurred during the earliest moments in the Frankfurt School's construction of a social, critical theory. In the early 1950s, Marcuse began to analyze and critique the predominant Idealist conceptions of the subject, rationality, and freedom through a more provocative lens. Marcuse's early works (most notably \textit{R\&R}) had stamped him as a Hegelian-Marxist, using the dialectical method for the deconstruction of social phenomena and as a means to explain culture's totalizing power in capitalist and fascist societies alike. In these critiques, however, Marcuse noticed a particular gap in Marxism.

Although he was committed to Marxism, he was an unabashed autonomist—that is to say, at once highly critical of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union and throughout his life, abstained from its membership. Indeed, Marcuse wrote a scolding polemic against the Soviet Union in his unfortunately poorly received \textit{Soviet Marxism} (1958). Marcuse contended that the Soviet Union was engulfed in repressive rationality akin to advanced industrial society; "socialism in one country," he wrote mockingly of Stalinism, "provided the general framework for Soviet Marxism...[which] serves to

\textsuperscript{115}Marcuse (Beacon: 1966 [1955]), 254.
provide a world-historical justification for repressive functions of the Soviet state."\(^{117}\) In addition to offering a provocative, scathing critique of the Soviet Union, his *Soviet Marxism* reveals his increasing skepticism of Marxian categories. In particular, Marcuse became more skeptical of Marxist notions of class struggle and historical change.

Some political theorists have situated this skepticism (not just of Marcuse's, but of all the Frankfurt School members) within the 'Crisis of Marxism' paradigm.\(^{118}\) This view, broadly defined, sees the skepticism towards Marxian concepts as arising out of their failure to adequately predict and explain social phenomena in light of the Soviet Union. Despite the outliers in this particular understanding of the 'crisis,'\(^{119}\) this perverts Marcuse's skepticism of Marxian categories and his later commitment to re-conceptualizing them.

Marcuse's skepticism does not arise from Marxism's failure to predict or explain; rather, it arises because of Marxism's neglect of the individual; that is to say, the Subject. To address this shortcoming in Marxism, Marcuse started formulating a radical subjectivity using Freud's theory of the instincts while simultaneously revising Marxian understandings of historical change. This chapter explores his formulation, which has often been characterized as Marcuse's Freudian-Marxism. In order to understand his

\(^{117}\) Marcuse (1969 [1958]), 94.

\(^{118}\) See, e.g., Kellner (1984); Agger (1992), particularly chaps. 1-3; and Jacoby (1971).

\(^{119}\) In particular, Agger (1992), who 'modernizes'--maybe even postmodernizes--the 'crisis' by eloquently writing:

Too frequently, Marxism and feminism degenerate into slogans; they become life-styles and shelves full of books, merely symbols of affiliation. Radical temperament, emotional commitment, intellectual rigor all fail in themselves to shift power. That is the real issue.

Today, virtually everything is arrayed against political and theoretical heroics. (54)

The late Christopher Hitchens (Basic Books: 2005), a once self-proclaimed socialist and activist, echoed Agger's lambasting critique of contemporary Marxist-feminists and (for many) their all-too-often hailed slogan, 'the personal is political.'
synthetic theory, we'll first examine his analysis of Freud and the Subject arising therefrom in *Eros and Civilization* (hereafter *EC*). From this examination, we'll then turn to Marcuse's theory of historical, radical change and take a long road in explaining how he simultaneously critiques and re-imagines Marxism and its emancipatory potential.

**The Subject and Eros**

In *EC*, Marcuse engages with Sigmund Freud’s central thesis in *Civilization and its Discontents*, which is that a repressive society is necessary. Freud predicated the subject's survival, indeed the very existence of a self or *ego*, on the repressed instincts of the *id*. According to Freud, human organisms are instinctual: they are driven by biological desires like sexual gratification and hunger, for example. Such desires make up the *id*, which is one of the three categories Freud creates for classifying the human organism’s psyche, the other two being the *ego* and *superego*. The *id’s* desires are not easily fulfilled because human organisms are situated in existential conditions that are not always subject to their will. Blindly pursuing the *id’s* desires without any recognition of these existential conditions, what Freud calls the reality-principle, is self-destructive. If the subject failed to recognize the existential scarcity of food, for example, and satisfied her hunger without rationing any food for later, the chances for her survival are unlikely. The human organism must recognize the reality-principle and adapt to its circumstances. The interaction between the real world and its concrete conditions, or the reality-principle, and the *id’s* desires, or the pleasure-principle, leads to the development of the *ego*. Self-preservation as well as the controlled satisfaction of the *id’s* desires is the
effect of the *ego’s* cunning engagement with a reality that does not readily bend to human desire.

The reality-principle confronts the pleasure principle, and, arising from these antagonistic, yet equally dictating forces, is the *ego* for the purpose of self-preservation. Self-preservation is not an instinctual drive. Rather, it is the repression of the instinctual drives. As Marcuse explains in *EC*, “[u]nder the influence of the external world (the environment), a part of the *id*…gradually developed into the *ego*” (30). Marcuse summarizes the “chief function of the *ego*” as that:

...of co-ordinating, altering, organizing, and controlling the instinctual impulses of the *id* so as to minimize conflicts with the reality: to repress impulses that are incompatible with the reality, to ‘reconcile’ others with the reality by changing their object, delaying or diverting their gratification, transforming their mode of gratification, amalgamating them with other impulses, and so on.120

Citing Freud, Marcuse continues, “In this way, the *ego* ‘dethrones the pleasure-principle, which exerts undisputed sway over the process in the *id*, and substitutes for it the reality principle, which promises greater security and greater success.’”121 The *ego’s* functions are *vital* in that they, as Marcuse explains, “secure instinctual gratification to an organism that would otherwise destroy itself.”122 This analysis is primarily a theoretical account of the individual’s relation to her environment and neglects the social and hence political implications. Freud’s third category of the human psyche, the *superego*, attends to this shortcoming.

The *superego* results from a social relation; in particular, the infant’s dependent relation to her parents. As Marcuse states, “the parental influence remains the core of the

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120 Marcuse (Beacon: 1966 [1955]), 30.
121 Ibid., pp. 30-31
122 Ibid., 31.
superego.” 123 Parents, particularly the father figure, serve as the child’s reality-principle that disciplines and represses the child’s desires for instinctual gratification. Parents repress these desires by subjecting their child to acceptable norms and standards of behavior. “Subsequently,” Marcuse writes, “a number of societal and cultural influences are taken in by the superego until it coagulates into the powerful representative of established morality.”124 Though this process commences with the parents, Freud states that, “the superego also takes on the influence of those who have stepped into the place of parents — educators, teachers, people chosen as ideal models,”125 or what Marcuse refers to as “social agencies.”126 All the restrictions with which these social agencies enforce upon the individual are, as Marcuse notes, “‘introjected’ into the ego and become its ‘conscience’” -- but these restrictions are only conscious for a time. The ego, conscious of these social agencies’ restrictions, becomes habituated to these restrictions and they are relayed to the unconscious superego, which preserves the so-called truth and ‘picture’ of the reality principle.

In sum, Freud articulates in terms of the clash between the reality-principle and the pleasure-principle the need for a methodical repression of the Subject’s desires in order to ensure a peaceful, productive cohabitation can be articulated. Freud’s theory of the instincts has, in this regard, been interpreted as a theoretical account of civilization as a biological necessity whereby destructive, instinctual desires are regulated by forms of

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123 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
124 Ibid., 32.
126 Marcuse (Beacon: 1966 [1955]), 32.
discipline that are collectively sanctioned so as to guarantee a productive, rather than destructive, environment. Society is necessarily repressive.

In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse accepts this Freudian claim, saying that “[f]ree gratification of man’s instinctual needs is incompatible with civilized society.”\(^{127}\)

Moreover, “[t]he methodical sacrifice of libido, its rigidly enforced deflection to socially useful activities and expressions,” Marcuse writes, “is culture.”\(^{128}\) Marcuse agrees that this ‘sacrifice’ is the governing principle of Western societies; however, he parts from Freud by his treating this principle as ontological— that is to say, as a necessary, timeless, universal characteristic of civilization. Marcuse’s central argument in *Eros and Civilization* is that Freud’s theory “seems to refute his consistent denial of the historical possibility of a non-repressive civilization.”\(^{129}\)

A recurring criticism of Freud’s theoretical concepts, however, hinders one’s gleaning this ‘historical possibility.’ The particular criticism that Marcuse attempts to rebut is the contention that Freud’s theory of instincts, the clash between the reality-principle and the pleasure-principle, lacks a historical character. *Eros and Civilization* does not serve as a jeremiad against Freud’s theory; rather, it is a remonstrance against the accusation of Freud’s using ahistorical concepts and thus it is ultimately an effort to glean from Freud’s concepts “their historical substance.”\(^{130}\) Retrieving the historical character of Freud’s concepts enables Marcuse to give an account of the possibility of a non-repressive civilization by marrying it with his dialectical method, which negates the

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 3.
\(^{128}\) Ibid.
\(^{129}\) Ibid., 5.
\(^{130}\) Ibid., 35.
repressive conditions as they are, and, thereby, renders them as the “preconditions for the gradual abolition of repression”\textsuperscript{131} rather than as petrified, ontological, ahistorical conditions of existence.

Marcuse emphasizes that the reality principle is “a specific socio-historical organization of reality.”\textsuperscript{132} “It has been argued,” Marcuse writes, “that Freud’s concept \textit{reality principle} obliterates this fact by making historical contingencies into biological necessities.”\textsuperscript{133} In other words, Freud’s critics, according to Marcuse, allege that Freud extrapolates the necessary biological development and transformation of the instincts (from conscious to unconscious) from a historically constituted reality. As such, these universal, necessary conditions for the biological development of the \textit{ego} cannot be universal, necessary conditions because the contemporary social and environmental conditions are historically constituted; that is, the conditions have changed throughout time and space. According to the critics, then, Freud’s theory renders a “historical form of reality as reality pure and simple.”\textsuperscript{134}

Marcuse emphasizes, however, that Freud’s theory does not “adequately differentiate between the biological \textit{and} the socio-historical vicissitudes of the instincts”.\textsuperscript{135} Marcuse introduces, therefore, two concepts that accomplish this differentiation, surplus-repression and the performance principle. These concepts

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 34
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 35.
“denot[e] the socio-historical component”\textsuperscript{136} of Freud’s theory, which were extrapolated from his biological, theoretical concepts, (basic) repression and the reality principle.\textsuperscript{137}

Marcuse generalizes the historical character of the instincts, first, from the biological category of the superego. To restate, the superego enforces the social restrictions on infantile desires for gratification. The social restrictions the superego preserves are, Marcuse emphasizes, “not only the demands of reality but also of a past reality.”\textsuperscript{138} The superego functions as a check on the individual’s development and “denies its potentialities in the name of the past,”\textsuperscript{139} that is, of past restrictions. The id, however, is the reservoir of timeless desires, of unfulfilled potentialities, and, as such, it “projects the past into the future.”\textsuperscript{140} The instinctual conflict becomes a temporal struggle: the superego’s preservation of past restrictions is pitted against the id’s projection of its timeless desires onto the future for their gratification. The individual, herself, is constituted by a temporal struggle, the past versus the future. The ego is, partly, the present by-product of this struggle and serves as the referee between the two, to make sure that one does not annihilate the other, that is, annihilate itself.

The ego and superego, as it was previously noted, arise from the id’s struggle for existence in the world, from its interaction with the reality principle. The superego, governed by the reality principle, is the ego’s historical conscience. It is the means by which the ego may successfully achieve some of the id’s desires because it contains the

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} After introducing these concepts, Marcuse henceforth refers to the necessary, biological repression of the instincts as basic repression. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Not my emphasis. Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
truth of existential limitations and social demands. This notion of existential limitation or scarcity [Lebensnot] is where Marcuse is able to distinguish between surplus repression (socio-historical) and basic repression (biological). Marcuse affirms the existential scarcity of resources available to satisfy the id’s demands (which serves as basic, biological repression); furthermore, he emphasizes that scarcity is “the consequence of a specific organization of scarcity, and of a specific existential attitude enforced by this organization.” This ‘specific organization’ is a social organization of the existential scarcity that has varied throughout time and space. For example, feudal society organized the scarcity of land differently than later liberal society. The former partitioned land among a privileged class, characterized by hereditary nobility, whereas liberal society theoretically treated property in land as a universal, individual right.

Feudalism and capitalism are two different, historical social relationships with a common characteristic; that is, they are both modes of domination. By mode of domination is meant the relationship between man and nature; the former dominates and organizes nature and its existential scarcity in a particular fashion, at a particular time and place. Therefore, Marcuse contends that, “The various modes of domination (of man and nature) result in various historical forms of the reality principle.” By historicizing the reality principle, Marcuse generalizes that:

repression will be different in scope and degree according to whether social production is oriented on individual consumption or on profit; whether a market economy prevails or a planned economy; whether private or collective property. These differences affect the very content of the reality principle, for every form of the reality principle must be embodied in a system of social institutions and

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141 “Vital needs,” Ibid.
142 Ibid., 36.
143 Ibid., 37.
relations, laws and values which transmit and enforce the required ‘modification’ of the instincts.\textsuperscript{144}

The “modification of the instincts” implies, for Marcuse, that in addition to the basic repression common to all reality principles, different modes of domination introduce “additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association.”\textsuperscript{145} Marcuse signifies the additional controls as surplus –repression. Surplus-repression is thus Marcuse’s socio-historical constituent to Freud’s theory of instincts.

The reason why Marcuse introduces the performance principle is that he can differentiate between Freud’s biological account of the reality principle’s function (i.e., basic repression) and the socio-historical manifestation of a particular reality principle at a given time, which is characterized by its surplus-repression, is what Marcuse calls the performance principle, which changes throughout time and space. With this historicity, Marcuse constructs his political theory with a dialectical and Freudian account of social change with provocative and, at times, controversial implications.

According to Marcuse, historical change is constituted by a struggle against the performance principle. Because of his usage of Freud’s concepts, this struggle or revolt against the performance principle, for Marcuse, has its origin in the pleasure principle, which he (as well as Freud) coins as \textit{eros}. Individuals release their instinctual desires for gratification against the performance principle, which, in turn, may constitute a new, radically different reality principle. This theory is a far more optimistic reading of civilization than Freud’s. It is, moreover, a far more optimistic outlook on advanced industrial civilization than the outlooks held by Marcuse’s contemporaries like Theodor

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Advanced industrial society has its origin in individuals’ striving for instinctual gratification: the prevailing performance principle resulted from an instinctual drive for gratification, to improve former social conditions and relations. As such, advanced industrial society is the testament to individuals’ success in improving social existence. “The continual increase of productivity [in advanced industrial society],” Marcuse highlights, “makes constantly more realistic the promise of an even better life for all.”

Eros, as that which impels the individual to rebel against and transform the prevailing reality principle, is the fundamental and basic element that Marcuse uses to radically re-conceptualize the Marxian understanding of historical change. It is to this re-conceptualization we shall now turn.

*Marcuse's Subject in his Freudian-Marxism*

Marcuse sought to defend the concepts of German Idealism (notably, reason, freedom, the subject, autonomy) in his critical theory. In this section I will explain how he synthesizes as well as critiques the Idealist conceptions and the Marxist paradigm and arrives at his Freudian-Marxism. We'll start this examination with reification and work our way to his rejection of Marxism's orthodox class dialectic.

With Lukács' work, reification becomes a central category in Marxism as well as in Adorno and Marcuse's understandings of the difference primarily between Kant and Hegel. Because of his reading of Freud, Marcuse considered reification to be not simply a problem in consciousness, but one rooted in the unconscious, instinctual structure, which

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146 Indeed, Ben Agger notes that Marcuse's preoccupation with Freud alienated him from Horkheimer and Adorno. See Agger (Northwestern University: 1992), 102.

is constituted by the prevailing performance-principle.\textsuperscript{148} Citing Franz Alexander’s concept of the “corporealization of the psyche,”\textsuperscript{149} Marcuse theorizes how the conscience ego’s confrontation with external, objective repressions becomes the unconscious superego and the “repressions … become … automatic as it were”.\textsuperscript{150} As Marcuse explains, this development—that is, repressions being relayed from conscious awareness to the unconscious—is,

of the utmost importance for the course of civilization. The reality principle asserts itself through a shrinking of the conscious ego in a significant direction: the autonomous development of the instincts is frozen, and their pattern is fixed at the childhood level. Adherence to a \textit{status quo ante} is implanted in the instinctual structure.\textsuperscript{151}

The autonomous individual internalizes, according to Marcuse, not only the basic, biological repression but also forms of surplus-repression, which are socially and historically constituted. The “struggle against freedom,” Marcuse emphasizes, “reproduces itself in the psyche of man, as the self-repression of the repressed individual, and his self-repression in turn sustains his masters and their institutions.”\textsuperscript{152} In other words, the psyche of the subject maintains a socio-historical mode of domination—be it the division of labor, social relations, and forces of production in advanced industrial society, or those of Medieval Europe’s feudalist society. Most importantly, however, Marcuse's analysis of the subject's psyche and its internalization of modes of domination brings us full circle in regards to his work with German Idealism and the concepts therein. The nature of reason, discussed at length in the preceding chapter, takes on an

\textsuperscript{148} That is, the concrete, material organization of scarcity.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., pp. 32-33.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 16.
entirely different form than before. Douglas Kellner (2004) underscores this transformation and explains that Marcuse's Freudian reading demonstrates the ways in which he understood rationality as a "social construct and subjectivity [as] a product of social experience." As such, Marcuse nevertheless maintains an account of the subject's agency (i.e., *eros*) in rebelling against the prevailing performance-principle.

Liberation from the prevailing performance principle must, according to Marcuse, become an instinctual desire or need. As Ben Agger explains, "Marcuse recognizes that social change will go nowhere unless people actively desire it and live it." In this regard, Marcuse's understanding of historical change hinges on subjects cultivating new desires and engaging in some practice to realize them in the world. In 1969, Marcuse published *An Essay on Liberation* (hereafter *EL*) to further develop his thesis that radical change spawns from the development of new needs. In what is perhaps the most important passage of the essay, Marcuse explains:

> the development of awareness and needs assumes primary importance. Under total capitalist administration and introjection, the social determination of consciousness is all but complete and immediate: direct implantation of the latter into the former. Under these circumstances, *radical change in consciousness is the beginning, the first step in changing social existence: emergence of the new Subject.*

Changing the entirety of social existence rests on the emergence of a new subject that has cultivated the desires and needs to do so.

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153 See Kellner's "Marcuse and the Quest for Radical Subjectivity" in Abromeit and Cobb (Routledge: 2004), 83.
154 Agger (1992), 150.
155 My emphasis, Marcuse (Beacon: 1969), 53.
In *EL*, Marcuse also stresses that the emergence of new needs, brought about *vis-à-vis* eros, requires the "emergence of a new, spontaneous solidarity."\(^\text{156}\) Shierry Weber Nicholsen in "Eros and Other in Marcuse" explains this solidarity as central to Marcuse's theoretical project and also that which distinguishes him from the other members of the Frankfurt School,

Marcuse's attempt is more broad-based, appealing more directly to the solidarity of individuals linked through eros while at the same time evoking the possibility--a negative or absent one for which he provides no specific images--of an extension into some intuitively felt need that people sense in their current subjective experience.\(^\text{157}\)

Though Nicholsen's observations are astute, her analysis leaves this 'intuitively felt need' as something Marcuse does not explain. She makes it appear as if Marcuse is taking a theoretical leap of faith. Marcuse not only gives an account of this intuitive need in his use of Freudian concepts (in particular, the instincts), but he also explains needs as the instinctual energy spawning from a repressed *eros*.

We can briefly entertain the question of what a liberated *eros* would look like.

Unfortunately, Marcuse is rarely explicit or quick to offer a detailed account.

Nevertheless, Agger gives a theoretical image of what Marcuse envisions:

Marcuse…aims for a blurring of the distinction between the sexual and sensual such that all sorts of productive and interpersonal activities, once eroticized, will afford sensual as well as intellectual gratification. People will touch and be touched without the inevitable arrival at genital encounters; indeed, polymorphous eroticism will very possibly involve some measure of bisexuality, where people of the same sex can share intimacy without shame.\(^\text{158}\)

\(^\text{156}\) Ibid., 52.
\(^\text{157}\) See her chapter in Bokina and Lukes (University Press of Kansas: 1994), 160.
\(^\text{158}\) Agger (Northwestern University: 1992), 116.
Regardless of what the liberated *eros* would actually look like, its theoretical operation is perhaps more apparent when we examine how it comes to reject orthodox Marxism’s dialectic, which explains the unfolding, historical relation between abstract classes (such as, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie) within the totality of classless society.\(^{159}\) Marcuse’s account of eros is a dialectical account concerned with the relation between the *individual* and the prevailing performance principle (i.e., advanced industrial society). The totality of a classless society for Marcuse is subject to utopias which “are susceptible to unrealistic blueprints.”\(^{160}\) Marcuse’s political theory is instead concerned with the totality of the subject's freedom and human happiness, which is realized when society organizes its material conditions *rationally* and humanely, where they achieve human gratification by liberating sexuality and eliminate unnecessary human suffering. The social organization of society’s resources is, according to Marcuse, “a matter of reason.”\(^{161}\) In this regard, freedom, when it is treated as the outcome of a rational and humane social organization, “means a real potentiality, a social relationship on whose realization human destiny depends.”\(^{162}\) Reason is actualized when individuals’ libidinal

\(^{159}\) Marcuse distinguishes critical theory from orthodox Marxism by stating, “From the beginning the [Marxist] critique of political economy established the difference by criticizing the entirety of social existence. In a society whose totality was determined by economic relations to the extent that the uncontrolled economy controlled all human relations, even the noneconomic was contained in the economy. It appears that, if and when this control is remove, the rational organization of society toward which critical theory is oriented is more than a new form of economic regulation….Without freedom and happiness in the social relations of men, even the greatest increase of production and the abolition of private property in the means of production remain infected with the old injustice.” See, “Philosophy and Critical Theory,” in Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), pp. 144-145.

\(^{160}\) Marcuse (Beacon 1966 [1955]), 225.

\(^{161}\) Ibid.

\(^{162}\) Marcuse (Beacon: 1968), 143.
instinct freely develops\textsuperscript{163} and thus, “[r]easonable is what sustains the order of gratification.”\textsuperscript{164}

In sum, reason in tandem with \textit{eros} (or gratification), can eliminate unnecessary repression (or surplus-repression) but it doesn’t eliminate social hierarchies, or rational authority. Rational authority, the nature of which has proved to be a philosophical debate from Plato and onward, is achieved, according to Marcuse, when desire and reason achieve one another’s ends—that is, when they become the means for each other.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[163] Marcuse (Beacon 1966 [1955]), 223.
\item[164] Ibid., 224.
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CHAPTER 3: THE DIMENSIONAL SUBJECT

Mass adhesion or non-adhesion to an ideology is the real critical test of the rationality and historicity of modes of thinking.

-Antonio Gramsci\textsuperscript{165}

There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms.

-Herbert Marcuse\textsuperscript{166}

Published in 1964, One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (hereafter ODM) would prove to be the most well received and most studied of Marcuse's works. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, one cannot disaggregate ODM from Marcuse's previous theoretical preoccupations with German Idealism and Freud's theory of the instincts, as evidenced by the Subject. In this regard, it is correct to conceive ODM as Marcuse's "synthesis of theories and ideas which [he] had been developing for several decades."\textsuperscript{167} However, Marcuse's ODM is not solely a synthetic theory of advanced industrial society; rather, his synthetic theory, explicitly evidenced by the title of the work, is of the Subject in advanced industrial society. Thus, this chapter is meant to explain the one-dimensional Subject and its relations with the concepts and theories the preceding chapters of this exegesis outlined.

The first section will explain the incorporation of Idealist (to be more precise, Hegelian) aspects of the one-dimensional Subject. This explanation will aid our understanding of why Marcuse characterizes the Subject as 'one-dimensional' in the first place. The second section will elaborate on how ODM is also a continuation of his engagement with the Subject that arose out of EC—in particular, Marcuse introduces the

\textsuperscript{166} One-Dimensional Man (Beacon Press: 1971 [1964]), 11.
\textsuperscript{167} Kellner (University of California: 1984), 229.
concept of 'institutionalized de-sublimation' which explains the Subject's de-eroticization in advanced industrial society. Lastly, the third section will discuss the Subject and alienation, which is central to his conception of one-dimensional society. What this chapter ultimately demonstrates is the cumulative Subject that arises out of the concepts Marcuse gleaned from Idealism, Freudianism, and Marxism. In short, Marcuse's analyses and critiques of the German Idealists, Freud, and Marxism serve as the presuppositions of the Subject in ODM.

The Subject and Object and One-Dimensional Society

What, if anything, does it mean to characterize the Subject as 'one-dimensional'? This section will explain the one-dimensional by referring back to the concepts in the first chapter, which explained the Subject that arose out of Marcuse's critiques of the German Idealists (in particular, Hegel). I also draw from Douglas Kellner's (1984) understanding of the one-dimensional and the two dimensional (what Kellner calls the bi-dimensional), which will also be discussed at length in this section. ODM should be understood as a continuation of Marcuse's R&R--this is to say, Marcuse's conception of the Subject in one-dimensional society directly relates back to the concepts he gleaned from German Idealism, which he explained in R&R.

Marcuse's chief objective in R&R, as you will recall, was to defend dialectical thought, which maintains the contradictory nature of reality and emphasizes the critical aspect of Reason as determinate negation. 'Negative thinking' in Marcuse's understanding allows for the discovery of potentialities in the existing society, whereas 'affirmative thinking' disallows the discovery or contemplation of potentialities because it affirms and
accepts the existing world as it is—that is to say, affirmative thinking accepts the world as it is and negative thinking allows for thought to contemplate the world as it could or ought to be. Thus, negative thinking, dialectical thinking, assumes a distinction between the ought and the is; dialectical thought is in this way, for Marcuse, critical because it allows the Subject to break free of reification by rejecting the facticity of the world. In this regard, the world is at the mercy of the Subject's capacity to appropriate and transform it. Negative thinking is thus the philosophical precondition for conceiving of a free agent, the Subject, who acts out of her own will (i.e., autonomously) rather than subjugating herself to the external, outside (i.e., the object) phenomena.

In contrast to Marcuse's earlier works, such as R&R and EC, which represent his theoretical pursuit to give an account of a radical, free Subject, ODM explains the ways in which advanced industrial society greatly undermines this possibility. One-dimensional is meant to describe the flattening out of critical thinking and radical behavior: it explains theoretically how the Subject is ideologically manipulated to accept the status quo and, in Hegelian diction, how the distinction between Subject/object collapses without calamity and with unnoticed obedience.

Marcuse commences his explanation of the collapse of the Subject/object distinction (again, necessary for negative, critical thinking) by introducing mimesis, which is, in short, imitation. Marcuse defines mimesis as the "immediate identification of the individual with his society and, through it, with society as a whole."¹⁶⁸ This immediate identification with the society as a whole, when it takes on a possessive character (i.e., when the Subject identifies society as his society), has lost the second

dimension of thought and action; that is, the dimension to contemplate potentialities and
the action required to realize them:

The loss of this dimension, in which the power of negative thinking—the critical
power of Reason—is at home, is the ideological counterpart to the very material
process in which advanced industrial society silences and reconciles the
opposition. The impact of progress turns Reason into submission to the facts of
life, and to the dynamic capability of producing more and bigger facts of the same
sort of life. The efficiency of the system blunts the individuals' recognition that it
contains no facts which do not communicate the repressive power of the whole. If
the individuals find themselves in the things which shape their life, they do so, not
by giving, but by accepting the law of things—not the law of physics but the law
of their society.  

With the loss of the critical dimension, of Reason's critical negative power, the products
and technological apparatuses of advanced industrial society become actors and subsume
the Subject into its objects. In this regard, Marcuse echoes Wittgenstein's 'way of life'

[Lebensform] to explain how the products of advanced industrial society,

indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune
against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more
individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be
publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life—much better than
before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus
emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas,
aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established
universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this
universe.  

In order to understand the concept of 'one-dimensional thought and behavior', we have to
again delineate the Hegelian tenets of Marcuse's understanding of the Subject that he
unravels most notably in R&R. The Subject can only realize or understand itself as a
Subject if and only if it is aware that it is other than the Object. It is an authentic Subject

169 My emphasis, Ibid., pp. 10-11.
170 My emphasis, Ibid., 12.
when it is aware of this difference and can "be itself in its otherness." It is only in this distinction, that is to say in the two dimensional awareness of the Subject's otherness, where freedom is at all possible. Freedom is the Subject's control of the object--the Subject has the power to 'mold' and 'shape' the object and transform it in accordance with its will, desire, and so on. This transformation is essential for 'self-realization,' for the transformed object represents the objectified Subject; moreover, the transformation is an objective testament to the Subject's capacity to be an autonomous agent in the world--this process is, for Marcuse, the "expression of the basic desire of idealism that man transform the estranged world into a world of his own." Thus, the Subject's status as a free, transformative, sovereign entity in the estranged world is not possible without the two dimensional distinction of Subject/object. When the object determines the Subject's self-realization, rather than vice versa, an unfree, non-sovereign Subject, one-dimensional world prevails:

Essential to its freedom and self-consciousness is the awareness of independence from the object: a free subject controls the object and is able to use its otherness for its own projects; if, however, the object controls the subject, a condition of unfreedom exists. This is precisely the situation in one-dimensional society where the object exercises domination and control over the subject. The tension between subject and object, central to Hegel's (and Marcuse's) thought, dissolves, and the subject assimilates itself into the object and thus loses its subjectivity.

One-dimensional is thus the loss of the Subject, which also means the loss of freedom, autonomy, and critical thought--and this loss is the replacement in advanced industrial society. The Subject's authentic autonomy is displaced or finds its expression in the objects of mass production. "Self-determination, the autonomy of the individual,"

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171 From *R & R*, qtd. in Kellner (University of California: 1984), 236.
172 Marcuse (Beacon: 1968 [1960]), 110.
173 Kellner (University of California: 1984), 236.
Marcuse explains, "asserts itself to race his automobile, to handle his power tools, to buy a gun".\textsuperscript{174} The expression of autonomy in the objects of advanced industrial society epitomizes the "rational character of its irrationality."\textsuperscript{175} One-dimensional thought and behavior levels out the Subject's capacity to self-reflect and recognize its inauthentic freedom in an irrational world.

Although we can perhaps understand how Marcuse characterized the 'one-dimensional'--the collapse of the subject/object distinction, the expression of a false freedom in the objects of advanced industrial society, the immediate identification of the Subject with the society \textit{vis-à-vis} the objects of advanced industrial society, and so on--we have yet to encounter an explanation of how the one-dimensional is at all possible. In order to understand how the one-dimensional Subject is possible in advanced industrial society, we must now turn to his \textit{return} to Freud.

\textit{De-eroticization of the Subject and Submission}

In \textit{EC}, Marcuse briefly takes up Freud's concept of "sublimation" and its relation to labor in advanced industrial society. Briefly defined, sublimation is the process by which the Subject copes with social or objective repressions of her instinctual needs for sexual gratification in a non-sexual activity. This coping is the channeling of instinctual energy (created by repression) into other areas that \textit{are} socially sanctioned. This is central to Freud's explanation of the development of civilization, and he even credits sublimation for the greatest art and the most useful social goods.\textsuperscript{176} Marcuse engages with sublimation because, as Agger explains, it theoretically attests that, "There is nothing in

\textsuperscript{174} Marcuse (Beacon: 1969), 12.
\textsuperscript{175} Marcuse (Beacon Press: 1971 [1964]), 9.
\textsuperscript{176} See, e.g., Sigmund Freud (Martino Fine Books: 2011[1949]).
the objectified world not touched by desire; thus [for Marcuse] the forces of resistance and liberation must necessarily pass through the instinctual core that Freud postulated".177

_EC_ locates the potentiality for the Subject's freedom in an eroticized reality principle whereby the pleasure principle is freed from surplus-repression and shapes as well as molds the objective world. Such a world requires a nonrepressive sublimation of the instincts. In contrast to this radical Subject, where the free development of the libido is the impetus for rebelling against the status quo, in _ODM_ Marcuse explains the "de-eroticization of the environment" that hinders rebellion and forces pleasure into submission in his concept of repressive de-sublimation.178 At the time of _ODM_ 's publication (1964), the misery and toil of capitalism in Marx's day had been replaced with, for the most part, a comfortable, safe working environment in the United States. Furthermore, advanced industrial society was by no means blind to the power and influence of sexual appeal.

Marcuse's pressing question, then, is whether advanced industrial society "operates with a greater degree of sexual freedom".179 This amounts to asking whether or not _eros_ is realized _already_ in advanced industrial society. If so, we could already determine that perhaps Marcuse's thesis in _EC_ is dead on arrival. Before we jump to conclusions, however, he did anticipate this question when he wrote in _EC_, "if alienated labor has anything to do with Eros, it must be very indirectly, and with a considerably sublimated and weakened Eros."180 In _ODM_ he develops this hypothesis but seems to

177 Agger (Northwestern University: 1992), 106.
179 Ibid., 74.
180 Marcuse (Beacon: 1966 [1955]), 85.
paradoxically contend that, "mobilization and administration of libido may account for
much [of the Subject's] voluntary compliance, [as well as] the absence of terror, the pre-
established harmony between the individual needs and the socially-required desires,
goals, and aspirations."\textsuperscript{181} However, it is less paradoxical when we understand that the
"mobilization and administration" of the sexuality is not the same as the gratification of
\textit{eros}--that is to say, the nonrepressive sublimation of sexuality. In one-dimensional
society, sexuality is restricted to a range of objects to find its gratification\textsuperscript{182} but,
simultaneously, it is divested of the depth of its desires because "[it is] irreconcilable with
the established society."\textsuperscript{183} As Kellner explains, "sexual energy is contracted into a
restrictive model of sexuality"\textsuperscript{184} and that "increased permissiveness [of this model] robs
the sphere of protest of vital instinctual energy".\textsuperscript{185} De-sublimation can thus be
understood as the process where "Pleasure, thus adjusted, generates submission."\textsuperscript{186} What
Marcuse is stressing here is that in one-dimensional society, submission is pleasurable.
"[One-dimensional society] turns everything it touches into a potential source of progress
\textit{and} of exploitation, of drudgery \textit{and} satisfaction, of freedom \textit{and} of oppression", and
most strikingly, "[s]exuality is no exception."\textsuperscript{187}

The peculiar and striking aspect of one-dimensional society is that the Subject
finds pleasure and satisfaction in the objects of advanced industrial society which rob her
of true autonomy, freedom, and self-realization. This contradictory nature is obscured,
however. The Subject in one-dimensional society cannot see sources of progress as sources of exploitation, the sources of drudgery as satisfaction, and so on. This contradictory nature is obscured by what Marcuse calls the "Happy Consciousness" which,

reflects the belief that the real is rational, and that the established system, in spite of everything, delivers the goods. The people are led to find in the productive apparatus the effective agent of thought and action to which their personal thought and action can and must be surrendered. And in this transfer, the apparatus also assumes the role of a moral agent. Conscience is absolved by reification, by the general necessity of things.\textsuperscript{188}

Marcuse's use of \textit{Happy Consciousness} is not coincidental; he is referencing Hegel's account of the unhappy consciousness [\textit{das unglückliche Bewuβtstein}] in the \textit{Phenomenology}. Briefly explained, Hegel's unhappy consciousness is "the consciousness of self as a dual-natured, merely contradictory being."\textsuperscript{189} Hegel is primarily referencing religion, whereby all things holy and good are alienated from the Subject and found in God. In this way, the Subject in \textit{ODM} is not 'dual-natured' or alienated from the Good--the Good is realized in the products of advanced industrial society.

We need to underscore, briefly, the implications of the \textit{Happy Consciousness} for Marxism. Marcuse may appear to fall in line with Marxism's claim that false consciousness (what we can assume to be this \textit{Happy Consciousness}) must be eradicated in order for there to be a radical Subject--typically understood to be the proletariat (i.e., the working class). This understanding would grossly pervert the provocative theoretical move Marcuse makes in his understanding of the \textit{Happy Consciousness}. Radical change for Marcuse cannot take place in a transformation of consciousness alone. Nor can it take

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{189} Hegel and Miller (Oxford: 1977), 126.
place on the abstract level of the proletarian class. Rather, the Subject as individual is where the transformation must occur. This transformation, however, will not come about solely through consciousness. Instead, desire and sexuality themselves are a basic and necessary level of transformation. As Agger explains, "the bourgeois individual must, through critical reflection, undo his or her own distorted needs, not simply on the level of consciousness but also on the level of desire."¹⁹⁰ Thus, the political project in one-dimensional society finds its objective, which is to transition from repressive de-sublimation to nonrepressive sublimation.

Nonetheless, we must turn to another aspect of the Subject in one-dimensional society that thwarts this political project. This aspect will explain and represent the synthesis of Marcuse's investigation of Hegel, Marx, and Freud. In this regard, it comes to represent the nature of the Subject in one-dimensional society and, also, that which casts the shadow on Marcuse's political theory.

*The Subject and Alienation*

Alienation, a central category of Marxian thought, becomes highly problematic in Marcuse's account of one-dimensional society. In a one-dimensional society, where there is no two dimensional, no distinction between Subject/object, how is it at all possible to speak of alienation? Indeed, Marcuse often notes this difficulty and writes throughout *ODM* that "the concept of alienation seems to become questionable" especially when the Subjects in one-dimensional society "identify themselves with the existence which is imposed upon them".¹⁹¹ What at first seems contradictory, Marcuse writes that this

identification is a "more progressive stage of alienation."\(^{192}\) This section will explain how Marcuse understands this progressive stage of alienation and how it creates or maintains the one-dimensional.

In his essay, "Foundations of Historical Materialism," Marcuse contends that the foundations for Marx's political economy are "continuous confrontation[s] with Hegel."\(^{193}\) As is well known, Marx's primary confrontation with Hegel, evidenced in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, is the concept of alienation. Marcuse notes that Marx used Hegel's *Phenomenology* to demonstrate the "possibility of alienated labor...to have its roots in the essence of man".\(^{194}\) This is precisely how Marcuse comes to conceptualize the progressive stage of alienation in one-dimensional society.

Alienation, for Marcuse, has "become entirely objective" and "the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence."\(^{195}\) Thus, alienation is, for Marcuse, the very mechanism that pushes the dimension of potentiality from the dimension of actuality. It creates the shift from one-dimensional to two dimensional, and *vice versa*. In this way, Marcuse contends that "people are increasingly alienated from their fundamental potentiality for creative individuality."\(^{196}\) Essentially, the Subject in one-dimensional society is alienated from actual freedom and autonomy which are necessary for the realm of potentiality and the possibility of realizing that potentiality. The Subject in one-dimensional society is alienated from its freedom, autonomy, and from the dimension of potentiality, which (for Marcuse) is necessary for self-realization.

\(^{192}\) Ibid.
\(^{193}\) Marcuse (1972), 48.
\(^{194}\) Marcuse (1972), 37.
\(^{196}\) Kellner (University of California: 1984), 247.
Real freedom is substituted with a false freedom that is realized in the objects of advanced industrial society--this Subject's realization of a false freedom (false because it is realized in an alienated form) "serve[s] as an ideological veil for bondage and domination." This ideological veil functions efficiently because of the "change in the social use of instinctual energy." This brings us back to Marcuse's repressive desublimation whereby a "whole dimension of human activity and passivity has been de-eroticized." The history of alienated labor has, for Marcuse, historically preconditioned the Subject's "spontaneous acceptance of what is offered." In its less-advanced stage, industrial society was characterized by the workers' never-ending misery and toil. Alienated labor was confined to the production process where workers were paid subsistence wages and required to work endlessly in gruesome conditions for the production of surplus value. With this form of industrial society, the "Reality Principle...require[d] a sweeping and painful transformation of instinctual needs." As the productive apparatuses began to evolve and become more efficient, and commodities become more available to more social classes, "[t]he individual [had to] adapt to a world which [did not] seem to demand the denial of his innermost needs". The Subject was able to sublimate his instinctual energy outside of the production process in civil society vis-à-vis the objects of industrial society:

Technical progress and more comfortable living permit the systematic inclusion of libidinal components into the realm of commodity production and exchange.

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197 Ibid., 248.
199 Ibid., 73.
200 Ibid., 74.
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
But no matter how controlled the mobilization of instinctual energy may be (it sometimes amounts to a scientific management of libido), no matter how much it may serve as a prop for the status quo—it is also gratifying to the managed individuals, just as racing the outboard motor, pushing the power lawn mower, and speeding the automobile are fun.\textsuperscript{203}

Now that I've detailed the basic mechanisms of one-dimensional society, alienation, and repressive de-sublimation, we can begin to understand the social and individual alternative to it. Marcuse's descriptions of the alternative are very scarce, and it is left to the reader's diligence to deduce an alternative society. Nevertheless, he occasionally gives us a glimpse of the alternative he has in mind. Marcuse believes that it is necessary for the Subject to engage in negative thinking, to open the realm of potentiality and realize the \textit{actual}, existing conditions for liberation. In doing this, the Subject would come to realize the potentiality of technology "becom[ing] subject to the free play of faculties in the struggle for the pacification of nature and society."\textsuperscript{204}

The pacification of existence would mean to end the current state of affairs whereby, "a civilized \textit{bellum omnium contra omnes} [prevails], in which the happiness of the ones must coexist with the suffering of the others."\textsuperscript{205} The pacification of existence would amount to:

the development of man's struggle with man and with nature, under conditions where the competing needs, desires, and aspirations are no longer organized by vested interests in domination and in scarcity--an organization which perpetuates the destructive forms of this struggle.\textsuperscript{206}

The realization of this alternative requires the Great Refusal, which is the Subject's rejection of advanced industrial society \textit{in toto}. It furthermore amounts to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 75.
\item \textsuperscript{204} Ibid., 16.
\item \textsuperscript{205} Marcuse (Beacon: 1969), 14.
\item \textsuperscript{206} Marcuse (Beacon Press: 1971 [1964]), 16.
\end{itemize}
rejecting the restricted model of sexuality and its rigid forms in advanced industrial society. Again, Marcuse is not explicit in describing what this would look like in *ODM*. However, there is no denial that Marcuse's Great Refusal appealed to the student movements in the 1960s and 1970s and that he was also well-received among the radical circles championing sexual liberation. Marcuse acknowledged the importance and radical hope "underneath [one-dimensional society's] conservative popular base" which was "the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, [and] the unemployed and the unemployable."²⁰⁷ For Marcuse, "their opposition is revolutionary *even if* their consciousness is not."²⁰⁸

Despite *ODM*'s characterization as Marcuse's most pessimistic treatise, the sentence quoted above underscores the great hope he placed in marginalized groups. Even though the oppositional groups of the 1960s and 1970s had qualitatively different objectives--from the Hippie movement to the Black Panthers--their non-conformity, their refusal to find realization in one-dimensional society is a revolutionary act. For Marcuse, they epitomized the cultivation of new desires, of a new sensibility, which is the beginning (not the end) of a radical political project and would ultimately lead to the reconfiguration of consciousness.

When they get together and go out into the streets, without arms, without protection, in order to ask for the most primitive civil rights, they know that they face dogs, stones, and bombs, jail, concentration camps, even death. Their force is behind every political demonstration for the victims of law and order. *The fact that they start refusing to play the game may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period.*²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 256.
²⁰⁸ My emphasis, Ibid., 256.
²⁰⁹ My emphasis, Ibid., 257.
Of course, Marcuse is quick to note that "[n]othing indicates that it will be a good end." But this is the beauty--instead of horror--of his critical theory. The radical Subject differs from the one-dimensional by refusing to believe in the telos of a good end. The radical Subject understands that the "critical theory of society possesses no concepts which could bridge the gap between the present and its future". Critical theory must remain negative lest it become another affirmative object to which the Subject is subsumed. It refuses to reify the future and thus provide the Subject with the conceptual means to create a future of its own. In this way, critical theory does not give the guarantee of a utopian blueprint--which is totalizing in and of itself--instead, it gives us a method to realize something worth fighting for. For Marcuse, the first step towards the process of this realization is the negation of one-dimensional thought and behavior. This negation does not spawn from critical thought alone, it comes from practices that expand and liberate sexuality, which creates community and solidarity. It is to humanize and communalize the atomistic relations of one-dimensional man. Whether or not the Subject engages in this struggle, "It is nothing but a chance."
CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Not those who die, but those who die before they must and want to die, those who die in agony and pain, are the great indictment against civilization.

- Herbert Marcuse

I first began studying Marcuse's Subject in May 2014 because I was intrigued with his driving question, "how can the people who have been the object of effective and productive domination by themselves create the conditions of freedom?" It is this question that drove Marcuse's work; it wasn't necessarily a crisis in Marxism as some of his leading commentators, such as Douglas Kellner (1984), contend. For Marcuse, there was no crisis in Marxism; after all, the Marxian concept of alienation, as the preceding chapter explained, worked quite well in describing one-dimensional society. If there were any crisis in Marxism, it was the success in which its concepts brought about the very question Marcuse posed above. Thus, his critiques and analyses--from the German Idealists to Marx and Freud--were propelled by finding an answer to this riddle of domination. It was, as Agger (1992) observed, a theoretical quest for a radical Subject.

The radical Subject that could potentially bring about an alternative society to one-dimensional society is, for Marcuse, a "life without fear". This 'life without fear' hinges on the Subject's imaginative capacity, which is the source, according to Marcuse, of dialectical or negative thought. Marcuse maintains that imagination and memory equip the Subject with liberating potential and open up the realm of potentiality. "Rational is the imagination," he writes, "which can become the a priori of the reconstruction and

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215 Ibid., 250.
redirection of the productive apparatus toward a pacified existence."\textsuperscript{216} There is a caveat to this radical, rational potential of the imagination and that is "[it] can never be the imagination of those who are possessed by the images of domination and death."\textsuperscript{217}

The liberation of this imagination becomes the task of liberating Subjects from the 'images of domination and death.' Indeed, the liberation of memory, where the "[u]nhappiness and the threat of punishment, not happiness and the promise of freedom, linger".\textsuperscript{218} Without the liberation of memory and the imagination, "non-repressive sublimation is unimaginable."\textsuperscript{219} In \textit{EC}, Marcuse began to formulate a hypothesis of how remembrance can liberate eros. Inspired by Proust, Marcuse writes that "happiness and freedom have been linked with the idea of the recapture of time: the temps retrouvé."\textsuperscript{220} The radical Subject "uses memory in his effort to defeat time in a world dominated by time."\textsuperscript{221} Marcuse thus understands memory as a struggle against time to be "a decisive moment in the struggle against domination".\textsuperscript{222} It becomes decisive for Marcuse because death itself comes to be instinctually re-defined. In the struggle against time,

\begin{quote}
Death would cease to be an instinctual goal. It remains a fact, perhaps even an ultimate necessity--but a necessity against which the unrepressed energy of mankind will protest, against which it will wage its greatest struggle.

In this struggle, reason and instinct could unite. Under conditions of a truly human existence, the difference between succumbing to disease at the age of ten, thirty, fifty, or seventy, and dying a 'natural' death after a fulfilled life, may well be a difference worth fighting for with all instinctual energy....In a repressive civilization, death itself becomes an instrument of repression. \textit{Whether death is feared as a constant threat, or glorified as supreme sacrifice, or accepted as fate, the education for consent to death introduces an element of surrender into life}.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 250.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 250.
\textsuperscript{218} Marcuse (Beacon 1966 [1955]), 232.
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 233.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
from the beginning--surrender and submission...Theology and philosophy today compete with each other in celebrating death as an existential category: perverting a biological fact into an ontological essence[.]²²³

The struggle for a better life, for Marcuse, should not be predicated on death. Death is, furthermore, not an 'ontological essence', as philosophy and theology have rendered it. The human condition in advanced industrial society is overshadowed enough by misery, toil, and the termination of life. Marcuse urges us that the radical Subject ought to rebel against this condition, which stems from imagining a better life, one that is conducive to gratification and true happiness. Marcuse famously and controversially understood the beginnings of this rebellion spawning from intolerance. Unfortunately, when Marcuse evinced this thesis in his essay "Repressive Tolerance" (1965), he was painted not only as a radical but also as a violent extremist.

At the time of the essay's publication, the United States and the Soviet Union had already been at the brink of nuclear annihilation during the Cuban Missile Crisis, troops were being deployed to Vietnam, blacks and civil rights advocates were being beaten, jailed, and even killed in their struggle against segregation, in short, the political and cultural climate was violent and threatening for human life and gratification. Marcuse understood this social and political environment to be an act of violence and that it was the "task and duty of the intellectual" to confront such violence by "break[ing] the concreteness of oppression in order to open the mental space in which society can be recognized as what it is and does."²²⁴ Broadly speaking, Marcuse contends that tolerance closes this 'mental space' to recognize the violent social and political reality of advanced

²²³ My emphasis, Ibid., pp. 235-236.
²²⁴ Marcuse and Feenberg (Beacon: 2007 [1965]), 33.
industrial society. For Marcuse, and this is the controversy, those who perpetuate aggression, violence, and irrationality should not have the same platform as those who do not. Moreover, one should not tolerate the perpetrators of violence and aggression. In denouncing this tolerance, Marcuse reaches a striking conclusion when he contemplates the violence of the perpetrators versus the violence used against them and writes, "In terms of ethics, both forms of violence are inhuman and evil--but since when is history made in accordance with ethical standards?"225 In short, Marcuse supported violent means to overthrow the people and establishment that he argued were perpetuating and breeding violence and destruction.

This thesis cannot reconcile Marcuse's conclusions in "Repressive Tolerance," but it can at least briefly provide some theoretical context in explaining the radical Subject and counter violence. Marcuse understands advanced industrial society as one-dimensional, as a totalizing force requiring violence to subsume free, autonomous Subjects into submission and toil. This society, for Marcuse, is not predicated on the amelioration of life, love, gratification, or even joy. The objects where these qualities are ostensibly found--primarily commodities--perpetuate class inequality and hinder contemplation and imagination of an alternative social and political order. The radical Subject, then, is radical when she is liberated from the images of fear and death and violently acts against this destructive society in the name of and out of the need for a better and more gratifying life.

If one agrees with Marcuse's analysis of radical and revolutionary social change, then one should quickly reach the same conclusion as Marcuse. In this political and social

225 Ibid., 47.
struggle for a better life, there is no guarantee the ends reached will be better than the prevailing form of society. There is only a radical Subject and historical change when Subjects cultivate a need for a better life. Marcuse thought it was wholly paradoxical and irrational in his time that few in the United States and elsewhere throughout the world did not cultivate this need given the empirical reality of violence, war, the threat of nuclear annihilation, racism, sexism, and so on. He saw individuals’ free capacity for thinking critically about this empirical reality was greatly hindered in advanced industrial society. He placed his hope in what he believed to be what was suppressed by one-dimensional society: human solidarity created out of free love, a mutual desire and imagination of a better world, and in the potential for reason to distinguish good from evil and violence from peace.

In this thesis, there is a lot of unrealized critiques of Marcuse's work that I briefly touched on in these concluding reflections. Nevertheless, I contend that further study requires a solid understanding of Marcuse's formulation of a radical Subject, which this exegesis intended to provide. In the Marcusean and Benjaminian spirit, however, perhaps this understanding I've provided and the unrealized critiques gives us the possibility for new, transformative knowledge.
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