HERBERT MARCUSE'S CONCEPT OF HUMAN NATURE

By

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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of Herbert Marcuse's concept of human nature. Starting from within the framework of traditional psychoanalysis, Marcuse uses some of its basic tenets such as "repression" to reveal a dimension of thought not usually associated with Freudianism. Marcuse's emphasis on repression, for example, reiterates Freud's basic position. That is, repression must be understood in its capacities as both an ontogenetic (individual) and phylogenetic (societal) function. But, unlike Freud, Marcuse views this notion of repression as more than simply a "given" psychoanalytical fact. The character of repression is, rather, historically acquired and, consequently, modifiable through time. Accordingly, an appreciation of psychoanalytical categories suggests an investigation into their political composition.

It is argued that the relationship of psychoanalysis, as an investigation of individual psychology, to politics clearly indicates an inextricable link between the two. The individual or ontogenetic factors contributing to human nature cannot be disassociated from societal or phylogenetic considerations. Moreover, Marcuse's view of this correspondence as a dynamic or dialectical rather than static relationship illustrates his radical point of departure

from traditional psychoanalytical thought. That Marcuse arrives at this conclusion using some of the most fundamental assumptions posited by Freud represents his unique contribution to the field of psychoanalysis.

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We cannot wait and we shall not wait. I certainly cannot wait. And not only because of my age. I don't think we have to wait. And even I, I don't have any choice. Because I literally couldn't stand it any longer if nothing would change. Even I am suffocating.

- Herbert Marcuse

(December 1968)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will be an analysis of Herbert Marcuse's concept of repression. Beginning with Freud's understanding of the term as a point of departure, I shall present an exposition of Marcuse's formulation of the term "repression" with specific reference to its ontogenetic (individual) and phylogenetic (societal) features. Marcuse associates the terms "ontogenesis" and "phylogenesis" with more than simply biological or instinctual characteristics. These terms are meant to broaden our interpretation of the psychoanalytical traditional in a way which is contrary to Freud. This means understanding psychological categories as political categories. In this regard, one of Marcuse's unique contributions to the field of psychoanalysis was to extend the discussion of repression, as it is found in Freud, beyond the parameters of a distinctly psychosexual framework. This is not to say that such an endeavour was not implicit in Freud's work. Marcuse uses the term "repression" and its relationship to other key concepts such as the "pleasure principle" and "super-ego" in much the same way as Freud. As such, Marcuse insists that Freud's writing is implicitly radical, a fact usually overlooked by many of his critics.

The radical potential of Freud's work is brought out most clearly in Marcuse's discussion of human nature. Broadly speaking, such an endeavour must take into account the interconnectedness between private history and general destiny. Links between the two are made in the thesis through an exposition of processes such as "introjection" and "symptom-formation." In Marcuse's hands, these psychological principles take on a decidedly political association. While Freud's writing, especially his later metapsychological work, discusses the inextricable link between the individual and society it is left to Marcuse to formulate this relationship in a more complete, that is, political, sense. That Marcuse viewed such an interpretation of psychoanalysis as necessary indicates certain major themes which dominate his writing. First, he maintains that even an undertaking with its emphasis on individuality as 'privatized' as Freudianism cannot divorce itself from its political underpinnings. Accordingly, it is only possible to fully appreciate a term like "repression" if one addresses the political as well as individual factors which make up its character. Moreover, the importance which Marcuse places on both individual and political mechanisms resides in his interpretation of them as interdependent. Consequently, repression in this post-Freudian sense is rendered intelligible only if 'externalized',

political domination recapitulates 'internalized', personal constraint. The focus of "personal constraint" in this thesis will revolve around Freud's formulation of the eternal fact of scarcity as it is understood by Marcuse. This discussion provides a framework in which the inextricable link between historical circumstance and personal fate is highlighted. That this relationship has traditionally presupposed limited personal desire as a sui generis element of civilization provides the basis for another principal motif in Marcuse's exposition of human nature.

The distinction Marcuse makes between "affirmaculture" and civilization is integral to any understanding of his work. Put simply, "affirmative culture" is a societal milieu which corresponds to the vital needs and aspirations of human nature insofar as it sustains and furthers these needs. Conversely, the term "civilization" is used pejoratively by Marcuse to connote the traditional institutions and values, such as our own, which are repressive of the most minimal requirements for personal satisfaction. Here, though, the terms "needs" and "aspirations" are devoid of their traditional associations. Rather, they have a spiritual as well as materialist aspect, a qualitative as well as quantitative dimension indicative of a much broader dialectic which informs his work. This dialectical process, for Marcuse, is understood as a

critical analysis of tendencies and historical possibilities with a view to the immanent capacity for negative quo radical transformation within society.

Accordingly, Marcuse's writing is largely an attempt to grapple with an anomaly. Given the dialectical process and its inherent capacity for change, how can an historically conditioned phenomenon such as repression take on an immutable or transhistorical appearance as it is expressed through Freud's formulation of the eternal fact of scarcity? We shall attempt to demonstrate how Marcuse deals with this anomaly through his interpretation of psychological as political categories. Suffice it is to say at this point that the major thrust of his treatment concerns the twofold dialectical process between individual and society as well as historical circumstance and political ideology. If historical circumstance is, by definition, modifiable then individual repression which is contingent on its specific historical context must, ipso facto, not be immutable.

Starting from within this framework, we discovered that Marcuse's critical evaluation of repression necessarily has a profound impact on his interpretation of Freud's insights into human nature. Indeed, by arguing that repression can only be comprehended within its specific historical context, Marcuse's work suggests that the onto-

genetic (individual) and phylogenetic (societal) factors contributing to the maintenance of repression must be viewed as dynamic rather than static concepts.. He concludes that such fluidity indicates the possibility of overcoming surplus-repression entirely. Stated negatively, Marcuse sees the way in which Freud posits the tension between ontogenetic and phylogenetic factors to be an inadequate characterization of the individual: an implicitly radical conception of human nature but inadequate nonetheless. In view of this, another major concern of this thesis will be to explore the suggestion of liberation in Marcuse's work insofar as it delineates his understanding of human nature. Such an exposition also serves to bring attention to both Marcuse's departure from and adherence to the essential elements in traditional psychoanalytical thought.

CHAPTER II

"REPRESSION" IN THE WRITINGS OF FREUD AND MARCUSE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Herbert Marcuse's conception of human nature will be discussed as it relates specifically to repression. Drawing heavily upon a few selected texts from Freud's work, an attempt will be made to illustrate that Marcuse made a unique contribution to psychoanalytical inquiry through his stipulative definition of the term "repression". For Marcuse, the term "repression" is:

> used in the nontechnical sense to designate both conscious and unconscious, external and internal processes of restraint, constraint, and suppression.[1]

These "processes of restraint, constraint, and suppression" designate a type of repression which takes place at both a political and psychological level. This is because repression is a result of the material as well as the mental forces within a society.[2] The exercise of repression, moreover, provides an inextricable link between political and psychoanalytical categories. It is this necessary correspondence between politics and psychoanalysis which provides Marcuse with the central underlying focus of his

[1] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 7.

[2] H. Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 2.

work. This is not to say that Freud's notion of repression is eclipsed by Marcuse's understanding of the term. Marcuse's emphasis on repression is, rather, a reiteration of Freud's basic position. Repression must be understood in its capacities as both an ontogenetic (individual) and phylogenetic (societal) function. But, repression is more than simply a "given" psychoanalytical fact. The character of repression is, rather, "historically acquired" and, consequently, modifiable through time. This understanding of repression allows Marcuse a vehicle for interpreting psychoanalytical categories as political ones. As Marcuse states,

> The notion of a non-repressive civilization will be discussed not as an abstract and utopian speculation. We believe that the discussion is justified on two concrete and realistic grounds: first, Freud's theoretical conception itself seems to refute his consistent denial of the historical possibility of a non-repressive civilization, and, second, the very achievements of repressive civilization seem to create the preconditions for the gradual abolition of repression.[3]

Drawing upon Freud's work as his point of criticism, Marcuse suggests that it is inadequate to understand repression as principally the result of biological or psychosexual history. It is also predicated on the basis of social and economic influences. Repression then is a dynamic rather than a static concept. A distinction must be made, how-

[3] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 5.

ever, between basic and surplus-repression. Basic repression is viewed at the phylogenetic-biological level as the degree of renunciation necessarily involved in the development of the animal man in his struggle with nature.[4] In contrast to basic repression, surplus-repression represents a degree of renunciation which is over and above that which is necessary for the functioning of civilization as it is expressed, for example, through morality or work. This conception of surplus-repression is implicit in Marcuse's use of the term when he refers to it as that which originates and is sustained at the sociological level.[5] By the phrase, "the sociological level", Marcuse understands "the development of civilized groups and individuals in the struggle among themselves and with their environment."[6] Clarification of this term is essential since, for Marcuse, "the only pertinent question is whether a state of civilization can be reasonably envisaged in which human needs are fulfilled in such a manner and to such an extent that surplus-repression can be eliminated.[7] An essential characteristic common to both basic and surplus-repression is the fact of scarcity. While Freud, however, views scarcity as an inherent aspect of human

[4] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 120.
[5] Ibid., 121.
[6] Ibid., 120.
[7] Ibid., 137.

nature, Marcuse sees it as an historically modifiable condition. The alterable quality of surplus-repression is of major concern for Marcuse. Because of their interaction, a change in the exogenous factors which mold the character of surplus-repression requires that basic repression, rooted in endogenous factors, can also be aspected in a new light. As such, Marcuse's unique contribution lays precisely in the fact that to understand his use of the term "repression" one has to think together psychoanalysis and politics. Marcuse's formulation of repression does not involve, however, an interpretation of psychoanalytical categories as political categories or, conversely, political categories as psychological ones. Instead, the psychological makeup of the individual as well as society is basically political. As Marcuse states,

> Our concern is not with introducing psychological concepts into political science or with explaining political processes in psychological terms. That would mean attempting to explain what is basic in terms of what is based on it. Rather, psychology in its inner structure must reveal itself to be political.[8]

This emphasis on repression as a political category is used by Marcuse to strengthen his argument that scarcity is an historically modifiable condition instead of an immutable aspect of the human psyche. Repression, whether

[8] H. Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 1.

it is basic or surplus in nature, is predicated on the basis of scarcity. An explanation of scarcity not founded on an immutable law of psychoanalysis but understood, rather, as a political fact of existence suggests that repression is dependent on the historically specific character of scarcity.

The "historically specific character of scarcity" is used here to signify a system of social, political and cultural institutions and relations, laws and values which vary 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 and, lastly, whether the dominant form of ownership is collective or private property. An investigation into the notion of scarcity reveals that it is deeply rooted in the fabric of tradition. That the abundance of wealth and technical expertise characteristic of Western civilization exists in tandem with excessive need and poverty appears to be a phenomenon over which rational, political expression has no control. That scarcity manifests an ahistorical or immutable quality even though it is, finally, a result of specific circumstances would be an anomoly in the growth of Western civilization were it not for the existence of domination. Domination involves the exercise of control by a ruling group or individual for the express purpose of restricting other individuals'

needs and satisfactions. Moreover, the imposition of such restrictions is, ultimately, irrational. As Marcuse states,

> Domination differs from rational exercise of authority. The latter which is inherent in any societal division of labour, is derived from knowledge and confined to the administration of functions and arrangements necessary for the advancement of the whole. In contrast, domination is exercised by a particular group or individual in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged position. Such domination does not exclude technical, material, and intellectual progress, but only as an unavoidable by-product while preserving irrational scarcity, want, and constraint.[9]

"Irrational scarcity", "want" and "constraint" are three terms which should appear as anomalies in a society such as ours with the greatest and most tangible opportunities for a peaceful, liberated existence. Yet, it is precisely this apparent contradiction between late capitalist society's irrational elements and its excessive wealth that provide for Marcuse's insights into the necessary correspondence between psychoanalytical and political categories as they are expressed through repression. The mechanisms involved in sexual repression are identical to those associated with political domination. Elsewhere, I

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[9] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), pp. 33-34.

shall try to explain in greater detail Marcuse's use of the term "domination" in respect to scarcity;[10] here I should simply like to point out that the alleviation of scarcity presupposes fundamentally changed political, social and cultural institutions. Since it is Marcuse's consideration of scarcity which lies at the foundation of his criticism of Freud, it is of initial importance to present Freud's discussion of scarcity.

For Freud, scarcity, or the primordial struggle for existence, is eternal.[11] Scarcity as a fact of human existence is predicated on the basis of two influences which have been instrumental in shaping human nature, namely, man in the state of nature and the primal horde.

Briefly stated, the idea of the primal horde consists of a community in which a primal father predominated over the rest of its members.[12] Being stronger than his sons, the father seized all the women for himself and drove away or killed all his male offspring. One day, the sons joined forces and were successful in killing as well as devouring their father. Ambiguous feelings such as guilt resulted from this act, however, because their

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[10] For a detailed discussion of this matter see pp.41-44 following.

[11] S. Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1943), p. 273.

[12] S. Freud, An Autobiographical Study (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1952), pp. 129-130.

father had been both a source of devotion and resentment. Moreover, since the overthrow of their father had been a collective enterprise, problems arose in regard to the equitable distribution of individual inheritances. It was on the basis of this commonly-shared sense of guilt as well as anxiety over the allocation of the community's resources that the sons banded together to prevent such a deed from happening again. Necessarily involved in this pact was the rejection of the women on whose account they had killed their father. Because of this denial, the sons were impelled to find sexual gratification in women outside of their community. Such an act of relinquishment constituted the first demonstration of scarcity in the primal setting.[13]

The other influence which dominates Freud's discussion of scarcity is man in the state of nature. Primal man was a feeble creature who had to assert his basic drive for self-preservation[14] not only against natural elements such as adversative wildlife but also against

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[13] Whether this idea of the "primal horde" is understood as an historical event or simply as an heuristic device, it provides insights into the psychosexual dynamic of historical types of scarcity, like man in the state of nature or more contemporary expressions of scarcity as they are found, for example, in capitalist society. It is precisely this 'metaphorical' quality rather than its historical accuracy which is of significance for Freud. See S. Freud, An Autobiographical Study (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1952), p. 130.

[14] S. Freud, The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, ed. Dr. A.A. Brill (New York: Modern Library, 1938), p. 864.

the inhospitable advances of people stronger than himself. It is this particular scenario of man in the state of nature which Freud draws upon to formulate his idea of an "assured" pleasure. Civilization, in this regard, grew out of the recognition of people's frailty in the state of nature and, as such, civilization has two functions: to protect individuals from nature and to adjust their mutual relationships.[15] As Freud states,

> Human life in common is only made possible when a majority come together which is stronger than any separate individual and which remains united against all separate individuals. The power of this community is then set up as 'right' in opposition to the power of the individual, which is condemned as 'brute force'. This replacement of the power of the individual by the power of the community constitutes the decisive step of civilization.[16]

The similarity between these two principle influences on human nature lies in Freud's emphasis on the fact that personal satisfaction is generally not an inherent component of an individual's existence. Rather, the freedom to attain gratification can only be exercised within a community. Freedom within such a milieu is understood as mutual respect between individuals rather than the arbitrary will of the individual. "The essence of it", Freud says,

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[15] S. Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 30.

[16] Ibid., 42.

> lies in the fact that the members of the community restrict themselves in their possibilities of satisfaction, whereas the individual knew no such restrictions.[17]

The purpose, for Freud, of discussing primal man in regard to civilized man is not to play off the virtues of the one against the other. He was aware that the advancements made by society are irrevocable. A return to an original state of existence can only be made at the expense of the security that people have come to know within a societal framework. This is clearly expressed in the tension that Freud sets up between the pleasure principle and the reality principle.

The pleasure principle strives for the complete gratification of one's needs. However, the pleasure principle is hampered in the pursuit of this goal by the eventual realization of an external and sometimes threatening world. As a case in point, Freud uses the example of a child breast-feeding.[18] Initially, an infant does not distinguish between the sense of gratification and the mother's breast. The child's contentment is at one with the external world. Gradually, however, an infant comes to realize that some sources of excitation are constant,

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[17] S. Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 42.

[18] S. Freud, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey (London, The Hogarth Press, 1961), XXI, pp. 66-67.

others are not. Sensations rooted in an infant's bodily organs, for instance, provide an uninterrupted source of pleasure unlike, for example, the mother's breast. In this manner a distinction is created for the first time between an individual and the external world.[19] The awareness of this division not only heralds the introduction of the reality principle[20] but also constitutes the tension between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. With the advent of the reality principle, one understands that personal gratification is not rooted solely in the individual. One must also look to the external world for the fulfillment of personal drives. If one can draw an analogy between the conflict inherent in the relationship of primal man to civilized man and the tension between the pleasure principle and the reality principle then it can be seen that the issue of scarcity does not revolve around the preference of one state of being over another. Like man's development into a civilized state of being, the acceptance of the reality principle as an unavoidable fact of self-preservation suggests that this self-preservation has to be based in something other than the individual. One does not have to look solely to the reality principle, however, to see the importance played by phylo-

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[19] S. Freud, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), XXI, pp. 66-67.

[20] Ibid.

genesis. The existence of the pleasure principle as also determined by phylogenetic influences provides another example. This approach is taken, for example, in Freud's "The Paths to Symptom-Formation" from The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.

In "Paths to Symptom-Formation", Freud states that because a symptom-formation involves the abandonment of external for internal reality, it is viewed as a product of the pleasure principle.[21] Moreover, the creation of a symptom corresponds phylogenetically to a highly significant regression.[22] However, to fully appreciate the phylogenetic character of a symptom, it is of initial importance to trace its origins.

A symptom is understood as the substitute for a frustrated satisfaction which ameliorates this sense of frustration through a return of the libido to an earlier time.[23] The term "libido" is used here to signify the energy of the sexual instincts. Earlier stages of sexual development, as it was discussed previously in regard to the example of a child breast-feeding, characterize this type of regression.[24]

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[21] S. Freud, The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, ed. J. Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 366.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] For a detailed discussion of this matter, see p. 15 above.

Integrally associated with a symptom-formation is the element of phantasy. Phantasies partake of one of two realities: the psychical or the material.[25] As it is expressed through neuroses, the psychical aspect of a phantasy is composed of three, reoccurring events: the observation of parental intercourse, seduction by an adult and the threat of castration.[26] Though Freud understood the source of a phantasy to reside in the instincts, he still had to account for not only the need and substance of phantasies but also why the same phantasies with the same content are created on every occasion.[27] Freud's response to these questions is expressed through his notion of primal phantasies (Freud's italics). Through the introduction of this term, phantasies are understood to have a material or phylogenetic as well as psychical base. "I believe these primal phantasies, as I should like to call them and no doubt a few others as well," states Freud,

> are a phylogenetic endowment. In them the individual reaches beyond his own experience into primaeval experience at points where his own experience has been too rudimentary. It seems to me quite possible that all the things that are told to us to-day in analysis as phantasy--the seduction of children, the inflamming of sexual excitement by observing parental intercourse, the threat of castration

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[25] S. Freud, The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, ed. J. Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 366.

[26] Ibid., 369.

[27] Ibid., 370.

> (rather than castration itself)--were once real occurrences in the primaeval times of the human family, and that children in their phantasies are simply filling in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth.[28]

This discussion of symptom-formation illustrates that even an approach to the notion of scarcity as indirect as "frustrated satisfaction" requires that one address its phylogenetic component. As such, ontogenesis and phylogenesis cannot be relegated simply to the realms of the pleasure and the reality principles, respectively.

This outline of Freud's basis for scarcity is, however, not quite as unadulterated as my previous discussion of it suggests. An ambivalence concerning the value of civilized society set against primal existence pervades his work. His position that "primitive man was better off in knowing no restrictions of instincts"[29] is constantly offset by his insistence that the state of original contentment was continually jeopardized by the slavish forces of nature. Conversely, Freud's depiction of beauty, cleanliness and order as facets of civilized society[30] is circumscribed throughout his work by the belief that

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[28] Ibid., 371.

[29] S. Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents", The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, XXI (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p. 115.

[30] Ibid., 93.

civilization has possibly paid too high a psychic price for its attainments. This tension finds clear expression in his article entitled "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness". In this article, Freud develops three stages which mankind has passed through to arrive at its present state. In the first stage, a person gives free expression to one's sexual instincts. Because it involves receiving gratification from parts of the body other than the genitals, this is understood as the auto-erotic stage.[31] Also, there is implicit, at this level, a disregard for reproduction.[32] The second stage of human development signifies the transition from auto-eroticism to object-love. What is of importance here is the subordination of other parts of the body to the primacy of the genitals.[33] At this stage, any sexual activity, other than that which serves the purpose of reproduction, is suppressed.[34] Whole classes of individuals, however, are unable to live up to the demands which this second level of development imposes. Generally speaking, these types of people fall within one of two categories. They are understood as either perverts or homosexuals.[35] Because it is at this

[31] S. Freud, "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness", The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, IX (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p. p. 188.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 189

[35] Ibid.

level that the state of nervous illness find fruition, it will be discussed at some length.

What perversion has in common with homosexuality is that both are deviations from normal sexuality[36] or sexuality for the sole purpose of reproduction. It is at this point, however, that the similarity ends. In the homosexual,[37] the sexual aim has been deflected away from the opposite sex. The harmful effects which one would expect from this type of deviation is often mitigated by the homosexual's aptitude for sublimation.[38] "Sublimation" is the process which channels any sexual energy which cannot be used in the service of reproduction into culturally acceptable activity. As Freud states,

> The sexual instinct--or, more correctly, the sexual instincts, for analytic investigation teaches us that the sexual instinct is made up of many separate constituents or component instincts--probably more strongly developed in man than in most of the higher animals; it is certainly more constant, since it has almost entirely overcome the periodicity to which it is tied in animals. It places extraordinarily large amounts of force at the disposal of civilized activity, and it does this in virtue of its especially marked characteristic of being able to displace its aim without materially diminishing in intensity. This capacity to exchange its

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 190.

> originally sexual aim for another one, which is no longer sexual, but which is psychically related to the first aim, is called the capacity for sublimation.[39] (Freud's italics)

The other type of deviation, perversion, is two-dimensional in that it has a positive as well as a negative aspect.[40] Its positive facet signifies that the pervert successfully copes with his deviation from the sexual standards of civilization.[41] The negative dimension of perversion is characterized as the inability to suppress perverse instincts.[42] As such, psychoneuroses is described as the 'negative' element of the perversions because the perverse impulses, after being repressed, manifest themselves from the unconscious part of the mind.[43] Within this framework, the inhibited sexual instincts are transformed into a substitute phenomena known as nervous illness or psychoneuroses.[44]

There is a third and last stage of human development which for the purposes of this discussion is the most important since it focuses on the question of whether or not civilization has paid too high a psychical price for its cultural achievements. Freud's presentation of this

[39] Ibid., 187.
[40] Ibid., 189.
[41] Ibid., 190.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 191.
[44] Ibid.

third level takes the form of three questions: (1) What is the task that is set to the individual by the requirements of the third stage of civilization? (2) Can the legitimate sexual satisfaction that is permissable offer acceptable compensation for the renunciation of all other satisfactions? and (3) In what relation do the possible injurious effects of this renunciation stand to its exploitation in the cultural field?[45] In answer to the first question, Freud says that the task of the individual revolves around one's ability to abstain from the procreative act until it takes place within a legally sanctioned marriage.[46] Reproduction is no longer understood simply as a procreative function as it was in the second stage. Reproduction is now defined as legitimate (Freud's italics) insofar as it is subject to the dictates of law. Freud states, however, that this is an unreasonable task since mastering such a powerful force, like the sexual impulse, is beyond the reach of most people: "Experience shows that the majority of the people who make up our society are constitutionally unfit to face the task of abstinence."[47] Moreover, this is the point at which Freud posits that the psychical value of sexual satisfaction increases with its frustration.[48] Consequently, people

[45] Ibid., 193.
[46] Ibid., 194.
[47] Ibid., 193.
[48] Ibid.

who retained their mental health under the requirements of the second level of civilization succumb to neurosis at this third and, sexually, most restrictive stage of development.[49] This brings us to the next question which Freud addresses in regard to advanced society. Having answered in the negative to the first question, it is pertinent to ask if the sexual gratification attendant on legal marriage compensates for the renunciation of all other satisfaction. In essence, Freud states that the ability of sexual intercourse to compensate in this manner is doomed from the outset. This is due principally to the fact that sexual intercourse, even within the realm of legitimate reproduction, is restricted to a very few procreative acts.[50] Such deprivation exacerbates the mental accord which would otherwise prevail between a married couple with the result that spiritual disillusionment between them also takes place.[51] The usual response to such a situation is the practice of the 'double' sexual standard in the case of males and nervous illness in the case of females.[52]

The final question which Freud raises in regard to the last stage of development is the status of the possible

[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 195.

injurious effects of renunciation in relationship to their exploitation in the cultural field. Initially, Freud answers this question by presenting three potentially beneficial elements of 'civilized' sexual morality. Firstly, the retardation of sexual development imposed by the educational system serves a useful purpose when one considers the late age at which young people reach independence and are able to earn a living.[53] Secondly, the ethical and aesthetic forces which one summons up to avert the powerful sexual instinct is said to 'steel' the character of certain, specially disposed individuals.[54] Lastly, the degree of one's individuality is seen as predicated on the basis of sexual restrictions. The relationship between the amount of sublimation possible and the amount of sexual activity necessary differs greatly from person to person with the result that the abstinent artist is highly inconceivable whereas the abstinent young savant is not.[55] Freud goes on to state, however, that these positive aspects of renunciation are only temporarily advantageous. The restrictions placed on the sexual instinct in the educational institutions are often too severe with the result that when this instinct

[53] Ibid., 196.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

is set free, for the purposes of legitimate reproduction, it is permanently impaired. In regard to the second and third benefits of abstinence, Freud is characteristically less than charitable. Though he views the strengthening of character and the cultivation of individuality as desirable qualities during the initial period of growth, Freud understands these advantages as liabilities over an extended period of time. Having attempted to master such an exceedingly strong force as the sexual instinct in one's youth, there is the probability that the individual will have only a minimal supply of energy left. This takes place at a time when individuals are in need of all their strength in order to win their share and place in society.[56] Mutatus mutandis, this type of individual finds it difficult to contribute to the well-being of society. "In general", states Freud,

> I have not gained the impression that sexual abstinence helps to bring about energetic and self-reliant men of action or original thinkers or bold emancipators and reformers. Far more often it goes to produce well-balanced weaklings who later become lost in the great mass of people that tends to follow, unwillingly, the leads given by strong individuals.[57]

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[56] Ibid., 196-197.

[57] Ibid.

Having discussed "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness" what insights can be derived from Freud's interpretation of phylogenesis? In his characterization of the Procrustean bed on which modern sexual standards lie, Freud is both critical and cautious. He states at one point in the article that there is an obvious parallel between modern nervous illness and the intensification of sexual restrictions at the third stage of civilization. In regard to the retardation of sexual development and activity fostered in the educational system, Freud is equally quick to point out "the intimate interconnection between all our cultural institutions and the difficulty of altering any part of them without regard to the whole."[58] What is also gleaned from this article is that the reality principle, as it is expressed through the imposition of moral standards, may exact too great a psychical price from the individual. It was stated earlier that these standards are important for Freud because they signify the growth of an orderly society based upon the general will of the people out of an essentially chaotic milieu founded on the arbitrary will of the individual.[59] The article "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness", however, brings into question the carte blanche distinction

[58] Ibid.

[59] For a detailed discussion of this matter see p. 14 above.

between the pleasure principle as bad and the reality principle as good. "The situation would even be tolerable", states Freud,

> if neurotic illness were to exclude from civilized sexual activities only a number of individuals who were in any case of the weaker sort, and allowed the rest to play their part in it at the cost of troubles that were merely subjective. But, far from this being so, I must insist upon the view that neuroses, whatever their extent and wherever they occur, always succeed in frustrating the purposes of civilization, and in that way actually perform the work of the suppressed mental forces that are hostile to civilization. Thus, when society pays for obedience to its far-reaching regulations by an increase in nervous illness, it cannot claim to purchased a gain at the price of sacrifices; it cannot claim a gain at all.[60]

Furthermore, it brings into question the prudence of maintaining phylogenetic factors at the expense of ontogenetic factors. The corollary of this appears as the exercise of greater personal freedom at the expense of societal restraint. Freud suggests as much when he says:

> It is one of the obvious social injustices that the standard of civilization should demand from everyone the same conduct of sexual life--conduct which can be followed without any difficulty by some people, thanks to their organization but which imposes the heaviest psychical sacrifices on others; though, indeed, the injustice is as a rule wiped out by disobedience to the injunctions of morality.[61]

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[60] Ibid., 202-203.

[61] Ibid., 192.

If one extends the rubric of the pleasure principle to include Freud's auto-erotic stage of civilization as well as his notion of primal man then it seems that the tension between primal man and civilized man has re-emerged, albeit, in a new context. Though Freud's depiction of scarcity was more pronounced in the state of nature, even an approach to the fact of scarcity as indirect as "frustrated satisfaction", as it is found in "The Paths to Symptom-Formation", requires that ontogenetic considerations be balanced with phylogenetic considerations. That Marcuse understood phylogenetic considerations as specifically political considerations provided his point of departure from Freud's use of the term "repression". Consequently, the fact of scarcity on which repression is predicated also goes through a radical alteration in Marcuse's writings.[62] That scarcity is extended beyond the psychosexual or biological sphere to include a political dimension has a profound impact on the nature of both the pleasure and reality principles. The ascription of

[62]The term "scarcity" is a source of controversy for many of Marcuse's commentators. "Scarcity" even in an attenuated form such as "frustrated satisfaction", however, should not be equated here with the bourgeois model of supply and demand. In an attempt to articulate a phenomenon such as scarcity, bourgeois economists have traditionally utilized a benign idea of supply and demand as it is found through voluntarism, for example. The term "benign" is used here to indicate an absence of class analysis, class conflict and power relationships. "Frustrated satisfaction", then, for Marcuse, is not the result of some impersonal, eternal force but, rather, the consequence of the

mutable qualities to repression means that the reality principle, as the depository of everyday repression within society, and, in turn, the pleasure principle are historically modifiable. Moreover, because they are contextual, a reified conception of the reality and pleasure principles must give way to a pluralistic understanding of these terms based upon not only present conditions but also future possibilities.[63]

Before discussing some of the ways in which Marcuse uses the political aspect of repression to further our understanding of its psychological nature, it is of initial importance to present Paul Robinson's discussion of Freud and Marcuse in his book, The Freudian Left. Not only is it helpful because it gives a lucid account of their work on repression but also Robinson's book demonstrates some of the strengths and weaknesses generally attributable to many of Marcuse's critics when analyzing the psycho-political dimension of his work.

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imbalance between classes in society where the dominant class orchestrates the needs of the subordinate classes for the purposes of controlling those very needs. Thus, instead of using the term "scarcity" in an ahistorical or neutral sense, Marcuse locates scarcity within the historically specific context of capitalist, class relationships.

[63]Victor Geoghegan, Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse (London: Pluto Press, 1981), p. 45.

CHAPTER III

PAUL ROBINSON ON FREUD AND MARCUSE: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE FREUDIAN LEFT

In his book, The Freudian Left, Paul Robinson discusses the equivocality of Freud's writing. He understands the indeterminate nature of Freud's thought to be a strength since it serves to point out the "dialectical" subtleties of his work.[64] Generally, this "dialectic" has taken, for example, the form of Freud the clinician versus Freud the speculative philosopher or Freud the rationalist versus Freud the instinctualist.[65] Although Robinson views these tensions as important ways of understanding Freud's thought, more importantly, he sees implicit in Freud's work a critique of society as significant as Marx's analysis. "By and large, I think, the verdict, both on Freud himself and on the science he created", Robinson states,

> has been on the conservative side. Freud has most frequently been identified, along with Weber, Durkheim, Pareto, and even Spengler, as one of the great antiutopians of the early twentieth century, the man who dealt the final blow to the revolutionary apirations of Marxism. Yet there remains the haunting suspicion that Freud was up to something mischievous, that psychoanalysis,

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[64] Robinson, The Freudian Left (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 149.

[65] Ibid., 1-2.

> despite its overt historical pessimism, refuses to adapt itself peaceably to the established political and sexual order. Certainly many European and American conservatives have found Freud most unsettling--indeed, no less dangerous than Marx himself.[66]

This critical or "dialectical" dimension has usually been overlooked in most interpretations of Freud's work.[67] Psychoanalysis is understood instead as an essentially conservative enterprise.[68] Marcuse's work is significant in this regard since he has been one of the few thinkers not only to recognize this critical aspect of Freud's work but also to analyze it in a systematic fashion.[69] As such, we will return again to the relationship between Marcuse's and Freud's writing.

The underlying theme in Marcuse's work is his interpretation of psychoanalytical categories as political ones. Essential to this interpretation is Marcuse's belief that Freud's conception of modern, repressive society has an inherently critical dimension. This dimension appears to refute Freud's consistent denial of the historical possibility of a non-repressive civilization. In this, both Marcuse and Robinson are in agreement. It is within this

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[66] Ibid., 3.
[67] Ibid., 148.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 149.

context that Robinson addresses what he considers the two most important concepts in Eros and Civilization, namely, surplus-repression and the performance principle.[70] Robinson sees Marcuse's use of these as serving a dual purpose: they are meant to enhance as well as clarify the critical aspect of Freud's thought. I will now turn to Robinson's exposition of these phrases since it provides helpful insights into the relationship of Marcuse's thought to Freud's.

Robinson interprets surplus-repression as the quantitative element in Marcuse's formulation of the term "repression" while the performance principle is its qualitative dimension[71] (Robinson's italics). For Robinson, both the terms "surplus-repression" and the "performance principle" enable Marcuse to introduce an historical dimension into Freud's general equation of civilization to repression.[72] As such, surplus-repression denotes the quantitative restrictions on sexuality which result from a particular form of economic and political domination.[73] In this respect, bodily repression and, in particular, sexual repression, illustrates one of the most important

[70] Ibid., 202.
[71] Ibid., 202-203.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

aspects of an exploitative social order.[74] Surplus-repression further represents a degree of renunciation over and above that which is necessary for the functioning of civilization as it is expressed, for example, through morality and work. Having discussed the term "surplus-repression", let us turn to the interpretation which Robinson gives to Marcuse's use of the term the "performance principle". As it is described by Robinson, the performance principle is the qualitative counterpart of surplus-repression. While surplus-repression exists apart from and beyond basic repression, the performance principle expresses itself outside of the reality principle as its specific historical variant.[75] This is not to say that Marcuse disputed the legitimacy of Freud's distinction between the reality and pleasure principles. The nature of contemporary society is such, however, that to grasp the depth and substance of the qualitative repression it exercises requires a special form of the reality principle. This is expressed, for Marcuse, through his notion of the "performance principle". To fully appreciate Marcuse's formulation of the term the "performance principle" as a significant departure from Freud's understanding of the reality principle, it is important to introduce as distinction which Marcuse makes between "affirmative culture" and civilization. As Robinson states,

[74] Ibid., 188.
[75] Ibid., 204.

> He coined the phrase "affirmative culture" to characterize the notion of an inner cultivation which stands in opposition to any "mere" physical well-being. Affirmative culture represented a world of beauty, freedom, and happiness which was entirely separate from the workaday world of civilization, and thus accessible to every individual, regardless of the ugliness, misery, and toil of his material existence.[76]

Clarification of this difference is made further with the distinction that Marcuse draws between "false" and real needs. A "false" need is interpreted primarily as a need which takes place beyond the biological level.[77] The desirability and necessity of these needs is conditioned by the institutions and interests which are prevalent at any particular point.[78] Consequently, human needs are historical needs in that a symbiotic relationship takes place between an individual and that person's historical milieu. These needs are false, though, because they are first and foremost repressive of human potential. They perpetuate the toil, aggressiveness, misery and injustice which constitutes an integral part of modern western civilization.[79] Moreover, their sine qua non is that they remain heteronomous because if a society can keep personal needs beyond one's reach then it is also possible to main-

[76] Ibid., 183.

[77] Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 4.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 5.

tain external control and imposition for the purposes of 'self-exploitation'. "In this sense ," states Marcuse, "human needs are historical needs and, to the extent to which the society demands the repressive development of the individual, his needs themselves and their claim for satisfaction are subject to overriding critical standards."[80] Marcuse further suggests that:

> No matter how much such needs may have become the individual's own, reproduced and fortified by the conditions of his existence; no matter how much he identifies himself with them and finds himself in their satisfaction, they continue to be what they were from the beginning--products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression.[81]

In contrast to "false" needs, real needs are expressed as those needs which are vital to the continuance of one's existence, such as, nourishment, clothing and lodging at the attainable level of culture.[82] Moreover, the satisfaction of these needs is the prerequisite for the realization of all (Marcuse's italics) other needs.[83] In this respect, true needs share two important factors with the term "basic repression". Firstly, true needs are similar to basic repression because true needs are basic to false needs in the same sense that basic repression is fundamental to

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[80] Ibid., 4.
[81] Ibid., 5.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

surplus repression. Secondly, both these concepts share a phylogenetic-biological characteristic. It is equally valid for true needs that like basic repression neither have meaning except where the individual's needs are brought into intimate association with the other members of society. "Indeed, society must first create the material prerequisites of freedom for all its members before it can be a free society", Marcuse states,

> it must first create the wealth before being able to distribute it according to the freely developing needs of the individual; it must first enable its slaves to learn and see and think before they know what is going on and what they themselves can do to change it.[84]

Through Marcuse's formulation of the term the "performance principle", Robinson sees a criticism of society which is similar to Marx's use of the terms "alienation" and "reification" insofar as the performance principle expresses a qualitative characterization of existence,[85] but, Marcuse's formulation of the performance principle is meant to be a more inclusive term than either alienation or reification. As Robinson states,

> It incorporated elements of Weber's Protestant ethic (the irrational psychological need to perform, to work for work's own sake) as well as the salient features of modern mass

[84] Ibid., p. 40.

[85] Robinson, The Freudian Left (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 204.

> society analysis (the technique of mass manipulation and the organization of leisure by the communications and entertainment industries).[86]

Secondly, the performance principle is unlike the concepts "alienation" and "reification" because it addresses the unnecessary repression of sexuality; not the repression of sexuality per se, however, but sexuality as it is expressed through secondary or partial drives.[87] Briefly stated, these drives are characterized as a state of "polymorphous perversity" through which the entire body is expressed as a source of sexual pleasure.[88] Under the performance principle, this particular form of denial is known as genital supremacy[89] or what Robinson refers to as "genital tyranny."[90] In this regard, the performance principle sets down the essential conditions on which the organization of society has to be based before a state of genital supremacy can be reached. As it was stated earlier, the influence of the performance principle on society is by definition repressive because its primary function is to constrain the secondary drives. This desexualization of the body services to concentrate the libido or sexual energy in one part of the body, namely, the genitals, leav-

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[86] Ibid., 204-205.

[87] Ibid., 205.

[88] Ibid., 207.

[89] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 44.

[90] Paul Robinson, The Freudian Left (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 206.

ing the rest of the body free for use as an instrument of labour.[91] This centralization of the many separate constituents of the sexual instinct into one libidinal object of the opposite sex is understood as the establishment of genital supremacy.[92] What the performance principle and genital supremacy share in common is their equally repressive character. In both cases the partial drives are not allowed to develop freely into a more complete stage of gratification. Rather, they are reduced simply to a component part in the body's employment as an instrument of labour. In this respect, Freud's conception of perversity takes on a whole new dimension in the way Marcuse interprets it. As it was discussed previously in his article "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness", Freud understands perversions negatively in that they neither service nor prepare the way for the procreative function.[93] Marcuse views this condition affirmatively because it provides perversity with a critical faculty.[94] "The perversions thus express rebellion against the subjugation of sexuality under the order of procreation", states Marcuse, "and against the institutions which guarantee

[91] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 44.

[92] Ibid.

[93] For a detailed discussion of this matter, see p. 21 .

[94] P. Robinson, The Freudian Left (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 207.

this order."[95] Further, Marcuse agrees with post-Freudian psychoanalytical theory which views perverse practices as acts of opposition to the continuing chain of reproduction and thereby of paternal domination.[96] Marcuse views the perversions positively not only because of their critical faculty but also for a number of other reasons. The homosexuals' act of redressing sexual standards facilitates an awareness of these 'norms' as social and inflexible instead of natural and pliant. The homosexual's view of marriage can be seen as one such example of a sexual standard which is a social rather than a natural good. Such an arrangement has obvious personal advantages. Insofar as marriage is organized around the socio-economic exigencies of modern Western civilization, however, it is predominantly a societal institution which expedites the body's function as an instrument of labour. Consequently, Marcuse sees one of perversity's major strengths as its ability to diffuse the sense of guilt or anxiety associated with an absence of reproduction. Moreover, homosexuality is understood as an act of protest against genital tyranny which precludes the possibility of a more wholistic, sexual, self-awareness. To return to Marcuse's understanding of paternal domination within this context, it is exemplified

[95] Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 45.

[96] Ibid.

through Freud's depiction of the primal horde. Given this fact and Robinson's suggestion that Marcuse's use of this term represents an attempt to synthesize sexuality and politics,[97] it is important to discuss Marcuse's formulation of the primal horde as Robinson understands it.

Robinson emphasizes, initially, that Marcuse attaches an exclusively symbolic value to the idea of the primal horde,[98] a position not unlike Freud's view on the subject.[99] In this regard, it serves as a kind of capitalist allegory. "Although he did not state so explicitly," Robinson says, "he obviously transformed Freud's primal father into the capitalist entrepreneur, and the band of brothers into the European proletariat."[100] Robinson goes on to say that Marcuse did not ignore the revolt of the male members of the tribe against the father although the principle event involved in the primal horde is paternal dictatorship:

> It became for him a symbol of the unsuccessful proletarian revolution, and he suggested that the guilt felt by the brothers following the murder was a product not merely of their love for the father, but also of their sense of having betrayed the revolution in

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[97] P. Robinsin, The Freudian Left (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 208.

[98] Ibid.

[99] S. Freud, An Autobiographical Study (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1952), p. 130.

[100] P. Robinson, The Freudian Left (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 208.

> reinstating the paternal tyranny and the paternal morality under the guise of the totem religion. The brother's guilt was the guilt which the proletariat bore for its inability to carry the revolution through to a successful culmination.[101]

Accordingly, the primary event for both Marcuse and Freud remains primal dictatorship.[102] It is this exclusion from sexual pleasure which allows the sons to channel their surplus instinctual energy into unpleasurable but necessary activity.[103] In this manner, economic repression is linked ultimately to the use of capitalism.[104] Robinson suggests, however, that there are two primary issues unresolved in Marcuse's exposition of the primal horde. The first problem involves the relationship of economic domination to sexual repression. He states that Marcuse was unable to explain whether the father established his economic domination because he succeeded in excluding the sons from the supreme pleasure or vice versa.[105] Robinson's second criticism of Marcuse focuses on his notion of genital supremacy. Since sexual suppression by the primal father relates specifically to genital sexuality, Marcuse could not extrapolate to the repression of secondary impulses from his analysis of the primal crime.[106]

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[101] Ibid., 208-209.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., 210.

As such, Marcuse was able to use Freud's hypothesis of the primal crime only to verify the restraints of domination as they relate to surplus-repression and not the performance principle.[107]

Upon further investigation of Marcuse's analysis of the primal horde, a response to Robinson's criticisms is possible. In respect to Robinson's first criticism, Marcuse states that constraint on the son's instinctual pleasure was a result of economic domination over the horde by the father.[108] The suppression of sexual gratification, moreover, provides the basis for the continued functioning (Marcuse's italics) of domination.[109] Since repression in this regard is both a basis for and a result of domination, it can be seen that its relationship to repression is ambivalent. As Marcuse states:

> In this organization of the primal horde, rationality and irrationality, biological and sociological factors, the common and particular interest are inextricably intertwined.[110]

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[107] Ibid.

[108] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 56.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

Although the ambivalence of Marcuse's scenario does not provide the causal link between economic domination and sexual suppression which Robinson feels is important, it is a formulation of the primal horde consistent with Freud's analysis.[111] In regard to Robinson's second criticism, it must be remembered that Marcuse used the example of the primal horde strictly for its symbolic value. Though beyond anthropological verification, the idea of the primal horde did add an historical dimension to the process of domination that it lacked otherwise.[112] This ability to elucidate an aspect of civilization hitherto unexplained constitutes the primal horde's role as a model for the subsequent development of civilization.[113] If the "subsequent development of civilization" is interpreted as contemporary industrial society then a reply to Robinson's second criticism takes the form of Marcuse's notion of "controlled desublimation". "The concept of controlled desublimation would imply the possibility of a simultaneous release of repressed sexuality and aggressiveness", states Marcuse,

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[111] Freud, An Autobiographical Study (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1952) p. 130.

[112] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 54.

[113] Ibid., p. 56.

> a possibility which seems incompatible with Freud's notion of the fixed quantum of instinctual energy available for distribution between the two primary drives. According to Freud, strengthening of sexuality (libido) would necessarily involve the weakening of aggressiveness, and vice versa. However, if the socially permitted and encouraged release of libido would be that of partial and localized sexuality, it would be tantamount to an actual compression of erotic energy, and this desublimation would be compatible with the growth of unsublimated as well as sublimated forms of aggressiveness. The latter is rampant throughout contemporary industrial society.[114]

For the purposes of this thesis, there is a more important point to make in respect to Robinson's exposition. A fundamental problem with Robinson's analysis of Marcuse is based on his consideration of the two most important concepts in Eros and Civilization. "Surplus-repression" and the "performance principle" are crucial terms for Robinson if one is to understand the relationship of Marcuse to Freud. For Robinson, "surplus-repression" and the "performance principle" are at least minimally successful in drawing out a social and economic dimension latent in Freud's analysis of repression. It is possible, for example, to extrapolate from "surplus-repression" to

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[114] H. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 78.

Marx's idea of "alienation". Implicit in this understanding is the suggestion that one has to introduce extraneous terms like "surplus-repression" and the "performance principle" to appreciate Freud's interpretation of repression in a more complete way. Marcuse states at the beginning of his book, however, that reasons for rejecting an identification of civilization with repression can be found on the basis of Freud's own theory.[115] The strength and freshness of Marcuse's philosophical inquiry into Freudianism resides in this observation. It was this tendency to introduce external factors into the framework of Freud's theory which provided Marcuse with the foundation for his criticism of the Neo-Freudian revisionists. For Marcuse, Neo-Freudian revisionists, like Erich Fromm, removed the question of human needs from the material realm as it is expressed, for example, in the biological sphere of Freud's thought.[116] Rather, these needs are understood as an internalized ethical or religious consideration.[117] This "spiritualization" of human needs is seen by Marcuse as the substitution of a potentially critical analysis of society for an essentially conformist one. "The revisionist minimization of the biological

[115] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York, 1955), p. 4.
[116] Ibid., p. 242.
[117] Ibid.

sphere", states Marcuse,

> and especially of the role of sexuality, shifts the emphasis not only from the unconscious to the consciousness, from the id to the ego, but also from the pre-sublimated to the sublimated expressions of the human existence. As the repression of instinctual gratification recedes into the background and loses its decisive importance for the realization of man, the depth of societal repression is reduced. Consequently, the revisionist emphasis on the influence of "social conditions" in the development of the neurotic personality is sociologically and psychologically far more inconsequential than Freud's "neglect" of these conditions. The revisionist mutilation of the instinct theory leads to the traditional devaluation of the sphere of material needs in favour of spiritual needs. Society's part in the regimentation of man is thus played down; and in spite of the outspoken critique of some social institutions, the revisionist sociology accepts the foundation on which these institutions rest.[118]

What is at issue here is not the character of repression as a product of internal as well as external factors. Both Freud and Marcuse agree on the equally important influence of both ontogenesis and phylogenesis. Marcuse's understanding of the "dialectic of civilization" involved in a discussion of repression, however, provides a radical point of departure from Freud's position. The dialectic which informed Freud's work is understood broadly as the

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[118] Ibid.

antagonism between Eros and Thanatos.[119] Such a tension implies that the precarious balance in civilized society between destructiveness and the life instincts is not maintained through the liberation of Eros. Rather, if society is to exist at all then it is only at the expense of sexual permissiveness. Contrarily, sexual restrictions are anathema to Marcuse's position. The liberation of one's body without a corresponding freedom at the phylogenetic level is, at best, a "mystifying" experience. The opposite of this is equally true. If such societal institutions as the workplace are liberated without it being recapitulated at the personal level then the individual remains an object, instead of a self-conscious subject, of history.[120] In this respect, Marcuse's conception of the dialectic as it is characterized by dichotomies such as subject and object, mind and body or reason and sensuousness is imperative if his formulation of human nature is to be fully appreciated.

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[119] P. Robinson, The Freudian Left (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 214.

[120] V. Geoghegan, Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse (London: Pluto Press, 1981), p. 50.

CHAPTER IV

MARCUSE'S FORMULATION OF THE TERM "REPRESSION" CONSIDERED ONTOGENETICALLY AND PHYLOGENETICALLY

That the role of ontogenesis and phylogenesis cannot be relegated simply to the realms of the pleasure and the reality principles, respectively, is a point on which Freud and Marcuse appear to be in agreement. Whether or not repression as it is expressed through scarcity can or should have the eternal quality which Freud attributes to is as a consequence of his interpretation of phylogenesis and ontogenesis, remains a central concern for Marcuse.

Assuming an analogy between primal man and civilized man in regard to the pleasure and reality principles, it is also possible to make a comparison between the pleasure and reality principles in light of basic and surplus-repression. The purpose of this comparison is, initially, to illustrate how the reality principle and surplus-repression exercise external control over the pleasure principle and basic repression, respectively. If it can be shown, however, that the reality principle and surplus-repression are in fact modifiable then the rigid makeup of both the pleasure principle and basic repression is brought into question.

Within the context of the pleasure and reality principles, repression is for Freud a result of an awareness of scarcity. With the recognition of something outside

of one's own ego came the understanding that the pursuit of security is contingent on external as well as personal factors. Because these exogenous factors provide an inconstant rather than a permanent source of satisfaction, the reality principle is seen as a built-in mechanism of self-restraint." For Freud's metapsychology", Marcuse states:

> it is not decisive whether the inhibitions are imposed by scarcity or the hierarchical distribution of scarcity, by the struggle for existence or by the interest in domination.[121]

If, however, the reality principle is founded on a hierarchical distribution of scarcity rather than a type of scarcity integral to human nature, then it is possible that the same dynamic is at work in regard to surplus-repression. Consequently, both the reality principle and surplus-repression would have to be seen as historically specific processes amenable to change.

Like Freud, Marcuse understands repression, as it is represented through scarcity, to be rooted in the primal horde. It was the original structure of the primal horde and the conflict inherent in it which has activated the chain of repression characteristic of civilization. Drawing upon Freud's example, Marcuse states that human history began with a primal horde in which the father, by virtue

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[121] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 121.

of his superior intellectual and mental faculties, exercised control over the rest of the community. Such control involved, for example, the exploitation and unequal distribution of the community's resources by the primal father while he reserved enjoyment for himself and imposed labour on the other members of the horde.[122] This first act of repression precipitated a rebellion by the sons against their father's despotism. As it was stated previously,[123] the failure of this rebellion was due, in part, to the ambiguous feelings which arose over the primal father's dispossession. Presumably, his presence was required irrespective of how despotically he ruled. It is here that Marcuse makes a connection between political categories and psychological categories. After the failure of their rebellion, the sons voluntarily reestablished the instinctual restrictions familiar to them under their father's rule. External control over one's instincts through general consensus is expressed internally through morality and conscience.[124] This internalization of repression is made possible through introjection which is

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[122] H. Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 37.

[123] For a detailed discussion see pp. 12-13 above.

[124] H. Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 38.

used here to signify the process through which aggressiveness is not only inhibited but also directed back towards one's ego.[125] It was seen within the context of the primal horde that the sons were robbed of the ability to find an adequate outlet for their instinctual drives.[126] The resultant frustration took the form of a buildup of aggressive energy, proportionate to the amount of control imposed upon them.[127] If this type of energy was not to be used to its detriment, however, then society had to find a means for rendering aggressiveness innocuous. The process of introjection fulfilled this function. Introjection is a way to channel aggressive energy by internalizing it, that is, by directing aggressiveness towards one's ego where it is taken over by that portion of the ego known as the super-ego or 'conscience'.[128] At this level, aggressive energy is used against the ego with the same severity which it would have liked to inflict upon other individuals,[129] specifically, the primal father. Moreover, this tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego expresses itself as guilt feeling.[130] It is this process

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[125] S. Freud, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. J. Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), XXI, p. 123.

[126] For a detailed discussion of this matter, see p. 13 above.

[127] H. Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 18.

[128] S. Freud, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. J. Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), XXI, p. 123.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid.

of introjection and its attendant sense of guilt which elucidates the otherwise anomalous relationship between the primal father and his sons. That they voluntarily imposed instinctual renunciations on themselves appears as a lacuna in the political makeup of the horde unless one considers the role of introjection as the psychological counterpart to a political mechanism. In this regard, introjection is understood as a translation of the sons' ambiguity and anxiety over their father's dispossession into psychological terms. "The primal father, as the archetype of domination", states Marcuse,

> initiates the chain of enslavement, rebellion, and reinforced domination which marks the history of civilization. But ever since the first, prehistoric restoration of domination following the first rebellion, repression from wihtout has been supported by repression from within: the unfree individual introjects his masters and their commands into his own mental apparatus. The struggle against freedom reproduces itself in the psyche of man, as the self-possession of the repressed individual, and his self-repression in turn sustains his masters and their institutions.[131]

It is important to note that the type of repression referred to here initially took place "from without" or at a phylogenetic level. That a certain amount of repression is required for the development of the human race, both Freud and Marcuse would agree on. As Marcuse states:

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[131] H. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), pp. 15-16.

> To the extent that individuals themselves are affected by it, the repressive transformation of the fundamental psychic structure is the individual psychological basis of the work of civilization and of progress in culture. Its result is not only the conversion of the organism into an instrument of unpleasurable labour but also and above all the devaluation of happiness and pleasure as ends in themselves, the subordination of happiness and gratification to social productivity without which there is no progress in civilization. With this devaluation of happiness and instinctual gratification, however, occurs the transformation and progression from the human animal to the human being, the progression from the necessity of mere instinctual gratification, which is not really enjoyment, to the reflective behaviour and mediated enjoyment characteristic of and particular to man.[132]

It is this type of repression which Marcuse refers to as basic repression. There is another form of repression which is in opposition to basic repression. Exercised over and apart from that which is essential for the continuance of one's existence, it is known as surplus-repression. It is this type of repression which characterizes the primal horde. The repression which resulted from the control of the primal father over the community was in excess of that required for its survival. It was the exercise of power by an individual for the express purpose of limiting other people's needs and wants. That it exists long after the abolition of scarcity has become

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[132] H. Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 34-35.

a realizable historical possibility indicates that the origin of surplus-repression is not natural but rather social. Accordingly, the scarcity imposed upon a society as a result of surplus-repression can be seen as rooted in the social structure. Such an interpretation necessitates a view of surplus-repression based on its historically specific character.

It is Marcuse's formulation of the historically modifiable nature of surplus-repression with specific reference to the psychological "fact" of scarcity which represents his radical point of departure from the psychoanalytical tradition. If the repression of the instincts, as this was typified by the primal horde, is not an inherent aspect of human nature but instead the result of a specific historical circumstance then the positing by Freud of an "eternal" idea of scarcity is brought into question. Moreover, Freud's formulation of the reality principle relies on the 'eternality' of scarcity as its focus in that an awareness of scarcity heralds the individual's emergence out of the pleasure principle and into the reality principle.[133] That the transhistorical quality of scarcity is questionable means, by extension, that Freud's depiction of the reality principle must be

[133] For a detailed discussion of this matter, see p. 16 above.

altered. "If the repression of instincts, even according to the Freudian hypothesis, is not only a natural necessity", states Marcuse,

> if it has its roots at least just as much and perhaps primarily in the interest of domination and the maintenance of despotic authority, if the repressive reality principle is not only a result of historical reason without which no progress would have been possible, but above and beyond this the result of a particular historical form of domination; then we must in fact undertake a decisive correction of Freudian theory.[134]

Furthermore, a re-evaluation of the "repressive reality principle" means that its relationship to the pleasure principle and, consequently, the individual must be viewed in a new light.

Thus, Freud's model of the primal horde has a dual purpose for Marcuse. Firstly, it illustrates that scarcity as a psychoanalytical "fact" must nonetheless be defined by its particular historical context. This conceptualization of scarcity is in contradistinction to Freud's formulation of it whereby an historical recurrence is elevated to the status of a universal truth. Secondly, the subjugation of the instincts by man rather than nature finds its

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[134] H. Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 39.

original expression in the primal horde's existence. Moreover, regardless of its empirical content, the primal horde compresses this subjugation of the instincts, in the form of the dialectic of domination (Marcuse's italics), into a unique image.[135] The dialectic of domination is understood here as the historical tension between surplus-repression and the potential for freedom. Surplus-repression within this dialectic takes on essentially three forms, all psychologically based. "As soon as civilized society establishes itself", Marcuse states,

> the repressive transformation of the instincts becomes the psychological basis of a threefold domination: first, domination over one's self, over one's own nature, over the sensual drives that want only pleasure and gratification: second, domination of the labour achieved by such disciplined and controlled individuals; and third, domination of outward nature, science and technology.[136]

This interpretation of domination, however, is founded upon the "repressive reality principle". There is also another aspect of domination more aligned to the pleasure principle which denotes the expression of human freedom. As Marcuse says,

> And to domination subdivided in this way belongs the threefold freedom proper to it: first, freedom from

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[135] Ibid., 37.

[136] Ibid., 12.

> the mere necessity of satisfying one's drives, that is, freedom for renunciation and thus for socially acceptable pleasure --moral freedom; second, freedom from arbitrary violence and from the anarchy of the struggle for existence, social freedom characterized by the division of labour, with legal rights and duties-- political freedom; and third, freedom from the power of nature, freedom to change the world through human reason--intellectual freedom.[137]

As the above passage suggests, Marcuse places great significance on the ability of "human reason--intellectual freedom" to create a better society in which to live. He was also aware, though, that reason has traditionally been employed as an adjunct of domination as it is found in the organization of labour (Marcuse's italics).[138] In this regard, Marcuse is no more of a rationalist than Freud is an irrationalist. The importance which Freud places on reason can be seen by his depiction of its role in the advancement towards a higher stage of human existence. "No feature, however," says Freud,

> seems better to characterize civilization than its esteem and encouragement of man's higher mental activities--his intellectual, scientific and artistic achievements--and the leading role that it assigns to ideas in human life.[139]

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[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid., 21.

[139] S. Freud, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), XXI, p. 94.

Such a state of growth assumes that the significance of the irrational or sexual element in a person's existence is gradually eclipsed by the rational or intellectual aspect. As society evolves towards a more rational future, the irrational component is brought under the control of reason and subordinated in importance. No such distinction between rationalism and irrationalism exists in the work of Herbert Marcuse. While the role of reason is certainly emphasized, his discussion of "rationalized" labour with its incumbent state of playfulness illustrates the necessary correspondence between rationalism and irrationalism, respectively. Because Marcuse's conception of labour provides important insights into not only the tension between rationalism and irrationalism but also between freedom and domination, it will be discussed at some length.

Marcuse refers to an effective subjugation of the instincts to repressive controls which are imposed by man rather than nature.[140] By implication, then, it is also possible to refer to an 'affective' form of subjugation. One of the ways of understanding this twofold dimension of subjugation is through Marcuse's concept of labour. As early as 1933, in an article entitled "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labour in Economics", he

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[140] Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 15.

alludes to "a dialectic of labour". This "dialectic of labour" is viewed as a tension between the "effective" and 'affective' forms of subjugation in that labour is expressed through "necessity" and "freedom", respectively.[141] Accordingly, work is seen to have two levels. It is described as "necessity" insofar as individuals derive the basic needs of survival. Equally important, however, is a concept of work expressed through "freedom", a concept which goes beyond basic necessities and contributes to the development of existence at a supramaterial level. The specific form that freedom takes is play.[142] Marcuse characterizes the former quality of labour as a passive process while the latter or 'affective' dimension of labour is understood as an active process.[143] For the passive process of labour, this means that it is determined by immediacy.[144] That is, like animal behaviour, it is molded solely by the most immediate demands of self-survival. Contrarily, an active process of labour assumes that a person interacts on a continual basis with one's environment for the acquisition of one's needs. The idea of "continuance" is important here since it is this feature which sets apart the active process of labour from the passive one.

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[141] H. Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labour in Economics", Telos, XVI (1973), 35.

[142] Ibid., 14.

[143] Ibid., 17.

[144] Ibid., 18.

The needs of people, unlike those of animals, can never be fully satisfied.[145] This is because the character of these needs is qualitatively different from those found in animals. This is not to say that one's existence is not determined substantially by the basic demands of self-preservation. On the contrary, it is this type of need which provides the link between human and animal drives.[146] However, the radical point of departure between human and animal needs is that the former are incapable of complete satisfaction. People are continually striving for the saturation of their desires. This is because human need, unlike that of the animal, has to be understood as something other than the material demands of existence. It is here that the idea of "mediation" has such a role to play.

To fully appreciate the concept of "mediation", it is of initial importance to distinguish between three components of labour which, taken together, constitute "mediation". The first of these three aspects is labour's duration (Marcuse's italics). Duration shares with the active process of labour the insatiable quality of people's desires. The second component of labour is its permanence

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid., 19.

(Marcuse's italics). The idea of permanence is viewed from either one of two perspectives since the labourer takes from, as well as gives to, the world. In the service of an individual labourer, the idea of permanence allows for the creation and maintenance of his place in the world through the products of his labour. However, these products of the labouring process whose raw materials are extracted from the "world" for the benefit of the single labourer are also beneficial to other people as an "object".[147] The relationship of labour to objectification is integral to the understanding of permanence. In essence, objectification relates to anything outside the self.[148] Because the idea of permanence relates to the products of labour as beneficial to both the individual and others, its "objectifying" capacity is seen as a necessary component. Lastly, the burdensome quality of labour has to be discussed in regard to the idea of mediation. Marcuse addressed first a common misconception associated with this quality. The characteristics one usually attributes to the burden of labour are those of a technological or psychological nature, such as, the organization of labour or a "feeling of unhappiness",[149] respec-

[147] Ibid., 16.
[148] Ibid., 23.
[149] Ibid., 17.

tively. This burden, however, is prior to any of these types of considerations and, as such, cannot be alleviated through technological or psychological means. It shares with the duration of labour the quality of never allowing for the complete satisfaction of the individual.[150] Also, like the permanence of labour, the burdensome character of labour is concerned with a sense of "Other".[151] Under its influence, the individual is always distanced from oneself in that a person directs one's labours away from oneself towards other.[152] But, the unique contribution of the burdensome quality of labour resides in the fact that it does not relate to the concept of labour specifically. Rather, this individual sense of incompleteness and "Otherness" is a fundamental statement about the relationship of one's self to existence generally. This brings us to the discussion of the term "mediation".

Human nature is not content with the passive acceptance of its lot. Having an 'affective' as well as "effective" dimension to its labour, mankind must mediate existence insofar as this leads to the development of human existence. Understood together with its three basic components, namely, its duration, permanence and quality of being a burden, "mediation" is understood in the literal sense as a process

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[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

of intervention. Labour is grounded in this mediating and conscious doing: in this continual production and reproduction of human existence (and is opposed to the immediate passive process of, e.g. animal existence). Further, Marcuse states,

> All the characteristics cited in the previous analysis of labour are present in this mode of becoming. And in this most universal meaning, which is concerned with the becoming of human existence in the world, this concept of labour is encountered everywhere--precisely where something is to be said about the essence of labour: from its place in Genesis (especially emphasized in Augustine's commentary) and the Pauline letters, all the way up to Hegel. Here we reach a change in meaning of the concept and its banishment to the economic dimension.[153]

This passage clearly suggests that the basis of human need cannot be sufficiently understood only within the economic realm. Personal needs are not solely quantitative or the sum total of one's "economic doing". That human need has gone through a qualitative as well as quantitative change is the significant point here. By definition, a process of labour characterized by mediation must address the totality of existence. "Man constantly confronts a situation concerning himself and his world that is not immediately his own," states Marcuse,

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[153] Ibid., 18.

> such that he could simply passively allow things to happen to him in this immediacy. Rather, he must first make every situation his own, by "mediating" it himself. This process of mediation is designated by the concepts of "production and reproduction" (concepts which, since Marx, have been deprived of their original essential meaning and have been reduced to the economic dimension). Production and reproduction do not simply refer to the becoming of "material existence" in economic doing, but to the active process of human existence as a whole: appropriation, overcoming, transforming and further developing all of human existence in all of its vital spheres. This applies to both the situation of the "world" which we immediately confront and existence itself--a bringing-before oneself and a having-brought-before-oneself ("represented") as a creation and development of existence and the world in all of its regions (including "material", "vital" as well as "spiritual" being).[154]

Consequently, if there is a source of opposition in labour as the term "dialectic" suggests, then it is between socially necessary labour and the individual's attempt to realize one's existence in the most complete manner. Marcuse indicates that the tension within the dialectic of labour is located here when he states that the realm of freedom begins only where labour determined by necessity and external purposes stop.[155]

As it was stated previously, the specific form that freedom takes is one of play.[156] Though submerged in one

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[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid., 36-37.

[156] Ibid., 14.

of his major works, One Dimensional Man, his notion of work as play is emphasized in enough of his later work to constitute a significant element. It is this notion Marcuse uses to characterize a type of human activity which is capable of reactivating pregenital polymorphous eroticism without losing its work content (Marcuse's italics).[157] Marcuse defines pregenital polymorphous-perverse eroticism as follows:

> Eros as the life-instinct is sexuality, and sexuality in its original function is "deriving pleasure from the zones of the body" no more and no less. Freud expressly adds: a pleasure which only "afterwards is placed in the service of reproduction." This indicates the polymorphous-perverse character of sexuality: in terms of their object, the instincts are indifferent with respect to one's own and other bodies; above all they are not localized in specific parts of the body or limited to special functions. The primacy of genital sexuality and of reproduction, which then becomes reproduction in monogamous marriage, is to a certain extent a subsequent development --a late achievement of the reality principle, that is, a historical achievement of human society in its necessary struggle against the pleasure principle, which is not compatible with society.[158]

Play has a basically negative function because it is considered a reprieve from work-oriented activities

[157] Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 196.

[158] Herbert Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 8.

which tend to dominate existence. However, it is precisely this association with one's own relaxation, recuperation and so forth which suggest play's paradoxical relationship to labour. Put simply, play is a recuperation for labour as well as a breaking off from labour.[159] While it is also concerned with self-interested endeavours, the experience of play necessarily assumes the existence of social labour as an objective necessity. As such, play is seen to be both "self-interested" and 'immanently other-interested'. By reflecting on Marcuse's use of the terms "permanence" and "burdensomeness", it is possible to conceive of the sense of 'other-interestedness' in labour. But the "self-interested" quality of labour has yet to be expanded upon.

An indication of this 'self-interestedness' is found in Marcuse's use of the term "objectivity". For the purposes of this discussion, the term is understood in two ways. Firstly, "objectivity" is the realization that every labouring process involves something apart from the individual to be worked upon.[160] Secondly, it has to do with tasks insofar as these are defined as the "mediation"

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[159] Herbert Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Labour in Economics", Telos, XVI (1973), 15.

[160] Ibid., 13.

and "appropriation" etc., of externalities.[161] Through the experience of play, one is able to affect the temporary suspension of objectivity which, in turn, precipitates a tension between an "effective" and 'affective' process of labour. The conflict particular to the labouring process as it is generally expressed through the idea of freedom (the 'affective' process of labour) and necessity (the "effective" process of labour) has been discussed at length because Marcuse sees this tension as indicative of a more general dialectic which informs his work between the "material" and "spiritual" regions of human existence: the tension between the 'affective' and "effective" processes of labour writ large. However, it is important to focus attention upon the dialectic between "material" and "spiritual" forces to understand how the dialectic of labour informs Marcuse's conception of human nature generally.

In his essay, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labour in Economics", Marcuse states that "the process of development of individual human beings is itself a process of development with others, alongside others, and for others.[162] This is consistent with his idea of human nature formulated in his article "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism". In this article, he

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[161] Ibid., 14.

[162] Ibid., 32-33.

states that society rather than the individual is the basic, historical unit.[163] It is also here that there is a radical point of departure from one of the basic tenets of Freudianism, namely, Marcuse's conception of scarcity. He posits that the "instinct of survival" is not the basic existential drive to the extent that no uniform instincts can be ascribed to society.[164] Rather, existence is a person's first concern.[165] This idea of "instinct" is taken up again nearly fifty-five years later in Marcuse's book Five Lectures. Again, a tension is described between freedom and necessity. However, unlike his earlier "On the Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Labour" and "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism", the emphasis in Five Lectures is on psychoanalysis as a political component of the instincts. This is not to say that Marcuse's conception of instincts is no longer a product of the labouring process. The dialectic between freedom and necessity in light of the liberation or repression of the instincts is decidedly rooted in the organization of labour. Here, a psychological dimension has been added to his concept of labour to the extent that his emphasis is now on the profound impact

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[163] Herbert Marcuse, "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism", Telos, IV (1969), 27.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Ibid.

which traditional means of labour have had on instinctual energy, erotic forces and modes of behaviour.[166] A dialectical relationship also exists between this psychological dimension and Marcuse's concept of labour. It is best expressed through his conception of the 'necessity of negativity'. "And just as idealist ethics interprets the freedom that suppresses sensuousness as an ontological structure and sees in it the "essence" of human freedom ," states Marcuse,

> so Freud sees in the repression of the instincts both a cultural and a natural necessity: scarcity, the struggle for existence, and the anarchical character of the instincts place limits on freedom which cannot be trespassed. We can now follow these parallels further. A second essential moment of the idealist notion of freedom, most clearly expressed in existential philosophy, is transcendence: human freedom is the possibility, even the necessity, of going beyond, negating every given situation in existence, because in relation to men's possibilities every situation itself is negativity, a barrier, "something other."[167]

This dialectic, however, assumes an inextricable link between "freedom" and "necessity". To suggest that necessity does not find its counterpart in a more humane form of existence as expressed through the abolition of

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[166] H. Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 40.

[167] Ibid., 23.

slavery and exploitation is just as false as to assume that greater freedom does not involve "objective" labour. That this theroretical formulation of the dialectic between "freedom" and "necessity" finds its practical expression, for Marcuse, in the traditional struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is a tenet as old as Marcuse's political philosophy.

CONCLUSION

One of Marcuse's unique contributions to psychoanatical theory was to reveal the critical implications of Freud's later, metapsychological works. The term "critical" is meant here to suggest that not only a political analysis is integral to Marcuse's work but also that a critical evaluation of society for Marcuse means generally a discussion of society *in toto*[168] and, specifically, the tension in society between claim and reality.[169] Certain social forces which dominate Marcuse's writing illuminate this tension. One such example is the significance which Marcuse places on the role of the proletariat. The relationship of the working class to the rest of society characterizes the disparity between claim and reality as it is expressed through the existence of great social wealth and its inequitable distribution. This theme was to engage Marcuse his whole life. As he states,

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[168] Herbert Marcuse, *Five Lectures* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 1.

[169] Paul Connerton, ed., *Critical Sociology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 24.

> It has been asserted, and the statement has even been attributed to me, that highly developed late capitalist society, particularly in the United States, is no longer really a class society; that the gap between rich and poor has become smaller and the class struggle no longer takes place; that the system has succeeded in removing or in any case dampening the contradictions that Marx revealed. This is out of the question and I have never maintained it. The fact is that in the last few years the gap between rich and poor has become greater than ever before. The fact is that the contradictions, the inner contradictions of the capitalist system, continue to exist. They are manifested particularly sharply, far more sharply than before, in the general contradiction between the enormous wealth of society that could make life without poverty and alienated labour really possible, and the repressive and destructive manner in which this social wealth is employed and distributed.[170]

This is not to say that other intimations of the disparity between claim and reality cannot be found. Marcuse's attempt to ferret out these other, potentially subversive elements has done much to damage the credibility of his position in regard to the working class. He emphasizes, with varying degrees of importance and consistency, such forces as the intellectual vanguard and minority groups as vehicles for social transformation. This is a source of confusion for many of Marcuse's critics in that they see

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[170] A.T. Ferguson, ed., Revolution or Reform? (Chicago: New University Press, 1976), p. 65.

the role of the proletariat as sometimes enhanced, sometimes diminished. If these various shifts of emphasis are seen, however, as an attempt to come to terms with a "reified" understanding of the contradictions within class society then the function of such groups does not usurp the role held traditionally for the proletariat. Rather, these groups are viewed as articulations of a revolutionary catalyst within an historically specific context preparing the way for the final, revolutionary agency, the proletariat.

Another important aspect of Marcuse's work in the field of psychoanalysis was to draw out the full implications of the statement by Freud that it is possible to take repression as a centre and bring all the elements of psychoanalytical theory into relation with it.[171] It has been the attempt of this thesis to understand the relationship of Marcuse's notion of repression to "all the elements of psychoanalytical theory" within the general framework of ontogenesis and phylogenesis as these terms are illustrated through the reality and pleasure principles. Marcuse uses this relationship as a vehicle to expand upon the critical dimension implicit in Freud's thought. That he also illuminated this critical aspect through the resurrection of certain essential elements eclipsed by the

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[171] S. Freud, An Autobiographical Study (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1952), p. 56.

Neo-Freudian revisionists should be equally apparent. One such element is the importance of psychoanalysis as an instance of individual psychology and the importance of this type of psychology for an analysis of society. If phylogenetic factors have a significant role to play in Marcuse's depiction of society then it is to bring attention to the individual's inability for self-determination. For example, whether Marcuse's discussion of society takes on a political dimension (as in his presentation of class struggle), or a psychoanalytical dimension (as in his interpretation of the psychological basis for domination), one of his principle concerns is the function of the individual. As he states in his criticism of Marxist theory:

> The subjectivity of individuals, their own consciousness and unconscious tends to be dissolved into class consciousness. Thereby a major prerequisite of revolution is minimized, namely, the fact that the need for radical change must be rooted in the subjectivity of individuals themselves, in their intelligence and their passions, their drives and their goals. Marxist theory succumbed to that very reification which it had exposed and combated in society as a whole. Subjectivity became an atom of objectivity; even in its rebellious form it was surrendered to a collective consciousness.[172]

What holds true in Marcuse's analysis of politics is equally valid for his interpretation of psychoanalysis. His emphasis on individual psychology explains, for example,

[172] H. Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977), pp. 3-4.

the phenomenon of self-repression as it is characterized by introjection or the process through which people incorporate the very tenets which allow for the continued existence of the repressed individual. As Victor Geoghegan states,

> This is the psychic equivalent of what Marcuse had seen in Reason and Revolution as the blind dialectic governing class society. Individuals are still determined by these archaic impulses because they have not yet gained control of their own lives; they are still the objects of history and not yet its self-conscious subjects.[173]

That a necessary correspondence exists between ontogenetic factors and phylogenetic factors in Marcuse's evaluation of society has been overlooked by many of his critics and has led to an unnecessary amount of confusion in regard to his work. Such an example is Paul Mattick's book, Critique of Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man in Class Society. Through his specific focus on Marcuse's interpretation of political economy, Mattick relegates Marcuse's exposition of individual psychology to the backwaters of analysis and, consequently, diminishes the fundamental importance which Marcuse attributes to ontogenetic factors. Mattick's book is also significant because he obfuscates the value which Marcuse places on phylogenetic factors, most notably, in his

[173] Victor Geoghegan, Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse (London: Pluto Press, 1981, pp. 49-50.

presentation of class struggle as a vehicle for social change. As Mattick states,

> The rise of one-dimensional society and one-dimensional man is not only bewailed but is celebrated as the common achievement of labour and capital to the benefit of all of society. Marcuse differentiates himself from such "critics" of Marxism and the proletarian revolution by opposing the "final" results of the reformist endeavours. For him, the world is in a bad and hopeless state just because there was not, and apparently will not be, a proletarian revolution, just because Marxism proved no match for the resilience of capitalism and for its capacity not only to absorb the revolutionary potentialities of the working class but to turn them to its own advantage.[174]

However, the importance which Marcuse places on the function of the proletariat as a source of change in society is posited as early as 1928 in the article entitled "A Phenomenology of Historical Materialism." Moreover, he reiterated this position fifty years later in his book, The Aesthetic Dimension. In fact, the role of the proletariat as a principle theme in the work of Herbert Marcuse stands in stark contrast to the position articulated by Mattick. Mattick's confusion over this point lies in his one-dimensional economic reading of Marcuse's work.

Marcuse does not deny the profound impact of economics on the nature of repression but he was equally aware that a full appreciation of repression precludes a reduction

[174] Paul Mattick, Critique of Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man in Class Society (London: The Mendin Press, 1972), p. 10.

of it to an economic consideration which is only one of many factors. Even a cursory examination of his work on repression suggests as much. Books like Soviet Marxism, Eros and Civilization or The Aesthetic Dimension indicate that a discussion of repression necessarily involves political economy, psychoanalysis and aesthetics. It is in this sense that Marcuse attempts to understand repression as a focal point of Freudianism and bring all the elements of psychoanalysis into relation with it. This interpretation of repression Mattick completely misses.

Marcuse's ability to expand the parameters of repression beyond biological or psychosexual history allows him to draw out the radical implications of the psychoanalytical tradition. As such, there are two central factors involved in understanding Marcuse's formulation of the term "repression". One element is his emphasis on the inherently political nature of the psychic structure. The second factor is the emphasis Marcuse places on the individual not only as an ontogenetic counterpart to society's ills but also as an agent for social change. His interpretation of the individual in this twofold dimension places Marcuse in a unique position among the commentators on psychoanalysis. It is generally assumed, as Gad Horowitz, for example, posits in his book, Repression, that ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis.[175]

[175] Gad Horowitz, Repression (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 151.

But, sense can only be made of phrases like the "Great Refusal"[176] or a "new type of man"[177] if Marcuse's conception of individuality is radically severed from these traditional associations. Rooted in the mind as well as the body, the Great Refusal, for example, involves the individual's re-appropriation of life-forms repressed until now. As Marcuse states,

> This radicalism activates the elementary, organic foundation of morality in the human being. Prior to all ethical behaviour in accordance with specific social standards, prior to all ideological expression, morality is a "disposition" of the organism, perhaps rooted in the erotic drive to counter aggressiveness, to create and preserve "ever greater unities" of life. We would then have, this side of all "values," an instinctual foundation for solidarity among human beings--a solidarity which has been effectively repressed in line with the requirements of class society but which now appears as a precondition for liberation.[178]

Accordingly, the importance which Marcuse attributes to ontogenetic factors as a vehicle for social change is contrary to assessments of the role of ontogenetic factors as these are articulated, for example, by the Neo-Freudian revisionists. This contrast is exemplified within the

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[176] Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 8.

[177] Ibid., 19.

[178] Ibid., 10.

context of true and "false" needs as it is discussed by Marcuse. To reiterate, true needs are defined as those demands of everyday life necessary for the continuation of existence. Such demands include sufficient nourishment and adequate shelter, for example. By way of contrast, "fase" needs are expressed as needs which are extraneous to the exigencies of self-preservation. Further, these needs are repressive because their function in society is to obfuscate and undermine the needs which would make genuine existence possible. "The intensity, the satisfaction and even the character of human needs, beyond the biological level," states Marcuse,

> have always been preconditioned. Whether or not the possibility of doing or leaving, enjoying or destroying, possessing or rejecting something is seized as a need depends on whether or not it can be seen as desirable and necessary for the prevailing societal institutions and interests. In this sense, human needs are historical needs and, to the extent to which the society demands the repressive development of the individual, his needs themselves and their claim for satisfaction are subject to overriding critical standards.[179]

The problem which this distinction between true and "false" needs raises is not so much the significance of true needs as an agency for social change. Clearly an awareness and reappropriation of these needs is fundamental to any such

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[179] Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 4.

undertaking. Rather, the issue with this division is the status which can be attributed to "false" needs as they are expressed, specifically, through societal institutions which maintain a repressive atmosphere. Put simply, the societal mechanisms which perpetuate false needs must be abolished but in order for these mechanisms to be abolished there must first be a need to abolish them. The circular nature of this dilemma did not go unnoticed by Marcuse.[180] If one interprets this relationship between ontogenetic and phylogenetic considerations less in terms of a causal connection and, instead, as a simultaneous interaction between individuals and societal institutions then one is closer to the heart of Marcuse's position. This interplay is illustrated, for example, in his postulation of "the new subject". "Where the traditional labouring classes cease to be the" gravediggers "of capitalism," states Marcuse,

> this function remains, as it were, suspended, and the political efforts toward change remain "tentative", preparatory not only in a temporal but also in a structural sense. This means that the "addresses" as well as the immediate goals and occasions of action will be determined by the shifting situation rather than by a theoretically well-founded and elaborated strategy. This determinism,

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[180] Herbert Marcuse, Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 80.

> direct consequence of the strength of the system and the diffusion of the opposition, also implies a shift of emphasis toward "subjective factors": the development of awareness and needs assumes primary importance. 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 changes in consciousness is the beginning, the first step in changing social existence: emergence of the new subject.[181]

Such a situation opens up the possibility for what Robinson refers to as a "dialectic of civilization". Specifically, Marcuse used the term "dialectic" to suggest the inextricable link between the individual and society and the necessary correspondence which must exist between the two if genuine existence is to be attained. As Marcuse states,

> The comprehension of reality as a necessary becoming--and not only of reality as a whole but of each particular, individual reality--views each being as developing out of something else, something later as "the unity of opposites," and only as such does it really exist.[182]

That this formulation of "authentic existence" is no less dynamic than Marcuse's conception of repression can be seen

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[181] Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 53.

[182] Herbert Marcuse, "On the Problem of the Dialectic", Telos, XXVII-XXX (1976-77), 18.

in his insistence that it is rooted in historical development. "They [sic] much has, perhaps, become clear: whenever the historical object from the very first is designated as a "unity of opposition", or is even incorporated within the scheme of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis," states Marcuse,

> such a method does violence to the entirety of the historically given fact. None of these procedures are implied by the original meaning of the dialectic, but appear only at a much later time. By no means does each historical object stand, from the very beginning, in such a two-fold (unity of opposition) or three-fold (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) relationship. Such an arrangement can only be achieved by grasping a comprehensive historical totality (periods, evolution--any stages), and therefore already presupposes dialectics and dialectical insight.[183]

This use of the term "dialectic" provides a basis for Marcuse's understanding of the relationship between the individual and society as it is expressed through ontogenesis and phylogenesis, respectively. As Marcuse uses these terms in relationship to the pleasure and reality principles, a greater fluidity of meaning must be attributed to them than Freud allows. Freud generally associates the pleasure principle with the complete satisfaction

[183] Ibid., 21.

of one's needs. The eventual realization of an external world which encroaches upon the pursuit of this goal typifies the reality principle. That the reality principle and, by extension, the pleasure principle are relatively stagnant concepts is predicated on the basis of Freud's view that scarcity is eternal. By introducing a dialectical element into his interpretation of scarcity, Marcuse opens up the possibility for a more flexible interpretation of the pleasure and reality principles and their correlates: ontogenesis and phylogenesis. This "dialectic" has an equally valuable role to play in Marcuse's critical analysis of society. It is Marcuse's position that any articulation of social issues involves its own negation or a "necessary coming into--being of reality itself."[184] That this process of negation applies as well to Marcuse's own criticism of the individual and society is of fundamental importance if the nature of his work is to be fully appreciated. This is not to say that a critique of society cannot involve some of the essential elements which lead to a more humane, just environment as they are found, for example, in collective ownership, collective control and planning of the means of production.[185] These elements, however, are only

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[184] Ibid., 18.

[185] Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 87.

a first step or quantitative stage in the development of human potential. What is also integral to human development is a qualitative dimension which would think, see and feel the world in a radically new way. As Marcuse states,

> This is the foundation, a necessary but not sufficient condition for the alternative: it would make possible the usage of all available resources for the abolition of poverty, which is the prerequisite for the turn from quantity into quality: the creation of a new reality in accordance with the new sensitivity and the new consciousness.[186]

Marcuse's hesitation in charting the course of the "new type of man" can be seen as rooted in this critical process. That his critical approach to society supercedes itself,[187] Marcuse understood as well as anyone. Thus, any attempt at extrapolation beyond the given reality is doomed to failure because as a critical theorist Marcuse's frame of reference is the "historically given" or a tradition of repression which requires precisely this supersession at the level of theory and practice. As Marcuse says,

> Social theory is supposed to analyze existing societies in the light of their own functions and capabilities and to identify demonstrable tenden-

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[186] Ibid.

[187] Paul Breines, ed., Critical Interruptions (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 4.

> cies (if any) which might lead beyond the existing state of affairs. By logical inference from the prevailing conditions and institutions, critical theory may also be able to determine the basic institutional changes which are the prerequisites for the transition to a higher stage of development: "higher" in the sense of a more rational and equitable use of resources, minimization of destructive conflicts, and enlargement of the realm of freedom. Beyond these limits, critical theory did not venture for fear of losing its scientific character.[188]

The phrase "scientific character" is used by Marcuse in the above passage to highlight a further distinction he makes between "critical theory" and "utopian speculation".

It was stated earlier that Marcuse's understanding of a critical faculty presupposes a stipulative definition of it in that the term "critical" is interpreted on a number of levels. While he uses it to suggest a political analysis of society, the critical dimension of human thought is equally important as a vehicle for pointing out the discrepancy between claim and reality. If the terms "reality" and "claim" can be used to describe the actual forces and the capabilities within society, respectively, then insights can be gleaned in respect to the distinction Marcuse makes between critical theory and utopian speculation. It is of initial importance, however,

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[188] Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 1.

to discuss his formulation of the scientific enterprise because the assumptions Marcuse attributes to science he also maintains lay at the heart of critical theory.

For Marcuse, the pursuit of truth has traditionally taken the form of epistemology as ethics and vice versa.[189] Moreover, because a root assumption of this task was the individual as a "societal animal",[190] such an undertaking precluded the possibility of a divorce between the knowing subject and the known object. Within this framework, two types of truth were acknowledged to exist in that one related to the truth of appearance which is subject to change and, ultimately, false. The other type of truth was not only considered immutable and, consequently, unconditional but also it was said to encompass a higher form of reality, that is, true reality. "Finite Being is incomplete realization", Marcuse states,

> subject to change. Its generation is corruption; it is permeated with negativity. Thus it is not true reality--Truth. The philosophic quest proceeds from the finite world to the construction of a reality which is not subject to the painful difference between potentiality and actuality, which has mastered its negativity and is complete and independent in itself--free.[191]

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[189] Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 125.

[190] Ibid., 134.

[191] Ibid., 127.

Furthermore, that true reality is predicated on the basis of ethics as well as epistemology precludes a division between theory and practice.

The legacy of modern thought, as it is typified by the scientific enterprise, has been to subvert the connection between theory and practice as the terms "pure science" and "applied science" indicate. Accordingly, the ethical or judgmental aspect of science is understood to exist alongside its epistemological or objective character rather than intimately linked to it. The effect of this has been the illusion that scientific theory can be separated from practice. As Marcuse says,

> True, the rationality of pure science is value-free and does not stipulate any practical ends, it is "neutral" to any extraneous values that may be imposed upon it. But this neutrality is a positive character. Scientific rationality makes for a specific societal organization precisely because it projects mere form (or mere matter--here, the otherwise opposite terms converge) which can be bent to practically all ends. Formalization and functionalization are, prior to all application, the "pure form" of a concrete societal practice.[192]

As a response to the scientific character of critical theory, Marcuse uses the term "utopian speculation" to indicate that dimension of critical thought

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[192] Ibid., pp. 156-157.

which begins where the other ends. While acknowledging its immense debt to critical theory's quantitative evaluation of the basis and direction for social change, utopian speculation understands such an analysis to be largely epistemological because it does not sufficiently translate abstract thought into social reality. Put simply, critical theory lacks an ethical dimension. The concern of utopian speculation in this regard is with the qualitative rather than quantitative aspects of transformation within society. Specifically, this type of approach involves the dialectic between the individual and society which is indicative of a broader tension between spiritual and material exigencies. As Marcuse states,

> This qualitative change must occur in the needs, in the infrastructure of man (itself a dimension of the infrastructure of society): the new direction, the new institutions and relationships of production, must express the ascent of needs and satisfactions very different from and even antagonistic to those prevalent in the exploitative societies.[193]

This thesis has been, in part, an attempt to present some of the more crucial aspects of Marcuse's formulation of the "dialectic of civilization". Any such endeavour is

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[193]Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 4.

integral if one is to understand Marcuse's concept of human nature within the context of repression as it is found specifically through his notion of surplus-repression.

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