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# Freedom, aesthetics, and technological rationality.

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Freedom, Aesthetics, and Technological Rationality

A Thesis by Ali El-Mokadem

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through Philosophy  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master at the  
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## ABSTRACT

Friedrich Schiller's *Letters On The Aesthetic Education of Man* identifies specific social conditions that prevent the development of individuals as complete beings. In order for humans to live as complete beings they must learn to synthesize the opposing forces of Nature and Reason, through the play-drive. Such a synthesis, he says, is the necessary condition of humans developing themselves freely. The alternative is to be one-sidedly determined by the demands of either the sense-drive or the form-drive.

Herbert Marcuse uses Schiller's theory of aesthetics and combines it with the social and political concepts allowing us to gain a more grounded understanding of the social and environmental conditions brought about by capitalism, as well as the situation of humanity within that system.

Both authors encourage us to think of humans as intrinsically valuable beings who, given the necessary material, can transform themselves and their world according to the laws of Freedom and Beauty.

## DEDICATION

To Carrie, you never doubted me and were always by my side; my parents, without whom none of this would have been possible; David Hojnoski, for your love of reason; Jeff Noonan, my mentor and advisor; Vince, your friendship has always been a source of enlightenment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As much as I have enjoyed reading the works of Schiller, Marcuse, and those who have written on them, it pales in comparison to the joy of discussing my project with others. In this way, I feel that I owe much thanks and consideration to many individuals who have provided both constructive criticism and delightful conversations.

First off, my partner Carrie supported me throughout the entire time that I spent researching, writing, and salvaging my work from numerous setbacks. Carrie's knack for proper grammatical structure allowed me to develop better writing habits, and a much deeper appreciation for proofreaders in general. More importantly, her emotional support throughout this journey allowed me to develop and maintain a positive attitude even during the toughest times.

I also want to thank Dr. Jeff Noonan and Dr. Deborah Cook, whose guidance has helped me to hone my academic and philosophical skills. Finally, my friend and colleague, Vincent Manzerolle, who spent many long nights conversing with me about countless philosophical issues, reading and criticizing my arguments, and offering much support.

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## INTRODUCTION

According to Immanuel Kant, individuals possess both intrinsic and instrumental value. It is immoral, Kant says, to treat people merely as instruments (as means to an end) we must also acknowledge the intrinsic value of human beings. As instruments, individuals contribute greatly to the development of human civilization. However, people's ability to act rationally gives rise to the issue of human dignity. This cannot be done at the level of instrumentality alone, since instruments are objects that can be replaced, whereas an autonomous, rational subject is irreplaceable. Human beings are able to value human life beyond the level of instrumentality.

As such, when attempting to consider the situation of human beings, we must begin by assuming that they possess both instrumental and intrinsic value. Furthermore, we must also assume that, given the necessary resources, individuals are autonomous and rational beings, capable of determining the course of their existence freely and creatively. This will allow us to be in a position where we may recognize which resources are necessary for the development of a better quality of life for human beings.

This ideal, autonomous human life may consist of the development and maintenance of life in general. This includes work, and the delay of gratification to some extent, but it also includes 'play': the free development of human imagination. To be sure, in order for individuals to develop their creative and imaginative faculties, they must possess access to the proper resources: the basic needs of nutrition, water, shelter, medicine, education, and personal freedom. Once those needs are satisfied, individuals may then develop their abilities to manipulate form and matter imaginatively.



This may be done through artistic activity in particular, for the pure and simple enjoyment of one's time. But this creative and imaginative interaction with the world may also extend to the rest of society, and as such the social and political world itself becomes subject to the laws of human imagination, and play. Individuals are able to express the truth of Humanity: rational and autonomous beings that can creatively and imaginatively shape their world according to rational laws they create.

However, as both past and current conditions show us, the world on the whole has adopted a poorly conceived notion of the individual as being first and foremost an instrument of labor. This particular conception of the individual neglects the intrinsic value of human capabilities, and complete human development since it only considers them as tools. The system of Western capitalism in particular demands the highest amount of productivity and contribution from citizens. The goal of Western capitalism is primarily, the increase of profit and capital. The quality of human life comes second, and only to those who are able to pay for it.

Though the quality of human life has improved drastically, thanks to the technological advancements made possible by the current system of production, there still remains a clause: a better human life is available only to those who can afford it. And since the unequal distribution of wealth and resources has rendered most of the world's population poor, most people are unable to partake in the improved quality of life that is offered by the capitalist market. Most individuals must work in order in order to acquire the most basic resources that are necessary for human life: food, water and shelter. Education and freedom come at a price that not many are able to afford. And furthermore, the freedom that individuals experience is limited by parameters that are established the ruling social

order. Thus, individual freedom amounts to the act of consuming mass produced commodities: an individual is free to choose from any of the comforts that are offered by the system of production, as long as he or she is able to pay for them. But this is a poor conception of human freedom because:

- 1- It is limited by the pre-established parameters of the existing social order
- 2- Individuals must spend their time working, sometimes dehumanizing jobs in order to afford the basic needs for life.

Most people are trapped in a cycle of labor and the consumption of mass-produced commodities, with little to no room for the free and autonomous development of human imagination, and the human character in general. The result is the needless suffering of many human beings at the hands of poverty, famine, and illiteracy.

And though we now possess the necessary material and intellectual and technological resources to lift ourselves from these degrading conditions, those resources are still only used for the perpetuation of the norms and values that perpetuate those conditions.

This is the result of a specific form of rationality which seeks to reduce any concepts such as freedom, pleasure, and the individual to the level of functional variables that are computed into the overall development of the existing capitalist order.

When a society does not recognize, and by that I mean: when a society does not provide equal access to basic resources for all its citizens it results in a failure to recognize the intrinsic value of humanity. Thus the intrinsic value of the individual, as a rational, autonomous being is neglected, and we are left with an inhuman and immoral conception of individuals as instruments only.

In this project I propose that the conception of human beings as rational, autonomous and creative beings is an ideal that we must continuously develop and revise. Each individual, given the necessary resources, has a task of becoming fully human, that is: to develop his or her beliefs and capabilities free. The problems arise when norms and values are imposed on people by an alien system that holds little to no value for human dignity. I will use Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* to begin my dissertation in order to expose the misunderstanding which surrounds the human character. Next, I will refer to Herbert Marcuse's work, primarily in *Eros and Civilization*, *One-Dimensional Man*, and *An Essay on Liberation* to ground Schiller's ideals with the necessary social and political concepts. The goal is for human beings to ascend to the position where they are able to determine their own existence freely.

## CHAPTER 1:

### FRIEDRICH SCHILLER AND THE AESTHETIC EDUCATION OF SOCIETY

Friedrich Schiller provides us with a philosophical assessment of the social problems that seem to constrict human development: Specifically, he explains why the social conditions that human beings have created for themselves do not accommodate the full potential of humanity. Human beings are imaginative, creative, and rational beings, and require an established structure that enables them to realize this potential. This philosophical assessment will provide the thesis with the conceptual foundations necessary for the critique of contemporary social reality. Given the historical context in which he wrote, however, Schiller can provide no more than the conceptual framework. The actual critique of society must employ the more complex social philosophy of Herbert Marcuse.

Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* aim at improving the human condition, which, he tells us, is impoverished by the schism between Nature and Reason. Though Schiller's conception of Nature and Reason is similar to Immanuel Kant's, I will limit my exploration of Kant's conception of Nature and Reason. It will be sufficient to say that, for Kant, Nature refers to the physical world and physical desires which are constantly changing: While Reason refers to our rational faculties and moral laws which are absolute and binding on all rational beings. Since the focus of this chapter centers on Schiller I will only say that for Kant

When we judge something as aesthetic, we do not judge it to be one of a class, as we would in determinant judgment. We do not place it in the empirical world. Instead, we place it with respect to ourselves. In doing so, we apprehend the object not as belonging

to a particular order or class of objects, but as belonging to, or fitting in with, our own faculties. The object thus seems to have as its own inner structure or order, a conformity to our own faculties; this is the order we are interested in.<sup>1</sup>

Kant's conception of aesthetics involves many categories of relationships between the subject and the object. Amongst the most important are: 1- our subjective relationship to the object, 2- the relationship between human imagination and aesthetic judgment, 3-the relationship between aesthetic judgments and universal validity.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, we classify the characteristics of a given object according to certain aesthetic criteria that we define, and then make an aesthetic judgment about the object.<sup>3</sup>

Schiller believes that aesthetics serves an important moral purpose: to improve all human beings. Beauty, he believes, involves free and imaginative creation, which is why the activity of play goes hand in hand with it. The relationship between play and beauty works out as follows: Play involves free and imaginative creation through the synthesis of form and matter. We engage in free and imaginative creation when we combine form and matter by using our imagination. Furthermore, he says, when we play we transform ourselves into living shape, we become our own imaginative creations and that is why he says human beings are beautiful when they play.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, for Schiller, beauty arises from the activity of the play-drive, i.e., the imaginative activity of synthesizing form and

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<sup>1</sup> Sychrava, Juliet. Schiller to Derrida: Idealism in Aesthetics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. p.20

<sup>2</sup> Stirk, Peter M.R. "Eros and Civilization revisited" History of The Human Sciences. 1999 SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi), Vol. 12 No.1 p.73-90.

<sup>3</sup> Sychrava, Juliet. Schiller to Derrida: Idealism in Aesthetics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. p.20  
I should not that Schiller owes much to Kant's theory of aesthetics and human freedom.

<sup>4</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967. p.101

matter. Also, we see that both play and beauty involve free and imaginative activity. I will now go on to explain how Schiller develops his ideas of Play and Beauty.

Schiller identifies two drives, within every human being, which place different demands on the individual. The first is the sense-drive which contains all of our animal or natural impulses, including sense perceptions, emotions, eating, aggression and sex<sup>5</sup>

The first of these, which I will call the sensuous drive, proceeds from the physical existence of man, or his sensuous nature. Its business is to set him within the limits of time, and to turn him into matter--not to provide him with matter, since that, of course, would presuppose a free activity of the Person capable of receiving such matter, and distinguishing it from the Self as from that which persists. By matter in this context we understand nothing more than change, or reality which occupies Time. Consequently this drive demands that there shall be change, that time shall have a content. This state, which is nothing but time occupied by content, is called sensation, and it is through this alone that physical existence makes itself known.<sup>6</sup>

Since the sense-drive requires stimulation from the outside, the purely sensual individual cannot determine the course of his or her life. This is because the sense-drive subject to the forces of time and change, both of which are beyond human control.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the sense-drive is passive in that it requires outside stimulation to be brought into action. For example, the scent of flowers arouses our sense of smell, and our sense of taste is aroused when we place lemon juice on the tongue. Therefore, Schiller continues “although it is this drive alone which awakens and develops the potentialities of man, it is

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<sup>5</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981. p.20

<sup>6</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967. p.79

<sup>7</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981. p.20-21

also this drive alone which makes their complete fulfilment impossible.”<sup>8</sup> The sensuous individual only possesses potentiality and not actuality since he is still a receiver and not yet a creator.

The second force is the formal-drive which expresses the individual’s rational faculty. The form-drive discovers scientific laws, and creates moral laws, as well as abstract concepts such as freedom, truth, and justice.<sup>9</sup> For example, through the form-drive we discover laws of physics and chemistry, and also create the social laws that protect individuals. Humans are rational beings who are capable of understanding laws that govern Nature, and also of creating moral and political laws that protect and govern their social lives. The form-drive, he says “proceeds from the absolute existence of man, or from his rational nature, and is intent on giving him the freedom to bring harmony into the diversity of his manifestations, and to affirm his Person among all his changes of Condition.”<sup>10</sup> The rational faculty then applies these conceptions to our feelings and experiences, creating a coherent set of meanings for us. It is not influenced by Time and therefore its laws are universal and permanent. He continues, “In so doing, it preserves our identity through the changing conditions of the world around us.”<sup>11</sup> The form-drive, unlike the sense-drive, seeks permanence instead of change.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the form-drive is an active faculty that helps us to discover and create laws; it seeks to determine rather than to be determined from without.

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<sup>8</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.81

<sup>9</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981. p.21

<sup>10</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967. p.81

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.21

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

The play-drive is the synthesis of the sensuous and formal drives. It alone allows us to develop our entire human character. Schiller views humans as multi-dimensional beings with multiple talents and abilities. This means that individuals may develop artistic talents, athletic and physical talents together, instead of simply one.<sup>13</sup> The play-drive involves creative, imaginative activity that is done for its own sake. For example, we may dance or draw for the simple enjoyment of the activity and not to satisfy a strictly utilitarian goal. Thus, the individual is determined by two drives: the sensual and the rational, and the aim of every individual, according to Schiller, is to synthesize both drives through play. In other words, full human activity requires the synthesis of both sensuous and formal drives through play.

However, society is not organized in such a way so as to benefit the individual's growth of self, i.e. play. Individuals are guided by one-sided activity determined by either the sense-drive or the form-drive. Schiller attributes this problem to society to the emphasis on specialized, specified use of the individual as a tool: "...once the increasingly complex machinery of State necessitated a more rigorous separation of ranks and occupations, then the inner unity of human nature was severed too."<sup>14</sup> Thus, he concludes, society must fix the issue of undeveloped human potential so that individuals may explore a humanity that is beyond the status of specialized tools.<sup>15</sup>

Schiller tells us that it is a common belief that the fate of humanity is determined within the political sphere. Ideally, elected officials discuss such issues as human rights,

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.97

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.33

<sup>15</sup> Throughout the Sixth Letter, Schiller maintains that the view of the individual as a whole becomes fragmented, when society's emphasis on the individual is one-sided. He tells that that though specialization in one area or another may have certain benefits, they do not amount to the harm brought upon the person's humanity "only the equal tempering of them all (physical and mental abilities), (produce) happy and complete human beings." Ibid, p.43



justice, liberty, and attempt to create meaningful laws that will benefit the citizens of a society:

Is it not, to say the least, untimely to be casting around for a code of laws for the aesthetic world at a moment when the affairs of the moral offer interest of so much more urgent concern, and when the spirit of philosophical inquiry is being expressly challenged by present circumstances to concern itself with that most perfect of all the works to be achieved by the art of man: the construction of true political freedom?<sup>16</sup>

Here, Schiller claims that the realm of politics is itself problematic and its issues can only be solved at the level of the aesthetic.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Schiller tells us, the aim of philosophical inquiry is to allow human beings to achieve “true Political and Moral Freedom.”<sup>18</sup> Schiller explains in the *Second Letter*, the artistic consciousness of human beings has become dependent on material needs and not human ideals. Excessive focus on utility and materialism, he believes, undermines the sort of self-improvement that is necessary for the realization of our potential. Furthermore, individuals have become overspecialized tools who neglect their human development and focus on their development as instruments. However, Schiller is optimistic that the problem may be solved, since he claims that the road to human freedom is paved by the aesthetic. Thus, Schiller’s work seems to focus particularly on the political and moral development of society in order to reconstruct a more complete concept of human freedom through aesthetics.

In the first section of the letters, Schiller considers both individual human beings

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.7

<sup>17</sup> Regin, Deric. Freedom and Dignity: The Historical and Philosophical Thought of Schiller. Martinus Nijhoff Ed., The Hague, Netherlands. 1965. p.120

<sup>18</sup> Sychrava, Juliet. Schiller to Derrida: Idealism in Aesthetics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. p.23

and human civilization as entities that progress over definite stages. Both individuals and civilization begin in the Natural State, where their actions are determined by natural laws and physical inclinations. In the *Third Letter*, Schiller refers to the earlier history of human beings as a starting point. In their earliest stages of development, human beings were wholly dependent on nature: “she (Nature) acts for him as long as he is as yet incapable of acting himself as a free intelligence.”<sup>19</sup> However, Schiller continues, human beings have the ability to rise above their dependence on Nature. In the age of reason, human beings awoke from their sensuous slumber to find themselves in “The State”.<sup>20</sup>

The Natural State represents human beings in the earliest stage of development, before they have had a chance to develop their rational faculties. As such, social cohesion is not freely chosen, but rather, it is arranged according to the laws of nature and built to satisfy the material requirements of individuals. At this stage, human beings are still creatures who are largely determined by Nature; driven by appetites and physical needs. For example, humans are driven by their physical need to survive: they protect themselves from harm, but they may also fight over food and shelter. The challenge, Schiller says, is one “of transforming the work of blind compulsion into a work of free choice, and of elevating physical necessity into moral necessity.”<sup>21</sup> But the problem lies precisely in *how* to move from physical to moral necessity.<sup>22</sup> Schiller will go on to argue

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<sup>19</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.11

<sup>20</sup> Miller, R.D. Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom: A Study of Schiller’s Philosophical Works with Chapters on Kant. London: Oxford University Press, 1970. p.107

<sup>21</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967. p.17

<sup>22</sup> Specifically, it is not possible to ‘leap’ from the physical to the moral state since both impose different demands on the individual; and any attempt to make such a ‘leap’ requires that we break our bond with the

that we need a mediation between the physical and the moral in order to satisfy the demands of both. In such a case, where the relationship between the physical and the moral is mediated, individuals may be free to live according to rational laws without being determined by natural laws.<sup>23</sup>

Schiller tells us that human beings cannot exist at the natural stage of development for an extended period of time, since there is the moral and rational demand for the protection and the preservation of life, and the pursuit of happiness. The drive for preserving life extends beyond the physical and pushes human beings to organize the first formation of government.<sup>24</sup> Schiller explains that human beings are able to break from the bonds of Nature once the faculty of Reason awakens. Unlike the Natural State, where individuals are ruled by their appetites, laws and principles govern human beings in the Rational State. Then, compulsion is transformed into free self-determination. He says:

Every individual human being, one may say, carries within him, potentially and prescriptively, an ideal man, the archetype of a human being, and it is his life's task to be, through all his changing manifestations, in harmony with the unchanging unity of this ideal.<sup>25</sup>

According to Schiller, each individual possesses the potential of transforming the self, according to social laws, through free-choice into an ideal human being.<sup>26</sup> Now if every autonomous, rational individual is able to work towards and ideal form of humanity it is

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physical, which is impossible. As a result, attempting to leap from the physical to the moral by virtue of neglecting the demands of the physical results in misunderstanding of the point of the challenge: to seek and maintain balance between both.

<sup>23</sup> Though in a sense, human beings are always determined by natural laws insofar as their physical existence.

<sup>24</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne's World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981. p.17

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.17

<sup>26</sup> Individuals would be free to develop themselves without infringing on laws that serve to protect other people and their interests.

the task of every human being to approximate that ideal: a harmonious union between reason and feeling, through the play-drive, allows us to achieve this ideal.<sup>27</sup>

The challenge becomes more difficult when the rational faculties have developed, and both the Natural and the Rational States begin to make equal demands on the individual. Schiller wants to reconcile the constraints made by each realm without sacrificing the demands of one to the other. This reconciliation means that every person who strives to achieve the ideal of the “complete human being” does so by synthesizing both the Natural and Rational sides of human nature.<sup>28</sup> According to Schiller the sense-drive and the form-drive are synthesized through play. As we shall see, it is through play, for Schiller, that we combine the ideas of our mind with matter from the physical world, thus resolving the tension between Nature and Reason, since they now work together.

The next step, he explains, is to attempt to establish a Moral State with the help of the rational faculties. However, the transition to the Moral State is not an easy task. Indeed, Schiller acknowledges that it is pointless to seek any type of political reform as long as individuals do not first become “whole”.<sup>29</sup> According to Schiller, it is not possible to simply leap from the Natural to the Moral State. The moral State is ruled by reason and the intellect, its laws are different from Natural ones insofar as rational and

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<sup>27</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967. p.17

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p.92-93 For Schiller, both drives must be tempered, which means that we must properly understand the boundaries of each one so that we may understand how they can work together. He says: “In a single word: Personality must keep the sensuous drive within its proper bounds, and receptivity, or Nature, must do the same with the formal drive.”

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.45 In the *Seventh Letter* Schiller says : “we must continue to regard every attempt at political reform as untimely, and every hope based upon it as chimerical, as long as the split within man is not healed, and his nature so restored to wholeness that it can itself become the artificer of the State, and guarantee the reality of this political creation of Reason,”

moral laws are conceived and understood by humans.<sup>30</sup> He says: “Nature in her physical creation points the way we have to take in the moral. Not until the strife of elemental forces in the lower organisms has been assuaged does she turn to the nobler creation of physical man.”<sup>31</sup> Nature, he tells us, provides us with the material we need for the moral, it is the grounds upon which the moral is built. We must not forget that Nature is the basis for any form of moral or rational human activity, and as such we are physically and rationally dependent on Nature, Schiller says:

What we must chiefly bear in mind, then, is that physical society in time must never for a moment cease to exist while moral society as idea is in the process of being formed; that for the sake of man’s moral dignity his actual existence must never be jeopardized.<sup>32</sup>

What Schiller means is that the existence of the moral laws and values of a society depend on the physical existence of its citizens. It seems more rational to ensure the physical well being of the citizens in order to ensure social growth and development. On the surface, for example, the physical existence of human beings contributes to constructing the very buildings where discussion about laws and morals take place. And on a deeper level, we may imagine, a given society might not get very far if most of its citizens are dying from malnutrition and disease. Our physical existence must be preserved if we hope to even conceive of a Moral State. Therefore, while it is necessary that human beings move towards organizing the State according to laws, it is very important not to disregard the Natural State in the process.

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<sup>30</sup> Human beings are able to understand the physical laws of the universe through the sciences. Likewise human beings create moral laws that govern societies.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.45

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.13

Additionally, Schiller tells us, there seems to be a conflict between the Natural State and the Rational State, which follows from the one-sided attitude of Reason. It is important to critically examine the conflict between Reason and Nature if we are to understand how to resolve it. The failure to resolve the conflict is due to human error, Schiller believes, and not because of any 'irreconcilability' between the rational and natural laws. He explains the nature of the conflict in the following passage

Reason does indeed demand unity; but Nature demands multiplicity; and both these kinds of law make their claim upon man. The law of Reason is imprinted upon him by an incorruptible consciousness; the law of Nature by an ineradicable feeling. Hence it will always argue a still defective education if the moral character is able to assert itself only by sacrificing the natural.<sup>33</sup>

This basically tells us that the individual cannot understand the demand of true Reason (to be synthesized with Nature). In this way each realm is understood separately: 1- The Natural realm is organized according to natural forces that are based on desire, 2- inclination and the Rational realm is organized according to rational laws that are based on universality. The individual neglects the demands of either drive when he or she is forced to focus on satisfying the demands of one drive in particular. This is important because, Schiller warns, it is not possible to improve the political situation of a State, without first improving each citizen of that State. Therefore, while it is important for us to acknowledge the conflict between nature and reason, we may also be positive about resolving it because, according to Schiller, humans are creatures who are able to improve and enhance their lives through imaginative and creative activity.

Due to the conflict between Reason and Nature, human beings misunderstand their duty to themselves, which is to develop as creatures that represent the union of the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.19

physical and the formal realms. Instead, he continues, individuals reside in either the physical world where they are driven by material causes or in the formal realm where they are ruled by reason. As a result of being ruled by exclusively one drive or the other the individual develops only one side of their nature, and never the complete being (union of nature and reason). The problem with cultivating only one side of our human nature, Schiller says, is that we completely miss out on the benefits that arise from the uniting both.<sup>34</sup> An incomplete human being “cannot cope with the highly advanced moral principles that demand—among other things—discipline, will power, respect for human dignity, and detachment from material things.”<sup>35</sup> Schiller’s notices the need for social change, but more importantly this passage seems to tell us that we must change ourselves before we can begin to understand “highly advanced moral principles”. In other words, it would be a mistake to believe that we have understood anything before we have begun to fully understand ourselves.<sup>36</sup> This is an important goal for all of humanity: we must attempt to understand the nature of the conflict between Nature and Reason if we are to resolve it, and more towards a higher moral State.

Furthermore, since an incomplete individual is not capable of grasping the concept of the ideal society, any efforts aimed at improving society through the political sphere will ultimately fail. For example, Schiller draws our attention to the aftermath that of the French Revolution, when individuals insisted dogmatically upon principles and reason in order to justify the torture and killing of other human beings. This dogmatic

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p.43

<sup>35</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981. p.17

<sup>36</sup> The understanding of ourselves as autonomous and creative beings who possess the ability to synthesize the demands of the natural and the rational.

obsession with reason—the unquestioned commitment to a realm whose demands have not yet been fully understood—Schiller explains, neglects the basic value of life. The development of the Natural State is compromised in favor of the Rational State. I will now discuss the consequences that individuals must bear as a result of the unresolved conflict between Nature and Reason.

### **THE SAVAGES AND THE BARBARIANS:**

This social schism between the physical and rational sides of human nature causes individuals to be at odds with themselves in two ways: Either as savage, when feeling predominates over principle; or as barbarian, when principle destroys feeling.<sup>37</sup> The conditions of the savage and the barbarian need to be discussed further in order to understand the impact of the tension.<sup>38</sup> I will discuss Schiller’s concept of the “savage”, the “barbarian”, and then move on to explain their connection to Nature and Reason.

The savages are individuals who are ruled by the sense-drive, and as such also ruled by physical desires and appetites. Furthermore, their intolerance and inability to grasp laws, Schiller says, threaten the existence of society.<sup>39</sup> Schiller says: “The savage despises Civilization, and acknowledges Nature as his sovereign mistress.”<sup>40</sup> For example, the savage is too sick, hungry and poor to be concerned with political matters.

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<sup>37</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.21

<sup>38</sup> I will not go into any detail about the savage and the barbarian since my interest is in Schiller’s theory of aesthetics. Though a brief mention of both will help illustrate Schiller’s points about the extremes of behaving according to either sense-drive or form-drive alone.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



After the French Revolution, the savages suffered torture, misery and death, at the hands of those representing the principles of 'enlightenment' (justice, democracy etc.). These principles of enlightenment were used to justify the suppression and execution of the savages.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the 'enlightened' Civilization neglects the needs of the savage, who is viewed as lawless, selfish and incapable of understanding reason (as the barbarians understand it) in favor of developing a notion of reason that is used to suppress nature.

On the other hand, the barbarian is consumed by Reason to the point where he forgets about Nature. As Schiller says "the barbarian derides and dishonours Nature, but, more contemptible than the savage, as often as not continues to be the slave of his slave."<sup>42</sup> The barbarian's understanding of reason is impoverished in the sense that it does not empower the human character anymore than it sets it free. Reason simply confirms the enlightened in their corrupt state.<sup>43</sup> As such, the principles of the enlightenment, following the French Revolution, aim to further develop a poorly conceived notion of reason that is used to confirm the existing order rather than liberating human beings.<sup>44</sup> Due to this underdeveloped conception of Reason, the barbarians do not seek to achieve the wholeness of being that Schiller envisions. Instead they simply seek to

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<sup>41</sup> Being 'rid' of the savages was simply easier than dedicating any time and effort to understanding their social conditions.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> The condition of the savage, Miller says "which threaten the structure of civil order, form one aspect of the problem; on the other hand the enlightenment of which the refined classes boast, instead of having an ennobling influence on their minds, tends rather to confirm them in their corrupt state." (Miller, p.109) Miller, R.D. Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom: A Study of Schiller's Philosophical Works with Chapters on Kant. London: Oxford University Press, 1970. p.109

<sup>44</sup> For Schiller, the true purpose of reason, which is strive towards the unification of nature and reason, is undermined when our talents and skills are developed in order to serve a specific social purpose: the advancement of a specific form of reason that neglects the complete nature of the individual. As such, the liberation of human beings must include an understanding of the connection between the demands of nature and reason; so that we may develop on the basis of a harmonious relationship between both.

distance themselves from their physical Nature, believing that attachment to the physical realm only clouds rational judgment.<sup>45</sup>

So far Schiller has recounted the social schism in human civilization: one side of humanity is consumed by Nature and appetite, whereas, the other side of humanity is consumed by a kind of pseudo-reason and “Thus, do we see the spirit of the age wavering between perversity and brutality, between unnaturalness and mere nature, between superstition and moral unbelief.”<sup>46</sup> In order to rescue themselves from these conditions individuals must learn to acknowledge the demands of both drives, while also respecting the limits of both. The central point that we must retain from Schiller is that by not focusing on synthesizing both drives we are in fact resisting a transcendental demand by Reason. In a very important passage, Schiller says:

Reason, on transcendental grounds, makes the following demand: Let there be a bond of union between the form-drive and the material drive; that is to say let there be a play-drive, since on the union of reality with form, contingency with necessity, passivity with freedom, makes the concept of human nature complete. Reason must make this demand, because it is reason—because it is its nature to insist on perfection and on the abolition of all limitation, and because any exclusive activity on the part of either the one drive or the other leaves human nature incomplete and gives rise to some limitation within it.<sup>47</sup>

Schiller is telling us that reason seeks to overcome limitation, and insofar as ‘irrational conditions’ (for example, needless death and suffering) are considered limitations to the development of reason (a more complete and fulfilling life, for example) ‘Reason’ seeks to overcome them. And since, as Schiller tells us, it is irrational to neglect the demands of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.103

This is very important because it seems very similar to the concept of dialectics in the way that Marcuse describes it: reason overcoming what is irrational through reflective criticism.

one realm over the other, Reason seeks to strike a balance between both. Therefore, it seems, in order for the individual to function holistically an attempt must be made to reach a synthesis between the demands of both the Natural and the Rational spheres.

Schiller attributes most of the illnesses plaguing human beings to overspecialization, which leads individuals to develop only one side of their being, knowing a great deal of information about one area and ignoring other areas<sup>48</sup>. For Schiller, true social progress requires the complete development of individuals as the union of nature and reason. Societies fall short of the true 'human state' when human potential is suppressed by factors such as overspecialization. The overspecialized individual focuses on developing one specific area of the human character, thus inevitably neglecting the other faculties.

It is important for us to understand the seriousness of Schiller's claim that civilization is at fault for its focus on fostering specialized individuals, thereby encouraging the schism between Nature and Reason. He says:

It was civilization itself which inflicted this wound upon modern man. Once the increase of empirical knowledge and more exact modes of thought, made sharper divisions between the sciences inevitable, and once the increasingly complex machinery of State necessitated a more rigorous separation of ranks and occupations, then the inner unity of human nature was severed too, and disastrous conflict set its harmonious powers at variance.<sup>49</sup>

The unity between Nature and Reason is severed when social emphasis tilted towards Reason. Indeed, the "inner nature" of human beings is disturbed as social relations are categorized further according to empirical knowledge, which instrumentalizes human

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p.33

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

potentialities.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, overspecialization is the result of social organization that follows a specific pattern which neglects the need to synthesize the opposing forces of both drives. And as such, the balance between both the realm of arts and that of sciences is immediately disturbed.<sup>51</sup>

A more holistic, human development is exemplified by the Greek State. The ancient Greeks were artists, philosophers, politicians and gymnasts, developing many of the human talents distinctly as ends in themselves. Modern society, by contrast, demands overspecialization, and this leads us to the disregard of overall development of human character. Indeed insofar as it aims at harnessing human potential towards one specific activity, it succeeds greatly.<sup>52</sup> The overspecialized individual, he tells us, forsakes the multiple dimensions of humanity in pursuit of one particular dimension with one particular function.<sup>53</sup>

However, though the ancient Greek state flourished and encouraged the development of the multiple talents of human beings, it eventually collapsed. For the ancient Greeks the focus shifted from the view of the individual as a multi-dimensional

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<sup>50</sup> This is another one of Schiller's points we should keep in mind, since it seems as if he is hinting at the dangers of "operationalism" as Marcuse will discuss. For Marcuse, the concept of the individual is undermined, indeed the individual altogether, when it is reduced to a particular instance or social behavior. The common thread between both authors is that the individual's human dignity and potentiality are undermined when the understanding of the 'individual' is reduced to a specific social function (worker, consumer, etc.)

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.33

<sup>52</sup> Regarding the Greeks, Schiller says: "With the Greeks, humanity undoubtedly reached a maximum of excellence, which could neither be maintained at that level nor rise any higher. Not maintained, because the intellect was unavoidably compelled by the store of knowledge it already possessed to dissociate itself from feeling and intuition in an attempt to arrive at exact discursive understanding; not rise any higher, because only a specific degree of clarity is compatible with a specific fullness and warmth. This degree the Greeks had attained; and had they wished to proceed to a higher stage of development, they would, like us, have had to surrender their wholeness of being and pursue truth along separate paths." Ibid, p.41

<sup>53</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne's World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981, p.18-19

being with multiple talents and abilities that must be holistically developed, to the view of the individual as a rational creature above all else.<sup>54</sup> Modern society faces the same problem.<sup>55</sup>

The concept of specialization itself appears like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, Schiller praises specialization since it allows us to make great advancements in science and medicine. On the other hand, individuals become objects: “In a specialized society, the individual becomes a tool subordinate to the whole, valued according to his usefulness.”<sup>56</sup> Doctors, lawyers and teachers are valuable insofar as they are useful and productive members of their society, and not because they are human beings.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Schiller strongly doubts the value of the role of human beings as simple productive, specialized members of society, he says

Forced to resort to classification in order to cope with the variety of its citizens, and never to get an impression of humanity except through representation at second hand, the governing section ends up by losing sight of them altogether, confusing their concrete reality with a mere construct of the intellect.<sup>58</sup>

This is how both the existence and the essence of the individual are undermined as a result of being reduced to a particular function in society and “a mere construct of the intellect.”

Although “specialization” is responsible for many great advances for any

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<sup>54</sup> Miller, R.D. Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom: A Study of Schiller’s Philosophical Works with Chapters on Kant. London: Oxford University Press, 1970, p.109

<sup>55</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.35

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.19

<sup>57</sup> Schiller believes that human beings are creatures that are capable of rationally understanding and organizing their world in a multitude of ways (social, economical etc.) creatively and imaginatively.

<sup>58</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.37

civilization, it alone cannot fully realize the potentials and ideals of human beings.<sup>59</sup> Our attention should be focused on bringing both faculties of Nature and Reason into harmony and based on the union of both realms humans may develop as free beings. Moreover, since we are multi-dimensional beings, with many abilities and talents, our humanity is undermined when our existence is reduced to our function as specialized workers. For example, although we may have an abundance of doctors, lawyers, and teachers, there are very few human beings, in Schiller's normative sense of 'human beings'. Therefore, in an overspecialized society, human beings are not free to develop as complete beings, and instead they interact with each other as specific tools with specific duties.<sup>60</sup>

However, the problem of the divided human being cannot be solved by the State. For Schiller, only the individual can work on uniting reason and feeling, and in turn, give birth to a State that encompasses full and complete human beings "improvement can only originate from the mind of man, after he has overcome the split in his nature, separating reason and feeling."<sup>61</sup> Those who are falsely enlightened are so because they allow reason to rule over their inner nature. And the result of allowing one realm to rule over the other leads to the inevitable neglect of the individual's 'other half', and the task of becoming 'whole' is undermined. And insofar as we value our development as complete individuals, as opposed to fragmented ones, Schiller says "It must, therefore, be wrong if

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<sup>59</sup> This issue surrounding "specialization" and "overspecialization" maybe similar, in some ways, to the concepts of "repression and surplus repression" that I will discuss in the next chapter. They are somewhat similar because both involve a degree of conformity for the purposes of maintaining and developing human civilization, and they both present a hindrance to the free and autonomous development of individuals when they become part of the ruling principles of the established order.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Regin, Deric. Freedom and Dignity: The Historical and Philosophical Thought of Schiller. Martinus Nijhoff Ed., The Hague, Netherlands. 1965, p.123

the cultivation of individual powers involves the sacrifice of wholeness.”<sup>62</sup>

In the seventh letter, Schiller argues that people must not only break free of the confines of Nature, but they must also broaden their understanding of Reason, and at the same time embracing Nature.<sup>63</sup> This holistic Reason seeks to unite with Nature instead of widening the gap between the two realms.

However, neither politics nor pseudo-reason can remedy the condition of the bifurcated individual. Politics, Schiller says, cannot bridge the schism of the human character, since the political realm has contributed to that split. For example, excessive focus on politics tips the scale towards one side of the human character and neglects the other realms.<sup>64</sup> Reason, as well, cannot bridge the gap “...because although its task is to conceive and to establish law, it has no power to enforce it.”<sup>65</sup> Therefore, it is through the higher arts that human beings will reach truth and freedom.<sup>66</sup> I will now discuss what Schiller means when he refers to the healing powers of the higher arts.

### **BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN NATURE AND REASON:**

In the *Ninth Letter* Schiller proposes that the human character can only be reconciled as a union of Nature and Reason through aesthetics. The activity that acts as a bridge between Nature and Reason is free and imaginative creativity, or as he says “This

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<sup>62</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.43

<sup>63</sup> Miller, R.D. Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom: A Study of Schiller’s Philosophical Works with Chapters on Kant. London: Oxford University Press, 1970. p.110

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p.49

<sup>65</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981, p.19

<sup>66</sup> Sychrava, Juliet. Schiller to Derrida: Idealism in Aesthetics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.24

instrument is Fine Art.”<sup>67</sup> Art, Schiller tells us, “good or bad, shapes man’s value system. Values exist because we perceive them; and what we perceive, and how we perceive them depends on the Arts. We prize authenticity, individuality, and freedom because creative individuals have instructed us in their value.”<sup>68</sup> Likewise, Schiller draws attention to the reconciling powers of the Arts: creative activities through which both the sense and the form drive are synthesized, which he says redeems human dignity.<sup>69</sup> He believes it is the duty of the artist to pave the way towards a complete human character, and to help elevate human beings above and beyond their animal nature.<sup>70</sup> Thus, according to Schiller’s theory of social evolution, human beings ascend from the natural state to the moral state by means of a character that is developed through art.<sup>71</sup>

But how exactly does art become the bridge that links Nature and Reason? First, we must realize that Schiller differentiates between an aesthetic object (a painting or sculpture) and the aesthetic state: a condition or state that humans may achieve through aesthetic activity. It is through aesthetic activity that human beings can recognize themselves as both sensuous and rational creatures. Individuals are able to achieve a more complete moral understanding of ‘what it means to be human’ because the notion of ‘human being’ is based on the union of the whole human character. Additionally, individuals become open to the possibility of perceiving themselves as free human

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<sup>67</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.55

<sup>68</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981, p.19

<sup>69</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.57

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p.61

<sup>71</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981, p.20



beings.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, aesthetics allows us to understand that the true value of the individual is more than instrumental.

Before I attempt to explain how Schiller believes people may regain and develop their humanity through the aesthetic, I will need to discuss his conception of “Beauty”. In the *Tenth* Letter he tells us that he is presupposing a concept of beauty that is derived from something more than “Experience” alone “since by means of it we are to decide whether that which in experience we call beautiful is justly entitled to the name”.<sup>73</sup> This concept of beauty informs our judgements about our experiences, even though it is not derived from experience and as such seems “to be discovered by a process of abstraction, and deduced from the sheer potentialities of our sensuo-rational nature.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, Schiller argues, beauty must be shown to be a necessary condition of Human Being, instead of simply being conceived as an individual’s experience of something.

At this point, the question arises: how is it possible to resolve the oppositions between the form drive and the sense drive? The first step, according to Schiller, is to realize that the opposition between the drives do not negate the other. The tendencies of both drives may conflict, but their objectives do not.<sup>75</sup> On the one hand the sense-drive seeks to change experience only, and not laws. On the other hand, the form drive seeks permanence in laws, and not in experience. Both drives do not conflict in nature. Schiller emphasizes that the strife between them is due to human error. The error arises precisely

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<sup>72</sup> Sychrava, Juliet. Schiller to Derrida: Idealism in Aesthetics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.25

<sup>73</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.69

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981, p.21

when the individual neglects the demands of one drive for the other, he says:

It is true that their tendencies do indeed conflict with each other, but—and this is the point to note—not in the same objectives, and things which never make contact cannot collide. The sensuous drive does indeed demand change; but it does not demand the extension of this to the Person and its domain, does not demand a change in principles. The formal drive insists on unity and persistence—but it does not require the Condition to be stabilized as well as the Person, does not require identity of sensation. The two, are, therefore, not by nature opposed; and if they nevertheless seem to be so, it is because they have become opposed through a wonton transgression of Nature, through mistaking their nature and function, and confusing their spheres of operation.<sup>76</sup>

This tells us that if the form-drive is neglected, human beings are not able to assert freedom or produce laws. Likewise, without the sense-drive the form drive possesses no material with which to work. Therefore, the two drives do not conflict in nature. Their conflict is due to human error. Specifically, problems arise when human beings focus on developing one drive over the other.

It should be clear now that, according to Schiller, most people experience both drives either exclusively or alternately, but rarely together at once.<sup>77</sup> However, should we experience both drives as a unity we would have a more insightful understanding of what it is to be “human”, in the normative sense. The next logical movement requires that we synthesize both drives, thereby transcending their opposition. Specifically, Schiller is most interested in what is developed through the unification of form and matter, he says: “The synthesis results when the sensate quality of the one combines with the reasonable

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<sup>76</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.85

<sup>77</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981, p.22

quality of the other and man is set in freedom, both physically and morally.”<sup>78</sup> The third impulse, which arises from the synthesis of the form-drive and the sense-drive, is the Play-drive. It is the complimentary interaction of both drives that allows for the play-drive to unite both: since the sense drive wants to be determined and to receive objects and the form drive seeks to determine and produce objects, then the play drive “will endeavour so to receive as if it had itself brought forth, and so to bring forth as the intuitive sense aspires to receive.”<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, the play-drive allows the individual to transform the physical and formal, so that he is free from the constraints of the sense drive, and from the moral tyranny of the rational drive. He says:

Assuming that cases of this sort could actually occur in experience, they would awaken in him a new drive which, precisely because the other two drives co-operate within it, would be opposed to each of them considered separately and could justifiably count as a new drive. The sense-drive demands that there shall be change and that time shall have a content; the form drive demands that time shall be annulled and that there shall be no change. That drive, therefore, in which both the others work in concert (permit me for the time being, until I have justified the term, to call it the play-drive), the play-drive, therefore, would be directed towards annulling time within time, reconciling becoming with absolute being and change with identity.<sup>80</sup>

Schiller tells us the sense drive constrains the mind by natural laws and the form drive constrains the mind by rational laws. Through the play-drive, Schiller says, the constraints on the mind are removed and the individual is set free. For example, I may

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<sup>78</sup> Regin, Deric. Freedom and Dignity: The Historical and Philosophical Thought of Schiller. Martinus Nijhoff Ed., The Hague, Netherlands. 1965, p.126

<sup>79</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.97

<sup>80</sup> Schiller, Fifteenth Letter, p.97

take material from the physical realm (say a guitar) and material from the formal realm, such as the musical notes and, by combining both, play; and though I am still bound by the musical notes, I am still free to interpret them in a unique way. Therefore, the play-drive involves both receptivity and creativity on the part of the individual, creating the ideal human being.

But that is not all. Schiller further explains that the moment we begin to play we are free to manipulate form and content, while at the same time respecting the boundaries of reason and nature i.e. physical and moral laws (ex. Gravity, Justice). We become complete human beings and develop as a unity of Nature and Reason. He says “For, to mince matters no longer, man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays.”<sup>81</sup> This means that when I play I become a living-form, a synthesis of receptivity and creativity, “Only when his form lives in our feeling and his life takes on form in our understanding, does he become living form; and this will always be the case whenever we judge him beautiful.”<sup>82</sup> As such, human nature involves creating our own nature, based on the union of both drives. Therefore, the play-drive “constitutes wholeness, totality, simultaneity” it represents the union of oppositions, of change and permanence.<sup>83</sup> It is both passive and active at once, producing things and receiving them at the same time, satisfying the demands of the body and the mind.<sup>84</sup> We become imaginative, self-creating beings.

Before going further, it is first necessary to enrich our understanding of Play,

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.107

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p.101

<sup>83</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981, p.22

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p.22

specifically to distinguish the concept of Play from Work. Play is an activity that is done for its own sake, without any goal or motive. We may sing, paint, or walk simply for our own pleasure, that we obtain from doing the activity.<sup>85</sup> Conversely, Work is an activity that is done for some reward, or in order to achieve a particular goal. However, Schiller acknowledges, this is not to say that work is not necessarily a bad thing, rather it becomes the central focus of a given society.<sup>86</sup> Work can be a very satisfying and rewarding activity, but he warns us that we must be cautious not to make it as the only valuable activity.

Furthermore, we must note that play is not necessarily opposed to 'rule-following'; though it may be a way to make the task of 'following rules' more enjoyable. For example, I may play a song on a guitar by following the exact notes for that song, and I may also play with the song e.g. playing the notes a different scale, adding more notes to the song, adding electrical distortion as opposed to playing it on an acoustic guitar etc. On the other hand, a child may pick up a guitar and simply hammer his or her hands on it, fully content with exploring the different sounds it produces. The child's activity may still be called 'play' because it involves both reception and creativity (no matter how horrible the instrument may sound). Therefore, play extends to activities that involve specific rules, as well as activities with no goals other than exploration.

It is precisely the non-instrumental, intrinsically valuable aspect of Play that distinguishes it from work. As soon as there is a definite, utilitarian dimension to the

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<sup>85</sup> I may play a casual game of street hockey with friends for enjoyment purposes. Whereas if I were to play professional hockey, my enjoyment has nothing to do with the end (goal) which is to win, over the other team

<sup>86</sup> The importance of work, and the degree to which it may be productive without encroaching too much on the individual's life, is discussed in much more detail by Marcuse. Borrowing from Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, and the Frankfurt School, Marcuse develops the necessary social and political concepts that will concretize Schiller's point. I will explain this dimension of Marcuse's theory in the next two chapters.

activity, it ceases to be Play and becomes work. He says: “Seen in this way, play and work take on a different meaning and are equivalent to freedom and servitude.”<sup>87</sup> But we must remember that Play cannot be the only life activity for humans, since we would not get any work done. And we must further keep in mind that while acknowledging the importance of play and freedom, we must not neglect our social duties, i.e. duties that allow us maintain social development. Although Schiller does not fully explore the importance of work and social services in a Western capitalist economy, he does propose an important analysis of the social problems that can arise when we make “servitude” the focus of human life. Therefore, the difference between both kinds of activities seems clear: play is done for its own sake, and work involves some kind of reward or goal; and further, in excess either activity can be problematic.

Schiller tells us that the sense drive constrains the mind by natural laws and the form drive constrains the mind by rational laws. Through the play-drive, Schiller says, the constraints on the mind are removed and the individual is set free. The sense of freedom that Schiller advocates arises from man’s whole nature, through the play drive. In other words, for Schiller, human freedom is expressed through aesthetic activity because liberates us from the confines of both drives. Indeed, Schiller tells us, the play-drive exists due to rational necessity.<sup>88</sup>

In the *Fifteenth Letter* Schiller draws our attention to a central point concerning the play-drive and beauty. He tells us that the object of the sense-drive is life, and it is associated with the physical world and our physical senses. The object of the form-drive

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p.22

<sup>88</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.103

is thought, and it is associated with our rational faculty. Since the play-drive is a compound of both drives, its object is living-form “A concept serving to designate all the aesthetic qualities of phenomena and, in a word, what in the widest sense of the term we call beauty.”<sup>89</sup> Likewise, beauty is also made up of two elements: it has life because we can sense and feel it, and it has form because we can think it.<sup>90</sup> Also, like play, beauty possesses intrinsic value. More importantly, play and beauty both share the produce the same liberating effect for the individual. Both provide the necessary grounds for the cultivation of the potentialities whose realization produces a complete and unified human being. Therefore, play and beauty have the same liberating effect on the person because they both resolve the conflict between the form-drive and the sense-drive: Both allow the individual to develop a multi-dimensional human life.<sup>91</sup>

### **CONCLUSION:**

Until now I have explored the key aspects concerning the fragmented human being: the two opposing drives (the sensuous and the formal) and the demands they place on the individual, the consequences of being ruled by either drive exclusively, the play-drive, and the healing powers of the aesthetic. Schiller has taught us that human beings are multi-dimensional creatures with many talents and abilities: we are individuals who are able to combine form and matter with the help of our imaginative faculty, and become

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p.101

<sup>90</sup> Simons, John D. Friedrich Schiller. Ulrich Weisstein Ed. Twayne’s World Authors Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981, p.22

<sup>91</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters. Wilkinson, E.M. & Willoughby, L.A. (Eds.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 1967, p.103-105

creators. As such, he encourages us to develop the sensuous as well as the rational faculties, and not simply one or the other.

Furthermore, Schiller stresses the importance of an aesthetic education so that individuals may improve themselves, since it will ultimately lead to the improvement of civilization. Furthermore, it is the task of every person to strive towards this union of oppositions and as such we must play. Therefore, we might consider Schiller's theory as a prescription against a common illness plaguing human kind: the fragmented human character. Following his advice, we may finally be able to achieve a wholeness that allows us to build a more fulfilling human existence. However, the problem with Schiller's theory is that its focus on individual education seems to lack the socio-economic concepts necessary to fully understand the cause of specialization/instrumentalization and human fragmentation. Thus, for Schiller, the problem is that the individual fails to unify both drives, but individuals cannot simply will away social forces, even with an aesthetic education.

Moreover, Schiller does not completely address the importance of work and the benefits of social cohesion. With that in mind, while we must be sensitive to social context in which Schiller worked, we must also understand that the improvement of society requires us to go beyond an aesthetic education of humankind. Specifically, although we may be able to identify a kind of pseudo-enlightenment that jeopardizes the freedom of the individual in Western Capitalist society, we need more than an aesthetic education to solve many of the problems. For example, we must fully acknowledge the importance of work and social services, which Schiller does not, since both seem to be important for the development of almost any physical society. Therefore, although



Schiller has identified a major social problem, we must look elsewhere to develop an understanding of the socio-political concepts required to fully address that problem. In the second chapter, I will examine Marcuse's theory in *Eros and Civilization*, where he draws on both Freud's work as well as Schiller. In particular, Marcuse will examine the roots of social repression beginning with Freud, and then the possibility of liberation through Schiller's aesthetic education.

## CHAPTER 2: MARCUSE AND AESTHETICS

I will begin to develop the social and political concepts necessary for further understanding the problem of individual fragmentation, with reference to Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*. Here he considers elements from Sigmund Freud's theory of human instincts and Schiller's theory of aesthetics to explicate his own understanding of the basis of a solution to the problem of the fragmentation and instrumentalization of human powers. First he critically examines Sigmund Freud's concepts of repression and the reality principle, in order to understand possible social and historical factors that promote social repression, and specifically the repression of sensuousness.<sup>92</sup> Second, Marcuse recognizes the possible application of Schiller's concept of 'play', not only to the social and political spheres but also for human life in general. Specifically, Marcuse was intrigued by the liberation of sensuousness promised by the play-drive, because that seems to be connected with true human freedom.<sup>93</sup>

I will begin by examining the section on "The Aesthetic Dimension" in *Eros in Civilization*. This will link up with the first chapter, and will allow us to understand the specific elements that Marcuse draws from Schiller's theory of aesthetics and play. Marcuse is most interested in the reconciling properties of play, i.e., its ability to tame the conflict between the sense-drive and the form-drive. Specifically, Marcuse will use Schiller's concept of play to project the possibility of a liberated human sensuousness. The problem, he believes, is that the erotic energy of the sense-drive is sublimated in a system-reproducing manner, and channeled towards expanding a capitalist system of

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<sup>92</sup> Schoolman, Morton. The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse. The Free Press, a division of Collier Macmillan Co., Inc. New York, 1980. p.94

<sup>93</sup> The play-drive as explained in chapter one of this thesis.

production and consumption. Although, it is true that pleasure must be repressed to some degree so that we may work on social development, Marcuse contends that the demand for sensuous, erotic pleasure, is repressed beyond the level that is necessary for the preservation and development of society. Ideally, as Marcuse will go on to say, human labor would take the shape of play, and in that sense become free, creative, imaginative activity; as opposed to oppressive, mechanical and inhuman commotion. Therefore, I will attempt to show how Marcuse wants to apply the reconciling powers of the aesthetic and the play-drive to the liberation of human sensuousness. This is important particularly when considering the tension between the pleasure principle and the reality principle.

Next, without digressing into elements of Freud's theory that are not central to present purposes, I will explicate the technical terms that Marcuse uses in his theory of the individual, as well their role in the development of human civilization. Specifically, I will identify the difference between Freud's concepts of "pleasure principle", which is characterized by gratification, and "the reality principle" which is characterized by the repression of the demands of the pleasure principle. Marcuse considers these concepts in particular in order to develop his own concepts of "surplus-repression and the performance principle." This will help us understand the dynamics between the pleasure, reality, and performance principle as humans attempt to establish the laws and demands of both to social and personal development. However, as I will demonstrate, Marcuse shows us that the performance principle successfully represses the demands of the pleasure principle.<sup>94</sup> In contrast to the reality principle, the performance principle

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<sup>94</sup> Marcuse will go on to explain the point that gratification does require a certain level of repression, in order to develop civilization: we may think of the saying "work now and play later", however, the capitalist system of production, he will argue, demands us to work as much as possible, and to make sure we get enough rest before the next shift. Most of the individual's time is there fore spent working, and when they

represses a person's demand for gratification over and above the level that is required for the improvement of civilization. Thus, the performance principle, he will argue, not only discourages the development of Schiller's "complete human being", but also leads to human need-deprivation and environmental degradation.

### **SCHILLER AND MARCUSE: THE RELEVANCE OF SCHILLER'S LETTERS**

As I ended, Schiller wrote the aesthetic letters under the influence of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. In this sense, his letters aim at reconstructing human civilization through the emancipatory powers of Aesthetics. The term "Aesthetics" Marcuse says, was originally defined as "pertaining to the sense", with emphasis on the cognitive function of the senses.<sup>95</sup> The cognitive function of the senses, according to Kant, is both receptive and creative, allowing us to experience beauty and pleasure.<sup>96</sup> However, Marcuse argues, the dominance of Reason undermines the cognitive function of sensuousness by repressing the need for pleasure satisfaction. Marcuse argues that this repression is required by the social demand that everyone become productive members of society. This means that the senses are viewed as mere receptive antennas that do not play a role in the development of a free society, only the reproduction of systemic goals that are ultimately economically driven. As such, human awareness (cognition) becomes associated with the faculty of reason, whereas the senses simply feed the 'higher' faculty of reason with

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are not working they are simply resting between work shifts. This leaves very little room (in some cases non) for the cultivation of human talents and ability or 'play'.

<sup>95</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization*. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955, p.180

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p.176, This is a very short version of Marcuse's discussion of the mechanics of Kant's concept of beauty and aesthetics. As I am not examining Kant's work in this project, a more detailed discussion may be found in Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*.

information. The faculty of reason then takes that information and organizes it according to laws of reason, while completely discounting the laws of pleasure. Marcuse says,

In line with the repressive concept of reason, cognition became the ultimate concern of the “higher,” non-sensuous faculties of the mind; aesthetics were absorbed by logic and metaphysics. Sensuousness, as the “lower” and ever “lowest” faculty, furnished at best the mere stuff, the raw material, for cognition, to be organized by the higher faculties of the intellect.<sup>97</sup>

As a result, sensuousness, one’s own subjective experience of pleasure, which cannot be measured and computed, is disregarded as socially useful. This means that an individual’s subjective experience of pleasure is not considered to provide any sort of measurable contribution to the development of civilization. Moreover, the elements that are ignored are those related to human creativity and imagination--the faculty that represents objects without their being “present,” the ability to play with form and matter and freely shape the world according to the pleasure principle.<sup>98</sup>

The concept of sensuousness maintains that our senses are the “sources and organs of cognition.”<sup>99</sup> However, the senses are not the exclusive or even the primary organs of cognition. The cognitive function of the senses, Marcuse explains, is confused with their appetitive function (which is sensuality). As noted earlier, the cognitive function of the senses is governed by the pleasure principle. Thus the cognitive function of the senses, Marcuse explains, strives for pleasure that is not simply physical and

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p.181 Marcuse is quite clear about this point, when he talks about how sensuousness is undermined to the point of pure ridicule “Those of its processes that did not fit into the rationalistic epistemology--that is, those that went beyond the passive perception of data--became homeless. Foremost among these homeless contents and values were those of imagination: free, creative, or reproductive intuition of objects which are not directly “given”--the faculty to represent objects without their being “present.”

<sup>99</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955, p.183-84

receptive, it strives for aesthetic pleasure and beauty.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the cognitive function involves the senses as the organs that provide the imagination with information, which it may then manipulate and play with.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, the appetitive function of the senses allows for the satisfaction of the need for instant physical gratification, and is much more about reception. The result of this confusion is a conception of sensuousness as a passive, receptive, and unproductive dimension, which does not coincide with the values of the established reality principle.<sup>102</sup> But we know from what has been said thus far that sensuousness is more than just receptive.

Philosophy, Marcuse explains, has done little to resolve this confusion between sensuousness and sensuality, or the cognitive and appetitive functions of the senses. And that is why it has been difficult for philosophy to provide an account of what a “liberated sensuousness” might look like.<sup>103</sup> As such, its only reasonable refuge was in the theory of aesthetics.

From this fusion of the cognitive and appetitive functions derives the confused, inferior, passive character of sense-cognition, which makes it unsuitable for the reality principle unless subjected to and formed by the conceptual activity of the intellect, of reason.<sup>104</sup>

Sensuousness gains freedom from the dominance of reason and finds expression in the

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<sup>100</sup> At this point we may recall Schiller, who also believed that human beings have a need for aesthetic pleasure as well as physical pleasure.

<sup>101</sup> It is important for me to note that unless stated otherwise I will be using the term “play” as Schiller meant it: Play as the activity of combining form and content according to the laws of the physical world and the laws of human imagination.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p.184, “liberated sensuousness” in this case refers to a conception of sensuousness that is not subordinated to the rule of reason.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.184, Marcuse quotes Otto Rank in order to explain the claim that Art challenges reason “Art challenges the prevailing principle of reason: in representing the order of sensuousness, it invokes a tabooed logic--the logic of gratification as against that of repression. Behind the sublimated aesthetic form, the unduplicated content shows forth: the commitment of art to the pleasure principle.”

realm of aesthetics. The truth of art, according to Marcuse, its goal, is to liberate sensuousness by reconciling it with reason, thus canceling the opposition between both. This is precisely a reference to Schiller's conception of the aesthetic, as the mediating force between Nature and Reason. Therefore, the conflict within the individual is revealed as one between the logic of gratification and the logic of repression: the gratification of the instincts and the need for aesthetic pleasure on the one hand, and the repression of those needs and demands for that pleasure. Unless the need for gratification conforms to the laws of the reason, it will be counter-productive to social development.<sup>105</sup> This is true only relative to the performance principle of capitalism, since 'the laws of reason' reflect the demands of the performance principle, which center on: productivity for the sake of increasing profit, requiring more work and less play.

Marcuse argues that the need for definite social changes change was obvious during the time Schiller wrote the letters. Indeed, as we have seen, Schiller drew our attention to the dangers of alienation, as 'reason' was used to justify the killing and murder of many people during his time. Marcuse explains that with the rise of industrial society individual productivity was directed by the performance principle within an industrial system that produced far more than was necessary to maintain life and enable the development of valuable human powers. As a result, the individual develops as a fragmented being and is used as a mere tool for the progress of capitalist productivity.

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<sup>105</sup> As I will go on to explain later "social development" amounts, largely, to the demands and laws of "the reality principle".

The individual's humanity is fragmented since he or she only develops his or her occupation rather than 'the whole being'.<sup>106</sup>

Marcuse explains that Schiller explicitly recognizes that civilization is responsible for the impoverished conception of the individual, which reduces a human being to the status of a tool. History shows us the development of human civilization came with the sacrifice of much human life, not to mention destruction on a global scale due to incredibly violent wars (using weapons of mass destruction as opposed to arrows and swords). But an impoverished conception of humanity has its clear consequences. Instead of being creative and productive individuals in reality, whose life is filled with personal interests and need satisfaction, they are reduced to the status of productive tools. This reduction allows atrocities, ranging from the slavery of many people and races, to the burning of women who were suspected of being servants of the Devil. Marcuse affirms that Schiller's concept of play, in contrast, represents the philosophical basis of a holistic conception of human freedom and fulfillment. And while we acknowledge the productive capacities of the individual and the need to exploit human capabilities to a certain degree, that new mode of civilization considers individual human powers and their all-round development as of paramount importance.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p.186, Marcuse refers to a specific passage in Schiller's *Letters* to describe how labor is kept separate from the pleasure principle, and strictly under the rule of the performance principle "...enjoyment is separated from labor, the means from the end, exertion from recompense. Eternally fettered only to a single little fragment of the whole, man fashions himself only as a fragment; ever hearing only the monotonous whirl of the wheel which he turns, he never develops the harmony of his being, and, instead of shaping the humanity that lies in his nature, he becomes a mere imprint of his occupation, his science."

<sup>107</sup> This new mode of civilization would not completely abolish work and labor, only inhuman labor, and inhuman conditions. Though there are many conditions to be considered for this new mode of civilization, such as the economic and social impact it would have, this conception basically gives us something to aim for.



To understand what this higher conception of the individual might look like, Marcuse notes, we begin by examining the root of the problem as Schiller identifies it. Schiller, Marcuse explains, attributes the fragmentation of the individual to the antagonism between sense and reason, matter and form, the particular and the universal. As I noted in the first chapter, each of these dimensions is governed by either the sense-drive or the form drive. The former is receptive while the latter is active.<sup>108</sup> This conflict, as Schiller stresses, must be resolved if we are to ever reclaim humanity and reconstruct human civilization. This reconciliation between the opposed drives is accomplished, as I explained earlier, through the play drive. With Schiller's theory of aesthetics in mind, Marcuse draws the implication that in play, "reason is sensuous and sensuousness rational." This refers to Schiller's claim that the play-drive cancels the tensions between sense and reason, as both are working together, as opposed to having one drive rule over the other.

However, this does not necessarily mean that individuals will have a clear conception of freedom, justice and morality. Rather, the individual becomes more open and receptive towards new forms of such concepts. The result is

A conception of an aestheticized and eroticized subjectivity that preserves the connotation of *Sinnlichkeit* as pertaining to sensuality, receptiveness, art, and Eros, thus redeeming the body and the senses against the tyranny of repressive reason and affirming the importance of aesthetics, play, and erotic activity in human life."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p.186-87 Marcuse reiterates the opposition between both drives as discussed by Schiller "Culture is built by the combination and interaction of these two impulses. But in the established civilization, their relation has been an antagonistic one: instead of reconciling both impulses by making sensuousness rational and reason sensuous, civilization has subjugated sensuousness to reason in such manner that the former, if it reasserts itself, does so in destructive and "savage" forms, while the tyranny of reason impoverishes and barbarizes sensuousness."

<sup>109</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Towards a Critical Theory of Society. Douglas Kellner Ed. Vol. 2 of *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*. London: Routledge, 2001, p.87-88

Therefore, the play-drive synthesizes our receptive and creative faculties (the sense-drive and the form-drive).

Though Marcuse agrees with Schiller's conception of the individual and the liberating qualities art, their views on politics differ greatly. Whereas for Schiller "the liberation of man from inhuman existential conditions" is solved through aesthetic education alone, since "beauty leads to freedom."<sup>110</sup>, for Marcuse, more specific social and political changes are necessary. Nevertheless, for both, the play-drive is the vehicle for liberation as "...the play of life itself, beyond want and external compulsion--the manifestation of an existence without fear and anxiety, and thus the manifestation of freedom itself."<sup>111</sup> Human beings are free, when the development of their potential is constrained by neither social laws or unmet material needs. Furthermore, Marcuse continues, since this constraint over human beings is exercised by the established reality, freedom has to mean: liberation from that established reality. As such, the ideal of human life, for Marcuse, is governed by a sensuous reason, which protects and enhances human life. As the barriers of repression are removed human beings may evolve freely, and attempt to organize social relations so as to make "lasting gratification" possible.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, Freedom within reality means that individuals are able to satisfy wants and needs without having to engage in repressive work.<sup>113</sup> Repressive-work in this sense amounts to repetitive, inhuman labor whereby the interests and goals of the individual are

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<sup>110</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization*. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955, p.187

<sup>111</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization*. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955, p.187

<sup>112</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. *Towards a Critical Theory of Society*. Douglas Kellner Ed. Vol. 2 of *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*. London: Routledge, 2001. p.88-89

<sup>113</sup> Repressive work may also be thought of as Marx's alienated labor, which describes the relationship between workers and their work.

directed towards, first and foremost, profit increase. Non-repressive work is just the opposite, in that while it still consists of some degree of exploitation of human capabilities, the value of the private interests and goals of the individual is acknowledged without sacrificing one's dignity as a human being. Thus, the purpose of non-repressive work is to instrumentally increase profit, but instead to interact with and transform nature according to human imagination "Then, man is free to "play" with his faculties and potentialities and with those of nature, and only by "playing" with them is he free. His world is then display, and its order is that of beauty."<sup>114</sup>

Marcuse explains that for Schiller, aesthetics may become the governing principle of humanity if it first becomes a universal. For Schiller, aesthetics begins at the individual level, but eventually it must be translated to the rest of humanity. As well, "Aesthetic culture presupposes a "total revolution in the mode of perception and feeling," and such revolution becomes possible only if civilization has reached the highest physical and intellectual maturity." He means that all of human civilization must become liberated, and recognize the over-exploitative demands placed on individuals.<sup>115</sup> For example, as I have mentioned before, though we must exploit our ability to work and create in order to develop human civilization, over-exploitation occurs when the individual is viewed as nothing more than a natural resource to be used by corporations, to increase profits. Such an individual is forced to lose sight of their whole humanity, as Schiller says, and instead is only focused on developing their ability to be a productive member of the system of production.

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<sup>114</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955, p.188

<sup>115</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955, p.189

Also, Marcuse explains, it is only when human beings acquire the qualities of aesthetic education i.e., play and creativity, that they are able to transform human civilization. This freedom to transform human civilization through play is made possible through human imagination, which projects the different possibilities of human existence. By playing with form and the matter supplied to it by the mental faculty and the objective world (Nature), human imagination plays a role in shaping human civilization.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, the maturity of humanity requires an aesthetic education, because it allows us to resolve the tensions between the form and sense-drives, and understand aesthetic experience as a both receptive and creative activity.

Once the play-drive ascends to a position where it becomes the governing principle of human civilization, nature (the objective world) is experienced as “the object of contemplation.”<sup>117</sup> This point means that we perceive the world, both natural and social/political, as a realm of possibility that is shaped according to the free-play of human imagination. As such, our perception of Nature as dominating or as the object of instrumental domination is transformed. And though it is not fully possible to completely cut off the ties of exploitation and domination from Nature, as it is still used as a means to life in general, it is possible to reduce waste and over-consumption. Correspondingly, the subjective world is also transformed. Marcuse tells us that aesthetic experience also tames “violent and exploitative productivity” that turns human beings into tools of labor.<sup>118</sup> This means that human life is still highlighted by activity and productivity, for example individuals would still work and participate in the community. However what the individual “possesses and produces need bear no longer the traces of servitude, the fearful

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

design of its purpose”; beyond want and anxiety, human activity becomes display--the free manifestation of potentialities.”<sup>119</sup> As such, human activity would not be prescribed by the parameters of instrumental rationality. The result for human beings is that they become ‘realms of possibility’, and the aesthetic individual realizes the self according to the free-play of the imagination.

The drive behind the ideal of aesthetic education is that morality should be based on sensuous grounds. To be sure, the sense-drive must be governed by freedom. Schiller tells us that the transformation of society begins at the individual level. But only a free and autonomous individual is able to bring about the harmony between individual and universal gratification.<sup>120</sup> As such, “in a truly free civilization, “the will of the whole” fulfills itself only “through the nature of the individual.”<sup>121</sup> Before social change can begin to take place, individuals must learn to synthesize the tension between Nature and Reason. And aesthetic education allows us to resolve that tension. Marcuse notes the similarity between the reconciling elements of play to those between the reality principle and the pleasure principle. He says,

Imagination preserves the objectives of those mental processes which have remained free from the repressive reality principle; in their aesthetic function, they can be incorporated into the conscious rationality of mature civilization. The play impulse stands for the common denominator of the two opposed mental processes and principles.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p.190 Specifically we should not undermine the importance of liberating sensuousness whenever we speak about liberating humanity, since the liberation of the senses promotes the liberation of humanity as a whole. Marcuse says “Freedom would have to be sought in the liberation of sensuousness rather than reason, and in the limitation of the “higher” faculties in favor of the “lower,” In other words, the salvation of culture would involve abolition of the repressive controls that civilization has imposed on sensuousness. And this is indeed the idea behind the *Aesthetic Education*.”.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p.190-91

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p.190

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, p.193-94

The activity of play, he says, has the same reconciling effect between the sense-drive and the form-drive, and also between the reality principle and the pleasure principle. Through the activity of play the individual is free to shape reality according to the pleasure principle, so that repression is kept to a minimum, labor is not inhuman, and thus the laws of both principles conform to one another. Past experiences of happiness and freedom are preserved in memory, and with the help of the imagination they are incorporated into the development of a better human life.

Reconciling both mental processes (drives) and the principles have the potential to liberate human beings. Since both views aim to establish a non-repressive social order, both are committed to the concept of freedom in this sense. Marcuse establishes a link between aesthetic philosophy and the images of Orpheus and Narcissus, in order to elaborate on the concept of a non-repressive social order

Still another element links the aesthetic philosophy with the Orphic and Narcissistic images: the view of a non-repressive order in which the subjective and objective world, man and nature, are harmonized. The Orphic symbols center on the singing god who lives to defeat death and who liberates nature, so that the constrained and constraining matter releases the beautiful and playful forms of animate and inanimate things. No longer striving and no longer desiring "for something still to be attained," they are free from fear and fetter-- and thus free per se. The contemplation of Narcissus repels all other activity in the erotic surrender to beauty, inseparably uniting his own existence with nature.<sup>123</sup>

In the same way, Marcuse says, aesthetic philosophy conceives of a non-repressive order in which nature "in man and outside man becomes freely susceptible to "law"--the laws of display and beauty." This non-repressive order possesses an essential quality:

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p.194 It will not be necessary for me to get into too much detail about the Orphic and Narcissistic images in Marcuse's writing. Though if the reader is interested, Marcuse provides a detailed explanation in his work (see *Eros and Civilization*)

Abundance. Marcuse explains “Non-repressive order is essentially an order of *abundance*: The necessary constraint is brought about by “superfluity” rather than need.”<sup>124</sup> But when we think of “superfluity” we should keep in mind that Marcuse does not mean the superfluity of mass produced commodities (weapons, televisions, cars) but rather the superfluity of true need-satisfying natural resources (food, water, medicine). This means that the distribution of natural resources must be equal across the globe, instead of being concentrated in the hands of a few countries. Indeed Marcuse claims, the only order that is compatible with true human freedom is that of abundance.<sup>125</sup> And rightly so, an individual cannot be free if he or she does not possess the necessary basic resources for life.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, he continues, this is precisely where both the idealists and the materialist agree: a non-repressive order is possible only when human civilization has matured to a stage where it demands and insists on true human freedom.<sup>127</sup>

Now according to both materialism and idealism, Marcuse says, the notion of freedom that is governed under the rule of the performance principle forces people to compete for basic needs. Competition for the basic needs of life is inhuman because the obvious advantage that some social classes have over others, and means that the satisfaction of the ruling classes demands for luxury will be satisfied at the cost of depriving the lower classes of even their basic needs. Instead, Marcuse explains, both

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> The poor people of third world countries cannot be free no matter how hard they try, since they have enough trouble securing food and clean water. As such Marcuse’s conception of human freedom requires the equal distribution and abundance of natural resources.

<sup>127</sup> At this point we might want to question whether or not abundance of resources may be attained within the limits of the harmonious relationship with Nature. Marcuse does not consider the strain that will be placed on the environment in order to lift human beings to a new and better level of development. The energy and resources required to free humanity may end up placing a greater strain on the environment.

idealists and materialists want to base the concept of freedom on a “universally gratified existence of needs.” This view tells us that this particular realm of freedom lies beyond the realm of necessity “freedom is not within but outside the struggle for existence.” Although the struggle for existence never ends we may be capable of conceiving ways to reduce its negative impacts (disease, famine, socialization etc.). Thus, this particular understanding of the concept of freedom says that the basic needs for any human individual are “the prerequisite, rather than the content, of a free society.”<sup>128</sup> This of course means an end to competition over the basic needs and resources required by all human beings (food, water, medicine etc.)

On the other hand, the realm of necessity (labor) does not coincide with freedom because, Marcuse explains, “the human existence in this realm is determined by objectives and functions that are not its own and that do not allow the free play of human faculties and desires.”<sup>129</sup> Ideally, human labor, the transformation of nature according to the imaginative faculties of the play-drive, belongs to human beings. However, because individuals are involved in a system that undermines their creative capacities and suppresses sensuousness, their creations are not developed by their own imaginations.<sup>130</sup> This means that in the realm of necessity the best conditions for human life are dictated by the standards of reason rather than the standards of freedom “namely, to organize production and distribution in such a manner that the least time is spent for making all

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p.195

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Karl Marx’s concept of “alienation”, discussed in The Manuscripts of 1844, should come to mind when we think of the relationship between humans and labor in the realm of necessity. As Marcuse explains, in the realm of necessity ‘human labor’ does not belong to human beings, because individuals are alienated from their world. [might want to see what M has to say about alienation in his “The Philosophical Foundations of Historical Materialism”]



necessities available to all members of society.”<sup>131</sup> However, “individuality cannot be a value and end in itself” because labor, Marcuse explains, is transformed into a system of inhuman activity.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, human existence is undermined in the realm of socially determined necessity (Western capitalism), and the solution to the improvement of culture consists in at least these two points: 1- The liberation of sensuousness, 2- a change in the social, political, and economic forces that repress and constrict the possibility for human freedom.

The relevance of Schiller to Marcuse, thus far, should be clear: Schiller diagnoses the problem of humanity as a split within the individual, between Nature and Reason. The tension between the sense-drive and the form-drive is resolved through the play-drive. This is precisely what Marcuse found so appealing about Schiller’s theory of aesthetics: It involves both the liberation of sensuous energy as well as the creative manipulation of form and content. But this is not enough for Marcuse, since there are social and political conditions that require more than an aesthetic education, and art alone cannot stimulate social change. Specifically, the performance principle, which I will go on to discuss in the following section, demands the highest amount of productivity and the least amount of pleasure, and thus reduces the individual to a tool that is used to perpetuate the growth of the system.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

## EROS AND CIVILIZATION: PLEASURE VS. PERFORMANCE

First, it is important to understand the basic elements of Freud's theory, which will allow us to understand the principles of performance and pleasure.<sup>133</sup> According to Freud, once the ego matures beyond the final stage of infantile sexual development, it becomes completely dependent on the external world for gratification. Prior to this stage however, the child gains gratification through the specific stage in its internal process of development.<sup>134</sup> The child seeks gratification from different objects, and also people, through the "autoerotic stimulation of the oral, anal, and phallic zones, and generally eroticized areas of the body."<sup>135</sup> But because human relations are so complex and varied "what is or is not gratifying easily appears to originate within social contexts rather than within the individual."<sup>136</sup> The instincts, therefore, drive the organism to seek and fulfill the demand for gratification.

However, instinctual theory must be qualified in order to provide a sufficient basis for Marcuse's critical theory: Since all social orders provide some sort of instinctual gratification, instinct theory alone cannot distinguish between morally acceptable and

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<sup>133</sup> In the introduction to Eros and Civilization, Marcuse explains some important terms which are important for reading the text: "the terms "Civilization" and "Culture" are used interchangeably as in Freud's Civilization and its Discontents. The terms "repression" and "repressive" are used in the non-technical sense to designate both conscious and unconscious, external and internal processes of restraint, constraint, and suppression. "Instinct" in accordance with Freud's notion of Trieb, refers to primary "drives" of the human organism which are subject to historical modification; they find mental as well as somatic representation. Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955.

<sup>134</sup> For a more detailed explanation on Freud's psychosexual stages of development see: Schoolman, Morton. The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse. The Free Press, a division of Collier Macmillan Co., Inc. New York, 1980. p.91

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. In Freudian terms this is called "polymorphous perversity", which means attaining gratification through all the different erogenous zones of the body.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. Schoolman says we may question the concept of gratification as "a definite need with universal characteristics", and though he does not explore this point in any detail at this point, he does draw our attention to it as something to consider. However, He does provide an adequate conception of gratification, saying "the pleasurable release of tension responsible for psychological and physical discomfort."

morally unacceptable gratification.<sup>137</sup> For Marcuse, what is considered morally accepted and morally unaccepted gratification seems to depend on more than just social standards and values. It also seems to depend on whether or not the experience of pleasure is life-affirming. For example, consider the kind of pleasure that one may gain through the consumption of mass-produced commodities versus pleasure that is experienced from engaging in imaginative and creative activity (such as art). This point will be explored further and in more detail throughout this section, but we should keep it in mind for now.

It is important to gain a deep understanding of the logic of gratification, since, as Marcuse tells us it contributes to the development of sensuous reason, and the possible liberation of the senses.<sup>138</sup> In order to understand the logic of gratification we look to Freud, who tells us that the history of western civilization is the history of its repression. However, Marcuse believes that the undeveloped historical content of Freud's argument must be elaborated in order to understand the critical significance of the key points. In particular, Marcuse emphasizes the different ways different levels of material culture constrains both the biological existence and the instinctual structure of human beings. On the one hand a basic level of constraint is the precondition of the progress of civilization,

Left free to pursue their natural objectives, the basic instincts of man would be incompatible with all lasting association and preservation: they would destroy even where they unite.<sup>139</sup>

In general this constraint may be connected to Freud's concept of polymorphous perversity, in the sense that "the basic instincts" refer to a very immature ego that seeks gratification through the different body's different erogenous zones. On the other hand,

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955. p.11

the level of repression needed to ensure the reproduction of society is reduced as social development increases. I will explain each moment in turn. To understand how the ego is instructed to become a more mature and productive contributor to social development we must begin with Freud's concepts of Eros and Thanatos.

Marcuse distinguishes between the two drives or instincts that Freud identifies, and claims that both permeate all of reality: Eros, the life instinct and Thanatos, the death instinct. He explains,

Under non-repressive conditions, sexuality tends to “grow into” Eros—That is to say, toward self-sublimation in lasting and expanding relations (including work relations) which serve to intensify and enlarge instinctual gratification. Eros strives for “eternalizing” itself in a permanent *order*.<sup>140</sup>

Eros, being the dominant instinct by nature, tempers human beings so that they develop receptive to non-aggressive relationships with both human beings and nature; this becomes the basis of all social relations.<sup>141</sup> However, Eros encounters the challenge of existing within the realm of necessity. Marcuse continues, the conditions of “scarcity and poverty” make it difficult for Eros to realize its laws in the world. And though progress in technology, and evolution of human beings may bring us closer to realizing the demands of Eros, it is not achieved without some degree of “alienated labor”.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand Thanatos, the death instinct, represents the ultimate obstacle to Eros: “The brute fact of death denies once and for all the reality of a non-repressive existence.”<sup>143</sup> The individual realizes that joy and pleasure cannot last forever, because Eros exists within time and as

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid. p.222

<sup>141</sup> Schoolman, Morton. The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse. The Free Press, a division of Collier Macmillan Co., Inc. New York, 1980. p.91

<sup>142</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955. p.222

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p.231

such is subject to its laws. Eros seeks timeless joy within time, and that cannot be fulfilled, as such Marcuse explains

The mere anticipation of the inevitable end, present in every instant, introduces a repressive element into all libidinal relations and renders pleasure itself painful. This primary frustration in the instinctual structure of man becomes the inexhaustible source of all other frustrations—and of their social effectiveness.<sup>144</sup>

Therefore, the individual experiences this tension between Eros and Thanatos as a threat to the attainment of pleasure and gratification.

However, Marcuse reminds us that both instincts can be equally destructive if they are not repressed and channeled properly. Both drives struggle to establish their need for instant gratification in the world, or “gratification as such and as an end in itself, at any moment”<sup>145</sup>, and tensions arise because culture cannot satisfy both instantaneously. In this sense the instincts must be sublimated, and channeled towards socially beneficial activity, and “Civilization begins when the primary objective—namely, integral satisfaction of needs—is effectively renounced.”<sup>146</sup> This basically means that the destructive forces of both drives must be channeled into socially beneficial activity, only then does human civilization begin. The destructive powers of Eros may be understood in terms of Freud’s polymorphous perversity, whereas the destructive properties of Thanatos may be thought of as the physical expiration of Eros. In this sense, then, we can understand that left to its own devices Eros simply seeks permanent instinctual gratification, and Thanatos serves as the constant reminder of the inability to do so. Therefore, Marcuse concludes, civilization channels the energy of Eros towards repressive alienated labor, and uses the threat of Thanatos to maintain that level of

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p.231

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, p.11

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

repression.

Marcuse then defines the transformation in the governing value system as follows: the values of the instinct pass from instant gratification demands immediate satisfaction, pleasure, joy (play), receptiveness and the absence of repression, to delayed satisfaction, restraint of pleasure, toil (work), productiveness and security. Furthermore, Freud associates the first set of values with the pleasure principle, and the second set of values are associated with the reality principle. Therefore, Marcuse tells us, Freud describes this change as the transformation of the pleasure principles into the reality principle.<sup>147</sup>

The instincts are sublimated in order to transform the “human animal” into a “human being”, when both the “instinctual aims” as well as the “instinctual values—that is, the principles that govern the attainment of the aims” are transformed. Furthermore, Marcuse claims, as does Freud, human instincts as well as their need for gratification are shaped by a socio-historical world.<sup>148</sup> This change has the goal of modifying human instincts so that they benefit the progress of civilization. Therefore, the individual realizes that instant gratification cannot be attained. Marcuse explains:

the reality principle supersedes the pleasure principle: man learns to give up momentary, uncertain, and destructive pleasure for delayed, restrained, but “assured” pleasure. Because of this lasting gain through renunciation and restraint, according to Freud, the reality principle “safeguards” rather than “dethrones,” “modifies,” rather than denies, the pleasure principle.<sup>149</sup>

This means that the needs of human nature for instant gratification and the needs of social organization are incompatible, since one set of needs gains ascendancy over the other. But it seems counterintuitive to say that the needs of human nature are incompatible with

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. p.12

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

the needs of social organization, because some human needs must be satisfied socially. For example, human beings rely on social relations insofar as they have a desire or need to reproduce, or to enjoy the company of others. However, these needs of human nature must be repressed to a certain extent, in order to continue with the development of society. In such case, the need for social organization is placed before the need for instant gratification, since the latter would undermine any social progress.<sup>150</sup>

However, we should keep in mind that neither Marcuse, nor Freud is saying that gratification must be completely repressed, only delayed. Freud argued that if instinctual gratification is completely repressed, individuals develop neurotic habits that end up harming them.<sup>151</sup> Morton Schoolman explains the significance of Freud's theory of infantile sexuality for Marcuse

Psychosexual activity during these earliest phases of development, when man is most directly influenced by (his own) nature and gratification is explicitly sexual, proves that the first value rooted in human nature, the first norm characteristic of its moral disposition, is the need for instinctual gratification.<sup>152</sup>

This tells us that the first value of human nature is the satisfaction of the demands of Eros. This first value, the need for instinctual gratification, must be repressed, and delayed for the benefit of cultural progress. The main issues of social organization do not include the instant gratification of Eros. Instead, the established reality principle seeks to transform the ego into an organized, rational, and moral entity and "becomes a conscious,

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<sup>150</sup> Schoolman, Morton. The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse. The Free Press, a division of Collier Macmillan Co., Inc. New York, 1980. p.91

<sup>151</sup> Freud also believed that neurosis is the price we pay for civilization. But Marcuse rejects this particular position of Freud, believing that it is possible to develop an unrepressed and liberated human civilization, and that depends in a large part on the social and political organization of societies.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

thinking *subject*, geared to a rationality which is imposed on him from the outside.”<sup>153</sup>

Schoolman continues

From the standpoint of human nature, that which has truth value is the happiness and freedom bred from the gratification of the instincts through non-aggressive relations governed by the pleasure principle. The hallmark of civilization’s morality of productivity, on the other hand, is the denial of freedom, the frustration of happiness, and the suppression of truth—suppression, but not elimination, as we now shall see.<sup>154</sup>

This is important because, as Marcuse believes that the liberation of humanity is based on the liberation of those instinctual needs that have been completely repressed by the reality principle. Therefore, Schoolman reiterates the point that the repression of Eros and its demand for instant gratification should not be confused with the elimination of those demands.

Before further discussing Freud’s concept of “Fantasy”, as well as the confusion between the repression and the elimination of the pleasure principle, I will reiterate the main points thus far, and link them towards Marcuse’s theory of radical subjectivity. First of all, Marcuse draws on Freud to describe the social construction of subjectivity and the opposition between the pleasure principle and the reality principle.<sup>155</sup> According to Freud, human instincts are governed by the pleasure principle, which means that the instincts

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<sup>153</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955. (p.14)

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. p.92

<sup>155</sup> To be sure, Marcuse believes that we possess an organic/natural ‘first nature’, which he refers to in *Essay On Liberation*. I will come back to this point in the third chapter of this thesis, but for now it is enough to say that for Marcuse the aim of our ‘first nature’, is to establish greater unities of life, and to project better possibilities for human life. Our ‘first nature’, however, is overshadowed by a socially constructed nature that is imposed on us from the outside, by the external values of the system of capitalism. The aim of this second nature is to sustain the capitalist system of production and consumption; and while it may be necessary to do so the problem arises, according to Marcuse, because individuals identify this ‘second nature’ as their ‘first nature’, so that the primary goal for human beings becomes ‘the fulfillment of the demands of the market’ and not the search for greater unities of life.



simply seek gratification and pleasure. However, Freud also notes, at a very early stage the pleasure principle confronts a hostile environment—hostile because it offers delayed instead of instant gratification. Therefore, the individual learns to delay gratification and play, in exchange for productivity.

On the other hand, the reality principle instructs the individual on how to behave, what things to avoid, and what things to accept. “Under the tutelage of the reality principle, the person learns what is useful and proved behavior, and what is harmful and forbidden.”<sup>156</sup> For example, children are taught proper social etiquette on how to behave, and what to say. Thus, the individual seems to be shaped so as to become a “conscious, thinking subject, geared to a rationality which is imposed on him from outside.” This shows that, for Marcuse, individual rationality is socially constructed and imposed on the person from the outside, and as such the subject “is the product of social experience.”<sup>157</sup> Thus, the individual learns, at a very young age, that certain values facilitate social interaction, which serve the purpose of maintaining the established reality principle.

## **FANTASY AND SURPLUS REPRESSION**

Though the reality principle represses the demands of the human instincts and as such the pleasure principle, one area in particular is kept free from its rule. According to Freud, Marcuse tells us

Fantasy is “protected from cultural alterations” and stays committed to the pleasure principle. Otherwise, the mental

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<sup>156</sup>Marcuse, Herbert. *Towards a Critical Theory of Society*. Douglas Kellner Ed. Vol. 2 of *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*. London: Routledge, 2001. p.83

<sup>157</sup> Ibid p.83

apparatus is effectively subordinated to the reality principle. The function of “motor discharge,” which, under the supremacy of the pleasure principle, had “served to unburden the mental apparatus of accretions of stimuli,” is now employed in the “appropriate alteration of reality”: it is converted into action.<sup>158</sup>

Play, as imaginative and creative activity involving sensuousness and reason, shapes reality. The role of memory in fantasy is another important factor that Marcuse borrows from psychoanalysis. We may understand what Marcuse has in mind by the role of memory and fantasy by looking to Freud’s work. Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis explains that individuals repress painful and traumatic memories and experiences. The result is a suppression of memory that may eventually lead to neurotic behavior. Psychoanalysis aims at understanding suppressed memories and experiences, in order to help free the person from neurosis.<sup>159</sup> More importantly, Freud introduces the concept of ‘play’, as Schiller conceives it, to connect it with memory, pleasure and fantasy. In his essay The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming, Freud writes

We ought surely to look in the child for the first traces of imaginative activity. The Child’s best loved and most absorbing occupation is play. Perhaps we may say that every child at play behaves like an imaginative writer, in that he creates a world of his own or, more truly he rearranges the things of his world and orders it in a new way that pleases him better.<sup>160</sup>

Freud begins by establishing the link between play, imagination and creativity, in childhood. He further explains that the child takes this world seriously insofar as he or she invests much emotion towards. The child is also able to distinguish ‘play’ from

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<sup>158</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955. p.14

<sup>159</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Towards a Critical Theory of Society. Douglas Kellner Ed. Vol. 2 of *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*. London: Routledge, 2001. p.83

<sup>160</sup> Freud, Sigmund, On creativity and the unconscious: papers on the psychology of art, literature, love, religion: The Relation of the Poet To Day-Dreaming. New York: Harper Press, 1958, p.45

'reality', because for the child reality is the opposite of play. The writer, Freud continues, does the same thing as the child in that he or she creates a world of fantasy and imagination. And though the writer, much like the child, invests much emotional energy into the creation of this fantasy world, the adult keeps it separate from reality. Therefore, this is the part of the mind that is still free from the clutches of the reality principle: Day-dreaming.

Furthermore, Freud tells us, individuals never completely cease to play even though the established reality principle may require so. Play, for the adult individual, takes on a different form as the activity of day-dreaming. The individual may then remember past experiences of childhood play and then compare the "would-be serious occupations with his childhood's play, he manages to throw off the heavy burden of life and obtain the great pleasure of humor."<sup>161</sup> Fantasy, the activity of day-dreaming, as well as play, are ruled by the pleasure principle and as such provide an outlet for the need for gratification. And the need for gratification becomes apparent in Freud's discussion of the characteristics of day-dreaming.

We can begin by saying that happy people never make fantasies, only unsatisfied ones. Unsatisfied wishes are the driving power behind fantasies; every separate fantasy contains the fulfillment of a wish, and improves on unsatisfactory reality.<sup>162</sup>

This should sound familiar because it brings us back to the issue of repression. To be sure the kind of repressed wishes depend on the physical and social factors of the creator, i.e. age, sex, environment etc. Also, Freud says, these repressed wishes may be grouped into

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, p.45-46

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, p.47-48

two main categories: Ambitious, and Erotic.<sup>163</sup> Finally, the activity of daydreaming usually makes use of early childhood memories when certain wishes were fulfilled. Freud tells us that the act of daydreaming “creates for itself a situation which is to emerge in the future, representing the fulfillment of the wish—this is the day-dream or fantasy, which now carries in it traces both of the occasion which engendered it and of some past memory.”<sup>164</sup> Thus the act of daydreaming becomes a way to deal with the repressed, unsatisfied wishes of the individual.

Marcuse, on the other hand, offers a reconstruction of the role of memory which suggests that it is possible to overview the oppressive aspects of the reality principle. Because memory preserves the past experiences of happiness and freedom it is possible to critically examine human civilization, by understanding its historical development. Rather than viewing human history as a series of factual events it is essential to critically reflect upon past errors, in order to guide positive future development.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, Marcuse’s point is to emphasize the importance of examining history, so that we may understand the ways in which human freedom and happiness are repressed.<sup>166</sup>

It is clear, then, that for Marcuse, defending the claims of the pleasure principle is synonymous with the rejection of oppressive social conditions. Freud as well considered

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, p.48 Freud discusses the differences between Ambitious and Erotic wishes in his essay in more detail. But for the purposes of this project I will refrain from discussing those aspects of Freud’s theory.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, p.48-49 Freud goes on to discuss an example to illustrate how a person’s wish “employs some even in the present to plan a future on the pattern of the past.” (Freud, p.49)

<sup>165</sup> By critically examining history we understand why oppression i.e., slavery, suffragists, eventually leads to revolution,. So we learn from our predecessors and attempt not to make the same blunders. This, in turn, may lead to a more inclusive development of human civilization. And though this matter deserves a research project of its own, we may get a glimpse and speculate on the positive gains of developing a more free civilization. Therefore, we should continue to critically understand history, because insofar as we value the positive development of humanity so that future civilization develops in a positive way i.e. less wars, diseases, poverty etc.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. p.84

the idea that it is part of human nature to strive for “happiness and freedom.”<sup>167</sup> And though Freud does not have an explicit theory of social oppression, he does draw our attention to repressive social factors that contribute to human oppression. And we may recall the role of memory in conceiving better social conditions that facilitate the achievement of happiness and freedom. “Marcuse holds that the “psychoanalytic liberation of memory” and “restoration of fantasy” provide access to experiences of happiness and freedom which are subversive of the present life. He suggests that Freud’s theory of human nature, far from refuting the possibility of a non-repressive civilization, indicates that there are aspects of human nature that are striving for happiness and freedom.”<sup>168</sup> Therefore, Eros might tolerate delayed gratification and repression of the instant demands for pleasure; however, Eros still seeks to fulfill its needs.

To some degree, repression is necessary for the progress of civilization. However, repression is not to be confused with the elimination of Eros. The demands of the reality principle become a problem when the demand for repression is above and beyond the level that is required for social maintenance. Thus we now return to the social moment of Marcuse’s argument which, recall, was the other, undeveloped side of Freud’s theory of repression. Marcuse explains

a repressive organization of the instincts underlies *all* historical forms of the reality principle in civilization. If he (Freud) justifies the repressive organization of the instincts by the irreconcilability between the primary pleasure principle and the reality principle, he expresses the historical fact that civilization has progressed as organized *domination*.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid. p.86

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955, p.35

With Freud providing a basis, Marcuse shows how individuals are dominated and oppressed by the same social norms that are meant to promote social progress. Specifically, we are able to understand how the person internalizes social norms and values, and as a result, conforms to the status quo. However, repression becomes a problem when it is above and beyond the level required for cultural progress.<sup>170</sup> This means that the performance principle, which demands the highest level of commitment to work and productivity, and requires the total repression of the need for pleasure, is problematic. The problem with the performance principle lies precisely within its laws and demands, which seek to instrumentalize and sacrifice human life for the purposes of Capitalist profit.

At this point I should note that Marcuse attempts to explain the social and political aspects of Freud's theory, which Kellner calls "a critical theory of socialization". Most theories of socialization focus on the "humanizing aspects by claiming that socialization makes individuals more "human"—and thus legitimate social institutions and practices."<sup>171</sup> However, Kellner continues, Freud exposes the repressive aspects of social reality and the result of its domination. Therefore, Marcuse argues, we need to develop the necessary terms to understand the historical and social processes that contribute to repression so that "with a change in these processes repression's historical content, its harshness, could change, too."<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Towards a Critical Theory of Society. Douglas Kellner Ed. Vol. 2 of *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*. London: Routledge, 2001.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Schoolman, Morton. The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse. The Free Press, a division of Collier Macmillan Co., Inc. New York, 1980, p.94

The social institutions that are established with the supposed duty of facilitating human interaction, and helping humanity develop its potential; end up repressing, reshaping, and policing the individual into a capitalist citizen. According to Stephen Eric Bronner, this is a paramount characteristic of western capitalist society: the reality principle becomes identified with the pleasure principle in order to transform individuals into hard working, productive, and competitive consumers

As a consequence additional limits on gratification will be put into effect above and beyond that minimum level of repression which is indispensable for human interaction. Socialization will occur in particular ways and progress will become identified with the growth of the existing order rather than with the attempt to actualize the unactualized values of emancipation”.<sup>173</sup>

As a result, Bronner says, the growth and progress of civilization is understood as the growth and progress of the established reality principle i.e., Capitalism, rather than the development of freedom and happiness. To be sure, the established order attempts to actualize values that will ensure the development of the system rather than the emancipation of human beings. Though the values of competition, ever-increasing profits, and production, become identified with human progress it is a mistake to confuse the values of the system with the values of human beings. It is sufficient at this point to mention that the values of the system, for Marcuse, are internalized by the individual and taken to be the true goals. Although he will also argue that we must be critical of those values in order to guard ourselves against the illusion of freedom, it is helpful to keep in

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<sup>173</sup> Bronner, Stephen Eric. “Between Art and Utopia: Reconsidering the Aesthetic Theory of Herbert Marcuse.” *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*. Eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Weble and Contributors. South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc. 1988. 107-140

mind the confusion of systemic values and true human values. I will explore this idea further in the next chapter.

Now, in order to understand “the historical content of the concepts repression and reality principle,” Marcuse matches them with “corresponding terms denoting the specific socio-historical component.” As a result, he exposes the relationship between the concepts of surplus-repression and the performance principle:

- (a) *Surplus-repression*: the restrictions necessitated by social domination. This is distinguished from (basic) *repression*: the “modification” of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization.
- (b) *Performance principle*: the prevailing historical form of the *reality principle*.<sup>174</sup>

Thus, Marcuse attempts to transform Marx’s “socially necessary and surplus labor” into “basic and surplus repression.”

On the one hand, basic repression refers to the denial or delay of gratification, which he regards as necessary for the development of “labor insuring survival.”<sup>175</sup> On the other hand, surplus-repression functions according to “a specific organization of scarcity”, which is created through socially constructed needs. These socially constructed needs, later referred to as false-needs by Marcuse in One-Dimensional Man, may come in the form of mass produced commodities that are created for the purpose of being consumed by the masses. As such, the consumption of these socially constructed needs perpetuates the domination of the established reality principle over human freedom. Schoolman explains

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<sup>174</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1955, p.35

<sup>175</sup> Schoolman, Morton. The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse. The Free Press, a division of Collier Macmillan Co., Inc. New York, 1980, p.94



With the concept of surplus-repression, it is possible to conceptualize unnecessary repression, or alienation, in biological-instinctual terms. It also allows us to reason that needs fulfilled through surplus-repression, surplus labor not contributing directly to the perpetuation of the human race, are false needs.<sup>176</sup>

As such, we are able to differentiate between necessary and unnecessary repression. Furthermore, we may conclude that the fulfillment of socially constructed false needs, made possible by surplus repression, does not in fact contribute to the liberation of humanity. And as the production of these socially constructed false needs rises, so does the amount of labor required to produce and consume them. As well, the level of instinctual repression also rises accordingly, in order to open up more time for labor. Therefore, the growth of the established performance principle, in this case being the capitalist system, depends on the mass production and the mass consumption of socially constructed false needs.

Furthermore, the values of Capitalism indoctrinate individuals to believe that owning certain commodities is a need that facilitates life. However, it is a superficial facilitation, one that is created for the individual and then sold in stores. For example, advertisements and commercials tell people they need bigger, better and faster things: bigger televisions, better CD players, and faster cars. The fulfillment of those socially constructed needs becomes socially identified as happiness. This is problematic in two ways: first, the concept of happiness is reduced to the particular experience of buying and owning things; which then leads into the second part of the problem, as Bronner explains, individuals are trapped in a cycle of consumption that is created and maintained by different social institutions. Religious and educational institutions, as well as the mass

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p.95

media “become the instruments through which “surplus repression” is extracted and maintained for the benefit of the given order.”<sup>177</sup> Surplus-repression, Bronner explains,

has its objective basis in the “false needs” that are endemic to the production process of advanced industrial society. If “planned obsolescence” can be used as an example, the system will quantitatively create these needs which will then attempt to be satisfied even as new ones are produced. The effects of this production process will, however, also “reproduce” the repressive values and desires of the existing order within individuals themselves.<sup>178</sup>

This means that people are socialized to believe that the existing social order, including its own definitions of the concepts of freedom, justice, and happiness, is the best one possible. Also, because most people accept the given social order as the best possible, they are discouraged from even attempting to conceptualize a better one. The repressive values of the system multiply as the internalized demand for more production intensifies. The problem with the existing social order is that it traps people within a cycle of consumption and satisfaction of false needs, and stuns their ability to explore a deeper understanding of concepts such as freedom and happiness, and their own selves.

Repressive social activity becomes the exact opposite of sublimated social activity. We remember from Schiller that human beings are creative beings who must strive to synthesize the conflicts between nature and reason. However, this cannot be done within the capitalist system because individuals are forced to satisfy the demands of the performance principle over and above their own. Furthermore, the death instinct drives the system of production, its laws permeate the globe in the form of environmental

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<sup>177</sup> Bronner, Stephen Eric. “Between Art and Utopia: Reconsidering the Aesthetic Theory of Herbert Marcuse.” *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*. Eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Weble and Contributors. South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc. 1988. 107-140

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. p.110

hazards, poverty, unequal distribution of resources, and most importantly the needless suffering and death of human beings. Thus human activity is highlighted by destruction instead of creation, which is obviously counter-productive in terms of maintaining life in general.

Now, to be sure, Freud's psychoanalytic theory has come under heavy criticism by other psychoanalysts, critical theorists (Habermas and his students) and post-structuralists. However, Douglas Kellner explains, Marcuse's theory may still help us to construct a strong theory of subjectivity "without deploying the problematic aspects of Freud's instinct theory."<sup>179</sup> As such, we may realize humanity's need for a life that is not highlighted by overtime at the factory, and the annihilation of the Natural world (including other human beings). Without getting caught up in the problematic aspects of Freud's theory, we need only to look around the world at the unfair and horrific conditions in which people, animals and the environment are trapped. And though the act of becoming aware of social conditions takes much time for various reasons, those of us lucky enough to develop a critical stance against social repression may create and spread awareness about it.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. *Towards a Critical Theory of Society*. Douglas Kellner Ed. Vol. 2 of *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*. London: Routledge, 2001, p.86

<sup>180</sup> Many individuals do not possess the necessary means to education, or the education to develop a critical stance towards social repression. Others have no time to dedicated to it; we may imagine the single parent with three kids, two jobs and not enough money to support the family. And yet others are simply too caught up in the pop culture industry—which encourages individuals to strive for a life filled with consumption of mass produced commodities—these are the same individuals who identify and commit to the values of Capitalism: consumption, productivity, profit increase etc. Awareness may be raised by engaging with the public and the community, through rallies, protests, public speaking and so forth.

## CONCLUSION:

In a sense, we should examine Marcuse as attempting to provide grounds for the liberation of the individual through the liberation of sensuousness, and in turn, the construction of a subject who is able to critically examine the oppressive values of capitalism. According to Kellner the central component of Marcuse's theory, upon which a theory of subjectivity may be built, lies in Marcuse's claim "that the prevalent reality principle of Western civilization presupposes an antagonism between subject and object, mind and body, reason and the passions and the individual and society."<sup>181</sup> This antagonism, between subject and object, causes the person to experience nature as an object that has to be dominated and controlled. As such, in Western society, the ego is conceived as an aggressive subject who struggles to gain complete control over nature, including other human beings. This aggressive and oppressive character is the harnessed, by channeling the powers of Eros towards socially productive activity that is dictated by the performance principle. Finally, labor is used as a tool to dominate and transform nature to fit the criteria of the established reality principle.<sup>182</sup> This is synonymous with Schiller's conception of the "incomplete human beings": Human existence is reduced to an instrumental level, and as such, individuals become 'specialized tools' whose creative

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p.86

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p.86-87 The conception of reason, under this reality principle, is an instrument of domination "that finds its culmination in the performance principle" (Kellner, p.87). The performance principle further seeks to repress Eros (the life instinct) and all the instincts that demand pleasure and gratification. Kellner quotes some of Marcuse's earlier work, addressing the values of the performance principle, which include "Profitable productivity, assertiveness, efficiency, competitiveness; in other words, the Performance Principle, the rule of functional rationality discriminating against emotions, a dual morality, the "work ethic," which means for the vast majority of the population condemnation to alienated and inhuman labor, and the will to power, the display of strength, virility." (Kellner quoting Marcuse)

capacities and talents are neglected and sacrificed as a consequence of social and political disorder.

Now, the answer to dealing with social repression and the liberation of the individual may seem to center around aesthetic experience and aesthetic activity. Aesthetic experience, for us, consists of de-sublimated erotic energy, and aesthetic activity involves the channeling of the de-sublimated Eros into autonomous, creative and imaginative activity. However, Marcuse contends, while both aesthetic experience and aesthetic activity play a key role in the liberation of society—in that they allow human beings to express the need for pleasurable and creative experience—they do not stimulate social change on their own. Therefore, in the next chapter I will examine the ways in which social repression is maintained through technology. I will primarily draw on Marcuse's work in *One-Dimensional Man*, and *An Essay on Liberation*. In particular, I will consider Marcuse's conception of true human needs and false human needs more in detail, in order to get a better grasp of how technology is used as a tool of social containment. And finally, I will consider the role and limits of aesthetics with relation to social change.

### CHAPTER 3:

#### THE LOGIC OF DOMINATION AND SOCIAL CONTAINMENT

When I began my inquiry with Schiller I examined the split within the individual, which manifests as a result of the tensions between Nature and Reason. While Schiller acknowledges the importance individual contribution to social development, through specialized functions, he warns that individuals must not only be defined according to those functions. The true meaning of “human individuals,” he believes, extends to their abilities to freely and creatively determine themselves, and their social and political world according to the laws of the play-drive.<sup>183</sup> Furthermore, Schiller explains that human beings are essentially “multi-dimensional”, i.e. possess many talents and abilities that require integral development, to focus on ‘one-dimension’ alone inevitably neglect the ‘whole’ development of the individual.

However, Schiller’s theory lacks the social and political concepts needed to concretize his points, which is why the second chapter is dedicated to fleshing out the link between Schiller and Marcuse. Marcuse’s use of the concept of “play” lends much to his theory on liberating individuals from social repression. Specifically, sensuous, erotic energy that is repressed by the reality principle and channeled into the performance principle becomes liberated through the play-drive. Thus we develop the notion of “sensuous-reason” which allows us to understand and develop ourselves, and our world according to the laws of the pleasure principle rather than the performance principle.

While Marcuse acknowledges the need for some degree of social repression, as Schiller would agree, “surplus-repression” leads to the complete repression of the

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<sup>183</sup> The result of the unification of the sense drive and the form-drive.

pleasure principle. And insofar as individuals value the demands of the pleasure principle “surplus-repression” represents an obstacle. Finally, though we may look to aesthetic activity and play as ways that allow us to overcome the repressive aspects of the reality-principle, we face a new kind of problem. Specifically, the character of the aesthetic has now been absorbed by the reality principle. As a result aesthetic activity, and works of art, that used to project different possibilities for human existence, loses its liberating qualities.<sup>184</sup>

This chapter will serve to further concretize what has been said in the preceding two chapters in two ways: first, by examining the social and political ramifications of using technical reason as a tool to dominate the masses, thereby maintaining the cycle of repression; second, by developing Marcuse’s point that aesthetics, as Schiller argued, on its own does not suffice to liberate human beings

### **THE BEGINNING OF ONE DIMENSIONAL SOCIETY:**

I will start with a short introduction before I get to the more technical aspects of Marcuse’s theory, so that I may introduce some of the key ideas that I will discuss further on. To begin, Marcuse applies the term “one-dimensional” to describe activity that conforms to pre-established social norms, structures and behaviors. This is contrasted with multi-dimensional activity “which focuses on possibilities that transcend the established state of affairs.”<sup>185</sup> Thus, multi-dimensional discourse aims at transcending

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<sup>184</sup> The liberating qualities of the aesthetic are lost when they are commodified. I will discuss this in detail, further in this chapter.

the pre-established social norms and structures. An antagonism between subject and object is presupposed, by their distinction, in which “the subject is free to perceive possibilities in the world that do not yet exist by which can be realized.”<sup>186</sup> Indeed, Marcuse’s theory of multi-dimensional discourse, presupposes the existence of an autonomous, self-directing human being who is part of an “object-world” that contains the material that allows us to develop the unrealized creative potential of humanity, and cultivate the higher values of culture.<sup>187</sup>

The distinguishing feature of humanity for Marcuse is autonomous, creative subjectivity. Individuals lose the ability to free determine the self the moment they are indoctrinated into a system of pre-established, one-dimensional values. In the introduction to the second edition of One-Dimensional Man Douglas Kellner says: “alienated from the powers of being-a self, one dimensional man thus becomes an object of administration and conformity.”<sup>188</sup> This is one of the main points that Marcuse wishes to communicate to the reader: that one-dimensional society seeks to impose on its citizens a pre-conceived, measurable and quantifiable concept of the self. Thus, when the established capitalist order only provides individuals with superficial comforts, which serve to maintain the pre-established concept of the self as a productive consumer, it also discourages the possibilities for developing a sense of ‘self’ that opposes its values.

In the introduction to *One Dimensional Man* Kellner explains: “One dimensional society and one dimensional man are the results of a long historical erosion of

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<sup>185</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964, p.xxvii

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, p. xxviii-xxix



individuality which Marcuse criticized over several decades.”<sup>189</sup> This passage describes Marcuse’s revolt against the loss of individuality in advanced industrial society. The only way to get around one dimensional thought, it seems, is to encourage people’s ability to critically about the existing social order. Being able to distinguish between existence and essence, appearance and reality, allows us see how things are in reality and how we might want them to be otherwise. One-dimensional thought, on the other hand, is unable to make such a distinction between appearance and reality.<sup>190</sup> One-dimensional individuals lose their freedom since, for them, reality is identified with given appearances only. Understanding reality simply in terms of what we may physically identify becomes one-dimensional when it is imposed on the population as the only mode of thought that counts.

The parameters of existence, the boundaries that are pre-established by society, become tighter and less accommodating for individual as well as social development outside of the ruling order. And though there exists the possibility that the individual might have all his or her needs and wants satisfied (indeed life is much more comfortable now than it was say in Schiller’s time) the price that is paid for this satisfaction is the surrender of freedom.<sup>191</sup> In this way, Marcuse’s work is best understood as the critical analysis of “the logic of “the containment of social contradictions, forces of negation, and possibilities of liberation that exist but are suppressed.”<sup>192</sup>

Though much of the advances in capitalism are celebrated as triumphs of humanity, Marcuse perceives them as destructive acts with major global consequences.

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<sup>189</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964(p. xxviii)

<sup>190</sup> Ibid,

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, p. xxviii

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, p. xxxiv

The consequences of the destructive acts of the market—for the purpose of profit increase—are pain and misery suffered by those who cannot participate in the economic system.<sup>193</sup> The planet itself suffers from the over-exploitative practices of capitalism, as it wantonly depletes natural resources. Despite all its achievements, Marcuse believes, capitalism has undermined and continues to undermine life. And though human life in general, measured by population, continues to grow, quality of life is not improving for everyone. Thus, the ideas of prosperity and growth in capitalism are based on “waste and destruction, its progress fueled by exploitation and repression, while its freedom and democracy are based on manipulation.”<sup>194</sup>

It will be central for us to understand exactly how concepts such as “freedom and democracy” are used to manipulate the masses. Specifically, Marcuse will argue, the manipulation occurs at the level of human needs. However, the individual does not know what his or her “true needs” are, because the system imposes “false needs” on its citizens. I will go on to discuss the issue of needs in more detail further on, but for now let us keep in mind that by “true needs” Marcuse means: needs that are essential for the survival of the individuals i.e. food, water, shelter, and ideally, freedom. And “False needs” refer to commodities that are created by the system of production, for the purposes of maintaining the cycle of repression.

However, true needs such as water and even air are also commodified, and by Marcuse’s account, this means that they become false needs. But that is clearly not the case since, commodified or not, water is still a necessary need for human beings. Since

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<sup>193</sup> Participation in the capitalist system of production entails long hours of labor and the consumption of mass-produced commodities. Individuals who do not possess the means (money) to secure the necessary needs (food, water, clothes) for maintaining life are usually the ones who suffer the most

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p. xxx

Marcuse's conception seems too strict on the issue of true needs I suggest that we use John McMurtry's formula determining true needs, which tells us: *N is a need if and only if, and to the extent that, deprivation of N always leads to a reduction of organic capability.* Clearly, by McMurtry formula, the result of too much need deprivation, whether the particular need is commodified or not, is death. However, McMurtry continues, and Marcuse would agree, the market only recognizes the needs of the people who have money to spend. This formula allows us to grasp a deeper understanding of true needs, as Marcuse's conception of "true needs" seems too harsh.<sup>195</sup>

### **SOCIAL CONTROL AND UNRIVALED COMFORTS:**

"A Comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic un-freedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization, a token of technical progress."<sup>196</sup>

The critical ideas such as "freedom of thought, speech and conscience" lose their critical dimension, as they are whittled down by the established social order. The negative conception of freedom, Marcuse says, represents a different dimension of freedom that an individual conceives when he or she criticizes the existing social order, is suppressed and replaced by a functional conception of freedom that is imposed upon the individual by pre-existing social norms. This functional conception of freedom, as we will see, amounts to participation in the global free-market, through the programmed consumption of mass-produced commodities, and ever increasing accumulation of capital.<sup>197</sup> The problem, as

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<sup>195</sup> McMurtry, John. Unequal Freedoms: The global market as an ethical system. Garamond Press, Toronto, Canada, 1998.

<sup>196</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964, p.1

<sup>197</sup> In this context a "functional" conception of freedom means that "freedom" is valuable only for the specific function(s) or purpose it serves. As such, freedom is only considered as a means to an end, and not

Marcuse will identify it, seems to have three features: first, the conception of freedom is reduced to particular instances of consumer behavior. Second, people are indoctrinated to accept this understanding as the only real and possible instantiation of the whole concept of “Freedom.” Finally the conception of greater possibilities of freedom disappears because freedom of thought and action in ways that oppose the established order become contained by that very same totalitarian system. These points will show themselves explicitly through an analysis of Marcuse’s work in One-Dimensional Man and An Essay On Liberation. I will now go on to discuss these three points in further detail.

To get a clear grasp of the first point let us consider the global market’s conception of the individual a “free economic subject” (to use Marcuse’s term).<sup>198</sup> Individuals are said to have the freedom to participate within the global market, to sell and trade, to buy and own things, as long as they have the necessary means to do it, i.e. money. From this follows the fact that those who do not possess the means to this economic freedom cannot enjoy its comforts and rewards.<sup>199</sup> As such, individuals are not only forced to work, they are also forced to compete for work as each tries to prove their economic worth. But according to Marcuse this is an impoverished conception of freedom because the idea of “Freedom” is narrowed down consumer behavior. Marcuse says,

If the individual were no longer compelled to prove himself on the market, as a free economic subject, the disappearance of this kind of freedom would be one of the greatest achievements of civilization. The very structure of human existence would be

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as an end in itself, which is how Marcuse will urge us to view it. In other words no one should have to pay for freedom.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid p.2

<sup>199</sup> McMurtry, John. Unequal Freedoms: The global market as an ethical system. Garamond Press, Toronto, Canada, 1998, p.159

altered; the individual would be liberated from the work world's imposing on him alien needs and alien possibilities. The individual would be free to exert autonomy over a life that would be his own. If the productive apparatus could be organized and directed toward the satisfaction of the vital needs, its control might well be centralized; such control would not prevent individual autonomy, but render it possible.<sup>200</sup>

In some sense, some individuals may worry about “the loss of individual freedom” insofar as it is ‘the loss of the freedom to participate in the free-market.’ But that is only because of this impoverished one-dimensional conception of freedom, which reduces it to the activity of buying and owning things. However, for Marcuse, individuals must realize that the prevalent conception of freedom as “economic activity” must be negated, if they are truly interested in preserving and developing “individual freedom.” It is only when we criticize the established conception of human freedom—as the act of participating in the free-market—that we may begin to conceive different possibilities and conceptions of human freedom, such as independence from the economy, competition for vital resources, and inhuman working conditions.<sup>201</sup>

The possibility to begin to develop this unrealized conception of freedom lies within the technical apparatus itself. The prevailing system of technological rationality may be reorganized so as to encourage the development of life in general, and in turn the reduction of needless toil and suffering. However, the direct opposite occurs, as the “technical apparatus imposes its economic and political requirements for defense and expansion on labor time and free time, on the material and intellectual culture.”<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964 p.2

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p.4

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, p.2-3

It is in this sense that the established social norms and values tend to be “totalitarian”: they do not allow for any sort of opposition or possibility that may jeopardize their existence. The development of such a one-dimensional system further tends towards totalitarianism when it uses every facet of the media to perpetuate those norms and values that ensure its survival. The media propagandizes for profit increase, and in this way lends further support to maintaining the established order.<sup>203</sup>

Upon closer investigation, Marcuse tells us, “This sort of well-being, the productive superstructure over the unhappy base of society, permeates the “media” which mediate between the masters and their dependents.”<sup>204</sup> The mass media becomes extremely efficient at disseminating the ruling, one-dimensional values of the established social order. Through it the values of competition, profit increase, and the consumption of commodities are imposed on people, telling them what to think and how to feel.<sup>205</sup> But something else is also at work, when the media imposes one-dimensional values it also suppresses all other values (along with negative thinking). As such, the only language that develops is that of the established order.

Marcuse further reiterates the process of development towards a deeper understanding of the concept of freedom (and other concepts such as justice and democracy) in his book An Essay on liberation. He says

What is at stake are the needs themselves. At this stage, the question is no longer: how can the individual satisfy his own needs without hurting others, but rather: how can he satisfy his needs without hurting himself, without reproducing, through his aspirations and satisfactions, his dependence on an exploitative

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid, p.3

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, p.85

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

apparatus which, in satisfying his needs, perpetuates his servitude?<sup>206</sup>

In this passage Marcuse is recalling the issue of true and false human needs, which he brought up introduced above. It is important for Marcuse to consider the question of human needs because it is precisely through the issue of “needs” that capitalism exerts domination over Nature and humanity. Therefore, it is essential for us to return to the issue of true and false human needs in order to grasp its full significance to my project.

Marcuse distinguishes between physical human needs, such as the vital needs that are necessary to maintain the healthy function of the human organism—and socially constructed needs that serve to perpetuate the established values of control and domination. Keeping in mind that some socially constructed needs are true needs in the sense described by McMurtry’s formula (such as the socially constructed need for certain types of activities over others) we consider what Marcuse says in the following paragraph:

We may distinguish both true and false needs. “False” are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice. Their satisfaction might be most gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness.<sup>207</sup>

There are many criteria that fit into Marcuse’s conception of “false needs”, much of them related to the consumption of mass-produced commodities by individual consumers. For

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<sup>206</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. An Essay on Liberation, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1969, p.4

<sup>207</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964, p.4-5

example, though all human beings share the necessary need to consume food, they do not need to consume it in a commodified, fast-food form (as a happy-meal from McDonald, or a value-meal from Wendy's), such foods are false needs because they do not serve to nourish the physical well-being of the individual as much as they aim to increase profit for the fast-food company.<sup>208</sup> Therefore, though the system of production provides us with amazing comforts, the goal is to dominate and repress the human need for freedom.<sup>209</sup>

On the other hand, "true needs", for Marcuse, "the only needs that have an unqualified claim for satisfaction are the vital ones—nourishment, clothing, lodging at the attainable level of culture."<sup>210</sup> This is an important point to consider: though we may all argue about whether or not one may need to own a computer, a car, or even eat candy, we may not dispute the fact that we all need proper nourishment, clean air, education, and shelter. These vital "true needs" must be satisfied first if we are to satisfy all other needs "of the un-sublimated as well as the sublimated ones."<sup>211</sup> But we must also consider that anyone that is indoctrinated into a one-dimensional, totalitarian system of beliefs cannot give a truly thoughtful (critical), and considerate answer to the question of true and false needs. The individual's answer cannot be taken seriously precisely because it is not his or her own, and only reflects the interests of the established social order.

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<sup>208</sup> Likewise, the need for the automobile is false, because a) we possess the ability to improve public transit, and b) owning an automobile serves to further entrap the individual in the economic system (through insurance payments, car tune-ups, gas and oil consumption etc.), in short the cost outweighs the benefit. In this sense, the individual does not need to eat McDonald's nor own a car to improve his or her social existence.

<sup>209</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964, p.5

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.



At this point the goal may seem clear: replacing false needs with true ones. However, this is much easier said than done. As more new false needs are created and fed into the cycle of consumption, individual reliance on the system of production rises.<sup>212</sup> For Marcuse, radical social change, which involves the negation of the established norms, values, and institutions of capitalism, is stalled because individuals are engaged in a repetitive cycle of consumption of false needs. A close look at An Essay On Liberation reveals how individuals confuse false needs with true needs.

First, the rejection of the established order requires us to re-evaluate our understanding of “true human needs.” Marcuse refers to “true needs” as the “infrastructure of man”, and that qualitative social change must begin at that level. “The infrastructure of man” refers to Eros, the life instinct which seeks gratification first and foremost. If the development, and understanding of true needs is directed by a rational, eroticized subjectivity (as discussed in the previous chapter) then we may broaden our conception of freedom so that it is based on Erotic, instinctual demand for gratification. Likewise, our understanding of “gratification of needs” is transformed. He says:

The new direction, the new institutions and relationships of production, must express the ascent of needs and satisfaction very different from and even antagonistic to those prevalent in the exploitative societies. Such a change would constitute the

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<sup>212</sup> For example, wireless connections are available for those who feel constricted by wires when it comes to computers and computer accessories. Though the overall idea of “wireless technology”, which incorporates electronic sensors that transmit and receive digital wave signals may improve our ability and efficiency to communicate it still ends up solely for the purposes of profit increase; “wireless freedom” as such is available to those who can afford it, otherwise the person is constricted by wires (if they are fortunate enough to be able to afford them). This example is meant to serve as an illustration of the lack of freedom that is perpetuated by the system. The person is free from one commodity and simply relies upon another, more advanced and intricate one. Then, it is only a matter of the system of production completely phasing out one type of commodity after enough dependence has been created over the new one. The same may be said about other products that claim to increase individual freedom: faster, safer cars, better computers, and high definition television sets.

instinctual basis for freedom which the long history of class society has blocked.<sup>213</sup>

Since human beings share a common interest when it comes to satisfying the need for gratification, this new direction, Marcuse proposes, is common to all of them. And as such, it is upon that commonality that individuals must develop the new understanding of true human needs.

Furthermore, the above passage tells us, it is a mistake to equate the concept of “human freedom” simply with the range of choice between commodities. The degree of human freedom is more accurately determined by “*what* can be chosen and what *is* chosen by the individual.”<sup>214</sup> The choices, that are currently available to the individual, surround the consumption of mass-produced commodities; it is not the sort of freedom that Schiller foresaw. As we recall from Schiller, human freedom is expressed in the activity of synthesizing form and matter, or play. Therefore, our understanding of true human needs must include the rejection of the established, one-dimensional view of false-needs.<sup>215</sup>

But if we recall the discussion of Freud in Chapter Two, the reality principle that informs individual thought and action is the performance principle. Individuals learn to identify pleasure and gratification with the demands of the performance principle and the creative power of Eros is channeled into socially productive activity i.e. work, consumer

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<sup>213</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. An Essay on Liberation, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1969, p.4

<sup>214</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964, p.7

<sup>215</sup> e.g. we *need* to eat nourishing food, because science has taught us the value of a nutritious diet. We do not *need* to eat mass-produced, commodified food in the same way, not just for health reasons but social and environmental ones too (animal suffering, unfair working conditions, etc.)

behavior.<sup>216</sup> As such, individuals do not question the rules of the established order because they do not perceive them as threats.<sup>217</sup> Therefore, if we simply accept the established understanding of human needs as “True” (mass-produced commodities), and without question or criticism, we fall under the system’s repressive rule.

Now the market doctrine may profess to create equal opportunity for economic competition for all peoples regardless of their race, sex, gender and other differences; however, the point that all peoples share the false needs that maintain the system of domination points to the deeper problem: the totalitarian and repressive character of the established social order.<sup>218</sup> We may now confront the rational character of the irrational system of production, according to Marcuse: The comforts, benefits, and indulgences that are now made available to us by the capitalist system of production make it difficult for some to perceive precisely how it deters social progress through these comforts and benefits. The reason for this blindness to the dangerous impact of the established order is that individuals have adopted those destructive values of economic growth as their own.

He says

The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> “Consumer behavior” in this context, refers to participating in the market: shopping, consuming commodities.

<sup>217</sup> Instead, individuals believe that abiding by the rules of the reality principle leads to the fulfillment of the need for gratification.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, p.8

<sup>219</sup> Ibid p.9

This point is further developed in Essay on Liberation. Marcuse says that individuals exercise their freedom and individuality through the commodities they purchase.<sup>220</sup>

Therefore, not only do individuals adopt the values of the market, but they also come to identify their own existence with the commodities provided by the system of production. The concept of individuality is reduced to the commodity form, since now the person may relate to him or herself, and to others through the mediation of the commodities they own. It is in this particular way that social control is perpetuated: the production and consumption of socially constructed false needs.

Marcuse once again emphasizes the possibility for liberation that is embodied by the same technical apparatus that dominates human beings. However, because of the strong, dogmatic ties between individuals and the values of the market, any alternative to those values seems irrational.<sup>221</sup> This false ideology, which the individual holds in relation to the established system of production, serves to strengthen and perpetuate the system of domination, and social containment on a global scale. The result of this entire process is:

a pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behavior* in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its quantitative extension.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Marcuse says "Self-determination, the autonomy of the individual, asserts itself in the right to race his automobile, to handle his power tools, to buy a gun, to communicate to mass audiences his opinion, no matter how ignorant, how aggressive, it may be. Organized capitalism has sublimated and turned to socially productive use frustration and primary aggressiveness on an unprecedented scale—unprecedented not in terms of the quantity of violence but rather in terms of its capacity to produce long range contentment and satisfaction, to reproduce the "voluntary servitude,". Marcuse, Herbert. An Essay on Liberation, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1969, p.13

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964. p.9

<sup>222</sup> Ibid p.12

As such, human beings may not develop a harmonious relationship between their faculties, as the established reality principles forces them to adopt its one-dimensional mode of thought. This will lead us into the second point, which concerns the indoctrination of the people, through the suffocation of critical thinking.

### **THE LOGIC OF SOCIAL CONTROL**

The way in which individuals are socialized to accept the established, one-dimensional reality extends, from the level of basic human needs up to the use of the universal concepts required to evaluate social reality. The concepts that are meant to serve as exemplars or ideals, towards which human civilization may develop i.e., freedom, democracy, justice etc. are reduced to the particular instances and behaviors required for the realization of the advanced capitalist system.<sup>223</sup> Marcuse relates this trend to “operationalism” in the physical sciences, and “behaviorism” in the social sciences.<sup>224</sup> What is common to both cases is the way in which concepts are reduced to empirical, measurable data that is used to quantify and represent “particular operations and behavior.”<sup>225</sup> In this way, the established social order finds a very useful way to convince and reassure individuals that they are free and autonomous individuals. Any one who doubts their freedom may simply look at a particular instance where someone is buying a particular product that they choose. Thus, in this way, the concept of freedom is reduced

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<sup>223</sup> For example, freedom is measured by how much money the individuals possesses, democracy is measured by the degree or level of economic participation, and justice is measured by individual behavior that adopts and conforms to the laws of the free-market.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

to the particular behavior that surrounds the activity of consuming mass-produced commodities. Finally Marcuse explains, any concepts that cannot be reduced and operationalized, i.e. reduced to measurable and quantifiable behaviors, are discarded.

The problem with the language of the established order, Marcuse explains, is that it reduces concepts to the point that the difference between truth and appearance vanishes.

He says:

The concepts which comprehend the facts and thereby transcend the facts are losing their authentic linguistic representation. Without these mediations, language tends to express and promote the immediate identification of reason and fact, truth and established truth, essence and existence, the thing and its function.<sup>226</sup>

The problem with operationalism becomes more specific, Marcuse says, since it confuses the essence, or true meaning of concepts, with the words that are used to refer to them (e.g. freedom as the ability to choose between different brands of commodities). This is the highlight of scientific thought for Marcuse: formal logic which seeks to reduce universal concepts to particular physical operations in the given reality “This is technological reasoning, which tends “to identify things and their functions.”<sup>227</sup> It is in this way that concepts are thus “operationalized”, or reduced to particular instances of individual behavior and empirical evidence through the use of language.

Furthermore, the result of operationalization of concepts is not simply this confusion between “what is” and “what seems to be.”<sup>228</sup> There is also the issue of dialectical discourse, which is closed off once again when a particular concept is operationalized. That which distinguishes dialectical thinking from scientific thinking is

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964, p.87

<sup>228</sup> Ibid, p.140

precisely that dialectical thought: 1- contains within it a value judgment which rejects the established reality, and 2- dialectical thought seeks to expand the meaning of concepts rather than reducing them to particular instances and behaviors. In this sense, we may understand Marcuse to be claiming that when concepts are operationalized the second point of dialectical thought is undermined.<sup>229</sup> The reason why the established, operationalized “concepts” (if we may still use that word) become resistant to change and opposition, political reasoning becomes mere tautology. Marcuse says: “The analytic structure insulates the governing noun from those of its contents which would invalidate or at least disturb the accepted use of the noun in statements of policy and public opinion. The ritualized concept is made immune against contradiction.”<sup>230</sup> For example, when the concepts of democracy and individual freedom are reduced to particular social behavior. As such it becomes difficult to deny or discredit the existing conception of freedom because it has already been operationalized; it is already given a specific role that is identified by a specific physical behavior, e.g. freely spending one’s money on commodities.

The logic of operationalism becomes the logic guiding behavior when people cease to criticize its validity, and simply accept its ways with no room for alternatives. As such, individuals are also trained to discard concepts and ideals that cannot be operationalized by market standards. Marcuse explains “The insistence on operational and behavioral concepts turns against the efforts to free thought and behavior *from* the given reality and *for* the suppressed alternatives.”<sup>231</sup> In this way reason is used to justify

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid, p.87 and also p.95

<sup>230</sup> Ibid, p.88

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, p.16

and perpetuate the use of technology as an instrument of domination. Thus, the progress of human civilization is measured by the criteria of the established social order. This logic goes on unquestioned by those who identify it as the best possible ground for life in general.

The problem with defining human progress solely in systemic terms leads to the same problem faced when freedom is defined in the same way. The concept of human progress is reduced to economic growth. However, if the system is reorganized so as to meet the genuine needs of humanity, then technology may be used to the benefit of humanity as it would “become subject to the free play of faculties in the struggle for the pacification of nature and society.”<sup>232</sup> Now by “the pacification of nature and society” Marcuse is referring to the possible resolution of the tensions that exist in the established order of capitalism. Specifically, a “pacified existence” does not feature competition over, and struggle for resources “where competing needs, desires, and aspirations are no longer organized by vested interests in domination and scarcity—an organization which perpetuates the destructive forms of this struggle.”<sup>233</sup> Mechanical, repetitive labor would be relegated to machines and the working day may be reduced, so that individuals may cultivate their humanity as an end in itself, as opposed to just a means of powering the system of production. Essentially, Marcuse is envisioning conditions that provide the basis for Schiller’s conception of “the complete individual”, who is able to engage in creative, autonomous activity i.e. “play.”

On the other hand, when we critically examine how capitalist societies function, Marcuse says, we see a completely different picture. The ultimate end of technological

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.



rationality in the established social order is to serve as a tool of domination for the purposes of perpetuating market ideals.<sup>234</sup> The result is a totalitarian, one-dimensional system that undermines any opposition or criticism of its values and norms, since it stifles both the norms and criteria according to which success in meeting them is measured. The political character of technical reason is revealed in its application as a tool of social containment.<sup>235</sup> Therefore, the complete universe of discourse, the medium in which all human relations may develop, is closed off to any opposition or change that seeks to negate its existing values. The ability for people to think critically about the system of production, or to develop the unrealized potential of both human beings and the machine itself (the industry), is halted. That which is accepted by the public is a pre-established, one-dimensional system of values, consisting of labor, competition for resources, mass-commodity consumption.

It is possible to understand the rule of the established order, and the perpetuation of one-dimensional thought further, by examining Marcuse's relationship to Marx. The In order to justify his claim that any particular social class does not initiate a global revolution, Marcuse begins by describing Marx's position. The classical Marxist ideal, which views the transition from capitalism to socialism as being rooted in the political revolution of the proletariat, concludes that while the political apparatus of capitalism is destroyed, the proletariat retains the "technological apparatus." The workers overthrow

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<sup>234</sup> In Essay On Liberation Marcuse further emphasizes the degree to which individuals become blind to the operations of the system. He says "Self-determination, the autonomy of the individual, asserts itself in the right to race his automobile, to handle his power tools, to buy a gun, to communicate to mass audiences his opinion, no matter how ignorant, how aggressive, it may be. Organized capitalism has sublimated and turned to socially productive use frustration and primary aggressiveness on an unprecedented scale—unprecedented not in terms of the quantity of violence but rather in terms of its capacity to produce long range contentment and satisfaction, to reproduce the "voluntary servitude," (Marcuse, p.13)

<sup>235</sup> Ibid, p.18

the government and gain control over industry as such. In such a case, Marcuse believes, technology's course is directed towards the development and sustainability of humanity.<sup>236</sup> However, the development of industrial society brought unprecedented changes that Marx could simply not foresee.

The process of Mechanization, which reduces the need for human labor by replacing it with machines, already distorts the Marxist conception of the proletariat. For Marx, Marcuse explains, the proletariat was the primary source of labor whose abilities were exploited to run the system of production.<sup>237</sup> Though the physical demands placed on the worker are reduced, it becomes replaced by mechanized, repetitive work that increasingly alienates workers from one another. And while the workers may control the machines that perform the demanding physical labor, the result still tends towards the mass-production of commodities for the purposes of profit increase.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, in the case of the modern worker as opposed to Marx's proletariat, social change is contained because the worker does not see anything to revolt against.<sup>239</sup> The worker is unable to see beyond the established conditions because he or she has already been indoctrinated to accept the given notion of progress and freedom. Therefore, though class-consciousness remains the same the consciousness of the worker has transformed since Marx's application of the term.

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<sup>236</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964, p.22

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> The worker feels compensated with company benefits, recognition, and the presence of worker unions (meant to reflect and uphold the interests of the workers). It is not as if the workers are really benefiting from having control over the machine, since in the bigger picture they are considered only as mere units that run the bigger capitalist machine.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, p.30 Marcuse points out the commitment of the workers to the company that owns them, he says "In some of the technically most advanced establishments, the workers even show a vested interest in the establishment—a frequently observed effect of "workers' participation" in capitalist enterprise." (p.30) He gives the example of the company Caltex refineries.

However, the conception of the worker is not the only one that changes. Whereas at one point it was possible to point the finger at the capitalists and the owners of the means of production, now it does not seem so clear. Marcuse writes

The capitalist bosses and owners are losing their identity as responsible agents; they are assuming the function of bureaucrats in a corporate machine. Within the vast hierarchy of executive and managerial boards extending far beyond the individual establishment into the scientific laboratory and research institute, the national government and national purpose, the tangible source of exploitation disappears behind the façade of objective rationality.<sup>240</sup>

What this means is that the capitalist system of production now essentially runs itself. The “owners” of production and “bosses” must participate within the system, and much like everyone else, they must obey the laws of the market because they have also been indoctrinated to accept the value of profit increase. This is a result of the intensification of instrumental rationality, and we may recall Schiller who warns us about the danger of being ruled by Reason alone.<sup>241</sup> A change in the structure of labor is not necessarily relevant to the development of humanity when the structure of society remains the same. Marcuse reminds us, that individuals, whether they are employees, business owners, or corporate bosses, all exist as instrumental resources not just for the perpetuation of the system of domination, but also to perpetuate its values to their children as well as other people.

Marcuse refers to the dialectical relationship between the Master and Slave, which comes out of Hegel, and concretized through Marx, to describe how obsolete it has become. While in Marx’s time the system of production was organized as a clear relation

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid, p.34

<sup>241</sup> refer to the discussion of Schiller in Chapter 1

between Masters (capitalist owners) and slaves (workers), this distinction disappears in a modern, capitalist society. In a very loose summation of the story: The existence of the owners depended on the existence of workers, and if the workers revolted against the owners they would be able to gain control over the system of production (not control over other people).<sup>242</sup> But this is not the case in modern industrial society; whether or not the workers overthrow the bosses, they still remain subservient to the machine process of capitalism. Marcuse writes

The organizers and administrators themselves become increasingly dependent on the machinery which they organize and administer. And this mutual dependence is no longer the dialectical relationship between Master and Servant, which has been broken in the struggle for mutual recognition, but rather a vicious circle which encloses both the Master and the Servant.<sup>243</sup>

In modern capitalism this difference disappears since both Master and Servant serve a greater process, namely technological rationality.

Therefore, the logic of social containment undermines the meaning of universal concepts by reducing them to measurable values. The understanding of a particular concept in economic terms is disseminated as a value of the ruling established order, and basically serves to deepen the roots of the reality principle, and increase surplus repression.<sup>244</sup> Individuals are not able to think outside of the established system of values, and as such they simply adopt the given norms that are imposed upon them from without. In this way social containment creates a one-dimensional, totalitarian society, where social change and progress is measured strictly in economic terms, and the

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<sup>242</sup> A much more detailed discussion of the "Master and Slave dialectic" is provided by Marx in The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844

<sup>243</sup> Ibid, p.33

<sup>244</sup> As discussed in chapter two.

prospect of social change seems more and more dire as the elements that are necessary for its development are stripped away by the existing order.

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONTAINMENT:**

Here we have the political concretization of Schiller's claims, that individuals must possess the necessary resources that are required for an aesthetic education. But Schiller is unable to articulate the social and political conditions that deny the aesthetic development of individuals. And though it is true, Marcuse believes, that the entire goal of technological rationality can be transformed so that the system of production serves to satisfy human ends instead of economic ends, society must possess the necessary resources required for such a transformation. Most importantly, freedom is an achievement that we must first develop in order to guide social development, and not by technological rationality. Individuals must have free and equal access to the resources that enable them to maintain their physical and mental well being, so that they may then establish and develop the laws of a free society. Marcuse says,

Indeed, society must first create the material prerequisites of freedom for all its members before it can be a free society; 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.<sup>245</sup>

In a truly free society, not only do individuals have free and equal access to the necessary resources for personal and social development, they are also *encouraged* to continually

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid, p.40

redefine the established order. The result is a gradual social change, in which the individuals control the means of production, as well their own lives.

However, under the capitalist system of production “social change” is always imposed upon individuals from the outside. In the case of modern capitalist society, social change always involves a relation to the economy. Marcuse says

The growing productivity of labor creates an increasing surplus-product which, whether privately or centrally appropriated and distributed, allows an increased consumption—notwithstanding the increased diversion of productivity. As long as this constellation prevails, it reduces the use-value of freedom; there is no reason to insist on self-determination if the administered life is the comfortable and even the “good” life. This is the rational and material ground for the unification of opposites, for one dimensional political behavior.<sup>246</sup>

As such, “social change” in capitalism refers to economic trends and the people’s response to them. New trends in consumption, such as shopping for particular products at a certain store (in the physical world or through the Internet, entertainment, global news, and the overall dissemination of capitalist values, are imposed to the public through mass media. Those who identify their existence with the ruling market values (to consume and increase profit) behave according to what is given to them. As such, real social change, which would involve the negation of the existing order, cannot take place in a one-dimensional society.

The question now becomes: How is it that technological rationality maintains its hold on the development of “negative thinking”? In chapter three of One-Dimensional Man *The Conquest of the Unhappy Consciousness: Repressive Desublimation*, Marcuse wants to consider the ways in which technological rationality destroys “the oppositional

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid, p.49

and transcending elements in “higher culture.”<sup>247</sup> Marcuse notes what he refers to as “two antagonistic spheres of society” that have existed together throughout the development of human civilization: Higher culture (the unrealized potential of humanity), and Reality (the established social order). The elements of “higher culture”, which I will go on to discuss further, such as philosophy and art are simply absorbed, he tells us, by the “process of *desublimation*.” Thus, the energy that should be directed towards the intellectual and cultural development of a society is instead absorbed by “reality” (the pre-established social order) and directed towards the production and consumption of commodities, and the maintenance of established values and norms. This denial of the need to grow is rooted in the destruction of the opposite (such as the values of higher culture). If there are no opposing values that may entice individuals to leave their present state of affairs, then there can be no resistance to the established social order.<sup>248</sup>

The problem with the concept of “higher culture”, Marcuse says, is that much like other universals it is reduced to particular instances, where it loses “the greater part of its truth.”<sup>249</sup> The western values of higher culture are pre-technological both in a functional as well as a chronological sense. Higher culture, Marcuse explains, “was derived from the experience of a world which no longer exists and which cannot be recaptured because it is in a strict sense invalidated by technological society.”<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, higher culture is a

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid, p.56

<sup>248</sup> If all “alien rationality” bends to the will and rationality of the status quo, and individuals are further discouraged from even conceiving, let alone developing, values and norms that differ from those of the status quo. the possibilities for developing social values and norms that oppose the status quo are slim, because the established social order simply does not provide the resources for the development of such values.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid, p.58

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

feudal culture in so far as it is: 1-restricted to a privileged minority, 2-its “authentic works” remained detached from the realms of business and industry.<sup>251</sup>

The second point deserves some careful consideration. Marcuse has high regards for the bourgeois mentality, which sought expression in the different forms of higher culture, specifically art and literature. The bourgeois class, through literature and art, was able to express a dimension of human thought and feeling that was “irreconcilably antagonistic to the order of business, indicting it and denying it.”<sup>252</sup> Schiller is a key exemplar of this because he represents the ideal bourgeois character who seeks to overcome the established perception of reality through art.<sup>253</sup> Moreover, this “other” dimension expressed the people’s rejection of the established order, through the portrayal of images that would disrupt the status quo and:

*not by the religious, spiritual, moral heroes (who often sustain the established order) but rather by such disruptive characters as the artist, the prostitute, the adulteress, the great criminal and outcast, the warrior, the rebel-poet, the devil, the fool—those who don’t earn a living, at least not in an orderly and normal way.*<sup>254</sup>

However, Marcuse continues, though these images are still used throughout literature and art today, they do not serve the same purpose that they once did: to negate the established order. Rather, they merely affirm the values of the established order because they become absorbed into it as resources to be commodified and sold to the public.

This sort of destructive and repressive social activity becomes the exact opposite of sublimated social activity. Sublimation is necessarily creative because it possesses

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid

<sup>253</sup> Schiller Letter on The Aesthetic Education of Man were about the only philosophical text he has ever written. He later left his interest in philosophy and pursued his passion for art, play writing to be exact.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, p.59



within it a principle of unification and harmony, which is the purpose of Eros as we recall from chapter two. I shall now discuss the outcome of “repressive desublimation” in relation to the critical and negating powers of the aesthetic.

### **THE FATE OF THE ARTS AND THE AFFIRMATIVE CHARACTER OF CULTURE: THE RISE OF THE HAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS**

Marcuse uses the terms “artistic alienation” to denote the world that the artist creates by virtue of dissociating him or herself from the established order. Marcuse is not using the term “alienation” to describe the relationship between individuals and individual labor in capitalist society. Rather, Marcuse says “the *artistic alienation* is the conscious transcendence of the alienated existence—a “higher level” or mediated alienation.”<sup>255</sup> This mediated alienation was the function of art and literature before they were commodified and absorbed by the established capitalist order, Marcuse says, “The place of the work of art in a pre-technological and two-dimensional culture is very different from that in a one-dimensional civilization.”<sup>256</sup> In pre-technological and two-dimensional culture, he explains, art holds the concept of negation within it “it is the Great Refusal—to protest against that which is. The modes in which man and things are made to appear, to sing and sound and speak, are modes of refuting, breaking, and

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid, p.60

<sup>256</sup> Ibid, p.63

This also represents a limit to Schiller’s argument, because there is no way he could have had any understanding of “technological culture” in the way Marcuse describes it. And as such, Schiller is not able to distinguish between pre-tech and modern technological culture. He simply cannot use his era as a reference point to something that has not come into existence. Marcuse, however, is able to critically examine the historical development of technological culture dating back to Schiller’s time.

recreating their factual existence.”<sup>257</sup> Therefore, Marcuse says, “Artistic alienation”, is sublimation—the channeling of the erotic energy into creative endeavor—it aims at creating images that do not fit in accordance with the established values of the social order. However, he continues, once this feature of art is commodified it becomes de-sublimated, and loses its negative, critical content.<sup>258</sup>

We may understand the relevance and importance of the critical dimension of art, by recalling our conception of Eros as discussed previously. Stephen Eric Bronner elaborates on this particular point. He tells us that for Marcuse as for Schiller, art allows us to creatively channel the liberating powers of Eros to express our humanity as a unified whole. Whereas repression is imposed through various social institutions, the individual attempts to “vent his libidinal energy through a sublimated practice that will result in a work of art.” However, as Marcuse will show us, this attempt, to oppose the repressive and oppressive values of the given system is undermined because the system of productivity will soak up “the erotic, libidinous content which provides the aesthetic object with its emancipatory “truth”. As a consequence, repression will literally increase through society’s subversion of sublimated activity.”<sup>259</sup> Therefore, within the confines of

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, p.71

<sup>259</sup> Bronner, Stephen Eric. “Between Art and Utopia: Reconsidering the Aesthetic Theory of Herbert Marcuse.” Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia. Eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Weble and Contributors. South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc. 1988, p.111

The exact quote by Bronner is : “Where repression is brought to bear upon the individual through institutionalized controls, he will attempt to vent his libidinal energy through a sublimated practice that will result in a work of art. But, the very society which the artwork attempts to oppose will transform that oeuvre and “absorb” the erotic, libidinous content which provides the aesthetic object with its emancipatory “truth”. As a consequence, repression will literally increase through society’s subversion of sublimated activity”.

one-dimensional culture art loses this feature of negation as it is integrated into the modes of domination.

A brief look at Marcuse's earlier work will allow us to further comprehend his position. Specifically, we will be able to understand how Marcuse's latest work brought Marcuse back to some of his earliest work.<sup>260</sup> Morton Schoolman explains Marcuse's understanding of the relationship between the artist and his or her society.<sup>261</sup> Marcuse had argued that the artist has two fundamental relationships with society: 1- as an extension of the norms and values of society, and 2- as a critical force whose work inherently negates the existing norms and values of society. Both kinds of relationships depend on the social order in which the artist lives. I will briefly describe both, focusing on the second relationship since it is central for Marcuse.

The first relationship concerns artists who live in a homogenous society where the economic, cultural and political spheres are all bound together by a single set of norms. Artists who live in a homogenous society are an extension of that homogeneity, and feel the need to represent that spiritual unity through works of art.<sup>262</sup>

The second relationship that the artist has can be seen in modern society. Modern society, Schoolman explains, is divided. This breakdown of the once homogenous society "occurs with the development of classes, the division of society into new social strata, professions, and so forth, and with the cultural complexity that follows in the path of this

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<sup>260</sup> Schoolman, Morton. *The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse*. "The Aesthetic Dimension and the Second Dimension". (p.324-349) The Free Press, a division of Collier Macmillan Co., Inc. New York, 1980, p.326

<sup>261</sup> I am referring to Morton Schoolman's book *The Imaginary Witness*, where he discusses Marcuse's doctoral dissertation "The German Artist Novel"

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, p.327 Schoolman explains: "Consequently, the life of an entire society is uniformly expressed through a common spiritual ethos." (p.327)

development.”<sup>263</sup> The ramifications of this social breakdown extend throughout human culture, and as such, the artist’s relationship with society mirrors that division. The artist becomes separated from the social order, and art no longer mirrors the unity of society. Art is no longer the extension of the consciousness of the whole, since the whole has become fragmented. This second relationship between the artist and society is the one that Marcuse develops in more detail throughout One-Dimensional Man.

The result of this fragmentation in society is an opposition between art and social existence. The artist, Schoolman explains, is forced to realize that there is no universal social spirit. Furthermore, this realization then drives the artist to define him/herself as a subject, who is facing the divided and antagonistic parts of society. Schoolman explains, “As society’s various aspects become objects of the artist’s work, nothing in the society satisfies the artist’s need to portray a unified vision of social life. Art can only reproduce the fragmentation of culture.”<sup>264</sup> A work of art then reflects this separation of the artist from society. Once the artist is aware that the work of art expresses the alienation with society he “passes beyond a self-consciousness of his opposition to society. He attempts to reunify art and life by depicting a higher, more rational ideal of a unified spiritual existence through a new aesthetic form.”<sup>265</sup> On the one hand, in a homogenous, one-dimensional society, a work of art is in conformity with the established norms; it mirrors the whole social cohesion. On the other hand, in an antagonistic society, or “multi-dimensional society” to use Marcuse’s term, works of art do not reflect any cohesive

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid, p.326

<sup>264</sup> This is another limitation that Schiller could not have considered, and Marcuse is forced to correct. Schiller could not foresee the impact of the commodification of art. Therefore, he cannot comprehend how the critical character of art could be suppressed and destroyed once it has been absorbed by the commodity form.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid, p.328

social norms, and are instead separate and opposed to dominant ideologies. This is precisely the dialectical process which allows the elements of “higher culture” to “develop the progressive dimensions of the antagonisms without becoming divided internally.”<sup>266</sup>

In one of Marcuse’s earlier essays called “The Affirmative Character of Culture”, he explains that the affirmative character of culture includes the dimensions of the intellectual and spiritual world, such as art, philosophy, and religion that are believed to be more important than tasks which directly involve earning a living. However, Schoolman explains, human culture does generate many ideals that express hopes, desires, and higher possibilities of life which causes the intellectual/spiritual world to be at odds with the world of necessary labor.<sup>267</sup> However, Schoolman continues, art is different from religion and philosophy for the following reasons: first, religion sacrifices human happiness “in the here and now” reserving it for an afterlife “thus fostering worldly stoicism.”<sup>268</sup> Second, for Marcuse, even philosophy has abandoned its search for an ideal of happiness. For Marcuse, only Marxist philosophy seriously considers the concept of human happiness, and struggles to bring that ideal to humanity.<sup>269</sup> Therefore, for Marcuse, the critical function of art resides in its opposition to established norms of the given society.

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid, p.329

Schoolman writes “The cultural universe is decidedly optimistic in that it expresses the ideas of beauty, pleasure, harmony, virtue, forgiveness and love, truth and justice. Culture protects notions of happiness as attainable ideals. In so doing, the real of culture assumes critical qualities. By sustaining the idea of a better life, it implicitly indicts society for its lassitude in fulfilling the promises of affirmative culture.”

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

However, Marcuse's point is that the individual's attempt to create an artwork that challenges the status quo is both undermined and exploited along with the artwork itself. The artwork is assimilated and commodified and the cry for change is silenced. Shierry Weber describes this phenomenon as "The Perversion of the Aesthetic."<sup>270</sup> This perversion results when the emancipatory potential of Eros is channeled into the market and diffused as commodities. As a commodity the emancipatory value of an artwork is replaced by economic value: for example, rock music, which has opposes the status quo with unconventional rhythm and unusually loud noise levels serve to diffuse repressed sexual and aggressive energy, thus substituting annihilation and explosion – escape from the self – for discovery and integration.<sup>271</sup> As such as the emancipatory potential of Eros is exploited, and the existing reality principle is strengthened: In this sense, the exploitation of Eros feeds and reinforces the status quo. This brings us full circle back to the process of "repressive desublimation" as described by Marcuse: when the emancipatory potential of Eros (Sublimated activity) is channeled into socially acceptable forms such as work, or consuming commodities and participating in the free market. Finally, those socially acceptable forms, on which the energy of Eros is focused, are

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<sup>270</sup> Bronner, Stephen Eric. "Between Art and Utopia: Reconsidering the Aesthetic Theory of Herbert Marcuse." Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia. Eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Weble and Contributors. South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc. 1988, p.111

Bronner Quotes Weber, who says "The perversion of the aesthetic: whereas the aesthetic is a totality formed by sublimation of the instincts, the spectacle releases instinctual energies but does not bind them into forms. On the other hand, the spectacle as aesthetic and as consumption prevents the individual from experiencing action and process; he is an actor only as an object and a subject only as a spectator; he consumes rather than makes."

<sup>271</sup> Shierry M, Weber, "Individuation as Praxis," in Critical Interruptions, ed. Paul Breines, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970, p.37

ultimately repressive since they do not allow for the free manifestation of sublimated activity.<sup>272</sup>

As the system increases the availability of commodified comforts the critical dimension of the mind dwindles and with it the hope for social change. Individuals no longer engage in the dialectical movement that allows them to overcome oppressive values. Instead, many of them bask in the comforts provided to them by the system of production, satisfied and completely oblivious to their servitude to the system. Therefore, the established social order which denies and discourages the growth of any opposing values by suppressing the ability and desire to think critically i.e., engage in negative thinking and, as Marcuse says “The *Happy Consciousness* comes to prevail.”<sup>273</sup>

The “Happy Consciousness” is basically created by the culture industry in order to make people complacent to the point where they simply accept the given reality principle.

The happy consciousness, he says:

reflects the belief that the real is rational, and that the established system, in spite of everything, delivers the goods. The people are led to find in the productive apparatus the effective agents of thought and action to which their personal thought and action can and must be surrendered. And in this transfer, the apparatus also assumes the role of a moral agent. Conscience is absolved by reification, by the general necessity of things.<sup>274</sup>

Furthermore, not only does the happy consciousness accept the existing reality principle, it also lacks the necessary tools and conditions to oppose it, and as such has no interest in

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<sup>272</sup> Bronner, Stephen Eric. “Between Art and Utopia: Reconsidering the Aesthetic Theory of Herbert Marcuse.” *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*. Eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Weble and Contributors. South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc. 1988, p.111

<sup>273</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man*. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964, p.79

<sup>274</sup> Ibid

seeking the creation of a better society.<sup>275</sup> This lack of interest towards negating the established system of production reflects the fact that most individuals have been suppressed to accept its existence as necessary and a given. Any opposition to the established order is quickly absorbed into a commodity form, thus canceling its critical potential.<sup>276</sup> Works of art, Bronner explains, used to point the way towards a more utopian world but has now been assimilated into the mainstream of society. Art ceases to be a unique expression of human freedom and creative since it becomes commodified. As such, works of art are reduced to things that everyone can understand: a nice painting on a mug.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> The lack of resources and materials, and the necessary conditions for the fostering of negative thought and opposition, is not due to their scarcity. Rather there is a lack of access to those resources and materials, they belong only to those who can afford to buy them at market-price.

<sup>276</sup> Bronner, Stephen Eric. "Between Art and Utopia: Reconsidering the Aesthetic Theory of Herbert Marcuse." *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*. Eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Weble and Contributors. South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc. 1988, p.115

Bronner further elaborates on the consequences of the happy consciousness. He says "The result is a "non-conformist conformity" (Adorno) whose conditions emerge from the affluence of advanced industrial society. In Marcuse's view, poverty and misery are no longer visible in daily life for the majority of the population. Through the creation, satisfaction, and re-creation of false needs, individuals will be content to enjoy their existence in accordance with those values which are propagated by the status quo. Satisfied, complacent, and introjected with the "happy consciousness," the individuals of advanced industrial society have become ideologically incapable of valuing even the possibility of a different enjoyment, peace, or a more embracing and sustained gratification"

<sup>277</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man*. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1964, p.65

Marcuse makes a sarcastic comment about commodified or "kitsch" art, and those who might praise it as a critical element of higher culture. He says: "It is good that almost everyone can now have the fine arts at his fingertips, by just turning a knob on his set, or by just stepping into his drugstore. In this diffusion, however, they become cogs in a culture-machine which remakes their content."



## CONCLUSION:

I have attempted to discuss the main ways of technological domination and oppression as expressed by Marcuse in One-dimensional Man, and to a small extent his work in An Essay on Liberation. The logic of domination, as Marcuse explains it, has been transformed since Marx's time to a point that it easily resists any radical, social revolution. The social class that would serve as the basis for a revolution in Marx's time has been pacified by the comforts that are provided to them by the established capitalist system of production. Furthermore, this pacification of human thought results in what Marcuse calls "One-dimensional Society", a society whose totalitarian values and norms are imposed upon its citizens, forcing them to act and behave according to those one-dimensional rules. One-dimensional thought, which entails mental atrophy and social aggression (competition over resources thought to be scarce i.e., false needs), serves to completely stall true human progress.<sup>278</sup> Any opposition to the laws and values of the market is met with fierce resistance by those who hold the established values as their own: Moreover, the necessary conditions for the development of negative thought, including the necessary material and intellectual resources, are completely repressed, making it more difficult for individuals to begin any serious movements.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> "True human progress" in this sense is defined as the unfolding of the dialectical process that aims at forming more considerate and understanding relationships with life and the world in general. For example, true human progress may be measured by how well a given society is able to satisfy everyone's basic needs, without having them engage in economic competition. Instead, the laws of the market define progress in economic terms i.e., the ability for a society, to sustain itself through the accumulation of capital.

<sup>279</sup> Though individuals may still form organizations that hold values which oppose the market doctrine, they encounter much difficulty and opposition from those who cling to the established values of the market.

Furthermore, insofar as art is commodified it loses its emancipatory qualities, since it becomes absorbed into the capitalist system of production and reduced to an economic calculation. But we may still think of instances where different public institutions promote culture and art e.g. public museums and art galleries. Also educational institutions may offer course in art and music as part of their curriculum. While this type of aesthetic education is still limited by the curriculum of educational and other public institutions the point is that the public should be exposed to art in its non-commodified form because: the liberating power of the aesthetic lies in its expression as a free, and creative activity.

The final question, which I will leave for the concluding chapter four, is thus: what sort of optimism can we count on from Marcuse's point of view? His book An Essay on Liberation reiterates the central themes in One-Dimensional Man, though he seems to hold a more positive view for the use and application of art. But one of the most central points he makes concerns what he calls "a biological foundation for socialism", which requires us to address our understanding of human needs. Once we address the question of human needs, Marcuse will argue, we may then be able to develop the necessary political foundations that will ensure their satisfaction.

**CHAPTER 4:**  
**A DIFFERENT DIRECTION**

In One-Dimensional Man Marcuse paints a grim picture for the aesthetic realm in general: its critical powers are absorbed and transformed into commodities. As such, the content of a work of art can no longer represent the negation of the established norms and values, once they become mass-produced commodities. However, his latest work in An Essay On Liberation and The Aesthetic Dimension, Marcuse brings us back to the point from which we originally began: Aesthetics as an ideal towards which we aim, to project and represent better possibilities of human existence.<sup>280</sup> In this concluding chapter, I will discuss Marcuse's later views about aesthetics, in order to link him back to Schiller and the concept of the beautiful (living-shape). Specifically, Marcuse seems to call for the development of a rational subjectivity that is guided by Eros.<sup>281</sup>

To do this, I will begin by examining the section in An Essay On Liberation: A Biological Foundation for Socialism? to understand Marcuse's optimism about the liberating powers of the aesthetic. I do not believe that Marcuse intended to leave us with an apocalyptic portrayal of the future of human civilization (and his two last books are proof of that). Rather, his point, as I intend to show, is to ground radical social change in something that is more basic to humans than aesthetics, and more common to all human beings. Next I will examine key passages in The Aesthetic Dimension and the section on

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<sup>280</sup> In fact, on page one of The Aesthetic Dimension Marcuse says "It seems that art as art expresses a truth, an experience, a necessity which, although not in the domain of radical praxis, are nevertheless essential components of revolution.", and as such represents an ideal for human beings.

<sup>281</sup> "Eros" as discussed in chapter 2, and as Marcuse discusses it in Eros and Civilization.

*The New Sensibility* in An Essay On Liberation, where Marcuse discusses the liberating potential of aesthetics, and make the necessary connections to the preceding chapters.

### **THE BIOLOGICAL DEMAND FOR LIFE:**

In the section *A Biological Foundation for Socialism*, of his book An Essay On Liberation, Marcuse tells us that the possibility for the realization of a utopian human life is inherent in the technological advancements that we have created. Marcuse tells us that we possess the necessary material and intellectual resources that are required to liberate humanity from the oppressive aspects of western capitalism. But, as we have seen in chapter two, it is not enough that individuals access the necessary resources, and control the economy. The problem of true and false needs must be solved.<sup>282</sup> False needs perpetuate the oppression of the people, and as such, the change must begin at the level of basic human needs. A change in those needs would bring about what Marcuse calls the new instinctual basis for freedom.

What we must chiefly keep in mind is that, for Marcuse, the question of needs must take precedence prior to any discussion of ethics or morals that pertain to human existence. Freud tells us that the demand for instinctual gratification takes precedence over everything else.<sup>283</sup> And Marcuse picks up on this point again in a very important passage. He says:

Prior to all ethical behavior in accordance with specific social standards, prior to all ideological expression, morality is a “disposition” of the organism, perhaps rooted in the erotic drive to

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<sup>282</sup> The distinction between false and true needs is discussed in the previous chapter, and that is the one I will be referring to from here on.

<sup>283</sup> Refer back to chapter two.

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.<sup>284</sup>

This central passage tells us that all human beings seem to share a common connection upon which we may build our conceptions of ethics and morality. Specifically, all human beings share the biological need to seek instinctual gratification. Furthermore, Marcuse is echoing another point he makes in Eros and Civilization, namely the biological demand by the organism, the instinctual demand of Eros, to “create and preserve “ever greater unities” of life.”<sup>285</sup> And it is specifically at this stage that we must consider the question of needs.

The new needs, he says, must be inherently antagonistic to the established conception of “needs” (false-needs). The problem, as I discussed in Chapter Three, is that individuals come to identify their false needs as true needs. And the difference between true and false needs is that the former serve to maintain human life, while the latter serve to maintain the established order. As such, people adopt the value of consumer society as necessary for maintaining life, when in fact it only fosters dependence and perpetuates

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<sup>284</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. An Essay on Liberation, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1969, p.10

<sup>285</sup> Ibid. recall the discussion of Eros and Civilization in chapter 2.

Marcuse describes his use of the term “biological” in a very important footnote to this passage. He says: “I use the terms “biological” and “biology” not in the sense of the scientific discipline, but in order to designate the process and the dimension in which inclinations, behavior patterns, and aspirations become vital needs which, if not satisfied, would cause dysfunction of the organism. Conversely, socially induced needs and aspirations may result in a more pleasurable organic behavior. If biological needs are defined as those which must be satisfied and for which no adequate substitute can be provided, certain cultural needs can “sink down” into the biology of man. We could then speak, for example, of the biological need of freedom, or of some aesthetic needs as having taken root in the organic structure of man, in his “nature,” or rather “second nature.” This usage of the term “biological” does not imply or assume anything as to the way in which needs are physiologically expressed and transmitted.”

domination. Moreover, individuals cannot understand that they are trapped in a cycle of consumption, and thus un-free, because their understanding of human freedom is defined by that very system within a closed circle of prejudgment, as the act of participating in free-market economics.<sup>286</sup> In this way, individuals feel that they gain a sense of freedom by participating in the market. But this is only a superficial and one-dimensional sense of freedom that is reduced to particular instances of consumer behavior.

However, as individuals adopt the values and norms of the market they continue restrict their understanding of the concept of freedom to the one-dimensional view of the established order. And yet, this is precisely the turning point, for Marcuse, upon which the basis for a revolution may be built:

We would have to conclude that liberation would mean subversion against the will and against the prevailing interests of the great majority of the people. In this false identification of social and individual needs, in this deep-rooted, “organic” adaptation of the people to a terrible but profitably functioning society, lie the limits of democratic persuasion and evolution. On the overcoming of these limits depends the establishment of democracy.

At this point, for Marcuse, once individuals adopt and internalize the values and norms of the established social order it becomes difficult to reject them, without also, in a sense, rejecting oneself. This character is embodied in Marcuse’s conception of “The New Sensibility.”

Marcuse’s discussion of the “new sensibility” involves the conception of a changing, developing and evolving subjectivity that strives towards higher states of

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid, p.12-13

freedom and happiness.<sup>287</sup> According to this view, subjectivity is not fixed, and neither are the states of freedom and happiness. This conception of is of a subjectivity that struggles against, and refuses oppression and domination in favor of a better quality of life. Instead, according to Marcuse, the reality principle would evolve, and its values and norms would develop to match the development and evolution of individuals. Specifically, Douglas Kellner explains, the new sensibility “would be developed, Marcuse claimed, by an aesthetic education that would cultivate imagination, fantasy, the senses and reason, producing a “new rationality” in which reason would be bodily, erotic, and political.”<sup>288</sup>

Marcuse returns to Schiller’s conception of aesthetic education and play, arguing that in aesthetic and erotic experience, play, and fantasy, the conflict between reason and

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<sup>287</sup> Marcuse’s interest in the women’s liberation movement was spurred for precisely the same reason that he was attracted to the New Left. The women’s movement, perhaps far more than the New Left, was the living expression of the new sensibility. Women’s liberation would be human liberation because the social order that would adhere to feminist principles would also adhere to a new reality principle. Feminine characteristics are those of Eros and, as such, correspond to the truest potentialities for a socialist society. For Marcuse, “feminist socialism” represented the antithesis of the performance principle, the emancipation of the senses and the intellect from the rationality of domination, “creative receptivity versus repressive productivity.” Feminist socialism would release the female element, libido, as a power in the rebuilding of all social institutions. Before the feminist movement could move to this higher stage of emancipatory politics, however, the equality of women was the first objective and the absolute prerequisite for liberation. “Only as an equal economic and political subject,” Marcuse declared, “can the woman claim a leading role in the radical reconstruction of society.” Here, once again, Marcuse remains within the theoretical framework of a radical critique of society while proposing liberal political practice as a means eventually to secure the influence required for organizing on an expanded scale. Schoolman, Morton. The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse. The Free Press, a division of Collier Macmillan Co., Inc. New York, 1980, p. 325-326

<sup>288</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Towards a Critical Theory of Society. Douglas Kellner Ed. Vol. 2 of *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*. London: Routledge, 2001, p.91

Kellner says: “Instead of the need for repressive performance and competition, the new sensibility posits the need for meaningful work, gratification, and community; instead of the need for aggression and destructive productivity, it affirms love and the preservation of the environment; and against the demands of industrialization, it asserts the need for beauty, sensuousness, and play, affirming the aesthetic and erotic components of experience.”

the senses would be overcome so that “reason is sensuous and sensuousness rational”.

Marcuse says:

The liberated consciousness would promote the development of a science and technology free to discover and realize the possibilities of things and men in the protection and the gratification of life, playing with the potentialities of form and matter for the attainment of this goal. Technique would then tend to become art, and art would tend to form reality: the opposition between imagination and reason, higher and lower faculties, poetic and scientific thought, would be invalidated. Emergence of a new Reality Principle: under which a new sensibility and a desublimated scientific intelligence would combine in the creation of an aesthetic ethos.<sup>289</sup>

This is a central link back to Schiller: Operating through the play impulse, the aesthetic function would “abolish compulsion, and place man, both morally and physically in freedom” and “reconciles them with the interest of the senses”.<sup>290</sup> The oppositions between nature and reason are synthesized, and produce a “new sensibility”; in the same way that Schiller’s synthesis involves the unification of the sense-drive and the form-drive which produces a playful, aesthetic individual. But in order to achieve these radical social conditions, as Marcuse says, we must redefine our understanding of true human needs, which includes the reconfiguration of the social institutions that impose a one-dimensional way of life i.e. economic, political, etc.

Furthermore, the kind of subjectivity Marcuse proposes seeks to extend itself and understand its world, by forming peaceful relationships with its environment instead of

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<sup>289</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. An Essay on Liberation, Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1969, p.24

<sup>290</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. Towards a Critical Theory of Society. Douglas Kellner Ed. Vol. 2 of *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*. London: Routledge, 2001, p.87-88 “The resultant conception of an aestheticized and eroticized subjectivity preserves the connotation of *Sinnlichkeit* as pertaining to sensuality, receptiveness, art, and Eros, thus redeeming the body and the senses against the tyranny of repressive reason and affirming the importance of aesthetics, play, and erotic activity in human life”,

This quote by Kellner serves to provide a link back to chapter two and what has been discussed about the relationship between Eros and sensuousness.



seeking to dominate it. For example, this eroticized subjectivity seeks “greater unities of life”, and a more comprehensive concept of gratification that does not include the consumption of false needs.<sup>291</sup> Thus, the eroticized subjectivity seeks to form a completely new reality principle, that takes the demands of Eros more seriously.

Now the next step is to discuss the relationship between Marcuse’s “eroticized subjectivity” and aesthetics. He will argue that aesthetics is the tool that we may use to develop the demands of Eros, and project better qualities of human life. The critical, negative powers of the aesthetic, which are present in the *aesthetic form*, allow us to transcend the established order. I will now discuss this in more detail. Finally, I will finish by linking Marcuse back with Schiller, through the point that the aesthetic realm is an ideal which will allow us to gain deeper insights into qualitatively different forms of human life.

### **THE RADICAL CHARACTER OF AESTHETICS:**

In The Aesthetic Dimension Marcuse argues against a Marxist theory of aesthetics, which ascribes a political function and a political dimension to art, and claims that works of art reflect the particular interests of a specific social class. However, he argues, the political dimension of art lies in the aesthetic form. As such, there is no need to ‘inject’ aesthetics with political theory, he says:

But in contrast to orthodox Marxist aesthetics I see the political potential of art in art itself, in the aesthetic form as such.

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<sup>291</sup> Further, Kellner explains Marcuse’s concept of “Libidinal Rationality”, in which reason does not act as an instrument of domination over our inner and outer nature. Libidinal reason seeks to transform and shape the world so as to meet the needs of Eros the life instinct.

Furthermore, I argue that by virtue of its aesthetic form, art is largely autonomous vis a vis the given social relations. In its autonomy art both protests these relations, and at the same time transcends them. Thereby art subverts the dominant consciousness, the ordinary experience.<sup>292</sup>

At this point, I am not interested in pursuing Marcuse's objections to the Marxist theory of aesthetics; rather I intend to focus on his discussion of the "political potential of art", and "aesthetic form", in order to make the link back to Schiller. Therefore, I will only discuss the key points that Marcuse uses to differentiate his understanding of the political, and ideological potential of art versus that of Marxist aesthetic theory, as well as the relevance of aesthetic form.

First, Marcuse considers art to be revolutionary in both a narrow and a wide sense. Revolutionary art in the narrow sense means that art is revolutionary "if it represents a radical change in style and technique."<sup>293</sup> However, Marcuse reminds us, this is only a technical definition, and only one example of what revolutionary art seems to be, and as such it tells us nothing about the authenticity and truth of the work. Therefore we must understand art in the wider sense of the term. However, we should keep in mind, as I mentioned at the end of Chapter Three, commodified art does not hold any revolutionary potential for Marcuse. We must look to un-commodified art in order to gain an appreciation for its liberating qualities.

Revolutionary art in the wide sense represents "the prevailing unfreedom and the rebelling forces, thus breaking through the mystified (and petrified) social reality, and

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<sup>292</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. The Aesthetic Dimension, Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics. Beacon Press: Boston Massachusetts, 1978, p.ix.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid, p. x-xi For example, surrealist art anticipates considerable social changes such as the destructive tendencies of monopoly capitalism

opening the horizon of change (liberation).”<sup>294</sup> Specifically, “Revolutionary” in this sense, refers to art that is “subversive of perception and understanding, an indictment of the established reality, the appearance of the image of liberation.”<sup>295</sup> We must This means that a work of art basically negates the established reality by projecting a qualitatively different reality.

Though Marcuse acknowledges that different periods in human history and different social classes express the subversive potential differently (which means that the work does reflect the interests and values of different time periods and different social classes), he also argues that “they are the specific historical expressions and manifestations of the same transhistorical substance of art: its own dimension of truth, protest and promise, a dimension constituted by the aesthetic form.”<sup>296</sup> Aesthetic form, as Schiller discussed it, is the combination of form and matter according to the creative laws of human imagination. The revolutionary potential of art lies in the work of art itself “as content having become form.”<sup>297</sup> Those last words are precisely the key back to Schiller’s claim that form and content are synthesized through the aesthetic. A work of art, therefore, represents the act of combining form and matter creatively and imaginatively, that has, as a result, a negating effect on the established reality.<sup>298</sup>

What sets Marcuse’s view apart from the Marxist theory of aesthetics? For starters, he believes, the radical dimension of art is undermined when the work is

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid, recall this discussion in chapter 3, the critical capacities of art which allow us to negate the established conditions, and project better ones.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid, xii

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

blatantly political. To explain this in more detail Marcuse considers different parts of the Marxist view of art.<sup>299</sup>

1-The connection between art and the relations of production: as the modes of production change art as well is transformed as part of the superstructure. As an ideology, art can either lag behind or anticipate social change.

2-The connection between art and social class: Marxist aesthetics considers works of art to be true, authentic and revolutionary if it expresses the consciousness of an ascending social class.

3-As such, since art represents the consciousness of an ascending social class, both the political and the aesthetic coincide.

4-It is the duty of the artist to express the values and interests of the ascending class (in capitalism, it would be the proletariat)

5-The declining class and its representatives only produce “decadent” art.

6-Realism is considered to be art work that best corresponds to given social relationships, and thus considered to be a “correct” form of art.<sup>300</sup>

The common line running through all these points is that the social relations of production must be represented in the work of art “not imposed upon the work externally, but a part of its inner logic and the logic of the material”.<sup>301</sup>

As such, the realm of the aesthetic is compromised. Marxist aesthetics reduces the political potential of art to ideology “a normative notion of the material base as the true reality and a political devaluation of nonmaterial forces particularly of the individual consciousness and subconscious and their political function.”<sup>302</sup> The political function of art maybe emancipatory or regressive, but in both cases it becomes a material force,

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<sup>299</sup> Again, my aim is not to discuss the internal problems with Marxist aesthetic theory, but simply to highlight some of the features in order to contrast them with Marcuse’s view of aesthetics. I will leave it up to the reader’s interest to investigate the relationship between Marcuse and Marxist aesthetics.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid, p.2

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid, p.3

leaving no room for ideology.<sup>303</sup> This is a problem for Marcuse who identifies with Schiller's view that aesthetics is first and foremost an ideal that may be concretized through human action, but is not reduced to it.

This is precisely the point behind the ideology of the aesthetic: the realm of aesthetic form represents an ideal towards which we should aim. The transcendental powers of art, its liberating qualities and its ability to reject the status quo, lie in its ability to project possibilities that are antagonistic to the established reality principle. Art moves beyond the established reality by expressing the negation of that reality.<sup>304</sup> As such, Art creates and expresses the true reality that is suppressed by the established reality. Therefore, a work of art breaks down the established understanding of love, happiness, death and sorrow, and expresses the repressed reality of such concepts.<sup>305</sup>

Marcuse says:

Under the law of the aesthetic form, the given reality is necessarily *sublimated*: the immediate content is stylized, the "data" are reshaped and reordered in accordance with the demands of the art form, which requires that even the representation of death and destruction invoke the need for hope—a need rooted in the new consciousness embodied in the work of art.<sup>306</sup>

Aesthetic form basically transforms the given reality according to the wishes of the pleasure principle. However, we must keep in mind that human reality does not simply transform on its own, it requires the reorganization of the social conditions that harm it.

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<sup>303</sup> Marcuse stresses that historical materialism must account for the role of subjectivity, and the non-material in aesthetics.

<sup>304</sup> For example, if the established reality principle favors quiet music, made with specialized instruments such as: horns, violins, cellos etc. radical art may respond by creating music with the use of trash cans, broom sticks and wooden boards (such as the loud percussive music of the ever popular group "Stomp").

<sup>305</sup> Ibid, p.7 recall the discussion, in the previous chapter, about the critical powers of the aesthetic.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

And we may tie this back the discussion of Eros in Chapter Two: Individuals may think and act on the basis of the pleasure principle to reorder the established reality principle. As such, the demands of the life instincts will ultimately shine through the aesthetic form, so that even images of death and destruction “invoke the need for hope.”

“Aesthetic form” is the key term that links Marcuse back to Schiller. We may recall from chapter one that, for Schiller, aesthetic form results in the creation of a work of art through the imaginative manipulation of form and content. Likewise, for Marcuse, aesthetic form represents the negation of the given reality through a work of art. Morton Schoolman explains

First, by virtue of aesthetic form, art possesses a remote eccentric language that contrasts sharply with ordinary discourse. Through art, particular human experiences are removed from their historical and social context and are universalized as a realm of potential experience for all mankind. In other words, particular experiences are given a new form as universal human potentialities.<sup>307</sup>

Furthermore, aesthetic form is the shape of the reality that is transformed through art. The way in which this transformation takes place, Marcuse tells us, seems to be through the manipulation of form and content i.e. “language, perception, and understanding.” By manipulating form and content, the artist may then re-present the established reality as the illusion, and “the repressed potentialities of man and nature.” As such, the artist is also able to negate that illusion and project possibilities of a more truthful reality.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Schoolman, Morton. The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse. The Free Press, a division of Collier Macmillan Co., Inc. New York, 1980, p.330

<sup>308</sup> Ibid, p.8 Marcuse emphasizes, the critical, negating function of art does not depend on how well its content mimics the established reality. Rather, the emancipatory potential of art lies in the content having form, which means: the artist takes the content from the established reality (such as for example, a guitar, percussions etc.) and gives it form by manipulating it according to imagination, and not according to fact. “The critical function of art, its contribution to the struggle for liberation, resides in the aesthetic form. A

## **CONCLUSION:**

Thus far, Marcuse explains the political and ideological function of art: to reshape the world so that the perception of individuals is 'shaken' from its established principles. Those established principles that motivated individuals to be productive members of society are the same principles that keep them trapped in a vicious cycle of oppression and servitude. Marcuse continues, to be able to see the reality that is communicated by art individuals must possess a certain degree of freedom from the established reality principle. Furthermore, he reiterates what he has argued in One-Dimensional Man that he is presupposing the existence of a rational, autonomous Individual. Since the world of art is a completely different reality, what Marcuse is saying seems to be that we need a different kind of perception to be able to understand the principles of a completely different reality.

In order to foster this new form of perception we must address the social and political conditions that undermine its growth, e.g. the unequal distribution of wealth, privatized business sectors and institutions, unemployment etc. Tying this point back to Chapter Three, a one-dimensional frame of mind, which only considers what is imposed on it from without, cannot consider the radical potential of aesthetics: because the established social order has no room for aesthetics as such. But as long as individuals do not possess the necessary resources to even be in a position of developing their aesthetic talents, aesthetics on its own, no matter how virtuous it may be, cannot lead to change.

However, Marcuse wants to end on a positive note that is meant to be every bit as idealistic as Schiller's view. Both authors acknowledge that it is only when we have

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work of art is authentic or true not by virtue of its content (i.e., the "correct" representation of social conditions), nor by its "pure" form, but by the content having become form."

properly arranged the social and political conditions of society that we may benefit from the healing powers of aesthetics. But the problem is exactly this: that not many people have access to the means for an aesthetic education, because they are trapped within the cycle of labor and consumption. For this reason we must address the issue of human needs, which itself requires a reconfiguration of the social institutions in capitalism.

The overall goal of this project has been to critically examine the social and political conditions that stifle the overall growth of human beings. Individuals gain the most benefit from society, ideally, when social institutions serve the interests of the public. Human life, indeed all life, comes in second as more and more private institutions seek economic growth over and above true human needs. The aesthetic realm allows us to project better possibilities for human life, and truly experience the depth of human potential, and in this sense it possesses both functional and intrinsic value. In a society where social institutions are organized so as to meet humanity's true needs individuals are able to develop every one of their faculties, thus becoming "complete individuals." I will end with a passage by Marcuse that I believe captures the ideal of a unified human existence under the guidance of the aesthetic realm:

the aesthetic dimension can serve as a sort of gauge for a free society. A universe of human relationships no longer mediated by the market, no longer based on competitive exploitation or terror, demands a sensitivity freed from the repressive satisfactions of the unfree societies; a sensitivity receptive to forms and modes of reality which thus far have been projected only by the aesthetic imagination. For the aesthetic needs have their own social content: they are the claims of the human organism, mind and body, for a dimension of fulfillment which can be created only in the struggle against the institutions which, by their very functioning, deny and violate these claims.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid, p.28



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## VITA AUCTORIS

Ali El-Mokadem was born in Beirut, Lebanon on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1980. His parents immigrated to Ottawa, Ontario, where he attended Charlotte Lemieux Elementary School and Champlain Secondary School until Grade 11. His family moved again to Windsor, Ontario where he attended, and graduated, St-Joseph's Secondary School. In 1999 Ali El-Mokadem began his post secondary studies at the University of Windsor. Beginning with a major in English, he switched to Philosophy and minored in Psychology. After receiving a B.A. in Philosophy with a minor in Psychology he continued his education at the University of Windsor and received an M.A. in Social and Political Philosophy and Critical Theory.