The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse: Imagining the Possible

by

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B.A., University of Toronto, 1997

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Political Science

We accept this thesis as conforming
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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to outline and develop features of the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse which are salient to a theory of radical democracy, by comparing his theory with the work of Judith Butler. It investigates Marcuse's readings of Hegel, Marx and Freud, and the goal of attainment of the concrete that animates his theory throughout these readings. Relating Marcuse's development of the concrete necessity to his conception of praxis, it reads the theory of Judith Butler and her conceptualization of radical democratic praxis as running obliquely against the thought of Marcuse and his unorthodox version of socialist praxis. Specifically, it holds that Butler's writing must itself be understood as a form of praxis in a way that Marcuse never considered his texts to be, and that the performativity of her writing indicates a difference from Marcuse (and between Butler's radical democracy and Marcuse's erotic civilization) not so much in spirit as in approach.

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acknowledgements

Thanks to my teachers: Rob Walker, Smaro Kamboureli, Raphael Foshay, Kara Shaw, Jim Tully, Radhika Desai, and my advisor Warren Magnusson, without whose experience and open-minded support this would not have been possible.

Thanks to Laurel and Erin, without whom I would never have been a registered student at the University of Victoria.

thanks to my friends:

dave - re(source)s and good times (and your *Reason and Revolution*)
jonathon -, "mental sparing partner"?
riss - stacking my empty cigarette packs like DNA
robin - aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaall aboarrrdDeH!!!!!
michael - may the force be with you. seriously!
chris - You were right. If you try to comprehend the entire universe your brain *will* explode.
ben and konrad - a pleasure doing business with ewe. BAAAAA.
shannon - enjoying our symptoms!
sheri - also "crazy in a good way."
holly - never heard you sing.
delacey - you know by now I was never smart enough to be a MENSA kid.
david - uhh..... you already know what I was going to say.

Introduction

Jeffrey Wigand: "Who is this, Herbert Marcus?"
Lowell Bergmann: "That's Maahh-coo-zaahh. He was my mentoah."[1]

Herbert Marcuse is a name that might always be conclusively associated with the social movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, especially with the students, black activists, feminists and environmentalists he supported as contemporary purveyors and reinterpreters of the Marxian project of social emancipation. Though widely influential in the political life of his time, what currently remains of his position in the popular imagination - nicely exemplified in the recent 'political' thriller, *The Insider* - is a figure admirable but not realistic, and therefore largely or totally irrelevant to what are perceived as the most important political challenges of our time - in *The Insider*, exposing the somewhat unbelievably sadistic negligence of tobacco companies in the media. Marcuse: a wise teacher, but in retrospect, much too idealistic, not relevant to the *real* political problems.

By the 1960s, Marcuse's unorthodox version of Marxism, which was an important part of the theoretical (and therefore practical) outlook of the new social movements, had undergone a series of developments.[2] He himself had been a student participant in the abortive workers' revolution in Germany in 1919. Following a Ph.D. in Literature in 1922, and then several years working in a bookstore, he took up study in 1928 under Martin Heidegger, a new intellectual giant at the time, in Freiburg. His dissertation and first book, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* (1932), was an attempt to integrate Heidegger's philosophical insights with what he saw, especially in light of his

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[1]From *The Insider,* Dir. Michael Mann, with Al Pacino, Russell Crowe, and Christopher Plummer (Buena Vista, 1999)

[2]The biographical sketch I offer here is largely drawn from the Marcuse page on Doug Kellner's website: www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell12

own experience of failure in 1919, as a growing crisis in Western Marxist thought and practice.

In 1933 Marcuse joined Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research, of which his work - along with that of the director, Max Horkheimer, and of his colleagues Theodor Adorno, Franz Neumann, Leo Loewenthal and others - is now considered to be exemplary. The success of anti-Semitic fascism in Germany forced Marcuse, with his Institute colleagues and a significant group of other Jewish scholars, into exile in the United States in 1934. Heidegger's troubling complicity with the Nazi regime forced him to reconsider his earlier work of integrating radical Marxist theory with Heideggerian philosophy. *Reason and Revolution*, his next publication (1941), saw Marcuse returning to a reading of Hegel and Marx, especially the latter's recently published early writings, the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. A pervasive theme in the book is that Marxism, in its dependence on Hegelian theory, can and must continually revisit itself and its relation to Hegel in light of contemporary problems. Marcuse's research on the early Marx was aimed in part at rethinking the more systematically rigid political economy of later works like *Capital*. A more empirical example of this questioning of Marxism from within, *Soviet Marxism* (published in 1958) was a critical Marxist examination of the successes and failures of communism in the USSR.

After the war, during which he had worked as an advisor to the American government's Office of Strategic Services analyzing Nazi propaganda (a role which later caused some student activists to accuse him of CIA involvement), Marcuse decided to stay in the United States - despite the return of the Institute to Frankfurt. The publication in 1955 of *Eros and Civilization* marked a crucial turning point in the development of Marcuse's theory. In more explicitly undertaking the kind of revision of Hegelian theory and Marxism he began to develop *Reason and Revolution*, he challenged one of the bulwarks of what had become a Marxist orthodoxy. He argued that, at least in the developed nations, and clearly in North America, the economic category of the proletariat

- central to earlier Marxist political efforts - was no longer concretely accurate. It had become an historical abstraction, an obfuscation of the concrete problems Marxism must always turn itself to facing. He turned from economic to psychological categories, from the analysis of surplus value to the analysis of surplus repression, a universal, nonclass-specific problem in late capitalism. As a social category, Marcuse argued, the proletariat is obsolete, because through the increasingly universal necessity of surplus repression *all* the members of late-capitalist society are becoming a kind of working class.

This turn foreshadows the movement of the rest of Marcuse's life's work, from his critical analysis of late capitalism and its thought in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), and his polemical publications encouraging action against the ideology of liberal tolerance and freedom in "Repressive Tolerance" (1965) and *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), to his tactical analysis of the fate of the student movement in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972), and his brief foray into aesthetic theory, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1979). The pervasive theme underlying all of Marcuse's later (post-1955) work is that the attainment of a radically different, deeply liberated, socialist society is currently possible, but is being prevented by the universalized mechanisms of psychic control that are hidden in the societies of liberal freedom in the age of information. Remaining in consonance with Hegel's deepest anxieties, he suggests the unbroken development of capitalism in its present forms is leading inexorably towards totalitarianism. The paranoia which arguably characterizes his analysis, Marcuse argues, only expresses the truth of the growing paranoia of an age characterized by the development of increasingly effective forms of surveillance and intellectual and emotional suggestion. Without a radical break in the continuity of the history of western capitalist societies - a *revolutionary* break - they must continue to develop increasingly totalitarian economic, military and - now, most importantly - psychological mechanisms of control, which paradoxically undercut the traditional liberal freedoms they are intending to preserve and encourage. The students he taught and influenced, largely from affluent middle-class families, identified deeply with his

thought, which no longer situated the need for revolutionary change in a separate proletarian class. Marcuse, for his part, publicly allied his theoretical interests with the American student movement in a way contrasting sharply with his colleague Adorno, who had returned to Germany after the fall of Nazi Germany, and felt threatened by a fascist potential in his students' orientation.[3]

His popularity as a radical figure on the left has faded along with the failure of the movements of the 1960s to achieve the kind of radical transvaluation of social conditions implicit in the phrase, 'We must be realistic and demand the impossible.' Marcuse has been called (and indeed called himself) a utopian for demanding and supporting these movements. In France, in the period following the failure of the spectacular 1968 student rebellion and general strike, the intellectual left saw the rise and subsequent spread beyond France of a new current of more explicitly postmarxist or 'poststructuralist' political thought and strategy, as exemplified in the work of Gilles Deleuze or Michel Foucault. The criticisms of Marxist thought and strategy offered in such work go beyond the immanent critique offered by Marcuse, often pointing to something *other than* Marxism rather than attempting to reread it from within. The work of thinkers like Deleuze and Foucault, among others (including Jacques Lacan, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, and Jacques Derrida) has supplanted Marcusean theory in its popularity and influence, and the goal of Marxist socialism has been challenged or displaced by the theme of radical democracy.

Showing this new influence, Judith Butler, among a range of contemporary thinkers that also includes Derrida and Baudrillard, Slavoj Zizek, William Connolly,

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[3]The details of Marcuse's and Adorno's positions and their conflict are painfully obvious in their recently published correspondence on the German student movement: "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," (*New Left Review* 233, Jan./Feb. 1999: 119-136)

Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe, points towards 'radical democracy', or the radicalization of 'democracy', as an appropriate site for contemporary critical activity. Whereas twenty years ago 'socialism,' inspired by some variety of Marxist theory and linked to a broadly-conceived socialist struggle, was the rallying point for the academic left (including Marcuse), this approach has come to appear problematic in a significant variety of ways. With the rise of non-parallel feminist, environmental, and racial-cultural movements alongside workers' and anti-poverty movements, all with different aims and demands, the insistent need for unity, for a universal subject of revolution - for a single, great revolutionary actor - has come to be seen as a hindrance to change, rather than its prerogative. Whether because of its universalist aspirations, its end-of-history metanarrative, its essentialism, or its utopianism, the idea of a socialist revolution, or even of significantly socialist social reform at the state level, has gone out of fashion in favour of a movement with far less definable, less universal, and more thematically radically democratic aims. "At this point," offer Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), "we should state quite plainly that we are in a post-Marxist terrain."[4]

The most startlingly new feature of this thought, the critique and deconstruction of the modern subject, would seem to represent an explicit and serious challenge to Marcuse's project in two ways. In *Eros and Civilization* and afterwards, Marcuse endorses a synthesis of two approaches - Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxian revolutionary social theory - which, from a postmodern perspective, each feature characteristically and problematically modern attempts to liberate, endorse or reconstruct subjectivity. On one hand, the success of revolutionary Marxist strategy traditionally rests on the coming-to-hegemony of a universal subject - for orthodox Marxism, the proletarian class - within the purview of a history marked by a revolutionary, universal teleology.

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[4]Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (New York: Verso, 1998): 4

Poststructuralists insist on remaining aware of and criticizing the totalitarian potential of a strategy grounded in a universal and teleological understanding of history. In *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, Butler writes:

> Marx's call for the realization of the ideal of radical equality, for instance, or the egalitarian distribution of wealth, was taken up by some Marxist states as a justification for imposing on populations certain kinds of economic plans that not only fortified the state as a centralized agency of regulation and control, but undercut basic principles of democracy.... So it seems that the committment to a conception of democracy which is futural, which remains unconstrained by teleology, and which is not commensurate with any of its 'realizations' requires a different demand, one which defers realization permanently.... democracy is secured precisely through its resistance to realization.[5]

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe dispense with Marcuse's theory because of its characteristic and lingering Marxist prejudice, arguing that he is looking for a "privileged subject of socialist change," albeit "a revolutionary substitute for a working class which has been integrated into the system."[6] This privileged subject of social change embodies the connected problems of historical teleology and universalism, both of which arguably serve to justify more violence and exclusiveness than the capitalist system they are employed to criticize. Indeed, far from being necessary, from the perspective of democratic *pluralism* an insistence on the liberation of a universal subject represents a great impediment to the possibilities of social change.

On the other (psychoanalytic) hand, as Foucault's influential work on the history of sexuality suggests, while the Freudian theory Marcuse employs in conjunction with a Marxist approach has been used to construct a 'healthy,' 'liberated' or 'unrepressed' psychic subject, it has above all else helped to produce and maintain (most clearly in the figure of the 'normal' psychic subject) a highly conformistic and disciplined culture. The decline of

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[5]Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Zizek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (New York: Verso, 2000): 268

[6]Laclau and Mouffe: 87

Marcuse as a figure of critical interest and the contemporary popularity of Foucaultian and other approaches in left theory in the postmodern era might be attributed largely to his reliance on both Marxism *and* psychoanalysis.

Among contemporary social theorists of radical democracy, Judith Butler is distinguished in the attempt to engage with the discourse of Freudian psychoanalysis, along with many traditions of continental philosophy influenced by Hegel (including Marxism), and to bring elements of all into a self-consciously 'queer' critical approach to the problem of democracy. While French Marxists such as Louis Althusser have developed such syntheses before, engaging explicitly in psychoanalytic discourse, Butler is unique in the attempt to bring a Foucaultian influence into the psychoanalytic conversation. In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler asserts (as an aside, without any more explicit or thorough critique) that Herbert Marcuse's appropriation of Freudian theory retains a characteristically Freudian problem: it essentializes the instincts and their home, the psychic unconscious, positing them as external or prior to the discourse which constructs them as such.[7] For Butler, the very unproblematic assumption of 'instincts' under the terms of his discourse would seem to render Marcuse's claim to a liberatory politics of the instincts problematic.

Perhaps a more serious challenge to Marcuse's psychoanalytic theory, as well as Marxist theory as a whole, rests in Butler's figuring of melancholia: an inaugural, emotionally violent loss which, she argues, makes subjectivity itself possible. In her consideration of melancholia, Butler seems to indicate that no civilization however erotic, and no attempt to rehabilitate the subject, Marxist, Freudian or otherwise, can ever avoid this inaugural violence and the impasse it necessitates. If to exist as subjects we must

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[7]Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford University Press, 1997): 58

disavow and preclude forms of erotic attachment at a primary level, how is it that we can hope for an 'erotic civilization' of the kind Marcuse argued was possible?

The fact remains, however, that notwithstanding these critiques of Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis in themselves, explicit criticisms of Marcusean theory influenced by postructuralism and postmodernism remain largely oblique and are rarely sustained. In *The Psychic Life of Power* his theory is invoked and dismissed in two sentences. What can account for the lack of a more explicit, in-depth interrogation? Of course, it is easy to find more sustained and explicit critique of Marcuse from other directions; for instance, George Grant's damning remark that 'the followers of professor Marcuse and the directors of General Motors are sailing down the same river in different boats.' Are Judith Butler and George Grant sailing down the same river in different boats? If, as seems obvious, Butler would never reject Marcuse in this way, then how so? It does not seem inappropriate to compare Butler's contributions to the field of queer theory and feminism, her studies of the body and power, and the popularity of her work among the twenty-first century intellectual left, with the place Marcuse's theory of sexual-instinctual liberation held in the student movements of the 1960s. Given this, why has Butler said so little about the theory of Marcuse?

Without denying that Butler's poststructuralism and Marcusean theory must remain in a relation of irresolvable difference, the aim of this thesis is to illustrate the extent to which their theoretical approaches actually share a great deal in common. It will hold that before their apparent differences over central concepts like truth and the subject, the major distinction between Marcuse's goal of an erotic civilization and most poststructuralist conceptions of radical democracy actually lies in the theoretical approach to praxis, and that much of the apparently irreconcilable theoretical difference between their positions emanates from how they conceive their texts in relation to political practice.

The first chapter of this thesis will outline Marcuse's relation to and development of Hegelian and Marxian theory in *Reason and Revolution*. While this text does not

include psychoanalytic categories in its analysis, I will argue that the outline of Marcuse's later synthesis of Freud and Marx is already implicit in the way in which he develops and selectively extends the orthodox Marxist reading of Hegel and Marx. I will show how his dialectical conception of materialism, especially influenced by Marx's earlier writings, already anticipates the introduction of the Freudian psychoanalytic concepts, and the way they will be appropriated. In the second chapter, I will outline how precisely Marcuse introduces Freud into Marxism in *Eros and Civilization*, and indicate how the 'utopian' theoretical direction attained in this book is maintained in his later writing.

The unresolved dialectical relationship between theory and the 'concrete' I will show Marcuse offering in *Reason and Revolution* and *Eros and Civilization* is perhaps one of the most glaring differences between his theory and poststructuralism. Indeed, in his theory Marcuse eventually finds the most concrete, most experientially relevant human world in the life and death of the body understood through psychoanalysis. From this concreteness, always understood as dialectically and negatively related to his own theorization of it, he develops, if not a unified subject, the glaring and unmistakably positive *need* for revolutionary change, for a *definitive break* in the continuity of capitalist development. In the third and final chapter, I will discuss in greater depth the poststructuralist critique of Marxism and psychoanalysis, as well as the problematic of radical democracy and democratic theory-praxis, and examine in detail how Marcuse's position on social change relates to this critique and problematic.

A central argument in this thesis is that a problematization of the elements of Marxism and Freudian theory that radical democrats such as Judith Butler criticize is anticipated or already offered in Marcuse's radical synthesis of the two theoretical orthodoxies. Critical elements from each field are employed in *Eros and Civilization* and in Marcuse's later research to deal with exactly the problems that each faces in itself, including the psychological normalization effected by discourses of psychoanalysis, and the antidemocratic tendencies of the universal subject of Marxism. I will argue that

Butler's brief criticism of Marcuse's theory in *The Psychic Life of Power*, that he essentializes the instincts, does not account for the way Marcuse situated his instinct theory in relation to his Marxism, or for the continuing relevance to real political problems that Marcuse's theory *shares* with contemporary theories of radical democracy.

Hegel's Philosophy and Critical Social Theory

> If one gets to the *root* of things, if one grasps their contradictory operations, the overcoming of political reaction is assured. If one does not get to the root of things, one ends, whether one wants to or not, in mechanism, in economism, or even in metaphysics, and inevitably loses one's footing.[8]

Hegelian Philosophy and Politics

It is perhaps necessary to view Marcuse's critical theory of society specifically as a development of the immanent contradictions of, and problems in, Hegelian thought itself, as a dialectical negation of Hegel's philosophy. Considering the problem of democratic politics, Judith Butler lays heavy emphasis on the problem of universalism in Hegel's thought, offering a reading of Hegel's political field that emphasizes the unpredictable *excesses* that occur in seemingly totalized dialectical relationships. Butler's theory of the body provides an excellent illustration of how she confronts the universalism in Hegel's theory. Drawing on Foucault, Butler is unwilling to view the problem of regulatory regimes governing bodies from the 'outside', as if the proper way of resisting a given regime were to conceptualize its relation to the body from the outside:

> In Foucault, the suppression of the body not only requires and produces the very body it seeks to repress, it goes further by extending the bodily domain to be regulated, proliferating sites of control, discipline and suppression.... In other words, the body *presumed* by the Hegelian explanation is incessantly produced and proliferated in order to extend the domain of juridical power.... In what many have come to see as a finally utopian gesture in Foucault, this proliferation of the body by juridical regimes beyond the terms of dialectical reversal is also the site of possible resistance.[9]

Butler wants to work from *within* given social norms and disciplinary controls because the Hegelian move to view them from the outside as a dialectical *whole* (a relation in which

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[8]Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970): 6

[9]Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*: 59

the body is somehow limited or negated) already presumes and moves toward a kind of ideal, universal subject position.[10]

Is it possible that Marcuse shares deeply in Hegel's universalizing pretensions? Is Marcuse's dialectical reading of Hegel somehow predicated on the assumption that the Hegelian categories apply universally to what they intend to apply to, or on the deeper assumption of the universal, apolitical transparency of that intention? While I will undertake a deeper consideration of Butler's theory of the body and discourse in the third chapter, the trajectory of this first one is simply to show that the trajectory of the Hegelian Marxism developed by Herbert Marcuse is *always already* moving or gesturing toward a rectification of the universalism in Hegelian (and Marxian) social theory that is perceived as problematic by theorists of radical democracy. It will hold that attention to the deficiency of theory in relation to the concrete social facts, and the attempt to attend to and minimize this gap in an historico-politically contingent sense, is exactly how Marcuse's version of Marxism avoids or dismantles the universalism of Hegelian philosophy or an ossified Marxian politics.

Marcuse's theory is highly similar to, borrows much from, the thought of Karl Marx - it can be accurately called 'Marxist' - but it is developed, as a Marxist critique must be, in immanent relation to the prevailing social and historical facts. While still referring explicitly to his theory of revolutionary change as a 'Marxist' one, Marcuse

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[10]Slavoj Zizek - "Or - to put it in yet another way - the premiss according to which resistance to power is inherent and immanent to the power edifice (in the sense that it is generated by the inherent dynamic of the power edifice) in no way obliges us to draw the conclusion that every resistance is co-opted in advance, included in the eternal game that Power plays with itself - the key point is that through the effect of proliferation, of producing an excess of resistance, the very inherent antagonism of a system may well set in motion a process which leads to its own ultimate downfall" (*The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, p256).

always also insisted that the content of Marxian theory in itself requires that it be rearticulated and reimagined in light of new social realities:

> The Marxian concept of revolution must comprehend the changes in the scope and social structure of advanced capitalism, and the new forms of the contradictions characteristic of the latest stage of capitalism in its global framework. The modifications of the Marxian concept then appear, not as extraneous additions or adjustments, but rather as the elaboration of Marxian theory itself.[11]

Ben Agger explains that the negative reaction against Marcuse's theory (as well as other theories of the Frankfurt School) from within much of orthodox Marxism fails to recognize this crucial element of Marxian theory. Agger makes a distinction between Marx's formal analysis and the empirical investigations he pursued as a development of that form, noting that strict orthodox Marxist often tend to conflate the two levels of analysis:

> The orthodox Marxist reads *Capital* as presenting both a formal analysis of deep structure and an empirical analysis of the precise stages of the breakdown, such as, in Marx's terms, the rising organic composition of capital, the falling rate of profit, the growing industrial reserve army, and deepening class consciousness. Orthodox Marxists fail, however to disentangle these two analytic levels sufficiently; thus they fall into the trap of retaining a contingent empirical analysis of crisis from Marx that may be quite outdated today.[12]

While the empirical element of Marxism cannot be eliminated without betraying its formal requirements - these two levels are co-dependent - a Marxist theory must, according to Marcuse's understanding, be also open to the contingencies of historical change, to real changes that Marx himself could not have foreseen in nineteenth-century Europe. The charge, often levelled against Frankfurt theorists, of reversion to Hegelian idealism and

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[11]Herbert Marcuse, "Re-examination of the Concept of Revolution," (*Diogenes* 64, Winter, 1968): 25

[12]Ben Agger, *The Discourse of Domination* (Northwestern University Press, 1992): 18

abandonment of the real social struggle[13] ignores the necessity of the continual re-evaluation and development of that struggle - precisely that which allowed Marx himself to reject Hegel's liberal idealism. Because the formal content of Marxism is so dependent on Hegelian philosophy (it is, in Marcuse's reading, merely a further development of the Hegelian theory itself), Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*, far from a simple return to idealism, endeavours to reread Hegel (and Marx's relation to Hegelian philosophy) in light of its contemporary historical situation.

The Negation of the Empirically Existing

Marcuse's discussion of the philosophy of Hegel in *Reason and Revolution* correspondingly situates it in its own concrete socio-historical context: a German nation whose political institutions were found to be lagging behind the emancipatory ideals of the Enlightenment, which had recently been realized in the French Revolution. While the preconditions of the modern state - capitalist-individualistic relations of production - were already present in German society, they had yet to be developed into a fully rationalized social system:

> The general competition between free economic subjects did not establish a rational community which might safeguard and gratify the wants and desires of all men. The life of men was surrendered to the economic mechanisms of a social system that related individuals to one another as isolated buyers and sellers of commodities. This actual lack of a rational community was responsible for the philosophical quest for the unity and universality of reason.[14]

On the other hand, in revolutionary France Hegel saw the first historical recognition of the principle that "Thought ought to govern reality," that "[w]hat men think to be true, right and good ought to be realized in the actual organization of their societal and individual

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[13]Agger offers an account of two such readings of Frankfurt theory in *Discourse of Domination*, p16

[14]Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941): 17-18

life."[15] This 'true, right and good' guiding principle comes, not from the thought of any particular individual, but from the concepts and principles of thought that denote universal norms and conditions, the totality of which, according to Hegel, is reason itself.

Reason appears in Hegel as a constant two-part struggle; first, the true comprehension of what exists, and second, transformation of what exists in realization of the truth of that existence. In part a reaction against British Empiricism, German Idealism connected theoretical reason with practical reason, and aimed at the establishment of a rational society. In Hegel's case, the idea of "the state as the union of the common and the individual interest"[16] aims at its own self-realization in the actual institutions of the Prussian state. Reason is thus fulfilled as an historical process, and Hegel's term 'Mind' ('*Geist*') refers to Reason realizing itself in history, to the self-realization of the subject in an objective world which has, before this realization, existed in a state of alienation.

Immanuel Kant, the forerunner of Hegel, had already set out against the British Empiricists and shown how universal ways and means for the organization of experience must be a faculty (transcendental 'forms') in every human *mind*, not something simply transmitted from the objective world, and that experience was therefore a product of synthetic reason. According to Kant, Empiricist thought surrenders human freedom to the mechanical causality of a purely objective world. Both Hegel and Kant view the Empiricists' attack on the primacy of human reason as an attack on one of the conditions of human freedom: the right of reason to guide experience.[17] Kant responded to Empiricism in situating the highest synthetic act of reason in the realm of 'transcendental apperception', the awareness of an 'I think' accompanying every empirical experience.

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[15] ibid: 6-7

[16] ibid: 19

[17] ibid: 21

However, Hegel was ultimately unhappy with Kant's synthesis, which he thought vitiated his attempt to rescue it from empiricism. In Kant, the world remains divided into two parts, subjectivity and objectivity. This division, for Hegel, represents a concrete conflict in social existence, whereby the world of empirical objects "becomes independent of man and comes to be governed by uncontrolled forces and laws in which man no longer recognizes his own self".[18]

> The Kantian philosophy left a gulf between thought and being, or between subject and object, which the Hegelian philosophy sought to bridge. The bridge was to be made by positing one universal structure of all being.[19]

For Hegel, the Kantian response to Empiricism ultimately accepts the empirically existing limitations on human freedom it intends to criticize. The Hegelian system anticipates a state where the integrating realm of Mind or Spirit dominates, outstrips the realm of objectivity; for him, this was the only way for man to be free to develop his potentialities:

> The realm of mind achieves in freedom what the realm of nature achieves in blind necessity - the fulfillment of the potentialities inherent in reality. It is this state of reality which Hegel refers to as 'the truth.'[20]

Marcuse notes that early on, Hegel connected the spread of 'common sense' understanding - the rule of exclusive self-identity - with the prevalence of certain concrete relationships in human life, the objectively concrete disunity of the German Reich at the time. Relations between individuals as isolated buyers and sellers of commodities had not spontaneously generated a rational community, and it was this "actual lack of a rational community" that drove the early Hegel's "philosophical quest for the unity and universality of reason."[21]

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[18] ibid: 23

[19] ibid: 63

[20] ibid: 25

[21] ibid: 18

This can be understood as another important aspect of the German Idealist rejection of Empiricism, of the dogmatic will to see self-identical 'things' as they 'are'; it is both an epistemological standpoint and a political ontology which opposes the status quo. According to Marcuse's reading, the antagonisms the early Hegel uncovers in common sense identity *thinking* always also express *empirically real* antagonisms; the fulfillment of the task of reason is both the reconciliation of opposites in a true unity in thought, *and* in a restoration of lost unity in social institutions.

This is why Hegel moves to a mode of speculative thinking, or dialectic, which conceives the world as a process of becoming, discarding what common sense gives as the immediate 'essence' of isolated objects. "The former criticizes and supersedes the fixed oppositions created by the latter."[22] The world common sense gives us is therefore seen as a bad form of reality, a "realm of limitation and bondage":[23]

> In the final reality there can be no isolation of the free subject from the objective world; that antagonism must be resolved, together with all the others created by the understanding.[24]

The final reconciliation of the Subject with its objects is termed by Hegel as the Absolute, and can be described only negatively, as something with no resemblance in any detail to the common sense world. Finite things are in a state of permanent unrest, "in a state which does not fully express their potentialities as realized."[25] They are in a state of permanent negativity, continuously changing. Truth is only realized when the essential negativity of immediate existence is recognized, and the subject begins to assert himself. Subjective reason speculatively comprehends the identity of opposites:

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[22]ibid: 46

[23]ibid: 47

[24]ibid

[25]ibid: 66

> It does not produce the identity by a process of connecting and combining the opposites, but transforms them so that they cease to exist as opposites, although their content is preserved in a higher and more 'real' form of being.[26]

The final outcome of reason's work is that the entire world must be viewed as a system where each part exists only as a motile relation to the whole or totality.

Again and again, however, Marcuse emphasizes that Hegel's universality is not a relation of being, of empirically existing *objects* - all objective being as such is determinate and particular. Hegel's Reason as Absolute Spirit has to be understood first and foremost as the dialectically comprehensive and comprehending act of *subjectivity*. The definition of an object through subjective reason consists in grasping its universal nature, "the movement in which a being maintains its identity through the negation of its conditions."[27] The definition can do this only because it grasps the actual process by which an object differentiates itself from other objects - this is the essential nature of the object, to become other than itself. So thought finds the knowledge of what things are in themselves, not in an isolated proposition, but through elaborating the history of the object in its determinate negations - in this sense it becomes highly objective. However, the comprehending subject, while it is precisely defined in its agency by the preservation of the 'now-and-again-negated' forms of the object in a comprehensive definition, *remains after the negation of the object which constitutes it as a subject.* The subject negates; the object is negated. It is for this reason that for Hegel the thought of the subject is *more real* than its objects, and the objective world finds its true dialectical form in free subjectivity and reason. The triadic, dynamic dialectic is explicitly asserted as the 'true' form of thought. It represents and is,

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[26]ibid: 47

[27]ibid: 72

> ...'the truth of,' a world permeated by negativity, a world in which everything is something other than it *really* is, and in which opposition and contradiction constitute the laws of progress."[28]

The Return of the Empirically Existing

In *Reason and Revolution*, however, Marcuse finds there is a lingering, unresolved contradiction in Hegel's historical-political system. The historical development of the state, like all objects, is for Hegel a development of subjective Mind. But for Hegel, Mind only *fully* realizes itself in culture: art, religion and most of all, philosophy. For Marcuse, this underlying contradiction in Hegel's work is part of a necessary, larger development, from a radical early position to a conservative one later on.

Hegel held throughout his work that *perfect* freedom can only happen in the realm of thought, but Marcuse asserts that the *Phenomenology of Mind* represents a clear turning point in relation to this problem. The *Phenomenology of Mind* was written in the context of the fall of Jena to the French Napoleonic armies, which for Hegel paradoxically did not bring freedom, but a new kind of despotism. For Hegel, the process of individual emancipation by individuals themselves, taken to its limit, necessarily results in terror; only the necessary legal-political limits of the state can provide true freedom.

In the early Hegel, the realization of perfect freedom in philosophy is deeply connected to the realization of a truly (if not perfectly) free social order. While human freedom is held to depend on the emancipation of the Subject from the objective realm, it is asserted that changes in the 'objective' world of social and economic institutions are as important as more strictly 'subjective' ones - in philosophy, art and religion. His idealization of the early Greek city-states reflected his own vision of the future of the Prussian state after substantial reform or even a liberal revolution. However, in his later works, the state has ceased to be a locus of change - it is as good as he thinks it can be,

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[28] ibid: 49

and the only path left for the historical development of freedom lies in pure Mind, thought. Not only *perfect* freedom, but now *any* freedom fundamentally beyond that of the status quo of the liberal state is relegated to the life of the Mind.

In this shift from the early to the late Hegel, the philosophical system itself is not changed, so much as the function of the dialectic. Earlier, the dialectic is oriented and open to the concrete historical process, to labour and social integration, leaving open the possibility that something new might happen to the Mind, as a result of or in relation to concrete change in the objective world. But in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, "the antagonisms of this concrete dimension are levelled and harmonized,"[29] and anything that happens to the Mind as the result of concrete historical events only leads to the further development of that self-same Mind. There are, of course, failures; these are necessary in order for there to be successes - "every conflict implies its own solution."[30] However, Hegel held that at the stage of German history following the Napoleonic war, the Mind had attained - will continue to attain, will solidify the attainment of - its goal in the *prevailing* social conditions:

> The negativity seems to be a *secure* stage in the growth of mind rather than the force that goads it beyond; the opposition in the dialectic appears as a willful play rather than a struggle of life and death.[31]

This shift, for Marcuse, is not accidental, but an *inevitable* consequence or *internal* developmental aspect of the Hegelian system itself. The goal of the realization of absolute spirit as the truth of reason is envisioned as occurring in relation to the concrete development of an absolutely rationalized society - rationalized in accordance with the

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[29] ibid: 92

[30] ibid: 93

[31] ibid

demands of absolute reason. The bad world of empirically-existing objects will be radically altered, negated and surpassed by an order of comprehensive rationality in which the subject is absolutely asserted. As early as his pamphlet on the German Constitution, Hegel called for the establishment of an absolute or 'power' state in order to redress the systematic unreason of German society at the turn of the nineteenth century.

However, in looking at the consequences Hegel draws from his conception of the state, Marcuse already sees the possibility of a weakening of the critical attitude he developed in the earlier writings. In his article on the German constitution, for the first time, Hegel clearly subordinates right to might:

> Hegel was eager to free his centralized state from any and all limitations that might hinder its efficiency, and he therefore made the state interest superior to the validity of right.[32]

Hegel's conception of freedom changes commensurately with this subordination. It is still the case that the individual's freedom should not be limited by the state (as was the case at the time of this writing), but rather that the individual should find his most authentic and greatest freedom through it. However, a distinct idea of sacrifice and submission to the state on the part of individuals now overshadows the earlier dialectic. This shift eventually leads to the identification of freedom with necessity, in the 'true community' of the modern liberal nation-state. The absolute freedom of the philosopher of Spirit can only be attained within a modern State to which the full expression of the rights of individuals must inevitably be sacrificed.[33]

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[32]ibid: 55

[33]Adorno describes, arguably more precisely than Marcuse, how Hegel's drive for pure philosophical reconciliation ultimately renders his project self-defeating: "The philosophical anticipation of reconciliation is a trespass against real reconciliation; it ascribes anything that contradicts it to 'foul' existence as unworthy of philosophy. But a seamless system and an achieved reconciliation are not one and the same; rather, they are contradictory: the unity of the system derives from unreconcilable violence. Satanically, the world as grasped by the Hegelian system has only now, a hundred and fifty years later, proved itself to be a system in the literal sense, namely that of a radically societalized society" (*Hegel:*

Marx: Standing Hegel on his Feet

Marcuse asserts that Marxist theory cannot be *derived* from idealistic philosophy; rather, it expresses the negation of it, a move toward a completely different order of truth. Hegel speaks of 'Being', 'Essence', and 'Absolute Spirit'. The conceptual content of Marxian theory consists of social and economic categories, and even where concepts are borrowed from Hegel, they have a "materially different foundation."[34] Marxian theory furthermore aims at a 'truth' which can only be realized in and through the revolutionary process of the concrete abolition of the society - its institutions and economic relations - which provides the foundation for the realization of truth in Hegel's system of philosophy. Marx negates Hegel's philosophical categories in line with the development of dialectical thought itself, asserting that the Hegelian equation of human existence with self-consciousness is an abstract speculative moment which must be open to dialectical negation in accordance with concrete activity in the material, empirically existing world. Marx's critique of Hegel's system focuses on its very undialectical abstractness:

> With Hegel's identification of man and self-consciousness, the alienated object or alienated essence of man is nothing but *consciousness*, merely the thought of alienation, its *abstract* and hence empty and unreal expression, *negation*. The transcendence of externalization is therefore likewise nothing but an abstract, empty transcendence of that empty abstraction, the *negation of the negation*. The rich. living, sensuous, concrete activity of self-objectification is therefore becomes its mere abstraction, *absolute negativity*, an abstraction fixed as such and regarded as independent activity, as activity itself. Since this so-called negativity is only the abstract, empty form of that real living act, its content can only be *formal*, derived by abstraction from all content.[35]

Three Studies, p27). However, for Adorno, this does not erase the traces and ambiguities remaining in Hegel's work considered as a whole, such that "...the system is not intended to form an abstract higher-order concept with regard to its moments but rather to achieve its truth only in and through the concrete moments" (ibid: 92). It is clearly important to keep in mind the degree to which Marcuse's reading of Hegel in *Reason and Revolution* is always already informed by a concrete, and therefore particular, political stance which determines how Marcuse will read Hegel's ambivalence.

[34]*Reason and Revolution*: 258

[35]Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,* in Easton and Guddat, eds., *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1967): 333

For Marx (and Marcuse) Hegel's philosophy loses its critical force and betrays itself and its critical rejection of Empiricism when it concludes that reification and alienation have been overcome with the philosophical realization of Absolute Spirit in the context of the post-Napoleonic Prussian state. In the late Hegel of the *Philosophy of Right* reality and theory are held to coincide; theory "seemed to give welcome to the facts as they were and hailed them as conforming to reason."[36] Hegel argued that truth is a whole that must be present in all of its component elements, and that the existence of one fact or element outside of or inimical to the process destroys the truth of the whole. Reading Hegel against himself, Marx claims that there exists in liberal society precisely such an element - the working class. The proletarian represents a development completely opposite to the realization of reason, which Hegel characterized as the full development of human potentialities. The proletarian has no property, no access to art, religion or philosophy, his labour is entirely alienated from him - he represents the complete erasure of human potentialities. Because the mode of labour of civil society as a whole requires the existence of a dehumanized labouring class as one of its parts, the very existence of the proletariat dialectically negates the truth Hegel found to rest in the modern liberal order, "expresses a total negativity: 'universal suffering' and 'universal injustice.'"[37] As a social reality, the proletariat and the concrete injustice of its suffering negates philosophical truth.

Marx concurs with Hegel that Man is by nature a universal being, and is only free as such. Life, including nature, should be shaped by this universal potentiality such that "he 'recognizes himself in a world he has himself made.'"[38] While this formulation

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[36] *Reason and Revolution*: 260

[37] ibid: 261

[38] ibid: 275

resembles Hegel's philosophy in many ways, the real problem for Marx is no longer a philosophical one - it can only be overcome/attained through abolition of the material process of alienated labour itself. Marx therefore moves to demonstrate the critical character of the economic categories by the categories themselves, rather than through philosophical argument. Rather than developing a critique of domination by reliance on a higher philosophical understanding of freedom, Marx merely expressed the concrete relations of economic exploitation - the living and working conditions of the new proletarian class - that were concealed in the prevalent liberal ideology.

Marx's treatment of economic relations and exploitation as existential (both objective *and* subjective) relations is not based on virtue or humanitarian feeling, or any positive moral assertion alien to the framework of the theory itself; it arises out of the economic concepts' own self-development. The apparent objectivity of economic relations in Marx in fact appears as such because of the prevailing mode of the economic relations themselves - commodity production. Its 'natural' objectivity is seen to be purely historical and specific, rather than a universal condition of man. When this latent content of the economic is emphasized, economic theory becomes, by force of its own objective relations, a critical theory of society - the facts literally speak for themselves. Technological progress and economic growth leads to the rule of apparently pure-objective factors over social existence. "Objective facts come alive and enter an indictment of society. Economic realities exhibit their own inherent negativity."[39] The Marxian dialectic is the expression of this real, unspiritualized negativity:

> Every fact is more than a mere fact; it is a negation and restriction of real possibilities. Wage labor is a fact, but at the same time it is a restraint on free work that might satisfy human needs. Private property is a fact, but at the same time it is a negation of man's collective appropriation of nature.[40]

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[39] ibid: 282

[40] ibid

Marx thus understands the overthrow of capitalism - the abolition of alienated labour and private property - as the concrete negation of this negativity. Nevertheless, the instruments of the overthrow (the abolition of capital) are never understood as positive ends in themselves; as such they would remain mere objective facts, reified economic institutions like private property. Rather than merely subjugating individuals to a newly reified economic totality, they must be utilized by and for developing free individuals. The right of the whole - society - will no longer be expressed in institutions - the family, religion, the state - as against the right of the individual. Rather, the individual will experience his social existence as an expression of that whole.

The problem of Hegel's earlier, utopian urge - the totalitarian tendencies he eventually found immanent to the aim to realize Absolute Spirit and universal reason in a concrete social order - can therefore attributed by Marxian theory to the undialectical predominance in Hegel of the activity of subjective mind. Marcuse emphasizes how Marx asserts that the realization of an order of justice and equality, seen as a process to be undertaken first and foremost through change in concrete economic circumstances, can be maintained as a critical ideal precisely in the act of seeing the struggle in the complexity of socio-economic relations themselves, instead of logical categories such as Being or Reason. A pervasive theme in *Reason and Revolution* is that for Hegel's idealism to remain true to itself, in relation to the Empiricism whose complacency it had rejected, it must precisely listen to and reflect the empirical social facts - as Marx did in his time.

The Return of the Repressed

Of course in his own time, Marcuse had seen the rise and fall of an emancipatory movement based on the principles of Marxian dialectical materialism. The establishment of Marxism in the Soviet Union offered, at best, a problematic example of human liberation beyond capitalism, at worst, only another example of the totalitarian tendency

Hegel ultimately found in any desire to move beyond its contradictions. For Marcuse, the most striking - the most contemporarily relevant - divergence from idealism in Marx's writings is in the fact that he places experiential happiness above and beyond reason as a social goal. Hegel's concept of reason always ultimately "dictated individual sacrifice for the sake of some higher universal independent of the 'base' impulses and drives of individuals."[41] Marx's conception of happiness manifests the positive or affirmative aspect of historical materialism (heretofore a purely negative analysis developed out of the materialistic relations of market society). In Marx, the material satisfaction of man is affirmed above and beyond the demand of universal reason.

Marcuse emphasizes this aspect of Marx's early writing - the focus on the 'vital' or 'sensuous' or 'concrete' activity of human beings - as one which has been overshadowed in the subsequent development of Marxist thought. He argues that the increasing 'economism' or economic determinism of Marxist theory has resulted in a betrayal of its own foundations. Marxism must involve the negation of abstract categories and the turn to the concrete, but Marcuse argues that the focus on *purely* objective-economic factors, the reduction of the problems of capitalism to quantitatively ascertainable class relations, has paradoxically rendered Marxism 'again' abstract, disconnected from the concrete problems of its time.[42]

Marcuse's brief early involvement with Heidegger's philosophy, as well as his later investigation into and call for the emancipation of the human instincts against a

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[41]ibid: 294

[42]In *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* Wilhelm Reich offers a concise account of how fascism made this re-evaluation of a Marxism inattentive to the 'subjective factor' necessary: "The playing up of material needs and of hunger was not enough, for *every* political party did that much, even the church; so that in the end it was the mysticism of the National Socialists that triumphed over the economic theory of socialism, and at a time when the economic crisis and misery were at their worst." (5)

psychologically repressive social order, are attempts on the part of Marcuse to turn or return Marxist theory to precisely what defines it as against Hegel's abstract spiritualism.

Marcuse's deployment of Freud's psychoanalytic categories within and as an expansion of Marxian critical theory is already foreshadowed in his discussion of 'pure' Marxian theory itself. His emphasis on the 'vital' or 'sensuous' aspect of Marx's materialism is articulated as the negation of the Hegelian ideal of social rationality, which dictated "individual sacrifice for the sake of some higher universal independent of the 'base' impulses and drives of individuals."[43] The subsumption of the goal of affirmative materialism under Marx's rubric of 'happiness' as "an affirmation of the material satisfaction of man"[44] hints at the subsequent development of a Marxian Hegelianism whose focus is the question of individual happiness and its relation to material satisfaction and gratification at the level of the instincts of the human body, and their repression.

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[43] *Reason and Revolution*: 294

[44] ibid

> The physical moment tells our knowledge that suffering ought not to be, that things should be different. "Woe speaks: 'Go.'" Hence the convergence of specific materialism with criticism, with social change in practice.[45]

Dialectical Materialism and the Concrete Necessity

Marcuse's re-development of the Marxian categories in the terms of Freudian theory must be understood as a rearticulation of the Marxian project: a reinvention of critical social theory corresponding with shifts in prevailing historical and material conditions. The development of late capitalism has made the economic category of 'proletarian', essential to earlier and orthodox versions of Marxism, abstract and anachronistic. Psychoanalytic theory, in its emphasis on the instincts of the human body, is a means for Marcuse of expressing and reflecting the concrete moments of exploitation and domination in societies in the electronic age, a way of breaking with a prevalent liberal ideology which is unable recognize such moments.

An account of his experience as a student of Heidegger given to Jurgen Habermas highlights the Marxian turn to the 'concrete' that later animates Marcuse's introduction of psychoanalysis:

> Philosophy was certainly taught at the time, the academic scene was dominated by neo-Kantianism and neo-Hegelianism, and then suddenly *Sein und Zeit* appeared as a really concrete philosophy. One spoke of "life" (*Dasein*), "existence" (*Existenz*), "one" (*Man*), "death" (*Tod*), "anxiety" (*Sorge*). That seemed to speak to us.[46]

Marcuse's first major work, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, clearly shows the Heideggerian influence. Marcuse seizes on Hegel's assertion concerning the ontological category of Being, that only with the Being of Life, the 'first' and 'immediate' form of the Idea, can beings come to exist in their true actuality. In emphasizing the role

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[45]Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, 1983): 203

[46]Jurgen Habermas and Herbert Marcuse, "Theory and Politics," (*Telos* 38, Winter 1978-79): 125

of Being in Hegel's system, Marcuse is aiming at exactly the kind of concreteness that he later attributes in *Reason and Revolution* to Marx's reorientation of Hegelianism.

In *Hegel's Ontology* Marcuse goes on to examine the strange schism that occurs in Hegel's *Logic* in the process of the development of the Idea of Life. The determinations of the Being of Life in Hegel's *Logic* explicitly refer to processes of Life in its *historicity.* However, at the same time, the *Logic* claims to have transcended all historical contingencies. In this way, Marcuse argues, Life passes beyond its own constitutive historicity, and becomes the ahistorical Hegelian form, *Absolute Knowledge*. This paradox is "the upshot of a decisive transformation in the basic ontological framework."[47] The consequences of this transformation "reverberate throughout the entire system of Hegelian philosophy."[48] At this point, Marcuse will retrace the stages of the ontological framework. He wants to show that this "framework was originally governed by the full *ontological concept of Life*."[49] Marcuse's emphasis on and discussion of 'the full ontological concept of Life' represents an attempt to invoke or evoke the concrete historicity which is sublimated by Hegel into Absolute Spirit.

However, by the time of the writing of *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse abandoned the Heideggerian turn to the re-investigation of ontological primaries like 'Being,' 'Life,' or 'Existence.' It might be argued that his rejection of the Heideggerian method can be attributed wholly to historical and personal circumstances: Heidegger's complicity with the Nazi regime. Of course, in the attempt to develop his own 'truly concrete' social theory under the influence of Heidegger, Marcuse could not ignore such circumstances:

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[47]Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*: 5

[48]ibid

[49]ibid

> Gradually we noticed - and I say "we," because it really wasn't just a personal development - that this concretization was quite false. What Heidegger had done was essentially to replace Husserl's transcendental categories with his own; such apparently concrete concepts as existence and anxiety, he evaporated into bad abstract concepts.[50]

Marcuse's abandonment of the Heideggerian approach thus proceeds from his concrete sense of exactly the problem for which Heideggerian philosophy finds fault in Hegel; inattentiveness to the process and motility of "Being" itself, and its sublimation into abstract categories.[51] Marcuse's turn to the early Marx in *Reason and Revolution* again indicates the importance for Marcuse of Marx's turn to *concrete social facts*, in a social theory which is the negation of abstract philosophy.

For Marcuse, the connection of social theory with a *practice of transformation* becomes a necessity for a theory which wants to avoid hypostasis. In relation to this, in his 1936 essay, "The Concept of Essence", Marcuse advances not a rejection of theoretical 'essentialism' per se, but a rejection of any account of the human essence which is not connected to, or proceeding out of, an attempt to realize such an essence in relation to prevailing 'bad' or 'perverted' concrete conditions of human existence:

> Materialist theory thus transcends the given state of fact and moves toward a different potentiality, proceeding from immediate appearance to the essence that appears in it. But here appearance and essence become members of a real antithesis arising from the particular historical structure of the social process of life. The essence of man and of things appears within that structure; what men and things could be appears in "bad," "perverted" form.[52]

The connection between a theory of society and the struggle within that society against concrete, material suffering and misery is the basis for Marcuse's account of the essence of

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[50]Habermas and Marcuse: 125

[51]Marcuse's historically specific and concrete (yet apparently universalistic) sense of what was wrong with the Heideggerian categories is clear when he says that "Faced with fascist barbarism, everyone knows what freedom means" (*Technology, War and Fascism: The Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse Vol. 1*, p4).

[52]Marcuse, "The Concept of Essence," in *Negations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968): 67

human life. Human 'essence' is uncovered in theory as a result of the concrete effort to realize relations of life other than those of the status quo; it is only in light of the efforts of this struggle and in the pain against which it struggles that a theory of 'true' or 'universal' essence arises. Without being any less true or universal as a result, Marcuse's conception of the 'universal essence' of man is always a politically contentious and oppositional form of knowledge, which always depends for its existence on the concrete changes which make clear the arbitrary nature of prevailing social relationships:

> Of course these insights cannot be arrived at through a contemplative attitude; in order to justify them knowledge can have recourse neither to evidence afforded by mere perception nor to a universal system of values in which they are anchored. The truth of this model of essence is preserved better in human misery and suffering and the struggle to overcome them than in forms and concepts of pure thought.[53]

So when Marcuse presents a conception of the 'universal essence of man', it is clear that he is always doing so in consciousness of his own critical position in society, as an individual and as part of a movement which aims first and foremost to change existing conditions. Ontology, for Marcuse, is an indispensable and yet secondary concern for social theory, one which remains open to its own historicity and the larger concern of transformation:

> The tension between potentiality and actuality, between what men and things could be and what they are in fact, is one of the dynamic focal points of this theory of society. It sees therein not a transcendental structure of Being and an immutable ontological difference but a historical relationship which can be transformed in this life by real men; the incongruity of potentiality and actuality incites knowledge to become part of the practice of transformation.[54]

What can then explain Marcuse's turn to psychoanalytic discourse, to including its categories as part of a Marxist analysis? What can the thought of someone as ultimately apolitical, or politically ambivalent,[55] as Freud offer to a theory whose basis must always

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[53]ibid: 73

[54]ibid: 69

[55]The last sentences of Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* clearly exemplify his reserved

lie in real opposition to the terms of the status quo, in concrete action to change prevailing social conditions? In the first chapter of *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse describes Freud's pessimism in relation to the problem of civilization and its discontents:

> According to Freud, the history of man is the history of his repression. Culture constrains not only his social but his biological existence, not only parts of the human being but his instinctual structure itself. However, such constraint is the very precondition of progress.... The instincts must... be deflected from their goal, inhibited in their aim. Civilization begins when the primary objective - namely, the integral satisfaction of needs - is effectively renounced.[56]

If indeed Marcuse's theory remains in accordance with what he takes as the essential component of a Marxist theory - that it be grounded in *concrete change* and the need for it - what can explain the turn to a discourse which seems to clearly abdicate its position on social change, merely indicating the consequences of the prevailing direction of more repression, intensified domination and control of the human instinctual structure, without positively delineating any other possibility?

The answer to this problem is that Marcuse finds a 'hidden trend' in Freud. While never allowing that civilization could occur in the absence of repressive control, Freud offered a decisive critique of that civilization as being increasingly unendurable. According to Marcuse, in Freud,

> Theory moved from the surface to the depth, from the "finished" and conditioned person to its sources and resources.... [O]nly by pushing his critical regression back to the deepest biological layer could Freud elucidate the hidden content of the mystifying forms and, at the same time, the full scope of civilized repression. Identifying the energy of the Life instincts as libido meant defining their gratification in contradiction to spiritual transcendentalism: Freud's notion of happiness and freedom is eminently critical in so far as it is materialistic: protesting against the spiritualization of want.[57]

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ambivalence: "And now it is to be expected that the other of the two 'Heavenly Powers', eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary. But who can foresee with what success and with what result?" (62)

[56]Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966): 11

[57]Marcuse, "The Social Implications of Freudian 'Revisionism,'" (*Dissent* 2(3), Summer, 1955): 238

For Marcuse, despite or because of the apparent pessimism in Freud's account of the vicissitudes of the human instincts, "the history of these vicissitudes reveals the full depth of oppression which civilization imposes upon man."[58] It is possible, then, to see in Marcuse's move to Freudian language a new approach to the goal of concretion in Marxist theory. The necessity of this move lies (as it must, for Marxism) in a change in prevailing social conditions. Marx had articulated his social theory by turning Hegelian philosophy toward concrete socio-economic facts. For Marx, the concrete conditions of life of the proletariat, or working class, offered an indication of the untruth of *and* a direction for radical change in the conditions of nineteenth-century capitalist society.

But in late capitalism, Marcuse argues, the situation has already changed radically, if not in the direction of working class revolution. Socialist theory (at least in the first world) cannot be defined or founded in a working class struggle, because the working class such as Marx concretely experienced it no longer exists:

> Late-capitalism has re-defined the working class: today, in the advanced countries, industrial labourers are no longer the great majority of this class. The "deproletarianization" of the working class is indicated not only in the higher standard of living, in the sphere of consumption: it is a trend rooted in the development of the production process itself, which integrates large strata of non-proletarian workers into the working class: White collar employees, technicians, engineers, and the steadily growing private and public bureaucracy which assures the creation as well as the realization of surplus value.[59]

The proletarianization of society, or obversely, the disappearance of the proletariat as a class distinct from the property owning class, necessitates a shift in Marxian theory. Speaking of the struggle of the proletariat in 1979, for Marcuse, might be nearly as mystifying and abstract as Hegelian philosophy. Given this crisis in the basis of Marxian

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[58]ibid: 236

[59]Marcuse, "The Reification of the Proletariat," (*Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 3(1), Winter 1979): 20

theory, Marcuse endeavoured to change it in accordance with the historical shifts that had produced the crisis.

The Psychic History of Civilization

Like Hegelian or Marxist theory, Freud's account of the development of civilization traces the way domination has changed historically. However, where Hegel or Marx would highlight the labour of the Subject or relations of production, Freud's account puts prime focus the 'vicissitudes of the instincts'. In this history, the Oedipus complex is the star; it represents instinctual relations expressed in terms of a family triangle - father, mother, son - whose shape is reproduced in various forms at many different levels of social existence.

In the first moment, Freud's 'primal father' exerts a kind of total socio-sexual authority, prohibiting the brothers-sons' access to, monopolizing for himself, the women of the group. Later, the sons of the father rebel against his authority, and install themselves in his place. Paradoxically, however, the father lives on in the psychic life of the brothers, in their collective Oedipus complex, and therefore in their society and their reality principle. His name, divorced from his living body, circulates as a symbolic incest prohibition which applies equally to each of them, so that his archaic external oppression is internalized. In order to overturn the father's sexual licentiousness, the brothers must also remain tied by his prohibition.

In the Oedipal conflict, repression is carried out through the "paradoxical paternal injunction 'Be and do not be like me,'"[60] so that the brothers simultaneously take their father's licentious place *and* maintain the archaic prohibition upon themselves as an incest taboo, making possible "a form of identification which fuses emulation and difference in an

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[60]Peter Dews, *The Limits of Disenchantment: Essays in Contemporary European Philosophy* (London: Verso, 1995): 218

advanced form of individuation."[61] The power the father had wielded arbitrarily over his sons, and the sexual license he had with the women of the group, is democratized for the brother-fathers through the process of repression of the Oedipus complex. So, the brothers do not exercise arbitrary paternal authority and sexual license; now they share it with each other in a system of agreements (which is in fact, the first system of rational human agreement). The overthrowing of archaic paternal oppression by the brothers-sons thus engenders a culture and a corresponding psychological structure of repression in the reality principle of a brother-dominated society.

A clearly important aspect of this history of psychic development lies in how women figure in it. A move by the brothers to make it possible for them to have access to women as objects, to share it rationally among themselves, appears in one moment as a rejection of the father's licentious behaviour. However, what appears as a self-imposed limitation on the apparently inherent sexual licentiousness of the males in this society is in reality at the same time only a means of concealing, assuring and universalizing the womens' continued status as objects.

This configuration of repression, in psychoanalytic theory, is civilized rationality itself: it functions to control and regiment the consumption and production of resources, as well as the access to women. However, the psychic structure this rationalization enacts is one ultimately fuelled by, or more accurately, *composed of,* accumulation of archaic negative *id* energy in the superego (guilt). Moreover, this accumulation of aggressive energy is cumulative and increases exponentially as processes of rationality develop and progress throughout history. This aggression can never be eliminated, but merely shared out, controlled, and disciplined in culture, because the repression is itself ultimately inseparable from the aggressive "drive" (Thanatos - the death drive). The process

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[61] ibid

multiplies itself in a positive feedback cycle. Referring to the Freudian thought of Jacques Lacan, Peter Dews notes this inflationary aspect of the Oedipal structure:

> Up to a certain point, a positive cycle occurs in which the normative ideals, juridical statutes and creative inspirations' made possible by Oedipal identity-formation react back on to the family, thereby helping to concentrate even further within it the conditions of Oedipal conflict, and 'reintegrating into psychological process the social dialectic engendered by this conflict. However, this self-reinforcing cycle eventually reaches a crisis point, where the level of individuation achieved begins to undermine the now highly compacted conditions of Oedipal identity-formation itself.[62]

Hence, in the late-modern age, irrational violence flows from the height of rational sociality, and flows more powerfully the more highly developed and controlled this rationality becomes. It is in relation to this paradox that Freud makes his pessimistic and yet highly critical remarks in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Repression is necessary for civilization, to counteract and rationalize the totalitarian impulses of the primal *id*. However, this repressive rationality is itself a product of the primal conflict, a culture of the aggressive instinct, producing a neurotic, anxious, psychic life which is more unhappy and more irrational the more civilized rationality is refined and expanded. It is out of this apparently irresolvable deadly paradox that Marcuse develops his theory of instinctual liberation.

The Marxist Reorientation of Psychohistory

Marcuse expands on the Freudian psychosexual drama in the light of the Marxist-Hegelian understanding of history and society. The development of repression and rationality is not essentially a response to the sexual licentiousness, the primal *id* of an archaic father-figure, but is in a wider sense a response to material scarcity and want in nature - the development of human labour as well as sexuality. This repression is subtly different from Freud's essentially sexual repression of the incestuous *id*-Father. The repression of the

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[62]ibid: 219

patriarchal *id* for Marcuse is a concrete, historically specific process, in which the brothers have made their greatest triumphs in the last two-hundred and fifty years, with the abolition of absolute monarchies and their replacement by liberal capitalism. Marcuse elaborates the Freudian sexual drama into a wider theory of history which highlights the role of repression in the progress of civilization and its rationality. The control and division of resources and labour, secured by the brothers in a fully rationalized liberal democracy, is the peak of the development of Western 'civilized' repression.

In Marcuse's synthesis of Freud and Marx, as in Freud himself, it is only repression which makes possible for any human group the control of scarcity, through the rational organization of resources and sharing of labour. Repression is necessary for the establishment of *ego* rationality, a reality principle to counter the primal impulses of the *id.* However, Marcuse notes that in the West, the repression and control of nature by technological rationality has occurred under particular conditions, a specific reality principle which he calls the 'performance principle.' Departing from Freud, Marcuse argues that in the west there is a *surplus* repression which is culturally and historically specific. While he agrees both with Freud's critique of civilized morality, and with the counterpoint argument that some kind of repression is necessary for any human civilization, he argues that it is possible to make a distinction between necessary repression and the repression required by civilized morality.

The inequality which has always characterized the order of the performance principle, where a few brothers exert patriarchal control over the Others - slaves, the poor labour class, other ethnic classes, and women of all classes - is the ultimately irrational and yet overwhelmingly powerful reality principle of rationalized modern society. However, the very terms of Western reason and its subjectivity, itself an historically specific set of discursive constructions, can show different possibilities for those who would like change in this society, those who have felt the violence of the capitalist system most directly. The repression of performance rationality is, Marcuse argues, surplus repression, repression

beyond that which is necessary to preserve any conceivable rational system against the threat of natural scarcity and the *id*. Indeed, the threatening, antidemocratic and sexist character of Freud's account of archaic patriarchal *id* must be understood as only the dialectical counterpart of the patriarchal rationality of the performance principle, because in Marcuse's Marxist theory, there is no essential *id* apart from the historical conditions of human life. Surplus repression is the residue of the Western Oedipal conflict, the unresolved influence of the patriarchal authority which inaugurated it.

Through the introduction of a Marxist perspective on the history of Western Civilization, through attention to the concrete cultural-economic aspects of the development of repression, Marcuse can open Freudian theory to the possibility of distinction between *kinds* of repression where Freud could only see an undifferentiated human truth. This new understanding of repression must perhaps necessarily be seen to resonate with Marx's new understanding of Hegel's category of freedom - a move from the spiritual-conceptual absolute to the concrete and particularized, bringing openness to new possibilities along with the rejection of existing necessities. In Marcuse's Freudian Marxism, Western reason can articulate the real possibility of unravelling patriarchal irrationality, of a new reality principle and corresponding subjectivity which no longer requires the subordination of women and a working class as resources for the production of surplus value. In this sense it could overcome the patriarchal sexual conflict altogether; it no longer has to preserve its key aggressive features as a means to overcoming scarcity. While some form of basic repression must continue as a moment of a new democratic-socialist subject which preserves the process of abolition of arbitrary power, the surplus repression can be overcome and with it the patriarchal violence which has so far been irrationally preserved in the process of this rational abolition.

Marcuse's Reorientation of Psychoanalysis

In *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse introduces two important theoretical constructs to support the possibility of a project of social resistance and change: the differentiation of repression into the categories of "basic" and "surplus,"[63] (briefly outlined above) and an account of the relationship between the instincts, eros and thanatos, in a "new concept of the person."[64] His new account of the problem of the instincts is driven by his distinction between basic and surplus repression.

Marcuse admits that the relationship between the drives "remains obscure."[65] In this, he refers to Freud's observation that the life instincts seem to be inextricably intertwined with the death instincts in such a way that one never exists without the other. Freud's insight into the fundamentally erotic character of the human instinctual structure, his "inability to discover in the primary instinctual structure anything that is not Eros, a monism of sexuality" thus flips into its opposite, "a monism of death."[66] In Freud's studies of sexual perversion, the co-imbrication of eros and thanatos is especially evident:

> The fusion of Eros and death instinct, precarious even in the normal human existence, here seems loosened beyond the danger point. And the loosening of this fusion makes manifest the erotic component in the death instinct and the fatal component in the sex instinct. The perversions suggest the ultimate identity of Eros and death instinct, or the submission of Eros to the death instinct. ...the instinctual drive in search of ultimate and integral fulfillment regresses from the pleasure principle to the Nirvana principle.[67]

The two drives are clearly not a simple dualistic figure, but are part of a fundamental paradoxical or dialectical relation which constitutes the human instinctual structure. As in Freud, Eros sometimes appears as a "great unifying force", the effort "to combine organic

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[63] *Eros and Civilization*: 35

[64] ibid: 29

[65] ibid: 27

[66] ibid: 28

[67] ibid: 51

substances into ever larger unities", but on the other hand "when [Eros] has achieved it in the proverbial way through the love of two human beings, he is not willing to go further."[68] The "monism of sexuality" flips into a "monism of death" under the Nirvana Principle. But what might underlie or explain this dialectic, how Eros and Thanatos can be so paradoxically interrelated, is not a problem which Marcuse attempts to *understand* or *explain*. The problem is never simply reduced to the overdevelopment of death instincts and suppression of the life instincts by an order which can exist outside of them. Rather, it is a paradox which Marcuse argues is embodied in human life, is its inaugural paradox, the one from which any theory of society necessarily works.

Marcuse indicates that the implication of the interinvolvement of the two principles in human existence is that, "The notions *instinct, principle, regulation* are being assimilated."[69] He quotes Edward Bibring's realization that "a mental apparatus regulated by certain principles" and "instincts penetrating into the apparatus from the outside" can no longer be maintained in hermetic opposition.[70] It is important to highlight that repression is not, according to this theory of the instincts, a social agency outside of or alien to the instincts. Repression, paradoxically, is always composed out of a relation between the instincts themselves, a complex balancing of the life and death instincts in the service of preserving and maintaining life.

To give a concrete example, the individual self-preservation instinct, a life instinct, developed in capitalist societies as surplus repression, shows its opposite in the degree to which active individuals must, in their pursuit of personal well-being, ignore the erosion and disintegration of the environment - attending to this disintegration must appear to

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[68] ibid: 42

[69] ibid: 27

[70] ibid

them as a personal sacrifice. Paradoxically, the individual activities of self-preservation in capitalist societies (largely, the activities necessary for preserving financial security) threaten *all* individuals with the fallout of environmental degradation. The overcoming of surplus repression here, a new balance of the instincts favouring life, would not eliminate individuals' needs in favour of the environment, as if these needs were the embodiment of the death instinct, or as if individual capitalists represent the 'evil' hand of death repressing an external or internal 'good' nature. It would instead see only that the very relations of life and death involved in individual self-preservation as it exists in the society of competitive accumulation must be altered, such that the individual's sense of well-being *would no longer depend on* owning a car, consuming intentionally wastefully-designed commodities.[71] Nature, the instinctual 'foundation' of human existence, can only be presented in the form of a negative dialectic, a foundation which continually negates itself in repression, not as some 'living natural essence' which civilized repression shackles, disintegrates, or wears down (note that characterizing the instincts as only or primarily 'living natural essence' is already clearly eliding the necessary existence of the death instinct).

Again, there is resonance with Marx's dialectical materialism here, as well as difference from it. The immanent problem of the valorization of the Freudian Eros over Thanatos, as much as of Hegel's Freedom over Necessity, is always that of spiritualization, evaporation - the abandonment of the concrete.[72] Marcuse's openness in his 'new concept of the person' to the necessity of Thanatos in Eros as basic repression is in many senses a redeployment of the deeply dialectical impulse that moves Marx beyond Hegel. Marcuse

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[71] An obverse political imperative would hold in the case of a totalitarian order, where the destructive self-preservation instinct in question would be that of the state rather than the individual.

[72] Marcuse describes his concern about the spiritualization or mystification of Eros in "Love Mystified," a critique of Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body*.

never contends that death is avoidable in life, only that it does not have to be so exaggerated, so predominant as it is under the terms either of modern capitalism or its totalitarian enemies. It is not the goal of uncovering a repressed underlying erotic essence of man, so much as the concrete relations of life and death instincts themselves in their *surplus* repressive forms, that determine the course of critique in *Eros and Civilization.*

Marcuse's theory of the instincts and their repression here might be fruitfully compared with Judith Butler's discussion, in *The Psychic Life of Power,* of the paradox of power and subjectivity:

> The form this power takes is relentlessly marked by a figure of turning, a turning back upon oneself or even a turning *on* oneself. This figure operates as part of the explanation of how a subject is produced, and so there is no subject, strictly speaking, who makes this turn. On the contrary, the turn appears to operate as a tropological inauguration of the subject, a founding moment whose ontological status remains permanently uncertain.[73]

While Judith Butler refers to the content of the relation as 'power', where Marcuse refers to it as 'instincts', in neither case is the problem of human existence reduced to the opposition of a human or subjective essence and some alien 'social' or 'discursive' force. Marcuse does not argue that the problem of civilization is essentially the suppression of pre-existing erotic instincts by external regulations. It is rather inherent in the *particular structure* of western-patriarchal regulations, which are not separate from the drives, but are rather an historical formation of and by them. Marcuse's figure of an Eros for which Thanatos is necessary and unavoidable, in this sense, can be read as effectively similar to the regulations of power which Butler (following Foucault) find necessary for the production of human existence.

Marcuse is not arguing, any more than Judith Butler, for the installation of a new order of discourse founded on an external erotic drive instead of the external aggressive

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[73]Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*: 3-4

one. Rather, he is only arguing that the instincts' negative position in relation to *all* particular historical circumstances indicates that a different order is *possible*. Marcuse makes the distinction between basic repression and surplus repression not to positively describe the contents of a basic repressive psyche, which would indicate a kind of essentialism incompatible with Butler's effort. Rather, it is to highlight the fact that even if some repression is logically necessary for the existence of any conceivable form of consciousness (in Butler's language, that subjectivity is founded upon a submission to power which is subsequently foreclosed from conscious knowledge), our experience of this discursive regulation is only one historical version of it, one which could be *less* repressive.

A Defect in Marcuse's Argument

But how, then, can we understand Marcuse's repeated call (both in *Eros and Civilization* and elsewhere) for a *non*-repressive Erotic civilization, when some repression - formed out of the death instinct - is necessary for any conceivable form of human existence? In relation to this, Gad Horowitz suggests that there is in fact a 'defect' in *Eros and Civilization*: "The terms 'repressive' and 'non-repressive' are often used carelessly, loosely, in contexts which do not make clear whether basic or surplus repression, or both, are being referred to."[74] Horowitz makes it clear that the possibility of this distinction offered by a *dialectical* understanding of the erotic instincts is the centrally important moment in Marcusean theory. While the distinction of basic and surplus repression would seem to indicate that Marcuse was not an essentialist liberationist, calling for the unmitigated release of a prediscursive drive against a non-instinctual, external societal repression, in much of *Eros and Civilization*, the distinction is often collapsed.

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[74]Gad Horowitz, *Repression: Basic and Surplus Repression in Freud, Reich and Marcuse* (****):186

It is this defect which makes Judith Butler's critique of Marcuse for employing "prediscursive" instincts as a lever of liberation resonant, because by glossing over the necessity of basic repression, Marcuse seems to be arguing that there indeed *is*, after all, a field of human instinctual life which is totally and transcendentally free, a free Eros which does not have any limits. Maybe this contradiction is evident in the absence of the term "Thanatos" from the title of Marcuse's philosophical inquiry into Freud, and perhaps belies a lingering difficulty with the "obscure" conceptual relation between Eros and Thanatos. The theoretical upshot of this contradiction is that a effective 'non-essentialist' social theory of the instincts remains a clouded or mixed trend in *Eros and Civilization,* rendering it politically problematic for theorists for whom the critique of foundations of knowledge is central.

Nevertheless, despite this flaw in Marcuse's argument, it is possible to argue, even where he seems most clearly to be calling for the release of an essential Eros against the repressive order, that he has in mind how the essence in question must develop out of *and* reflect the need for concrete struggles. Marcuse's drive-theory, even where it seems to essentialize Eros, is always negative in the sense of the oppositional political role the category assumed in the 1950s and 1960s, and reflects his honest *feelings*, dreams and fears, about politics at the time - feelings he never ignored as part of a critical theory. While this essentialism certainly makes Marcuse's theory easily open to appropriation by those who would essentialize sexual liberation as the 'truth' of humanity, it makes sense to understand it in its operation in its time (1955) as part of a social struggle, eventually crystallizing in the student movements of the late 1960s.

Like Hegel's philosophical categories, and Marx's socio-economic ones, it is possible to argue that 'instincts' as a category of emancipation can no longer be concretely associated with the struggle for social change in any simple way. Indeed, as Michel Foucault argued in the 1970s, the 'liberation' of a 'healthy', 'true' (and above all else, 'normal') sexuality has become such a universal cultural (therapeutic, educational,

recreational) practice, itself so saturated with the disciplinary formations of late-capitalism, to make it necessary that Marcuse's theory be revisited again in light of changed social conditions.

Theory and the Concrete, Praxis and Performativity

> And when Butler claims, against the Lacanian notion of constitutive bar or lack, that the subject-in-process is incomplete precisely because it is constituted through exclusions that are politically salient, not structurally 'static', does she also not - potentially, at least - conflate two levels, the endless political struggle of-for inclusions/exclusions *within* a given field (say, of today's late capitalist society) and a more fundamental exclusion which sustains this very field?[75]

Repression and Normalization

Judith Butler's work in psychoanalytic social theory is heavily influenced by the work of Michel Foucault, whose *History of Sexuality vol. 1* presents a radically new way of approaching the problem of sexual liberation. This new approach might seem in many respects to undercut Marcuse's attempt to ground a new Marxist resistance and socialist project in the body, understood concretely through psychoanalysis. A brief analysis of Foucault's claims in regard to repression and liberation of the instincts will provide context for Butler's understanding of these problems, and clarify the terms by which she introduces psychoanalytic discourse into a Foucaultian ethic, and a project of radical democracy.

Liberation from 'repression', Foucault argues, is a practice which incessantly and unavoidably instantiates new forms of repression. The very act of discursively defining particular instincts as needing to be freed already circumscribes the instinctual body, makes it socially available. He makes the radical claim that the science and doctrine of sexual liberation as it has developed as educational, therapeutic, and recreational discourses in the late twentieth century is in many ways only the Other of the Victorian era of repression and silence. Foucault shows that the will to speak, to describe and circumscribe sexuality and sexual feelings has become another instance of the productive power of repression, to create new forms of always-already repressed sexual expression.

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[75]Zizek in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*: 108

The new 'liberated' meta-repression, moreover, does not negate sex (any more than the Victorian variety ever did), but only channels it along courses and through apparati which develop it in certain historically specific directions - in our 'liberated' society, the direction of a continuous psychological self-commentary aimed at regulating and normalizing our sexual lives. Viewing the new values of healthy, normal sexuality in relation to the repression of the Victorian era, Foucault illustrates the fact that what modern sexual liberationists refer to as 'repression' has certainly not disappeared, and furthermore that the idea of a sexuality, a true sexual essence, 'freed' from repression - like the problem of a sexuality silenced and constrained by repression - neglects the fact that the power of repression and repressive structures *produce*, ***multiply***, and *change* forms of sexuality. Repression, as a concept, is poor because it implies that it can exist apart from the sexuality which it produces.

Nevertheless, perhaps surprisingly, Foucault's aim is not to prove the repressive hypothesis 'wrong,' as if there were any other better or more true way of describing the problem:

> The doubts I would like to oppose to the repressive hypothesis are aimed less at showing it to be mistaken than at putting it back within a general economy of discourses on sex in modern societies since the seventeenth century.[76]

Through contextualization of the problem, he wants instead to illustrate how it can be that the repressive hypothesis, employed by psychiatrists, has actually come to work against its own apparent aims, concealing in the ideal of free sexuality a more antiseptic, regulatory and normalizing sexual discourse.[77]

Elsewhere, Foucault explicitly questions the *critical effectiveness* of the psychoanalytic dualism of the instincts and the repression which controls them:

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[76]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990): 11

[77]Saying 'more repressive' here does not help us to understand the problem any more clearly.

> I believe that the notion of repression remains a juridical-disciplinary notion whatever critical use one would make of it. To this extent the critical application of the notion of repression is found to be vitiated and nullified from the outset by the two-fold juridical and disciplinary reference it contains to sovereignty on the one hand and to normalization on the other.[78]

'Repression,' one of the central terms of psychoanalytic discourse, and perhaps the pivotal term in Marcuse's investigation into Freud, is rejected by Foucault because of the ambivalence this term conceals in relation to power:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes," it "represses," it "censors," it "abstracts," it "masks," it "conceals." In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.[79]

For Foucault, psychoanalytic concepts (essential, pivotal terms, such as 'repression') gain their 'liberatory' power by referring to an extra-discursive realm - the contents of the realm of the unconscious - as their objects. The objectification this Other realm as that of the 'drives' is an act of social power, a form of identity sewn into the Other, the body, in order to psychoanalyse and normalize ('heal') its subject. The possibility that this kind of discursive imposition might allow for human liberation is rejected by Foucault and his followers as an impossibility. Foucault seeks instead to uncover a "will to knowledge" in matters of modern sexuality (liberatory and otherwise) which mirrors the Victorian 'will to silence':

> And finally, the essential aim will not be to determine whether these discursive productions and these effects of power lead one to formulate the truth about sex, or on the contrary falsehoods designed to conceal that truth, but rather to bring out the "will to knowledge" that serves as both their support and their instrument.[80]

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[78]Foucault, "Two Lectures," in Colin Gordon ed., *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): 108

[79]Foucault, "Practices and Knowledge," in Paul Rabinow ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984): 204-5

[80]Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*: 12

One might imagine a sustained Foucaultian critique of Marcuse's position - indeed, one must, as the closest Foucault comes to such a critique is in an oblique conflation of Wilhelm Reich's and Marcuse's critical theories. As an alternative to the sexual liberationist position, Foucault offers "the efficacy of dispersed and discontinuous offensives" which lack "systematic principles of coordination," which are related only "perhaps in a vague and fairly distant way to Reich and Marcuse."[81] We might imagine that Marcuse, like Reich and the clinical-therapeutic-educational sexologists, earnestly wants to liberate human instincts ('our imprisoned nature, our deepest truth') from the historically imposed shackles of repressive civilization, but in his earnestness, at the same time moves retrogressively to isolate *knowledge* of the instincts from the repressions-regulations which supposedly control them. In this sense, one would be criticizing Marcuse for his unselfcritical 'will to knowledge' concerning sexuality and the human body, his desire to discover or fix its truth. Along these lines, Foucault has offered a very general critique of the theory Frankfurt School:

> I'm convinced that... the Frankfurt School cannot by any means admit that the problem is not to recover our "lost" identity, to free our imprisoned nature, our deepest truth; but instead, the problem is to move towards something radically Other."[82]

For purposes of this thesis, the question however remains: how well does this criticism, part of a discussion of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, really apply to Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*? Is it possible that Foucault's superficial relation with Frankfurt theory (in *Remarks on Marx*, he admits "their influence on me remains retrospective"[83]) elides a distinction between the Marcusean position and that of other

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[81]Foucault, "Two Lectures": 80

[82]Foucault, *Remarks on Marx* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991): 121

[83]ibid: 120

members of the Frankfurt School? Does extending Foucault's critique of Adorno's pursuit of the truth to Marcuse *require* reading Foucault's oblique criticisms of Marcuse in a particular, and perhaps problematic, way?

At least one part of the problem of elaborating this kind of question lies in the fact that Foucault himself never engaged in any direct way with psychoanalytic theory. A close examination of the work of Judith Butler, who in her work has extended a Foucaultian style of critique directly into the realm of psychoanalytic theory, makes this elaboration possible.

A Defect in Foucault's Argument

Like Foucault, Judith Butler is wary of any move to positively identify and liberate 'pre-discursive instincts' because of the political power which is invoked in any theory which relies on something essential which is exogenous to culture. In *The Psychic Life of Power* Marcuse is mentioned briefly, to the effect that in his theory "the drives, or eros and thanatos, precede the regulatory imperatives by which they are rendered culturally liveable."[84] Again, as there is no explicit further discussion of Marcusean theory, it must be imagined that a critique of Marcuse would rest in his earnest and unquestioned valorization of some essential, true sexual body as against society's repressive controls. This critique could be framed by Butler in the terms of radical democracy as a project in a sense opposed to Marxist socialism; Marcuse's employment of the instinctual body as revolutionary is sexually and culturally specific in a way that threatens the ideal of a truly radical democracy in which no particular subject position achieves hegemony. Even if we grant his own unrelenting radicalism at some personal level, the unquestioned ideals of sexual and instinctual liberation espoused by Marcuse are highly subject to the disciplinary

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[84] *The Psychic Life of Power*: 58

conformism of heterosexual (and often white-male-dominated) modern psychiatry, medicine and popular culture.

Interestingly, Butler has criticized Foucault's description of the discursive formation of the body for a not entirely different reason. In *Discipline and Punish,* Butler argues, Foucault portrays the evolution of forms of punishment as one of historical inscription upon a *prediscursive* array of bodily forces:

> Because the distinction between the historical act of inscription and the body as surface and resistance is presupposed in the task of genealogy as he defines it, the distinction itself is precluded as an object of genealogical investigation.... Foucault seeks recourse to a prediscursive multiplicity of bodily forces that break through the surface of the body to disrupt the regulating practices of cultural coherence imposed upon that body by a regulatory regime, understood as some vicissitude of "history."[85]

Butler gives a "Foucaultian account of the demarcation of bodies"[86] in order to correct Foucault's own essentialism, and interrogates the assumption that a bodily surface exists as that which is inscribed upon by discourse. She characterizes the formation of bodies through discursive formation as "the result of a diffuse and active structuring of the social field" with no "fictions of bodies, subversive or otherwise, ontologically intact before the law."[87]

In "Contingent Foundations," Butler more clearly articulates the political ethic informing her rejection of the prediscursive or 'instinctual' body: the question of whether such a thing exists "misconstrues the critical point,"[88] and does not lead to "politically

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[85]Butler, "Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions," (*The Journal of Philosophy* 86(11), November 1989): 607

[86]ibid

[87]ibid

[88]Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" in Butler and Scott eds., *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 17

engaged critique."[89] This position is already apparent in her genealogical deconstruction of Foucault's disciplined and punished body, insofar as she discards ontological stability in favour of the genealogical investigation of political authority. It does not matter whether or not the body pre-exists discourse. What matters is how ideas about the idea of a body preexisting discourse function politically:

> And the point is not to do away with foundations, or even to champion a position that goes under the name of antifoundationalism. Both of these positions belong together as different versions of foundationalism and the skeptical problematic it engenders. Rather, the task is to interrogate what the theoretical move that establishes foundations *authorizes*, and what precisely it excludes or forecloses.[90]

In *Bodies That Matter*, while Butler's theory retains its clear antiessentialism in relation to the body, she responds to a charge levelled against her antiessentialism, insofar as the purported contingency of gender-identity means it could be chosen like a 'garment in a closet.' In response to this charge, she makes clear that some discursive constructions appear to be necessary, are constitutive, "that without them there would be no 'I', no 'we.'"[91] The negative power of the anti-essentialist critique, taken to its limit as social constructivism, ceases to be politically engaged, because it ignores the constitutive constraints of its own critical identity. At certain crucial moments, then, the negativity of this critique must oscillate towards the knowledge that some aspects of identity, while not ontologically essential, are also not flexible for a choosing subject insofar as they form the conditions of possibility for the subject in the first place.[92] The radicalism of the antiessentialism Butler articulates as the condition of effective political critique is necessarily *qualified* by the existence of such constitutive constraints. The inessentiality of

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[89] ibid: 7

[90] ibid

[91] Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993): xi

[92] ibid: x

the sexual identities of a woman does not make rape merely a questioning or rearrangement of her identity - it is a threat to, a denial of her very status as a free subject, equal with a man. While these foundational constraints are ultimately violent forms of social power, to ignore the fact that they exist in all discourses leads the antiessentialist position to the extreme of facile constructivism, and to ignoring the necessary foundations which inhere in even its own position. If nothing is fundamental, neither is nothing fundamental.

The eventualities which these constitutive constraints pose for Butler in relation to critique of the status quo are clearly evident in *The Psychic Life of Power*. The subject does not in any strict way preexist discursive power, because it is also a creation of that power. There is no instinctual structure or body to be 'liberated' from discursive power, because the body is a materialization of power. 'Instinctual structure' and 'discourse' are terms vulnerable to essentialization, terms which in their syntactic structure elide the interplay and fundamental relationality of what they describe - varying relations of power. Butler retraces the problem of repression in poststructuralist terms, underlining the fact that repression produces and extends the field of instincts it is conventionally thought to restrict. Some repression or discursive regulation is, Butler argues, necessary if the subject is to exist at all, and is in fact the condition for the subject's agency. The necessity of discursive power has unhappy consequences for the subject of the status quo:

> The power imposed upon one is the power that animates one's emergence, and there appears to be no escaping this ambivalence. Indeed, there appears to be no "one" without this ambivalence, which is to say the fictive redoubling necessary to become a self rules out the possibility of strict identity. Finally then, there is no ambivalence without loss as the verdict of sociality, one that leaves the trace of its turn at the scene of one's emergence.[93]

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[93] *The Psychic Life of Power*: 198

The investigation into the constitutive constraints whose existence Butler only admits *in relation to* the contingency of all identities has, strangely enough, led her back to the problem of the relation of the instincts, that Marcuse was exploring in his investigation of psychoanalysis. Human subjectivity appears to be marked by loss and alienation (Marcuse: "thanatos") as a necessary part of its (Marcuse: "erotic") structure. Resistance to the alienating effects of social power cannot therefore appear as external to culture itself, but for Butler can only or rather be "derived from what is unforeseeable in proliferation."[94] Marcuse argued similarly that resistance cannot come from some rationality or ideality external to the play of the instincts, but only from a qualitatively different and unforeseeable configuration of the instincts themselves.

But what begins for Butler as a radical critique of identity (and what culminates in Marcuse as a distinction between basic- and surplus-repressive *forms* of identity) oscillates towards a comment which appears to despair the possibility of radical change. In "Poststructuralism and Postmarxism", she explains:

> The poststructuralist position, if it is a position, argues that this "end" is in the future, but - and this is the crucial twist - *in a future which is in principle unrealizable.* The promise of history is one that is destined to be broken. The end of history is an impossibility; it never happened, and it never will happen.[95]

Where Marcuse moves from a sense of the inessentiality of social relations the status quo (the same sense delineated in Hegel's idealistic philosophical insights) to the need for changing them, Butler appears to be indicating that this inessential status quo is by no means not inevitable. A radical democracy, in Butler's reading, would then immediately appear to differ from Marcuse's goal of an erotic civilization, insofar as it is an unrealizable ideal.

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[94]ibid: 60

[95]Butler, "Poststructuralism and Postmarxism" (*Diacritics* 23(4), winter 1993): 4

Arguing with the Real

In the chapter of *Bodies That Matter* entitled "Arguing with the Real," Butler offers a careful examination of the problem of democracy and the constitution of a radically democratic subject. She affirms the incontrovertible paradox of subjectivity: every viable subject is and can only be formed through a constitutive exclusion, the unnameable object of which constantly threatens to return and unravel the subject. She takes up and develops Slavoj Zizek's emphasis on the 'phantasmatic' character of sites of political identity, such as 'women', 'socialism' or 'radical democracy.' These sites are phantasmatic because of the inessentiality of their meaning, their ultimate lack of any foundation in anything outside the symbolic order of identity itself - they are thus both disappointing, unable to more than temporarily fulfill a promise of unity, but are also, paradoxically, the possibility for a continuing democratic openness:

> It is what opens the signifier to new meaning and new possibilities for political resignification. It is this open-ended and performative function of the signifier that seems to me to be crucial to a radical democratic notion of futurity.[96]

While identifying herself in a contingent way with Zizek's position here, Butler raises a distinct objection that relates to her position as a feminist. Butler discusses how Zizek insists on holding what is necessarily excluded from any subject position as the 'Real' in a Lacanian sense. He insists, following Lacan, that the return of this excluded Real poses an impossible threat to *any* political order, of *any* time - psychosis, "that sexualized trauma which originates in the family and reappears in the Gulag, in concentration camps, in political horror shows of various kinds."[97] Politics, for Zizek, "holds out the promise of the manageability of unspeakable loss,"[98] but it can never be assumed that the violent and

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[96] *Bodies That Matter*: 191

[97] ibid: 203

[98] ibid: 209

terrifying character of this loss and its return itself might ever be qualitatively *changed*: the Real is the excess of the constitutively exclusionary process of discourse *as such*. There is a dual problem for Butler here: (a) the way Zizek's formulation of the Real in the Oedipal triangle necessarily regulates the feminine and women as a 'stain' on discourse, as something necessarily and eternally excluded from a democratic politics, and (b) the way Zizek's rigid formulation of the Real sets limits on the development of a radicalized democratic politics itself.

In Lacan, the symbolic order which enables human discourse can only be taken up by the infant through the intervention of the 'name of the father.' Without a forceful break in the incestuous attachment between the child and its mother, the child would never experience the lack, the deferment of immediate infantile gratification that develops into the use of symbols. The use of language covers over the lack introduced by the paternal injunction. Of course, the now-excluded, incestuous attachment that comes to be denied returns continuously as the Real, as a 'stain' on adult human social interaction. Because it results from a denial of maternal love, the stain is feminine, and the reaction to it is unavoidably misogynist. Moreover, Lacan's conception of the Real not only relegates women to the position of a stain on discourse, but implies an unchangeable character of violence in all adult human social interactions, including those, for example, striving to radicalize democracy. It appears that the foreclosure of Lacan's *nom-du-pere* sets a limit beyond which no democratic human existence is possible, and within which violence against the feminine and anything in excess of the discursive law is inevitable and inalterable.

Of course, even given Zizek's stern warnings about Lacan's Real, as a feminist and a radical democrat Butler must ask some dangerous and radical questions:

> How might those ostensibly constitutive exclusions be rendered less permanent, more dynamic? How might the excluded return, not as psychosis or as the figure of the psychotic within politics, but as that which has been rendered mute, foreclosed from the domain of political signification? How and where is social content ascribed to the

> "real," and then positioned as unspeakable? Is there not a difference between a theory that asserts that, in principle, every discourse operates through exclusion and a theory that attributes to that "outside" specific social and sexual positions?[99]

Without denying the necessary role of exclusion and constraint in the formation of subjectivity as such, Butler raises the possibility of distinguishing between invariant and historically variable forms of them:

> Is it even possible to distinguish between the socially contingent rules of subject-formation, understood as regulatory productions of the subject through exclusion and foreclosure, and a set of "laws" or "structures" that constitute the invariant mechanisms of foreclosure through which *any* subject comes into being? To the extent that the law or regulatory mechanism of foreclosure in this latter instance is conceived as ahistorical and universalistic, this law is exempted from the discursive and social rearticulations that it initiates.[100]

Butler, then, moves to radicalize Zizek's conception of democracy by noting that the performative character of discourse extends socio-historically to the very character of discourse itself as a violent, exclusive social process. She argues that Zizek's installation of an ahistorical and invariable *law* of lack - in the name of the Real - in subjectivity works "to preclude the possibility of a future rearticulation of that boundary which is central to the democratic project that Zizek, [Ernesto] Laclau, and [Chantal] Mouffe promote."[101]

What is immediately striking here is Butler's 'utopian' outlook. It is utopian in that it finds in the indeterminacy of the 'no-place' of the future, the unpredictable excesses in any discursive repetition, the possibility of a *more* inclusive, *less* violent social and political order - for example, one in which women can sustain and perhaps modify their own subject position in a democratic direction(s), rather than being accorded the excluded position of a stain in or on it. However, to call this position utopian is also to falsify it; it is in fact a highly realistic position, precisely in the fact that it takes root in the undeniable

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[99]ibid: 189

[100]ibid: 191

[101]ibid: 207

social, cultural and historical variability of what is considered real or Real (in the Lacanian sense). So, in a sense, what Butler is doing here might be called 'imagining the possible,' as opposed to the more clearly 'utopian' practice of imagining the impossible. We can imagine the possible by questioning the established discursive limits on possibility.

The 'utopian' character of Butler's argument here (and its relation to what in *The Psychic Life of Power* she calls a "finally utopian gesture in Foucault"[102]) makes the possibility of sustained critique of Marcuse on her part a more complicated issue. Indeed, in "Arguing with the Real" it would seem impossible to distinguish Butler's approach from the account of Marcusean politics that emphasizes his distinction between basic and surplus repression. Marcuse's negative dialectic of Eros and Thanatos can elucidate the relation with Butler's politics here. For Marcuse, basic repression is necessary to ensure the possibility of Eros, of human life, in any conceivable sense. Eros and Thanatos are not fixed essentials; the liberation of a pure Eros in the absence of any repression, as is noted by Freud himself, flips immanently into a monism of pure death. The paradox is that for life to have any life at all, it requires the presence of death, expressed in psychic terms in the form of repression. A concrete theory of erotic liberation - concrete in the Marxist sense - requires acceptance of this irresolvable inaugural dilemma, the reality of death. For Butler, though radical democracy would seem to be the goal of human life itself - emancipation from unjust social oppression - its own identity as democracy must remain perpetually open. Striving for absence of any contestation, difference toward a democratic order, as history proves, flips immanently into a monism of totalitarianism and the terror of being forced to be free. Marcuse's erotic civilization and Butler's radical democracy are deeply mutually resonant, not in the least because they both account for the necessity of their own self-contradiction. And their vectors of democratic transformation resonate as

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[102] *The Psychic Life of Power*: 59

well; we know that the necessary self-contradiction of radical democracy, and the necessary repression in an erotic civilization, are open variables. Our democratic civilization(s) can be *more* democratic and *more* erotic than they are now because of the radical openness of futurity itself.

Changing the Real

Judith Butler argues against Slavoj Zizek's conception of the Real, which would locate in the domain of lack or the necessary violence constitutive of subjectivity a fundamental and irrevocable limit to social change. Butler resists the transhistorical intransigence of Zizek's Lacanian conception of the Real, the Other of discourse, arguing that through concerted efforts to rearticulate, to occupy and tactically redefine subject positions, that the social field of democracy might be radicalized and expanded. In this sense, imagining her oblique criticisms Marcuse's theory as anything but highly *complicitous* with his general aims seems very difficult.

Nevertheless, in other arguments (made in *The Psychic Life of Power* and elsewhere) it seems less or un-likely that Butler intends the idea of rearticulation of regulations to move beyond the constitutive limits of the discursive law, even if the Other of discourse is not hypostatized as the 'Real'. Does her theory aim at or encourage, like Marcuse's theory, a movement effecting a shift in the social field itself, as opposed to simply valorizing contingent, perverse forms of resistance as effects of an unavoidably surplus-repressive discursive power? Must this kind of rearticulation be effected as merely an effect of the power of exclusion that creates abjection, without the possibility of imagining any kind of qualitative shift in the exclusiveness of that power? Whatever contingent and unpredictable shifts in the character of democratic social power Butler opposes to Zizek's intransigence, it seems clear that in many places Butler's model of resistance remains tied to the exclusionary power it resists. What does this imply about

the possibilities for radical democracy, considered in light of Marcuse's distinction between basic and surplus forms of repression?[103]

Perhaps a possible question might be whether, in light of Marcuse's theory of social change, Butler's queer politics circumscribes 'queer' in a surplus repressive fashion, by limiting 'queer' resistance to that which can occupy *existing* sites of discursive intelligibility. It might be arguable, in light of Marcuse's analysis, that an important problem to pose directly here is whether a qualitatively more radically democratic (less exclusive, less violent) field of social power is imaginable outside the limits of late modern state capitalism. Does Butler's critique of the Marxist project and her committment to a multiculturalist agenda - including queer cultures - *within* existing liberal institutions not imply that the dispersal of the global capitalist order is a form of change in the Real that is *simply not possible*? Does this place certain abject positions which cannot even contingently occupy even queer subject positions - the homeless alcoholic, the drug-addict, the confined schizophrenic, or perhaps merely one of the millions of victims in a nearly global capitalist system, of starvation and war - outside the realm of inclusivity for any project of radical democracy? Can a democracy based on competitive accumulation, even one regulated by an increasingly unpopular state, ever extend the limits of its discursivity to sites such as these?

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[103]While it is not possible to properly elaborate his argument here, it is striking that Zizek's rationale for maintaining an ahistorical Real in some sense is that he finds precisely in Butler's sense of history - an open field in which the Real is unfixable and itself fully historicized - the unquestioned, unconsciously persisting Real of liberal state capitalism: "*This global dimension of capitalism is suspended in today's multiculturalist progressive politics...*" (Zizek in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, p96). He upholds the Real, at least at one level, simply because he wants to show that it persists in Butler's work as the liberal capitalist background, suggesting that she is not actually trying to change the Real at all, merely to reform cultural worlds that a more fundamental Real continues to dominate. Are not both Butler and Zizek attacking one another at obverse levels for not being utopian enough? Does Marcuse's position not have a striking resonance here? For his part, Zizek reiterates the call to 'Be realistic and demand the impossible' (ibid: 321).

If democracy cannot be qualitatively more inclusive in *these* ways, if radical democrats can only ever exist largely as a reaction-formation against the necessary and ahistorical exclusiveness of any democratic order, vying for the discursive intelligibility of the 'culture' they represent, how is a democratic theory of politics distinguishable from a reserved Hegelian or Freudian acceptance of the status quo, except by denying *a priori* that a capitalism that is becoming global is a culturally and historically specific, and *specifically repressive*, way of human life? Doesn't Butler only revert to an aloof and disengaged (albeit queer) philosophical Hegelian idealism that Marcuse's Marxian theory moves continually to negate and reconsider in light of new developments?

In *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse notes that Marx criticizes Hegel's melancholy consciousness because it collapses the deep complexity of the history of human relations (economic and otherwise) into the logical categories of the dialectic - 'being', 'essence,' 'notion,' 'self-consciousness' - ignoring the fact that even a dialectical presentation of these fundamental logical categories is an abstract and immediate moment which must be followed by the concrete mediation of praxis. Marcuse demonstrates how Hegel's early political ideal – the supersession of alienation in the 'one true community' where every individual realizes himself as the embodiment of the universal – is eventually and *necessarily* sublimated by Hegel into the realm of philosophy. Hegel came to realize, in awareness of the violence of extremism in the French Revolution, that the realization of such a completely transparent and equal order, would paradoxically involve negating the very individual whose alienation it was supposed to dispel. Hegel's claim to have *comprehended* the dialectic of human existence as philosophy suggested a radical ideal - a 'true community' of complete subjective equality – but also its necessary relegation to the world of Absolute Spirit, the world of philosophy. Hegel's melancholic and ambivalent philosophy expressed an unrealizable, spiritual ideal, which remains bound for his conservative interpreters, and for Hegel himself in his political philosophy, in a liberal order of deep inequality.

Marcuse's Marxist social theory, on the other hand, looks dialectically beyond itself for qualitative change in concrete political praxis, in a social life where the unpredictability and heterogeneity of history indicate the real possibility of a qualitatively less painful, less unjust alienation (not its total or final abolition). Theory here considers itself as only one moment of the dialectic of social transformation, and in doing this can move from a primarily melancholic perspective to one that is utopian, one that actively seeks or encourages redress of a loss which has previously been foreclosed from consideration. It does so precisely in becoming aware that the melancholy impossibility of recovering the loss is one complexly vested in historical and material factors, and that distinctions within its monolithic impossibility – between the always impossible and the only currently impossible - can be discerned, through active participation in those factors. It does so knowing that a distinction can be made in practice, between the loss which must be foreclosed for the existence of any subject at all, and the loss that is foreclosed in the currently prevailing situation. It goes beyond melancholia by daring to uncover that loss, through the 'ruthless criticism of everything existing.'

Following Marx, Marcuse rejects Hegel's melancholia, and argues explicitly for the possibility of a struggle of resistance to the prevailing social conditions, on the basis of the future-historical possibility of a fundamentally different society, a possibility paradoxically 'grounded' in the perpetually shifting material-historical heterogeneity of that society. Marcuse's introduction to psychoanalytic and philosophical discourse of the distinction between basic and surplus repression must be read as a development of this aspect of Marxism. Repression is a logical, abstract category, which conceals a heterogeneous historical-material complexity. By recognizing this, and making the distinction in theory between surplus and basic repression, we are calling for praxis, a concrete movement of resistance against the surplus repression of the status quo.

The importance of *practice* in distinguishing between surplus and basic forms of alienation for Marcuse's theory is often missed by critics. Martin Jay characterizes

Marcuse as having exactly the kind of Hegelian drive to absolute reconciliation that his distinction between basic and surplus repression problematizes. He quotes Marcuse's reference to Hegel's assertion that "as authentic reality, the world... is now comprehended by thought and defined as a concept," which leads to "identity between thought and being... can be established on the basis of a shared rationality."[104] He assumes that when Marcuse asserts the theoretical truth of Hegel's assertion, he does so undialectically, as a whole and unproblematic truth - one divorced from his strategic position, as well as instinctual-emotional experience, in a struggle for change. And so Jay concludes:

> Thus, in positing a utopia of identity in which all contradictions are overcome, Marcuse displays that basic hostility to politics that has been the curse of too many German thinkers for too many years. Its effects spill over into the only type of political action he sanctions today: the Great Refusal, a complete rejection of the mechanics of political change presented by the system.... Metapolitics rather than true political activity becomes the only authentic mode of revolutionary behaviour.[105]

The dialectical fact is that Marcuse knew that Hegel's 'utopia of identity in which all contradictions are overcome' was impossible because it was a theoretical absolute, but that possibilities might be distinguished with regard to it when mediated in practice, in a theory attempting to reflect concrete human relations, to express his feelings, his dreams and fears, honestly and in their concrete complexity. Jay assumes that Hegel's ideal of the 'one true community' is shared unquestioningly by Marcuse, and cannot imagine any ideals that radically break with the politics of the status quo without immediately falling into the Hegelian philosophical utopia. In his conception of idealism and the concrete in politics, where the concrete can only refer to the 'politics' of American liberal pluralism, he is therefore forced to assume that Marcuse shares in the totalitarian implications of Hegel's

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[104]Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985): 7

[105]ibid: 11

spiritualized ideal. That Jay makes this assumption is strange, given the great care Marcuse took to make his position on the irreducibility of difference clear:

> All joy, and all sorrow are rooted in this difference, in this relation to the other, of whom you want to become part, and who you want to become part of yourself, and who never can and never will become part of yourself. Feminist socialism would thus continue to be riddled with conflicts arising from this condition, the ineradicable conflicts of needs and values, but the androgynous character of society might gradually diminish the violence and humiliation in the resolution of these conflicts.[106]

While he is speaking specifically of gender difference here, there is every reason to believe that Marcuse was fully aware of the necessity of these kinds of differences (and as a corollary, the necessity of basic repression) in every field of human life - even the politics of socialist or radically democratic human life. Notwithstanding Marcuse's theory - with its clear difference from Hegel - Jay reacts against its purported Hegelian totalitarianism, and is forced to accept an ambivalent defense of the American status quo:

> The vaunted American system of pluralistic politics may indeed be a mask for manipulation and special interests, as he has always argued, yet pluralism as such is the very essence of politics.[107]

Jay never allows for the possibility that it is precisely by attending to the nonidealized, concrete lives of human beings under American pluralism (whether in psychoanalytic terms or otherwise), that something fundamentally *more pluralistic* than the pluralism of the status quo might be possible. In light of Marcuse's distinction between surplus and basic forms of alienation, it seems incredible to say that Marcuse was totally opposed to 'pluralism as such' just because he earnestly opposed *American* pluralism.

Relegating her explicit opposition to Zizek's invariable conception of the Real in the background, Judith Butler might at times be compared with Martin Jay and his

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[106]Marcuse, "Marxism and Feminism," (*Women's Studies* 2(3), 1974): 287

[107]Jay: 11

collapse of the *category* of 'pluralism' (meaning and including the 'pluralism' of the status quo) into 'pluralism as such.' In *The Psychic Life of Power,* as in Hegel, the deep complexity of human relations tends to be collapsed into quasi-logical categories - 'power,' discourse,' 'subjectivity.' The political ideal implicit here - a radical democracy breaking discursive barriers to absolute equality - is 'in principle, unrealizable.' Of course Butler does argue for the possibility of new and unpredictable modes of signification, emerging from the fact that discourse has to be constantly reinscribed in resistant matter. However, the social world which these new possibilities might enable is and will always be the object of *our* (North American?, liberal democratic?) melancholy ambivalence, because any human sociality must always be experienced as the loss *we* experience in our social world, "as *the* verdict of sociality"[108] [my emphasis].

Butler's unwillingness to conceive of 'sociality' as more than a univocal, homogeneous term is part of what might be criticized as an aspect of the implicit individualistic liberalism of *The Psychic Life of Power*. Butler on one hand appears to reject the prevailing liberal notion of individuality, in which the individual would have any prior or ontological significance outside of social discourse. Individuals, she might argue, are moments or sites of the social process. She says:

> "The subject" is sometimes bandied about as if it were interchangeable with "the person" or "the individual." The genealogy of the subject as a critical category, however, suggests that the subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation.[109]

The subject is a *social* site even when it is producing an individual. On the other hand, however, she goes on to argue:

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[108]*The Psychic Life of Power*: 198

[109]ibid: 10

> Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject (the subject simultaneously emerges as a "site"), and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language. The subject is the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency.[110]

As a corollary of the omission of the possibility of a qualitatively less violent social order, is the privileging (at the explicit level) of individual resistance against social power over the resistance of new or different social forms against those of the status quo. While the subject is not the individual *per se*, in *The Psychic Life of Power* the subject only emerges as a site when there is an individual there to fill it. What is foreclosed from the discussion here is the possibility that *collectivities* might 'achieve and reproduce intelligibility,' and use a *collective* subjective site, a new form of social existence, as a means of *transformation* of norms of power. Political resistance is figured in terms of the resistance of the individual against social constraints, and it often seems that the *only* site of resistance to social subjectivity is the lone individual, because collective subjectivity is, *per se*, disciplinary, violent, and exploitative. Might a connection be drawn between this figuration and the discourses of individualism which are so characteristic of the liberal political culture of the United States? While such a question is far beyond the scope of this thesis, a connection can arguably be drawn between Judith Butler's individualism and Martin Jay's ambivalent defense of American pluralism.

Performativity, Theory and Practice: Melancholia and Radical Democracy

All this can be said only with Butler's critique of Zizek, and Foucault's and her own 'finally utopian' gestures relegated to the background. Given this problem it would seem that the only way to avoid unfairly oversimplifying Butler's position, to avoid trying to impose some logic of self-identity on it, is to say that there is no one position her theory can be

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[110] ibid: 11

said to occupy. The question of the theoretical status of Butler's own self-inconsistency can perhaps only fairly be pursued with the performativity of her texts in mind.

Butler demonstrates in many places that melancholic foreclosure is necessary for the existence of the subject. She offers a glimpse of how this process works in the phrase, 'I could never love such a person.' The impossibility of the 'love' in this sentence both defines the 'I' and implicitly suggests the conditions under which the 'I' would cease to exist. If 'I' were to love such a person, 'I' would not be 'me.' In Butler's writing, this grammatical turn is a prism that illustrates the constitution of human existence and consciousness as such. She argues that subjective agency and all social existence must be based on something this grammar of foreclosure exemplifies:

> In my view, the self only becomes a self on the condition that it has suffered a separation (grammar fails us here, for the "it" only becomes differentiated through that separation), a loss which is suspended and provisionally resolved through a melancholic incorporation of some "Other." That "Other" installed in the self thus establishes the permanent incapacity of that "self" to achieve self-identity; it is as if it were always already disrupted by that Other; the disruption of the Other at the heart of the self is the very condition of the self's possibility.[111]

Melancholia, then, has an ambivalent psychic purpose:

> On the one hand, melancholia is an attachment that substitutes for an attachment that is broken, gone, impossible; on the other hand, melancholia continues the tradition of impossibility, as it were, that belongs to the attachment for which it substitutes.[112]

Considering Butler's hint that "the explanation of melancholia participates in the mechanism it describes,"[113] it would seem possible to read this statement in one aspect as an expression of and about the larger problem of radical democracy in poststructuralism. Poststructuralist melancholia is both a substitute attachment for something that is broken,

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[111]Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in Linda Nicholson ed., *The Second Wave* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 311

[112]*The Psychic Life of Power*: 24

[113]ibid: 4

gone and impossible, and a way of maintaining the tradition of that impossibility as a kind of latent possibility:

> Melancholia is a rebellion that has been put down, crushed. Yet it is not a static affair; it continues as a kind of "work" that takes place by deflection. Figured within the workings of the psyche is the power of the state to preempt an insurrectionary rage. The "critical agency" of the melancholic is at once a social and psychic instrument.[114]

Poststructuralist radical democracy, as a kind of virtual sociality or community is "a sociality in which loss cannot be grieved because it cannot be recognized as loss, because what is lost never had any entitlement to existence."[115] Butler situates the valences of this melancholia not in the repression of already-existing social attachments (e.g. 'I love something in a sexual way but am forced to give up that love to be considered normal') but as productive regulations that make all social attachments possible in the first place (e.g. 'As a loving human, I could never/have never imagined/could never imagine loving something in such a way'). Guilt, in this state of affairs, is not only a consequence of the punishment of a subject for its aberrant love acts, but is a way of binding the originary ambivalence of love itself, which can issue in a "potentially obliterating violence"[116]:

> As a stopgap against sadistic destruction, guilt signals less the psychic presence of an originally social and external norm than a countervailing desire to continue the object one wishes dead. It is in this sense that guilt emerges in the course of melancholia not only, as the Freudian view would have it, to keep the dead object alive, but to keep the living object from "death," where death means the death of love, including the occasions of separation and loss.[117]

Like much of her work, *The Psychic Life of Power,* then, as a text is itself an ambivalent expression of love for an object, a love-hate, or attraction-repulsion expression. Butler

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[114] ibid: 190

[115] ibid: 24

[116] ibid: 25

[117] ibid

realizes that the agency of this text is formed in an ambivalent relationship with the social power which makes its agency possible. So the only, or best, way for its unmentionable object of love - a 'Real Radical Democracy of the Future' - to be preserved, is in melancholia. This object could never have been loved - the love we have for it paradoxically undermines it - and the only subjective residue that can be deduced from the foreclosure is the self-imposed aggression - guilt - acting paradoxically to preserve the object from the subject's ambivalent love and hate for it.

A clear connection between Foucault's most clearly utopian desire - "to move towards something radically other"[118] - and Butler's conception of radical democracy can be drawn through melancholia, when she suggests it "functions to make possible an epistemological encounter with alterity."[119] She suggests further that

> Indeed, the "other" may be an ideal, a country, a concept of liberty, in which the loss of such ideals is compensated by the interiorized ideality of conscience. An other or an ideal may be "lost" by being rendered unspeakable, that is, lost through prohibition or foreclosure: unspeakable, impossible to declare, but emerging in the indirection of complaint and the heightened judgements of conscience.[120]

So there is an undeniably crucial difference between Butler's poststructuralism and a more conservative Hegelian thought, insofar as it expands the Hegelian 'spiritual' moment (in his time, expressed only in philosophy, art and religion) into a performative discursive moment that is technically available to the wider political environment. Sherry Turkle, describing the influence in France in the 1970s of Jacque Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, outlines an important and characteristic aspect of French poststructuralist writing which flows from the practice of 'deconstruction of the subject.' What sets this radical theory

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[118]Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*: 121

[119]*The Psychic Life of Power*: 194

[120]ibid: 196

apart from the mode of communication of traditional political and social ideas is the *way it performs*. Lacanian and poststructuralist texts can be visualized (in a way which perhaps runs counter to their spirit) as a kind of machine which acts directly on the mind of the reader, as opposed to being the represented speech of an author:

> Using a new kind of discourse to break the reader's usual "set" is not an uncommon strategy for subversive intellectual movements of the twentieth century... the text is not there simply to transmit content or to convince you of an argument, it is there *to do something* to the reader.... This discourse assaults, its language breaks language apart, fragments all person markers and tries to transform the reader's way of thinking about his personhood. Its power seems to depend more on involvement with its language than on agreement with its individual propositions.[121]

'The deconstruction of the subject' is a way of describing this way in which poststructuralist discourse functions. In Lacanian theory, the subject finds its continuous existence in the symbolic order of language, an idea of itself as an 'I' that this symbol 'I' makes possible. To attack the subject in a really effective way means to displace its centrality in language of the attack itself. In this approach to political action, praxis and theory collapse into each other, because there is no subject position, no 'author' who can speak of political action in the abstract. The subjectivity of the author itself is constituted, and only in a contingent sense, out of the dispersion of radically discontinuous assertions, ideas and beliefs the text presents. Thinking as a nonsubject is in itself the radical political act. Anticipating Butler's performative approach, thinking as a nonsubject, Foucault remarks:

> Thought is no longer theoretical. As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites or re-unites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must be done, even before exhorting or merely sounding an alarm, thought, at the level of existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action – a perilous act.[122]

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[121]Sherry Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1978): 147-8

[122]Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Cornell University Press, 1977): 5

If thought is no longer theoretical then it might indeed be argued that the melancholic sense of the irony of human existence which might have once been reserved for the intellectually-minded is no longer only the territory of philosophers. Given this, the political compromise Hegel was forced make to the status quo might no longer be binding.

Butler notes the ironic rearticulation and appropriation for political purposes of the term 'queer' as a prime example of what may be the truly promising radical cultural and political change in the postmodern era. As a term like 'queer' becomes culturally ambivalent through its appropriation and reappropriation, its exclusiveness and social violence is defused, reduced, and superseded, without needing reference to an essential (true, free...) sexuality existing before it is called 'queer.' The reflexive and ironic use of this term by those for whom it was intended as an insult mimics the voice of the insulter, repeating the scene of injury. It sounds at first like self-castigation, but the sheer perversity, the not-quite-exact repetition of the act (for now it is the queer herself calling herself queer) acts both as a challenge to the subject position of the insulter, and as a way for the insulted to maintain a form of existence - one which preserves the alterity that otherwise would have had to be abandoned for her to avoid further insult. The directions of the changes this performativity of discourses promises is such that questioning 'capitalism' as a universal fact might seem politically irrelevant: if 'it' is universal, 'it' can only be broken up and rearticulated from within, at the particular sites where its injuries are incorporated.

So, the pivotal difference between Marcuse's and Butler's approaches to political critique might be tentatively crystallized in the terms of the relationship between critical theory and critical practice. Reading the efficacy of Butler's melancholy criticism through a conception of the relationship between theory and praxis influenced by Marcuse - outlined in his development of Marxian theory and its openness to the concrete - might be missing the critical value of *The Psychic Life of Power*. If it is indeed true that, today,

thought has become something more than purely theoretical, is no longer at a remove from the concrete world of human life, Butler's melancholic performance must itself be read as a form of praxis. It fosters and maintains an ironic and problematic sense of one's own subjectivity which leaves one open to possible shifts in rearticulations of discourse, and is a text in which communities of resistance and the possibility of social change are implicit. *The Psychic Life of Power* and much of Butler's other writings perform melancholia, are melancholic 'machines' which reproduce the founding structure of consciousness itself as much as articulate explicit social theory:

> One does not stand at an instrumental distance from the terms by which one experiences violation. Occupied by such terms and yet occupying them oneself risks a complicity, a repetition, a relapse into injury, but it is also the occasion to work the mobilizing power of injury, of an interpellation one never chose....The compulsion to repeat an injury is not necessarily the compulsion to repeat an injury in the same way or to stay fully within the traumatic orbit of that injury. The force of repetition in language may be the paradoxical condition by which a certain agency – not linked to a fiction of the ego as master of circumstance – is derived from the *impossibility* of choice.[123]

The foreclosed object of this melancholia is the radically democratic Subject itself, the ideal Subject we would see in a transparently and totally equal community, an ideal subject which is attacked for its necessary limits, even as it is impossibly maintained as an ideal. In this way, we perhaps ultimately hope to lessen the violence of the 'subject', the same way the (re-)appropriation of a word like 'queer' contests the exclusiveness of heteronormativity. We can achieve a radically inclusive democracy only by appreciating its impossibility from our point of view, and what that impossibility says about our point of view.

Somehow like Marcuse, Judith Butler argues for the possibility of new modes of signification, emerging from the fact that discourse is ambivalent, might in its repeated

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[123]Butler, "Gender is Burning," in Anne McClintock, Amir Mufti, Ella Shohat, eds., *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 383

activity be less violently reinscribed in resistant matter. At the explicit level, the social world which these new possibilities might enable is and will always be the object of the liberal individual's ambivalence, because *any* human sociality must *always* be experienced as loss. But social possibilities do return continuously, as question and absence:

> If we reject theoretically the source of resistance in a psychic domain that is said to precede or exceed the social, as we must, can we reformulate psychic resistance *in terms of the social* without that reformulation becoming a domestication or normalization? (Must the social always be equated with the given and the normalizable?)[124]

Perhaps the only lingering question for me, if I read Butler's and Marcuse's theories in this way as tensely parallel (differing in 'method' but similar in 'spirit'?) concerns the constantly recurring problem Marcuse addressed in his appropriations of German Idealism and psychoanalytic theory, the discourse of the 'Subject' - the problem of attention to the socially concrete. We might imagine Marcuse saying that the performativity of a political text - which he might call praxis as opposed to theory - must emanate from the perpetually shifting material-historical heterogeneity of social life. The rearticulation of terms like 'queer' along with other terms of insult is obviously a trend which has wide cultural-political resonance. Furthermore, this kind of reflexivity seems to act in a diverse array of political locales. But does psychoanalytic or philosophical discourse have such a wide-variable, (and therefore) concrete resonance - at least, outside of the academy? Specifically, in what kind of place, what kind of highly specific social situation (outside of the academy or the theatre), would one have to be working to have the opportunity to ironically and self-consciously rearticulate one's *subjectivity*, in the same way that it is possible to rearticulate one's *queerness* as a political act? What kinds of places and situations might make a fusion of theory and practice impossible or even irrelevant?

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[124] *The Psychic Life of Power*: 102

Considering this problem, it might be useful to contrast Butler's performative philosophy of the subject with the postmodern textual art of Barbara Kruger:

> Something located between theory, laughter, and the connection of things. Something which has benefited from the dispensations of the long shot, which appreciates the prophesies of science fiction and yet is disappointed by a deluded solidarity drenched in ineffectiveness. Something which foregoes a singular strategy for a series of simultaneous games, which indulges in a laughter located nowhere near contempt and tries to communicate without the belligerence of the challenge. Something which has no need for utopias or sacred structures of belief, and finds power's disingenuous attempts at invisibility and self-effacement to be as predictable as a not-so-hot rerun.[125]

Even from the position of a Marcusean social theory, we can say that Kruger has no need for utopia because she is an artist intervening in discourse itself, effecting a shift in the constitution of subjectivity through art. Clearly, her style is composed as interventionary, intended to affect a potentially wider (though certainly not universal) audience, a diverse community - to change the Real. But when dealing with the highly rarefied categories of academic language (indeed, of the fraction of that community with a background in continental philosophy) does not an explicitly utopian approach – acknowledging the *gap* between theoretical terms and their practical employment, working to address or redress that gap – like that demonstrated by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* - not harbour an equally undeniable, if different, critical effectiveness in this sense? As much as Marcuse's discourse can be appropriated in its earnestness as forms of essentialist sexual liberationism, is it not very possible that readings of Butler which ignore, 'don't get', the performative element in her melancholic style will ultimately assimilate her writing to Martin Jay's liberal pessimism? At the very least, 'getting' Butler's performativity would seem to be contingent on a pre-existing (if not prediscursive) historical openness to futurity, a sense of hope, something like that demonstrated explicitly by Herbert Marcuse.

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[125]Barbara Kruger, *Remote Control* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994): 231

Such a criticism of Butler's work - if it can even be called a criticism - might be undermined easily on the basis that it aims toward some kind of performative universal, derives its critique from the desire for a performative that would phantasmatically unite all those interested in democratization, social transformation and emancipation, or the radicalization of democracy. Surely, any attempt to deliver 'the message' of democracy ultimately founders in its pretension to be able to address everyone. But given the possibility of distinguishing between basic and surplus repression in practice, Marcuse might suggest that some level of temporary transparency, some kind of clearer, wider communication aimed practically at diversifying, encouraging, expanding (without universalizing) interest in a project of truly radical democratic change is possible - even if it often seems impossible. Far from threatening it, they are perhaps necessary right now both in practice and as a part of a radical democratic theory which can only be informed by it, at a distance.

Conclusion

I have attempted so far to describe the development of Marcusean theory as a striving for the level of the concrete, the continual questioning of reified concepts that have become abstract. Marcuse found in Hegel's philosophy and his dialectical reason a powerful means for rationally questioning the existing state of things. He also found that Hegel's rationality was ultimately too abstract, too purely philosophical in its questions to be able to do any more than comprehend the status quo - ultimately, it could not see and did not have the means to encourage concrete change in the status quo. Marcuse's Marxism, his introduction of Heideggerian and then psychoanalytic terminology is always inflected by the demand that theory reflect and demonstrate concrete possibilities, and reject abstract barriers to their realization.

I have also tried, in undertaking a brief analysis of Judith Butler's work, to demonstrate possible problems posed by the poststructuralist radical democratic ethic to the goal of the attainment of concretion in theory. From what subject-position is it possible to ascertain the truth of what is - any truth, no matter how internally differentiated and variegated - that does not in its subjective unity pose an immanent threat to the democratic ideal of pluralistic equality? And yet posed against this problematic, returning to Marcuse, the question of the concrete returns: to what extent can democratic theory be radical if it does not admit of positive evidence, attained through concrete interventions in theory or in (other) practices, for the possibility of radically different ways of life, characterized in their necessary democratic agonism by *less* violence and exploitation?

While the subjective moment of my work on these two approaches to political resistance will, according to both theories, remain in tension with an objectivity it will always threaten, I would like to suggest somehow that, paradoxically, one important function of a theory of resistance is to provide *encouragement* to its subject. It seems

clear that Marcuse's revolutionary theory does exactly this - encourages a subject to deploy its power in favour of change, at the same time as it encourages the subject to change. It certainly and unencouragingly seems likely that a theory that attempts beyond such encouragement to locate or fix a *redemptive* moment in its subject's development is doomed paradoxically to repeat the very hegemonic objective patterns which ensure that subject's self-negation. But does this threat or spectre of negation or co-optation loom in the same way in a theory which perpetually *looks toward* or *listens for* the possibility of that redemption, in a utopian mode?

One might be forced to admit the apparent impossibility of redemption from one's own perspective, but in that same force feel drawn to look toward an Other subject's space-time in which this impossibility does not exist as such. Theory here looks to a praxis entirely beyond itself, beyond its means of communication. A concrete no-place or some-place (or places) in which certain apparently fixed and unchangeable realities might be overcome, sublimated, even be non-existent. Marcuse's distinction between basic and surplus repression indicates his committment to the *real* possibility of an Other way of life, that he was not merely absorbed in achieving the impossible and abstract - therefore not concretely utopic - condition of the absence of all repression as we know it. It indicates his earnest belief that the dream of a society radically less exploitative, violent, and homogeneous than the status quo must be put into action - questioned, developed, reimagined, but not abandoned.

All this only means that Marcuse's articulation of Marxist theory - characterized by an open relation to praxis - is simply and irreconcilably different from the poststructuralist approach. Foucault suggests that 'thought is no longer theoretical.' Judith Butler is not waiting for the revolution - she is changing hegemonic patterns of discourse (for instance, the discourse of exclusive heterosexuality) *as she speaks*. She rearticulates philosophy, gender norms, culture, in characteristically queer, perverse ways which implicitly

undermine the authority of the paternal law - Marcuse's 'performance principle.' Marcuse called for change; poststructuralists make it.

Surely these projects are mutually exclusive. A postfoundationalist/ poststructuralist/performative approach finds, even in the minimum hope for the redemption of the subject from the other, the already immanent possibility of *destructive* repetition, the need for perpetuation of the same, and likely the co-optation of gestures of resistance by regimes of disciplinary efficiency. A utopian approach, on the other hand, resists the moment in deconstructive politics which, after all, must affirm and accept some form of existing subjectivity in order to exist at all. A utopian approach proceeds through the ruthless criticism of *everything existing*, aiming to reduce its subject position to the no-space of listening for and encouraging change in the existing order. Perhaps the relation could be summed up in saying the former position makes political resistance in the moment when the inevitability of the colonization of the Other is unavoidable, the latter forefronts its obligation to acknowledge the ultimately irreducible alterity of the (historical, social, political) Other.

Of course an immediate problem with this binary characterization comes in considering Marcuse's theory and his critical position in itself. Does his open admission that the American student movement was 'not even in a pre-revolutionary position' not indicate an awareness that many aspects of the student movements were already colonized by liberal capitalism? That the colonization of the Other by capitalism was already at work in this movement? Even in this situation of apparent inevitability, in awareness of his own necessary and troubling complicity with existing forms of power, Marcuse's theory is characterized by a utopian excess of hope which resonates in many ways with contemporary movement for radical democracy. The questions he raises remain deeply relevant, and could only be summarily put to rest by an excessive, a 'surplus' pessimism, a clearly undemocratic hate.

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Title of Thesis:

The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse: Imagining the Possible

Author [redacted]

Colin Campbell

December 18, 2000