Critical theory of Herbert Marcuse: An inquiry into the possibility of human happiness

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THE CRITICAL THEORY OF HERBERT MARCUSE: AN INQUIRY

INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF HUMAN HAPPINESS

By

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The works of the philosopher Herbert Marcuse form the basis for this inquiry into the possibility of human happiness. The thesis explores the social, psychological and philosophical basis for the establishment of a general happiness. It also seeks to clarify the inherent obstacles and limitations to such a condition. Beginning with an examination of the hedonistic and eudaemonistic traditions, the study explores the underlying relationship between the exercise of reason and the promise of happiness.

The necessary connection between reason, happiness and social justice in Plato's philosophy was reflected in the development of Marcuse's critical theory of society. It was the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of Karl Marx, however, which provided him with a radically new understanding of the essence of man and the proper use of reason. He made use of Marx's dialectical materialism to analyze the objective changes in social organization necessary for the realization of a general human happiness.

In the 1930's, Marcuse believed that the prospects for the free satisfaction of human needs were at hand. The rise of fascism and the Holocaust, however, shattered any faith he might have had in the inevitability of proletarian revolution. In the 1940's, he turned his attention to the works of Sigmund Freud in an attempt to understand the irrational forces within the human psyche which had permitted the rise of fascism.

In Eros and Civilization and subsequent works, Marcuse argued that under the ideal conditions of mature industrial society, human aggressiveness could be replaced by an aesthetic ethos which placed the pursuit of happiness above competitive economic pursuits. This study explores the principal themes of his critical theory, with an emphasis on the relationship between his conception of instinctual liberation and the possibility of happiness.

Marcuse also explored the power of authentic works of art to instill in individuals a vital need for radical change. In the end, however, he held that death represents an ultimate obstacle to the goal of lasting happiness. In the final chapter of the thesis, the relationship between time and happiness is examined in light of the tendencies within society which may increase the possibility for greater human happiness. While Marcuse's critical theory has not resolved the problem of unhappiness, it does represent the ongoing commitment of philosophy to human welfare.
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THE CRITICAL THEORY OF HERBERT MARCUSE:
AN INQUIRY INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF HUMAN HAPPINESS

INTRODUCTION

The question of human happiness has been of enduring interest to philosophers since the time of Plato and Aristotle. In our time, the philosopher Herbert Marcuse made the inquiry into the possibility of happiness a cornerstone of his critical theory of society. This thesis will explore Marcuse's treatment of the question of human happiness as it relates to his overall social theory.

Marcuse's interest in the problem of social unhappiness led him to re-examine the works of previous thinkers on this subject. Aristotle, for example, maintained that happiness represented the proper final end for mankind. Hedonist and utilitarian philosophers argued that happiness, measured by the ratio of pleasure to pain, constituted the only thing good in itself. Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages and the moral philosophy of the bourgeois period, while emphasizing duty, also produced a promise of happiness. According to Marcuse, however, it was a false promise which could not cure the discord within society.

While the goal of happiness has represented a perennial concern, understanding of the nature of happiness has varied significantly. For Plato and Aristotle, the term eudaemonia characterized happiness in the sense that one possessed those things worth having and engaged in activities which were morally virtuous. Because they believed that the capacity to reason represented mankind's unique and highest endowment, and because goodness and virtue could not be understood without the use
of reason, they maintained that happiness could be attained only through the use of reason. The irrationality of sensual satisfactions marked them as dubious contributors to eudaemonia. This definition stands in sharp contrast with one version of hedonism which defined happiness as the satisfaction of whatever desires an individual might possess.

Marcuse's critical theory combined features of eudaemonism with the hedonistic protest against the repression of sensuality. He argued that some needs are better satisfied than others and that individual happiness cannot be separated from the creation of a rational society. His criticism of hedonism was based on the conviction that purely subjective gratification in the face of general misery is incompatible with the need to abolish that misery.

In defense of hedonism, Marcuse maintained that in the hedonistic protest against the repression of sensuality is preserved the possibility of a general happiness. According to his theory, human happiness requires both the gratification of instinctual impulses and the exercise of reason.

Whether one subscribes to a eudaemonistic or to a hedonistic conception of happiness, any characterization of happiness must entail the satisfaction of some human need or desire. The repression of human needs would, therefore, tend to give rise to a state of unhappiness.

Marcuse's first exposition on the subject of happiness was contained in an essay entitled "On Hedonism" which was published in 1938. In it, he examined the problematic of happiness and provided a critique of what he termed 'the philosophy of reason.'
For Marcuse, the organization of Western civilization has been shaped by the political, economic, moral and scientific theories made possible by a philosophy of reason. This philosophy originated in Plato and Aristotle's preoccupation with reason as man's essential nature. Because they equated the highest good exclusively with the exercise of reason, they came to regard the pursuit of sensual gratification as something evil. Both philosophers branded as irrational the appetitive and instinctual elements of the human constitution.

According to Marcuse, the conflict between reason and sensuality expressed in the works of Plato and Aristotle greatly contributed to the development of repressive morality and hierarchical social organization. It also served to justify a capitalist mode of economic organization which made efficient operation more important than human happiness.

Marcuse linked the philosophy of reason to "the development of the productive forces, the free rational shaping of the conditions of life, the domination of nature, and the critical autonomy of the associated individuals.... The idea of reason aims at universality, at a society in which the antagonistic interests of 'empirical' individuals are cancelled."2

In contrast to the philosophy of reason, Marcuse argued that hedonism "has stressed the comprehensive unfolding and fulfillment of individual wants and needs, emancipation from an inhuman labor process, and liberation of the world for the purposes of enjoyment.... Hedonism wants to preserve the development and gratification of the individual as a goal within an anarchic and impoverished
Marcuse's critique of the philosophy of reason represents a key element of his critical theory and his consideration of the question of human happiness. By linking the philosophy of reason to the development of the productive forces and the domination of nature, Marcuse was able to extend his critique to technology and what he termed 'technological rationality'. It was not technology, per se, which was objectionable, but its utilization as a means of social domination. Like the philosophy of reason, technological rationality represented for Marcuse more of an attitude than a method. He argued that the domination of nature, which technological rationality encouraged, also fosters the domination of man. According to Marcuse, social domination has resulted in social unhappiness which can be alleviated only by a fundamental change in society itself.

Marcuse also saw the philosophy of reason at work in bourgeois morality, especially in Kant's moral philosophy. He criticized bourgeois morality for its rejection of individual happiness in favor of duty to universal laws which are indifferent to individual fate. In his analysis, since happiness can never be guaranteed in a contingent world, bourgeois morality placed the promise of happiness outside of society. He asserted that the possibility of happiness was preserved only in bourgeois art.

Marcuse's critical theory was significantly influenced by his reading of Marx, especially by such early works as the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. Marx's analysis provided Marcuse with a conception of human nature which helped him to better grasp the
question of happiness. Marx's materialist philosophy emphasized labor as the universal human activity. His theory of history provided a critique of the class nature of society, and he called for a revolution of the working class, or proletariat, as the means by which social domination could be eradicated.

Marx's analysis pointed to a division of labor which impoverishes the laborer, while denying to him any control over his work activity, as an objective basis for social unhappiness. His analysis of capitalism also provided a theory of social revolution which promised greater freedom and happiness by eliminating the capitalist division of labor. The Marxian conception of labor as man's essential nature represented for Marcuse a key element of any social theory which proposes not only to understand human nature, but to also influence the course of human events.

Marx's materialist philosophy represented for Marcuse an advance over the idealist philosophy of reason to the extent that it based its analysis on the real conditions under which men and women live. His critique of capitalism was also a call to action to the victims of capitalism. While bourgeois morality offered the promise of happiness in the life hereafter, Marxist theory envisioned human happiness within a rational social order. It was not until after the proletarian revolution, predicted by Marx, failed to materialize in Western Europe that Marcuse turned his attention to other ideas.

As the revolutionary movements of the 1920's were shattered, Marcuse observed that "the end of a historical period and the horror of the one to come were announced in the simultaneity of the civil war
in Spain and the trials in Moscow." The rise of Nazism and the Holocaust led Marcuse to conclude that irrational forces within the human psyche could lead to behavior clearly at odds with human self-interest. His search for an explanation for the support offered to Hitler by the German working class led him to the works of Freud.

Of particular interest to Marcuse were Freud's metapsychological speculations after 1920. Freud's theory of human instinctive behavior postulated the existence of both life and death instincts within the human psyche. The presence of death instincts represented, for Freud, a significant problem in that those instincts must be permanently repressed if civilization is to avoid chaos and barbarism. The theory of instincts was adopted by Marcuse despite the pessimistic implications it produced in Freud's work. In contrast to Freud, Marcuse recast Thanatos, or the death instinct, not as the urge to death, but toward the elimination of pain. Consequently, as pain and misery were reduced, death "would cease to be an instinctual goal."5

While Freud viewed the destructive instincts as largely immutable and forever in need of repression, Marcuse maintained that objective changes in social organization could reduce the aggressive tendencies within the psyche and allow for a much greater measure of freedom and happiness. Thus, his critical theory of society developed in response to the challenges posed both by Marx and by Freud. His theory sought to reconcile the need for rational organization with the irrational demands of the human instinctual constitution.

The publication in 1955 of Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* represented one of the first efforts to reconcile the works of Marx
and Freud. In it, he utilized his critical theory to demonstrate the objective possibilities for a non-repressive society. He argued for a 'rational sensuality' which could satisfy basic material needs through a rational distribution of the goods of society while also satisfying instinctual needs for peace and pleasure through the creation of an aesthetic sensibility.

Marcuse's study of the human psyche in *Eros and Civilization* led him to the conclusion that only the imagination remained free from the forces which dominate society. The failure of the proletarian revolution confirmed for him the power of such repressive institutions as the church, the state and the multinational corporation. These institutions have propped up an order of scarcity and inequality at a time when the productive capacity of society could provide for the basic needs of all of its citizens. They have also created a permanent war economy which threatens the very survival of the human species. Because Marx's proletariat has dissolved as a revolutionary force, Marcuse turned his attention to the imagination in order to project a new historical subject for which revolution might constitute a vital need.

This theme was pursued in works such as *An Essay on Liberation* and *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* where Marcuse argued forcefully for a 'new sensibility' which would place human happiness before competitive economic pursuits as the goal of social organization. He believed that the images of freedom and gratification preserved by the imagination could be expressed in works of art. His subsequent turn to art represented an attempt to indict existing reality in favor of its repress-
ed, but genuinely human possibilities.

In his final work, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse maintained that art "is committed to an emancipation of sensibility, imagination, and reason in all spheres of subjectivity and objectivity." For Marcuse, aesthetic form came to replace Marx's proletariat as the determinate negation of existing society. Its commitment to beauty stands in sharp contrast to the present ugliness of post-industrial society and because of its commitment to beauty it plays a critical role in any attempt to reform society.

Marcuse's argument that aesthetic form had come to replace the proletariat is significant because it represents the first socialist theory of revolution which lacked a revolutionary class. Many on the left have criticized Marcuse's turn to art as an abandonment of revolutionary praxis because he maintained that the individuals to which authentic art might appeal are socially anonymous.

What Marcuse's critics must bear in mind is the fact that he openly acknowledged the limitations of his critical theory. Marcuse noted that the commitment of art to beauty weakens the negation contained in the art work. Enjoyment derived from great works of art provides a catharsis which cancels the indictment delivered by the work. In the end, he argued that works of art are powerless to change the world.

In his last work, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse also insisted that no society could transcend what is called chance or fate and that irresolvable contradictions and sorrow are inevitable. One reason for this conclusion is the fact of death which "denies once and for all
the reality of a non-repressive existence."

While this conclusion raises questions about the direction of Marcuse's critical theory, it does not remove happiness as the object of a rational society. The tragic features of existence have long been recognized in philosophy and Marcuse's pessimistic conclusions must be carefully weighed in relation to the necessary task of ongoing social reconstruction.

The impulse to reform society is perennial and derives from certain uncritical judgments about the human condition. Every philosophical system rests on certain fundamental presuppositions which are not susceptible to logical demonstration. In Marcuse's social philosophy, the claim that a general happiness ought to be realized in society serves as such a presupposition. Unless one accepts such a claim as true then it is impossible to argue that individuals ought to act in such a way as to attain happiness. For Marcuse, the validity of the claim that happiness should be attained enjoyed the same status as the claim that life is valuable or that life is preferable to death.

Marcuse's critical theory relies heavily upon judgments of a non-empirical nature. For example, he held that the ontological distinction between essence and appearance also involves an ethical distinction between "is" and "ought". Truth cannot be described simply as what is, but more correctly as what ought to be. His critical theory relies upon the claim that truth is not described by the facts of social existence, but rather by their unrealized possibilities. Given this emphasis on possibility, Marcuse's reliance on the imagin-
ation as the faculty which sees behind and beyond the facts of social existence is understandable.

Marcuse made use of his conception of truth as a means to better comprehend the possibilities for human happiness. He maintained that happiness requires knowledge of the truth. However, since knowledge of the present state of society is hardly conducive to happiness, he believed that we are confronted with a dilemma. Happiness requires knowledge, but knowledge leads to unhappiness. The way out of the dilemma, according to Marcuse, would come from the creation of a rational society based on knowledge of the truth.

It is at this point that Marcuse's theory is most subject to criticism. If truth is described not by the facts, but by unrealized possibilities, then which possibilities should be counted as true? Marcuse did argue for a number of values which he believed should be incorporated into social existence. It is very problematic, however, to maintain that such a list of values will ever be universally accepted as true in any objective sense. While it is possible to accept his contention that human possibilities are never restricted to the facts of social existence, it will prove far more difficult to argue successfully for any particular set of values as higher or more true than another.

Marcuse's use of idealist conceptions must also be carefully scrutinized in order to avoid reliance on purely subjective judgments. When utilized as the normative basis for an objective analysis of social conditions, such judgments may lead to conclusions which not only are at odds with the facts, but which may be incompatible with
the possibilities.

One idealist conception utilized by Marcuse was that of essence. His designation of happiness as an appropriate social goal rests upon the answer to another question: What is man? The question of whether or not mankind possesses some unique and essential nature is as old as philosophy. As we have seen, Plato and Aristotle held that because only man possesses the capacity to reason, this characteristic represents our essence. Since they also believed that happiness requires the unimpeded use of human faculties, the highest good requires the use of reason in an act of contemplation. Other philosophers, in various ways, have made a similar case for reason as humanity's essential attribute.

The argument for a concept of a uniquely human essence is a complex one which goes to the heart of the problem of happiness. While a concept of essence holds great potential to indict the actual world in light of its better possibilities, the argument for reason as man's essential nature is fraught with difficulties. By elevating reason to the status of the highest good, Aristotle and others, at the same time, have devalued sensuality and the imagination. According to Marcuse, the subsequent repression of sensuality in the name of reason is a major cause of unhappiness.

The argument for a particular human essence can also be understood as an argument in favor of the exercise of one human faculty over another. If it is true that happiness results from the proper integration of all human faculties and capacities, then the argument for any distinctive human essence becomes part of the problem rather than
part of the solution to the question of happiness. It was, in fact, Marcuse's contention that reason and sensuality must be harmonized before happiness can be attained.

The problem of happiness is further compounded by the issue of false needs. Marcuse, following the eudaemonistic tradition initiated by Plato, maintained that it was possible to distinguish between 'higher' and 'lower' and between 'true' and 'false' needs. He argued that a 'technological veil' blinded individuals from knowing what their true interests were and that it may be necessary to disrupt their choices in the interest of genuine freedom.

The issue of whether or not true human needs can be distinguished from false ones will occupy little attention in this study. With the exception of needs which are clearly destructive to the individual or to others, it is difficult to maintain that the gratification of the need to read poetry, for example, is inherently higher or lower than the need to engage in physical exercise. Although Marcuse argued for aesthetic consciousness as a higher need which is currently repressed by consumer society, the rational society projected by his critical theory would not restrict the free gratification of human needs, except to the extent required to maintain social order.

Rather than arguing about what might constitute a higher need, this thesis will only seek to examine what objectively might be necessary to bring about greater human happiness. It will also examine the inherent limitations to social freedom and happiness which cast doubt on the efficacy of the entire project.

The goal of a truly rational society remains an unfinished pro-
ject which may be unattainable. If freedom is a necessary condition for happiness, however, any attempt to expand the realm of freedom would be significant. The alternative view, that individual happiness is compatible with social unfreedom, holds that inner peace and satisfaction can be maintained alongside poverty, injustice and misery. According to Marcuse, by restricting freedom to the inner autonomy of the individual, bourgeois morality has determined that general happiness and a rational society are unattainable.

It should be understood that Marcuse never sought to describe an ideal society such as More's Utopia. He did describe the preconditions for a rational society; at the same time he acknowledged the necessity of social taboos and restraints. Marcuse understood freedom both as freedom from fear, anxiety and want and as freedom for the fullest development of human capabilities and sensibilities. The rational society projected by his critical theory would provide the greatest opportunity for the free development of human capabilities consistent with the need to maintain social order.

This thesis will examine the nature of happiness in both its subjective and objective manifestations. It will then explore the relationship between happiness and social justice as it develops in Marcuse's critical theory. Subsequent chapters will discuss Freud's theory of instinctive behavior, instinctual liberation and the aesthetic dimension. Finally, the relationship between time and happiness will be examined. This final chapter will conclude with an analysis of the application of Marcuse's critical theory in light of the obstacles and opportunities for progressive social change.
THE NATURE OF HAPPINESS

The concept of happiness is difficult to grasp. While it is common to hear people speak of being happy or sad, there is little agreement as to what the nature of happiness might be. According to Marcuse, "Happiness is not in the mere feeling of satisfaction but in the reality of freedom and satisfaction. Happiness involves knowledge: it is the prerogative of the animal rationale."

In what sense does happiness involve knowledge? Surely, many of our happiest moments do not seem to be directly connected to rational activity. It often appears that the happiest among us are the most carefree, while those who are aware of the world's problems are the unhappiest. Because happiness is experienced subjectively as a sense of well-being, it has received more attention from the proponents of conformist psychology than from the advocates of progressive social change. However, if the goal of a rational society is greater human happiness, then it would seem crucial that political theorists study its nature.

Marcuse's conception of human happiness drew its inspiration from both the eudaemonistic and the hedonistic traditions. His eudaemonism held that certain activities were higher or more likely sources of happiness than others. His hedonism sought to preserve the world as an object of pleasure.

What is the nature of happiness? Happiness is commonly expressed as a sense of well-being. It has also been described as a state in
which an individual has everything that he or she wants or, in the alternative, as a state in which there is nothing that the individual wants changed.

The term 'want' is important in any discussion of the nature of happiness. For all human beings have wants. Individual happiness is directly related to an individual's ability to satisfy his or her wants. Of importance to any theory of happiness is the psychological fact that not all individuals have the same wants and, therefore, not all would find satisfaction in the same activities. The very fact that many individuals have wants whose satisfaction would conflict with the happiness of others makes clear that social unhappiness is a problem not readily solved.

Another difficulty in the development of a theory of happiness concerns the question of measurement. Since happiness is a subjective sense of well-being, is it possible to know whether or not another individual is happy? Is it possible for an individual to be happy without knowing it? Aside from the issue of whether or not we can know the mental states of others, there is also the question of how to measure happiness over time.

Proponents of eudaemonism would tend to consider a life as a whole when determining whether or not there is happiness present. Aristotle argued that an individual should not consider himself truly happy until the end of his life because some tragedy could always destroy the happiness that he presently enjoys. The hedonistic emphasis on the ratio of pleasure to pain also requires a period of time in which to measure happiness, for many short-term pleasures can obviously produce
Our search for a general happiness, however, cannot be limited to the identification of a single formula by which each individual might be happy. The presence of unhappiness in society is due to many factors, not all of which are rooted in social antagonisms. Because all happiness or sorrow is subjectively experienced, the most that such a theory could offer are the social preconditions necessary for the possibility of a general happiness.

As we have noted in the introduction, the question of human happiness was first addressed by Marcuse in his essay, "On Hedonism." In it, he described two different versions of the hedonistic philosophy—the Cyrenaic and the Epicurean. Within the Cyrenaic school, the pursuit of happiness was secondary to the pursuit of particular pleasures. According to the exponents of that school, "Particular pleasure is desirable for its own sake, whereas happiness is not desirable for its own sake, but for the sake of particular pleasures." According to the exponents of that school, "Particular pleasure is desirable for its own sake, whereas happiness is not desirable for its own sake, but for the sake of particular pleasures." In addition, the Cyreniacs held that "bodily pleasures are far better than mental pleasures, and bodily pains are far worse than mental pains." The only measure of happiness, therefore, was the individual's immediate perception of pleasure or pain.

In contrast to the Cyrenaics, the Epicureans adopted what Marcuse labeled a 'negative' hedonism. They were not so much interested in obtaining pleasure as they were in avoiding pain. For that reason, they "do not choose every pleasure whatsoever, but oftentimes pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them." For example, Epicurus led a spartan existence and often scoffed at
the degenerate lifestyles of those who lived only for physical gratification. He and his followers practiced moderation in all things and found the pleasures of the mind to be superior to those of the body.

Marcuse argued that both schools of hedonism developed in response to the slave economy in the ancient world and to the prevailing unhappiness which that economy produced. However, the hedonist schools focused their attention on the individual. Only individual pleasures or pains mattered, and the civic life was something to avoid. He found fault with hedonism precisely on that account. He noted that, "The particular interest of the individual, just as it is, is affirmed as the true interest and is justified against every and all community.... The concrete objectivity of happiness is a concept for which hedonism finds no evidence."5

According to Marcuse, the failure of hedonism did not lie in its demand for individual happiness in the face of social injustice, but in its inability to separate true from false interests. The pleasure which the master derived from the labor of the slave was quite real. However, the master-slave relationship was, nevertheless, the source of much unhappiness in the ancient world.

Any theory which uncritically endorses the pursuit of pleasure or the avoidance of pain as the only good will be unable to reconcile the interests of the individual with those of society. Plato had anticipated this critique of hedonism when he contended that the gratification of 'bad' pleasures could undermine the social order.

One of the first formulations of the eudaemonistic position was put forth by Plato, who held that happiness necessarily involves
knowledge. One must know the good in order to possess it. Because of the necessary connection between knowledge and happiness in Plato's philosophy, the quest for knowledge could not be divorced from the pursuit of human happiness. This quest for knowledge has since characterized the theoretical attitude of all science and philosophy.

For both Plato and Aristotle, theoria meant contemplation of the universe. Classical theory was related to life in that it sought to discover the paradigm of order in nature and man as a guide for practical action. This connection between theory and practice resulted in the interest in ethical concerns for classical theory.

Because of this interest in eudaemonia, philosophers have, in various ways, attempted to explain the changing and contingent character of experience. Plato developed his theory of universals as an intellectual response to his uncertain knowledge of the phenomenal world. He reasoned that while individuals change, certain properties and ideas remain unchanged. Theorems of geometry, ideals of beauty, goodness and justice, and laws of nature all persist through change. Even the self recognizes itself as constant throughout life despite continual physical and mental changes.

This quest for knowledge led Plato to speculate on the existence of a realm of forms in which dwelled the ideal forms of which individuals are but imperfect copies. This realm of forms included such ideas as truth, goodness and beauty. In various dialogues, he expressed his understanding of the relationship between the forms of existence and the possibility of human happiness. For example, in the Symposium, Plato described a banquet at which a number of orators are
asked to explain the nature of Love. The dialogue culminates with the speech of Socrates which expressed Plato's understanding of the relationship between beauty, time and happiness.

In this dialogue, Socrates relates the instruction he received from the wise Diotima of Mantinea. Diotima informed Socrates that Love is neither mortal nor immortal, good nor bad, beautiful nor ugly. Born of Poverty and Plenty, Love is always striving after that which it lacks. However, men do not love the ugly or the bad because only possession of beauty and good things bring happiness. Because one who possesses perfect beauty or goodness would want it forever, the ultimate object of Love is immortality. For finite creatures, a measure of immortality may be attained through the 'birth in beauty' of natural offspring as well as the products of the soul.

Finally, Socrates relates the instruction he received regarding the proper manner in which to grasp the essence of beauty. Diotima counseled that,

"he should love one body and there beget beautiful speech; then he should take notice that the beauty in one body is akin to the beauty in another body....When he has learnt this, he must become the lover of all beautiful bodies.... Next he must believe beauty in souls to be more precious than beauty in the body;...that he may moreover be compelled to contemplate the beauty in our pursuits and customs, and to see that all beauty is of one and the same kin....Next he must be led from practice to knowledge,...directing his gaze from now on towards beauty as a whole...and in contemplation of it give birth to many beautiful and magnificent speeches and thoughts in the abundance of philosophy."

Diotima goes on to state that the nature of Beauty is everlasting, neither increasing nor diminishing. While beautiful things are born and perish, Beauty remains unchanged. As such, it is both per-
fect and immortal.

For Plato, the Form of Beauty represented an integral aspect of the most general ground of being. The perfection and immortality of Beauty constitute mankind's highest aspiration, the promise of happiness.

Plato's formulation of the nature of happiness deserves some scrutiny. He began by saying that Love is always striving after that which it lacks. We want what we do not have. The unhappy man will be happy only when he has achieved his aims or acquired what he wants. Conversely, the happy individual wants nothing which he does not have.

Men, however, do not love the ugly or the bad because only beauty and good things bring happiness. This statement appears at first to be tautological to the extent that the term 'good' may be defined as that which we desire. However, Plato’s eudaemonism ruled out such a definition. Clearly, he believed that not all that we desire is good.

Plato also maintained that the possession of beauty is a primary source of happiness. Such a suggestion might appear odd, especially in light of the negative way poets and other artists are regarded in the Republic. However, his subsequent delineation between the beauty in the body and the beauty in the soul makes clear his preference for the "beautiful and magnificent speeches and thoughts in the abundance of philosophy."

Finally, Plato argued that immortality is the ultimate object of Love because one who possesses perfect beauty or goodness would want it forever. Because humans are mortal, however, only a measure of immortality can be attained through the birth in beauty of natural off-
spring or the products of the soul. Plato had philosophy in mind here, and certainly our reception of his works has provided him a measure of immortality.

Love of immortality characterizes a profound human concern for self-preservation in the face of death. The fear of death, or of loss in general, represents a significant obstacle to the pursuit of happiness. The relationship between time and happiness, therefore, presents a central question in any study of the subject.

These observations from the Symposium raise many of the same issues addressed by Marcuse in his exploration of the subject of human happiness. His turn to the aesthetic dimension concurs with Plato's emphasis on beauty as a source of happiness. In the rejection of hedonism he found an anticipation of the subsequent attempt of Christian theologians and bourgeois moralists to justify a repressive morality. Finally, Marcuse's contention that the reality of death presents a final obstacle to the attainment of happiness is consistent with Plato's claim that immortality is our ultimate aim.

The nature of happiness remains problematic. With his contention that happiness requires knowledge, Marcuse rejected the hedonist equation of pleasure and happiness. His critique of hedonism was based on the belief that individual satisfaction in the face of general misery was illusory. Instead, he argued that social justice formed the objective basis for a general happiness. But unlike Plato, Marcuse did not endeavor to depict the utopian society which reflected his ideal of justice. Instead, he confined his analysis to the actual conditions of capitalist society in order to examine the relationship between happi-
ness and social justice. It is this relationship which guided the development of his critical theory of society.
The examination of the nature of happiness initiated in the previous chapter indicates a relationship between reason, happiness and social justice. For Plato and Aristotle the capacity to reason defined essential human nature. The ability to reason represents a unique power which separates human beings from other animals. Reason gives form to experience. Only through the proper use of reason can men arrive at a knowledge of the good. Such knowledge is essential if men are to live happy and virtuous lives. In this way the philosophical implies the practical and social.

For Plato, to know the good is to do it. For Aristotle, happiness results from the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. Both philosophers maintained that only the proper exercise of reason provided human beings with the knowledge necessary to live well. Both ex-tolled virtue and rejected sensual pleasure as a reliable source of happiness.

The classicist preoccupation with reason as the expression of man's essential nature was taken up by Marcuse in his essay, "The Concept of Essence". In this essay, he demonstrated that philosophical conceptions of human nature have been influenced historically by existing forms of social organization.

According to Marcuse, Plato and Aristotle understood human essence as potentiality in conflict with existence. Man's capacity to reason did not find expression in a rational social order. He observed that,
"The Being of things is not exhausted in what they immediately are; they do not appear as they could be." ²

The distinction between essence and appearance is crucial for any critical social theory. Marcuse stated that things do not appear as they could be. Existence does not coincide with essence. From Plato onward, idealist philosophy has never equated the truth of Being with mere appearance. Likewise, in Marcuse's critical theory the truth is defined not by the facts of social existence, but by the ideal possibilities which have been repressed by the organization of society.

Marcuse also maintained that, "The essence as potentiality becomes a force within existence."³ The concept of essence can become a force when it is used to criticize existence in light of its better possibilities. This same task was taken up by Plato in many of his dialogues.

In The Republic, for example, Plato used his description of the ideal state to criticize the Athenian society which had put Socrates to death. The principle which defines such a state is justice. In the dialogue, Plato maintained that the good of the individual could not be separated from the good of society as a whole. If justice is a precondition for the general well-being of all citizens, Plato asked whether or not in all cases the just man is happy? He concluded that the just man is happy despite the sacrifices he might be required to make because he lives in a just society which provides for the good of its citizens.

The interest in social justice produced a tension within classical theory which could not be resolved within the context of the slave
economy. However, despite this unresolved tension, classical theory reflected an accommodation to the social order.

According to Marcuse, this accommodation was expressed in three ways. First, Aristotle's delineation of active and passive reason, with the latter reserved for the slave, reflected the prevailing order of domination and servitude. Second, his separation of practical from philosophical knowledge reinforced the belief that happiness is not to be found in this world. Finally, the other-worldly appeal of both the Platonic and Aristotelian world-views utilized reason as a means to repress the erotic and aggressive instincts at work within the human psyche.

Marcuse took issue with this tendency in classical philosophy to portray social contradictions as ontological conditions. The acceptance of slavery and other forms of social domination represented the retreat of critical reason in the face of an irrational social order. The very existence of slavery denied the possibility of happiness to the vast majority of individuals in the ancient world.

Marcuse also rejected Plato's utopian description of an 'ideal' society which bore little resemblance to the actual conditions of Greek life. Such a description did not provide the theoretical basis from which such a society might be established. In the end, Plato concluded that justice would never be realized until philosophers became kings. Obviously, such an admission does not render the Republic a likely blueprint for social transformation.

Is individual happiness compatible with general misery? Is there such a state as 'false happiness'? Although it may be argued that
happiness is strictly an individual concern, Marcuse, like Plato, maintained that true happiness was impossible without social justice. Only the creation of a just society could resolve the tension between essence and existence first expressed in classical philosophy. His critical theory of society was concerned, therefore, with the real conditions of existence which might lead to a general happiness. Consequently, he branded as 'false' any expression of individual happiness which did not concern itself with the happiness of other human beings.

According to Marcuse, "General happiness presupposes knowledge of the true interest: that the social life-process be administered in a manner which brings into harmony the freedom of individuals and the preservation of the whole on the basis of given objective historical and natural conditions."4

As we have seen, it was Marcuse's contention that the appeal to reason present in classical philosophy co-existed with an irrational social order. The philosophical contemplation of truth, goodness and beauty did not provide for a general happiness. On the contrary, classical philosophy resigned itself to the fact that true happiness could not be found in this world.

This spirit of resignation grew deeper in the feudal period as Christian theologians used reason and religion to create an elaborate idea of the after-life. But unlike Plato's reconciliation of the tension between essence and existence as idealist or utopian philosophy, Christian theology pacified the tension with the idea of a loving God. This idea served to reduce social conflict while deferring the promise
of happiness to the 'other world'.

Subsequently, in the bourgeois era, the philosopher Immanuel Kant also located the essence of man in his rational capabilities, but his conception of reason rested upon two distinct conceptions. He defined reason as both the unifying totality of the cognitive faculty and as "a single faculty that rises 'above' the understanding, as the faculty of those 'Ideas' that can never be represented in experience...."5

Marcuse argued that it was only the latter conception of reason—that of a purely regulative function—which possessed any relation to freedom in Kant's philosophy. That freedom, of course, was internal. Freedom was understood as the ability of the subject to give to itself the universally necessary laws of reason. External to the individual was a world governed strictly by natural necessity. Consequently, the critical function of reason was restricted to the realm of morality as the only realm which could be determined in accordance with the rule of freedom.

Marcuse interpreted the appeal to reason expressed in the works of Kant as reflective of the nature of bourgeois society. The universal freedom proclaimed by that society masked the reality that the 'free' economic subjects were still controlled by the laws of the commodity market. The emphasis on duty and morality contained in these works underscored the extent to which happiness within society was not something which should be expected. In fact, the pursuit of happiness was a subversive idea which found expression only in bourgeois art.

Marcuse asserted that because "the beauty of art is compatible with the bad present," bourgeois art was able to offer happiness in an
illusory form. Bourgeois culture eternalized the beautiful moment which could be repeated again and again in the art work. He noted that, "there is an element of earthly delight in the works of great bourgeois art.... The individual enjoys beauty, goodness, splendor, peace and victorious joy. He even enjoys pain and suffering, cruelty and crime. He experiences liberation." It is, however, only the liberation of the moment. Happiness is possible only in the aesthetic illusion.

The relationship between reason and happiness is a troubling one. Philosophers since Plato have argued that happiness is dependent upon the exercise of reason. However, the actual history of Western civilization tends to refute the claim that the use of reason might bring about a general happiness. In fact, the application of reason to questions of social organization may actually prove to be a greater source of human unhappiness.

With the philosophers, Marcuse agreed that happiness requires knowledge; that it is more than the mere feeling of satisfaction. A general happiness, however, requires more than the exercise of reason. It requires the creation of a rational society which harmonizes individual freedom with the need to maintain social order. This task led Marcuse to writings of Karl Marx and to the theory of revolution.

From Idealism to Materialism

In contrast with the views expressed by such philosophers as Plato and Kant, the philosopher Karl Marx proposed a radically different interpretation of mankind's essential nature. He argued that the "essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single indi-
individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relationships."

With this radical reorientation, Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* provided a philosophical basis for his critique of bourgeois political economy. His discussion of alienated labor came in response not only to questions raised by the philosopher Hegel, but to the entire tradition of idealist philosophy which had ignored the actual conditions of man's existence in its formulation of the concept of human happiness. In contrast to the many philosophers who had sought to explain the world, Marx sought to change it.

The discovery of Marx's materialist dialectic represented a major turning point in the development of Marcuse's critical theory. As a student at the University of Freiberg, he adopted much of the idealist and phenomenological orientation of his professor Martin Heidegger. In its place, Marx's historical materialism provided a methodology with which to analyze the actual conditions of man's existence.

Marcuse believed that the materialist dialectic proposed by Marx held great potential to indict existing society in light of its repressed, but better possibilities. Although Hegel had described alienated labor as a negative reality, his idealistic formulation of the problem did not provide the basis for radical social change. For Marx, on the other hand, "the negativity of reality becomes a historical condition which cannot be hypostatized as a metaphysical state of affairs. In other words, it becomes a social condition, associated with a particular historical form of society."

Marx argued that man is a sensuous being whose nature is confirmed
by the products of his labor as a practical activity. As an objective, sensuous being, mankind's existence is characterized by neediness and distress. "Objects are thus not primarily objects of perception, but of needs, and as such objects of the powers, abilities and instincts of man."  

Marx's materialism found the confirmation of man's essential powers only in their objectification. Man does not simply accept the objective world, he must appropriate it by transforming objects into the organs of his life. According to Marx, each of man's "relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, wanting, acting, loving—in short, all the organs of his individual being...are in their orientation to the object, the appropriation of that object."  

Human freedom, according to Marx, involves the appropriation and transformation of objects in order to transcend what is given and pre-established. Through labor, man literally creates himself and his world. According to Marx, man creates "because he is posited by objects—because at bottom he is nature." In the act of self-creation, man regards himself as a universal and free being. 

Furthermore for Marx, objective reality is also social and historical. He characterized the nature of social relationships in all previously existing societies as one of domination and servitude. Beginning with the first division of labor, one class of human beings has always labored for another. As such, neither class can realize itself in its labor. In his day, the major social classes were the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.
For Marx, the need for the abolition of class society was drawn directly from his analysis of alienated labor. He held that under capitalism, the laborer is alienated both from the product of his labor and from the labor process itself. Because the object which labor produces belongs not to the laborer but to another, it confronts the laborer as something alien. Consequently, his productive life appears only as a means to another end. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx wrote,

"What constitutes the alienation of labour? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that, consequently, he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague....Finally, the external character of work for the worker is shown by the fact that it is not his own work but work for someone else, that in work he does not belong to himself but to another person."

According to Marx, the alienation of labor leads to other forms of alienation, including the alienation from nature, from other human beings, and from the species being which binds humans into community. For Marx, historical materialism represented a 'real humanism' which grasped the alienation of labor as a practical problem. Because he defined labor as man's essential nature, Marx equated humanism with naturalism. The alienation of labor, therefore, calls into question the very nature of man.
The implications of Marx's theory of alienation for the problem of human happiness are clear. First, Marx understood that the possibility of human happiness relied upon the actual state of social conditions. Since objective reality is social and historical, the present form of objective reality must be superseded before a new form can exist. Therefore, he called for a revolution of the proletariat as the only means by which a general happiness could be achieved.

Further, Marx maintained that communism represented the resolution of the tension between essence and existence which first appeared in classical philosophy. Under communism there would be "the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species."13

While such a pronouncement appears incorrect in light of subsequent historical development, the abolition of alienated labor and class society became the object of Marcuse's critical theory. Writing in 1932 on the subject of Marx's Manuscripts, he proclaimed that, "Capitalism is characterized not merely by economic or political crisis but by a catastrophe affecting the human essence...(which) requires the cataclysmic transcendence of the actual situation through total revolution."14

In the initial formulations of his critical theory, Marcuse maintained that the realization of reason in society would mean the disappearance of philosophy. He argued that materialism reversed the orientation of all previous conceptions of man. In Marxism, "the idea of
reason has been superseded by the idea of happiness."

In contrast to traditional philosophy, Marcuse insisted that in his critical theory, "The philosophical construction of reason is replaced by the creation of a rational society." His demand of reason required the creation of a social organization in which individuals could collectively regulate their lives in accordance with their needs. It was this emphasis on social revolution as the means to a general happiness which animated Marcuse's critical theory of society.
The Critical Theory of Society

Herbert Marcuse developed his critical theory of society while a member of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. Established in 1923, Institute members published both empirical and theoretical studies of the social, economic, political, psychological and philosophical issues of modern society. In 1937, Director Max Horkheimer coined the term 'critical theory' to describe the common methodology employed by Institute members.¹

Marcuse came to the Frankfurt Institute from the University of Freiberg where he studied under the philosopher Martin Heidegger. German idealism and Heidegger's phenomenological approach both influenced the initial development of Marcuse's philosophy. As we have seen, his discovery of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in 1932 radically shifted the focus of his study from questions of human authenticity to ones of social transformation.

Marcuse contended that in the materialist dialectic, reality is the totality of the relations of production. Its content is the maintenance and reproduction of society as a whole. Its form is the realization of capital. This form, however, is only a particular historical pattern in which the content may be realized. He held that the existing content is reality in a 'bad' form.²

Nonetheless, while adopting Marx's materialist dialectic, Marcuse did not abandon the critical insights he found in idealist philosophy. His emerging critical theory sought instead to combine a critical ra-

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tionality with the historical analysis of man's social, economic and political existence in order to establish a framework in which the subject of human happiness could be explored.

Writing in the 1930's, Marcuse believed that the real potentialities for the fulfillment of human life were at hand. The relative success of capitalism in overcoming material scarcity had provided the level of economic development which Marx claimed was necessary for socialist transformation. Marcuse believed that human fulfillment would be determined by such factors as the control of natural and social productive forces, the development of needs in relation to the possibility of their satisfaction, and the availability and wealth of cultural values.³

Above all, Marcuse believed that democratic social planning would enable the associated individuals to freely decide what was to be produced and how the wealth of society would be distributed. This emphasis on democracy and the autonomy of associated individuals characterized Marcuse's vision of the rational society. The purpose of his critical theory, therefore, was to explore the actual tendencies within capitalist society which could provide the basis for the realization of such a society.

The optimism of the 1930's soon gave way to horror, however, as the rise of fascism forced Marcuse and other Institute members to flee Germany for the United States. He later noted that his pre-Auschwitz writings were deeply separated from everything which was to follow. He observed that, "the concern with philosophy expressed in these essays was already, in the thirties, a concern with the past: remembrance of
something that at some point had lost its reality.... Precisely at that time, beaten or betrayed, the social forces in which freedom and revolution were joined were delivered over to the existing powers."4

The failure of proletarian revolution in Western Europe did not lead Marcuse to reject Marxism. It did, however, cause him to carefully examine the existing powers which stood in the way of social revolution. Obviously, the bourgeoisie as the dominant social class opposed the revolution. The rise of fascism, however, represented a development far more barbaric than mere class conflict. It more closely resembled what Horkheimer and others later referred to as an 'eclipse of reason'.

Marcuse's interest in the relationship between reason and happiness led to the development of a critique of what he now termed the 'philosophy of reason'. A primary focus of this critique dealt with the application of scientific reason to questions of social organization. He argued that the relationship between reason and technology raised particularly serious issues which called into question the supposed rational self-interest of individuals.

Marcuse defined scientific rationality as that use of reason which, by quantifying nature, separates the true from the good, science from ethics. Universal ideas are refuted a priori by scientific reason. They become "mere ideals, and their concrete content evaporates."5

Scientific rationality proposes to remove the interest of the observing subject from the object of his study. But, according to Marcuse, the disinterestedness of science betrays its appropriation by
the forces which control society. Because knowledge had always existed within a political context, the application of science to technology necessarily involves either an extension or a subversion of the existing political order.

For Marcuse, technology meant far more than just the tools and methods of production. It was also a means of organizing social relationships and projecting a world. Not only had technology permitted the conquest of nature, it had redefined our conception of nature. Thus, Marx's equation of humanism and naturalism had been replaced with the conception of nature as a mere object of utility.

Marcuse further contended that the forces which control society have used technology to bolster social domination. He held that when the domination of man is accomplished through the use of technology, scientific rationality becomes technological rationality. For Marcuse, technological rationality represented the constriction of reason to the needs of the technical apparatus. No longer is the fulfillment of human interests the ultimate purpose of reason. Rather, the rational is defined in terms of what serves the interest of the apparatus.

Marx had argued that the alienation of the laborer from the product of his labor led to the fetishism of commodities in which a "definite social relation between men...assumes...the fantastic form of a relation between things." The fetishism of commodities conceals the true nature of capitalism as a system of domination and servitude.

In Marcuse's formulation the fetish of technique, or technical efficiency, had replaced commodity fetishism as the predominant form of mystification in the modern world. According to Marcuse, social
organization as a whole reflects a technological a priori which defines all social relationships in terms of technical efficiency. As a consequence, individuals develop a 'matter-of-fact' attitude which does not question the efficacy of technological rationality itself. While matter-of-factness itself was certainly not new, the social organization which it defined has changed considerably. Marcuse asserted that,

"Matter-of-factness animated ancient materialism and hedonism, it was responsible in the struggle of modern physical science against spiritual oppression, and in the revolutionary rationalism of the Enlightenment. The new attitude differs from all these in the highly rational compliance which typifies it. The facts directing man's thought and action are not those of a nature which must be accepted in order to be mastered, or those of society which must be changed because they no longer correspond to human needs and potentialities. Rather are they those of the machine process, which itself appears the embodiment of rationality and expediency."^8

Marcuse argued that the organization of modern society reflects a machine process which subordinates individual differences to a common framework of standardized performances. The pursuit of profit dictates the quantity, form and kind of commodities which are produced and the skills of the individual laborer tend to be reduced to a series of "semi-spontaneous reactions to prescribed mechanical norms."^9

This characterization of modern society as a machine process suggests the extent to which Marcuse believed that we have lost sight of human happiness as the proper end of society. The pervasiveness of technological rationality masks the irrationality of contemporary life and blocks efforts to understand the source of our unhappiness.

The application of technological rationality within society finds
perhaps its clearest expression in bureaucracy. Marcuse cited Weber's dictum that, "'In contrast to the democratic self-administration of small homogeneous units', bureaucracy is 'the universal concomitant of modern mass democracy.'" The development of bureaucratic organization is also the universal concomitant of the technical apparatus.

Bureaucratization embodies the whole of the advanced capitalist and socialist world. It is central to both public and private organization, to the ruling elite and to the official opposition. Bureaucracies function hierarchically in order to regulate, control, enhance, and maintain the efficient utilization of resources—both human and natural—within a society defined by the economic performances of its members.

Although the bureaucratization of society is hardly synonomous with fascism, Marcuse did believe that technological rationality was common to both forms of organization. He argued that fascism represented an extreme form of bureaucratic organization guided by technological rationality.

According to Marcuse, the reign of terror in National Socialist Germany was sustained not only by brute force but also by "the ingenious manipulation of the power inherent in technology: the intensification of labor, propaganda, the training of youths and workers, the organization of the governmental, industrial and party bureaucracy... follow the lines of greatest technological efficiency." Thus, technological rationality, unchecked by any overriding concern for the happiness of humanity, culminates in the authoritarian state. By equating reason with the needs of technical ef-
ficiency, the forces which control the authoritarian state are capable of transforming the rational self-interest of individuals into compliance with the demands of the state. In this manner, the connection between reason and happiness, the object of philosophy from the beginning of Western civilization, is severed.

Marcuse did acknowledge that within a liberal democracy, economic forces cannot compel consumers to purchase their products. With the techniques developed from psychological and marketing studies, however, the loyalty of the consumer is elicited in a more subtle manner. Conformity is won with the appearance of freedom. Happiness has been replaced with the temporary gratification of manufactured needs.

In sum, this critique of technological rationality as a form of mystification and domination went to the heart of his concern for human happiness. Happiness involves knowledge; it requires the exercise of human reason in a world free from fear, want and anxiety. The technical apparatus, however, has redefined human reason as technical efficiency. Man's creation has displaced the development of his essential capacities as the telos of life. Consequently, technology cannot deliver the happiness it promises because individual happiness is no longer the goal of reason. As long as man's reason is applied only to questions of technical efficiency, it is powerless to criticize and transcend existing social relationships.

However, while his rejection of technological rationality was unwavering, Marcuse's attitude toward technology itself was ambivalent. He never renounced the possibility that mechanization could shift the focus of labor away from the necessities of production to an
arena of free human realization. The reduction of scarcity and the abolition of competitive pursuits could provide the basis for greater social freedom. While it could not guarantee perennial happiness, it would mean a reduction in the alienation of labor, freedom from want, and a greater chance for the fullest development of human capabilities.

The critique of technological rationality and the philosophy of reason formed a cornerstone of Marcuse's critical theory of society. He viewed the goal of technical efficiency as a dangerous challenge to the goal of social justice and human happiness. Furthermore, the failure of proletarian revolution and the rise of fascism strongly suggested to Marcuse that the problem of human happiness required a closer examination of the human psyche. It was at this point that he began his inquiry into Freud's metapsychology.
In the preceding chapter we discussed Marcuse's critique of technological rationality as an obstacle to social revolution and its implied promise of human happiness. The fetishism of technical efficiency provides an explanation for the separation of reason from the pursuit of happiness. However, the experience of fascism represented for Marcuse an even more serious obstacle to the realization of a rational society. For fascism was possible only as a result of the acquiescence of a large segment of the working class. In his search for an explanation of this behavior Marcuse turned his attention to the works of Freud.

Freud's metapsychology presented a serious challenge to the supposed rationality of the human subject. Freudian theory reached to the core of Western conceptions of the self and constructed a system in which the interaction of instinctual forces could serve to explain human behavior.

Although several members of the Frankfurt Institute were deeply involved with Freud's work, Marcuse did not focus his attention on it until after 1940. Earlier work by Erich Fromm and Theodor Adorno centered on Freud's discussion of ideology and his theory of group behavior. It was Freud's theory of instinctive behavior, however, which greatly interested Marcuse. Of particular concern to him was the postulate of a death instinct present in organic life since its origin.

Freud's theory developed gradually as a result of his clinical
observations and his metapsychological speculations. He defined instinct as "an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces."¹

The 'earlier state of things' to which Freud referred was the inorganic state. His clinical observations led him to conclude that, "The dominating tendency of mental life, and perhaps of nervous life in general, is the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli...and our recognition of that fact is one of our strongest reasons for believing in the existence of death instincts."²

Freud's hypothesis of a death instinct was first proposed in Beyond the Pleasure Principle. Patients' accounts of the repetition of traumatic dreams and painful behavior patterns led him to posit the existence of an instinct which opposed the pleasure principle. Freud proposed that a death instinct could explain the inclination to pain present in such experiences. The existence of sadomasochism also provided evidence of the fusion of sexual, aggressive and self-destructive instincts.

In addition to a death instinct, Freud also believed that the inclination to aggression represented "an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man (and) it constitutes the greatest impediment to civilization."³ Because of man's innate aggressiveness Freud believed that civilization was necessarily built upon the repression of the human instinctual constitution.

In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud traced the maturation of
his instinct theory from its initial division of the ego and sexual instincts. With his hypothesis of narcissistic libido, the sexual instinct was transformed into Eros, "which seeks to force together and hold together the portions of living substance."\(^4\) Sexuality designated that portion of Eros which is directed toward objects.

Freud speculated that Eros operates from the beginning of life as a 'life instinct' in opposition to a "'death instinct' which was brought into being by the coming to life of inorganic substance."\(^5\)

Freud wrote that his original characterization of the ego instincts as separate from the sexual instincts was challenged by his realization that a portion of the ego instincts had a libidinal quality which took the subject's own ego as its object. "These narcissistic self-preservative instincts had hence-forward to be counted among the libidinal sexual instincts."\(^6\)

The distinction between the ego and sexual instincts was thus transformed into one between ego and object instincts, both of which were of a libidinal nature. Freud explained that at this point a new opposition emerged between the libidinal instincts and the instincts at work in destructive behavior. He referred to this opposition as one between the life instincts (Eros) and the death instincts (Thanatos).

The theory of the death instinct and man's natural aggressiveness were highly controversial features of Freud's metapsychology. Some analysts, such as Fromm, completely discounted this feature of Freud's work. Wilhelm Reich, on the other hand, argued vehemently that all forms of aggression could be reduced to repressed sexuality. His doctrine of social liberation emphasized the primacy of sexuality as a
cure for aggressiveness.

Although Marcuse appropriated Freud's theory of a death instinct, his application of it remains somewhat obscure. In Eros and Civilization, he argued that the ultimate goal of the instinct is pleasure and not death. "If the instinct's basic objective is not the termination of life but of pain—the absence of tension—then paradoxically, in terms of the instinct, the conflict between life and death is the more reduced, the closer life approximates the state of gratification.... Death would cease to be an instinctual goal." 

Although Marcuse accepted the fact that the instincts were essentially conservative, he rejected Freud's designation of them as largely immutable. Rather, he argued that the aggressiveness which Freud found to be innate in man represented no more than a depiction of the domination present historically within class societies. Accordingly, a change in social organization could result in a historical modification of man's instinctual constitution.

Marcuse also appropriated several other features of Freud's metapsychology which provided insights into human instinctive behavior, for one the Freudian division of the human psyche into id, ego and superego. With this division, Freud had attempted to explain the interaction of instinctual and societal forces on the individual.

The id is the most archaic structure of the psyche. It is governed entirely by the pleasure principle, Freud's term for the urge which seeks a diminution of the quantity of excitation. 

The ego represents the self-conscious organization of the human personality. The existence of scarcity has led to the emergence of a
reality principle which requires the ego to postpone or abandon many of the pleasures sought by the id in the interest of self-preservation.

The superego represents the structure of personality which incorporates society's demands on the individual. According to Freud, the need to establish and enforce order requires the repression of aggressive tendencies in individuals. This introjection of aggression produces conscience, the sense of guilt and the need for punishment. The demands of the superego struggle against the urges of the id for control of the ego.

Freud noted that in the process of maturation our sense of ego changes significantly. For the infant "the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself. Our present ego-feeling is, therefore, only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive—indeed, an all-embracing—feeling which corresponded to a much more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it."  

Freud called this feeling 'oceanic' and referred to the impulse to return to such a state as the Nirvana principle. Marcuse speculated that, "Perhaps the taboo on incest was the first great protection against the death instinct: the taboo on Nirvana, on the regressive impulse for peace which stood in the way of progress, of Life itself."

According to Freud's evolutionary theory, at the genesis of organic life is the realization that life is less 'satisfactory', or more painful than the preceding inorganic stage. This awareness generates the death instinct as "the drive for relieving this tension
through regression."¹² Such a realization is often alluded to as the cause of birth trauma and of the desire of infants to return to the womb.

The next turning point in Freud's theory occurs with his analysis of the origin of civilization whereby the existence of scarcity forced the repressive control of the instincts. Freud speculated that the first human group was dominated by the father on the basis of his physical prowess. In this primal horde, the father monopolized the women while the instinctual energy of his sons was diverted to work. Eventually, their repression culminated in a rebellion in which they collectively killed and devoured the father and established the brother clan.

There was an ambivalence in the brother's attitude toward their father, however. Their hatred was mixed with admiration and affection because the father provided the order necessary to maintain their group. Their collective guilt felt upon the destruction of this order led them to deify the father and to establish a sexual taboo enforced by the clan as a whole.¹³

Freud's general theory of social evolution was very much informed by the above speculation. He believed the presence of guilt to be central to the subsequent development of civilization. Although this speculation is beyond the realm of anthropological verification, it was accepted by Marcuse for its symbolic value. What is more, he asserted that the alleged consequences of these events are historical facts.

* * * * *

The publication in 1955 of Eros and Civilization marked the first
real attempt to reconcile Freud's metapsychology, especially the death instinct, with Marxism and the Western philosophical tradition. Although neither Marx nor the proletariat are even mentioned in the first edition of this work, the critical insights of Marxism were incorporated into Marcuse's general framework.

We must acknowledge that Marcuse's extrapolation has not been without its detractors. His adoption of Freud's metapsychological speculations has been criticized as unscientific. His use of psychoanalytic terminology was at times imprecise and inconsistent. These objections notwithstanding, the thesis of this work is essential to any study of the question of human happiness. By reconciling the insights of Marx and Freud, it was Marcuse's intention to demonstrate that a non-repressive civilization was theoretically possible.

Marcuse began his introduction to *Eros and Civilization* with the observation that, "Sigmund Freud's proposition that civilization is based on the permanent subjugation of the human instincts has been taken for granted." While adopting many of the speculations of Freud's metapsychology, Marcuse sought to overcome the apparent biology of the Freudian system. It was his contention that under the 'ideal' conditions of mature industrial society, it would be possible to gradually reduce the level of instinctual repression.

For Freud, the struggle for existence represented an eternal condition of mankind. The presence of scarcity led to the emergence of a reality principle which repressed the instinctual demands of the id. Marcuse accepted the fact that "scarcity teaches men that they cannot freely gratify their instinctual impulses." What he rejected was
the contention that scarcity depicted the eternal fate of mankind.

The fact of material scarcity provides an explanation for the genesis of repression and domination. Material privation has led to the division of labor, class society and the repression of instinctual gratification. For Marcuse, however, the mere fact of scarcity did not prove the necessity of repression or domination. Anthropological studies, for example, have verified the existence of archaic societies which have been peaceful and egalitarian.

It was Marcuse's intention to demonstrate that at the attained level of mature industrial society, an order of abundance could eliminate the repression and domination enforced by past orders of scarcity. To accomplish this task he combined Marxian political economy with Freudian metapsychology in order to examine the social basis for instinctual liberation.
In the works that followed the publication of *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse developed his contention that the order of domination promoted by scarcity could be abolished because of the success of science and technology. In *An Essay on Liberation*, he argued that what is needed is "not the arrest or reduction of technical progress, but the elimination of those features which perpetuate man's subjection to the apparatus." The emergence of new needs which capitalism cannot satisfy would, accordingly, lead to the development of an essentially new science and technology.

The influence of Freudian theory persisted in Marcuse's analysis of capitalist society. In *Eros and Civilization*, he defined repression as "restraint, constraint and suppression." His usage of the term was not strictly psychoanalytic, however, and its meaning shifted in different contexts. "Surplus repression" was defined as "the restrictions necessitated by social domination" as opposed to those of rational authority. A particular group or individual may exercise domination "in order to sustain or enhance itself in a privileged position."

Similarly, Marcuse coined the term "performance principle" to describe the prevailing historical form of the reality principle and with this term he argued that individuals are judged in this society by virtue of their competitive economic performances. Although couched in the language of psychoanalysis, his critique of domination
was consistent with his Marxian analysis of class society.

Unlike Marx, however, Marcuse's indictment of social domination focused on the success of the capitalist system to assimilate its opponents with the promise of an ever-increasing material standard of living. As early as 1941, Marcuse had argued that the proletariat no longer represented the determinate negation of society and that "the coordinated masses do not crave a new social order but only a larger share in the prevailing one." Consequently, if the working class is to become radicalized, the catalysts of change must come from outside its ranks.

As it developed in the 1960's, Marcuse's critique of advanced capitalist society was based on three points. First, the permanent preparation for war necessitates the expenditure of huge sums of money for weapons of destruction which postpone the abolition of scarcity while eliminating any real sense of security.

Second, the level of capitalist development is uneven and has generated what is today referred to as a permanent underclass consisting of the dispossessed and unemployable outcasts of society. For these individuals the success of the system represents the very negation of their humanity.

Finally, the needs generated in capitalist society are 'false' because their satisfaction represses other 'higher' needs. Such higher needs would involve the intellectual and aesthetic aspirations of humanity as well as the realization of solidarity with other human beings.

Although it is not possible to fully explore Marcuse's theory of
needs, he did maintain that it was possible to objectively distinguish true from false needs. The ability to satisfy true human needs would coincide with the creation of a rational society which harmonizes the interests of individual freedom with those of social order. His thesis of a non-repressive civilization was predicated on the attainment of a social order in which the free expression of human drives and the satisfaction of true human needs has eliminated the basis for aggressiveness.

Marcuse's thesis of a non-repressive civilization was called into question, however, by what Freud had described as the 'fatal dialectic of civilization'. This dialectic described the process by which the advances of society require ever greater repression which threatens, in turn, to unleash ever great destructiveness. If civilization does depend upon the permanent subjugation of the human instincts as Freud had asserted then any hope for instinctual liberation is illusory.

Although Marcuse acknowledged that cruelty and mass annihilation have increased along with the highest achievements of culture, he refused to accept that claim that civilization is built upon instinctual repression. His search for a human faculty free from the repressive control of the prevailing reality principle led him to the imagination.

Pursuing Freud's contention that the imagination was the only human faculty still committed to the pursuit of pleasure, Marcuse noted the decisive function the imagination plays in the total mental structure. "It links the deepest layers of the unconscious with the highest products of consciousness (art), the dream with the reality; it pre-
serves the archetypes of the genus, the perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom. 6

But, despite the critical role which Marcuse assigned to the imagination, he also acknowledged its subservience to the reality principle. According to Marcuse, when the reality principle takes root, "reason prevails: it becomes unpleasant but useful and correct; phantasy remains pleasant but becomes useless, untrue—a mere play, daydreaming." 7

Nevertheless, the role of the imagination remains essential to any possible reconciliation of reason and happiness. The imagination reinvigorates the tension between existence and essence, between the actual and the possible. According to Marcuse, the cognitive function of the imagination reveals the aesthetic form as the actual expression of the pleasure principle. He asserted that, "Behind the aesthetic form lies the repressed harmony of sensuousness and reason—the eternal protest against the organization of life by the logic of domination, the critique of the performance principle." 8

This critique of the performance principle was based on his claim that the order of abundance achieved in the advanced industrial nations had created "transcending needs which cannot be satisfied without abolishing the capitalist mode of production." 9 The satisfaction of these new needs would replace the performance principle with an aesthetic ethos as the new reality principle.

As he developed the critique, Marcuse envisioned a new sensibility which would affirm the "ascent of the life instincts over aggressive-
ness and guilt" by creating "a vital need for the abolition of injustice and misery."¹⁰ This sensibility would be guided by the imagination and technique would tend toward art. The sensuous, the playful, the calm and the beautiful characterized the aesthetic ethos which Marcuse believed would replace the prevailing performance principle.

Marcuse's concern for the development of a new sensibility also led him to re-examine the possible role of human sexuality in his aesthetic ethos. Sexuality as a form of play was central to Marcuse's critical theory. While Freud had pointed to the fusion of the sex instincts with aggressiveness as one explanation for society's hostility toward sexuality, Marcuse maintained that "the sex instincts bear the brunt of the reality principle. Their organization culminates in the subjection of the partial sex instincts to the primacy of genitality, and in their subjugation under the function of procreation."¹¹

Marcuse's rejection of genitality stemmed from what he saw as the resultant desexualization of the remainder of the body. In place of genitality, he advocated pregenital polymorphus perversity which would eroticize the entire personality. He believed that the perversions upheld "sexuality as an end in itself...against the subjugation of sexuality under the order of procreation, and against the institutions which guarantee this order."¹²

Marcuse's elevation of the perversions, or partial sex instincts, was an extremely controversial feature of his call for instinctual liberation. Although rejected by Marxists and Freudians alike, Marcuse maintained that genital sexuality reinforced the repressive institutions of society by linking sexuality to procreation and the patri-
Marcuse's call for instinctual liberation also included the extension of libidinal relations into all areas of life including the order of work. Although Freud recognized the libidinal character of work relations, he held that aim-inhibited sexuality was still a form of instinctual repression. Marcuse, on the other hand, believed that the extension of libidinal relations into the order of work would make work "gratifying in itself without losing its work content." He contended that work as play could not be subject to any administration.

Marcuse held that the extension of libidinal relations into the order of work could actually create a realm of freedom through work activity. He remarked that, "The social expression of the liberated work instinct is cooperation which, grounded in solidarity, directs the organization of the realm of necessity and the development of the realm of freedom." The idea of work as play may have been the most utopian of Marcuse's conceptions. It was never really thematized after *Eros and Civilization* and its realization would appear to rest upon the abolition of the realm of necessity. As long as scarcity and competition define the world of work it is hard to imagine anything but the most creative of pursuits as gratifying in itself.

In addition to its implications for aesthetics and sexuality, Marcuse's conception of instinctual liberation also envisioned the
reconciliation of man and nature. In his search for a new cultural model he turned to Greek mythology and the figures of Narcissus and Orpheus. He observed that, "Theirs is the image of joy and fulfillment...the redemption of pleasure, the half of time, the absorption of death; silence, sleep, night, paradise."15

In these myths the harmony of man and nature is restored. "In being spoken to, loved, and cared for, flowers and springs and animals appear as what they are—beautiful, not only for those who address and regard them, but for themselves, objectively."16

Marcuse's depiction of man's reconciliation with the natural world challenged the necessity of the performance principle. His new sensibility expressed the ascent of Eros, or the life instincts, over the aggressive and self-destructive instincts. It envisioned human solidarity, environmental harmony, the preservation of joy, and the abolition of alienation, want and privation.

Marcuse's conception of a new sensibility also called for a new relationship with nature which would be free from domination and all ideas of utility. The idea of 'letting-be' or surrender characterized an essentially passive or receptive relationship to the natural world. At the same time, however, he acknowledged that receptivity meets the resistance of matter in that "nature is not a manifestation of 'spirit', but rather its essential limit."17

This acknowledgement of the limits of receptivity may also be applied to the entire conception of instinctual liberation. While Marcuse's call for a new science and a new technology might redefine man's relation to nature, it could not eliminate all ideas of utility.
Likewise, even his most optimistic vision of instinctual liberation was conditioned by his acceptance of death as the ultimate barrier to lasting gratification.

In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse concluded that, "The brute fact of death denies once and for all the reality of a non-repressive existence... Timelessness is the ideal of pleasure... But the ego... is in its entirety subject to time... The flux of time helps men to forget what was and what can be: it makes them oblivious to the better past and the better future."\(^{18}\)

Against the surrender to time, he proposed "the restoration of remembrance to its rights, as a vehicle of liberation..."\(^{19}\)

Marcuse's emphasis on remembrance, however, was not meant to invoke any golden past or even the innocence of youth. Instead, he claimed that it represented the attempt to reassemble the fragments of joy and truth which can be found in a distorted humanity and a distorted nature. For Marcuse, the expression of that repressed truth was confined to authentic works of art. It was, therefore, to the aesthetic dimension and the idea of Beauty that he returned in his inquiry into the possibility of human happiness.
The relationship between beauty and happiness was a central theme in Marcuse's critical theory from its inception. While a member of the Frankfurt Institute, he analyzed the 'beautiful illusion' present in bourgeois art. In *Eros and Civilization*, he linked aesthetic form to the pursuit of pleasure which has been repressed by the performance principle. In *One-Dimensional Man*, he appropriated Whitehead's definition of art as the determinate negation of society, thereby replacing Marx's proletariat as the primary source of opposition.¹

The development of Marcuse's aesthetic ethos was influenced considerably by the aesthetic theories of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller. In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant described aesthetic judgment as the 'middle term' between reason and the understanding. He held that contemplation of beautiful objects stimulated the harmonious interplay of the understanding and the imagination. Beauty was designated as 'purposiveness without purpose'. Just as truth was the object of theoretical reason and goodness the object of practical reason, beauty was the object of aesthetic judgment. Like truth and goodness, beauty was for Kant a symbolic representation of freedom.²

Turning to Schiller, Marcuse observed that, "Only because beauty is a necessary condition of humanity can the aesthetic function play a decisive role in reshaping civilization....In a truly free civilization, all laws are self-given by the individuals: 'to give freedom by freedom is the universal law' of the aesthetic state...."³
In contrast to the predominant thought of the bourgeois period, Schiller introduced the concept of the play impulse as an alternative to toil. Its object was beauty, its goal freedom. Marcuse argued that, "In a genuinely humane civilization, the human existence will be play rather than toil, and man will live in display rather than need."¹

But since time is the fatal enemy of lasting gratification, Schiller attributed to the play impulse the function of "abolishing time in time", of reconciling being and becoming; change and identity."² Schiller's call for the timeless possession of beauty echoed the instruction which Socrates received from Diotima. All love is ultimately love of immortality.

In works such as An Essay on Liberation, Counter-Revolution and Revolt and The Aesthetic Dimension, the relationship between beauty and the possibility of happiness was increasingly thematized. In these works, Marcuse asserted that radical social change depended upon the emergence of a new aesthetic sensibility. He held that, "radical change in consciousness is the beginning, the first step in changing social existence: emergence of the new Subject."³

The new sensibility which Marcuse advocated required a new language and a new mode of perceiving the world. In order to project a sensibility free from all forms of domination, he turned to poetry and surrealism as aesthetic forms which could "dissolve the very structure of perception."⁴

This emphasis on aesthetic form, as opposed to the content of the art work, placed Marcuse outside of the mainstream of Marxist aesthetics. In The Aesthetic Dimension, he flatly rejected the claim that the
authenticity of a work of art is directly related to its political content. Instead, he argued that, "The fact that a work truly represents the interests or the outlook of the proletariat or of the bourgeoisie does not yet make it an authentic work of art."  

For Marcuse, the truth of an art work is measured by its content having become form. Aesthetic form is defined by those qualities which make a work a self-contained whole with a structure and order of its own. Aesthetic form transforms reality into illusion and in so doing affirms its commitment to Beauty as the ultimate truth of all art.

Marcuse criticized Marxist aesthetics for ignoring the idea of Beauty in its emphasis on the political content of the art work. He insisted that although the Greek tragedy or the medieval epic, for example, have nothing to do with the interests of the proletariat, we nevertheless experience them as authentic works. He maintained that because such works convey a truth about the human condition they are authentic irregardless of the political outlook of the author.

While writers such as Sartre and Brecht insisted that revolutionary art must speak the language of the people, Marcuse contended that it may be necessary to stand against the people in order to bring about the necessary rupture with existing society. He argued that, "Revolutionary art may well become 'The Enemy of the People,'" in its insistence on a sensibility and social organization which 'the people' do not want.

Marcuse suggested that there may be more revolutionary potential in the poetry of Baudelaire or Rimbaud than in the didactic plays of Brecht. In fact, he even argued that, "Art can express its radical
potential only as art....Art cannot represent the revolution, it can only invoke it in another medium."\textsuperscript{10} For Marcuse, the necessity of revolution is given a priori in the authentic work. To make 'The Revolution' thematic as proposed by the advocates of socialist realism only threatens to reduce authentic art to a form of propaganda.

The revolutionary character of authentic art was confirmed for Marcuse by the fact that art, by its very commitment to beauty, indicts existing society. The indictment estranges its audience from their everyday lives without offering any simple, practical means of reforming their lives. In Beckett's plays, for example, no hope is offered in the political sense, only the message that existing reality must come to an end. Likewise, Kafka's prose shatters the reasonableness of the established order.

Marcuse argued that, "The indictment is just as much in the sensuous, emotional language of Werther and the Fleurs du Mal as it is in the hardness of Stendahl and Kafka."\textsuperscript{11} Art is able to indict reality precisely because it is unreal. As illusion, art can freely portray the unfreedom of individuals in an unfree society.

The commitment of art to aesthetic form, however, also weakens the indictment contained in the authentic work. According to Marcuse, "The very commitment of art to form vitiates the negation of unfreedom in art....The form of the work of art invests the content with qualities of enjoyment...."\textsuperscript{12} This enjoyment derives from the beautiful illusion which the work presents. The resulting catharsis reduces the sense of estrangement and the need to change reality.

Marcuse asserted that, "Art is powerless against this reconcilia-
tion with the irreconcilable; it is inherent in the aesthetic form itself....Thus even the prison scene in Faust is beautiful, as is the lucid madness in Buchner's Lenz, Therese's story of the death of her mother in Kafka's Amerika and Beckett's Endgame."

Despite this self-limitation, Marcuse held that the idea of Beauty remains subversive of the existing order and offers the most powerful alternative to this order. Art is committed to Eros in its fight against social and instinctual repression. According to Marcuse, "Art represents the ultimate goal of all revolutions: the freedom and happiness of the individual." 

Marcuse maintained that the commitment to aesthetic form guarantees the autonomy of art vis a vis social reality. While social conditions are always present in the work of art, even if only as background or horizon, the work must transcend the given social relations in its creation of a fictitious world.

Marcuse rejected attempts to abandon aesthetic form in favor of a direct depiction of reality because in such depictions art loses its critical distance from its subject. "Renunciation of the aesthetic form does not cancel the difference between art and life—but it does cancel that between essence and appearance, in which the truth of art has its home and which determines the political value of art." 

The collapse of essence into appearance would represent the end of art and the end of critical theory. Marcuse held that such phenomena as the 'living theater', 'cinema verite' or the artistic composition of the soup can amounted to 'anti-art'. By abandoning aesthetic form, such works become "the bits and pieces of the very society..."
seek to criticize. Despite the self-limitation of the aesthetic form, Marcuse maintained that only in the idea of Beauty is preserved the possibility of happiness and liberation.

The relationship between aesthetic form and revolution was somewhat ambiguous in Marcuse's critical theory. He rejected the identification of aesthetic form with political tendency as proposed by another member of the Frankfurt Institute, Walter Benjamin. Instead, he sided with Theodor Adorno in his debate with Benjamin over the importance of autonomous works of art. Because he believed that authentic art was the determinate negation of existing society, Marcuse held that authentic works must not uphold any particular social group or political party as the revolutionary vanguard.

Marcuse argued that although art cannot change the world, "it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world." At present, these men and women belong to no particular social class, but rather constitute those individuals for whom revolution has become a vital need.

This emphasis on needs and sensibilities resulted from Marcuse's conviction that the proletariat no longer represented the determinate negation of society. In an attempt to identify the possible catalysts of revolutionary change, he turned his attention to various outgroups such as students, women, the poor and third world minorities. In the end, however, he concluded that the subject to which authentic art might appeal "is socially anonymous; it does not coincide with the potential subject of revolutionary practice." 

Marcuse insisted that what is needed is a new system of aesthetic
and intellectual needs which are free from the repressive power of the
performance principle. If social revolution is to take place, he held
that it will be necessary to first change the consciousnesses and
drives of the men and women who could change the world. According to
Marcuse, such a change in consciousness is possible only because the
unreality of the work of art permits it to freely contradict the un-
free reality of existing society.

For Marcuse, the power of art to transcend reality makes the con­
lict between art and social practice inevitable. If absolute freedom
and justice is impossible within society, then authentic art must al­
ways criticize social practice. He argued that "the 'end of art' is
conceivable only if men are no longer capable of distinguishing be­
tween true and false, good and evil, beautiful and ugly, present and
future."¹⁹ Such a prospect would not represent a state of freedom,
but a state of barbarism.

The inherent limits to social freedom are plainly stated in The
Aesthetic Dimension. "The institutions of a socialist society, even in
their most democratic form, could never resolve all the conflicts be­
tween the universal and the particular, between human beings and na­
ture, between individual and individual. It is the struggle for the
impossible, against the inconquerable whose domain can perhaps never­
theless be reduced."²⁰ This profoundly anti-utopian conclusion
stands in stark contrast to the optimistic prospects outlined in Eros
and Civilization.

Despite the profound change in outlook, there is a common theme
which unites these works. In both works, the role of memory is central
to the artistic mimesis which, in turn, directly affects the possibility of happiness. In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse observed that, "Art cannot show the present without showing it as past....The mimesis translates reality into memory. In this remembrance, art has recognized what is and what could be, within and beyond the social conditions."21

In *Eros and Civilization*, he contended that, "The lost paradises are the only true ones not because, in retrospect, the past joy seems more beautiful than it really was, but because remembrance alone provides the joy without anxiety over its passing and thus gives it an otherwise impossible duration. Time loses its power when remembrance redeems the past."22

The anxiety over the passing of joy goes to the heart of the question of human happiness. If joy must pass with time, then lasting happiness is impossible. But if the delight of the past moment can be relived again and again in memory or in the work of art, at least some measure of happiness may be secured. Only the reality of death as the destruction of memory brings to an end the promise of lasting gratification.

Marcuse's response to the inevitability of death was surprising. In *Eros and Civilization*, he remarked that, "The necessity of death does not refute the possibility of final liberation. Like the other possibilities, it can be made rational—painless. Men can die without anxiety if they know that what they love is protected from misery and oblivion."23

It appears as if Marcuse had not fully reconciled himself to the
finality of death in this passage. His prescription for a painless death seems out of place with the fact that it is impossible to completely protect what one loves from misery and oblivion—particularly from beyond the grave.

In The Aesthetic Dimension, however, the tone is decidedly more pessimistic. Even the power of remembrance to redeem the past seems almost illusory. Marcuse wrote that, "While art bears witness to the necessity of liberation, it also testifies to its limits. What has been done cannot be undone; what has passed cannot be recaptured. History is guilt but not redemption. Eros and Thanatos are lovers as well as adversaries....The world was not made for the sake of the human being and it has not become more human."24

He further pointed out that it is difficult to imagine any society which could abolish what is called fate or chance. He maintained that art "bears witness to the truth of dialectical materialism—the permanent non-identity between subject and object, individual and individual."25 Consequently, even the rational society projected by critical theory could not guarantee the general happiness which Marcuse sought.

Finally, he asserted that death represents "a constant hazard, misfortune, a constant threat even in moments of happiness, triumph, fulfillment....death remains the negation inherent in society, in history."26

Despite the gloominess which these conclusions reveal, Marcuse did not abandon his inquiry into the possibility of human happiness. While he acknowledged that "tragedy is always and everywhere...", he also
maintained that "this insight, inexorably expressed in art, may well shatter faith in progress but it may also keep alive another image and another goal of praxis, namely the reconstruction of society and nature under the principle of increasing the human potential for happiness. The revolution is for the sake of life, not death."27

Marcuse maintained that happiness involves knowledge, that it is the prerogative of the animal rationale. Happiness is not to be found in the mere feeling of satisfaction, however, but in the reality of freedom and satisfaction. Although death represents a final barrier to lasting happiness, Marcuse did not abandon revolution and the pursuit of social justice as the means to increase the potential for human happiness. In The Aesthetic Dimension he concluded that, "If the remembrance of things past would become a motive power in the struggle for changing the world, the struggle would be waged for a revolution hitherto suppressed in the previous historical revolutions."28

What this revolution would be like and what type of society it might produce remains to be seen. For Marcuse, the power of reason and memory to comprehend and project a better world provided the basis for his critical theory of society. It is our endowment as rational and sensuous beings which makes it possible for us to transcend our present conditions by appropriating our past. As Marx observed, the philosophers have interpreted the world, in various ways, the goal is still to change it.
TIME AND HAPPINESS

While happiness has been acknowledged by philosophers to represent an end in itself, the means to that end vary radically. The social conditions which Marcuse charted as necessary pre-conditions for the possibility of happiness—an order of abundance, democratic planning and social justice—remain the task of political praxis. At the same time, he also recognized that death and human imperfection presented ultimate barriers to lasting happiness.

Plato understood that men do not only want to possess good things, but that they want to possess them forever. The impossibility of satisfying this desire, however, led to the birth of theory as the attempt to understand the world in order to overcome suffering and death.

The Western response to suffering and the necessity of death has been diverse. The religious tradition has tended to deny the reality of death by offering the promise of eternal life. The secular tradition, in the extreme, has emphasized material satisfaction because of the inevitability of death. Unfortunately, the pursuit of earthly riches within a context of scarcity has led to domination and exploitation. Slavery and servitude, discrimination, poverty and injustice are more than the results of natural necessity. They are also the products of the spirit of capitalism, which in its pursuit of worldly gain has subjected the less fortunate to worldly misery.

There is, however, another path to human happiness. Marcuse's
critical theory adopted the insights of hedonism and eudaemonism, Marxian political economy and Freudian metapsychology in order to establish the necessary preconditions for the realization of a general happiness. His emphasis on material abundance, social justice and instinctual liberation provides a theoretical basis for the creation of a rational society. The possibility of lasting happiness, however, remains problematic.

Marcuse maintained that happiness requires knowledge. If, however, knowledge of the truth of existence is tragic, how can happiness be secured? In response to this dilemma, Schiller introduced the concept of the play impulse as a means of abolishing time in time. Likewise, Nietzsche's myth of the eternal return sought to break the domination of time over life. The poetic and the mystical conceptions of life have proclaimed the momentary identity of subject and object as the ultimate truth of existence. Bourgeois art also offered the momentary happiness of the beautiful illusion which could be experienced again and again.

The question of happiness appears to be inseparable from the question of time. Anxiety over the passage of time robs us of the possibility of happiness. Fear and anxiety emerge in relation to a future possibility which threatens to destroy what we love. Want, as the consciousness of deprivation, relates the unsatisfactory present to a possibly better future. Freedom from fear, anxiety and want not only would require social justice and an order of abundance, but also would require the abolition of time in time—an accomplishment which no society can insure.
Obviously, the question of happiness must not be reduced to one of the transcendence of consciousness. Freedom for the fullest possible development of human capabilities and sensibilities requires that we attend to the pursuit of human solidarity and a just social order.

The spiritual and the materialist conceptions of life must somehow be reconciled. While religious conceptions may be unscientific, what science can explain the origin of life? The mystery of life may ultimately invalidate the certainty of all science and philosophy.

While the poetic experience of time may not resolve the question of happiness, it does speak to the central issues at stake. In his poem, "Song of Myself," Walt Whitman reflected on his belief in the cycles of life and death which affirm rather than negate the possibility of lasting happiness.

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity indicate? We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers, there are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety.
And other births will bring us richness and variety....

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least,....

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to try to alarm me....

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths, (No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)...

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it is in me....

It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is Happiness.
While the truth of poetic expression is at most suggestive, we have seen that Marcuse maintained that there is an intimate connection between the truth of art and the possibility of happiness. He also spoke of aesthetic sensibility as rational and moral. His conception of reason and morality, however, was linked to human sensuousness as a practical concern. Consequently, the creation of aesthetic sensibility and the pursuit of social justice became common goals of his critical theory.

For Marcuse, critical rationality is completely committed to the realization of a society in which human beings could freely satisfy their needs in accordance with their reason. His critique of technological rationality did not reject technology, but the mentality which comprehends the end of life only in terms of technical efficiency. He opposed the rational organization of modern society precisely on the basis of its efficiency.

What is to be done? The truth of art is also the truth of critical reason—to call things what they are, not to imitate but to comprehend life. The task of political praxis has not changed since Marx—it is still our task to change the world. In One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse outlined the criteria which he believed must be invoked to justify any call for a new social order.

"(1) The transcendent project must be in accordance with the real possibilities open at the attained level of the material and intellectual culture.

(2) The transcendent project, in order to falsify the established totality, must demonstrate its own higher rationality in the threefold sense that
(a) it offers the prospect of preserving and improving the productive achievements of civilization;
(b) it defines the established totality in its very structure, basic tendencies, and relations;
(c) its realization offers a greater chance for the pacification of existence, within the framework of institutions which offer a greater chance for the free development of human needs and faculties."²

In the face of a political system dominated by a military technocracy which threatens the very survival of humanity, the possibility of human happiness depends upon the success of political praxis. What is needed is the courage and organization to bring about those reforms which will reduce the international tensions and injustices which have brought us to the brink of annihilation.

Human survival is the first priority. Only a human species can reproduce the social order necessary for individual happiness. Survival requires the end of the nuclear arms race and a general reduction in armaments and violence throughout the world. It may also require the abolition of the nation-state as the predominant form of political organization. In its place, a new international order must be established which can administer justice without recourse to warfare.

Survival also requires the abolition of hunger, disease and all forms of want and privation. Only an order of abundance is consistent with freedom. The conquest of scarcity remains the great unfinished project of mankind, the completion of which is greatly hindered by the presence of political elites and authoritarian regimes. A conversion of economic resources now committed to warfare, however, would go far in the effort to provide for the general welfare.

Survival means the protection and enhancement of the natural world as the environment in which we live. The physical and psychological health of human beings is directly related to the preservation of nature. The beauty and grandeur of open spaces is a source of human
creativity which, if lost, would destroy the possibility of happiness.

Finally, survival means solidarity with all members of the human species. Empathy for the plight of others can help to alleviate the unnatural misery which social domination now enforces. Human solidarity may also reconcile men and women to the fact that the suffering which cannot be alleviated may at least be endured.

The transcendent project which Marcuse envisioned would also entail a new science and a new technology. While the scientific enterprise would not necessarily change, the direction and application of scientific research would create new facts and new possibilities. Technology as the tools and methods to feed the hungry is an essentially different project than the technology utilized to build a space-based weapons system. A rational use of technology must respond to a human reason which pursues human goals rather than technical efficiency or profit maximization.

The powers which restrict and deform humanity are also human powers which can, therefore, be confronted and transformed. The restrictions imposed by natural necessity, on the other hand, can be reduced, but never eliminated.

Might not human beings one day achieve immortality through technical means? Even if the human lifespan could be extended indefinitely, the lack of human perfection would, of itself, guarantee sorrow. Perfection, on the other hand, would halt the passage of time. It would capture in a moment the identity of subject and object, the unity of self and world as the source of life and as the guarantee of lasting happiness.
Marcuse's preoccupation with human happiness represents a perennial concern of philosophy. The original impulse of philosophy was toward the 'other world' as the hope for a happiness which society and material existence denied. What the two-world theory failed to acknowledge, however, was the fact that the other world cannot exist apart from this world. The other reality exists within this reality, even if it is accessible only in memory or in the beautiful illusion of the aesthetic dimension.

If happiness exists only in the moment, then it would be incorrect to assert that even the most rational society could insure a general happiness. For every society is subject to time and time is the negation of happiness. No momentary satisfaction may cancel the future or the inevitable path to death.

Although social change cannot insure human happiness, neither can it be ignored. The attempt to transcend reality through art will ultimately fail because aesthetic transcendence is illusory. While the aesthetic experience can become a factor in the struggle for greater freedom, justice and solidarity, it cannot replace the need for political praxis.

In the end, there is no other world than the one which is shared by all of humanity. How we live now is of critical importance in determining how we will live and die in the future. The commitment to the future can only be expressed in the here and now—in what we say and in what we do.

The spiritual and the materialist paths to happiness converge on the same road when we see that the realm of matter and the realm of
spirit cannot be separated. There is no consciousness which is not embodied.

From Plato's Eros as the love of perfection and immortality to Marcuse's Eros as the free expression of human instincts, philosophy has moved from the idea of happiness to the search for its realization in society. Although Marcuse's transcendent project may be premature, given the attained level of consciousness and social organization, it nevertheless articulates the perennial protest against the subjugation of human desires to the interests of social domination. His critical theory may have come a hundred years too soon, or a thousand. We can only hope that his vision of social harmony and instinctual gratification did not come too late to reverse the fatal dialectic of civilization.

Herbert Marcuse's final vision of existence was profoundly anti-utopian. His analysis of the possibilities and the limitations to human happiness, however, makes it possible to continue his critical theory in light of the actual tendencies toward liberation existent within this culture. Such efforts would represent the ongoing commitment of philosophy to happiness and would provide the basis for the further development of a critical theory of society.
Footnotes

Introduction

2. Ibid., p. 167.
3. Ibid.

The Nature of Happiness

3. Ibid., p. 163.
4. Ibid., p. 169.
5. Ibid., pp. 167-168.

Happiness and Human Nature

2. Ibid. pp. 45-46.
3. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 33.
11. Karl Marx, Early Writings, translated and edited by T. B.
The Critical Theory of Society

1. Also known as the Frankfurt School, the Institute moved its headquarters to Columbia University in 1934 and did not return to Frankfurt until 1950. The term 'critical theory' also served to mask the Marxist orientation of the Institute which found itself removed from the mainstream of American political theory. Perhaps the best and most complete history of the Frankfurt School is contained in Martin Jay's The Dialectical Imagination (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1973).

3. Ibid., p. 72.

8. Ibid., p. 143.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 154.
11. Ibid., p. 139.

The Death Instinct

2. Ibid. pp. 49-50.
Instinctual Liberation

3. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
4. Ibid., p. 44 ff.
7. Ibid., p. 142.
8. Ibid., p. 144.
11. Ibid., p. 40.
12. Ibid., p. 49.
13. Ibid., p. 225.
16. Ibid., p. 166.
17. \textit{Counter-Revolution and Revolt}, p. 69.

The Aesthetic Dimension

1. \textit{One-Dimensional Man}, p. 228.
3. Ibid., pp. 185-191.
4. Ibid., p. 188.
5. Ibid., p. 192.
7. Ibid., p. 38.
8. \textit{The Aesthetic Dimension}, p. 16.
9. Ibid., p. 35.

2. One-Dimensional Man, p. 220.