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Nature and Community:
Toward a Marcusean-informed Environmentalism

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Thesis submitted to the School of
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of a Masters of Arts in Political Science



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Abstract

Concern for the environment is a theme which has gained much currency in popular and academic discourse. The normative assumptions, however, which underlie the field of environmental politics, are far from univocal. The exclusion of normative considerations from much environmental literature and many environmental projects, therefore, is an indication of our general failure to see environmental issues as ethical issues demanding resolution.

This study aims at examining how the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse contributes to an ecological perspective that does treat the natural environment as a domain of ethical inquiry. Drawing from the Romantic tradition, Marcuse treats nature as sensuousness and spirituality with immanent value. His theory of nature is concerned with the reconciliation of human subjectivity as rational, moral will with external nature. What emerges is an ethics of aesthetic community in which nature is more than an object of contemplation, but the purveyor of immanent value, the grounds for ethical, creative and "playful" activity. This notion of aesthetic community does not emerge without its own internal tension and ambiguity which, we argue in this work, remain unresolved as a synthesis of subjective aesthetic judgment and collective reason. In spite of the tension, we conclude that the Marcusean spiritual sensitivity and rational interest could more fruitfully serve as a more solid foundation for contemporary environmentalism and ecological theory.

NATURE, COMMUNITY, AND MARCUSE

Introduction	1
a) The Present Context for Environmental Politics	4
b) Terminology	8
c) The Normative Context of Environmental Politics	13
d) Methodology	19
Chapter I - Definitions of Nature	23
a) Dualist Concept of Nature	23
b) A Second Variant of the Dualist Concept of Nature	32
c) Dualist Concepts of Nature in Practice	36
d) Dualist Concepts of Nature in Theory	46
Chapter II - Philosophical Foundations	54
Chapter III - The Critical Conviction of Reason	64
Chapter IV - Reason, Labour and Freedom	83
Chapter V - Marcuse's Middle Period	100
a) On "The Governing Principle of Western Civilization"	102
b) The "Hidden Depth Dimension" Behind the Governing Principle of Civilization	105
c) The Great Refusal	112
d) Technology	116
Chapter VI - Nature as a Ground for Freedom	137
a) A Theory of Liberation	140
b) The New Technology, the New Sensibility and the Aesthetic Form	141
c) The Aesthetic Rationality Rooted in Nature	144
Conclusion	157

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing concern for environmental issues. This is expressed in greater public sensitivity to the environment, in intense theoretical debate regarding projects for social change and in increasing numbers of publications devoted to exploring the implications of such projects. Analysis of different variants of ecological thought is crucial to the ongoing ecological debate. However, investigating the philosophical foundations of ecological thought is equally important. My objective in this thesis is not to examine forms of ecological thought directly as much as it is to assess certain elements of western philosophical thought *for their influence or potential influence on ecological theory*. I have chosen to return to the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse and the philosophical traditions he evokes to see what problems and solutions his project can bring to ecological theory.

My analysis of the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse in relation to ecological thought is motivated by two principal considerations. First, Marcuse's critique of instrumental reason may serve to enlarge the debate on environmental issues which tends implicitly or explicitly to evoke instrumentalism in its regard of nature as an object devoid of value in itself. The debate, at present, remains confined to an instrumentalist mold by its adherence to the political, social, economic, and scientific *status quo*. Second, the critical theory of Marcuse offers a notion of community which does not deprive nature of value but on the contrary poses human fulfillment in terms of an aesthetic reconciliation with nature. This may open the way out of the instrumentalist domination of nature prevalent in modern thought, including contemporary environmental thought.

In this thesis I suggest that Marcuse offers in his works a philosophical foundation for nature which treats nature as a much more differentiated, rich and central concept than the balance of instrumental and utilitarian approaches to nature.

Marcuse elevates the concept of nature to a status commensurate with that of Reason itself.

From his earliest writings to The Aesthetic Dimension, nature emerges as an integral concept of human fulfillment and creativity. In interpreting Marcuse's thought, I propose the hypothesis that while Marcuse draws from many philosophical traditions in working out his notion of nature, it is the Romantic tradition which provides most fertile ground and has the most lasting effect. I advance a more specific hypothesis that Marcuse appropriates the Romantic notion of aesthetic activity in his notion of play as a creative synthesis between nature and human freedom. This notion of play emerges subsequent to Marcuse's reception of Freud but I hold here that it carries the Romantic notion of spirituality of nature critical to an ecologically sensitive theory of community.

Further, I hold that Romanticism, while central to Marcuse's thought, is only *selectively* appropriated by Marcuse to satisfy a unity of vision in his entire *oeuvre* which is equally beholden to the Hegelian-Marxian rationalist tradition.¹ Specifically, Marcuse's Romanticism cannot be read as an artistic *abdication* and *final* spiritual estrangement from the bourgeois order based on mechanistic efficiency. Far from being an assertion of poetic ideality over and above prosaic reality, Marcuse's thought is concerned with the *contradiction* between these two moments. The convergence of the ideal and the world of reality can only be in Marcuse's thought a rational *transformative process*. Consequently, his thought displays a dual influence of Romanticism and rationalism, only in terms, however, of their common commitment to the language of negation.

The Romantic orientation to Marcuse's thought offers critical insight into the destructive and marginalizing effect of instrumental reason. That is, by preserving the memory of things past, such as the cultural unity of political, social, economic

and artistic life in Greek classicism. Marcuse seeks to indict the present repression of capitalist society which fragments cultural life and divorces it from the productive process. This task is of equal concern to Marcuse the critical rationalist. The rationalist spirit offers Marcuse a method of dialectical critique in which the truth of theory is posited. The critical conviction of reason to go beyond the established world of facts does not contradict the ideals of the Romantic revolt, but *complements*, rather, this spirit of negation. The aesthetic values, then, which are claimed by Marcuse to underlie a true human community *are in no sense arbitrary*, the result of subjective judgment and predilection. Rather, through a process of dialectical critique, through which purely formal and instrumental reason is displaced historically by a reason conceived as *substantial*, ethical and aesthetic values emerge as regulative principles for human action.

Very early in his work, Marcuse rejects the Newtonian mechanistic conception of nature, as a complex of forces acting in determinate ways and expressed in observable, understandable and controllable phenomena, in favour of the Romantic conception of nature. According to this conception, nature is sensuousness and spirituality with immanent value. Its own regulative principle is undisclosable to theoretical reason but intuitively sensed and aesthetically appreciated. Accordingly, this view raises artistic and poetic activity (as opposed to analytic activity) to the highest level of mediation with nature. Marcuse will, in the later stages of his thought, come to see this aesthetic activity in the diversity of its expression as the ground of community.

As early as his 1922 dissertation The German Artist-Novel, Marcuse explores the potential and limits of the romantic project in terms of the literary portrayal of the artist in both its "realistic-objective" and "subjective-romantic" incarnations.² Marcuse's espousal of aesthetic activity ultimately leads to his

analysis of alienation as denial of sensuality and to his search for liberation by aesthetic activity. Douglas Kellner draws a similar conclusion in his study, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism. In his words, The German Artist-Novel "centres on analysis of the sources of alienation and ways of overcoming it through the quest for liberation and a harmonious community -- themes that would later become central to Marcuse's thought".³ But even early in his work and influenced by the German Romantics, Marcuse identifies the greatest challenge to the dominant social, cultural and political vision of the world as residing in artistic expression. Given the emancipatory potential of art, liberation and harmonious existence are seen to be the hallmark of an *aesthetically constituted* community.

My interest in Marcuse is not simply and purely academic. I do not seek to uncover the notion of community toward which Marcuse's thought ultimately takes him and in so doing to establish internal coherence or discontinuities in his thought. My interest is also practical. Understanding the concept of aesthetic community may be one small step, but an important one, on the road to constructive ecological sensitivity away from the present form of environmentalism. This latter currently dominates the environmental discourse and implicitly and explicitly remains loyal to analytic reason and is confined to instrumentalism.

a) The Present Context for Environmental Politics

In the closing decade of the twentieth century, environmental issues have become a frequent subject of social and political discourse. Issues such as the 'greenhouse effect', ozone depletion and general environmental degradation are being asserted onto the agendas of states, and local and international bodies. While the urgency to act 'green' appears to be growing in society, however, the ways and

means of action are becoming more and more contentious. That is, our concern for environmental issues is being met not by concerted and generally validated responses but by a plethora of conflicting interests and contradictory approaches.

Such a context generates confusion over what constitutes 'environmentally sound' practice, and this can only increase in the foreseeable future. The most apparent reason for confusion and contradiction over 'what is to be done' for our environmental well being can be attributed to the state of scientific research in this field. Just as environmentalism is a relatively new social movement, the concerted attempt by researchers and scientists to find solutions to environmental problems is in an equivalent state of infancy. Consequently, it would appear to many as if the scientific response to environmental problems is, for the most part, in an exploratory stage. "Solutions" to various problems are being introduced only to be followed by serious questions as to their ultimate effectiveness.

A case in point is arguably the Canadian 'blue box' recycling program of the past decade. Putting aside all arguments brought against the economic viability of the program, there are nonetheless serious doubts as to whether the impact of the program on the problem of solid waste is anything more than negligible.⁴ More and more researchers appear to be arguing that emphasis should be focused on 'reuse', and promoting the infrastructural adjustments which this approach demands. In a similar vein, the back-and-forth debate regarding the type of packaging McDonald's Restaurants of Canada should use⁵ points up some of the disaccord which exists between 'experts'.

While not wishing to neglect these considerable and ongoing debates which question the science -- methodology and results -- behind environmental programs and policy, it is possible to see a deeper level of discord which has an equal, if not greater, impact on the state of environmental politics. What is being referred to here

is the virtually unspoken disagreement which pervades the issue at its normative level. That is to say, the world view which underlies much of what can be broadly termed environmental politics suffers from two separate, but compounding problems.

The first characteristic problem which must be admitted is that such is the fate of social policy, environmental policy is often undertaken without any clear or articulated rationale as to how it fits into a more complex social whole. In short, the normative assumptions underlying these projects and policies are often taken for granted. Our willingness to proceed with a certain set of unspoken normative assumptions precipitates the second characteristic problem. Specifically, it would appear that the system of values, on which the programs of environmental politics are implicitly based, is far from univocal. In other words, by perilously ignoring the social goals which underlie much of what we do in the field of environmental politics, we are also ignoring the multiplicity of intentions which may very well contradict one another. According to ethicist J. Ronald Engel, the values at stake in policy decisions must be clarified, and moral reasons must inform alternative courses of action. "Contemporary environment and development issues", he writes, "are loaded with moral implications that need to be understood and carefully weighed before intelligent choices can be made".⁶

This point can be illustrated by looking more closely at the issue of recycling versus reuse. For instance, when it comes to judging efficiency of operations and effectiveness of results the lines of argumentation are quite clear. The experience and aggregate data of the past decade increasingly suggests that the Canadian recycling program has not met, and cannot meet the expectations of efficiency and effectiveness imputed to its operations. Researchers and environmental groups for the most part concur. Reuse must be promoted as a viable environmentally sound

practice.⁷

Undoubtedly, lobbying by environmentalists on this point serves an important function. On a practical level, it may generally slow down the degradation process. It also sensitizes the public to environmental concerns, and arguably helps foster an environmental consciousness necessary for fundamental social change. However, beyond the "practical" public discourse advocating reuse, there are other, often ignored points of interrogation regarding fundamental social values.

It is, for instance, ironic that the argument over which process will reduce the most garbage (effectiveness), at the lowest possible cost (efficiency), is taking place at all. For such an argument takes place within a restricted sphere of discourse. In this case, two interests alone are legitimized: the environmental interest, narrowly conceived as the need to mitigate the harsh effects of modern consumption patterns; and the economic interest conceived in counterbalance to the environmental interest. This issue alone begs two fundamental questions which are obfuscated by the nature of the common discourse. Are our expectations and patterns of consumption acceptable, and what social forces underlie them? Secondly, what legitimizing criteria are used for balancing, in some supposed'y objective way, economic interests with environmental interests?

These are but two of the normative questions which underlie environmental politics. Their exclusion from the common discourse are indicative of a more general failure highlighted by Engel. Without an understanding of the rights, duties and values involved in environmental issues, he points out, "the possibility of significant change is foreclosed and action is taken on the basis of habit or custom, personal preference, or political or technical feasibility".⁸ In this case, consumption is reified and a utilitarian 'checks and balances' approach, which denies intrinsic value to nature, is adopted.

We see, from this account, that there are evident scientific disputes in the field of environmental politics. These disputes can, and do, lead to ongoing questioning of the methods used and results obtained under environmental projects and policies. However, much confusion and many questions antecede these disputes of science. This is the realm of ethics. To situate my analysis on this level I draw a distinction between 'scientific disputes' on the one hand and 'ethical disputes' on the other, concentrating on the latter. This is not to argue that disputes in the realm of environmental science are not of crucial importance to environmental politics. Rather, I wish to focus on the ethical notions which subtend environmental politics.

b) Terminology

Environmental discourse unfolds in its own terminology, often with disparate meanings for a common term. Up to now, the term 'environmental politics' has been used to capture the broadest and most common sense of understanding. 'Environmental' encompasses all that which has been variously listed or labelled as an environmental concern in the public domain. 'Politics' also is here used in its broadest sense. It is all issues highlighted in the discourse of individuals, groups, institutions, media, and elected politicians. Thus, 'environmental politics' should convey the connotation here of the broadest range of social issues and policies which are perceived as environmental concerns by the public.

For many writers there is a distinction between environmentalism and ecologism.⁹ Here environmentalism can be equated with both the organizations, such as Friends of the Earth, or the Sierra Club, and the 'politics' which these groups raise as a matter of public concern. Environmental groups, according to Andrew Dobson, "typically confront the negative effects on the environment of late-twentieth

century society, and try to ameliorate them." In other words, environmentalism involves both the recognition of environmental problems and the belief that change can be affected through piecemeal actions. On the other hand, writes Dobson, ecologism challenges "the political, social, economic and scientific consensus that has dominated the last two or three hundred years of public life".¹⁰ In Dobson's sense, ecologism presents a radical challenge to the philosophical foundations of western society in that it "self-consciously confronts dominant paradigms".¹¹

The distinction between environmentalism and ecologism which Dobson provides is useful in two ways. Firstly, it points to the fact that the most apparent expressions of environmental politics -- environmental organizations -- do not represent a radical challenge to the societal *status quo*. They seek, for better or for worse, to bring about change within the existing structures. I take Dobson's observation to support my claim that, for the most part, environmental politics takes place without threatening the validity of our fundamental social ideas and values. Secondly, this distinction highlights the fact that to say that environmentalism does not represent a radical challenge to the philosophical foundations of society is not to say that this challenge does not exist. Ecologism expresses this challenge. It is, in fact, the subject matter of Dobson's book, Green Political Thought. His thesis is that ecologism is a new political ideology which alone can adequately express Green political thought. For Green ideas necessitate a rupture with our present mode of social and political life, and with our present patterns of production and consumption.

Whether or not Green political thought does actually represent a new political ideology -- and not just an extension, adjunct or addendum to either liberalism or socialism -- is beyond the purview of this analysis. However, the arguments given by Dobson for this view help to elucidate the perspective which I take here. For

instance, one justification Dobson gives for affixing an "ism" to a certain spectrum of theories of ecology is, as was mentioned earlier, the radical nature of the challenge it poses to the *status quo*. Ecologism overthrows our presumptions about technology, and in so doing, reorients our vision of the future. Dobson writes that it challenges the dominant vision of "'post-industrial society' as a technological, affluent, service society".¹²

I would like to retain this notion, as I agree that theories of ecology must pose just such a fundamental challenge. This assumption helps to detect in some of the most radical notions of the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse, insightful principles for ecological theory, and ones in which ecological theory may find a congenial ground.

In pointing out my wish to retain the radical nature of 'ecologism', I have perforce revealed where I must take umbrage with Dobson. For the sake of consistency, as well as preference, I cannot accept Dobson's central thesis that Green political thought -- ecologism -- is a new political ideology. Rather, my purpose is to show how ecological thought may benefit from some of its philosophical antecedents. The critical theory of Herbert Marcuse, stemming from the socialist tradition, is just such a possibility.

As I mentioned earlier, to refute the claim made for 'ecologism' by Dobson is beyond the purview of this analysis. Nevertheless, a few more clarifications of Dobson's view will, I believe, reveal them to be disputable enough to sow some doubt. In the process of disputing Dobson's thesis, I hope to justify my own predilection for retaining some of Marcuse's notions. Indeed, I suggest that they not only be retained, but that they also be viewed as sustaining a philosophical foundation of great importance to ecological theory.

Dobson's view is that the argument for conceiving ecologism as a political

ideology separate from socialism is stronger even than the argument which distinguishes between liberalism and socialism as ideologies. Whereas socialism tried to "pick up and reconstitute" the "calls for liberty and equality" which were the groundwork of liberal theorists, ecologism "is self-consciously seeking to call into question an entire world view rather than tinker with one that already exists".¹³

There is considerable ambiguity in Dobson's view. On the one hand, ecologism, according to Dobson, *does not* try to "pick up and reconstitute" the "calls for liberty and equality", as it is preoccupied with calling into question "an entire world view". But at the same time he would refute this with his claim that "ecologism's political utopia is (by and large) informed by interpretations of the principle of equality".¹⁴ On the other hand, Dobson suggests that ecologism is an ideology *by virtue* of the challenge it poses to the dominant world view.

Furthermore, it is Dobson that writes "the world view that modern political ecologists challenge is the one that grew out of the (early) enlightenment".¹⁵ Ecologism, however, is surely not the first, nor the only, theoretical movement which has challenged the basic precepts of the Enlightenment. If ecologism seeks to displace the human being from the 'center' of Being and redefine rationality, its preoccupation is not unlike the preoccupation of the Romantic generation of the late 18th and early 19th century which argued for an aesthetic ideal in which the Self was in harmony with the objective world, including nature. In other words, such challenges and reactions against dominant world views do not *necessarily* lead to a sustained ideological position.

These arguments which I put forth against Dobson are not intended as incontrovertible proof of my position. Rather my intention is to point out that even when the concept of equality is "reconstituted" and the dominant world view is challenged (as I agree they are under "ecologism"), the theoretical continuity which

exists between philosophical traditions and current ecological thought must not be ignored. Firstly, an emphasis on paradigmatic rupture, which a new ideology implies, tends to overstate the impact of this "ideology" on social practice. My emphasis is on the disparity between theory and practice in the realm of environmental politics, as this is far more revealing of ecological praxis. Secondly, and of even greater importance in the context of this paper, such an insistence on the ideological novelty of a given movement risks overlooking the theoretical antecedents which inform its very progression. To avoid these problems, I focus on the philosophical foundations of ecology.

With this objective and, not wishing to impute the same 'ideological' meaning to ecology as does Dobson, my preference is the term ecological theory or ecological thought. Yet, I retain the "radical" thrust of ecologism. Ecological theory explicitly challenges our most fundamental social presumptions. In this light, the distinction made between environmentalism and this concept remains an important one. Environmentalism is the dominant approach taken by those who wish to mitigate the effect of environmental degradation. The environmentalist approach is tolerated, and, for the most part, sanctioned in western society. The effect of environmentalism, especially in the last decade, has been by no means negligible as its visible impact on the behaviour of individuals and institutions attests. However, environmentalism remains a piecemeal approach which does not fundamentally challenge the material nor the philosophical foundations of western society.

For analytical purposes, I make the distinction between radical ecological thought which challenges fundamental social precepts, and environmentalism which takes a piecemeal corrective approach. Given that many so-called environmentalists do decry pervasive social values which perpetuate over-consumption and waste, the

'reality' of this distinction is far from 'neat'. However, despite the understanding or intentions of environmentalists, the politics of environmentalism does not in practice seek to overthrow the established reality. In this sense, the distinction is that of the classic disrupter between theory and practice. It is this I seek to underscore, more so than to identify two 'camps' consciously advocating different environmental projects.

c)The Normative Content of Environmental Politics

Drawing from the above discussion on terminology, environmental politics can be seen as an uneasy amalgam of environmentalism and ecological thought. The ethical stance implicit in the environmentalist *approach* is one that does not question the dominant instrumentalist ethos. Yet -- and this is the point which Dobson makes clear -- the environmental concerns which are raised by environmentalists are *in theory* potentially explosive. That is, concern for the environment, viewed normatively, is a radical challenge to our understanding of the relationship between human beings, technology, and nature.

I begin the analysis of environmentalism and of how Marcuse can constructively and creatively inform it by sketching out, in the first section (Chapter I), what I consider to be the conceptual understanding of 'nature', as it is most commonly expressed in environmentalist discourse. I maintain here that two related concepts of nature pervade the common environmentalist discourse. First, the utilitarian dualist concept of nature suggests that nature is external to social beings. Humanity is placed at the 'center' and derives a managerial function in relation to nature. Second, a more differentiated concept of nature conceives of humanity as an essential component part of the naturalist equation. Thus, a reverential feeling of

"oneness" is created. I raise the problematic of an underlying utilitarian thrust to this second concept of nature despite its holistic pretense. I maintain that the resultant ambiguity is witnessed by analyzing the underlying precepts of the thesis of sustainable development as it is presented in the Brundtland Report. The espousal of the thesis of sustainable development demands an uneasy intellectual adherence to both utilitarian conceptual understandings of nature.

In concluding this first section, I argue that the two most prevalent notions of nature found in environmentalist discourse cannot, in the words of the Brundtland Report, "break out of past patterns".¹⁶ Both concepts are ultimately instrumental as they are concerned with the place of the human being *in nature*. This critique leads to a search for a conception of nature which is not completely objectified. That is, the question "what is nature?" must be broadened. The response must be more expressive of a symbiotic relationship between Reason and nature. The theory of nature, if it is to be fruitful, must be concerned with a non-instrumental mediation between human subjectivity and the objective natural world.

In the second section (Chapters II to VI), I introduce a theoretical perspective as an alternative to what is perceived to be the dominant instrumentalist approach to nature, that of Herbert Marcuse. It recognizes the dichotomous interplay between the subjective and objective moments of man and nature, the opposition between freedom and necessity, between subjective self-realization and objective construction of the social world, and between the dual imperatives of nature and technology.

As a preparation for my analysis of Marcuse's theory I briefly examine the Romantic elements which have influenced his thought (Chapter II). I argue that the Romantics resisted the idea that nature and society held merely a functional purpose for humankind. Rather, the Romantic project seeks a synthesis of the aestheticized

'feeling for nature' with external nature. Moreover, I also point out to what extent the Romantics sought to express an essential commonality between subjectivity and nature. Their quest was to envision human activity *within* and in relation to a natural world which has its own immanent value. Such activity is not purely rational, governed by analytic reason, for nature does not fully disclose its own principles rationally. If this activity is thought of as synthesis between freedom and nature, it cannot be a rational synthesis but rather an aesthetic synthesis as intuitive imagination and poetics. This living process and the immanent objective in nature are intuitively sensed and aesthetically appreciated not subject to a masterful control by calculating reason. Charles Taylor is right to depict the internal value in the Romantic sense of nature as a "spiritual principle striving to realize itself". ¹⁷

In the second part of this section, I argue that the Romantic project holds more than a passing affinity with the work of Marcuse. Firstly, Marcuse's theory acknowledges the seminal importance of human subjectivity as negative critique. In One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse's Romanticism is summed up in his term "artistic alienation". By this he means more than the Marxian concept of the alienation of man from man and nature. For, he writes, "the *artistic alienation* is the conscious transcendence of the alienated existence -- a 'higher level' or mediated alienation". ¹⁸ From this understanding Marcuse is able to explore and defend an alternative relationship between humanity and nature; one which emphasizes an aesthetic reconciliation between subjectivity and external nature.

The Romantics were concerned to expose the cause of alienation in bourgeois society, and to transcend alienated existence. In Marcuse, 'artistic alienation' is put forth as a *necessary* protest against the dominant economic, political and cultural vision of society. Hence, Marcuse's project, with its romantic goal of overcoming the *cause* of alienation in modern society, presents itself as a critical counterpoint to

the common utilitarian conception best exemplified by the term 'sustainable development', which seeks merely to mitigate the harshest *effects* of modern social organizations. By reinstating critical, aesthetic appreciation, Marcuse opens up a whole realm of 'potentiality' denied by one-dimensional reality. That is, Marcuse's theory explicitly reconceives society in light of its potential for liberation. We look at his project, therefore, in terms of its attempt to situate the impetus for social transformation in the "hidden" foundation of society, rather than in the external phenomenal features of a given social reality.

Secondly, by being open to nature's own aesthetic form, Marcuse is able to recognize nature as a "symbol" of a liberated society. That is, "the life-enhancing, sensuous, aesthetic qualities inherent in nature"¹⁹ are emphasized for their regulative role in human history. Nature, then, is a partner to the historical subject based on its inherent values which serve as guides for moral action. I demonstrate how, through this "symbol", Marcuse is attempting to discredit the historical equation of 'reason' with 'repression'. Repressive reason is substituted, in Marcuse's perspective, with a 'reason' reconciled with 'sensuousness'. Finally, I argue that through the articulation of this project an ethical-aesthetic notion of community emerges.

Marcuse's writings display three distinct phases (Chapters III to VI). In his early writings, the theory of aesthetic liberation is least articulated (Chapters III & IV). That is, despite a preoccupation with notions such as "play" and "vital activity", the key stumbling block which Marcuse encounters is his inability to articulate a vision which does not retain a fundamental bifurcation between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom. That is, the realm of freedom is proposed as being "other", "apart from" and "beyond" the realm of necessity. Not only are these realms opposite in regard to the laws operating in each, but they remain

irreconcilable. A goal posited at the level of freedom becomes "toil" at the level of necessity, material nature, as action to achieve it is a labouring "burdensome" process. Early, Marcuse regards labour as alienation. Later, his aesthetic vision challenges the 'social imperativeness' of alienated labour. It becomes a historical rather than an absolute imperative.

With the publication of Eros and Civilisation Marcuse elaborates on both his theory of liberation and his aesthetic notion of community (Chapter V). By incorporating the psychological themes, Marcuse attempts to bridge the gap between the development of the individual as "ontogenetic" development and the development of the human species as "phylogenetic" development. Notions such as 'recollection', 'mediation', and 'reconciliation' gain a measure of centrality in Marcuse's project. This phase of his writing contributes to a fuller articulation of the teleological nature of the aesthetic notion of community. Nonetheless, a certain ambivalence remains as to the nature of necessity and the nature of freedom.

On the one hand, Marcuse's idea of "achievement", as the reduction of time spent at necessary labour afforded by increased automation, *upholds* the notion of the burdensome quality of necessary labour. Yet, on the other hand, Marcuse envisions a future in which individual faculties, once released from the "inevitably repressive work-world", will "generate new forms of realization and of discovering the world, which in turn will *reshape* the realm of necessity, the struggle for existence".²⁰ Hence, the discourse surrounding the idea of an aesthetic reconciliation towards the liberated society remains ambiguous.

In the later writings, the proposed mediation of subjective self-fulfillment and objective construction of the material world attains its strongest defence (Chapter VI). The notion of 'negation' in social theory and social praxis is central to social reconstruction and liberation. Negative critique identifies potentialities and opens up

the way to expressing that which established reality excludes.

Aesthetic community is posed as more than a tool for speculative critique, it is posed as a call to action. We may say in Kantian terms that it is posed as a moral imperative necessary to achieve for both Reason's sake and nature's sake. In uncovering human values such as beauty, receptivity, and contemplation, the notion of aesthetic community is a concerted attempt to rescue these values from their repressive distortion under the established reality. Accordingly, reason, by shedding repressive instrumentality, is reconstructed in terms of aesthetic sensibilities. *This* new rationality is rooted in nature. That is, nature emerges as a ground for an ethic of aesthetics, and indeed as a ground for freedom. In this sense we must read Marcuse's claim to "appropriate" nature for liberating rather than repressive ends, not as a call for the human management of natural systems, but as a call to reconceive nature beyond its instrumental use. Far from being an instrumental appropriation of nature, Marcuse's "appropriation" is more properly understood to be an appropriation of the term "nature", so that its liberatory content may be acknowledged outside the reified rule of the performance principle. In this way, for Marcuse, nature and liberation are inextricably linked.

The third and final section (Conclusion) critically speculates on the significance of certain Marcusean concepts for radical ecological thought. It is argued that the culmination of his project in the 'aesthetic dimension' is the fulfillment of its inherent moral logic. It offers an important counterpoint to environmentalist positions from which the moral imperative is absent. Marcuse's theory does suggest that the subjective interest and the objective interest are potentially reconcilable if we conceive of the aesthetic community -- rather than efficient cause -- as being the moral genesis of human determination. This potential

can be tapped, in Marcuse's view, by recognizing the subjective, determinate side of man's nature *in nature* .

d) Methodology

There is a need to offer some justification for the particular form and direction which I take in this dissertation, attributable, in some measure, to the consciously selective use of source material. My analysis of Marcuse's relevance for contemporary ecological theory is premised by the view that his concept of nature and theory of liberation are worked out haltingly but creatively in the long course of his studies in political and cultural thought. I feel it is not only appropriate but beneficial, therefore, to assume a focus which is chronologically and broadly encompassing rather than one which is narrow yet detailed. I place emphasis in this dissertation on Marcuse's Reason and Revolution, Eros and Civilisation , One-Dimensional Man, An Essay on Liberation and Counterrevolution and Revolt . By concentrating on Marcuse's well known and full-length works I am in a better position to trace in his project the gradual development of the aesthetic orientation with all its attendant ambiguities and tensions. While at the same time, these texts, because of their length, contain internal contradictions which reveal not only inherent tensions and dichotomies, but importantly, reveal theoretical shifts. More references drawn from his essays and other works would undoubtedly have added their weight to my line of argumentation. The purpose and scope of this dissertation, however, precludes a systematic and comprehensive study of Marcuse's work.

This same consideration is at work in my admittedly cursory overview of environmentalism and ecological thought. The subject matter here is all the more circumscribed by discretionary and somewhat artificial boundaries. Yet, the

purpose here is not so much an in-depth analysis of the practical and theoretical approaches to nature but rather a presentation of their most salient deficiencies. It is only by acknowledging the limitation of environmentalism in terms of its paradigmatic adherence to capitalism that a way may be opened for a radical reconfiguration of the relationship of sentient beings and nature. That is to say, the discussion of the concept of nature in the following chapter is of limited scope, presented primarily to satisfy specific critical claims as to the beneficence of environmental strategies taken within the context of an atomistic-mechanical world view.

A final point must be made regarding Marcuse's Romanticism. While the general claim is widely acknowledged that Marcuse's work is influenced by the generation of German Romantics including Herder, Schelling and especially Schiller, as well as thinkers such as Rousseau and Kant noted for their influence on the movement, my method of presentation in this regard is somewhat problematic. In discussing the Romantics, I often refer to secondary rather than original sources. This is an expediency not a merit. Given the wide ranging and eclectic nature of Romantic thought, and my more circumscribed interest in Marcuse's Romantic appropriations, I was forced by practical considerations to seek broad interpretations of Romanticism rather than interpret the dissonant voices as to the particulars. This is indeed a shortcoming, but one which allows, nonetheless, for a greater concentration on Marcuse's texts which are crucial in elucidating the central hypothesis that Marcuse's aesthetic preoccupation -- witnessed throughout his discussion in terms of imagination, pleasure principle, rationality of gratification, sensuousness, the new sensibility and aesthetic activity or play -- recalls the Romantic temper, and more than this, seeks in it the ground for a new mode of thought and sensibility based on an organic relation of man and nature.

1. see Michael Lowy, "Marcuse and Benjamin: The Romantic Dimension", Telos, 13, no. 2, summer '80, pp. 22-33. Here, he discusses the "two poles" -- Romanticism and rationalism -- of Marcuse's thought.
2. Douglas Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism (Berkeley: UCP, 1984), p. 22.
3. Ibid., p. 21.
4. Jane Coutts, "The Politics of Blue" in The Globe and Mail, Saturday, May 25, 1991, p.D3. Coutts explains that "less than 10 percent of municipal waste is actually diverted from landfill through blue boxes".
5. Virginia Galt, "Casualties of the environmental wars", in The Globe and Mail, Saturday Feb. 23, 1991, p.D2. After McDonald's switch from polystyrene to paper packaging, Galt writes that "some experts believe that paper production causes more environmental damage than polystyrene manufacture and that the public's well-intentioned attempt to protect the environment by refusing polystyrene packaging could end up doing more harm than good".
6. J. Ronald Engel, "Introduction: The ethics of sustainable development" in Ethics of Environment and Development, Engel & Engel, eds. (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), p. 7.
7. Jane Coutts, "The politics of Blue" in The Globe and Mail, Saturday, May 25, 1991, p.D3. Richard Gilbert, president of the Canadian Urban Institute, is quoted as saying "we could put much more emphasis on finding novel ways to reuse things ... we must not give the wrong message that recycling somehow solves all the problems".
8. J. Ronald Engel, "Introduction: The ethics of sustainable development", op. cit., p.7.
9. Andrew Dobson, Green Political Thought (London, Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1990). Dobson points out that other writers make a distinction between 'light' and 'dark' green, and 'shallow' and 'deep' ecology. Murray Bookchin also speaks disparagingly of 'deep', 'deeper' and 'deepest' ecology.

(See Murray Bookchin, The Philosophy of Social Ecology, Montreal, Black Rose Books, 1990).

10. Ibid., p. 5.

11. Ibid., p. 5.

12. Ibid., p. 6.

13. Ibid., p. 8.

14. Ibid., p. 10.

15. Ibid., p. 8.

16. World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future (New York, Oxford University Press, 1987), p.22.

17. Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.9.

18. Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (1964; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 60.

19. Herbert Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt (Boston, Beacon Press, 1972), p.67.

20. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud (1956; rpt. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), p. 223, my emphasis.

CHAPTER I - DEFINITIONS OF NATURE

In discussing "what is nature?" it is useful to explore the issue from the ground up. Or, more precisely, to reduce the term to its more mundane, in the hope of building on its complexity. I shall propose then two mundane, but I believe readily acceptable understandings of the term. One understanding of nature focuses on its physical constitution as that which is analytically prior to all human-technical manipulation. A second sense of nature, equally familiar to us, is humanist as well as physicalist. It is all that is of us and around us.

Both definitions are widely shared but they are logically mutually exclusive. Nature cannot be inclusive of human potential and enterprise yet exclude technology. However, my claim is that despite the apparent logical contradiction between these two conceptions, more often than not, they coexist uncritically in the consciousness of modern culture. Further, the coexistence of the two conceptions underscores their mutual character as instrumental approaches to nature. To meet this claim, I shall elaborate in turn on each understanding of the term. Then, I shall situate each concept of nature in the common understanding and discourse.

a) Dualist Concept of Nature

Nature in the first popular sense has come to mean that which we can conceive apart from, or opposed to, technological society. Nature is all whose form has been shaped by biological and physical causality. It is physical as in a tree but not as in a car. It is not a product of the societal arrangements be they "primitive", artisanal or highly technological. In this sense, a primitively constructed wood table is no more natural than a television set.

This sense of nature draws a distinction between nature and subjectivity

which is the seat of the human will and where desires or goals are consciously posed. Nature is external to subjectivity. From this, what I call the dualist concept of nature, nature is an entity apart from human subjectivity. This idea of nature being external to, and counterposed to subjectivity makes of the human being independent subject of action and comes from a particular world view. It is a world view that places the inner nature of humanity at the 'center' and apprehends all else in relation to this positioning. It is a Promethean world view that grew out of the Enlightenment understanding that living and inanimate matter is the "stuff" put in place as the raw material for human endeavours. It is a world view as familiar to our modern technological society, captivated by efficient cause, as it was unfamiliar to the world inhabited by Francis Bacon. Bacon's words in the preface to The Great Instauration were as prophetic as they were entreating: "that a way must be opened for the human understanding entirely different from any hitherto known,..., in order that the mind may exercise over the nature of things the authority which properly belongs to it".¹

If the Enlightenment ushered in human-instrumental authority over the material world as the preferred mode of social and scientific practice, it did so with the weight of a philosophical preoccupation dating back to classical Greece. Dualism, in the most general sense of two irreducible kinds of substances or categories, can be traced back at least as far as the Sophists. Karl Popper, for instance, maintains that Protagoras' Sophists generation "is marked by the realization of the need to distinguish between two different elements in man's environment -- his natural environment and his social environment." ² G.S. Kirk agrees in that the Sophists were effective in clarifying certain philosophical problems such as the problem of "presupposed unity and observed plurality" in explicit opposition to a myriad of homogeneous, indivisible, Eleatic and monist visions current at the time. ³

And indeed the Promethean myth, depicted by Aeschylus, presents the struggle of culture over the brute force of nature in the clash between Prometheus, as humanity's primordial benefactor in the arts and sciences, and Zeus, the unyielding force of irrationality.⁴

The modern dualist concept of nature can perhaps best be traced back to the Cartesian understanding of the world which, in the view of some thinkers, Heidegger in particular, ushered in the modern epoch. Descartes perceived a division of the world into mind (thinking substance) and matter (extended substance). By positing an irreducible distinction between these two types of substance, Descartes' theory had the effect of privileging the (human) mind over matter. Matter existed as one extended, yet divisible, substance which the indivisible mind can know by reason alone.

In his "Sixth Meditation", Descartes offers arguments for the proof of the existence of material things. Significantly, though, in considering these arguments he writes that "we come to recognize that they are not as firm and as evident as those which lead us to the knowledge of God and of our soul".⁵ Further, he writes, "we must conclude from all this that things which we clearly and distinctly perceive to be diverse substances, as we conceive the mind and the body, are in fact substances which are really distinct from each other."⁶ The dualist separating off of our inner nature from the corporeal world achieves its strongest expression in Cartesian rationalism.

Thomas Hobbes, another rationalist, parlayed his epistemology into a political theory grounded in mechanical laws. In Hobbesian theory, man is not naturally social. He is however social by necessity. The state of nature, according to Hobbes, is a state of war in which *individuals* mutually struggle for supremacy and preservation. The combination of this desire for power and fear of death, however,

leads individuals into a pact of mutual assurance, the social contract.

The conception of the state of nature which Hobbes provides is significant in that the individual subject is accorded a strict autonomy. The 'right of nature' is the individual liberty of each person. This right is conceived in spite of the harsh natural environment which avowedly makes life "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short".⁷ What is more, this theoretical autonomy is held not only in relation to nature, but in relation to other individual subjects as well. The atomistic conception of the human subject is well expressed in the following passage of the Leviathan. Hobbes writes,

Because the condition of man is a condition of war of every one against every one; in which case every one is governed by his own reason; and there is nothing he can make use of, that may not help unto him, in preserving his life against his enemies; it followeth that in such a condition, *every man has a right to every thing; even to one another's body.*⁸

The fact that in Hobbesian theory individuals give up their natural right is as significant here as the initial theorization of a state of war. That is to say, the social contract is construed as an artifice. As society is an artificial construction in Hobbesian theory, the central importance of individuals and their actions is made clear. Man is the measure and builder of society, which in turn establishes the 'temper, custom and doctrine' of the time. The inference is that social man is the determinant of what is good and evil. As such, social man will manage the natural and man-made environment based on *his own*, necessarily relative, understanding of *his own* subjective interest.

The instrumentalist rationale has grown to be commonplace, as the concern for accumulation, growth and efficiency in Western culture attests.

Environmentalists, however, have not been immune from the allure of placing 'man's mind' at the center of "(authority) over the nature of things". Time and again environmentalists have called for new approaches to *manage* the ill effects of industrial growth, without questioning the limits to growth, let alone the desirability of growth.⁹ This, I shall argue later, is the most conspicuous limitation befalling the thesis of sustainable development. When environmentalists invoke the sustainability thesis. I argue, they accept *de facto* the utility of nature *for* human development.

The dualist concept of nature, for instance, underlies a 'preservation ethic' of many environmentalists in today's society. The preservation ethic argues that it is incumbent upon humanity to manage the natural environment to preserve " *our* natural heritage".¹⁰ This ethic is manifest in numerous cases of human-nature relations, such as wildlife management programs and conservation practices. In these and other cases, the often heard arguments for preserving genetic diversity and conserving (recreational) parkland are explicit pleas on behalf of natural systems *for the sake of* human prudence.

On this point a certain terminological precision is required. Superficially, my critique of the utilitarian-dualist concept of nature, which I ascribe to the environmentalist perspective, is directed at its anthropocentrism. Indeed, criticism of anthropocentric perspectives is not unusual within the ecological literature. Warwick Fox, for instance, writes that "deep ecologists want to unmask the ideology of anthropocentrism so that it can no longer be used as the 'bottom line' legitimation for social domination and ecological destruction".¹¹ Contrary to Fox and other self-described proponents of ecocentrism and biocentrism, however, my critique is restricted to anthropocentrism *of a certain kind*. My critique explores the instrumental anthropocentrism which justifies nature in terms of its use-value for

human endeavours. It is not human-centredness per se, but its *instrumental variant* which is the focus of criticism.

To clarify this distinction, the work of Andrew Dobson proves useful. Dobson argues "that there is a strong and a weak meaning for the word -- meanings that emerge from a reading of the ecophilosophical literature, but that are rarely formally distinguished".¹² In Dobson's terminology, "weak" anthropocentrism is "human-centred" while "strong" anthropocentrism is "human-instrumental". He argues convincingly that while anthropocentrism in the "strong" sense of the instrumental use of the non-human world is rightly criticized by ecophilosophers, "weak" anthropocentrism is criticized unfairly (as well as unconsciously). According to Dobson, "anthropocentrism in the weak sense is an unavoidable feature of the human condition". By this he means that even theorists who search for intrinsic value or ethical principles in nature have embarked on a "human search".¹³ What is at issue here is really the imputation of value by the human subject on nature. Underlying Dobson's understanding is the view that value resides not in the natural object, but in the human subject *through* its apprehension of the object of nature.

Agreeing with Dobson's argument, in the following discussion I argue that the problem is not that the dualist concept of nature is anthropocentric per se, but that it is anthropocentric in the strong or instrumental sense. Further, I argue that the weak or human-centred anthropocentric arguments for the preservation of nature, if present at all in the common discourse, are overshadowed by pervasive utilitarian or instrumental arguments.

In practice, the preservation ethic, even in the human-instrumental sense, has no doubt led to the protection of much that is crucial to our long-term survival on this planet. Without a sense of preservation, the technological developments as they

are, would have assuredly usurped the natural functions of this world. Most would agree that the complete degradation of the natural environment by technological advancement would be a nightmarish vision of a society gone mad, leading to the eventual extinction of all life (human included). The currency of these horrifying images in Hollywood films such as "Bladerunner" attests to a popular fear of unchecked technological development. Few agree, however, on *where* this line or this balance between natural preservation and technological advancement exists. We see this fundamental disagreement in the various environmental and industrial causes. Whether it be the issue of clear-cut logging, pulp mills, or hydro and nuclear power, the cause of preserving 'our natural heritage' of land, water and air is weighed against the technological causes of jobs, comfort and efficiency. Thus, human-instrumental arguments for the preservation of nature are invoked to counterclaim the instrumental or utilitarian arguments which have traditionally supported the idea of technological progress. In this way, the social debate rages between those who would privilege nature and those who invoke economic necessity.

A good example of how deeply the utilitarian rationale has pervaded even the 'ecologically conscious' can be found in Linda Starke's book Signs of Hope: Working Towards Our Common Future. Starke's book is an assessment of the impact of the Brundtland Report in the three years (at time of publication) since the Report's publication. In keeping with her avowal that the "decision taken from the start was to accentuate the positive", Starke proceeds to document "successes" attributable to the sustainable development approach.¹⁴ One such "sign of hope", according to Starke, is "green consumerism". She points out that the Canadian Supermarket chain Loblaw, responding to market research, "introduced more than 100 green products in June 1989".¹⁵ The research which precipitated the green

product line, according to Starke,

found that half of all *consumers* would switch to a store selling merchandise *they believe* to be environmentally safe. Earlier opinion polls had indicated that 80 per cent of consumers would pay 10 per cent more for products that have a low environmental impact. The Chamber of Commerce highlights one of the many reports on public opinion: 86 per cent are willing for their '*green conscience*' to cost them \$100 more in expenses per month.¹⁶

It is significant that the only fear Starke raises regarding the issue of green consumerism is corporate faith. She acknowledges that if such campaigns become viewed as "marketing ploys" green consumer trends could deteriorate. "Loblaw has been taken to task by environmental groups", she points out, precisely "for not releasing the criteria it uses to include products in the new line".¹⁷

However real fear regarding corporate faith may be, it obscures more fundamental problems with the notion of green consumerism. More serious than the veracity of individuals and corporations in their 'green' claims, is the underlying utilitarian nature of these claims. That is to say, if we look at the aforementioned "marketing research" what stands out is the human-instrumental criteria which are invoked to judge and delimit the extent of our environmental generosity. Specifically, every environmental concession is predicated on its economic acceptability. Percentage figures on the numbers of "consumers" willing to switch supermarkets or pay more for "green" products can indicate to the benefit of a corporation how far it should go in its green campaign, but can only be an arbitrary measure in relation to environmental sustainability.

Michael Redclift calls this the "willingness to pay principle" and he agrees that

it, in no way, reflects environmental necessity, but rather economic necessity.¹⁸ A whole set of assumptions accompanies this willingness to pay principle. There is an erroneous assumption that, in the terminology of Redclift, "behaviour is optimal". In other words, green consumption is predicated on the belief that consumer decisions are informed, that what "they believe" is also what consumers know. This is the problem that Starke recognized by raising the possibility of the "marketing ploy". But "optimal behaviour" also requires that all possible choices be evident and realizable. If green consumption requires a *willingness* to pay more, this, it should be noted, is not always commensurate with the *possibility* to pay more. Equally problematic is the behavioural goal itself of consumption. If green consumption is promoted as the proper environmental response, consumption is reified. The idea of reducing consumption is eliminated as a serious consideration. In other words, it is assumed by advocates of green consumerism that our environmental interests can be adequately expressed and addressed by way of our identities as consumers. It is no accident that this research which purports to measure our level of environmental commitment defines us not in terms of our citizenship or membership of a community but defines us as consumers.

This points up the fundamental problem with this utilitarian-dualistic vision of the world which sets off subjectivity as the master of nature. If our inner nature has no ethical affinity with, and if human goals are independent of a natural potentiality, then we can see no basis *but utility* on which to support external nature. The "weak" anthropocentric or non-instrumental arguments for preserving natural systems are submerged by a logic which cannot admit their legitimacy. Consequently, the preservation ethic becomes nothing more than a product of a societal 'checks and balances' between nature and technology. For instance, fish quotas are established at "sustainable" levels to preserve the stock *and* the long term viability of the fish

industry. In this view, the counterposition of nature to technology is accepted on the basis that the exigencies of nature can be measured in relation to technological requirements. The preservation of nature becomes an instrumental concern of humanity, and thus anthropocentric in the strong sense, as nature derives its importance from our primary concern for technological growth. Essentially, the human-instrumental preservation ethic decrees that humanity must find a reason, an excuse to fit the 'natural world' into its own. But if this reason should become less obvious to us, or become overshadowed by technological reason, nature must necessarily lose out.

This would appear to be an untenable outcome of the instrumental bifurcation of human subjectivity and nature. The utilitarian-dualist concept of nature needs to be understood in terms of these theoretical implications.

b) A Second Variant of the Dualist Concept of Nature

If this dualist concept of nature underlies popular wisdom (of environmentalists and industrialists, and everyone in between), it does so without an exclusive hold on our understanding. Particularly among those who profess sensitivity to 'environmental concerns', there is an additional understanding of nature. That is, in support of ecological causes, it is often said that humanity's 'oneness' with nature must be recalled. This oneness, of course, is more than just a feeling. In a very real sense humanity is dependent on the continued functioning of natural forces. In order for us to exist, the atmosphere must persist, the vegetation must grow, and the animals must thrive. By recognizing our essential dependence on, and connectedness to nature, we come to recognize our own naturalness. We are, in this view, fundamentally a part of the natural process.

This sense of nature is humanist as well as physicalist. It is maintained, as I

will show later, that this differentiated concept of nature distinguishes itself from the utilitarian-dualist concept of nature more by degree than by substance. Thus, I shall first endeavour to show how this more humanist conception is suggestive at least of a more subtle, complex and differentiated understanding of nature. Second, I shall point out to what extent human-instrumental assumptions nevertheless underlie this conception. In the final analysis, this concept of nature can be characterized as little more than a pretense to holism while remaining instrumental in the first dualistic sense of nature. I shall mention briefly and generally some of the actual and perceived implications of this concept of nature. Then, I shall situate this view in the common discourse, and more particularly in the Brundtland Report.

Generally, a professed oneness with nature does imply that humanity (despite being a social being) holds a certain responsibility towards nature. This world view is different from the aforementioned dualist concept of nature to the extent that the crux of this view is that nature cannot be whole, persistent, or stable without all of its component parts. There is, then, an added emphasis on the importance of humanity *as nature*. Humanity is an essential component part of the naturalist equation. Therefore, a second underpinning of environmental thinking -- an addendum to the utilitarian-dualist concept of nature -- is the belief that *as natural beings* we are responsible for nature.

As far as the analysis goes so far, there is no *practical* contradiction between the first dualist concept of nature and the second variant. No matter which way the subject is approached, human beings' intercession in the cause of nature is justified. It is justified in the first account by humanity's status as external custodian of nature. Or, through the second concept of nature, humanity is viewed as a legitimate participant, and integral influence on the course of nature.

This second concept of nature, differentiated by a humanist as well as a

physicalist sense, is not without its historical antecedents. The second variant is to the dualist concept of nature as empiricism is to rationalism. For instance, the empiricists do not question the dualistic vision of the world advanced by cartesian rationalists. If the locus of men's knowledge is sensorial-experiential, empiricists accept the dualist world view which posits a corporeal world in opposition to human subjectivity. It is precisely through sense-experience that the repository of knowledge, the corporeal world, is accessed by the human subject. Analogously, this second concept of nature does not question the dualistic assumptions which necessarily accompany notions of the *coexistence* of human subjects and natural objects. It is precisely the *interdependence* of opposites -- subjectivity and nature -- which is invoked by the notion of "oneness". Yet, empiricists question, more specifically, the rationalist belief that the human subject can know without perceiving or experiencing the material world. For empiricists observation, and more specifically science, is the means of acquiring knowledge. In this specific sense, the second differentiated concept of nature also calls into question the very possibility that human determination can exist independently of the external world. Indeed, in this second understanding of nature the human telos is intimately and inextricably linked to the state of external nature.

What then does this recognition of "oneness" appear to add to the dualist concept of nature? By adding a humanist dimension to the physicalist dimension of nature one is then open to the possibility of reconciling natural processes with human endeavours. That is, by recognizing the 'natural' affinity or mutuality of inner and external nature, the telos of human subjectivity can be reconciled with nature. Whereas without this sense of oneness or interdependence, such as in the initial dualist concept of nature, human subjectivity must necessarily *overcome* physical nature. This recognition of the humanist element of nature is an important

additional level of complexity suggestive of a human-centred yet non-instrumental approach to nature.

I intend to show, however, that despite its initial promise, this differentiated concept of nature is more often than not reduced to a human-instrumental understanding and response to nature. By examining both concepts of nature as they appear in the Brundtland Report it becomes apparent that the Report's appeal to a fundamental reconciliation between subjectivity and nature is without a theoretical foundation. Critics note similar deficiencies. Ethicist J. Ronald Engel, for instance, sees the conflict, reflected in the various international policy statements of the environmental movement, as "between 'resource conservation', which stresses efficient, long-term utilization of natural resources, and 'ecocentrism', which stresses preservation of values inherent in natural landscapes".¹⁹ Significantly, he writes that the Brundtland Report is one such statement which "*fails to integrate* 'our moral obligation to other living beings' with its overriding concern for better resource management and economic betterment".²⁰ In the Report, nature, whether physicalist or physicalist-humanist, is still completely objectified. Efficient cause, rather than subjective self-fulfillment, is still the 'referent' accorded to natural (both external and inner) processes. In the end, the Report fails to problematize the notion of "reconciliation", hindering the emergence of an ecological community with an ethical orientation to nature.

The essentially physicalist and the physicalist-humanist concept of nature may persist together (in practice) among those who adhere to a certain ecological consciousness. However, the theoretical contradictions of these utilitarian-dualist concepts of nature are made explicit by the persistence of a rationality based on technology. Before turning to an analysis of these contradictions, it is important to show just how profoundly these two concepts of nature have influenced the

contemporary environmentalist ethic.

c) Dualist Concepts of Nature in Practice

It can be said with some conviction that the study and report done by the World Commission on Environment and Development has at once led the debate concerning environmental problems. While at the same time, its own existence is a testament to the already growing environmental consciousness of our day. It is not my intention to maintain that the resulting Brundtland Report ²¹ is representative of every environmental perspective current today. It is however representative of the most popular ideas, and it surely will have an influence on the course of future debate.

It is for these reasons, as well as for its espousal of the thesis of "sustainable development", that the Brundtland Report can be seen as a bench-mark for current opinion. It is on this basis which an analysis and critique of its basic premises proves revealing of the most popular concepts of nature. For it would appear that the ecological consciousness adhered to by the Commission members is one which ranges between essentially physicalist statements regarding external nature, and statements which appeal to our understanding of a fundamental interdependence (or "oneness") between social beings and nature.

The Report opens by pointing out that our first glimpse of the planet earth from space did not reveal signs of human activity, but "a pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery, and soils" ²². What this points out to the authors of the Report is that fundamentally, nature, not technic, exemplifies human existence. From this reality stems human responsibility:

Humanity's inability to fit its activities into

that pattern is changing planetary systems, fundamentally. Many such changes are accompanied by life-threatening hazards. *This new reality, from which there is no escape, must be recognized -- and managed.* (my emphasis).²³

This planetary perspective is revelatory on two counts. First, it does capture a generalized feeling among an increasing number of human beings that we do live in a natural world, balanced (or unbalanced) in some way by our social existence. That, indeed, the natural earth is being increasingly challenged by technological development. Furthermore, that this challenge will either result in the further release of nature's potential, or the domination of nature by technology.

Second, this planetary perspective is derived from both world views or popular concepts of nature. On the one hand, the planetary perspective is a holistic bird's eye-view. Underneath the clouds, beneath the ocean and amidst the greenery, it is understood that human social activity is being carried out. Furthermore, this social and technical activity is inextricably enmeshed (if hidden) in nature -- as evidenced by this view of the whole. What is being called upon here is a holistic understanding of nature: the view from space confirms the essential oneness of humanity and nature. Nature here is both physicalist and humanist. After all, it is human technology which has allowed human beings to glimpse this perspective in the first place.

On the other hand, if mankind is essentially one-with-nature, this fact does not stop the authors of the report from adding that man is also responsible for 'external' nature. If we recall the above quotation, the authors state that there is "no escape" from "life-threatening hazards" brought on by *human-induced* changes in planetary systems. Yet nevertheless, this planetary -- in other words natural -- "reality ... must be recognized -- and managed". The Report's call for responsible

management points up an understanding of mankind as custodian to nature. The preservation ethic based on a bifurcation of human subjectivity and nature is assumed. What is more, the Report's "no escape" reveals not only its internalization of this bifurcation of subjectivity and nature, but its acquiescence to the inevitability of technologically abetted "life threatening hazards". Hence, it is ultimately from a dualistic perspective, that sees the relationship between subjectivity and nature as an instrumental one, that the Report succeeds in compartmentalizing humanity's natural essence from an essential -- "From which there is no escape" -- destructive technology.

For the members of the Commission it is simply a matter of reconciling two polls: "We have the power to reconcile human affairs with natural laws and to thrive in the process"²⁴. In this they concede that the viability of human life depends on our attaining of a symbiotic relationship between the parts. "From space", they write, "we can see and study the Earth as an organism whose health depends on the health of all its parts".²⁵ Thus, in the Brundtland Report, a differentiated or organic perspective is premised on an original duality whose mediation is a technical one.

It should come as no surprise that the dualist human-instrumental concept of nature is the theoretical basis for the direction which the Report takes. For one, the dualist concept has strong and lasting historical precedents. Throughout modern western thought, theorists have tended to acknowledge the duality of man's existence. The human being is at once a physical and a thinking being. Whether philosophically this duality has been cheerfully accepted or strenuously combatted, the condition of man as a rational being has tended to -- at least on one level -- abstract man from his physical environment. If indeed we are 'abstracted' from it, our only possible control would seem to arise from our managerial function. The optimism (and holistic pretense) of the Report rests on the belief that through

technological management "we have the power to reconcile" human subjectivity and nature.

The Report's faith in mankind's rational ability to reconcile his natural world with his technological world necessarily stems from the utilitarian-dualistic premise of western thought. That is, it is precisely a dualistic perspective which is required to even conceive of reconciliation. Where both worlds of nature and technology are held to be mutually cooperative: "...we can produce more food and more goods with less investment of resources; our technology and science gives us at least the potential to look deeper into and better understand natural systems".²⁶ Thus, the Report advocates that our relationship with nature be technically mediated. This 'reconciliation', while necessarily stemming from a premise of dualism, necessarily purports to conjure up a holistic picture. That is, the Report explicitly recognizes the fundamental interdependence of economic and environmental concerns. From a utilitarian-dualistic perspective the authors of the Report point out a necessary and crucial fact. They point out that the environment (nature) and the economy (technology) must be understood as interdependent entities. However, they further suggest that it is by recognizing our interdependence that we will come to reconcile human endeavours and natural processes. The point, however, is that the theoretical and ethical basis of such a projects of reconciliation remains obscure.

The concept of sustainable development championed by the Report is without an obvious theoretical or ethical foundation. Indeed, much of the critical literature to be found on this concept acknowledges, at least implicitly, such a deficiency. For instance, in a book of essays dedicated to exploring the ethics of sustainable development, the editor makes it clear that it is a task which has only just begun. The collection of essays do not presume a global ethic, but rather a lack of ethical orientation in the current invocation of the term. In his introduction to Ethics of

Environment and Development, J. Ronald Engel explains:

Before we accept 'sustainable development' as a new morality as well as a new economic strategy, we need to know what ecological, social, political, and personal values it serves, and how it reconciles the moral claims of human freedom, equality, and community with our obligations to individual animals and plants, species, and ecosystems. Most important, if we are morally serious, we must know on what grounds it may be said that sustainable development is a *true* ethic for human beings on planet earth.²⁷

This is no small task, as Rajni Kothari points out, despite the fact that 'sustainable development' has become a universally accepted slogan. Indeed, it is because of its currency, according to Kothari that "the environmentalist label and the sustainability slogan have become deceptive jargons that are used as convenient covers for conducting business as usual". There is, in Kothari's view, a lack of an "ethical imperative" which reduces environmentalism to a "technological fix".²⁸ And, in his book Sustainable Development: Exploring the Contradictions, Michael Redclift asks rhetorically whether or not sustainable development has a methodology and a praxis. It is clear to Redclift that without a new ethical paradigm "advocating sustainable development or ecodevelopment in principle does not commit governments or international organizations to its achievement in practice".²⁹

The utilitarian-dualist concept of nature, however, as it was said earlier, succeeds on a practical level. Indeed, the instrumental mediation of nature would *appear* to be a necessary avowal. On the one hand, nature as organic matter operates on a rationale completely distinct from technological reason. Nature, on its own, has a limited capacity to accommodate population growth and technological

demands. Nature in short is indeterminate, or as Marcuse writes in Counterrevolution and Revolt, it is without "plan or intention"³⁰. Hence, it must be managed. Technology, for its part, has no innate sense of, nor accomodation towards the realm of nature. It is a social construct, as the means of putting nature towards man's purposes. Hence, it too must be managed. On the other hand, for either of the two realms to persist, they must come to operate mutually as a whole. And it is this understanding which has given life to the popular concept of sustainable development.

If indeed it is this understanding which has given life to the thesis of sustainable development, it might have been unproblematic if it were not for the *context* or world view *in which* this thesis emerged. It is a context in which technological development, economic growth and accumulation are still the *sine qua non* of human development. As a result, nature is invariably thrust into the role of 'variable'. The consideration of nature is reduced to an instrumental consideration as to how, predicated on these reified notions of growth, nature can aid human development.

It is rightly pointed out by Michael Redclift however that it is this "linear model of growth and accumulation that ultimately serves to undermine the planet's life support systems".³¹ In other words, our environment cannot be sustained through a development which is "too closely associated in our minds with what has occurred in western capitalist societies in the past, and a handful of peripheral capitalist societies today".³² I must agree with Redclift "that neo-classical economics is incapable of fully incorporating environmental considerations into its methodology without what amounts to a 'paradigm shift'".³³ He argues convincingly that the atomistic-mechanical world view which subtends neo-classical economics "is epistemologically predisposed towards a reductionist view of

resources and their utility".³⁴ In this light the solution of sustainable development can only be one of moderating environmental degradation in a greater context of technological growth. In the Brundtland Report, the much used term "reconciliation" does not transcend the dominant instrumentalist ethos.

What is being maintained here is that the utilitarian-dualist concept of nature underlies the theory of sustainable development. The formulators of Our Common Future accept, as fundamental premises, both the duality *and* the prospect of "reconciliation". From this theoretical perspective, the Report literally prescribes a new order based on an instrumental understanding of nature. The preservation of the environment is portrayed as a *means* of securing the higher cause of economic development. They see, for instance, "the possibility for a new era of economic growth, one that must be based on policies that sustain and expand the environmental resource base."³⁵ The possibility even of challenging the notion of development is undermined by their exhortation to "expand" the "base" of environmental resources.

The Report describes changes which must occur to secure sustainable growth. They write that "a new development path was required, one that sustained human progress not just in a few places for a few years, but for the entire planet into the distant future". For instance, a new relationship must be forged between so-called rich and poor nations. For continued development there needs to be "an assurance that those poor get their fair share of the resources required to sustain that growth" ³⁶. If economic and technological "growth" in the poorer nations is dependent upon "their fair share" of the natural resources, implicit in the Report is the understanding that technological and natural wealth must be commensurate and mutually reinforcing, and that this will ensure "growth". The Report even goes so far as to

point out the radical implications of this. It points out that balancing nature and technology globally will require redistributive redress: "sustainable global development requires that those who are more affluent adopt life-styles within the planet's ecological means" ³⁷. This exhortation only goes to highlight in more glaring terms, however, the abject failure of the green consumerism lauded by Starke, which has the effect of reifying rather than modifying consumption in the West.

So far, what we have seen is that sustainable development is inspired by a technically mediated dualistic perspective. The Report also acknowledges the interdependence of our economic, social and environmental interests. Thus, from this perspective, they see that our only real policy options are ones which ultimately reflect the perspective of the whole. Hence, according to the Report, our institutions will have to undergo radical restructuring in order to produce cohesive and comprehensive policies, for all nations, and for the future.

What is also evident from our analysis of sustainable development is that the term implicitly accepts the possibility of reconciliation between economic and environmental interests, on the terms of technology. That is, the concept of sustainable development admits to no inherent contradiction between the prevalent rationality of technic and an ecological consciousness. There is, in the Report, an unchallenged optimism. Reconciliation is possible if one accepts, as the Report does, that growth and ecological protection can both be advantageously managed. They write, "technology and social organization can both be managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth" ³⁸, while maintaining the integrity of the natural environment. Clearly, the thought of preserving both our ecological and our industrial well being underlies this conception.

The concept of sustainable development, it would appear, is based partly on

the holistic pretense of an economically, socially and environmentally interdependent world. It also appears to be partly derived from a 'preservation ethic' rooted in man's perceived need to act as custodian to nature. While both of these tendencies are understandable, they are nevertheless theoretically problematic.

The problem with the concept of sustainable development is that it absolutely demands that society recognize, and be in a position to act upon, the proper balance between technological and ecological interests. Essentially, both interests are presented as counterweights. The exigencies of nature must be measured in some supposedly objective way against the requirements of a technological society. However, the mediation remains necessarily technical, as society attempts to slot environmental "goods" into existing market mechanisms. If technological society insists on subjecting nature to its objectives, the solution of sustainable development can only be one of moderating the harshest effects of technological growth and economic accumulation.

The members of the Commission correctly identify this as a problem of "political will". However, the deeper implications of this problem are not acknowledged. They underline the greatest stumbling block for change as the problem of our continued disassociation of our environmental goals from our technological goals. According to the Report, this has propped up a state of fragmentation at the institutional level:

Those responsible for managing natural resources and protecting the environment are institutionally separated from those responsible for managing the economy. The real world of interlocked economic and ecological systems will not change; the policies and institutions concerned must. 39

On what basis, or by means of what impetus, will policies and institutions change? This is the fundamental question left unaddressed by the Report, as a *project of reconciliation*, as well as its theoretical basis, is conspicuously absent. They hint however at radical change. They write that "we need a mandate for change" and that "the time has come to break out of past patterns". The Report admits that "attempts to maintain social and ecological stability through old approaches to development and environmental protection will increase instability".⁴⁰ Thus these references would appear to suggest obliquely that in the final analysis the intent of sustainable development cannot be reconciled with the continuation of the established reality of instrumental reason, let alone economic "development" plans in poorer countries. Yet the radical intention of breaking the repressive "containment" of society is not recognized by the Commission members. For they write, "This Commission has been careful to base our recommendations on the realities of present institutions".⁴¹ Their ultimate goal, furthermore, is still one of propelling a "new era of economic growth". Hence, "reconciliation" in the Report does not portend a paradigmatic shift in the relationship of human subjectivity to nature. Reconciliation, in terms of the Report, cannot mean overcoming technical control of nature but simply moderating this technical control.

The Commission's perspective is self-professedly entrenched within the *status quo*. Those who have adopted the concept of sustainable development (from businessman, to government official, to environmentalist) have, for the most part, likewise attempted to reconcile its radical intent with the prevailing reality: the prevailing reality being the technological imperative. J. Ronald Engel agrees that the radical intention of a new global ethic of sustainable development is far from being realizable in the present political, social and economic context. "Indeed, to all appearances", Engel writes, "the prevailing opinion among professional specialists,

business, and political leaders alike is that the economic, managerial, technical, and scientific dimensions of conservation and development, mixed with a good dose of *realpolitik*, are sufficient to cope with the problems of providing adequate resources for human consumption and material progress". Furthermore, the need to put ethical considerations at the forefront of public debate is forestalled by the simplistic assumption "that once people understand the harmful consequences of environmental mismanagement, their behaviour will change".⁴² However, if the logic of economic growth continues to dominate in society, then indeed ecological interests will systematically lose out. The dominance of a capitalist ethos makes a mockery of the Report's contention that "in the final analysis, sustainable development must rest on political will".⁴³

d) Dualist Concepts of Nature in Theory

To understand the failure of the thesis of sustainable development at the level of theory, let us look more closely at the problematic implications of each of the two variants of the concept of nature.

In the case of the initial dualist concept of nature, it was said above that the preservation ethic leads to an arbitrary weighing of environmental and technological interests. If ecological reason were to be ignored; if the ecological cause should lose the battle to be heard; in short, if the supremacy of the forces of technological reason were used to perpetuate the *status quo*, then nature will be relegated to a secondary status.

In the case of the more differentiated concept of nature, the effect, if not the process, is similar. Again, among those who adhere to some sort of ecological consciousness, the primacy of humanity's essential naturalness is upheld. However, to view humanity as an essential component of a natural whole leaves open to

interpretation the question of humanity's own "creations". That is, this second concept of nature raises the possibility of our social institutions, social products, and social behaviour having some sort of natural determination. Yet the legitimization of all potential social undertakings within an all-inclusive natural determination is problematic. Without a clear and comprehensive naturalist rationality, which differentiates between nature's potentiality on the one hand, and its "by-products" (to use Marcuse's terminology) on the other, every and any human undertaking can be justified in terms of the essential unity of all things under the rubric of 'nature'. In this problematic sense, technology, and what we call technological advancement, can be viewed as natural and essential to human existence. The point is that the second concept of nature allows for no distinction between human being's constructive and destructive practices. There is no attempt to see nature as a creative form and basis for ethical action. Nature is viewed as a monolith, necessarily a factor in human affairs, but not the bearer of intrinsic values. On these terms, mankind is natural; the atom is natural; the splitting (by a natural being) of the atom is natural; and necessarily, the technological products (nuclear energy and weapons) are also natural.

The current contentious debate taking place in Canada and elsewhere regarding the science and ethics of new and prospective reproductive technologies is a case in point. The simple argument *for technology*, as a form of 'all-inclusive naturalism', taken to its extreme would suggest that all scientific breakthroughs in the area of controlling, altering or managing genetic functions are *ipso facto* progressive developments. Nonetheless, the debate is spurred by the implicit understanding that restrictions on the use of this technology are necessary. In other words, the discourse itself surrounding the issue of reproductive technology suggests that *there are certain limits which a consideration of ethics necessarily*

imposes on this "all-inclusive" paradigm of progress. The differentiated dualist concept of nature, on the other hand, exhorts us only to understand the 'natural' interdependence of all things. Such a blanket naturalism simply does not furnish the theoretical tools needed to help us make the crucial differentiations which we nonetheless readily make in society.

This concept of nature can point out to us that there is a necessary interdependence or interaction between natural systems and technological processes. However, it cannot furnish us with a consequential course of action. To say that nature and technology must be reconciled, as the Report does, is not to offer a rationale on which to judge any given "reconciliation". Similarly, the dualist concept of nature is expressed as an unavoidable outgrowth of an anthropology which regards the human being as having insatiable appetites. For the last 300 years, however, our utilitarian desire to manage natural systems have not been based on an overriding "ecological consciousness" and the effect is the ecological disaster we are now facing.

What is evident is that our preoccupation with our place within or without nature is misplaced. The answer as to whether we are better off treating nature as an object on which to act, or rather view ourselves as active subjects in the natural process itself -- or both, as we see is the case with 'sustainable development' -- is an answer which cannot alone define the meaning of 'nature'. At best, both views are an acknowledgement of an essential, decisive relationship between/among humanity and nature. Neither variant of the dualist concept of nature, however, can escape the context in which they emerge -- a context in which growth is reified. In either case, the existence of natural phenomena is defended *on the basis* of how they 'fit' into the accepted scheme of human development.

The theoretical contradictions which arise within both conceptions of nature stem from this fundamental objectification of nature. If in the initial dualist conception, human society is apprehended apart from nature, human technological society is accorded its own separate legitimacy. The legitimized technological realm, while dependent on the objects of the realm of nature, necessarily struggles against the latter. In the case of the more differentiated conception, humanity accepts technology as part of its "nature". As such, human beings see no legitimate criteria on which to limit technological "progress". Technological development is seen as *the* natural development of society. The contradiction, however, becomes apparent when our technological "nature" is used against our organic nature.

This is the limitation of any environmentalist ethic. Nature is viewed instrumentally. An ecological ethic, then, must necessarily start from an alternative world view. It is the search, in the work of Herbert Marcuse, for this alternative world view on which nature can be reconceived, to which we must now turn. However, what is immediately clear, is that to apprehend the concept of nature in its full complexity, the question "what is nature?" must be broadened. The answer to this question involves not only man's place in nature, but man's relation to nature which nature itself demands be an ethical one. The answer requires that we regard nature as an entity demanding our respect. Nature must be understood as having inherent value and not only in terms of its mechanistic relation to humanity. The perpetuation of a natural existence on earth should not depend on our ability to find a utilitarian reason or excuse for this existence.

1. Francis Bacon, The Great Instauration, J. Weinberger, ed. (Arlington Heights Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1980), p. 7.
2. Karl Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, vol. 1 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 57.
3. J. O. Ormson & Jonathan Ree, ed., The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 263.
4. Aeschylus, "Prometheus Bound" in Ten Greek Plays in Contemporary Translations, L. R. Lind, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.), 1957.
5. René Descartes, "Meditations" in Descartes: Philosophical Essays, L. J. Lafleur, ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1984), p. 74.
6. Ibid., p. 72.
7. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, part 1, ch. 13, as quoted in The Great Political Theories, vol. 1, Michael Curtis, ed. (New York: Avon Books, 1961), p. 300.
8. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, part 1, ch. 14, my emphasis, as quoted in The Great Political Theories, vol. 1, Michael Curtis, ed., op. cit., p. 302.
9. There are many high profile instances where concern for environmental sustainability is explicitly conceived as a utilitarian task. This role is often expressed in terms of mitigating environmental damage *within* the context of human (technological, economic) development. For instance, in July 1991, the American government's Commission on Environmental Quality was set up to advise the President on how to improve environmental protection without harming the economy. Moreover, "the President's Commission on Environmental Quality includes top executives from some of the nation's largest industrial companies, as well as the heads of major environmental and conservation groups" (World Resources Institute, Environmental Almanac,

Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992, p. 14.)

10. This expression denoting possessiveness occurs frequently in the Brundtland Report and among other environmentalist statements. See for instance the Environmental Almanac, op. cit., 1992.

11. Warwick Fox, "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels", in Environmental Ethics, vol. ii, 1989, pp. 5-25, p. 25.

12. Andrew Dobson, Green Political Thought (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1990), p. 63.

13. Ibid., p. 66.

14. Linda Starke, Signs of Hope: Working Towards Our Common Future (Oxford: OUP, 1990), p. VIII.

15. Ibid., p. 107.

16. Ibid., p. 106, my emphasis.

17. Ibid., p. 107.

18. Michael Redclift, Sustainable Development: Exploring the Contradictions (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 39.

19. J. Ronald Engel, "Introduction: The ethics of sustainable development", Ethics of Environment and Development, Engel & Engel, eds. (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), p. 7.

20. Ibid., p. 8, my emphasis.

21. World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future (New York:

Oxford University Press), 1987.

22. Ibid., p. 1.

23. Ibid., p. 1.

24. Ibid., p. 1.

25. Ibid., p. 1.

26. Ibid., p. 1.

27. J. Ronald Engel, "Introduction", op. cit., p. 1.

28. Rajni Kothari, "Environment, technology and ethics", Ethics of Environment and Development, Engel & Engel, eds. (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 27-35, p. 27.

29. Michael Redclift, Sustainable Development: Exploring the Contradictions, op. cit., p. 34.

30. Herbert Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 66.

31. Michael Redclift, Sustainable Development: Exploring the Contradictions, op. cit., p. 4.

32. Ibid., p. 4.

33. Ibid., p. 39.

34. Ibid., p. 41.

35. Our Common Future, op. cit., p. 1.

36. Ibid., p. 8.

37. Ibid., p. 8.

38. Ibid., p. 7.

39. Ibid., p. 8.

40. Ibid., p. 22.

41. Ibid., p. 22.

42. J. Ronald Engel, "Introduction", op. cit., p. 5.

43. Our Common Future, op. cit., p. 9.

CHAPTER II - PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

Marcuse's philosophical project involves a non-instrumental mediation of subjectivity and nature. He achieves this by developing the notion of aesthetics which transcends cognitive rationality and combines ethics with sensuousness. To see how a non-mechanistic relation of subjectivity to nature develops in Marcuse's thought we must look largely to the Romantic thinkers who inspired Marcuse's aesthetic critique of modernity. The German Romantics, along with Aristotle and Rousseau, supply Marcuse with a philosophical foundation of great importance for his vision of the aesthetic community.

What these thinkers all have in common with Marcuse is that they cast the whole social order in an ontological perspective which gives nature and human beings a potentiality which seeks expression. Aristotle's contribution to this perspective can be seen in his rejection of Plato's idea of the 'forms'. By rejecting a separate and other-worldly sphere where the ideal and universal forms of common place objects and actions reside in their perfection, Aristotle maintains rather that ideality resides in the objects of this physical world. As such, all things seek to fulfill their *own* nature, not a hypostatized external ideal. As he writes in Book I of The Politics, "the 'nature' of things consists in their end or consummation; for what each thing is when its growth is completed we call the nature of that thing, whether it be a man or a horse or a family".¹ This is significant for if things, and men in particular, possess an innate or natural potentiality which seeks fulfillment, then man possesses a teleologically grounded substance.

Aristotle identifies man's soul as the innate purveyor of his potentiality. It seeks what Aristotle calls "right reason", intellectual and moral virtue compounded. Or, as he explains in Book I of the Nicomachean Ethics, "the function of man is

activity of soul in accordance with reason, or at least not without reason" 2, and later, "we assume that the principle and reason for good things is something valuable and divine".³ Hence, right reason is reason sustained by a strong moral conviction. Finally, the conclusion which Aristotle draws from this conceptualization of right reason is significant as well. He explains in Book II that "virtue, then, is a disposition involving choice. It consists in a mean, relative to us, defined by reason and as the reasonable man would define it".⁴ However, right reason is far from a subjective or relativist notion as it is sustained by a conviction in the human subject's innate rationality and morality. In this way Aristotle develops and defends his notion of human potentiality.

Marcuse sees in Aristotle the root of the idea of the *identity* of individual will and general will. The individual's "autonomous" soul is operative *as a reflection of* universal reason. This Aristotelian conception carries with it a specific understanding of the "good". The "good" is both general and attainable. It is, after all, accessible by "the reasonable man" by reference to the universalized "right reason". This notion of the good is taken up in some forms of modern thought such as that of Rousseau. The conception of the "General Will" is an invocation of this notion of the good. The General Will embodies the interest shared by all individuals as individuals. It is the universal will of the community which supersedes all individual or self-interested desires. Rousseau's is a moral view of politics. Society emerges as a ground on which men actively engage in politics to pursue the common good. In as much as the General Will is posed in ethical terms it is reminiscent of the classical notion of the good. Rousseau did not believe, as Aristotle, however, that man is *by nature* political. Nonetheless, he does suggest in The Social Contract that man is at least capable of choosing political and social forms which conform to the notion of the good. That is, cooperation and social

equality can be freely chosen by members of a community. If vice, he believed, was the result of bad government, then the source of virtue was to be found in good government.⁵

By arguing in The Social Contract that man can create a political community which maximizes freedom and diminishes inequality, Rousseau is doing two things. First, he is indicting the current social order for its foundation in inequality. In his second Discourse on the Origins of Inequality Rousseau claims that inequality is the result of the institutionalization of private property, the partitioning of the earth for appropriation by individuals.⁶ Second, he is challenging the emerging Enlightenment ideas on scientific reason and progress. Unlike many of his contemporaries Rousseau was inclined to denigrate the modern commitment to expanding knowledge. Classical rationalism, he believed, rather than leading humankind's development from the Dark Ages, has led to the corruption and depravity of civilization.⁷

Rousseau's theory of history is important for suggesting that the shift from a state of nature to that of civilization is highly problematical. For Rousseau, reason, as it is positively understood, is put into question. This challenge to scientific rationalism which Rousseau conveys so strongly is a theme which is taken up and pursued by the generation of German Romantics.

Generally, the Romantics refuse to look upon nature mechanistically as that which must be conquered or tamed by human science or reason. Rather, nature has its own movement and laws, its own spirituality which is not penetrable by Reason. It is aesthetically sensed. The notion of man was radically reconceived as an expressive being to reflect its mutuality with nature. As Charles Taylor writes, the Romantics "developed an alternative notion of man whose dominant image was rather that of an expressive object".⁸ Their aspiration was for human life to unfold

"from some central core -- a guiding theme or inspiration".⁹

The Romantics developed their notion of aesthetic expressivity, in part, in critical reaction to the modern mechanistic conception of nature as a network of forces without an inner principle, and in reaction to the conception of reason as analytical, theoretical and masterful of these natural forces. For the Romantics, this not only denies the internal spirituality of nature but it blocks and distorts the human being's potentiality for aesthetic expression of nature's inner spirituality. Rather than permitting an expressive unity, mechanistic and rationalistic modernity blocks it. An interpreter of the Romantics, Jurgen Habermas, argues in his "Excursus on Schiller's 'Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man'" that modern scientific rationalism is beset by two contrary impulses, the necessity of physical nature and the freedom of the moral will. "Both of which", he claims, "become all the more intensely felt the more uninhibitedly subjects seek to master nature". According to Habermas, this has dire implications for reason itself, for spontaneity and sensuousness are lost to reason. Reason and expressivity are, according to him, "alien to one another".¹⁰

The Romantics were concerned with what was lost in mankind's headlong rush to usurp the functions of the natural world in the name of science and progress. What was lost was the unity and humanistic wholeness which characterized the sense of community in the classical Greek tradition. The Romantics were responding, then, to a sense of increasing fragmentation and instrumentalization in their world. They decried the lack of harmony between man's rational *and* sensuous capacities which had encouraged this fragmentation within the political, social and artistic realms. In short, reason led to a diremption with nature.¹¹

Both Taylor and Habermas point to a fragmented human identity as the source of concern for the Romantics. They both identify the tension between

freedom and nature as demanding resolution in Romantic thought. Taylor poses what he considers to be the central question: "how to combine the greatest moral autonomy with a fully restored communion with the great current of life within us and without?".¹² In other words, how to reconcile the impulse toward freedom and morality with nature. He goes on to suggest that the attempted resolution advanced by the Romantics seeks to fuse the natural with the rational as aesthetic activity.

"This goal is only attainable if we conceive of nature itself as having some sort of foundation in spirit", he writes. "If the highest spiritual side of man, his moral freedom, is to come to more than passing and accidental harmony with his natural being, then nature itself has to tend to the spiritual". In the end, natural spirituality accords with "the rational, the autonomous in man". This, Taylor points out, cannot be achieved "as long as we think of nature in terms of blind forces or brute facts".¹³

Taylor offers one of the most succinct expressions of the Romantic worldview that aesthetic subjectivity and nature must be in communion with each other. He writes:

If man is to be at one with nature in himself and in the cosmos while being most fully a self-determining subject, then it is necessary first that my basic natural inclination spontaneously be to morality and freedom; and more than this, since I am a dependent part of a larger order of nature, it is necessary that this whole order within me and without tend to realize a form in which it can unite with subjective freedom.¹⁴

Taylor completes this perspective by attributing to the Romantics, and Schelling in particular, the additional principle "that the creative life of nature and the creative power of thought were one". In other words, it is not enough that humankind "reflect in consciousness the life which is already complete in nature". Rather, as an

integral part of the process, humankind must remain active in the ongoing perfection of nature.¹⁵ This ontology of man in which nature is not only reflected but perfected is a principle which resonates throughout Marcuse's work. It is present in his earliest understanding of the liberatory aspect of 'the feeling for nature'. And it is the necessary core of his later notion of a harmonious and aesthetic community.

Habermas concurs with Taylor as to the central problematic of the Romantic period. For Schiller, he writes, "the realization of reason ... can emerge from neither nature nor freedom alone, but solely from a formative process".¹⁶ Reason, as it is understood by scientific rationalism is an inadequate basis for a true human community. Schiller, Habermas points out, argued that the reconciliation of nature and freedom can only be achieved through the medium of art. The notion of art here is aesthetic creativity. It refers to a general conception of expressivity and aesthetic judgment. "Schiller's aesthetic utopia is", Habermas writes, "not aimed at an aestheticization of living conditions, but at revolutionizing the conditions of mutual understanding".¹⁷ This reading of Schiller's notion of art is shared by Ted Cohen and Paul Guyer. They argue that in Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgment, the groundwork of Schiller's "Letters", the notion of art should be interpreted more properly as judgment of beauty, and more specifically natural beauty. "Aesthetic judgments in Kant's conception", they write, "in radical contrast to what had been assumed by most writers since classical times, are more properly applied to objects of nature than to works of art".¹⁸ We concur with Habermas, then, in his contention that Schiller's aesthetic utopia, "remain(s) a point of orientation for ... Marcuse".¹⁹

Whether it be Aristotle, Rousseau or the Romantics, all these influences carry in Marcuse and are integrated by certain common elements. In Aristotle, Marcuse sees a conception of reason which is ethical, a regulative concept for right action. 'Right reason', by compounding the intellectual and moral virtues, is seen as a

guiding principle for community. In Rousseau, right reason is operative as the General Will. Significantly, the General Will is not a hypostatized, unconditioned ideal, but rather the domain of individual subjects who, through mutual recognition, establish the universally valid. Truth is not arbitrary, however, but rather immanent to its historical relation to the given reality. The universal will, lacking arbitrariness, is rational. It is the Romantics, however, who give a content to reason acceptable to Marcuse. For it is the Romantics, above all, who point out that analytical reason is a distortion of nature's spirituality and man's expressivity. And, under these terms, it is moral and aesthetic activity which accords with the rational in man.

In German idealism, 'aesthetic sense' has often been held in dialectical opposition to reason, opposing yet completing rational understanding. Thomas McCarthy recognizes this when he refers to aesthetics as that "outlawed 'other' of reason". The need to develop in the modernist project the 'aesthetic dimension' is given force by his disparaging accusation as to the "overwhelming 'impurity' of reason" and by his characterization of reason's "fragmented moments".²⁰ Others, such as Philip Kain, recognize in the moderns the attempted reconciliation, at least, of the rational and aesthetic moment. In his book Schiller, Hegel and Marx: State, Society and the Aesthetic Ideal of Ancient Greece, Kain seeks to trace the aesthetic ideal in these thinkers. And indeed he establishes that "Schiller speaks of a harmony between sense and reason, Hegel of a harmony between spirit and nature, and Marx of a harmony between consciousness and sensuous activity"²¹ In a longer passage, reminiscent of Taylor's account of the requisite communion in the Romantic project between objects of nature and free subjects, Kain explains the task of reconciliation:

A harmony is required between the self and the external object. The external object may be nature, the product of labor, or the political state. In his

relation to the external object it is important that the individual not be dominated or oppressed by the object; nor, on the other hand, can the individual have turned away from the object, withdrawn into himself, and lost touch with the object ... The individual must be able to contemplate the object as an end in itself as it freely confronts him.²²

This "aesthetic ideal" is very much a factor in the Marcusean project. Marcuse, moreover, has the historical advantage of being able to combine the insights of Schiller, Hegel and Marx. So, whereas Schiller privileges the aesthetic education of man, the remaking of the subject; Marx privileges the objective conditions which will bring about freedom within an aesthetically based community; and Hegel privileges reason as *the vehicle* of historical development²³; Marcuse aspires to ground a rationality of gratification which conceives the reconciliation of subjectivity and nature as an aesthetic interchange conceived of as sensuous activity. Marcuse's project unfolds as an exploration into this sensuous interchange as reconciliation between reason and nature.

No doubt there have been many other philosophical influences on Marcuse's work which have not been mentioned here. What is important, however, is that the influences which are revealed share a perspective which is decisive for the development of Marcuse's thought. The idea of human freedom and a notion of nature with purposiveness are both essential to an understanding of Marcuse's development from an early concept of community based on practical reason to his later concept of aesthetic community as a larger sensuous unity of subjectivity and nature. And indeed the Romantic preoccupation with the mutuality and unity of reason and sense is indicative of Marcuse's attempt to establish the aesthetic sense as *the* reasonable.

- 1 . Aristotle, The Politics, in Great Political Theories, vol. I, Michael Curtis ed. (New York: Avon Books, 1961), p. 60.
- 2 . Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, in The Philosophy of Aristotle: A Selection, Renforth Bambrough, ed. (New York: Mentor Books, 1963), p. 293.
- 3 . Ibid., p. 300.
- 4 . Ibid., p. 309.
- 5 . Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, in The Great Political Theories, vol. II, Michael Curtis. ed. (New York: Avon Books, 1962), pp. 16-32.
- 6 . Robert Wokler, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Moral Decadence and the Pursuit of Liberty" in Political Thought from Plato to NATO (London: Ariel Books, 1984), 120-134, p. 124.
- 7 . Ibid., p. 123.
- 8 . Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society (New York: Cambridge UP, 1979), p. 1.
- 9 . Ibid., p. 2.
- 10 . Jurgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), p. 47.
- 11 . see Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, op. cit., ch. 1.

12. Ibid., p. 9.
13. Ibid., p. 9.
14. Ibid., p. 9.
15. Ibid., p. 10.
16. Jurgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, op. cit., p. 47.
17. Ibid., p. 49.
18. Ted Cohen and Paul Guyer, editors' Introduction, in Essays in Kant's Aesthetics, Cohen and Guyer, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 6.
19. Jurgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, op. cit., p. 48.
20. Thomas McCarthy, editor's Introduction, to The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, op. cit., p. viii.
21. Philip J. Kain, Schiller, Hegel and Marx: State, Society and the Aesthetic Ideal of Ancient Greece (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1982), p.10-11.
22. Ibid., p. 11.
23. Ibid., p. 11.

CHAPTER III - THE CRITICAL CONVICTION OF REASON

Marcuse's earliest writings are informed predominantly by a Hegelian-Marxism. In his 1941 work Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory, Marcuse reveals his empathy towards the project of liberation implied by Hegel's dialectical system. In Marxian fashion he is critical of the lack of a materialist grounding in Hegel's concept of Reason. Marcuse is less dismissive, however, of the abstract character of idealist thought than Marx. We may note with Iring Fetscher that "Marx only used Hegel's dialectic methodologically and tacitly to ground his belief in historical progress".¹ In a letter to Kugelmann Marx, himself, put the difference between himself and Hegel this way:

He knows very well that my method of development is *not* Hegelian, since I am a materialist and Hegel is an idealist. Hegel's dialectics is the basic form of all dialectics, but only *after* it has been stripped of its mystified form, and it is precisely this which distinguishes *my* method.²

In Reason and Revolution Marcuse is critical of idealist philosophy, but is not wholly dismissive of it. What distinguishes Marcuse's interpretation of Hegel from that of Marx and other especially scientific Marxist interpretations is the emphasis Marcuse places on what he believes to be the "critical conviction" contained in the Hegelian concept of reason. He writes, "Hegel's idea of reason has retained, though in an idealistic form, the material striving for a free and rational order of life".³ For Marcuse, reason retains the negating potential, even in its idealist form. Rather than decry the "mysticism" of abstract reason, Marcuse seeks to uncover the hidden potentiality of its materialist form.

In the following section I intend to show how in Reason and Revolution Marcuse interprets Hegel's preoccupation with the realization of reason. Marcuse puts the body of Hegel's work in historical and philosophical perspective in order to examine the role that reason plays in Hegel's idealist system. In the first instance, this perspective leads Marcuse to impute a high level of critical intent to Hegel's project. The critical conviction held by Marcuse informs his understanding of the failure of 'the rational to become real'. He is critical of the contemplative fixity of German idealism. It does not venture into the material realm to revolutionize the real and make it into a rational reality. It is as if there is a fixed realm of beauty, freedom and morality in the soul of the individual unshaken by the external realities.⁴ However, unlike Marx, he is not prepared to dismiss this idealism as mysticism. Rather, by virtue of its universality and its potential subjective and objective realization in freedom, sublating reason is a concept rescued by Marcuse for its critical or negating potential. Douglas Kellner agrees that the Hegel presented in Reason and Revolution by Marcuse is the critical rationalist, predecessor of Marx. This presentation is, according to Kellner, in explicit contrast to others presentation of Hegel as a precursor to fascism.⁵

In the second instance, the negative intent of the dialectic of reason highlighted in Reason and Revolution is put forth by Marcuse as *reason reconceived in the light of historical development*. In other words Marcuse's particular interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic, while prioritizing the material moment, emerges as a corrective to Hegel's system. Hegel's claim that the end of history is imprinted in the beginning of history is transformed under Marcuse into the claim that history is the reality of reason. The truth can only potentially be revealed in the course of social history and not in its end as Hegel's theory would imply. Notwithstanding modern theorists from Alexandre Kojève to Francis Fukuyama who see the ascendancy of Western

liberalism as the pinnacle of human progress,⁶ Marcuse's critical interpretation of Hegelian reason proves trenchant. Specifically, if reason and the critical historical potential are as intimately related as Marcuse would suggest, then history itself emerges as an unfilled vessel. The content of history is not preinscribed, but emerges through the critical conviction of reason to go beyond the given forms of being.

Marcuse's account of the "critical conviction" of reason sets the stage for, and colours, his middle period preoccupation with the repressed (negative) values of society and the process of the reconciliation of these values with nature and society. His critical account of the dialectic of reason foreshadows in a very specific sense the further development of his thought. That is specifically at the historical juncture when the idea of reason seems most completely taken up and subsumed within the idea of technological progress. In short, when technological progress assumes rationality *as an affirmative trait*, then and only then do the critical and even ideal or utopian elements come into focus. While residing in the consciousness of the marginalized and in the notion of opposition, critical values take shape. The actual content of opposition is never more accessible than when it is juxtaposed to a fully rationalized repressive reality.

I will conclude this section by speculating on a possible link which can be made between the early emergence in Marcuse's writing of the critical conviction of reason and the subsequent development of his thought towards an investigation of the repressed values of society. More specifically, I suggest that the critical conviction of reason incites the task which Marcuse sets for himself in Eros and Civilization. Here Marcuse examines the repressed values of society for their "truth content". In the process of this investigation of the "instincts", universal values emerge as having the characteristics of force, *dynamis* and potentiality. The

universal character of these values attests to their grounding in reason, while their repressed content reveal a grounding in both the moral and aesthetic faculties. Thus, a 'rationality of gratification', suggestive of an aesthetic reconciliation of subjectivity and nature, emerges. This shift towards the notion of the aesthetically constituted community is the subject matter of the subsequent chapters. In order for this shift to be established it is necessary to understand the importance of the concept of reason to Marcuse's early period.

In Reason and Revolution Marcuse writes that "the concept of reason is central to Hegel's philosophy".⁷ It would not be unfair to suggest that the concept of reason is also central to Marcuse's thought in his early period. For Marcuse notes pointedly that the history of philosophy in the modern period has largely been a response to the perception that society and state were being reorganized on a rational basis. He writes, "the concrete historical efforts to establish a rational form of society (in the French Revolution) were (under German idealists) transposed to the philosophical plane and appeared in the efforts to elaborate the notion of reason".⁸ If indeed the world is to be an order of reason, Marcuse is interested in exploring in what consists its liberating content *and* its repressive reality.

According to Marcuse "Hegel's philosophy is indeed what the subsequent reaction termed it, a negative philosophy".⁹ That is to say that Hegel understood that rational man will organize reality not in terms of the dictate of external authority, but in the full light of "his own potentialities and those of his world".¹⁰ Marcuse is attaching particular importance here to the concept of determinate negation where the subject's own cognition of his potentialities is mediated through the objective ground of negating thought. Reason is necessarily critical. He writes, "it is originally motivated by the conviction that the given facts that appear to common sense as the

positive index of truth are in reality the negation of truth, so that truth can only be established by their destruction".¹¹ Marcuse emphasizes the critical function of reason with the terminological pronouncement declaring its "critical conviction".¹²

The reason which Marcuse sketches from its idealist grounding is one consonant with its tradition in Western philosophy. That is, man's reason is an objective, universal reason not a subjective, particularist one dictating validity only for the particular. According to Marcuse, Hegel understood that "reason's right to shape reality depended upon man's ability to hold generally valid truths." For "reason could lead beyond the brute fact of what is, to the realization of what ought to be, only by virtue of the universality and necessity of its concepts".¹³

There is an underlying tension which emerges with the understanding that reason is universally valid. How can, for instance, objective guiding principles for human organization emerge from the subjective understanding of individuals. "Thinking" as Marcuse points out "varies among individuals".¹⁴ Objective concepts and principles exist, but their realization in a rational community is not guaranteed by political practice. "The implication" he writes "that reason will immediately show itself in practice is a dogma unsupported by the course of history".¹⁵ Hegel, according to Marcuse, senses this problem and that consequently for him "reason cannot govern reality unless reality has become rational in itself".¹⁶ The key to this dichotomy, according to Marcuse resides in the subjective moment. Universal reason "is made possible through the subject's entering the very content of nature and history. The objective reality is thus also the realization of the subject".¹⁷ And unless reason is made to bear on nature and society, man is "forever doomed to frustration".¹⁸

The inability of this reconciliation or harmony between the real and the rational to actually take place -- the failure of idealist philosophy -- is what Marcuse

focuses on. The failure of the idealist project suggests that it is the *process*, as a material process itself, and not the end of this process, which reveals the hidden potentialities in freedom. This material process is the task of the historical subject: "man alone has the power of self-realization, the power to be self-determining subject in all processes of becoming, for he alone has an understanding of potentialities and a knowledge of 'notions'".¹⁹ Thus reason must encompass more than thought which knows itself to be true. It must also have a social provenance and a social praxis *beyond the given social order*. It is the individual subjects of the past and present who convey history, but do so in a process of *critique*.

Other writers, such as Kellner, recognize the primary significance of the critical appropriation of Hegel to Marcuse's own method of critical theory. In a formulation which acknowledges that the mediation of reason and freedom in Marcuse is materially posited through subjectivity, Kellner explains that "critical reason presupposes an autonomy of the subject and an ability to discover truths that transcend and negate the given society in order to alter 'unreasonable' reality until it comes into accord with the demands of reason".²⁰ The critical impetus of reason is the lesson of critical theory. Marcuse's Hegelian exposition of the critical dialectical method is, in a broader context, a recognition of the profound influence of Hegelian thought on basic concepts of critical theory.

Marcuse is critical of German culture for its tendency to divorce critical values from their objective basis. The subject's apprehension of his world was purely an inner process, the contemplation of his 'soul'. "Ultimately", he decries, "the ideal that the critical aspects set forth, a rational political and social reorganization of the world, becomes frustrated and is transformed into a spiritual value".²¹ At first Marcuse's criticism appears as a complete indictment of the idealist project, and

indeed of the whole German Romantic tradition exemplified by Schiller's aesthetic ideal. However, Marcuse demonstrates more than just respect for the critical *yet idealistic* content of this German tradition. He writes that it is precisely because 'ideal' notions of freedom were retained that freedom remains a 'practical' possibility:

This idealistic culture, however, *just because* it stood aloof from an intolerable reality and thereby maintained itself intact and unsullied, served, despite its false consolations and glorifications, *as the repository for truths which had not been realized in the history of mankind.* 22

Under Marcuse's authorship the critical content of the 'idealistic framework' is not only rescued but is accorded a *decisive* role in the historical project. Accordingly, the values associated with the 'idealistic framework' are not dismissed as a mystification of the "real" material values. Rather they retain a truth content *necessary* for the realization of a rational community based on freedom.

This reading of Marcuse is echoed by Kellner when he states:

Far from seeing Hegel's philosophy as the wild metaphysical fantasies of a German professor, Marcuse believes that Hegel's critical philosophical method and concepts provide revolutionary tools that are embodied in Marx's historical materialism and in his own critical theory of society. 23

Furthermore, this reading is only strengthened by Kellner's earlier account of the thematic concerns taken up in Marcuse's The German Artist-Novel. According to this dissertation, explains Kellner, without an 'objective-realist' prose and substance, which Marcuse attributes favourably to Goethe, Gottfried Keller and Thomas Mann,

the artist-novel is reduced by Romanticism to that which champions "art over life, the artist over common humanity".²⁴ In this light, Marcuse's own Romanticism, especially in this early period, is informed by a limited or circumscribed understanding of Romanticism as a revolt against the dominant social, cultural and political ethos. Marcuse explicitly rejects the attendant Romantic vision of an artistic abdication from social reality.

Recognizing the critical conviction of reason becomes all the more important for Marcuse in light of the historical development of society. Faith in technological progress became a guiding factor in human organization. It was this underlying social faith in technology which was the internal motive which "prompted Hegel to break with the tendency of introversion and to proclaim the realization of reason in and through given social and political institutions".²⁵ Through a mastery of nature and the new production process the world was transformed "into a huge commodity market". In this way reason itself "came under the sway of technical progress, and the experimental method was seen as the model of rational activity".²⁶ Marcuse points to modern rationalism such as Descartes's mechanistic philosophy and Hobbes's materialist political thought as initiating such a turn. Men increasingly saw the relations between individuals to have the necessity of physical laws, and their freedom to consist in choices within this framework. Reason, in Marcuse's view, was losing any claim it had to the realization of the rational:

The more reason triumphed in technology and natural science, the more reluctantly did it call for freedom in man's social life. Under the pressure of this process, the critical and ideal elements slowly vanished and took refuge in heretical and oppositional doctrines.²⁷

Marcuse recognizes a dilemma. On the one hand reason is emerging

historically as a repressive force. Yet, on the other hand, reason, 'as the repository for truths', appears condemned to its ideal form. The philosophical project directed towards a rational political and social reorganization of the world appears doomed. How can the liberatory content of reason be reconciled with a repressive reality? It is precisely at this point that the critical conviction of reason must be recalled.

As we noted, Marcuse considers the 'idealistic framework' as *necessary* for the discovery and articulation of the notion of reason as the real. If this concept of reason is to be validated, it must be superseded by the concrete manifestation of its own becoming. With Marcuse, as with all materialists, the concept of reason must necessarily transcend its idealistic footing. By acquiring a material content, reason is not refuted but rather fulfills its potentiality. This eventuality is dependent upon the understanding that Marcuse conveys as the 'critical conviction' of reason. He writes, "Dialectic in its entirety is linked to the conception that all forms of being are permeated by an essential negativity, and that *this negativity determines their content and movement*".²⁸ The content and movement of history are necessarily oppositional so that " history...when comprehended, shatters the idealistic framework".²⁹

Marcuse's account of the critical conviction of reason *in history* sets the stage for his later preoccupation with the repressed (negative) values of society. Repressed values are accessible by virtue of the historical immanence of critical reason. Repressed values also have a "truth content" which has been preserved by the domain of speculative thought. The dual immanence and transcendence of thought is an understanding at the core of Marcuse's work whose relation drives the critical dialectic. Moreover, the dual relation of thought precipitates and explains Marcuse's later development of an increasingly differentiated reason which culminates in an aesthetic understanding. For, through immanent critique, the repressed values associated with the "pleasure principle" and "creative activity" are

found to have an aesthetic truth content.

The claim imputed to Marcuse that thought is at once immanent and transcendent is validated by the writings of many who seek to explain the motive and perspective of critical theory in general. Seyla Benhabib, for instance, affirms that "For critical theory, consciousness is both immanent and transcendent: as an aspect of human material existence, consciousness is immanent and dependent upon the present stage of society. Since it possesses a utopian truth-content which projects beyond the limits of the present, consciousness is transcendent".³⁰ That Marcuse should be concerned to preserve both the historical facticity and the utopian content of reason is consonant with his task as a critical theorist. With both these qualities of immanence and transcendence repressed values enter the *process* which is the realization of reason.

The subjective understanding merges here with objective reason. History is necessarily human history as it reflects at once the subjective will and its own objective truth content. This *potentiality*, which Marcuse goes on to explore in great depth in Eros and Civilisation, is inscribed in the Hegelian system itself. Only what Marcuse sees as the underlying critical conviction of reason in history is perverted by Hegel into an affirmative conviction. Nonetheless, as early as 1932 the implicit direction of Hegel's system is lauded by Marcuse. He writes that "the fact that Hegel goes beyond the traditional opposition of subjectivity and objectivity ... has crucial significance, for it makes the dimension of historicity accessible". That is, the unity of subjectivity and objectivity means that "human history no longer happens to take place *in* a world which is essentially its other, but occurs in unity with the happening of this world without losing its essential uniqueness in this process."³¹

Marcuse, in Reason and Revolution, reaffirms that this process is necessarily

historical, an understanding 'missed' by Hegel. For he writes:

To Hegel, reality has reached a stage at which it exists in truth. This statement now needs a correction. Hegel does not mean that everything that exists does so in conformity with its potentialities, but that the mind has attained the self-consciousness of its freedom, and become capable of freeing nature and society. *The realization of reason is not a fact but a task.*³²

This last line also points up to what extent Marcuse is preoccupied by the actual lack of rational community in modern society. Rationality, as a project of liberation, has visibly failed thus far. It is not until his middle period work, however, that Marcuse actually questions, sometimes obliquely, the centrality of Reason to the project of social liberation. Interestingly enough though, it is in the preface to the 1966 edition of Reason and Revolution, written in 1960, that Marcuse first demonstrates a profound ambivalence towards the concept of reason. Here he writes that the idea of Reason itself is at stake. By examining Marcuse's ambivalence towards the Hegelian concept of reason, we can more easily understand his development in later writings of a more differentiated concept of reason encompassing a moral and an aesthetic dimension.

By his middle period, Marcuse was critical of the idea of Reason. His reservations are clearly evident in his 1960 preface to Reason and Revolution. The following passage expresses most palpably the growing disenchantment he felt towards the totalizing concept of reason:

In what, then, lies the power of negative thinking? Dialectical thought has not hindered Hegel from developing his philosophy into a neat and comprehensive system which, in the end,

accentuates the positive emphatically. I believe it is the idea of Reason itself which is the undialectical element in Hegel's philosophy. This idea of Reason comprehends everything and ultimately absolves everything, because it has its place and function in the whole, and the whole is beyond good and evil, truth and falsehood. It may even be justifiable, logically as well as historically, to define Reason in terms which include slavery, the Inquisition, child labor, concentration camps, gas chambers, and nuclear preparedness. These may well have been integral parts of that rationality which has governed the recorded history of mankind. If so, the idea of Reason itself is at stake; it reveals itself as a part rather than as a whole.³³

This statement is a stronger indictment of Reason than any of the reservations expressed in the body of his work written in 1941. The statement would seem to express the degree to which Marcuse has dropped the notion that Reason *alone* can be constitutive of human liberation. The question arises, then, as to what in fact does remain of this concept of reason as the foundation for historical development, by Marcuse's middle period. This preface gives a few first insights into Marcuse's shift.

The above passage would seem to suggest that reason is a concept tied to the idealist project. That is, as a consequence of idealistically imputing to reason the process of liberating thought, reason has the effect of validating the established universe of discourse *and* the repressive reality. Indeed Hegelian philosophy culminates in the affirmative conception. Marcuse is not prepared, however, to *replace* the rationally conceived universe with another concept such as the aesthetically grounded universe. In fact, it will be shown later that Marcuse never intended to replace objective Reason with Aesthetics, but rather collapse the two concepts into an integral one. Be that as it may, in this preface Marcuse is intent on

rescuing Reason even if it must be reconceived "as a part rather than as a whole".

To 'rescue' reason, Marcuse goes on to write "it is consonant with the innermost effort of Hegel's thought if his own philosophy is 'cancelled', not by substituting for Reason some extrarational standards, but by driving reason itself to recognize the extent to which it is still unreasonable, blind, the victim of unmastered forces".³⁴ Objective reason, indeed, has made the world an object of domination. Nonetheless, Marcuse recognizes rightly that the failure of Reason *thus far* to bring about a social and political practice consonant with the values of liberation does not invalidate a future role for Reason in such a material development. Only that objective reason is alone an insufficient vehicle of human liberation. Here we may read in Marcuse a premonition that reason is incomplete without reason being conceived of as a sensuous process of understanding. Later, in Counterrevolution and Revolt, Marcuse identifies the process of transition towards the highest union of human freedom and natural necessity -- liberation -- as involving not only the emancipation of consciousness, but the emancipation of the senses as well, "thus involving the totality of human existence".³⁵ However, in the preface to Reason and Revolution Marcuse is still not prepared to redefine reason in this way. His reticence shows through by his offering of an additional defence of the rational in the face of the irrational with the proclamation that "Reason, and *Reason alone*, contains its own corrective".³⁶

This statement, also in his preface, is consonant with his 1941 work. In the modern Western philosophical tradition the rational community is the only conceivable community. However, by 1960 his newly written preface on balance adopts a different tone. By stating that "Reason alone contains its own corrective" Marcuse is only contradicting his more forcefully argued statement that Reason "reveals itself as a part rather than as a whole". Reason "as a whole" is found by

Marcuse to be inadequate for confronting the persistence of a repressive reality. But what appears to be an inexplicable defence of totalizing Reason can be explained, if not justified, as an attempt by Marcuse to satisfy a unity of perspective with his 1941 work. For the body of Reason and Revolution arguably treats the notion of reason as *the* basis for philosophy.

Reason, nevertheless, is effectively rescued here by Marcuse. That is Reason is rescued from its displacement by "extrarational standards". What is implicitly revealed, however, if not yet consistently articulated by Marcuse, is that "Reason alone" is inadequate to confront the material conditions of modern industrial societies. This is not to say that Reason is the philosophical equivalent of a false prophet. On the contrary, Reason retains a central role in the constitution of the material world. Only Reason is reconceived by Marcuse so that it cannot, as the Hegelian conception, validate the positive that-which-is. Marcuse writes that "no thought and no theory can undo (an unfree world); but theory may help to prepare the ground for (the) possible reunion (of theory and practice), and *the ability of thought to develop a logic and language of contradiction is a prerequisite for this task*".³⁷ In this the rationally conceived relation of opposites is decisive for critical reason.

In his privileging in Reason of that-which-is-not, Marcuse is laying the groundwork for his later discussion of the repressed values of society, and their constitutive role in human liberation. That is to say that if it is indeed the negating content of Reason which is in need of being fleshed out, the relations of opposites must be privileged at the expense of the given facts. The task appears to emerge in Marcuse's work as that of rescuing values with the power of negativity. Aesthetic values such as beauty, contemplation, sensuality and ultimately nature would seem to naturally emerge as they confront their 'actual' opposites in the values and norms

of wretchedness, alienated labour, cruelty and instrumental reason.

Does the objective production of the material world satisfy the demands of human rationality and freedom? A close look at Marcuse's earliest writings suggests that while he is committed to an enlightened and objective rationalist notion of a free and rational community, he comes to see, nevertheless, that reason can be nothing less than a formative process between the objective construction of the material world *and* subjectivity as aesthetic receptivity. Further, aesthetic sense is universalized by the 'idealistic framework' wherein necessary and aesthetic truths are preserved. The following chapter looks at these early and partial intimations that the aesthetic function is a universal guide for human action, and, as a principle governing the entire human existence, *is rational*.

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31. Herbert Marcuse, Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity, Seyla Benhabib, tr. (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), p. 192.
32. Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, (1968 edition), op. cit., p. 26.
33. Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory (1941 rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. xii.
34. Ibid., p. xiii.
35. Herbert Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 74.
36. Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, (1966 edition), op. cit., p. xiii, my emphasis.

37. Ibid., p. xii, my emphasis.

CHAPTER IV - REASON, LABOUR AND FREEDOM

Before moving forward to assess the emerging view that "the idea of Reason itself is at stake", it is helpful to explore some insights contained in the path which leads to Marcuse's reconsideration of Reason.

We can understand how "Reason itself" becomes problematic by looking at Marcuse's earliest work. In his earliest writings the mediation of the philosophical concept of reason with social praxis is accorded a very specific form -- that of production. In his essay "The Foundations of Historical Materialism" the principle arguments attest to the centrality of praxis, and more specifically labour, in the production and reproduction of social life and human history.

This 1932 interpretation of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, in which labour is said to be the real expression of human freedom, is echoed in Marcuse's subsequent assessment of the Hegelian notion of freedom. "The concept of labor", he writes in Reason and Revolution, "is not peripheral in Hegel's system, but is the central notion through which he conceives the development of society".¹ Here it is said that subjectivity is universalized through labour:

Through labor ... man loses that atomic existence wherein he is, as an individual, opposed to all other individuals; he becomes a member of a community. The individual, by virtue of his labor, turns into a universal; for labor is of its very nature a universal activity.²

Thus, the notion that man creates and appropriates the objective world through labouring activity is ascribed, by Marcuse, to both Hegel and Marx. Our assessment of Marcuse's concept of labour, then, can be seen in the light of this dual

influence. Whether from his analysis of the early Marx or Hegel, Marcuse consistently puts forth in his early period a concept of labour as actualizing and objectifying activity. For, as Douglas Kellner rightly points out, Marcuse assumes "that Marx and Hegel have substantially the same concept of labor". He explains that "this tendency to collapse Hegel and Marx into one philosophical hybrid dominates Marcuse's early essays and is still evident in Reason and Revolution".³ The discussion of the concept of labour in relation to Marx, however, is significant for our purposes for it reveals more readily the problematic nature of the concept of labour. In his early essays on the young Marx, Marcuse is concerned to show that labour is no mere economic activity. It is rather "a matter of man as man (and not just as worker, economic subject and the like), and of a process not only in economic history but in the history of man and his reality".⁴ If this is the ontological and historical role of labour, the question arises as to *how* to conceive of *alienated labour* in its historical facticity. In this essay, Marcuse tends to accord alienation itself an ontological status, a tendency decidedly problematic for a theory which maintains that alienation "can and must be superseded".⁵

The problem arises for Marcuse as a result of his understanding that the essence of man is reached through his objectification in and through labour. "Man", he writes, "can only realize his essence if he realizes it as something *objective*, by using his 'essential powers' to produce an 'external', 'material', objective world". And later, "labour, understood in this way, is the specifically human 'affirmation of being' in which human existence is realized and confirmed".⁶ Thus objectification or the collective "human way of producing"⁷, is interpreted as universality and freedom.

It is Marcuse, however, who points out that objectification is also the source of unfreedom. The historical facticity of alienation, already palpable, is to engender

Marcuse's lifelong critique of instrumental reason. Be that as it may, his early caveat is given prominence. He writes:

But this same objective world, since it is real objectivity, can appear as a precondition of his being which does *not* belong to his being, is beyond his control, and is 'overpowering'. This conflict in the human essence -- that it is in itself objective -- is the root of the fact that objectification can become reification and that externalization can become alienation.⁸

Marcuse is here suggesting that alienated labour is an inherent risk or possibility within the universality of labour. The objective world is always potentially, if not actually "overpowering" of man. We may protest here that a *potential* for alienated labour in human history does not ontologize alienation. And indeed for Marcuse here alienation is most certainly meant to be overcome not reified. The history of man's essence is not to be "identified with his factual history" he writes. Nonetheless, he also maintains that "his existence is a 'means' to the realization of his essence".⁹ Hence it would appear that factual history, as alienating existence, is a *necessary* "means" to the human essence. This he all but confirms in his summation of the integral relation between existence and essence:

For Marx essence and facticity, the situation of essential history and the situation of factual history, are no longer separate regions or levels independent of each other : the historical experience of man is *taken up into the definition of his essence*.¹⁰

Later Marcuse writes that labour always tends towards alienation, "so that reification and alienation are not merely *chance* historical facts".¹¹ The tendency in Marcuse to

attribute to alienation necessary rather than contingent historical status is understandable. Marcuse is, after all, concerned with the determinate "other" of alienation. It is the negation of alienation through its determinate and mediated "becoming" which is decisive for freedom. Or as Marcuse himself puts it:

The expression of man thus first tends towards alienation and his objectification towards reification, so that he can only attain a universal and free reality through 'the negation of negation': through the *supersession* of his alienation and the *return* out of his estrangement.¹²

A paradox arises within the Marcusean perspective. On the one hand, labour is essential for the attainment of freedom. On the other hand, essential alienated labour denies freedom. Accordingly, he writes with full equanimity that "it is in labour that the distress and neediness, but also the universality and freedom of man, become real".¹³ In this Lukacsian position Marcuse is comfortable with two contradictory moments of labour as if the dialectic of identity worked itself out and alienation gave way to freedom. However, a year after contending that "human labour fundamentally distinguishes itself as 'universal' and 'free' production" ¹⁴, he puts forward the idea that the dimension of freedom is "denied in labor" ¹⁵. In this ambivalence we may read two tendencies in Marcuse's early work concerning the status of the concept of labour. We will briefly explore some of the consequences contained in the 'freedom *from* labour' perspective of the latter statement. To precipitate, the notion that "distress and neediness" are actualized in labour leads Marcuse to characterize labour as "burdensome" and to search for a dimension of freedom in a realm "other" than labour, namely "play". The opposing, by Marcuse, of the realm of freedom to the realm of necessity, proving unsatisfactory, will lead

us to consider anew the first tendency of Marcuse's concept of labour as universality and freedom -- the 'freedom in labour' perspective. It will be suggested here that there is an insightful, yet undeveloped passage in "The Foundations of Historical Materialism" which relates production to "the whole of nature", expanding the meaning of 'productive activity' into a more differentiated and rich 'creative activity'.

A year after "The Foundations of Historical Materialism", Marcuse published an essay entitled "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics". Here Marcuse sustains the perspective that "labor is an ontological concept of human existence as such" ¹⁶. Again, Marcuse asserts pointedly that labour is more than economic activity. It is rather, "the specific *praxis* of human existence in the world". ¹⁷ Praxis is the "relationship between labor and objectification" so that "in labor ... man 'objectifies' himself and the object becomes 'his', it becomes a human object". ¹⁸ Additionally, however, Marcuse counterposes the concept of play to that of labour in the hope of delimiting the boundaries of the philosophical concept of labour. He sets a task "to define play in explicit reference to the character of labor". ¹⁹

We will recall that as an "objective being" man, according to Marcuse, is unavoidably "a suffering, conditioned and limited creature". ²⁰ However, in play, Marcuse writes, one does not objectify oneself in the same "sense" that one is objectified through labor. "Rather, play abolishes this 'objective' content and lawfulness and puts in its place another lawfulness, created by man himself, to which the player freely adheres on his own free will". ²¹ The object of labour known as "thinghood", and the actuality of the objective and objectifying world, for the intent and purposes of play, "are almost temporarily suspended". ²²

According to Marcuse's initial characterization of play, it would appear as if human beings attain their essential freedom through their activity of play. He writes:

For once, one does entirely as one pleases with objects; one places oneself beyond them and becomes 'free' from them. This is what is decisive: in this self-positing transcendence of objectivity one comes precisely to oneself, in a dimension of freedom denied in labor. ²³

However, Marcuse's proclamation of a "dimension of freedom" in man's moment of non-objectification is decidedly premature. For he goes on to admit that play is but that time "between" human vital activity, never occurring "in and by itself". He explains that "it is essentially non-self-sustaining and dependent". And, "within the totality of human existence, play has no duration or permanence".²⁴

What Marcuse is suggesting here is that play, in and of itself, is not part of that rational process which is determinate negation. Alone it 'plays' no vital role in human liberation. On the contrary, in Marcuse's view it might even abet alienated labour. As an appendage to labour, that is, it spurs on alienated labour's determinate "happening". That is, "play is self-distraction, self-relaxation, self-recuperation from regimentation, tension, toil, intense self-consciousness, etc.", and "it is all this *for the purpose* of a new concentration, tension, etc.". ²⁵ That is, play 'works' against a rationally constituted community as it is in its nature to be used to facilitate alienated labour. Play's mis-named "dimension of freedom" is only "for the purpose" of alienated labour, for Marcuse writes, "on the whole play is necessarily related to an Other which is its source and goal, and this Other is already preconceived as labor through the characteristics of regimentation, tension, toil, etc.". ²⁶

At issue here is Marcuse's counterpositioning of the realm of necessity (labour as toil) to the realm of freedom (play). Marcuse writes, "in a single toss of a ball, the player achieves an infinitely greater triumph of human freedom over

objectification than in the most powerful accomplishment of technical labor".²⁷ Here, the thesis of 'freedom from labour' is predominant over any intuitive understanding Marcuse may have harboured for the notion of 'freedom in labour'. However, the attainment of human freedom is an empty promise if play is an activity apart from, and "between" the real and ontologically significant activity of labour. If play can be used, in conditions of alienated labour, to increase labour and legitimize alienation, then play, as Marcuse conceptualizes it in this early period, is not truly an independently free and rational dimension of man.

The notion of play-as-freedom is but incompletely advanced until the distinction between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity upheld here is effectively collapsed. Indeed it will be shown that Marcuse does reject this distinction by his middle period. In Eros and Civilization the notion of play encompasses more than the idea of a disengaged freedom, a freedom only in the negative sense of *not being necessary labour* while at the same time facilitating the re-creation of energy *for* necessary labour. In Eros and Civilization, play has a different content. Here, play is ontologically significant in its own right, assuming the characteristic of creative activity. For, "in a genuine humane civilization, the human existence will be play rather than toil, and man will live in display rather than need." Adopting the Romantic vision, Marcuse goes on to say that the realm of play is not "one of ornament, luxury, holiday, in an otherwise repressive world. But here the aesthetic function is conceived as a principle governing the entire human existence, and it can do so only if it becomes 'universal'".²⁸

This reading of the concept of play, as having undergone a transformation within the body of his work, is supported by other writers as well. Vincent Geoghegan, for instance, in writing about Marcuse's pre-Institute period during which time both essays in question had been written, explains:

At this stage of his life Marcuse was not willing, as he was later, to consider play the quintessential mode of human existence. The role of play in this period was a purely subordinate one. Unlike labour, play lacks duration and permanence. It has no role in itself, being simply the cessation of, and preparation for, labour.²⁹

What appears to be the case is that Marcuse's initial attempt to equate play with freedom is haunted by his own acknowledgement that play is used "for the purpose of a new concentration, tension (and) toil". This tendency to accept "ornament, luxury (and) holiday" in the face of repressive productivity is seen, in Eros and Civilization, more clearly as a historical rather than a necessary reality. Accordingly, Marcuse reserves the term "leisure" to denote the historical and passive acceptance of repressive productivity. In this way, the concept of play is then 'freed' to assume a more ontologically significant meaning as creative activity and receptivity in which human beings fulfill their potentialities.

Play, as we will see in the next section is a less ambiguous concept by Marcuse's middle period as it no longer confronts necessary labour as a subordinate "other", but in fact seeks to absorb labour into its own realm of creative activity.³⁰ This tendency is acknowledged by writers such as Geoghegan who see in Eros and Civilization an attempt to develop the "work-as-play thesis"³¹, and Patricia Jagentowicz Mills who explains that "Marcuse envisions a future society in which work will be libidinally satisfying and freedom will be realized *in labor* through the reconciliation of work and play".³²

Marcuse's shift to a more inclusive concept of play in Eros and Civilization will be taken up again in the next section. However, it goes to highlight here the relative poverty and ambiguity of his early concept. One can only wonder why

Marcuse, given his own characterization of play here as a re-creation of energy for toil, insists on maintaining a distinct realm of freedom, on this basis.

In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts Marx develops the categories of labour and alienated labour. In the section titled "Alienated Labour", labour is said to be the essence of mankind. But it is the ontological category which, when fetishized by capitalist political economy, becomes the vehicle of alienation in society. Marx's key 'discovery' in this text, then, is that the relationship between labour and capital (under capitalism) is not a natural relationship, but only appears so under the prevailing historical relations.³³

In "The Foundations of Historical Materialism", we will recall, Marcuse demonstrates a certain ambivalence as to the particular ontological status of alienation. A year later, in "The Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics", Marcuse introduces the notion of the essential "burdensomeness" of labour which, according to Douglas Kellner, reinforces the ontological status of alienated labour.³⁴

Marcuse's notion of the burdensome character of labour would seem to alter the intent of Marx's initial formulation, where the 'burden' is historically contingent. For, Marcuse explicitly states that by "burden" he is not referring "to specific conditions in the performance of labor, to the social-technical structuring of labor, to the resistance of the materials, etc." Rather, "even before all such burdening, labor as such is already encountered as a 'burden'." ³⁵ "In the last analysis", he writes, "the burdensome character of labor expresses nothing other than a negativity rooted in the very essence of human existence: man can achieve his own self only by passing through otherness: by passing through 'externalization' and 'alienation'." ³⁶ Marcuse appears to hold that labour is toil and hence unfreedom and that labour is freedom as overcoming of alienation.

This ambivalence towards labour hinders the notion of reconciliation between freedom and necessity, for freedom is premised on burdensome labour rather than creative activity and sensuousness, notions only elaborated on by the later Marcuse. In the end Reason as Freedom is restrained from fully entering the realm of material production as labour. For labour is perpetually beset by an irrational (or perhaps, rational) necessity, expressed as toil, where it must relegate its determinate happening to an essential 'other', play. Yet, still, play is decidedly without ontological significance as it is cast in a subordinate role to labour, re-creating energy for necessary toil. Labour, as it is characterized by Marcuse as "life activity" through "objectification", is also Reason's impasse, as it is "already encountered as a 'burden'". Reason, narrowly conceived as the rational instrumental regulation of necessary labour, it would appear, is an inadequate locus of emancipation.

Perhaps this tendency in the early Marcuse to conceptualize labour as necessarily burdensome can be related back to the tendency of the later Marx to accept that "production and consumption in civil society require the domination of nature".³⁷ In reference to the scientific Marxism of the later Marx, Patricia Jagentowicz Mills points out that "nature becomes an object of mere utility, the 'stuff' or matter upon which humans labor".³⁸ In this understanding the domination of nature accounts for the necessarily burdensome character of productive activity, as organic and inorganic objects of nature are essentially opposed to and dominated by man. Given Marcuse's understanding here that an essential moment of labour is toil and unfreedom, we can see how, in this light, the objective world is cast into the role of that which confronts human determination. From this confrontation Marcuse concludes that "Man cannot simply accept the objective world or merely come to terms with it; he must appropriate it".³⁹

However, there is another content to the Marxian notion of labour. That is the

understanding that the essence of mankind is realized through productive activity conceived as liberation. The 'freedom-in-labour' thesis can be detected in Marx's early philosophical texts. In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, under the communist mode of production, according to Marx, the "riddle of history" is solved. The schism "between man and nature and between man and man ... the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species" ⁴⁰ is resolved when nature and human society no longer confront one another. In this formulation, alienation is overcome when social productivity and nature are reconciled in freedom.

We will remember that one tendency in Marcuse's development of the concept of labour was to equate it directly with "universality and freedom". If we leave aside our primary criticism of his other tendency to ontologize alienation, we can see how this second tendency reveals insights into the concept of nature, worked out more fully by the later Marcuse. We recall Marcuse's contention in Reason and Revolution that Universal reason "is made possible through the subject's entering the very content of nature and history. The objective reality is thus also the realization of the subject".⁴¹ This conception of subjectivity allows Marcuse to see beyond the simplistic and unidirectional relation of man and nature, with the subject acting as "appropriator". In a short but insightful passage in "The Foundations of Historical Materialism", that is, Marcuse *appears* to recognize that objective necessity need not be the sole and decisive content of rational productive activity. He writes:

The thesis of nature as a means for man implies more than merely that man is dependent simply for his physical survival on objective, organic and inorganic nature as a means of life, or that under

the direct pressure of his 'needs' he 'produces' (appropriates, treats, prepares, etc.) the objective world as objects of food, clothing, accommodation, etc. Marx here explicitly speaks of "spiritual, inorganic nature", "spiritual nourishment" and "man's physical and spiritual life".⁴²

The understanding that Marx's early concept of nature does not treat organic and inorganic nature simply in terms of its use-value is not the discovery of Marcuse alone. Marcuse is supported in these initial, if tentative, remarks by many theorists who, for instance, contrast the concept of nature in the young Marx from this concept in the later Marx. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, for instance, refers to the "double dialectic" in Marx's work. She argues that in Marx's initial formulations nature is an "independent moment of the dialectic". Whereas in his subsequent writings on political economy "labor is central to the formation of consciousness", effectively relegating nature to a subsidiary "sociohistoric category". "There is no longer any 'resurrection' of nature, no 'reconciliation' of the schism between nature and human society", she writes, "but rather the domination of nature".⁴³ Similarly, Roy Bhaskar explains that in Marx's early expressivist works, "where, espousing a naturalism understood as a species-humanism, Marx conceived man as essentially at one with nature". Bhaskar compares this to "the technological Prometheanism of his middle and later works where he conceives man as essentially opposed to and dominating nature".⁴⁴

If we put aside, then, the problematic tendency of Marcuse to reify "distress and neediness", another content emerges (although briefly in this work) as rational productive activity. "He can produce 'in accordance with the laws of beauty'", he writes, "and not merely in accordance with the standards of his own needs". Necessity is not opposed to freedom in this concept as he writes, "in this freedom

man reproduces 'the whole of nature', and through transformation and appropriation furthers it, along with his own life, even when this production does not satisfy an immediate need". Consequently, "man is not *in* nature; nature is not the *external* world into which he first has to come out of his own inwardness. Man *is* nature. Nature is his 'expression', 'his work and his reality'".⁴⁵ Marcuse quotes Marx approvingly: "externality is ... the self-externalizing world of sense open to the man endowed with senses".⁴⁶ It is, then, appropriate to look at how Marcuse takes and develops this notion of sensuousness in his middle period work.

1. Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory (1941; rpt. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1968), p. 78.

2. Ibid., p. 77.

3. Douglas Kellner, "Introduction to 'On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor'", in Telos, no. 16, summer '73, p. 5.

4. Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism" in Studies in Critical Philosophy, Joris de Bres, tr. (London: NLB, 1972), p. 8.

5. Ibid., p. 18.

6. Ibid., p. 14.

7. Ibid., p. 17.

8. Ibid., p. 18.

9. Ibid., p. 29.

10. Ibid., p. 28.

11. Ibid., p. 37. my emphasis.

12. Ibid., p. 37.

13. Ibid., p. 22.

14. Ibid., p. 14.

15. Herbert Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics", in Telos, no. 16, summer '73, 9-37. p. 14.

16. Ibid., p. 11.

17. Ibid., p. 13.

18. Ibid., p. 13.

19. Ibid., p. 14.

20. Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism", op. cit., p. 22.

21. Herbert Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in economics", op. cit., p. 14.

22. Ibid., p. 14.

23. Ibid., p. 14.

24. Ibid., p. 15.

25. Ibid., p. 15.

26. Ibid., p. 15.

27. Ibid., p. 15.

28. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud (1956; rpt. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), p. 188.

29. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse (London: Pluto Press, 1981), p. 10.

30. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, op. cit., p. 214.

31. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse, op. cit., p. 91.

32. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature, and Psyche (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 154.

33. Karl Marx, The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Dirk J. Struik, ed. (NY: International Publishers, 1964).

34. Douglas Kellner, "Introduction to 'On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor'", op. cit., pp. 2-8.

35. Herbert Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor", op. cit., p.17.

36. Ibid., p. 25.

37. Mills, p. 65.

38. Ibid., p. 65.

39. Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism", op. cit., p. 16.

40. Karl Marx, The Economic and philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, op. cit., p.135.

41. Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, op. cit., p. 7.

42. Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism", op. cit., p. 16.

43. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature, and Psyche, op. cit., p. 50.

44. Roy Bhaskar, "Materialism" in A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, Tom Bottomore, ed. (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1983), p. 325.

45. Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism", op. cit., p. 17.

46. Ibid., p. 25.

CHAPTER V - MARCUSE'S MIDDLE PERIOD

Eros and Civilisation represents a fundamental shift in Marcuse's project of liberation. Precisely because Eros and Civilisation represents a turning point, however, this shift is only partially successful. The strength of Marcuse's middle period work, in terms of working out more fully the inter-penetrative relationship between humanity and nature, emerges most clearly in his discussion of the role of memory in preserving the as yet unfulfilled human potentialities. It is in this context that the critical function of the repressed values of sensuousness becomes decisive in the development of a fully human society based on aesthetic receptivity rather than repressive productivity. Or as Patricia Jagentowicz Mills so rightly explains, "the memory of gratification fuels ... aesthetic... images... that contain intimations of a liberated future".¹

The ambivalence towards the concept of labour, evident in Marcuse's early work, is by no means, however, overcome here. We will revisit the problematic of freedom-in-labour versus freedom-from-labour still evident in Eros and Civilisation. It will be suggested that while some ambiguity remains, the development of the notion of the critical function of repressed values has the effect of mitigating Marcuse's problematic representation of labour as necessity. For the aesthetic universe envisioned by Marcuse tends, in its logic, to absorb the function and content of productivity. In the final analysis Eros and Civilisation distinguishes itself as a strong, if flawed, critique of the domination of nature.

What follows is a summation of Marcuse's attempted appropriation of Freudian categories. In the course of this exposition, the notion of memory, and attendant concepts such as the Great Refusal, will be looked at for their contribution to a fuller, more differentiated understanding of nature which asserts itself at the core

of being, rather than as purely the 'stuff of human endeavours'. His search for the essence of being through remembrance of the past, according to Martin Jay, is a legacy of Heideggerian influence. Jay points to Heidegger's concept of lamented "forgetting of being" as the genesis of Marcuse's concern to establish the validity of the a priori but repressed content of being.² And it is Jagentowicz Mills who points out that it is specifically the concept of nature which is accorded ontological significance by this process of remembrance, as she explains that Marcuse primarily "seeks to ground the critique of the domination of nature in the memory of utopia".³

In the second instance, the problem with the concept of labour emerges most palpably in Marcuse's discussion of the "achievements" of industrial society. Many of the concerns, raised in the previous section concerning the concept of labour, return. I must agree with Jagentowicz Mills that the ambiguity in Marcuse's concept of labour runs deeply. She writes, "Marcuse's position that a quantitative reduction of labor time is necessary to the qualitative change from an unfree to a free society reflects the problematic relation between freedom from labor and freedom in labor that we find in Marx".⁴

Nonetheless, the weakness of Marcuse's position is partially mitigated in the end by his own formulation of the necessity-freedom problematic. For necessary labour as automation loses its "sense" in that labour is no longer the worker's identification and realization. Concomitantly, the "play of life" acquires its ontological sense. Play as freedom "will generate new forms of realization and of discovering the world, which in turn will reshape the realm of necessity".⁵ The dissolution of the distinction between the two realms, and the blurring of the ontological status of necessary labour will, Marcuse hopes, "transform the basic attitude towards man and nature which has been characteristic of Western civilization".⁶

a) On "The Governing Principle of Western Civilization"

In Eros and Civilisation, Herbert Marcuse is summarily concerned with Sigmund Freud's proposition that the suffering of individuals in civilization is both "inevitable and irreversible".⁷ According to Freud, mankind's lot in life is one of renunciation and delayed gratification for the sake of social progress. Socially *useful* activity becomes a transmitted cultural value.

Historically, discipline of work and reward is achieved through the "conquest of nature". Consequently, according to Marcuse, Freud maintains the theory that the progress of Western civilization is based on the perpetual conquest of nature. In the Freudian understanding of civilization, nature and progress are antithetical. In effect, the management, taming and subjugation of nature are the *sine qua non* of social progress.

Marcuse, while adopting general Freudian categories and concepts, refutes this general premise. Although he agrees that this indeed has been "the 'principle' which has governed the progress of Western civilization", Marcuse rejects its assumption of necessity.⁸ He chastises Freud for maintaining that nature is *necessarily* subjugated for the sake of civilization. In effect, Marcuse uses Freudian categories to 'stand Freud's principle on its head'. Freudian concepts are used to show that civilization need not be repressive, and that a non-exploitative relationship between man and nature may be envisaged.

The importance of Eros and Civilisation lies in the fact that it is fundamentally a critique of the domination of nature. As such, Marcuse sets an explicit task to 'flesh-out' the ontological and historical content of the concept of nature. Other writers, as well, see Eros and Civilisation as a turning point on the concept of nature.

According to Vincent Geoghegan, "a crucial Component" in Marcuse's conception "is a transformed relationship between humanity and nature". Furthermore, he points out that "it was in Eros and Civilisation that he had first speculated about the possibility of a non-repressive relationship between humanity and nature".⁹ Even more pointedly, Jagentowicz Mills explains that "in the attempt to specify those aspects of instinctual life that are the basis of a *new* reality principle, Marcuse resuscitates nature as an independent moment within a dialectical theory that points to the possibility of a reconciliation of man and nature".¹⁰

The significance of Eros and Civilisation to the evolution of Marcuse's theory warrants a more detailed exposition of some of the pertinent ideas advanced here. Since it is the first significant thrust towards a concept of nature as an independent moment of human cognition, many ambiguities remain in Marcuse's position. In some cases these ambiguities are worked out, in others they remain, leaving way for the problematical relation between reason and nature to be sharpened further in Marcuse's subsequent works.

In Eros and Civilisation Marcuse explores various Freudian concepts -- as well as other relevant notions such as progress, technology, scarcity and liberation -- in order to argue that the potential for a non-repressive social order exists. What this section must explore is precisely how Marcuse interprets Freud for this purpose. It shall be maintained that despite the fact that Eros and Civilisation was first published in 1956, Marcuse's reading of progress, technology and scarcity, challenges traditional assumptions which still prevail in contemporary social theory. That is, by equating the traditionally 'acquisitive' and 'accumulative' notions of progress with the domination of nature, Marcuse effects an ecological challenge to the scientific, social and economic *status quo*. That the scope of Marcuse's critique should reach into the

domain of ecological theory is not an unforeseen element. For as Geoghegan points out, the critical impulse in Marcuse "casts its net wide and takes seriously the monumental task which the negative moment of the dialectical world view entails", which translates into an "obligation to criticise the whole".¹¹

It is the challenge which Marcuse directs here at Freud's governing principle which makes his ideas so pertinent for the on-going dialogue within social-ecological theory. Marcuse offers an interpretation of Freud which purports to reveal the possibility of society *not* based on domination of nature. As such, Marcuse's theory can be placed in that current of social theory which challenges the prevalent notions of 'progress', 'development', and 'growth' -- notions which have been so keenly and effectively transmitted by our liberal tradition.

In advanced industrial society nature has been regarded as instrumentality consecrated to the fulfillment of human 'needs'. Nature has been enlisted by science and technology in the name of both material and intellectual progress. However, this 'progress' is anything but liberating. It has the effect, according to Marcuse, of reifying a specific experience and organization of reality -- one based on instrumental reason. The existence of individuals is dependent upon (and is but a reflection of) the technical apparatus of production (and destruction). Thus, the domination of nature is the domination of man. Consequently, in Eros and Civilisation, Marcuse is concerned with establishing a "conceptual basis outside the established system". He wishes to overthrow the "sanctioned" theoretical basis of modern culture. The question, for Marcuse, becomes how to develop critical ideas and values not "provided by the system".¹² How, in short, to refute the prevalent ideology of growth -- the principle that the progress of civilization is dependent upon the conquest of nature.

Marcuse's answer is to challenge this "rationality of domination" by

developing the notion of a new order based on the "rationality of gratification". With the rationality of gratification, Marcuse is attempting to invalidate the historical equation of 'reason' with 'repression'. The rationality of gratification elevates the value of sensuousness above that of instrumental reason. Marcuse writes, "repressive reason gives way to a new rationality of gratification in which reason and happiness converge".¹³ Marcuse's attempt here to redefine reason in terms of happiness can be traced back to his early intuition, which we will recall is that "the idea of reason itself is at stake". Geoghegan would concur as he points out that as early as Reason and Revolution Marcuse "stated that for critical theory 'the idea of reason has been superseded by the idea of happiness' and anticipated his 1950's concept of the 'rationality of gratification' -- the convergence of reason and happiness".¹⁴

It will become apparent further in this discussion that the 'rationality of gratification' is closely aligned with the concept of nature. In Marcuse's conception, the rationality of gratification is revealed by memory of the individual's primary drives (pleasure principle) and the "primal past" of society. It is upheld by the individual and the social unconscious. And, it is the *Form* of potential human liberation. In this sense, the rationality of gratification transcends all historical epochs. It is both prior to and beyond technological rationality. That is, the promise contained within the rationality of gratification is of a 'natural' order. It is a rationality for all times -- it is in accordance with nature.

b) The "Hidden Depth Dimension" Behind The Governing Principle Of Civilization

In his treatment of Freud, Marcuse adopts and modifies Freudian concepts in

order to elucidate what he considers to be the condition of modern society. Marcuse explores the Freudian 'theory of the instincts' -- the analytical concept of the pleasure versus the reality principle -- in light of what he calls the "historical dialectic of domination".¹⁵ He uses Freud's theory of the instincts as a philosophical tool to explore the basic trend of civilization -- from the "symbolic" primal past, to modern civilization based on the "interest of domination".

Briefly stated, the Freudian conception is as follows. The instinctual value system which governs man is initially that of the pleasure principle: immediate satisfaction, pleasure, joy (play), receptiveness, and absence of repression.¹⁶ According to Freud, the complete gratification of these needs is impossible as they come into conflict with the natural and human environment (the reality principle). In civilization, the needs associated with the pleasure principle are repressed and altered ("transubstantiated"). They are replaced in consciousness by the needs transmitted by the reality principle, while the "tabooed aspirations of humanity" are relegated to the unconscious.¹⁷

For his part, Marcuse reclaims the Freudian conception. Motivating his appropriation of the theory of the instincts is his own concern with the social-psychological forces underpinning the history of civilization. That is, Marcuse investigates the instinctual structure of human society with the (Freudian) conviction that the history of civilization is marked by instinctual constraint.¹⁸ However, for Marcuse this is only a starting point. Behind the 'fact' of instinctual subjugation lies a complex cultural dynamic. Marcuse purports to reveal this "hidden" historical process which lies behind the governing "principle" of civilization. His desire is to "explode" the hidden rationality which justifies social domination.

Essentially, Marcuse develops the basic Freudian notion in two different directions. The first new dimension is the idea that while the history of civilization

has been the repression of mankind, the present era of modern industrial society has engendered an unprecedented degree of repression -- what Marcuse calls "surplus repression". That is, according to Marcuse, the quantity of instinctual repression has surpassed that needed for the functioning of society. As such, this quantitative increase becomes a qualitative one. Repression (or rather surplus-repression) can no longer be attributed to the rational organization of means. What began as a "rational exercise of authority" necessary for the "advancement of the whole" ¹⁹, has evolved, "through the ever more effective transformation and exploitation of nature", into the domination of man in the "interest of domination". As Marcuse succinctly puts it: "in the process the end seems to recede before the means". ²⁰

In her analysis, Jagentowicz Mills characterizes this entrenchment of repressive powers as the process of "extending the domination of nature to new psychic dimensions".²¹ It is also appropriate to add here, to new historical dimensions, for as Jagentowicz Mills so rightly points out, the "intensifying domination is rooted in *our* technological society". ²²

Marcuse also sees in the Freudian conception of instinctual repression a second new dimension, or what he calls a "hidden trend in psychoanalysis". It is the idea that the deepest drive for integral gratification (absence of want and repression) is upheld by memory:

Its truth value lies in the specific function of memory to preserve promises and potentialities which are betrayed and even outlawed by the mature, civilized individual, but which had once been fulfilled in his dim past and which are never entirely forgotten. ²³

Thus, although memory has been controlled and "conventionalized" by society, it is

nevertheless an "explosive force". The fact that the pleasure principle is maintained as a potentiality attests to its continuing influence on the evolving reality. "The liberation of the past does not end in its reconciliation with the present", Marcuse writes. "Against the self-imposed restraint of the discoverer, the orientation on the past tends towards an orientation on the future".²⁴

The pleasure principle is an attempt to recapture transcendent tendencies, and to project them onto the aesthetic vision of the future. This framework is one which has close affinities with the Romantics' 'expressive unity' through which they seek to recall and reappropriate the humanistic wholeness of the classical age. Both 'recollections' are ontological inquiries, or what Geoghegan calls in Heideggerian fashion, the inquiry into "authentic existence".²⁵ The understanding that recollection or remembrance is an aesthetic inquiry is established by Geoghegan when he points out the strong influence of Schiller's aesthetic theory on Marcuse. Recalling remarks made by Marcuse regarding one of Schiller's poems, Geoghegan establishes the irreducibility of memory and aesthetic cognition. Marcuse writes:

In his poem *Die Kunstler* ... he expresses the relationship between the established and the coming culture in the lines: 'What we have here perceived as beauty / We shall one day encounter as truth'.²⁶

According to Martin Jay, Lukacs was the first major Marxist thinker to tap "the emancipatory potential of memory".²⁷ However, it is with Marcuse that we understand memory to be "the drive for integral gratification", in which sense "it is the immediate identity of necessity and freedom".²⁸ Thus memory is also the point of convergence of reason and nature, productive and receptive activity, and subject and object. Memory not only indicts the past, but anticipates the future, in

reconciliation. Jagentowicz Mills identifies a similar function for memory. She writes:

For Marcuse, memory recalls happiness, which in turn evokes a utopian vision that criticizes the domination of nature in the present. Since happiness is a state of union of subjective experience with its object, utopia is characterized by a reconciliation of humanity with nature, a unity of subject and object that recalls Hegel's absolute knowledge.²⁹

Jagentowicz Mills' claim, that Marcuse is "resuscitating nature as an independent moment of the dialectic" ³⁰ in Eros and Civilisation, is trenchant. And this is most evident in the notion of memory where again Jagentowicz Mills is correct in asserting that Marcuse's "emphasis is on a 'natural', 'unrepressed' freedom that lies undistorted beneath the forms of domination". ³¹ The orientation toward a more ontologically significant concept of nature is clear. Though, as we shall see, it is not unproblematic, nor is it complete.

As a reworking of the Freudian theory of the instincts, Marcuse's claim is to have discovered a "depth dimension" to this Freudian theory which eluded even its author.³² Firstly, Marcuse puts forth the notion that surplus-repression is a fundamental entrenchment of the historical dynamic shaping present-day society. Secondly, he advances the idea that the seeds of human liberation are contained within memory -- as well as its various manifestations such as phantasy or art.

Now it becomes apparent that these two basic trends which Marcuse reveals lead in two very different directions. The first -- surplus-repression -- Marcuse points out is "progress in domination", since "domination becomes increasingly

rational, effective, productive".³³ That is, modern society is driven by the rule of the performance principle in which the division of labour and competitive economic performance come to determine the life of its members. Consequently, "the hierarchy of functions and relations assumes the form of objective reason: law and order are identical with the life of society itself".³⁴

Such a perspective leaves little 'space' for the development of the non-repressive truth value in memory. Marcuse's discussion concerning what we could call the repositories and mediations of freedom -- memory, imagination, phantasy and art -- begins with a positive perspective, but seemingly collapses in contradiction.

Imagination, for instance, envisions the harmonization of desire and actualization. Marcuse writes optimistically that "while this harmony has been removed into utopia by the established reality principle, phantasy insists that it must and can become real, that behind the illusion lies knowledge".³⁵ Marcuse points to art as the *form* of this liberated knowledge: "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".³⁶

However, it is Marcuse himself who points out that despite the liberating content of memory, imagination, phantasy and art, the real potential for liberation grows ever more circumscribed. That is, since art is a manifestation or form within a repressive reality, "the critical function of art is self-defeating". A work of art, as a critical representation of reality is necessarily subject to the prevalent "aesthetic standards" and thus is deprived of its "terror".³⁷ Moreover, the content of art -- "no matter how tragic, how uncompromising the work of art is" -- has always been reconcilable with the established reality. It is, after all, mere representation.

Fundamentally, Marcuse writes, "the aesthetic quality of enjoyment, even entertainment, has been inseparable from the essence of art".³⁸

So, in the context of the recollection thesis, to the extent that Marcuse puts forth a transcendent pleasure principle as an emancipatory moment, his position reveals promise in terms of establishing the inter-penetrative relationship between humanity and nature. However, he appears to stop short of maintaining that the pleasure principle could ever be adequately expressed in this "veil of tears". Indeed, some writers such as Geoghegan maintain that Marcuse "pulled back from absolute idealism" by the time of his writing of The Aesthetic Dimension in recognition that, in Geoghegan's words, "humanity and nature can never be completely reconciled".³⁹

In this sense, Marcuse appears to have come full circle. He exposes society based on supra-repressive reason. Concomitantly, he upholds the notion of a non-repressive reality which has hitherto been buried in our social and individual unconscious. Once the explosive force of memory is revealed, however, the aspirations which it contains are said to be "more at home in such sub-real and surreal processes as dreaming, daydreaming (and) play".⁴⁰ Or alternatively, these aspirations manifest a 'real' form (such as art) while their substance is tainted (or transformed) within a repressive reality.

Marcuse's circle appears to be a closed circle, where domination becomes increasingly rationalized by what he calls "restrictions" which have become "universal" and which "permeate the whole of society". These restrictions:

operate on the individual as external objective laws and as an internalized force: the societal authority is absorbed into the 'conscience' and into the unconscious of the individual and works as his own desire, morality, and fulfillment.⁴¹

However, Eros and Civilisation is an attempt to overcome this seeming irreconcilability between freedom and necessity. Despite what appears to be the complete rationalization of domination, Marcuse upholds the notion of a rationality of gratification. This sensuous rationality is dependent on the understanding of the historical contingency of surplus repression. For "according to Marcuse", Jagentowicz Mills explains, "with the elimination of surplus repression and through a dialectical regression, a 'sensuous rationality' containing its own moral laws would develop to sustain freedom".⁴²

The contingency of domination itself is expressed in terms of the Great Refusal. A short excursus on this concept is required to explain how the potential reconciliation of humanity and nature 'survives' the entrenchment of domination in the late industrial age.

c) The Great Refusal

If domination has indeed been increasingly rationalized, on what basis does Marcuse lay claim to the possibility of a non-repressive reality principle? First of all, his claim hinges on a very un-Freudian assumption. Namely, he maintains, repression in the interest of domination is a historical reality and not a necessary one. Marcuse does not so much justify this assumption as point out that its reverse -- the Freudian 'principle' -- is itself an unfounded conclusion. Marcuse writes that "precisely because all civilization has been organized domination, the historical development assumes the dignity and necessity of a universal biological development".⁴³ In other words, the historical process has only the appearance of a natural or biological process. As such, Marcuse writes that "Freud's conclusions ... hypostatize a specific historical form of civilization as the *nature* of civilization".⁴⁴

Marcuse relies on the two aforementioned "hidden trends" -- which he claims to have elicited from the Freudian perspective -- to further his argument that domination is historically contingent. For instance, his claim that surplus-repression is domination beyond what is necessary for any rational organization of authority, is a necessary part of his argument. It is precisely because surplus-repression is not necessary for the progress or even perpetuation of civilization, that an alternate social reality may be envisaged. He writes:

From the historical necessity of the performance principle, and from its perpetuation beyond historical necessity, it does not follow that another form of civilization under another reality principle is impossible. ⁴⁵

Similarly, if memory has so far (under successive reality principles) been unable to conjure up 'real' freedom, this does not invalidate the possibility of a non-repressive reality principle. Marcuse maintains, unlike Freud:

That such a principle could itself become a historical reality, a matter of developing consciousness, that the images of phantasy could refer to the unconquered future of mankind rather than to its (badly) conquered past. ⁴⁶

Marcuse sums up this perspective as that of the Great Refusal. It is the "refusal to accept as final the limitations imposed upon freedom and happiness by the reality principle". As well, it is the "refusal to forget what can be". ⁴⁷ According to Marcuse, to deny the potentiality of the Great Refusal is to fall victim to the dictates of the repressive reality. The Great Refusal not only deserves, but requires,

our countenance. This would appear to be our essential defence against repressive reason, for "the relegation of real possibilities to the no-man's land of utopia is itself an essential element of the ideology of the performance principle".⁴⁸

The Great Refusal, then, is presented as an article of faith -- although a necessary one. Starting with the premise that the basic historical trend of civilization is mutable, the Great Refusal acquires a *de facto* truth value. It is simply the acknowledgement that things can be otherwise. If we accept the analytical truth of the Great Refusal we are left with a particular scenario. We are left with the repressive history of civilization. Nevertheless, we are also left with the hope and possibility of transcending, overcoming this history of domination.

The underlying assumption here is that truth, fact and reason -- such that we perceive them in our repressive reality -- are very much defined by our particular social existence. They are shaped by what Geoghegan terms that "spurious rationality of the modern administered society".⁴⁹ This ideological perception of truth, fact and reason in Marcuse's project is seen in clear counterposition to our essential, moral understanding. The project of human liberation is to expose the ideological in order to reveal the essential teleological vision. The concept of critical rationality, then, upholds the distinction between essence and appearance as an ethical distinction between 'is' and 'ought'.⁵⁰

Some writers do not, however, attribute such an epistemological position to Marcuse. Alasdair MacIntyre, for instance, denies that Marcuse held *any* consistent and defensible epistemological position. Marcuse, he writes, "does not make it clear what criteria of truth he accepts or to what criteria of truth he is appealing in inviting us to accept his assertions".⁵¹ MacIntyre's criticism, however, rather than highlighting any particular lacuna in Marcuse's project, does more to reveal his own particular view of truth. MacIntyre's assertion that Marcuse "never tells us how we

are to determine what the facts actually are"⁵² demonstrates his own positivistic leanings. It is precisely because of his own predisposition towards an ahistorical notion of truth as static and evident that MacIntyre chooses to ignore Marcuse's dialectical approach in which reason is *process* so that truth is recognized *in* contradiction.

The Great Refusal is premised on an aprioristic moral understanding. But it is, as Geoghegan points out, an aprioristic position which admits historical experience in the definition of the human essence. Remembrance, then, is guided by essential a priori truths but, in Dilthean fashion, is mediated by the conditions of factual history.

This is the assumption under which Marcuse operates in Eros and Civilisation. The concepts which Marcuse uses to explain the historical dynamic of society have both an essential reality and an immediate political context. Consequently, Marcuse reinterprets and redefines pertinent concepts with the aim of revealing their political and contingent content. By subverting the realm of appearance, Marcuse is attempting to make room for a new reality principle, beyond the rationality of domination. The rationality of gratification emerges explicitly in Marcuse's work as the new sensibility which characterizes the relationship between humanity and nature. And it is the theory of remembrance which supplants practical rationality by sensuous rationality. For "phantasy is cognitive in so far as it preserves the truth of the Great Refusal, or, positively, in so far as it protects, against all reason, the aspirations for the integral fulfillment of man and nature which are repressed by reason".⁵³

Here Marcuse reveals himself to be, however, of two minds. In Eros and Civilisation he is not completely convinced that the function of memory "protects against all reason" a sensuous rationality in which nature is taken up dialectically in

the definition of the human essence. For part of his argument in Eros and Civilisation revolves around the notion of the constructive role of technological progress. In such a context, nature, rather than being ontologically significant, can only be of subordinate significance as an aid to the development of productive forces. Nonetheless, in the final analysis Jagentowicz Mills' understanding of "nature as an independent moment of the dialectic" is rescued, if unsatisfactorily, by Marcuse's own formulation under which full automation leads to a "consummation" of alienation. That is, full automation refutes the basis for repression under capitalism. The individual no longer identifies the realm of necessity as *the* realm of human fulfillment. Thus, the aesthetic realm of sensuous activity is no longer rest and relaxation for a renewed concentration on toil, but it is itself constitutive activity which will in turn "reshape the realm of necessity".

To understand how this problematic 'plays out' in Eros and Civilisation we must start with his discussion of technology.

d) Technology

Within Marcuse's discussion and appropriation of the Freudian "governing principle" the essential role of technology is made clear. Historically, according to Marcuse, technics have played a key role in the dialectic of civilization. That is, in keeping with the Freudian principle, he writes, "technics provide the very basis for progress". Marcuse, in effect, ascribes to technics a historical necessity. It is what "secured the growth of civilization".⁵⁴ Hence, there is an essential link between 'technological development' and the 'progress' of society.

The perspective that technological development, and its implied domination of nature, is a historical necessity comes from Marcuse's reading of the later Marx.

For the notion of the intractability of the realm of necessity comes across clearly in Capital III:

The realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Thus as the savage must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production.⁵⁵

To be sure, technological developments have historically abetted the ever greater satisfaction of wants. Consequently, technological society is seen as "the wise order which secures the goods and services for the progressive satisfaction of human needs".⁵⁶ However, this perception is "spurious", according to Marcuse, to the extent that "the existing liberties and the existing gratifications are tied to the requirements of domination; they themselves become instruments of repression".⁵⁷

Hence, individuals' needs and desires are not their own. They are "tied" to a system which has, as its logic, "progress in domination". Thus, individuals engage technology in "productive performance" not for their own satisfaction, but to satisfy a system from which they are increasingly alienated, and to which they have no control. Under this form of productive performance:

Objects are in most cases actually and violently assailed, deprived of their form, and reconstructed only after partial destruction; units are forcibly divided, and the component parts forcibly rearranged. Nature is literally 'violated'.⁵⁸

Not only, then, are technics necessary for the 'progress' of society; technology is also implicated in the forces of social destruction. Thus, according to Marcuse, there is an essential link between technological development and the repressive organization of society, a stance reminiscent of Schiller's lament regarding the "fragmentation" of modern society.

Up to now, Marcuse defines the concept of technology in such a manner that it harmonizes with the basic Freudian principle. That is, technology is ascribed a dual role as the motor of society. We are told that the development of technology has been historically necessary for both social progress and societal repression. Marcuse reveals this irony when he writes that "productive performance" is "socially useful destructiveness".⁵⁹ It is arguable here that Marcuse's position on the ineluctable development of technology and fragmentation of productive forces, and the consequent alienation of the individual which ensued, closely parallels the Romantics' understanding of the historical devolution from the unity of the classical period, and their lament for their increasingly fragmented social existence. Yet, it is a lament prefaced, as Charles Taylor points out, by the understanding that the growth of reason could only emerge out of alienation and estrangement. In other words, it was necessary.

This position is also in accord with Marcuse's earlier writings. It recalls the understanding that essential labour is essentially burdensome. We will recall, however, that Marcuse was equally comfortable with two contradictory moments of labour as if the dialectic of identity worked itself out and alienation gave way to freedom. He expressed this most succinctly in the statement that "it is in labour that the distress and neediness, but also the universality and freedom of man, become real".⁶⁰ Universality and freedom become real, however, not as labour, but beyond

it "in a dimension of freedom denied in labor".⁶¹

Marcuse's Freudian understanding picks up and reaffirms this freedom-from-labour theme. However, what is decisive in Marcuse's eventual shift from this conception of freedom-from-labour to one of freedom-in-labour is that Marcuse cannot accept the Freudian principle 'as is'. Just as the Freudian principle contains a "hidden depth dimension", so too does the concept of technology contain an additional dimension. Aside from its essential historical reality, that is, Marcuse believes that the apparatus of technology has also engendered a new and immediate historical truth. Specifically, that is, modern technological "achievements" offer the possibility of liberation from the supra-repression which technology initially has engendered.

In other words, Marcuse not only refutes Freud's assertion that civilization necessitates repression, he also purports to reveal an objective basis on which to judge the potential for a non-repressive society. Fundamentally, Marcuse's whole project is premised on the idea that a 'product' of the late industrial age has been the creation of a societal sphere with unprecedented potential to reorganize itself precisely by refuting the repressive foundation on which it is based. Marcuse suggests that the performance principle, in creating "the institutions for the orderly satisfaction of human needs on an expanding scale", refutes the logic of renunciation; it refutes itself. As Marcuse writes, "its inner limits appear in the late industrial age".⁶²

The new historical circumstances which Marcuse claims to have identified are, above all else, the result of advancements in technology. Marcuse writes:

The very progress of civilization under the performance principle has attained a level of productivity at which the social demands

upon instinctual energy to be spent in alienated labor could be considerably reduced.⁶³

Here, freedom is still not to be attained within the sphere of production, but rather beyond it. For as he clearly explains:

Technology operates against the repressive utilization of energy in so far as it minimizes the time necessary for the production of the necessities of life, thus saving time for the development of needs *beyond* the realm of necessity and necessary waste.⁶⁴

Marcuse considers technological society's basic achievement to be that it permits a reduction in time spent in alienated labour. What appears decisive is the release of free or extra-productive time, against that of time spent in productive performance, which advanced technology portends.

It would appear that hypothetically Marcuse sees no limit on the achievements of a fully developed industrial society. One of the effects of the performance principle has been the rationalization and mechanization of the productive sphere. "Under the 'ideal' conditions of mature industrial civilization" he writes, "alienation would be *completed* by general automatization of labor, reduction of labour time to a minimum, and exchangeability of functions".⁶⁵ Here Marcuse seems to be using the word "completed" in the dual sense of *totality* and *finality*. That is, while the logic of productive performance is to increasingly, and eventually completely in the sense of *fully*, alienate the individual from both his performance and the product of his performance, the paradoxical effect of the performance principle, at its extreme, is to exclude the individual from the sphere of labour, thus completing in the sense of *ending* alienation.

"The elimination of human potentialities from the world of (alienated) labor", he explains, "creates the preconditions for the elimination of labor from the world of human potentialities".⁶⁶ Thus, Marcuse is saying that a non-repressive social order may potentially be attained when individuals are no longer required to "toil" to secure their basic needs; when the working day is reduced "to a point where the mere quantum of labor time no longer arrests human development".⁶⁷ When labour is effectively dehumanized, the potential for human liberation emerges. Or, as Gad Horowitz explains, "when alienation has developed to its utmost, it can be turned into its opposite".⁶⁸ Accordingly, Marcuse speaks of a "consummation" of alienation rather than its "arrest".

There is an inherent ambivalence within the Marcusean notion of achievement. On the one hand, the idea of achievement, as the reduction of time spent at necessary labour, retains the notion of the burdensome quality of labour. Labour is to be overcome, for as Marcuse explains, "the realm of freedom is envisioned as lying *beyond* the realm of necessity: freedom is not within but outside the "struggle for existence".⁶⁹ In this perspective, as Jagentowicz Mills rightly points out, in order to free the worker from labour, nature must be dominated and incorporated into the production process. The apprehension of nature strictly in terms of its utilitarian objectivity "conflicts with the concept of nature as an independent moment of the dialectic that culminates in the 'all-round development' of individuals".⁷⁰

Ultimately, on the other hand, Marcuse envisions a future in which individual faculties, once released from the "inevitably repressive work-world", will "generate new forms of realization and of discovering the world, which in turn will reshape the realm of necessity, the struggle for existence".⁷¹ Drawing from Schiller, Marcuse portrays a future in which the faculty of sensuousness recalls, as it were a

new reality. This transformation is complete, as "the altered societal conditions would therefore create an instinctual basis for the transformation of work into play".⁷² In other words, necessity and freedom coincide.

Horowitz agrees that in Eros and Civilisation "the relations between reason and desire, necessity and freedom, are no longer *antagonistic* in a non-repressive civilization, and that under these circumstances the technological apparatus itself is thoroughly transformed, in the sense of the current projections of an 'alternative', 'liberatory' technology".⁷³ However, Horowitz argues further that because toil, as alienated labour, is potentially eliminated by the achievements of modernity, this does not mean that *necessary* labour is eliminated. Labour, he writes, "is no longer carried out primarily because it is necessary, though it does not cease to be necessary".⁷⁴

Horowitz presents this view, that necessary labour is an enduring trait, as a corollary to Marcuse's surplus repression thesis. Horowitz claims that Marcuse, although he is not always explicit, writes with the understanding that some basic repression is inevitable in the functioning of society. Indeed, this is a fair assessment of Marcuse's concept of surplus repression. For Marcuse defines surplus repression as "the restrictions necessitated by social domination". This, he writes, "is distinguished from (basic) repression: the 'modifications' of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization".⁷⁵ In light of this definition, Marcuse's proclivity to critique "repression" rather than the more specific "surplus-repression", can be seen as a tendency, according to Horowitz, to use the terms "carelessly" and "loosely".⁷⁶ Consequently, Horowitz argues, necessary labour "is the minimally unpleasurable work which is made possible by basic as opposed to surplus repression".⁷⁷

Horowitz's distinction, however, between necessary labour and alienated

labour, although it has a plausible foundation in Marcuse's own theory of surplus repression, raises its own theoretical complications. The immediate effect of drawing a distinction between necessary and alienated labour is to reinforce our own intuition that Marcuse is concerned to ground as a potentiality the convergence of necessity and freedom. That is to say, such a perspective reinforces the idea that the realm of freedom can be *whole*. However, it is a *completeness* which is not without its costs. In Horowitz's view, supra-repressive toil is eliminated, allowing the remaining order of work to merge with the *needs* of freedom. The 'needs of freedom' is a consciously chosen phrase here, for it points up the irony of a position in which "the burden of necessary labour" is, in the words of Horowitz, "freely assumed as a means of sustaining the 'order of gratification'".

Horowitz's position comes very close to returning us to the position we attributed to the early Marcuse in which necessity and freedom are two irreconcilable spheres of operation. However, whereas for Marcuse play was *for the purpose of* a recreation of energy for work, for Horowitz, here, work is *for the purpose of* a recreation of energy for play.

In either case, what is missing is a conception of the ontological status of work and play, and the consequential relationship between the two. In Horowitz's position, work has a subordinate objective purpose. The need to work is eternal *because* there is a biological need to sustain life. Work is no longer alienating *because* it is no longer meaningful. Horowitz appears to be willing to drop the Marxian ontology in which the subject is realized through objectification. The notion of work, if it is retained, however, as *necessary* for the constitution of material existence, is also, by definition, the objectification of the subject. The ontology of labour is a point which Horowitz conveniently drops in his explanation of Marcuse's treatment of the necessity-freedom theme.

Marcuse, it would appear on the other hand, does not wish to do away with the ontology of labour. In numerous instances within Eros and Civilisation he expresses the view that work can be libidinally satisfying. "If work were accompanied by a reactivation of pregenital polymorphous eroticism", he writes, "it would tend to become gratifying in itself without losing its *work* content".⁷⁸ What is decisive in this conception is that work and play now come together; they are no longer separate moments of freedom and necessity. Douglas Kellner sees this as one of the most important theoretical shifts in Marcuse's work. In reference to Marcuse's statement in Five Lectures, in which he writes that the new society requires "letting the realm of freedom appear within the realm of necessity -- in labour and not only beyond labour", Kellner enthuses that Marcuse's theory "now posits the possibility of non-alienated labour which can be genuinely self-fulfilling, and thus eliminates the sharp division in his theory between labour and play".⁷⁹

At issue here is whether Marcuse is suggesting that necessary work is by definition unpleasurable, as Horowitz would have it, or rather, in Kellner's view, that necessary work is potentially libidinal in character and hence pleasurable. The latter view is more plausible because it better takes into account the evolution of Marcuse's thought towards a freedom-in-labour conception. However, we cannot ignore Horowitz's charge that it is, according to Marcuse, surplus repression and not repression per se, which is overcome. It is a charge which suggests that "the burden of necessary labour" is an issue which has not been satisfactorily put to rest.

Perhaps, though, it is at least possible to put the question of necessary labour in *historical context* in deference to the method of critical theory. Horowitz's understanding of "necessity", as it was pointed out above, is of a benign, non-ontological conception which has no exact representation in our historical past. That is, it is a necessity divorced or separated from the condition of alienation. *This*

necessity is a vision of the future *not* grounded in the historical condition of necessary labour. In Horowitz's conception, "necessity", as he understands it, cannot be necessity in the same sense of historical necessity to construct the objective world. For, this latter necessity has engendered the historical condition of alienation. Necessity and alienation, at least as they are presented by Marcuse, are historically linked. But this does not mean that a *form of necessity*, which *coincides with the self-positing development of individuals*, could not emerge in the historical future. In other words, "necessity" could refer not to the burdensomeness or unpleasurableness of necessary labour, which Horowitz suggests, but rather to the as yet realized convergence of necessity and freedom.

The point is that the context for both the realms of freedom and necessity would be so altered that their *content* would be altered as well. Before the emergence of the liberated society the *nature* of productive activity and aesthetic receptivity cannot be determined. What is clear, however, is that the *distinction* between productive activity and aesthetic receptivity will lose its meaning, so that concepts which contain this distinction such as 'necessity versus freedom' can only be inadequate expressions of this future reality. The inadequacy is not so much in Horowitz's conception as it is in the very structure of the language to express what is beyond the given.

Horowitz's view that necessary labour is eternal is correct as far as it goes. However, his interpretation does not fully account for the dialectical nature of Marcuse's argument. What is decisive is not the rejection or retention of a given form of human activity, but rather its meaning in historical context. It is important to understand Marcuse as a dialectician, for Marcuse's dialectical formulation mitigates somewhat the problematical tendencies of his notion of achievement. The idea of the achievement of modern society, that is, has the effect of reifying

repressive productivity *in the name of freedom*. However, in Marcuse's conception, the reification of productivity is coupled with its complete *transformation*. A change in the conditions of necessity presupposes a change in the conditions of freedom. Alfred Schmidt would concur, for he writes that the distinction between necessity and freedom, under Marcuse, loses something of its "absoluteness and rigidity".⁸⁰ The transformation of the content of both necessity and freedom is historically and dialectically posited. Schmidt explains that "with the ending of the division of life still experienced by the majority of men, between a main content of 'alienated labour' and a subsidiary one of 'non-labour', and with the beginning of man's activity in all areas of life 'for himself' in the Hegelian sense, culture is no longer the complete antithesis of material labour".⁸¹

Marcuse could confidently suggest the development of non-repressive work relations on two grounds. First, the notion that alienation is consummated under total automation suggests that the objective historical circumstances are so altered as to alter the essence of productive activity as well. Geoghegan rightly points out that under total automation labour no longer affords the individual any measure of self-realization. The individual no longer identifies with work.⁸² Or, more to the point, the individual no longer identifies with labour *as it is constituted* under advanced industrial civilization. Yet the possibility of necessary labour *coinciding* with free libidinal activity remains a potentiality. Thus, Marcuse writes without hesitation that the end of domination "seems to require, not the arrest of alienation, but its consummation, not the reactivation of the repressed and productive personality but its abolition".⁸³ Marcuse is identifying the ultimate estrangement when he writes: "the more external to the individual the necessary labor becomes, the less does it involve him in the realm of necessity". And what is decisive is the individual's

subsequent transference of his energies and his identification to the expanding sphere of sensuous gratification. "Relieved from the requirements of domination," he writes, "the quantitative reduction in labor time and energy leads to a qualitative change in the human existence: the free rather than the labor time determines its content".⁸⁴

The second aspect of his theory here completes the grounds of the first. Specifically if, on the first ground identified above, labour in the realm of necessity is no longer the determining existential category, then *free activity assumes the role* of determining "authentic existence", an existence in accordance with the pleasure principle. In other words, the aim associated with the pleasure principle "generates its own project of realization: the abolition of toil, the amelioration of the environment, the conquest of disease and decay, the creation of luxury". This project of realization, explains Marcuse, constitutes " *work* which associates individuals to 'greater unities'".⁸⁵ 'Work' is thus rescued from its relegation to a sphere determined by toil. When Marcuse writes that "it is the purpose and not the content which marks an activity as play or work" ⁸⁶, he is drawing play and work into the same sphere, effectively collapsing the distinction between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom. For play, as a form of gratifying activity, need not lose its work *content*, as long as it retains its *purpose* as an existential category.

By suggesting the potential for libidinal work relations in the realm of freedom, Marcuse's earlier concept of play is recast. Rather than serving as time for recuperation for a further concentration on necessary labour, play is now released from this subordinate purpose. Play now "'just plays' with the reality" in Schiller's terms, for "it cancels the repressive and exploitative *traits* of labor and leisure".⁸⁷

The collapsing of the distinction between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom is of crucial significance for our purpose. Marcuse's shift from an

earlier understanding of labour as necessary toil, to a more encompassing freedom-in-labour conception, challenges the very basis of human cognition as controlled experimentation and domination of nature. For in this shift toward an enlarged order of non-repressive work relations, *reason itself is nuanced*. The rational organization of community is no longer associated with productive activity per se. Rather, an expanded order of reason, encompassing aesthetic sensibilities, emerges. As Marcuse explains, "reason becomes sensuous to the degree to which it comprehends and organizes necessity in terms of protecting and enriching the life instincts".⁸⁸ In the end, the enlarged order of reason would draw out that which is denied by distorted humanity and distorted nature. It "would literally transform the reality", nature and humanity would be "released from violent domination and exploitation".⁸⁹

The final section shall explore the consequence of this idea of sensuous rationality on his later work, and indeed on the whole project of the critical dialectic. It will be shown to what extent the "all-round development of individuals" is dependent on this expanded concept of reason. Further, the reconceptualization of 'authentic existence' in light of this rationality of gratification implies the reconceptualization of nature as well. And it is a conception of nature which is no longer completely objectified which emerges decisively in Marcuse's later work. The culmination in his theory of a concept of nature integral to an understanding of human subjectivity is a worthy legacy. So it is to this conclusion that we must now turn our attention.

1. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature, and Psyche (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 155.
2. Martin Jay, "Reflections on Marcuse's Theory of Remembrance" in Pippin, Feenberg and Webel, eds., Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia (Mass.: Bergin & Garvey Pub.), 1988.
3. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature, and Psyche, op. cit., p. 165.
4. Ibid., p. 153.
5. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud (1956; rpt. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), p. 223.
6. Ibid., p. 215.
7. Ibid., p.3.
8. Ibid., p. 4.
9. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse (London: Pluto Press, 1981), p. 97.
10. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature, and Psyche, op. cit., p. 151.

11. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros, op. cit., p. 100.
12. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 6.
13. Ibid., p. 224.
14. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros, op. cit., p. 37.
15. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 60.
16. Ibid., p. 12.
17. Ibid., p. 18.
18. Ibid., p. 40.
19. Ibid., p. 36.
20. Ibid., p. 111.
21. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature, and Psyche, op. cit., p. 168.
22. Ibid., p. 167, my emphasis.
23. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 19.

24. Ibid., p. 19.

25. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros, op. cit., p. 101.

26. As quoted in Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros, op. cit., p. 29.

27. Martin Jay, "Reflections on Marcuse's Theory of Remembrance" in Pippin, Feenberg and Webel, eds., Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia (Mass.: Bergin & Garvey Pub., 1988), p. 32.

28. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 18.

29. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature, and Psyche, op. cit., p. 171.

30. Ibid., p. 148.

31. Ibid., p. 161.

32. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 17

33. Ibid., p. 89.

34. Ibid., p. 89.

35. Ibid., p. 143.

36. Ibid., p. 144.

37. Ibid., p. 144.

38. Ibid., p. 145.

39. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros, op. cit., p. 99.

40. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 145.

41. Ibid., p. 46.

42. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature, and Psyche, op. cit., p. 159-160.

43. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 34.

44. Ibid., p. 147.

45. Ibid., p. 147.

46. Ibid., p. 147.

47. Ibid., p. 149.

48. Ibid., p. 150.

49. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros, op. cit., p. 62.

50. Ibid., p. 18.

51. Alasdair MacIntyre, Marcuse (London: Fontana, 1970), pp. 17-18.

52. Ibid. p. 18.

53. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 160.

54. Ibid., p. 86.

55. From Karl Marx, Capital III (London: Laurance and Wishart, 1977), p. 820, as quoted in Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros, op. cit., p. 17.

56. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 92.

57. Ibid., p. 92.

58. Ibid., p. 86.

59. Ibid., p. 86.

60. Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism" in Studies in Critical Philosophy, Joris de Bres, tr. (London: NLB, 1972), p. 22.

61. Herbert Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics" in Telos, no. 16, summer 1973, 9-37, p. 14.

62. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 77.

63. Ibid., p. 129.

64. Ibid., p. 93.

65. Ibid., p. 152, my emphasis.

66. Ibid., p. 105.

67. Ibid., p. 152.

68. Gad Horowitz, Repression, Basic and Surplus Repression in Psychoanalytical Theory: Freud, Reich, and Marcuse (Toronto: UTP, 1977), p. 181.

69. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 195.

70. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, Woman, Nature, and Psyche, op. cit., p. 70.

71. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 223.

72. Ibid., p. 215.

73. Gad Horowitz, Repression, Basic and Surplus Repression in Psychoanalytical Theory, op. cit., p. 184-185.

74. Ibid., p. 185.

75. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 35.

76. Gad Horowitz, Repression, Basic and Surplus Repression in Psychoanalytical Theory, op. cit., p. 186.

77. Ibid., p. 185.

78. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 215.

79. Douglas Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism (Berkeley: UCP, 1984), p. 324.

80. Alfred Schmidt, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Foukes, tr. (London: NLB, 1971), p. 142.

81. Ibid., p. 143.

82. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros, op. cit., p. 60.

83. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 105.

84. Ibid., p. 222.

85. Ibid., p. 212.

86. Ibid., p. 215.

87. Ibid., p. 195, my emphasis.

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89. Ibid., p. 189.

CHAPTER VI - NATURE AS A GROUND FOR FREEDOM

The previous section traces in Marcuse's project a transition from a freedom-from-labour to a freedom-in-labour conception. There are, in this transition, certain outstanding ambiguities. It was pointed out that the *idea of achievement*, as the reduction of time spent at necessary labour, retains the notion of the burdensome quality of labour characteristic of the freedom-from-labour conception. The notion of "achievement" does not insert itself smoothly into Marcuse's dialectical thinking. For if the "historical turn" towards a rationality of gratification is as Marcuse suggests "rendered possible only on the basis of the achievements of the performance principle"¹, then Marcuse appears to reify repressive productivity, and the instrumental use of nature, in the name of a future freedom.

This formulation, and others like it in Eros and Civilisation and One-Dimensional Man, has encouraged critics such as Alasdair MacIntyre to accuse Marcuse of depending on a "fairly crude technological determinism".² Other critics as well complain that by attributing the liberation of society to the "achievements" of technological production, Marcuse validates the destructive history of technology. Given "the thoroughly sinister element in technology", in the view of Vincent Geoghegan, "the constructive role of technology is thus a by-product of an essentially deadly process".³

Geoghegan's view is akin to the stance of other critics who suggest that Marcuse's theory of technology holds a close affinity with theories of "autonomous technology" such as in Heidegger.⁴ However, despite Marcuse's formulation of his notion of achievement, in which the "consummation" of alienation belies its potentially more sinister appearance as the reification of destructive productivity and the consummation of nature's instrumentality, Marcuse should not be read as a

technological determinist. By attributing such "thoroughly sinister" ends to technology, Geoghegan and others are misrepresenting the essentially historical character of technology. In both Eros and Civilisation and One-Dimensional Man it is not technology per se which is repressive (or necessarily liberatory for that matter). More accurately, Marcuse takes issue with the use and abuse of technology for repressive means. In Eros and Civilisation, more often than not, what is *decisive* is not the achievement, but rather what it portends, the transformation of "the human existence in its entirety, including the work world and the struggle with nature".⁵ "Beyond the performance principle", Marcuse writes, "its productivity as well as its cultural values become invalid".⁶

In One-Dimensional Man, as well, there is ample evidence that Marcuse does not wish to equate technology directly and inextricably with a repressive instrumental reason. Rather, technology is seen to have acquired a repressiveness of a very different order in the historical context of advanced industrial society. "Advanced industrial culture", Marcuse writes, "is *more* ideological than its predecessor, inasmuch as today the ideology is in the process of production itself".⁷ Thus technological reality is a *political reality* "systematically promoted by the makers of politics and their purveyors of mass information".⁸ In the view of Marcuse, one-dimensional thought and behaviour emerges out of a historical process *in which* ideas, aspirations and objectives "are redefined by the rationality of the given system".⁹

What is decisive in Marcuse's account, in One-Dimensional Man, is not technology per se, but the *organization* of technology. "The industrial society which makes technology and science its own", he writes, "is organized for the ever-more-effective domination of man and nature, for the ever-more-effective utilization of its resources".¹⁰ Accordingly, 'progress' is understood by Marcuse to be but "the *token*

of its achievements", for "it becomes *irrational* when the success of these efforts open new dimensions of human realization".¹¹

Fundamentally, Marcuse's understanding in One-Dimensional Man is that technological rationality is historically contingent. "The 'end' of technological rationality", he writes, "is a goal within the capabilities of advanced industrial civilization"¹², despite the trend towards the totalitarian tendency of contemporary industrial society.¹³ The stance, which Marcuse takes here, highlights what Douglas Kellner sees as an important distinction made by Marcuse, that between technology and technology under capitalism. "The problem in advanced capitalist society", Kellner explains, "is not that people are enslaved by technology, but that it functions in many instances as an instrument of class domination".¹⁴ "For Marcuse", he writes, "technology is used as an instrument of social control and profitability by the 'vested interests' which control society".¹⁵

This reading of One-Dimensional Man is significant for our purposes for it counters somewhat the reading of critics who see a virtual or absolute pessimism in Marcuse's thought.¹⁶ Our understanding of the exploitative repressive *use* of technology by advanced industrial society -- while acknowledging the very real contradiction between the historical possibility of human realization in freedom and the actual relations of domination in society -- suggests that the contradiction can potentially be overcome. It is precisely because technology is not "thoroughly sinister" in One-Dimensional Man that the potential for a non-repressive social order *survives* Marcuse's seemingly "one-dimensional pessimism". Marcuse's critique of instrumental reason should not be isolated from his attendant understanding that *instrumental reason is increasingly irrational* in advanced technological society. "Here", he writes, "is the internal contradiction of this civilization: the irrational element in its rationality".¹⁷ The inference is clear. The irrationality of the whole,

"at its limit", potentially undermines the prevalent instrumental rationality.

a) A Theory of Liberation

This more optimistic reading of Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man still acknowledges an underlying pessimism. In other words, as a critique of capitalism, Marcuse's analysis appears to be a 'hope against all reasonable hope' perspective, given that "technological rationality *has become* political rationality".¹⁸ Nonetheless, its very irrationality is no less decisive. And it is the irrationality of reason which leads Marcuse to explore in his writings a 'new' configuration of reason. Intimations of a new rationality have been an important factor of Marcuse's project from his earliest intuition that "reason itself is at stake" to his subsequent development of the theory of remembrance in which "reason and happiness converge".

In his latest writings, it is maintained here, Marcuse speculates on the objective historical conditions which may serve to break the continuum of repression, the focus of One-Dimensional Man. Moreover, for Marcuse, change in the structures of society presupposes a concomitant change in the consciousness of individuals. Marcuse's "utopian" vision in this period was premised on the emergence of a new sensibility *in tandem* with a radical structural transformation. Both reason and the objective conditions on which reason is grounded are fundamentally challenged in Marcuse's later period.

Marcuse's project of liberation is fundamentally an attempt to both reconstruct reason in terms of aesthetic sensibilities and to root *this* rationality in nature. For reason of analysis, this project can be seen to have three components, that of the "new technology", the "new sensibility", and the "aesthetic dimension" grounded in nature. Drawing primarily from An Essay on Liberation, we will briefly explore

Marcuse's proposed aesthetic sensibility and the conception of a new technology on which it relies. Then, we will turn our attention to a discussion of what this new aesthetic sensibility means for the concept of nature. For as Marcuse suggests in Counterrevolution and Revolt, "what is at stake" in the "novel historical pattern" shaped by the "new sensibility", is the "new relation between man and nature". For "the discovery of the liberating forces of nature and their vital role in the construction of a free society becomes a new force in social change".¹⁹

b) The New Technology, the New Sensibility and the Aesthetic Form

In An Essay on Liberation, Marcuse adopts a more explicit stance on the possibility of the development of a new non-repressive technology. Here he writes that "the development of the productive forces beyond their capitalist organization suggests the possibility of freedom *within* the realm of necessity".²⁰ His earlier notion of achievement is significantly qualified here by his statement that "the quantitative reduction of necessary labor could turn into quality (freedom), *not in proportion to the reduction* but rather to the transformation of the working day".²¹ Such a conception suggests, against Horowitz's view of Marcuse, that Marcuse did not countenance unpleasurable necessary labour. Rather, Marcuse proposed a vision in which necessity would 'submit' to an altogether new reality which tends "to make the process of production a process of creation".²² Whereas, in Eros and Civilisation, Marcuse proposed a somewhat vague reconciliation between freedom and necessity, here the utopian *direction* is clear. Marcuse speaks of "the *ingression* of freedom into the realm of necessity".²³

Douglas Kellner writes that Marcuse avowed to him his regret at certain formulations in One-Dimensional Man that suggest an ahistorical concept of

technology.²⁴ Indeed many passages in An Essay on Liberation appear as correctives. He writes, for instance:

Is it still necessary to state that not technology, not technique, not the machine are the engines of repression, but the presence, in them, of the masters who determine their number, their life span, their power, their place in life, and the need for them? Is it still necessary to repeat that science and technology are the great vehicles of liberation, and that it is only their use and restriction in the repressive society which makes them into vehicles of domination?²⁵

And further, if technology is to be realized as the vehicle of freedom, then historical conditions commensurate with this goal must emerge as "new consciousness" and "new needs". Marcuse writes:

For freedom indeed depends largely on technical progress, on the advancement of science. But this fact easily obscures the essential precondition: in order to become vehicles of freedom, science and technology would have to change their present direction and goals: they would have to be reconstructed in accord with a new sensibility.²⁶

Marcuse opens the second chapter of An Essay on Liberation with the declaration: "the new sensibility has become a political factor".²⁷ This 'fact' is a vital prerequisite for Marcuse's project. In the late '60s Marcuse sees a "rupture with the continuum of repression"²⁸ in the convergence of the new sensibility and the objective historical "struggle against violence and exploitation".²⁹ The "exigencies of sensibility develop as historical ones", he explains. We may see this, to

paraphrase Marcuse, as the historical potential of 'the ingression of theory into political practice'.

The new sensibility is in the first instance "negation of the entire Establishment, its morality, culture".³⁰ It is, though, in the second instance, retrieval of all that has been denied by the established reality, the aesthetic truth. For Marcuse asks the question as to whether "the aesthetic" can become a "factor in the technique of production, horizon under which the material and intellectual needs develop". He answers in the affirmative by invoking what he perceives to be a continuum uniting ancient mythology, classical aesthetics and the aesthetics of Kant and Nietzsche. "Throughout the centuries", he writes, "the analysis of the aesthetic dimension focused on the idea of the beautiful".³¹ Beauty as "desired object ... links the adversaries: pleasure and terror". According to Marcuse, "beauty has the power to check aggression".³² "The harmonious union of sensuousness, imagination, and reason in the beautiful" is consummated with the "objective (ontological) character of the beautiful, as the Form in which man and nature come into their own: fulfillment".³³

For Marcuse, the sensuous, the playful and the beautiful are no longer relegated to the imagination, nor are they just forms of existence. They are rather *the* Form of society. The issue, for Marcuse, is nothing less than the aesthetic dimension in its political, existential form. The aesthetic Form is, according to Marcuse, the result of a process in which the freedom of the imagination is shaped by rationality *and* the sense experience such a reality entails. ³⁴ When political action takes up "the truth of the imagination", the aesthetic ethos becomes a political reality.³⁵ In the end, freedom:

can emerge only in the collective *practice of creating an*

*environment: level by level, step by step -- in the material and intellectual production, an environment in which the nonaggressive, erotic, receptive faculties of man, in harmony with the consciousness of freedom, strive for the pacification of man and nature.*³⁶

c) The Aesthetic Rationality Rooted in Nature

Marcuse writes about a benevolent "human appropriation" of nature which would release the "aesthetic qualities inherent in nature".³⁷ Murray Bookchin, for his part dismisses Marcuse's notion of nature as "absurd".³⁸ The idea that there is a "liberating" mastery of nature, which Marcuse endorses, in opposition to a "repressive" mastery of nature, which underlies the instrumental rationale is, according to Bookchin, a preposterous claim. Bookchin argues vehemently that Marcuse's language of "appropriation", "mastery" and "pacification" is "anthropomorphic in its myopia".³⁹ Underlying his criticism of Marcuse's "muddled logic" is his belief that Marcuse seeks to make of nature an ethical end in itself. Bookchin argues that Marcuse sees in nature a "model" for an ethical community, rather than seeing in nature a more subtle role. Bookchin writes:

*Nature itself is not an ethics; it is the matrix for an ethics, the source of ethical meaning that can be rooted in objective reality. Hence nature, even as the matrix and source of ethical meaning, does not have to assume such delightfully human attributes as kindness, virtue, goodness and gentleness; nature need merely be *fecund* and *creative* -- a *source* rather than a "paradigm".*⁴⁰

Is Bookchin's criticism, however, of the Marcusean concept of nature, well grounded? On the whole, no. The reason for Bookchin's misinterpretation, though, is multifaceted and deserving of our attention, for it goes to highlight a level of ambiguity in Marcuse's concept of nature.

First, Bookchin's criticism of Marcuse's *anthropocentric* treatment of nature is not completely without merit. In Counterrevolution and Revolt, where we find his most explicit discussion of the role of nature in human liberation, and in his earlier One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse does use the vocabulary of "appropriation" extensively. Phrases such as man's "struggle with nature"⁴¹, and the "pacification of existence" where "pacification presupposes mastery of nature"⁴², are indicative of a tendency to equate nature directly with necessity, a necessity in need of being overcome *by man*.

Nevertheless, Bookchin assumes that Marcuse, as a critical theorist, is referring to a *human-instrumental* appropriation and mastery of nature. Bookchin faults Adorno and Horkheimer who, by their "subdued adherence to Marxism" cannot "avoid the invasion of instrumentalism" into a theory of nature which turns "nature into a mere object for manipulation in the very name of respecting its subjectivity".⁴³ However, anthropocentric positions need not be anthropocentric in the strong sense of the term.⁴⁴ Rather than being human-instrumental, Marcuse's position is more accurately understood as *human-centred*.

In One-Dimensional Man, for instance, "pacification of existence", he explains, "means the development of man's struggle with man and with nature, under conditions where the competing needs, desires, and aspirations *are no longer organized* by the vested interests in domination and scarcity".⁴⁵ In other words, "pacification" is not the de-clawing of nature by its instrumental appropriation, but rather the *recognition* that, outside of the reified rule of the performance principle,

nature has a different content. It is a content which can be "appropriated" for liberatory rather than repressive ends. "If Nature is in itself a rational, legitimate object of science", he writes, "then it is the legitimate object not only of Reason as power but also of Reason as freedom; not only of domination but also of liberation".⁴⁶

In Counterrevolution and revolt, as well, Marcuse's treatment of nature is human-centred without being instrumental. In fact, here he clearly delineates between an instrumental "rational development of the productive forces" in whose form "nature appears as that which capitalism has *made* of nature: matter, raw material for the expanding and exploiting administration of men and things", and nature which exists "*for its own sake*", and, in *this* mode of existence for *man*".⁴⁷

Second, to say that Marcuse *anthropomorphizes* nature is to pervert Marcuse's intention. It is true enough that Marcuse looks favourably upon the passage in Marx's 1844 Manuscripts in which nature is said to be "humanized".⁴⁸ What is important, however, is the *meaning* Marcuse attaches to this formulation. Marcuse, in speaking of a "humanized" nature does not intend to attribute self-constituting human characteristics to nature per se. He explains that "the idea of the liberation of nature stipulates no such plan or intention in the universe: liberation is the possible plan and intention of human beings, brought to bear upon nature".⁴⁹

In this sense, nature need not take on, to use Bookchin's words, "delightfully human attributes", but it may, nonetheless, facilitate the free play of the human faculties within its sphere. Nature is not liberation per se, it is rather, in Marcuse's view "a universe which becomes the congenial *medium* for human gratification".⁵⁰ Thus Marcuse speaks of the "capacity of nature" and the "forces in nature" which render it "susceptible" to liberation.⁵¹

How, we may ask, on the basis of this concept of nature, does Marcuse still

retain the notion of "nature as a *subject* in its own right"? ⁵² And does the idea of nature in Marcuse, which Jagentowicz Mills defines as an independent moment of the dialectical process, survive this position which denies ethical determinacy in nature? The answer can only emerge in the particularly Marcusean formulation in which nature, as a ground of freedom, is *dependent* on the subversive potential of the aesthetic sensibilities. For although nature is not an ethics per se, the "new sensibility" is an ethics of aesthetics in whose ascendancy nature is able to shed its repressive organization. For "it must be stressed", according to Marcuse, that "nature is a historical entity: man encounters nature as transformed by society". ⁵³

The subjugation of nature by the prevalent instrumentalist rationality, we will remember from our discussion of Eros and Civilisation, is not a necessary, but a contingent reality. The emergence, then, of a new rationality of gratification alters our relationship with nature and indeed alters nature itself. For Marcuse is convinced that a new sensibility or rationality will allow man to find "himself in nature" and recognize "nature as a subject in its own right -- a subject with which to live in a common universe". ⁵⁴

The revolution is primarily a revolution of aesthetic sensibilities which precedes the liberation of nature, for "nature, too, awaits the revolution!". ⁵⁵ But this conception in no way relegates nature to the status of 'mere nature' -- simple objectivity. In an important passage, Marcuse writes:

Although the historical concept of nature as a dimension of social change does not imply teleology and does not attribute a "plan" to nature, it does conceive of nature as subject-object: as a *cosmos with its own potentialities*, necessities, and chances ... but also as (a bearer) of *objective values*. (Hence) human action against nature ... offends against certain *qualities* of nature -- qualities

which are essential to the enhancement and fulfillment of life. And it is on such objective grounds that the liberation for man to his own humane faculties is linked to the liberation of nature -- that "truth" is attributable to nature not only in a mathematical but also in an existential sense.⁵⁶

Marcuse rescues nature's subjectivity and its dialectical truth value not by making nature into a value in itself. The revolutionary potential of nature lies in its *mediation* of new sensibilities, objective truths. For "the emancipation of man involves the recognition of such truth in things, in nature".⁵⁷

Ironically, this reading of Marcuse's concept of nature renders it very close in detail to Bookchin's nature philosophy. Bookchin writes that fundamentally, we must recreate "our existing sensibilities, technics, and communities along ecological lines". With this 'new sensibility' -- to use Marcuse's term -- Bookchin explains:

An ecological community might well recover its sense of place in its specific ecosystem by allying itself with its natural environment in a *creatively reproductive form* -- a form that spawns a human symbiotic sensibility, a human technics that *enriches* nature's complexity, and a human rationality that enlarges nature's subjectivity. Here, humanity would neither give nor take; it would actually *participate* with nature in creating the new levels of diversity and form that are part of a more heightened sense of humanness and naturalness. Our ethical claim to rationality would derive from the participation of human mind in the larger subjectivity of nature.⁵⁸

It is ironic, for Bookchin is almost vitriolic in his statements against the members of the Frankfurt School generally. "All members of the Frankfurt School", he writes,

"took for granted" Marxian premises which "led to a historical fatalism that saw any liberatory enterprise (beyond art, perhaps) as hopelessly tainted by the need to dominate nature and *consequently* 'man'". 59

Bookchin's charge, that "the Frankfurt School, no less than Marxism ... placed the onus for domination on a 'blind', 'mute', 'cruel', and 'stingy' nature" 60, ignores Marcuse's understanding of nature as a *historical category*. It ignores, as well, Marcuse's understanding of nature's intimate and dialectical relationship with aesthetic sensibilities, as an *existential category*.

Other writers, however, do recognize Marcuse's project as an attempt to both reconstruct reason in terms of aesthetic sensibilities and to root *this* rationality in nature. Douglas Kellner, for his part, explains that although "Marcuse was persuaded by the arguments" of Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialectic of Enlightenment "that the rationalist project had been rendered ineffective by the technological rationality (and reality!) that absorbed reason into the rationality of domination", he did not accept the pessimistic conclusion of this premise. Marcuse, explains Kellner, "sought a new ontological foundation for reason and revolution in nature that would obliterate ontological dualism between nature and history". This project leads, according to Kellner, "to new perspectives on liberation that ... stress the primary importance of human needs and gratification". 61

Contrary to Bookchin's reading of Marcuse, we maintain here that the "pacification" of nature is not an attempt to de-nature nature through mechanization, nor is it an attempt to accord it "such delightfully human attributes as kindness, virtue, goodness and gentleness". The concept of nature, in Marcuse, is not an "ethics" for freedom per se, neither as an instrumentalized nor anthropomorphized ethic. It is, rather, the basis or ground for an ethics of freedom. Nature is seen, by Marcuse, as a sphere which through its "fecundity" and "creativity" (to quote

Bookchin), and given the proper historical circumstances, will promote a "new sensibility". Nature is *potentially* the unfettered domain of aesthetic sensibility. Nature is not an ethics, but is rather the fertile ground for an ethics of aesthetics, the new sensibility.

1. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud (1956; rpt. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), p. 157.

2. Alasdair MacIntyre, Marcuse (London: Fontana, 1970), p. 66.

3. Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse (London: Pluto Press, 1981), p. 72.

4. Geoghegan claims that Marcuse "appreciatively paraphrased Heidegger" in a significant passage in One-Dimensional Man. See Vincent Geoghegan, Reason and Eros, op. cit., p. 73.; See also Douglas Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism (Berkeley: UCP, 1984), pp. 264-266, where he disputes the idea that Marcuse is a proponent of an "autonomous technology". He argues convincingly that in One-Dimensional Man, rather, "it is the types and functions of technology that maintain and reproduce capitalism and not the mere fact of technology that is the basis of a totalitarian societal domination". Those who see in Marcuse an understanding of "autonomous technology", he argues, have been misled by a "somewhat ahistorical analysis in ODM". (my emphasis).

5. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation, op. cit., p. 157.

6. Ibid., p. 157.

7. Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (1964; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 11.

8. Ibid., p. 14.

9. Ibid., p. 12.

10. Ibid., p. 17.

11. Ibid., p. 17, my emphasis.

12. Ibid., p. 2.

13. Ibid., p. 3.

14. Douglas Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism (Berkeley: UCP, 1984), p. 265.

15. Ibid., p. 266.

16. See Alasdair MacIntyre, Marcuse, op. cit., p. 63., where he wonders, "if social control in the interest of the status quo" is as entrenched as Marcuse suggests, *how* the writing and publication of the critical One-Dimensional Man ever came to pass. (my emphasis). See also Douglas Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism, op. cit., p. 267; pp. 445-446n. He notes that critics from the Left also criticize Marcuse's "one-dimensional pessimism".

17. Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, op. cit., p. 17.

18. Ibid., p. xvi, my emphasis.

19. Herbert Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 59.

20. Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 21.

21. Ibid., p. 21, my emphasis.

22. Ibid., p. 21.

23. Ibid., p. 22, my emphasis.

24. Douglas Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism, op. cit., p. 266.

25. Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation, op. cit., p. 12.

26. Ibid., p. 19.

27. Ibid., p. 23.

28. Ibid., p. 36.

29. Ibid., p. 25.

30. Ibid., p. 25.

31. Ibid., p. 26.

32. Ibid., p. 26.

33. Ibid., p. 27.

34. Ibid., p. 29.

35. Ibid., p. 30.

36. Ibid., p. 31.

37. Herbert Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, op. cit., p. 67.

38. Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2nd ed., 1991), p. 277.

39. Ibid., p. 277.

40. Ibid., p. 278.

41. Herbert Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, op. cit., p. 59.

42. Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, op. cit., p. 236.

43. Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom, op. cit., p. 277.

44. See my discussion, pp. 23-24.

45. Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, op. cit., p. 16, my emphasis.

46 . Ibid., pp. 236-237.

47 . Herbert Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, op. cit., p. 62.

48 . Ibid., p. 67.

49 . Ibid., p. 66.

50 . Ibid., p. 67, my emphasis.

51 . Ibid., p. 66.

52 . Ibid., p. 60.

53 . Ibid., p. 59.

54 . Ibid., p. 60.

55 . Ibid., p. 74.

56 . Ibid., p. 69.

57 . Ibid., p. 69.

58 . Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom, op. cit., p. 277.

59. Murray Bookchin, "Thinking Ecologically: A Dialectical Approach" in The Philosophy of Social Ecology (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990), p. 188n.

60. Ibid., p. 188.

61. Douglas Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism, op. cit., p. 180.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation began with the contention that environmental and ecological discourse alike may be constructively informed by a discussion of the philosophical grounds of the concept of nature. Environmentalism, the most prevalent expression of our concern for nature, we will remember, is beset by an instrumental rationale which relegates nature to the status of mere objectivity. Ecological theory, while for the most part advocating a more radical project for social change, is sometimes hampered by an avowed ecocentrism or biocentrism. While rightly dismissing human-instrumental arguments for the preservation (or destruction) of nature as untenable, much of the ecological literature wrongly disavows the "weaker" human-centered arguments for natural preservation.

I take, as a point of orientation, the view that the concern for nature is fundamentally a human concern, the basis of our concern for "authentic existence". Indeed, it is maintained that the theory of nature, if it is to be fruitful, must be concerned with the reconciliation of human subjectivity as rational, moral will with external nature. I chose the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse as one such approach which attempts to reconcile subjectivity and nature. I show how this reconciliation is effectuated through Marcuse's critical dialectical project to reconstruct reason, and to root this new rationality in nature.

Fundamentally, Marcuse's project puts into question the *basic model of life* which humankind has adopted in the modern world. Marcuse challenges the performance principle and the mechanistic world view on which it is based. If ethics define how we live in community, Marcuse's project suggests that our ethical stance must be broadly based. That is, the survivability of the human collectivity is dependent on the recognition of our bonds with external nature, not as objective

instrumentality, but as a participant in the greater totality of being. The ethics of aesthetic community imply a larger identity of subjectivity and nature. Showing empathy for the whole of creation is *the* mainspring of authentic praxis.

It is on this level that the notion of aesthetic community most adheres to a Romantic world view. For, as a revolt against the containment of ideas, and indeed the model of man, within the confines of analytical reason, Romanticism seeks to broaden the base of human knowledge. The Romantics, as well as Marcuse, put forth a notion of humanity as sensual as well as rational, as imaginative and intuitive as well as objectifying. What is more, this aesthetic capacity of the human being is elevated to the highest principle of authentic existence. Praxis is no longer merely a process of production but a process of creation. In this system, nature emerges as more than an object of contemplation, but as the purveyor of immanent value, the grounds for ethical, creative and playful behaviour in a true human community. I must conclude that the centrality of aesthetic praxis to Marcuse's project bares out the initial hypothesis which posits the importance of this Romantic conception.

I argue that the preponderance of concepts put forth in the extended course of Marcuse's project reinforce the *emerging* view that not only is the real rational, but the real is sensual, or at least it should be in Marcuse's terms if consciousness and the senses were not so often "mutilated" by our distorted reality. Whether it be the "pleasure principle", the "rationality of gratification" or "libidinal rationality", Marcuse's point of orientation remains the aestheticization of collective consciousness. Moreover, the aesthetic community presupposes a rupture with the continuum of repression, the surmounting of the performance principle, and above all, the overcoming of the domination of nature.

This brings us back to the practical consideration which motivates my work. Endorsing a formative process between nature and Freedom, Marcuse's position

offers the foundation for higher ethical principles in nature. In practice, this leads to a critical stance *vis-à-vis* the environmental positions most evident in contemporary discourse. Marcuse's project calls for the aesthetic ethos to be taken up, not only in theory, but in political practice -- in the "new technology". For Marcuse, science and technology are inevitable, even desirable. This should not obscure, however, their essential "precondition". He writes that "science and technology would have to change their present direction and goals: they would have to be reconstructed in accord with a new sensibility".¹ Marcuse's conception is thus a practical critical counterpoint to positions which support merely piecemeal technological responses to ecological disasters which increasingly threaten the material basis and viability of contemporary society. The concept of sustainable development, if it is to be fruitful, must be taken as an ethical concept grounded in the aesthetic model of life, rather than as a "technological fix" supportive of the mechanistic world view. As it stands, 'sustainable development' is limited by its focus on means over ends.

Humanity's relationship with nature has always been a partnership. Modern society has always exploited that relationship, however, as an expedient to improve the conditions of existence for privileged species, communities and individuals. Such an uneven relationship between man and man, and man and nature cannot help but increasingly manifest its unsustainability and indeed its irrationality. The theory of aesthetic community indicts those who would ignore this lesson by approaching 'sustainable development' as a simple rationalization of resources, rather than what it should be, "the participation of human mind in the larger subjectivity of nature".² Marcuse's analysis shifts concern for the environment from one of reliance on piecemeal changes to social and political institutions, short-term technological fixes, and "gadgetry", to *the question* of the larger ethical world view which subtends the totality of human and non-human existence.

Concern for the environment is not one of many political and social issues facing the human species. It is, rather, at the root of the question of human existence. Until we incorporate an ethical-aesthetic approach to nature into our basic model of life, we cannot expect to overcome the global ecological crisis which has beset the contemporary world. Marcuse's theory suggests that human beings, however, have the capacity to integrate sense perception, imagination and intuition with moral understanding. An ethic on this basis, moreover, recognizes the mutuality of human freedom and the freedom of nature. It is the values which emerge from this total world view, and not the acquisitive, masterful values which we now uphold, which must come to inform our actions.

While I must conclude that the concept of aesthetic praxis which Marcuse advances is a significant addition to environmental and ecological discourse, *the dynamics of such a path are not yet clear*. If the values of freedom, equality, and public participation are to flow from a new global ecological ethic, then *both* our social and biological communities need to be radically reconceived. *How*, we may ask, *do* mutually reinforcing ecological and social values come to inform our actions in concrete living communities? J. Ronald Engel, in discussing the radical implications of a new ecological ethic, suggests that we have gone as far as outlining the fundamental issues involved. *How* this radical reconceptualization of the relationship between human beings and nature will manifest itself concretely, however, is a project yet to be realized. Engel writes:

To ask how these enduring social values can reinforce one another and also promote the complex and diverse values of the natural world, and how, moreover, the values that human beings discover in their relationships to nature can reinforce these social values, is to issue an unparalleled challenge to human capacities for moral

understanding.³

I maintain that Marcuse's thought takes up this challenge. Yet, as a *project*, the aestheticized community grounded in nature remains unrealized. Perhaps this is inevitable. For, we will remember, in Reason and Revolution Marcuse exclaims, "the realization of reason is not a fact but a task".

The convergence of reason and happiness, which Marcuse situates in the aestheticized harmonious community, is the ideal on which all theory and practice is measured. As such, Marcuse's presentation begs an evaluation of contemporary political practice and of the ideas which subtend it. In 1972, Marcuse offers his evaluation of the ecological struggle in the following terms:

In the last analysis, the struggle for an expansion of the world of beauty, nonviolence and serenity is a political struggle... People must learn for themselves that it is essential to change the model of production and consumption, to abandon the industry of war, waste and gadgets, replacing it with the production of those goods and services which are necessary to a life of reduced labor, of creative labor, of enjoyment.⁴

Marcuse's critique of the material structure and logic of capitalism, which reifies consumption and economic growth, is seen in counterposition to the most common environmental position which accepts the logic of economic growth, and seeks merely to mitigate the harshest effects of modern production and consumption. 'Sustainable development', as it is commonly invoked and advocated, is a significant case in point. For, in the present social and political context, a reductionist and utilitarian approach to nature is inevitable. Whether environmental

discourse calls for the proper management of resources for the sake of human prudence, or attempts to reconcile societal desires and objectives with nature's own movement and laws by invoking the essential interdependence or 'oneness' of the social and natural spheres, the emergence of a true ecological ethic is forestalled by the economic presuppositions and ideological orientation that act as barriers to fundamental social change. "This", according to Marcuse, "is the insurmountable internal limitation of any capitalist ecology".⁵

The concept of sustainable development is posed without an ethical orientation. If a global ethic were indeed made to *inform* the Brundtland Report's call for a reconciliation of human endeavours with natural processes, it is conceivable that a radical orientation would emerge. If, in Marcuse's terms, the emancipation of consciousness were accompanied by the emancipation of the senses, and if Reason were accepted as a larger order of libidinal rationality with nature acting as a ground for ethical action, then and only then is it possible to speak of a project of human emancipation. For, if we agree with Marcuse, "the issue is not the purification of the existing society but its replacement".⁶

1. Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (Boston: BeaconPress, 1969), p. 19.
2. Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom: The emergence and dissolution of hierarchy 2nd ed. (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991), p. 277.
3. J. Ronald Engel, "Introduction: The Ethics of Sustainable Development", Ethics of Environment and Development, Engel & Engel, eds. (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 1-35, p. 19.
4. Herbert Marcuse, "Ecology and Revolution: A Symposium", in Liberation, New York, Sept., 1972, pp. 10 - 12, p. 12.
5. Ibid., p. 12.
6. Ibid., p. 12.

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