ANAMNESTIC TOTALIZATION

Reflections on Marcuse's Theory of Remembrance

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At a time when the memory of Herbert Marcuse is fresh in the minds of many on the left, it is perhaps particularly fitting to focus our attention on the special place held in Marcuse's thought by the concept of memory. Many of his earlier commentators have, in fact, already noted its importance.[1] One of the more astute of their number, Fredric Jameson, even went so far as to claim that the theoretical foundation of Marcuse's philosophy

> takes the form of a profound and almost platonic valorization of memory, anamnesis, in human existence. Indeed, it is not too much to say that Mnemosyne occupies something of the same emblematic and mythopoetic position in Marcuse's thinking that the deities of Eros and Thanatos hold in Freud's late metapsychology.[2]

But precisely what that position was and how it was defended has not yet been subjected to sustained critical analysis. The following remarks are thus intended as a first step in that direction. From his earliest writings, beginning with *Hegels Ontologie* in 1932, until his very last, *The Aesthetic Dimension* in 1977, Marcuse returned again and again to what he saw as the liberating power of remembrance. In almost all of his major works, most notably *Eros and Civilization, One-Dimensional Man,* and *Counterrevolution and Revolt,* he introduced a virtually identical defense of that power and expressed alarm at its current weakened status. Matched among twentieth-century Marxists perhaps only by Walter Benjamin,[3] Marcuse attempted to harness the energies of recollection for revolutionary purposes.

The sources of his persistent fascination with memory can be traced for analytical purposes to four separate stimuli: his early philosophical training, his adherence to critical Marxism, his special concern for aesthetics, and his radical appropriation of psychology. Although often conflated in his discussions of anamnesia, these different sources contributed distinctive elements to his

Department of History, University of California, Berkeley.

argument, elements which can be isolated and critically analyzed. In so doing, the strengths and weaknesses of Marcuse's theory of remembrance can be more accurately assessed. From its earliest beginnings, Western philosophy has been drawn to the issues raised by present knowledge of past events.[4] From Plato's the *Meno* and the *Theaetetus* through Aristotle's *De Memoria et Reminiscentia,* Augustine's *Confessions,* Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature,* Bergson's *Matter and Memory,* and on up to Russell's *The Analysis of Mind* and Ryle's *The Concept of Mind,* the greatest philosophers of the Western tradition have wrestled with the epistemological puzzles presented by memory. Contemporary philosophers such as E. J. Furlong, W. von Leyden, Brian Smith, and Norman Malcolm continue to devote long and learned studies to the same, still unresolved issues.[5] Marcuse, however, seems to have paid little attention to this body of what might be called mainstream speculation about memory. Aside from an occasional vague reference to the "ancient theory of knowledge as *recollection*,"[6] he ignored the arguments of these thinkers. Instead, as might be expected, he relied far more on the less technical treatments of the problem in the German idealist and phenomenological traditions.

Although no firm evidence appears in his writings, it is likely that the phenomenological current first impressed upon him the importance of remembrance. In particular, his philosophical apprenticeship under Martin Heidegger in the late 1920s should probably be accounted decisive in this regard. For in Heidegger's *Being and Time* of 1927, a work whose influence on his early development Marcuse freely acknowledged, memory played a central role. To characterize the wayward course of Western philosophy since the pre-Socratics, Heidegger introduced the notion of *Seinsvergessenheit,* the forgetting of Being.[7] This forgetting, he contended, was so pervasive that language itself had lost the capacity to treat Being as a meaningful reality. His own philosophy, Heidegger claimed, was an effort to reverse this collective amnesia and restore consciousness of Being to its proper place. Although Marcuse soon came to recognize the vacuous nature of Heidegger's notion of Being, he nonetheless retained his teachers's insistence that something extraordinarily important had been forgotten in the modern world. Because remembrance was a window on this fundamental reality, it had ontological as well as epistemological implications. What these implications were became clearer to Marcuse in his first prolonged study of Hegel, directed by Heidegger, which appeared as *Hegels Ontologie* in 1932. In examining Hegel's *Logic* with its central category of negativity, Marcuse argued

> This 'not,' this negativity which Being is, is itself never present in the sphere of immediacy, is itself not and is never *present.* This 'not' is always precisely the *other* of immediacy and the other of presence, that which is never as *present* precisely *never* is and what, however, constitutes its *Being.* This 'not,' this negativity is the immedi-

> ate present always already past at every moment. The Being of present being resides therefore always already in a past, but in a, to a certain degree, 'intemporal' past (*Logic,* II, 3), in a past which still always is present and *out* of which precisely Being *is.* A being is at each moment what it is in its immediate present through memory .... With the phenomenon of memory, Hegel opens the new dimension of Being which constitutes Being as authentic having-beenness (*Gewesenheit*): the dimension of essence.[8]

Memory, *Errinerung,* in other words, permits access to an essential, "negative" level of reality, that "intemporal past" preserved on a second ontological plane more basic than that of "positive" and immediate appearance. The German language itself, so Hegel had noted, captured this relationship: "In the verb *Sein* (to be) language has conserved essence (*Wesen*) in the past participle of the verb, '*gewesen*'."[9] As Alison Progrebin Brown has perceptively noted,[10] Marcuse's later stress on two-dimensionality was foreshadowed here in his discussion of the temporal aspect of Hegel's doctrine of essence. But whereas in *Hegels Ontologie* Marcuse identified essence entirely with the "intemporal past," in his later work it was ambiguously related to the future as well. In his 1936 essay, "The Concept of Essence," written after his break with Heidegger and his entrance into the Institute of Social Research, Marcuse linked essence with the Aristotelian notion of potentiality. "All historical struggles," he argued,

> for a better organization of the impoverished conditions of existence, as well as all of suffering mankind's religious and ethical ideal conceptions of a more just order of things, are preserved in the dialectical concept of the essence of man, where they have become elements of the dialectical practice linked to dialectical theory. There can also be experiences of potentialities that have never been realized. . . . In idealist philosophy the timeless past dominates the concept of essence. But when a theory associates itself with the progressive forces of history, the recollection of what can authentically be becomes a power that shapes the future.[11]

Yet, for Marcuse, the identification of essence with the past as well as the future remained a powerful premise of his thought. Returning to Hegel in *Eros and Civilization,* he enthusiastically endorsed his cyclical view of time:

> The fact that remembrance here appears as the decisive existential category for the highest form of Being indicates the inner trend of Hegel's philosophy. Hegel replaces the idea of progress by that of a cyclical development which moves, self-sufficient, in the reproduction and consummation of what *is*. This development presupposes the entire history of man (his subjective and objective world) and the comprehension of his history – the remembrance of his past. The past remains present; it is the very life of the spirit; what has been decides on what is. Freedom implies reconciliation – redemption of the past.[12]

And in *Counterrevolution and Revolt,* he contended, now with special reference to Goethe's view of science, "The Marxian vision recaptures the ancient

theory of knowledge as *recollection*: 'science' as the *re*discovery of the true *Forms* of things, distorted and denied in the established reality, the perpetual *materialistic core of idealism*."[13] What, of course, made it imperative for Marcuse to link essence with both the past and the future was his adherence to Marxism. At first glance, Marxism seems an unlikely stimulant to the notion that recapturing the past, whether understood as the repository of essence or not, would be a revolutionary project. For all his stress on grasping reality historically, Marx himself appears to have had little use for memory as a radical tool. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* he mocked those earlier revolutions, such as the English and French, that had sought legitimacy by cloaking themselves in the mantles of their historical predecessors. "The social revolution of the nineteenth century," he argued,

> cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury the dead.[14]

Although one might, as Christian Lenhardt has suggested,[15] read Marx's labor theory of value as a reminder to see the capital of the present as the coagulated labor power of previous generations, Marx himself never seems explicitly to have drawn the conclusion that remembering the workers of the past was a key stimulus to revolutionary consciousness. Instead, he contended, "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."[16] It was not really until Georg Lukács introduced the idea of reification in *History and Class Consciousness* that the emancipatory potential of memory was tapped by a Marxist thinker of note. Lukács had, in fact, pointed to the power of remembrance in his pre-Marxist *The Theory of the Novel* while discussing time in Flaubert's *Sentimental Education:*

> Only in the novel and in certain epic forms resembling the novel does memory occur as a creative force affecting the object and transforming it. The genuinely epic quality of such memory is the affirmative experience of the life process. The duality of interiority and the outside world can be abolished for the subject if he (the subject) glimpses the organic unity of his whole life through the process by which his living present has grown from the stream of his past life dammed up within his memory.[17]

After Lukàcs' conversion to Marxism in 1918, he no longer stressed the retrospective nature of totalization, as he had in *The Theory of the Novel.* A true totality would be achieved only when the proletariat, the universal class, dereified the objective structures of the social world and recognized them as its own creations. Totalization was thus a practical activity of the future, not a contemplative one directed towards the past. And yet, the concept of

dereification implied a certain type of remembering, for what had to be recaptured were the human origins of a social world that had been mystified under capitalism as a kind of "second nature". Marcuse recognized the link between memory and dereification, at least implicitly, in his 1932 essay "The Foundations of Historical Materialism," where he reviewed Marx's newly published Paris manuscripts. "Because it is dependent on the conditions pre-established by history," he argued,

> the praxis of transcendence must, in order to be genuine transcendence, reveal these conditions and appropriate them. Insight into objectification as insight into the historical and social situation of man reveals the historical conditions of this situation and so achieves the *practical force and concrete form* through which it can become the lever of revolution. We can now also understand how far questions concerning the *origin* of estrangement and insight into the *origin* of private property must be an integrating element in a positive theory of revolution.[18]

The explicit linkage of dereification with remembrance came somewhat later in the work of Marcuse's colleagues at the Institute of Social Research. In an important letter of February 29, 1940 to Walter Benjamin, Adorno responded with considerable enthusiasm to the theory of forgetting propounded in Benjamin's essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire".[19] In that essay, Benjamin had introduced his now celebrated contrast between the integrated, meaningful experience he called "*Erfahrung*" and the atomizing, incoherent alternative he called "*Erlebnis*". Benjamin tied the former to Proust's idea of "involuntary memory," which he claimed was possible only when men were immersed in an ongoing, communal tradition. In the modern world, such a tradition was lacking; the only experience thus possible was the impoverished disorientation of *Erlebnis*. In his letter to Benjamin, Adorno asked, "Wouldn't it be the task to connect the entire opposition between *Erlebnis* and *Erfarhung* to a dialectical theory of forgetting? One could also say: to a theory of reification. For every reification is a forgetting: objects become thinglike at the moment when they are seized without all their elements being contemporaneous, where something of them is forgotten."[20] Although there is no reason to assume Marcuse knew of this letter, one of the aphorisms included in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, entitled "Le Prix du Progrès," repeated the key phrase "all reification is a forgetting."[21] Significantly, it was linked to the issue of the domination of nature, one of the Frankfurt School's central concerns. The lines preceding it read: "perennial domination over nature, medical and non-medical techniques, are made possible only by the process of oblivion. The loss of memory is a transcendental condition for science."[22]

In Marcuse's later work, the same linkages between forgetting, reification, and

the domination of nature appear. The passage quoted above from *Counterrevolution and Revolt,* with its veiled reference to Goethe's theory of science as the recovery of primary forms, follows directly a discussion of the redemption of nature as a "subject-object" with intrinsic value in its own right. The implication is that forgetting the suffering of men is akin to forgetting the pain caused nature by its human domination; remembrance somehow permits us to see the connections and honor the subjective side of both nature and man. "All reification is a forgetting" also served another function in Marcuse's theory of remembrance, as a reminder of the negative potential in art. The final paragraph of *The Aesthetic Dimension* begins by quoting the phrase from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and continues: "Art fights reification by making the petrified world speak, sing, perhaps dance. Forgetting past suffering and past joy alleviates life under a repressive reality principle. In contrast, remembrance spurs the drive for the conquest of suffering and the permanence of joy."[23]

The third source of Marcuse's celebration of memory was, in fact, the role it played in his vision of aesthetics. For much Western art, as for Western philosophy, memory has proven an object of singular fascination. To the Greeks, Mnemosyne was the mother by Zeus of the nine Muses. The more recent figure of Proust, to whom Marcuse himself referred approvingly,[24] comes immediately to mind in this regard, but he was by no means alone in associating art with remembrance. The romantics, towards whom Marcuse was always drawn, were intensely interested in the links between memory, personal identity, and imagination.[25] In Germany, Schlegel was particularly fascinated with memory as a vehicle for overcoming fragmentation, while in England Wordsworth sought ways to recapture and render intelligible his personal past in such works as *The Prelude.* His friend Coleridge defined "the primary imagination" as "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation,"[26] and later Victorian writers, such as Ruskin in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture,* advocated lighting what he called "the lamp of memory" to escape the dreary present and renew contact with a more beautiful past. Although after his 1922 dissertation on the *Kunstlerroman* (novels about artists),[27] Marcuse never directly acknowledged the influence of the Romantic tradition on his thought, he was clearly in its debt, as the following passage from *Counterrevolution and Revolt* demonstrates:

> On a primary level, art is recollection: it appeals to a preconceptual experience and understanding which reemerge in and against the context of the social functioning of experience and understanding – against instrumentalist reasoning and sensibility.[28]

No less Romantic was his privileging of music among all the arts as the most essential repository of recollected truth:

> These extreme qualities, the supreme points of art, seem to be the prerogative of music . . . and within music, of melody. Here the melody – dominant, *cantabile,* is the basic unit of recollection: recurring through all variations, remaining when it is cut off and no longer carries the composition, it sustains the supreme point: in and against the richness and complexity of the work. It is the voice, beauty, calm of another world here on earth.[29]

In *The Aesthetic Dimension,* Marcuse introduced memory into the very heart of artistic form itself:

> The medium of sensibility also constitutes the paradoxical relation of art to time – paradoxical because what is experienced through the medium of sensibility is present, while art cannot show the present without showing it as past. What has become form in the work of art has happened: it is recalled, re-presented. The mimesis translates reality into memory.[30]

In short, for Marcuse the promise of future happiness embodied in art was dialectically related to its retention of past instances of joy and fulfillment. In combatting the "affirmative character of culture"[31] as a realm of transcendent values, Marcuse was insistent on the sensuous, material, even erotic nature of artistic pleasure. His linkage of art and Eros was abetted by his radical appropriation of psychology into his version of Critical Theory, an appropriation that also strengthened his interest in the liberating power of remembrance. Psychology thus joined philosophy, critical Marxism, and aesthetics as an especially potent source of his theory of memory. In *Hegels Ontologie,* he had warned against reducing memory to a psychological category,[32] but after his entrance into the Institute of Social Research, where psychology was a subject of considerable interest, he grew increasingly open to the psychological dimension of anamnesia. The psychology of memory to which Marcuse was drawn was not, to be sure, that of the experimentalists, such as Hermann Ebbinghaus,[33] whose scientific data on the functioning of memory he chose to ignore. It was instead the psychoanalysis of Freud that provided him with a psychological theory of memory to complement those he had derived from philosophy, Marxism, and aesthetics. Beginning with his 1898 paper, "On the Psychic Mechanism of Forgetfulness,"[34] and elaborating in later works such as *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* Freud advanced the now familiar argument that the loss of memory was due to the repression of traumatic experiences or unpleasant thoughts that had engendered pain or anxiety in the past, most of which were sexual or aggressive in nature. One of the fundamental objectives of psychotheraphy was thus the anamnestic recovery of forgotten and repressed experiences, thoughts, desires, or impulses. Once remembered, they could be dealt with in a conscious and responsible fashion, rather than being allowed to fester as the source of unconsciously generated neurotic symptoms.

Marcuse adopted Freud's linkage of forgetting and repression, but drew on an essay on childhood amnesia by his former Institute colleague, Ernst Schachtel,[35] to give it a subtle twist. Instead of emphasizing the forgetting of painful or traumatic episodes in the past, Marcuse stressed the repression of pleasurable activities that society could not willingly tolerate. The source of forgetting was thus not so much the intrapsychic needs of repression as the external demands of a repressive society. Citing Nietzsche's link in *The Genealogy of Morals*[36] between the training of memory and the origins of morality, Marcuse condemned

> the one-sidedness of memory-training in civilization: the faculty was chiefly directed toward remembering duties rather than pleasures; memory was linked with bad conscience, guilt and sin. Unhappiness and the threat of punishment, not happiness and the promise of freedom, linger in memory.[37]

What should be remembered by man instead, Marcuse contended, are those promises and potentialities "which had once been fulfilled in his dim past".[38] There was a time, he claimed, in the "archaic" prehistory of the species before socially induced surplus repression, a time controlled largely by the pleasure principle, which remembrance should labor to rescue. As he put it in his later essay, "Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts,"

> Originally,* the organism in its totality and in all its activities and relationships is a potential field for sexuality, dominated by the pleasure principle.
>
> *The notion of "origin" as Freud uses it has simultaneously structural-functional – and temporal, ontogenetic, and phylogenetic significance. The "original" structure of the instincts was the one which dominated in the prehistory of the species. It is transformed during the course of history but continues to be effective as a substratum, preconscious and unconscious, in the history of the individual and the species – most obviously in early childhood. The idea that mankind, in general and in its individuals, is still dominated by "archaic" powers is one of Freud's most profound insights.[39]

Although in this essay[40] Marcuse acknowledged that freedom from certain of these archaic powers, most notably those associated with the death instinct, would be itself a liberation, the burden of his argument was that remembering others was a precondition for the achievement of a utopian future. With the psychological component introduced in *Eros and Civilization,* Marcuse's theory of remembrance was essentially complete. It provided him a potent weapon in his attempt to find an Archimedean point for a Critical Theory no longer able to rely on the *praxis* of a revolutionary proletariat as its ground. For insofar as recollecting a different past prevents men from eternalizing the *status quo,* memory subverts one-dimensional consciousness and opens up the possibility of an alternative future. Moreover, it does so in a way that

avoids the traditional bourgeois and social democratic ideology of history as evolutionary progress. As Benjamin had often pointed out,[41] the belief in a smooth, unilinear flow of time helps preserve the tendencies for domination existent in the present. In *Eros and Civilization,* Marcuse approvingly quoted Benjamin's observation that clocks were shot at during the July Revolution as evidence of the link between stopping ongoing temporality and achieving revolutionary change.[42] And in *One-dimensional Man,* he cited Adorno's similar insight that "the spectre of man without memory . . . is more than an aspect of decline – it is necessarily linked with the principle of progress in bourgeois society."[43] By negating the past as mere preparation for the future and seeing that future as an extrapolation of tendencies in the present, the ideology of progress justified the suffering of past generations as necessary. It also made impossible that recapturing of past moments of happiness and fulfillment which memory preserved as beacons for the future. In fact, so Marcuse argued, the very notion of progress with its never-ending dissatisfaction with the present and impatient yearning for an improved tomorrow was one of the earmarks of a repressive society. In a true utopia, "time would not seem linear, as a perpetual line or rising curve, but cyclical, as the return in Nietzsche's idea of the 'perpetuity of pleasure'."[44] Memory, by restoring the forgotten past, was thus a model of the utopian temporality of the future. In other words, it was not merely the content of what is remembered that constitutes the liberating power of memory, but also the very fact of memory's ability to reverse the flow of time that makes it a utopian faculty. If there is to be a true human totality in the future, anamnestic totalization in the present is one of its prefigurations.

The claims Marcuse made for the liberating power of remembrance were thus obviously very large ones. What now in conclusion can be said about their validity? Any answer to this question must begin with a consideration of precisely what Marcuse thought should be remembered. For it is clear that emancipatory remembrance was far more than that indiscriminate preservation of everything in the past condemned by Nietzsche in his "Use and Abuse of History" and Benjamin in his "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian". If memory has been trained by civilization to preserve duties and guilt, it must be re-trained to recover something else. Marcuse's notion of that alternative, however, contained a certain ambiguity. At times, the Marxist in him protested against the ontologization of the content of memory; the dialectical concept of essence, we have seen him argue in his 1937 essay, contains only the historical struggles and ethical and religious ideals of past generations. In *Counter-revolution and Revolt,* he protested in a similar vein: that recollection "is not remembrance of a Golden Past (which never existed), of childhood innocence, primitive man, etcetera."[45] In contrast, what must be remembered are the

actual historical experiences and desires of our ancestors, not some imagined prehistorical era of perfect bliss. Indeed, as Benjamin once noted,[46] revolutionary motivation may well stem more from outrage over the indignities suffered by our fathers than hope for the comfort of our children.

But despite the historical intentions of these passages, at other times in his work Marcuse fell back on what must be called an ontological theory of anamnesis. Although he abandoned Heidegger's notion of a Being that had to be recollected and criticized Hegel's idea of essence as an "intemporal past," in his appropriation of psychoanalysis he retained their ontological biases. Freud's archaic heritage meant that an individual's promises and potentialities "had once been fulfilled in his dim past,"[47] or as he put it elsewhere, the sensuous form of beauty preserved "the memory of happiness that once was."[48] Jameson captures this aspect of Marcuse's theory of remembrance when he writes:

> It is because we have known, at the beginning of life, a plenitude of psychic gratification, because we have known a time before all repression, a time in which, as in Schiller's nature, the elaborate specializations of later, more sophisticated consciousness had not yet taken place, a time that precedes the very separation of subject from its object, that memory, even the obscured and unconscious memory of that prehistoric paradise in the individual psyche, can fulfill its profound therapeutic, epistemological, and even political role. . . . The primary energy of revolutionary activity derives from this memory of prehistoric happiness which the individual can regain only through its externalization, through its reestablishment for society as a whole.[49]

Although on the surface this type of remembrance seems to be historical in the sense that it recaptures a reality that allegedly existed in the past, a closer look at Marcuse's use of the archaic heritage shows it to be something else. For when confronted with the anthropological evidence that Freud's theories cannot be corroborated, he retreated into the explanation that "We use Freud's anthropological speculation only in this sense: for its *symbolic* value. The archiac events that the hypothesis stipulates may forever be beyond the realm of anthropological verification: the alleged consequences of these events are historical facts."[50] What this admission implies, as he put it in *An Essay on Liberation,* is "not regression to a previous stage of civilization, but return to an imaginary *temps perdu* in the real life of mankind."[51] But if the plenitude "remembered" is only symbolic and the *temps perdu* merely "imaginary," can one really talk of memory in the same way one does when recalling the actual defeats and struggles of our historical predecessors? How, in fact, can we distinguish a true memory from what Brian Smith calls a "mnemic hallucination,"[52] if the reality remembered never actually occurred? Marcuse was obviously introducing here a myth of original wholeness, of perfect presence, of the "re-membering"[53] of what had been dismembered, whose roots, if

in memory at all, were in remembered desire rather than remembered fulfillment. Very much in the spirit of his problematic call for a "biological foundation for socialism,"[54] Marcuse's exhortation to remember an "imaginary *temps perdu*" allowed him to smuggle an *a priori* philosophical anthropology into Critical Theory.

His symbolic adoption of Freud's archaic heritage also allowed him to sidestep another troubling aspect of his theory of remembrance: its undefended identification of individual and collective memory. "Individual psychology," he wrote in *Eros and Civilization*, "is thus *in itself* group psychology in so far as the individual itself still is in archaic identity with the species. This archaic heritage bridges the 'gap between individual and mass psychology'."[55] But precisely how far the individual was in fact in archaic identity with the species Marcuse did not say. For all Marcuse's contempt for Jung, a certain affinity can perhaps be discerned here. Assuming too quickly that individual and collective memory were virtually the same, Marcuse never conducted those experiments in personal recollection so painstakingly attempted by Benjamin. Marcuse's own *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnten Jahrhundert* remained unwritten. Nor did he rigorously investigate the differences between personal memory of an actual event or thought in a person's life and the collective historical memory of events antedating all living persons. Because the latter is preserved in the archival records of past men and the often opaque processes of collective behavior and belief rather than in the living memories of present ones, the hermeneutic process of recovery is different in each case. The dialectic of restitution between the present and past is more than mere remembrance of things past. As Benjamin understood,[56] there is both a destructive and constructive move necessary to explode a previous epoch out of the continuum of history and make it active in the present. At times, when, for example, he linked memory to imagination as a synthetic epistemological faculty "reassembling the bits and fragments which can be found in the distorted humanity and distorted nature,"[57] Marcuse seemed to sense this. But he never adequately developed the dynamics of mnemonic *praxis*.

One final difficulty in Marcuse's appropriation of anamnesis for revolutionary purposes was the problem of accounting for the new in history. Although Marcuse was firm in insisting that remembrance did not simply mean retrogression – a mistake for which Jung was chastised in *Eros and Civilization*[58] – he did not entirely escape the reproach that recollection is too close to repetition. The inadequacies of anamnestic totalization were perhaps nowhere as clearly perceived as in the work of Ernst Bloch, who preferred another Greek term, *anagnorisis*, or recognition. In an interview given at the 1968 Korcula summer school, which Marcuse also attended, Bloch spelled out his reasons:

> The doctrine of *anamnesis* claims that we have knowledge only because we formerly knew. But then there could be no fundamentally new knowledge, no future knowledge. The soul merely meets in reality now what it always already knew as idea. That is a circle within a circle and just as inaccurate as the other theory [*anagnorisis*] is revealing: that the new is never completely new for us because we bring something with us to measure by it. . . . *Anamnesis* provides the reassuring evidence of complete similarity; *anagnorisis,* however, is linked with reality by only a thin thread; it is therefore alarming. *Anamnesis* has an element of attenuation about it, it makes everything a gigantic *dêja vu,* as if everything had already been, *nil novi subanamnesi.* But *anagnorisis* is a shock.[59]

Based on Bloch's idiosyncratic ontology of the "not-yet," *anagnorisis* meant that one could recognize figural traces of the future in the past, but the past itself contained no archaic heritage of plenitude. Whether or not Bloch's alternative seems superior to Marcuse's depends on one's confidence in his highly speculative philosophy of hope, which cannot be evaluated here. His criticism of anamnesis however, makes an important point, which is clarified still further if we turn to Paul Ricoeur's well-known dichotomy, which he applied to hermeneutics as a whole,[60] between mnemonics as a recollection of meaning and mnemonics as an exercise of suspicion. Recoeur placed Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx as the great exemplars of the interpretative art of suspicious demystification. The recollectors of meaning were mainly men of religion, for the opposite of suspicion was faith, faith in a primal word that could be recovered. In Bloch's terms, *anamnesis* is a doctrine that derives from the belief in an original meaning that can be recollected, whereas *anagnorisis,* while holding out hope for a plenitude in the future, is suspicious of claims that it existed in the past.

If one were to survey the Frankfurt School as a whole, one would conclude that its attitude towards these alternatives was mixed. In Benjamin's search for an *Ursprache,* a perfect language in which words and things are one, there is an elegiac impulse for recollected meaning. But in his stress on the constructive and destructive aspects of memory properly applied there was an awareness that simple recollection does not suffice. Similarly, in Adorno's warning against a philosophy of origins, his stubborn insistence on a negative dialectic of non-identity, and his acceptance of the inevitability of some reification, the mnemonics of suspicion were paramount. When Horkheimer speculated on religion and concluded that no matter how utopian the future might be, the pain of past generations could never be redeemed through remembrance,[61] he too questioned the possibility of recovering a primal wholeness. Especially when in his more Schopenhauerian moods, he despaired of mankind ever fully awakening from the "nightmare" weighing on the brain of the living which Marx had seen as the legacy of the past.

Marcuse seems to have been attracted to both types of mnemonics. The philosophical legacy he inherited from Heidegger and Hegel led him to argue that something essential had been forgotten, whose content he thought he saw in Freud's archaic heritage. But his tenure at the Institute of Social Research, where the critique of ideology was a far more frequent practice than the postulating of utopian alternatives, seems to have tempered his search for recollected meaning with a suspicion that it might never be found. At the very end of the main argument of *Eros and Civilization,* his most utopian book, he borrowed Horkheimer's argument against memory as redemption:

> But even the ultimate advent of freedom cannot redeem those who died in pain. It is the remembrance of them, and the accumulated guilt of mankind against its victims, that darken the prospect of a civilization without repression.[62]

Remembrance must, in other words, always retain its demystifying critical impulse, bearing sober witness to the sufferings of the past, even as it offers up images of utopian fulfillment as models for the future. For those who remember Herbert Marcuse himself with affection and respect, it is also valuable, I would argue in conclusion, to apply both kinds of mnemonics to his intellectual legacy. For a true elegy to a master of Critical Theory would mean furthering the spirit of critique that he so brilliantly embodied rather than merely recollecting his arguments as objects of respectful contemplation.

NOTES

1. See for example, Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Theories of Literature* (Princeton, 1971), 112f; Trent Shroyer, *The Critique of Domination: The Origins and Development of Critical Theory* (New York, 1973), 208f; John O'Neill, "Critique and Remembrance," in *On Critical Theory,* ed. John O'Neill (New York, 1976); and the forthcoming study by Alison Pogrebin Brown, *Marcuse: the Path of his Thought.* For a very suggestive discussion of the role of memory in the Frankfurt School as a whole, which curiously ignores Marcuse's contribution in favor of Horkheimer's and Benjamin's, see Christian Lenhardt, "Anamnestic Solidarity: the Proletariat and its *Manes,*" *Telos* (Fall, 1975). See also Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia; A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing* (Boston, 1975) for an attempt to apply the Frankfurt School's theory of remembrance to the history of psychology in this century.
2. Jameson, 112.
3. Benjamin's theory of memory has been widely discussed in the context of his philosophy of history. See, for example, Peter Bulthaup, ed., *Materialien zu Benjamins Thesen "Uber den Begriff der Geschichte"* (Frankfurt, 1975); Jeanne M. Gagnebin, *Zur Geschichtsphilosophie Walter Benjamins. Die Unabgeschlossenheit des Sinnes* (Erlangen, 1978); there are also suggestive treatments of Benjamin's theory of memory in Jameson; Jürgen Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism – The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin," *New German Critique* (Spring, 1979); and Irving Wohlfahrt, "Walter Benjamin's Image of Interpretation," *ibid.* Another figure whose meditations on memory warrant mention is Siegfried Kracauer, a close friend of Adorno's and Benjamin's. See my discussion in "The Extraterritorial Life of Siegfried Kracauer," *Salmagundi* (Fall, 1975–Winter, 1976).

4. For a brief survey of Western philosophy up to Bergson that deals with this issue, see Michael Wyschograd, "Memory in the History of Philosophy," in *Phenomenology of Memory,* ed. Erwin W. Straus and Richard M. Griffith (Pittsburgh, 1970). For a brilliant discussion of artificial inducements to memory or mnemotechnics, from the classical period to Leibniz, see Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago, (1966). On twentieth century analytic philosophy and memory, see W. von Leyden, *Remembering: A Philosophical Problem* (New York, 1961) which deals with Russell and Ryle.
5. E. J. Furlong, *A Study in Memory* (London, 1951); von Leyden; Brian Smith, *Memory* (London and New York, 1966); and Norman Malcolm, *Memory and Mind* (Ithaca and London, 1977).
6. Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston, 1972), 69. In his lectures at Brandeis, according to the testimony of Jeremy Shapiro, he did discuss the classical doctrines of memory at some length.
7. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, 1962), passim.
8. Marcuse, *Hegels Ontologie und die Grundlegung einer Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit* (Leipzig, 1932), 76. I am indebted to Alison Pogrebin Brown's manuscript for bringing this passage to my attention.
9. *Ibid.,* 78.
10. Brown, 153.
11. Marcuse, "The Concept of Essence," *Negations, Essays in Critical Theory,* trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston, 1968), 75–76.
12. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston, 1955), 106.
13. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt,* 69.
14. *Karl Marx: Selected Writing,* ed. David McLellan (Oxford, 1977), 302.
15. Lenhardt, 149. 16. *Karl Marx: Selected Writings,* 300.
17. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel,* trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 127. It should be noted here that Lukács' epic theory of memory with its assumption that the past could be recovered as a meaningful narrative leading up to the present was implicitly attacked by Benjamin in his "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," *New German Critique* (Spring, 1975), where he writes: "The historical materialist must abandon the epic element in history. For him history becomes the object of a construct (*Konstruktion*) which is not located in empty time but is constituted in a specific epoch, in a specific life, in a specific work. The historical materialist explodes the epoch out of its reified 'historical continuity,' and thereby lifts life out of this epoch and the work out of the life work" (29). Marcuse's attitude towards memory seems to have vacillated between these two alternatives.
18. Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism," in *Studies in Critical Philosophy,* trans. Joris de Bres (Boston, 1972), 35.
19. Benjamin's essay is in *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1968); Adorno's letter is reprinted in Theodor W. Adorno, *Über Walter Benjamin* (Frankfurt, 1970).
20. *Ibid.,* 159.
21. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam, 1947), 274; the English translation by John Cumming (New York, 1972) unfortunately renders "*Verdinglichung*" as "objectification," which destroys the meaning of the aphorism. It should be emphasized that the Frankfurt School did not believe that reification was *only* a forgetting, which could be undone by memory alone. Clearly, dereification, to the extent that it was possible, was a practical task.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston, 1978), 73.
24. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 213.
25. For discussions of these links, see M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York, 1973), 80–83; Robert Langbaum, *The Mysteries of Identity; A Theme in Modern Literature* (New York, 1977), chap. I; Marshall Brown, *The Shape of German Romanticism* (Ithaca, 1979), 186–7; and Carl Dawson, *Victorian Noon: English Literature in 1850* (Baltimore and London, 1979), 123ff. For a treatment of Marcuse's general indebtedness to Romanticism, see Michael Löwy, "Marcuse and Benjamin: The Romantic Dimension," *Telos* (Summer 1980).
26. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria,* ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1965), 202.
27. Marcuse, *Der deutsche Kunstlerroman,* in *Schriften,* Vol. I (Frankfurt, 1978).
28. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt,* 99. 29. *Ibid.,* 100.
30. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension,* 67.

31. Marcuse, "The Affirmative Character of Culture," *Negations.* The phrase was Horkheimer's invention.
32. Marcuse, *Hegels Ontologie,* 77.
33. Ebbinghaus, *Über das Gedächtnis* (Leipzig, 1885). Ebbinghaus was the pioneer of the experimental psychology of memory.
34. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud, vol. III (London, 1962).
35. Schachtel, "Memory and Childhood Amnesia," in *A Study of Interpersonal Relations,* ed. Patrick Mullahy (New York, 1950) and in Schachtel, *Metamorphosis: On the Development of Affect, Perception, Attention and Memory* (New York, 1959). Marcuse singled out for special praise Schachtel's discussion of the "conventionalization" of memory by society. He might also have mentioned Schachtel's linkage of memory with artistic creation and his depiction of childhood as dominated by the pleasure principle and "polymorphous perversity". Marcuse went beyond Schachtel in linking childhood amnesia with the repression of the species "childhood," which Freud had discussed in his speculations about the "archaic heritage". Marcuse felt both were forgotten for social reasons, and argued, as Schachtel did not, that a different social order would allow the repressed to return in a healthy way.
36. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1969), Part II, 1–3; Marcuse did not, however, acknowledge Nietzsche's defense of a certain kind of forgetfulness in *The Genealogy* as a mark of the noble man "beyond good and evil". For discussion of the positive role of forgetting in Nietzsche, see Alphonso Lingis, "The Will to Power," Eric Blondel, "Nietzsche: Life as Metaphor," and Pierre Klossowski, "Nietzsche's Experience of the Eternal Return," all in *The New Nietzsche; Contemporary Styles of Interpretation,* ed. with intro. by David B. Allison (New York, 1977).
37. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 212. 38. *Ibid.,* 18.
39. Marcuse, *Five Lectures; Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia,* trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro and Shierry M. Weber (Boston, 1970), 8.
40. *Ibid.,* 29.
41. Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," and "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations.*
42. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 213.
43. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston, 1964), 99.
44. Marcuse, "Progress and Freud's Theory of Instincts," *Five Lectures,* 41.
45. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt,* 70.
46. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 262.
47. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 18. 48. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension,* 68.
49. Jameson, 113. 50. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 54–55.
51. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston, 1969), 90. 52. Brian Smith, 19.
53. In a translator's footnote in *Negations* (277), Jeremy J. Shapiro points out: "*Sich errinern,*' the word for 'to remember' or 'to recollect', literally means 'to go into oneself'. That is, in remembering, one is re-membered or re-collected by returning to oneself from a state of externality, dispersion, or alienation."
54. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation,* chap. I. 55. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 51.
56. Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian"; see fn. 17.
57. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt,* 70. 58. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 134–135.
59. Michael Landmann, "Talking With Ernst Bloch: Korcula, 1968," *Telos* (Fall, 1975), 178.
60. Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy; An Essay on Interpretation,* trans. Danis Savage (New Haven and London, 1970), 28f.
61. Max Horkheimer, "Thoughts on Religion," in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays,* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, et al. (New York, 1972) 130.
62. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 216. It might be noted that this stress on remembering the suffering of past generations is absent in Habermas' revision of Critical Theory. For a critique of Habermas on this issue, see O'Neill, 4.

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