The Century of the Self Reader

Part 3:

The Politics of the Self

The Illusion of Individuality by Erich Fromm

Marcuse and the New Left by Douglas Kellner

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Is viewing oneself as a unique individual, in itself, an inherently political action?

CHAPTER VII

Freedom and Democracy

1. THE ILLUSION OF INDIVIDUALITY

In the previous chapters I have tried to show that certain factors in the modern industrial system in general and in its monopolistic phase in particular make for the development of a personality which feels powerless and alone, anxious and insecure. I have discussed the specific conditions in Germany which make part of her population fertile soil for an ideology and political practice that appeal to what I have described as the authoritarian character.

But what about ourselves? Is our own democracy threatened only by Fascism beyond the Atlantic or by the "fifth column" in our own ranks? If that were the case, the situation would be serious but not critical. But although foreign and internal threats of Fascism must be taken seriously, there is no greater mistake and no graver danger than not to see that in our own society we are faced with the same phenomenon that is fertile soil for the rise of Fascism anywhere: the in-

significance and powerlessness of the individual.

This statement challenges the conventional belief that by freeing the individual from all external restraints modern democracy has achieved true individualism. We are proud that we are not subject to any external authority, that we are free to express our thoughts and feelings, and we take it for granted that this freedom almost automatically guarantees our individuality. *The right to express our thoughts,* however, *means something only if we are able to have thoughts of our own;* freedom from external authority is a lasting gain only if the inner psychological conditions are such that we are able to establish our own individuality. Have we achieved that aim, or are we at least approaching it? This book deals with the human factor; its task, therefore, is to analyze this very question critically. In doing so we take up threads that were dropped in earlier chapters. In discussing the two aspects of freedom for modern man, we have pointed out the economic conditions that make for increasing isolation and powerlessness of the individual in our era; in discussing the psychological results we have shown that this powerlessness leads either to the kind of escape that we find in the authoritarian character, or else to a compulsive conforming in the process of which the isolated individual becomes an automaton, loses his self, and yet at the same time consciously conceives of himself as free and subject only to himself.

It is important to consider how our culture fosters this tendency to conform, even though there is space for only a few outstanding examples. The suppression of spontaneous feelings, and thereby

of the development of genuine individuality, starts very early, as a matter of fact with the earliest training of a child.[1] This is not to say that training must inevitably lead to suppression of spontaneity if the real aim of education is to further the inner independence and individuality of the child, its growth and integrity. The restrictions which such a kind of education may have to impose upon the growing child are only transitory measures that really support the process of growth and expansion. In our culture, however, education too often results in the elimination of spontaneity and in the substitution of original psychic acts by superimposed feelings, thoughts, and wishes. (By original I do not mean, let me repeat, that an idea has not been thought before by someone else, but that it originates in the individual, that it is the result of his own activity and in this sense is *his* thought.) To choose one illustration somewhat arbitrarily, one of the earliest suppressions of· *feelings* concerns hostility and dislike. To start with, most children have a certain measure of hostility and rebelliousness as a result of their conflicts with a surrounding world that tends to block their expansiveness and to which, as the weaker opponent, they usually have to yield. It is one of the essential aims of the educational process to eliminate this antagonistic re-

[1] According to a communication by Anna Hartoch (from a forthcoming book on case studies of Sarah Lawrence Nursery School children, jointly by M. Gay, A. Hartoch, L. B. Murphy) Rorschach tests of three to five year old children have shown that the attempt to preserve their spontaneity gives rise to the chief conflict between the children and the authoritative adults.

action. The methods are different; they vary from threats and punishments, which frighten the child, to the subtler methods of bribery or "explanations," which confuse the child and make him give up his hostility. The child starts with giving up the expression of his feeling and eventually gives up the very feeling itself. Together with that, he is taught to suppress the awareness of hostility and insincerity in others; sometimes this is not entirely easy, since children have a capacity for noticing such negative qualities in others without being so easily deceived by words as adults usually are. They still dislike somebody "for no good reason" —except the very good one that they feel the hostility, or insincerity, radiating from that person. This reaction is soon discouraged; it does not take long for the child to reach the "maturity" of the average adult and to lose the sense of discrimination between a decent person and a scoundrel, as long as the latter has not committed some flagrant act.

On the other hand, early in his education, the child is taught to have feelings that are not at all "his"; particularly is he taught to like people, to be uncritically friendly to them, and to smile. What education may not have accomplished is usually done by social pressure in later life. If you do not smile you are judged lacking in a "pleasing personality"—and you need to have a pleasing personality if you want to sell your services, whether as a waitress, a salesman, or a physician. Only those at the bottom of the social pyramid, who sell nothing but their physical labor, and those at the very top do not need to be particularly "pleasant." Friendliness, cheerfulness, and everything

that a smile is supposed to express, become automatic responses which one turns on and off like an electric switch.[2]

To be sure, in many instances the person is aware of merely making a gesture; in most cases, however, he loses that awareness and thereby the ability to discriminate between the pseudo feeling and spontaneous friendliness.

It is not only hostility that is directly suppressed and friendliness that is killed by superimposing its counterfeit. A wide range of spontaneous emotions are suppressed and replaced by pseudo feelings. Freud has taken one such suppression and put it in the center of his whole system, namely the suppression of sex. Although I believe that the discouragement of sexual joy is not the only important suppression of spontaneous reactions but one of many, certainly its importance is not to be underrated. Its results are obvious in cases of sexual inhibitions and also in those where sex assumes a compulsive quality and is consumed like liquor or a drug, which has no particular taste but makes you forget yourself. Regardless of the one or the other effect, their suppression, because

[2] As one telling illustration of the commercialization of friendliness I should like to cite *Fortune's* report on "The Howard Johnson Restaurants." (*Fortune,* September, 1940, p. 96). Johnson employs a force of "shoppers" who go from restaurant to restaurant to watch for lapses. "Since everything is cooked on the premises according to standard recipes and measurements issued by the home office, the inspector knows how large a portion of steak he should receive and how the vegetable should taste. He also knows how long it should take for the dinner to be served and he knows the exact degree of friendliness that should be shown by the hostess and the waitress."

of the intensity of sexual desires, not only affects the sexual sphere but also weakens the person's courage for spontaneous expression in all other spheres.

In our society emotions in general are discouraged. While there can be no doubt that any creative thinking—as well as any other creative activity—is inseparably linked with emotion, it has become an ideal to think and to live without emotions. To be "emotional" has become synonymous with being unsound or unbalanced. By the acceptance of this standard the individual has become greatly weakened; his thinking is impoverished and flattened. On the other hand, since emotions cannot be completely killed, they must have their existence totally apart from the intellectual side of the personality; the result is the cheap and insincere sentimentality with which movies and popular songs feed millions of emotion-starved customers.

There is one tabooed emotion that I want to mention in particular, because its suppression touches deeply on the roots of personality: the sense of tragedy. As we saw in an earlier chapter, the awareness of death and of the tragic aspect of life, whether dim or clear, is one of the basic characteristics of man. Each culture has its own way of coping with the problem of death. For those societies in which the process of individuation has progressed but little, the end of individual existence is less of a problem since the experience of individual existence itself is less developed. Death is not yet conceived as being basically different from life. Cultures in which we find a higher development of individuation have treat-

ed death according to their social and psychological structure. The Greeks put all emphasis on life and pictured death as nothing but a shadowy and dreary continuation of life. The Egyptians based their hopes on a belief in the indestructibility of the human body, at least of those whose power during life was indestructible. The Jews admitted the fact of death realistically and were able to reconcile themselves with the idea of the destruction of individual life by the vision of a state of happiness and justice ultimately to be reached by mankind in this world. Christianity has made death unreal and tried to comfort the unhappy individual by promises of a life after death. Our own era simply denies death and with it one fundamental aspect of life. Instead of allowing the awareness of death and suffering to become one of the strongest incentives for life, the basis for human solidarity, and an experience without which joy and enthusiasm lack intensity and depth, the individual is forced to repress it. But, as is always the case with repression, by being removed from sight the repressed elements do not cease to exist. Thus the fear of death lives an illegitimate existence among us. It remains alive in spite of the attempt to deny it, but being repressed it remains sterile. It is one source of the flatness of other experiences, of the restlessness pervading life, and it explains, I would venture to say, the exorbitant amount of money this nation pays for its funerals.

In the process of tabooing emotions modern psychiatry plays an ambiguous role. On the one hand its greatest representative, Freud, has broken through the fiction of the rational, purposeful character of the human mind and opened a path

which allows a view into the abyss of human passions. On the other hand psychiatry, enriched by these very achievements of Freud, has made itself an instrument of the general trends in the manipulation of personality. Many psychiatrists, including psychoanalysts, have painted the picture of a "normal" personality which is never too sad, too angry, or too excited. They use words like "infantile" or "neurotic" to denounce traits or types of personalities that do not conform with the conventional pattern of a "normal" individual. This kind of influence is in a way more dangerous than the older and franker forms of name-calling. Then the individual knew at least that there was some person or some doctrine which criticized him and he could fight back. But who can fight back at "science"?

The same distortion happens to original *thinking* as happens to feelings and emotions. From the very start of education original thinking is discouraged and ready-made thoughts are put into people's heads. How this is done with young children is easy enough to see. They are filled with curiosity about the world, they want to grasp it physically as well as intellectually. They want to know the truth, since that is the safest way to orient themselves in a strange and powerful world. Instead, they are not taken seriously, and it does not matter whether this attitude takes the form of open disrespect or of the subtle condescension which is usual towards all who have no power (such as children, aged or sick people). Although this treatment by itself offers strong discouragement to independent thinking, there is a worse

handicap: the insincerity—often unintentional—which is typical of the average adult's behavior toward a child. This insincerity consists partly in the fictitious picture of the world which the child is given. It is about as useful as instructions concerning life in the Arctic would be to someone who has asked how to prepare for an expedition to the Sahara Desert. Besides this general misrepresentation of the world there are the many specific lies that tend to conceal facts which, for various personal reasons, adults do not want children to know. From a bad temper, which is rationalized as justified dissatisfaction with the child's behavior, to concealment of the parents' sexual activities and their quarrels, the child is "not supposed to know" and his inquiries meet with hostile or polite discouragement.

The child thus prepared enters school and perhaps college. I want to mention briefly some of the educational methods used today which in effect further discourage original thinking. One is the emphasis on knowledge of facts, or I should rather say on information. The pathetic superstition prevails that by knowing more and more facts one arrives at knowledge of reality. Hundreds of scattered and unrelated facts are dumped into the heads of students; their time and energy are taken up by learning more and more facts so that there is little left for thinking. To be sure, thinking without a knowledge of facts remains empty and fictitious; but "information" alone can be just as much of an obstacle to thinking as the lack of it.

Another closely related way of discouraging original thinking is to regard all truth as rela-

tive.[3] Truth is made out to be a metaphysical concept, and if anyone speaks about wanting to discover the truth he is thought backward by the "progressive" thinkers of our age. Truth is declared to be an entirely subjective matter, almost a matter of taste. Scientific endeavor must be detached from subjective factors, and its aim is to look at the world without passion and interest. The scientist has to approach facts with sterilized hands as a surgeon approaches his patient. The result of this relativism, which often presents itself by the name of empiricism or positivism or which recommends itself by its concern for the correct usage of words, is that thinking loses its essential stimulus—the wishes and interests of the person who thinks; instead it becomes a machine to register "facts." Actually, just as thinking in general has developed out of the need for mastery of material life, so the quest for truth is rooted in the interests and needs of individuals and social groups. Without such interest the stimulus for seeking the truth would be lacking. There are always groups whose interest is furthered by truth, and their representatives have been the pioneers of human thought; there are other groups whose interests are furthered by concealing truth. Only in the latter case does interest prove harmful to the cause of truth. The problem, therefore, is not that there is *an* interest at stake, but *which kind* of interest is at stake. I might say that inasmuch

[3] Cf. to this whole problem Robert S. Lynd's *Knowledge for What?* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1939. For its philosophical aspects cf. M. Horkheimer's *Zum Rationalismusstreit in der Gegenwärtigen Philosophie.* Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, Vol. 3, 1934, Alcan, Paris.

as there is some longing for the truth in every human being, it is because every human being has some need for it.

This holds true in the first place with regard to a person's orientation in the outer world, and it holds especially true for the child. As a child, every human being passes through a state of powerlessness, and truth is one of the strongest weapons of those who have no power. But the truth is in the individual's interest not only with regard to his orientation in the outer world; his own strength depends to a great extent on his knowing the truth about himself. Illusions about oneself can become crutches useful to those who are not able to walk alone; but they increase a person's weakness. The individual's greatest strength is based on the maximum of integration of his personality, and that means also on the maximum of transparence to himself. "Know thyself" is one of the fundamental commands that aim at human strength and happiness.

In addition to the factors just mentioned there are others which actively tend to confuse whatever is left of the capacity for original thinking in the average adult. With regard to all basic questions of individual and social life, with regard to psychological, economic, political, and moral problems, a great sector of our culture has just one function—to befog the issues. One kind of smokescreen is the assertion that the problems are too complicated for the average individual to grasp. On the contrary it would seem that many of the basic issues of individual and social life are very simple, so simple, in fact, that everyone should be expected to understand them. To let

them appear to be so enormously complicated that only a "specialist" can understand them, and he only in his own limited field, actually—and often intentionally—tends to discourage people from trusting their own capacity to think about those problems that really matter. The individual feels helplessly caught in a chaotic mass of data and with pathetic patience waits until the specialists have found out what to do and where to go.

The result of this kind of influence is a two-fold one: one is a scepticism and cynicism towards everything which is said or printed, while the other is a childish belief in anything that a person is told with authority. This combination of cynicism and naïveté is very typical of the modern individual. Its essential result is to discourage him from doing his own thinking and deciding.

Another way of paralyzing the ability to think critically is the destruction of any kind of structuralized picture of the world. Facts lose the specific quality which they can have only as parts of a structuralized whole and retain merely an abstract, quantitative meaning; each fact is just *another* fact and all that matters is whether we know more or less. Radio, moving pictures, and newspapers have a devastating effect on this score. The announcement of the bombing of a city and the death of hundreds of people is shamelessly followed or interrupted by an advertisement for soap or wine. The same speaker with the same suggestive, ingratiating, and authoritative voice, which he has just used to impress you with the seriousness of the political situation, impresses now upon his audience the merits of the particular brand of soap which pays for the news broad-

cast. Newsreels let pictures of torpedoed ships be followed by those of a fashion show. Newspapers tell us the trite thoughts or breakfast habits of a debutante with the same space and seriousness they use for reporting events of scientific or artistic importance. Because of all this we cease to be genuinely related to what we hear. We cease to be excited, our emotions and our critical judgment become hampered, and eventually our attitude to what is going on in the world assumes a quality of flatness and indifference. In the name of "freedom" life loses all structure; it is composed of many little pieces, each separate from the other and lacking any sense as a whole. The individual is left alone with these pieces like a child with a puzzle; the difference, however, is that the child knows what a house is and therefore can recognize the parts of the house in the little pieces he is playing with, whereas the adult does not see the meaning of the "whole," the pieces of which come into his hands. He is bewildered and afraid and just goes on gazing at his little meaningless pieces.

What has been said about the lack of "originality" in feeling and thinking holds true also of the act of *willing*. To recognize this is particularly difficult; modern man seems, if anything, to have too many wishes and his only problem seems to be that, although he knows what he wants, he cannot have it. All our energy is spent for the purpose of getting what we want, and most people never question the premise of this activity: that they know their true wants. They do not stop to think whether the aims they are pursuing are something they themselves want. In school they

want to have good marks, as adults they want to be more and more successful, to make more money, to have more prestige, to buy a better car, to go places, and so on. Yet when they do stop to think in the midst of all this frantic activity, this question may come to their minds: "If I do get this new job, if I get this better car, if I can take this trip—what then? What is the use of it all? Is it really I who wants all this? Am I not running after some goal which is supposed to make me happy and which eludes me as soon as I have reached it?" These questions, when they arise, are frightening, for they question the very basis on which man's whole activity is built, his knowledge of what he wants. People tend, therefore, to get rid as soon as possible of these disturbing thoughts. They feel that they have been bothered by these questions because they were tired or depressed—and they go on in the pursuit of the aims which they believe are their own.

Yet all this bespeaks a dim realization of the truth—the truth that modern man lives under the illusion that he knows what he wants, while he actually wants what he is *supposed* to want. In order to accept this it is necessary to realize that to know what one really wants is not comparatively easy, as most people think, but one of the most difficult problems any human being has to solve. It is a task we frantically try to avoid by accepting ready-made goals as though they were our own. Modern man is ready to take great risks when he tries to achieve the aims which are supposed to be "his"; but he is deeply afraid of taking the risk and the responsibility of giving himself his own aims. Intense activity is often mistaken for

evidence of self-determined action, although we know that it may well be no more spontaneous than the behavior of an actor or a person hypnotized. When the general plot of the play is handed out, each actor can act vigorously the role he is assigned and even make up his lines and certain details of the action by himself. Yet he is only playing a role that has been handed over to him.

The particular difficulty in recognizing to what extent our wishes—and our thoughts and feelings as well—are not really our own but put into us from the outside, is closely linked up with the problem of authority and freedom. In the course of modern history the authority of the Church has been replaced by that of the State, that of the State by that of conscience, and in our era, the latter has been replaced by the anonymous authority of common sense and public opinion as instruments of conformity. Because we have freed ourselves of the older overt forms of authority, we do not see that we have become the prey of a new kind of authority. We have become automatons who live under the illusion of being self-willing individuals. This illusion helps the individual to remain unaware of his insecurity, but this is all the help such an illusion can give. Basically the self of the individual is weakened, so that he feels powerless and extremely insecure. He lives in a world to which he has lost genuine relatedness and in which everybody and everything has become instrumentalized, where he has become a part of the machine that his hands have built. He thinks, feels, and wills what he believes he is supposed to think, feel, and will; in this very

process he loses his self upon which all genuine security of a free individual must be built.

The loss of the self has increased the necessity to conform, for it results in a profound doubt of one's own identity. If I am nothing but what I believe I am supposed to be—who am "I"? We have seen how the doubt about one's own self started with the breakdown of the medieval order in which the individual had had an unquestionable place in a fixed order. The identity of the individual has been a major problem of modern philosophy since Descartes. Today we take for granted that we are we. Yet the doubt about ourselves still exists, or has even grown. In his plays Pirandello has given expression to this feeling of modern man. He starts with the question: Who am I? What proof have I for my own identity other than the continuation of my physical self? His answer is not like Descartes'—the affirmation of the individual self—but its denial: I have no identity, there is no self excepting the one which is the reflex of what others expect me to be: I am "as you desire me."

This loss of identity then makes it still more imperative to conform; it means that one can be sure of oneself only if one lives up to the expectations of others. If we do not live up to this picture we not only risk disapproval and increased isolation, but we risk losing the identity of our personality, which means jeopardizing sanity.

By conforming with the expectations of others, by not being different, these doubts about one's own identity are silenced and a certain security is gained. However, the price paid is high. Giving up spontaneity and individuality results in a

thwarting of life. Psychologically the automaton, while being alive biologically, is dead emotionally and mentally. While he goes through the motions of living, his life runs through his hands like sand. Behind a front of satisfaction and optimism modern man is deeply unhappy; as a matter of fact, he is on the verge of desperation. He desperately clings to the notion of individuality; he wants to be "different," and he has no greater recommendation of anything than that "it is different." We are informed of the individual name of the railroad clerk we buy our tickets from; handbags, playing cards, and portable radios are "personalized," by having the initials of the owner put on them. All this indicates the hunger for "difference" and yet these are almost the last vestiges of individuality that are left. Modern man is starved for life. But since, being an automaton, he cannot experience life in the sense of spontaneous activity he takes as surrogate any kind of excitement and thrill: the thrill of drinking, of sports, of vicariously living the excitements of fictitious persons on the screen.

What then is the meaning of freedom for modern man?

He has become free from the external bonds that would prevent him from doing and thinking as he sees fit. He would be free to act according to his own will, if he knew what he wanted, thought, and felt. But he does not know. He conforms to anonymous authorities and adopts a self which is not his. The more he does this, the more powerless he feels, the more he is forced to conform. In spite of a veneer of optimism and initiative, modern man is overcome by a profound feel-

ing of powerlessness which makes him gaze toward approaching catastrophes as though he were paralyzed.

Looked at superficially, people appear to function well enough in economic and social life; yet it would be dangerous to overlook the deep-seated unhappiness behind that comforting veneer. If life loses its meaning because it is not lived, man becomes desperate. People do not die quietly from physical starvation; they do not die quietly from psychic starvation either. If we look only at the economic needs as far as the "normal" person is concerned, if we do not see the unconscious suffering of the average automatized person, then we fail to see the danger that threatens our culture from its human basis: the readiness to accept any ideology and any leader, if only he promises excitement and offers a political structure and symbols which allegedly give meaning and order to an individual's life. The despair of the human automaton is fertile soil for the political purposes of Fascism.

From: Introduction to *the Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Vol. 3:
                    The New Left and the 1960s*
by Douglas Kellner

One-Dimensional Man, The Great Refusal, and the Rise of the New Left

While *Eros and Civilization* provides the most detailed depiction of his vision of liberation, *One-Dimensional Man* provides Marcuse's most systematic analysis of the forces of domination. *ODM* explored the development of new forms of social control that were producing a "one- dimensional man" and "society without opposition." Citing trends toward conformity, Marcuse described the forms of culture and society which created consumer needs that integrated individuals into the existing system of production and consumption via mass media, advertising, industrial management, and uncritical modes of thought. To "one-dimensional society," Marcuse counterposed critical and dialectical thinking that perceived a freer and happier form of culture and society, and advocated a "great refusal" of all modes of repression and domination.

One-Dimensional Man theorized the decline of revolutionary potential within the industrial working class in capitalist societies and the development of new forms of social control. Marcuse claimed that "advanced industrial society" created consumer and conformist needs that integrated individuals into the existing system of production and consumption. Domination in institutions of labor, schooling, the family, the state, social relations, culture, and contemporary modes of thought all reproduced the existing system and tended to eliminate negativity, critique, and opposition. The result was a "one-dimensional" universe of thought and behavior in which the very aptitude and ability for critical thinking and oppositional behavior were withering away.

Not only had capitalism integrated the working class, the source of potential revolutionary opposition, but the current capitalist system had developed new techniques of stabilization through state and corporate policies and the development of new forms of social control. Thus Marcuse questioned two of the fundamental postulates of orthodox Marxism: the revolutionary proletariat and inevitability of capitalist crisis. In contrast with the working class focus of orthodox Marxism, Marcuse championed non-integrated forces of minorities, outsiders, and radical intelligentsia and attempted to nourish oppositional thought and behavior while promoting radical thinking and opposition.

For Marcuse, domination combined economics, politics, technology and social organization. For orthodox Marxists, domination is inscribed in capitalist relations of production and the logic of commodification, and for Heideggerians, Weberians and others it is technology, technological rationality, and/or the coercive logic of political institutions that are the major force of societal domination. Marcuse, by contrast, had a multicausal analysis that ferreted out aspects of domination and resistance throughout the social order. Moreover, Marcuse insisted that contradictions of the system, theorized by classical Marxism as the antagonism of capital and labor, continued to exist, albeit in altered forms. He also constantly cited the unity of production and destruction, highlighting the ways that creation of wealth produced systematic poverty, war, and violence. Hence, for Marcuse there was an "objective ambiguity" to even the seeming achievements of advanced industrial society which had the wealth, science, technology, and industry to alleviate poverty and suffering, but used the instruments of production to enhance domination, violence, aggression, and injustice. Since this dialectic continues

unabated into the 21st century, Marcuse's critique of the growing distance between the possibilities of justice, the alleviation of poverty and suffering, and a freer and happier life for all in contrast to growing inequality, intensified violence, and proliferating suffering is as relevant as ever.

In contrast to his Frankfurt School colleagues who were becoming increasingly depoliticized, Marcuse constantly attempted to politicize critical theory and to detect forces of resistance and transformation to contrast forces of domination and repression. After a period of pessimism during the phase of One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse was encouraged by the global forces of revolt, centered around the student and anti-war movement, the counterculture, national liberation movements, and what became known as the new social movements. Marcuse sought in these forces the instruments of radical social change that classical Marxism found in the proletariat.
But just as oppositional working class movements were defeated in the course of the twentieth century and the working class, in Marcuse's view, was integrated into contemporary capitalism, so too, for the most part, were the radical movements of the 1960s defeated or integrated into the triumphant system of global capitalism by the late 1970s.6 Up until his death in 1979, however, Marcuse continued to seek agents of social change in oppositional social movements and in the most critical and radical forms of art and philosophy.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Marcuse's work generated fierce controversy and polemics, and most studies of his work are highly tendentious and frequently sectarian. *One-Dimensional Man* was severely criticized by orthodox Marxists and theorists of various political and theoretical commitments. Despite its negativity, it influenced many in the New Left as it articulated their growing dissatisfaction with both capitalist societies and Soviet socialist societies. Moreover,
Marcuse himself continued to foster demands for revolutionary change and defended the emerging forces of radical opposition, thus winning him the hatred of establishment forces and the respect of the new radicals.

One-Dimensional Man came out as the civil rights movement intensified and an antiwar coalition was beginning to arise against U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Marcuse's sharp critique of the totality of advanced capitalist and state socialist societies won him a large audience among the growing struggles against racism, imperialism, and other forms of oppression. During the 1960s when he gained world renown as "guru of the New Left," Marcuse was probably the most controversial public intellectual of the day, as students painted "Marx, Mao, and Marcuse" on walls, the media debated his work, and intellectuals of every tendency criticized or defended his views. Simply reducing Marcuse to the politics of the 1960s, however, does him a disservice, as it covers over his important contributions to philosophy and social theory, by reducing his thought to his political positions of the day.

Marcuse was not the first Marxist to formulate theories of the integration of the working class and capitalist stabilization, but few on the Left have presented such a theory so bluntly and at the same time vigorously sought alternative forces. Marcuse wanted at the same time to remain a Marxist, be loyal to the project of critical theory developed by the Institute for Social Research, be an independent thinker, and advance the struggles of the New Left. In view of his writings and activity both before and after the publication of *ODM*, it is clear that he fervently desired total revolution, described as a radical upheaval

and overthrow of the previously existing order, bringing about wide-ranging changes that would eliminate capitalism and establish a new liberated society and way of life.

Although the postwar conservative environment pre-1960s of the United States seemed to rule out the sort of radical social transformation affirmed by Marxism, Marcuse continued to affirm the relevance and importance of the Marxian critique of capitalism, and near the end of *ODM* confirmed his belief in the superior rationality of socialism:

> the facts are all there which validate the critical theory of this society and of its fatal development: the increasing irrationality of the whole; waste and restriction of productivity; the need for aggressive expansion; the constant threat of war; intensified exploitation; dehumanization. And they all point to the historical alternative: the planned utilization of resources for the satisfaction of vital needs with a minimum of toil, the transformation of leisure into free time, the pacification of the struggle for existence. (ODM, pp. 252-3)

This affirmation of his continued commitment to socialism is followed by a poignant and revealing passage in which Marcuse articulates his anger and regret that there is not in fact arevolutionary situation, or class, to carry through the Marxian theory of revolution: 'the facts and the alternatives are there like fragments which do not connect, or like a world of mute objects without a subject, without the practice which would move these objects in the new direction. Dialectical theory is not refuted, but it cannot offer the remedy. It cannot be positive ... On theoretical as well as empirical grounds, the dialectical concept pronounces its own hopelessness.' (ODM, p. 253)

Whereas, previously, the critical theory of society could count on oppositional forces within the society, disintegrating tendencies that would activate these forces, and the 'liberation of inherent possibilities' (ODM, pp. 254ff), by the early 1960s Marcuse no longer saw in the early 1960s any possibility for revolutionary forces to explode the society from within, believing that advanced capitalism is so totalitarian and pleasantly repressive that only absolute refusal can be sustained as a 'truly revolutionary mode of opposition' (ODM, pp. 255ff). Marcuse explicitly renounces here advocacy of any reformism, or piecemeal change, and claims that only non-integrated 'outsiders' can be a genuinely revolutionary force (ODM, pp. 256-7).

 In 1964 Marcuse perceived only a slight chance that the most exploited and persecuted outsiders, in alliance with an enlightened intelligentsia, might mark 'the beginning of the end' and signify some hope for social change:

> However, underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable. They exist outside the democratic process; their life is the most immediate and the most real need for ending intolerable conditions and institutions. Thus their opposition is revolutionary even if their consciousness is not. Their opposition hits the system from without and is therefore not deflected by the system; it is an elementary force which violates the rules of the game and, in doing so, reveals it as a rigged game. When they get together and go out into the streets, without arms, without protection, in order to ask for the most primitive civil rights, they know that they face dogs, stones and bombs, jail, concentration camps, even death. Their force is behind every political demonstration for the victims of law and order. The fact that they start refusing to play the game may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period.

This passage bears witness to the hope that the civil rights struggle signaled the beginning of a period of radicalization and change of consciousness which would create new possibilities for qualitative social change. However, this was merely a hope, and Marcuse thought that there was just a 'chance' of a radical coalition forming: 'The chance is that, in this period, the historical extremes may meet again: the most advanced consciousness of humanity and its most exploited force. It is nothing but a chance' (ODM, p. 257). Hence Marcuse ended *One-Dimensional Man* on a note of pessimism, bordering on resignation and stoical opposition for the sake of loyalty to humanity's highest hopes and reverence towards those who have died in the struggle for those hopes: 'The critical theory of society possesses no concepts which could bridge the gap between the present and its future; holding no promise and showing no success, it remains negative. Thus it wants to remain loyal to those who, without hope, have given and give their life to the Great Refusal. At the beginning of the fascist era, Walter Benjamin wrote: "It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us"' (ODM, p. 257).

Marcuse's concept of the 'Great Refusal' and his advocacy of the revolutionary potential of those strata, groups and individuals not integrated in advanced industrial society provide the crux of his oppositional politics at the time. 'The Great Refusal' is a highly complex and multidimensional concept that signifies at once individual rebellion and opposition to the existing system of domination and oppression; avant-garde artistic revolt that creates visions of another world, a better life and alternative cultural forms and style; and oppositional thought that rejects the dominant modes of thinking and behavior. The term the 'Great Refusal' was inspired by Andre Breton, who defended the total refusal of the institutions, values and way of life in bourgeois society. Marcuse long admired bohemian and counterculture refusals to conform to existing bourgeois society and admired the modernist art that rejected its contemporary society and projected visions of a freer and happier mode of life.

Marcuse's emphasis on individual revolt and refusal is indeed a deeply rooted aspect of his thought. In his early writings, he championed the 'radical act' against capitalist society, and although he formulated the concept in Marxian terms, there were elements of Heideggerian individualism in his project which surfaced again in EC, ODM and other later writings. Some of Marcuse's critics see concepts like the Great Refusal as ineradicable individualist and anarchist dimensions in his thought. Yet Marcuse's emphasis on individual revolt and self-transformation arguably constitute a vital component of a radical politics which maintains that there can be no meaningful program of social change unless individuals themselves are liberated from capitalist needs and consciousness and acquire 'radical needs' for thoroughgoing social change. Instead of seeing Marcuse's emphasis on the Great Refusal as a capitulation to 'bourgeois individualism' -- or 'one-dimensional pessimism -– his use of the concept in *ODM* can be read as a revealing indication of the depth and parameters of the crisis of Marxism in an era when a revolutionary theorist could simply not point to any forces of revolution, or revolutionary class, in the advanced capitalist countries. Marcuse was thus honestly questioning the Marxian theory of revolution during an era in which proletarian revolt was for the most part absent and there were no spectacular revolutionary struggles or forces evident in the advanced capitalist countries during a period of almost unprecedented affluence and relative stabilization.

Almost on the eve of *ODM*'s publication, however, the civil rights struggles that Marcuse alluded to at the end of his book intensified, and the New Left and anti-war movement began to grow in response to the accelerating American military intervention in Vietnam. At this time, a generation of radicals turned to study Marcuse's *ODM*, which seemed to have denied the possibility of fundamental political change. During the heroic period of the New Left in the 1960s, *ODM* helped to show a generation of political radicals what was wrong with the system they were struggling against, and thus played an important role in the student movement. Marcuse himself quickly rallied to the student activists' cause and in 1965 began modifying some of his theses to take account of the surge of militancy that both surprised and exhilarated

him. Yet although the Great Refusal was being acted out on a grand scale, Marcuse's theory had failed to specify in any detail agents of social change or strategies for revolution. Consequently, Marcuse began a search for a radical politics that was to occupy him the rest of his life. This search led him to defend confrontation politics and, under specific conditions, revolutionary violence, and deeply alienated Marcuse from those who advocated more moderate models for social change.

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s Marcuse made a major effort to repoliticize theory and directed much of his work towards the concerns of the New Left. He traveled widely in Europe and America, speaking at conferences and to a wide variety of audiences, and published many books and articles on the topics of liberation and revolution that became the central focus of his work. In 1965, Marcuse moved from Brandeis University, where he had taught since 1954, and began teaching at the University of Calfornia at La Jolla. In his post-1965 writings, Marcuse sought forces of revolution that would make such change possible, as well as a political strategy that they could follow. Since the industrial working class was, in his view, integrated into advanced capitalism, Marcuse sought new radical political agency, successively, in non-integrated outsiders and minorities, in students and intellectuals, in a 'new sensibility', and in 'catalyst groups' (see below). Marcuse supported strategies of militant confrontation politics from about 1965-70, then shifted to the advocacy of political education and the formation of small oppositional groups modelled on workers' councils; during the 1970s he called for a 'United Front' politics and the long march through the institutions'. Throughout, Marcuse remained faithful to a Marxist tradition of revolutionary socialism represented by Marx, Luxemburg and Korsch, while he increasingly criticized orthodox Marxist-Leninist conceptions of revolution and socialism.

Marcuse was the only member of the original Frankfurt school who enthusiastically supported political activism in the 1960s, gearing his writing, teaching and political interventions towards New Left struggles. The result was a remarkable series of writings, from 'Repressive Tolerance' in 1965 up until his death in 1979 which attempted to articulate the theory and practice of the New Left while repoliticizing critical theory. Some key examples of texts that articulate the theory and politics of the New Left and that could inspire oppositional theory and politics for the contemporary era are collected in this volume.

Marcuse's political involvement in New Left politics won him notoriety as a guru of the student movement, thereby creating a heated political-intellectual situation that made it extremely difficult to appraise his works dispassionately and to measure his larger contributions to critical theory. Caught up in the political debates of the day, Marcuse's ideas were subject to both fierce polemics and fervent espousal. Moreover, he himself

frequently revised his views, developing new revolutionary perspectives, while his critics were attacking his previous positions. Marcuse's political writings thus theorized the vicissitudes of the New Left and both reflected and commented on its development. With the passage of time, it is now possible to gain the necessary distance and perspective to evaluate critically Marcuse's writings from 1965-79 and to analyze his theoretical and political positions in relation to New Left and other political movements of the day.

9.

Reach Out and Elect Someone

In *The Last Hurrah*, Edwin O'Connor's fine novel about lusty party politics in Boston, Mayor Frank Skeffington tries to instruct his young nephew in the realities of political machinery. Politics, he tells him, is the greatest spectator sport in America. In 1966, Ronald Reagan used a different metaphor. "Politics," he said, "is just like show business." [1]

Although sports has now become a major branch of show business, it still contains elements that make Skeffington's vision of politics somewhat more encouraging than Reagan's. In any sport the standard of excellence is well known to both the players and spectators, and an athlete's reputation rises and falls by his or her proximity to that standard. Where an athlete stands in relation to it cannot be easily disguised or faked, which means that David Garth can do very little to improve the image of an outfielder with a .218 batting average. It also means that a public opinion poll on the question, Who is the best woman tennis player in the world?, is meaningless. The public's opinion has nothing to do with it. Martina Navratilova's serve provides the decisive answer.

One may also note that spectators at a sporting event are usually well aware of the rules of the game and the meaning of each piece of the action. There is no way for a batter who strikes out with the bases loaded to argue the spectators into believing that he has done a useful thing for his team (except, perhaps, by reminding them that he *could* have hit into a double play). The difference between hits and strike-outs, touchdowns and fum-

bles, aces and double faults cannot be blurred, even by the pomposities and malapropisms of a Howard Cosell. If politics were like a sporting event, there would be several virtues to attach to its name: clarity, honesty, excellence.

But what virtues attach to politics if Ronald Reagan is right? Show business is not entirely without an idea of excellence, but its main business is to please the crowd, and its principal instrument is artifice. If politics is like show business, then the idea is not to pursue excellence, clarity or honesty but to *appear* as if you are, which is another matter altogether. And what the other matter is can be expressed in one word: advertising. In Joe McGinnis' book about Richard Nixon's campaign in 1968, *The Selling of the President*, he said much of what needs to be said about politics and advertising, both in his title and in the book. But not quite all. For though the selling of a President is an astonishing and degrading thing, it is only part of a larger point: In America, the fundamental metaphor for political discourse is the television commercial.

The television commercial is the most peculiar and pervasive form of communication to issue forth from the electric plug. An American who has reached the age of forty will have seen well over one million television commercials in his or her lifetime, and has close to another million to go before the first Social Security check arrives. We may safely assume, therefore, that the television commercial has profoundly influenced American habits of thought. Certainly, there is no difficulty in demonstrating that it has become an important paradigm for the structure of every type of public discourse. My major purpose here is to show how it has devastated political discourse. But there may be some value in my pointing, first, to its effect on commerce itself.

By bringing together in compact form all of the arts of show business—music, drama, imagery, humor, celebrity—the television commercial has mounted the most serious assault on capitalist ideology since the publication of *Das Kapital*. To un-

derstand why, we must remind ourselves that capitalism, like science and liberal democracy, was an outgrowth of the Enlightenment. Its principal theorists, even its most prosperous practitioners, believed capitalism to be based on the idea that both buyer and seller are sufficiently mature, well informed and reasonable to engage in transactions of mutual self-interest. If greed was taken to be the fuel of the capitalist engine, then surely rationality was the driver. The theory states, in part, that competition in the marketplace requires that the buyer not only knows what is good for him but also what is good. If the seller produces nothing of value, as determined by a rational marketplace, then he loses out. It is the assumption of rationality among buyers that spurs competitors to become winners, and winners to keep on winning. Where it is assumed that a buyer is unable to make rational decisions, laws are passed to invalidate transactions, as, for example, those which prohibit children from making contracts. In America, there even exists in law a requirement that sellers must tell the truth about their products, for if the buyer has no protection from false claims, rational decision-making is seriously impaired.

Of course, the practice of capitalism has its contradictions. Cartels and monopolies, for example, undermine the theory. But television commercials make hash of it. To take the simplest example: To be rationally considered, any claim—commercial or otherwise—must be made in language. More precisely, it must take the form of a proposition, for that is the universe of discourse from which such words as "true" and "false" come. If that universe of discourse is discarded, then the application of empirical tests, logical analysis or any of the other instruments of reason are impotent.

The move away from the use of propositions in commercial advertising began at the end of the nineteenth century. But it was not until the 1950's that the television commercial made linguistic discourse obsolete as the basis for product decisions. By substituting images for claims, the pictorial commercial

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made emotional appeal, not tests of truth, the basis of consumer decisions. The distance between rationality and advertising is now so wide that it is difficult to remember that there once existed a connection between them. Today, on television commercials, propositions are as scarce as unattractive people. The truth or falsity of an advertiser's claim is simply not an issue. A McDonald's commercial, for example, is not a series of testable, logically ordered assertions. It is a drama—a mythology, if you will—of handsome people selling, buying and eating hamburgers, and being driven to near ecstasy by their good fortune. No claims are made, except those the viewer projects onto or infers from the drama. One can like or dislike a television commercial, of course. But one cannot refute it.

Indeed, we may go this far: The television commercial is not at all about the character of products to be consumed. It is about the character of the consumers of products. Images of movie stars and famous athletes, of serene lakes and macho fishing trips, of elegant dinners and romantic interludes, of happy families packing their station wagons for a picnic in the country— these tell nothing about the products being sold. But they tell everything about the fears, fancies and dreams of those who might buy them. What the advertiser needs to know is not what is right about the product but what is wrong about the buyer. And so, the balance of business expenditures shifts from *product* research to *market* research. The television commercial has oriented business away from making products of value and toward making consumers feel valuable, which means that the business of business has now become pseudo-therapy. The consumer is a patient assured by psycho-dramas.

All of this would come as a great surprise to Adam Smith, just as the transformation of politics would be equally surprising to the redoubtable George Orwell. It is true, as George Steiner has remarked, that Orwell thought of Newspeak as originating, in part, from "the verbiage of commercial advertising." But when Orwell wrote in his famous essay "The Politics of the English

Language" that politics has become a matter of "defending the indefensible," he was assuming that politics would remain a distinct, although corrupted, mode of discourse. His contempt was aimed at those politicians who would use sophisticated versions of the age-old arts of double-think, propaganda and deceit. That the defense of the indefensible would be conducted as a form of amusement did not occur to him. He feared the politician as deceiver, not as entertainer.

The television commercial has been the chief instrument in creating the modern methods of presenting political ideas. It has accomplished this in two ways. The first is by requiring its form to be used in political campaigns. It is not necessary, I take it, to say very much about this method. Everyone has noticed and worried in varying degrees about it, including former New York City mayor John Lindsay, who has proposed that political "commercials" be prohibited. Even television commentators have brought it to our attention, as for example, Bill Moyers in "The Thirty-second President," a documentary on his excellent television series "A Walk Through the 20th Century." My own awakening to the power of the television commercial as political discourse came as a result of a personal experience of a few years back, when I played a minuscule role in Ramsey Clark's Senate campaign against Jacob Javits in New York. A great believer in the traditional modes of political discourse, Clark prepared a small library of carefully articulated position papers on a variety of subjects from race relations to nuclear power to the Middle East. He filled each paper with historical background, economic and political facts, and, I thought, an enlightened sociological perspective. He might as well have drawn cartoons. In fact, Jacob Javits did draw cartoons, in a manner of speaking. If Javits had a carefully phrased position on any issue, the fact was largely unknown. He built his campaign on a series of thirty-second television commercials in which he used visual imagery, in much the same way as a McDonald's commercial, to project himself as a man of experience, virtue and piety. For all I

know, Javits believed as strongly in reason as did Ramsey Clark. But he believed more strongly in retaining his seat in the Senate. And he knew full well in what century we are living. He understood that in a world of television and other visual media, "political knowledge" means having pictures in your head more than having words. The record will show that this insight did not fail him. He won the election by the largest plurality in New York State history. And I will not labor the commonplace that any serious candidate for high political office in America requires the services of an image manager to design the kinds of pictures that will lodge in the public's collective head. I will want to return to the implications of "image politics" but it is necessary, before that, to discuss the second method by which the television commercial shapes political discourse.

Because the television commercial is the single most voluminous form of public communication in our society, it was inevitable that Americans would accommodate themselves to the philosophy of television commercials. By "accommodate," I mean that we accept them as a normal and plausible form of discourse. By "philosophy," I mean that the television commercial has embedded in it certain assumptions about the nature of communication that run counter to those of other media, especially the printed word. For one thing, the commercial insists on an unprecedented brevity of expression. One may even say, instancy. A sixty-second commercial is prolix; thirty seconds is longer than most; fifteen to twenty seconds is about average. This is a brash and startling structure for communication since, as I remarked earlier, the commercial always addresses itself to the psychological needs of the viewer. Thus it is not merely therapy. It is instant therapy. Indeed, it puts forward a psychological theory of unique axioms: The commercial asks us to believe that all problems are solvable, that they are solvable fast, and that they are solvable fast through the interventions of technology, techniques and chemistry. This is, of course, a preposterous theory about the roots of discontent, and would ap-

pear so to anyone hearing or reading it. But the commercial disdains exposition, for that takes time and invites argument. It is a very bad commercial indeed that engages the viewer in wondering about the validity of the point being made. That is why most commercials use the literary device of the pseudo-parable as a means of doing their work. Such "parables" as The Ring Around the Collar, The Lost Traveler's Checks and The Phone Call from the Son Far Away not only have irrefutable emotional power but, like Biblical parables, are unambiguously didactic. The television commercial is about products only in the sense that the story of Jonah is about the anatomy of whales, which is to say, it isn't. Which is to say further, it is about how one ought to live one's life. Moreover, commercials have the advantage of vivid visual symbols through which we may easily learn the lessons being taught. Among those lessons are that short and simple messages are preferable to long and complex ones; that drama is to be preferred over exposition; that being sold solutions is better than being confronted with questions about problems. Such beliefs would naturally have implications for our orientation to political discourse; that is to say, we may begin to accept as normal certain assumptions about the political domain that either derive from or are amplified by the television commercial. For example, a person who has seen one million television commercials might well believe that all political problems have fast solutions through simple measures—or ought to. Or that complex language is not to be trusted, and that all problems lend themselves to theatrical expression. Or that argument is in bad taste, and leads only to an intolerable uncertainty. Such a person may also come to believe that it is not necessary to draw any line between politics and other forms of social life. Just as a television commercial will use an athlete, an actor, a musician, a novelist, a scientist or a countess to speak for the virtues of a product in no way within their domain of expertise, television also frees politicians from the limited field of their own expertise. Political figures may

show up anywhere, at any time, doing anything, without being thought odd, presumptuous, or in any way out of place. Which is to say, they have become assimilated into the general television culture as celebrities.

Being a celebrity is quite different from being well known. Harry Truman was well known but he was not a celebrity. Whenever the public saw him or heard him, Truman was talking politics. It takes a very rich imagination to envision Harry Truman or, for that matter, his wife, making a guest appearance on "The Goldbergs" or "I Remember Mama." Politics and politicians had nothing to do with these shows, which people watched for amusement, not to familiarize themselves with political candidates and issues.

It is difficult to say exactly when politicians began to put themselves forward, intentionally, as sources of amusement. In the 1950's, Senator Everett Dirksen appeared as a guest on "What's My Line?" When he was running for office, John F. Kennedy allowed the television cameras of Ed Murrow's "Person to Person" to invade his home. When he was not running for office, Richard Nixon appeared for a few seconds on "Laugh-In," an hour-long comedy show based on the format of a television commercial. By the 1970's, the public had started to become accustomed to the notion that political figures were to be taken as part of the world of show business. In the 1980's came the deluge. Vice-presidential candidate William Miller did a commercial for American Express. So did the star of the Watergate Hearings, Senator Sam Ervin. Former President Gerald Ford joined with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for brief roles on "Dynasty." Massachusetts Governor Mike Dukakis appeared on "St. Elsewhere." Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill did a stint on "Cheers." Consumer advocate Ralph Nader, George McGovern and Mayor Edward Koch hosted "Saturday Night Live." Koch also played the role of a fight manager in a made-for-television movie starring James Cagney. Mrs. Nancy Reagan appeared on "Diff'rent Strokes." Would

anyone be surprised if Gary Hart turned up on "Hill Street Blues"? Or if Geraldine Ferraro played a small role as a Queens housewife in a Francis Coppola film?

Although it may go too far to say that the politician-as-celebrity has, by itself, made political parties irrelevant, there is certainly a conspicuous correlation between the rise of the former and the decline of the latter. Some readers may remember when voters barely knew who the candidate was and, in any case, were not preoccupied with his character and personal life. As a young man, I balked one November at voting for a Democratic mayoralty candidate who, it seemed to me, was both unintelligent and corrupt. "What has that to do with it?" my father protested. "*All* Democratic candidates are unintelligent and corrupt. Do you want the Republicans to win?" He meant to say that intelligent voters favored the party that best represented their economic interests and sociological perspective. To vote for the "best man" seemed to him an astounding and naive irrelevance. He never doubted that there were good men among Republicans. He merely understood that they did not speak for his class. He shared, with an unfailing eye, the perspective of Big Tim Sullivan, a leader of New York's Tammany Hall in its glory days. As Terence Moran recounts in his essay, "Politics 1984," Sullivan was once displeased when brought the news that the vote in his precinct was 6,382 for the Democrat and two for the Republican. In evaluating this disappointing result, Sullivan remarked, "Sure, didn't Kelly come to me to say his wife's cousin was running on the Republican line and didn't I, in the interests of domestic tranquility, give him leave to vote Republican? But what I want to know is, who else voted Republican?" [2]

I will not argue here the wisdom of this point of view. There may be a case for choosing the best man over party (although I know of none). The point is that television does not reveal who the best man is. In fact, television makes impossible the determination of who is better than whom, if we mean by "better"

such things as more capable in negotiation, more imaginative in executive skill, more knowledgeable about international affairs, more understanding of the interrelations of economic systems, and so on. The reason has, almost entirely, to do with "image." But not because politicians are preoccupied with presenting themselves in the best possible light. After all, who isn't? It is a rare and deeply disturbed person who does not wish to project a favorable image. But television gives image a bad name. For on television the politician does not so much offer the audience an image of himself, as offer himself as an image of the audience. And therein lies one of the most powerful influences of the television commercial on political discourse.

To understand how image politics works on television, we may use as an entry point the well-known commercial from which this chapter takes the first half of its title. I refer to the Bell Telephone romances, created by Mr. Steve Horn, in which we are urged to "Reach Out and Touch Someone." The "someone" is usually a relative who lives in Denver or Los Angeles or Atlanta—in any case, very far from where we are, and who, in a good year, we will be lucky to see on Thanksgiving Day. The "someone" used to play a daily and vital role in our lives; that is to say, used to be a member of the family. Though American culture stands vigorously opposed to the idea of family, there nonetheless still exists a residual nag that something essential to our lives is lost when we give it up. Enter Mr. Horn's commercials. These are thirty-second homilies concerned to provide a new definition of intimacy in which the telephone wire will take the place of old-fashioned co-presence. Even further, these commercials intimate a new conception of family cohesion for a nation of kinsmen who have been split asunder by automobiles, jet aircraft and other instruments of family suicide. In analyzing these commercials, Jay Rosen makes the following observation: "Horn isn't interested in saying anything, he has no message to get across. His goal is not to provide information about Bell, but to somehow bring out from the broken ties of millions of Amer-

ican lives a feeling which might focus on the telephone. . . . Horn does not express himself. You do not express yourself. Horn expresses you." [3]

This is the lesson of all great television commercials: They provide a slogan, a symbol or a focus that creates for viewers a comprehensive and compelling image of themselves. In the shift from party politics to television politics, the same goal is sought. We are not permitted to know who is best at being President or Governor or Senator, but whose image is best in touching and soothing the deep reaches of our discontent. We look at the television screen and ask, in the same voracious way as the Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?" We are inclined to vote for those whose personality, family life, and style, as imaged on the screen, give back a better answer than the Queen received. As Xenophanes remarked twenty-five centuries ago, men always make their gods in their own image. But to this, television politics has added a new wrinkle: Those who would be gods refashion themselves into images the viewers would have them be.

And so, while image politics preserves the idea of self-interest voting, it alters the meaning of "self-interest." Big Tim Sullivan and my father voted for the party that represented their interests, but "interests" meant to them something tangible—patronage, preferential treatment, protection from bureaucracy, support for one's union or community, Thanksgiving turkeys for indigent families. Judged by this standard, blacks may be the only sane voters left in America. Most of the rest of us vote our interests, but they are largely symbolic ones, which is to say, of a psychological nature. Like television commercials, image politics is a form of therapy, which is why so much of it is charm, good looks, celebrity and personal disclosure. It is a sobering thought to recall that there are no photographs of Abraham Lincoln smiling, that his wife was in all likelihood a psychopath, and that he was subject to lengthy fits of depression. He

would hardly have been well suited for image politics. We do not want our mirrors to be so dark and so far from amusing. What I am saying is that just as the television commercial empties itself of authentic product information so that it can do its psychological work, image politics empties itself of authentic political substance for the same reason.

It follows from this that history can play no significant role in image politics. For history is of value only to someone who takes seriously the notion that there are patterns in the past which may provide the present with nourishing traditions. "The past is a world," Thomas Carlyle said, "and not a void of grey haze." But he wrote this at a time when the book was the principal medium of serious public discourse. A book is *all* history. Everything about it takes one back in time—from the way it is produced to its linear mode of exposition to the fact that the past tense is its most comfortable form of address. As no other medium before or since, the book promotes a sense of a coherent and usable past. In a conversation of books, history, as Carlyle understood it, is not only a world but a living world. It is the present that is shadowy.

But television is a speed-of-light medium, a present-centered medium. Its grammar, so to say, permits no access to the past. Everything presented in moving pictures is experienced as happening "now," which is why we must be told *in language* that a videotape we are seeing was made months before. Moreover, like its forefather, the telegraph, television needs to move fragments of information, not to collect and organize them. Carlyle was more prophetic than he could imagine: The literal gray haze that is the background void on all television screens is an apt metaphor of the notion of history the medium puts forward. In the Age of Show Business and image politics, political discourse is emptied not only of ideological content but of historical content, as well.

Czeslaw Milosz, winner of the 1980 Nobel Prize for Literature, remarked in his acceptance speech in Stockholm that our

age is characterized by a "refusal to remember"; he cited, among other things, the shattering fact that there are now more than one hundred books in print that deny that the Holocaust ever took place. The historian Carl Schorske has, in my opinion, circled closer to the truth by noting that the modern mind has grown indifferent to history because history has become useless to it; in other words, it is not obstinacy or ignorance but a sense of irrelevance that leads to the diminution of history. Television's Bill Moyers inches still closer when he says, "I worry that my own business . . . helps to make this an anxious age of agitated amnesiacs. . . . We Americans seem to know everything about the last twenty-four hours but very little of the last sixty centuries or the last sixty years."[4] Terence Moran, I believe, lands on the target in saying that with media whose structure is biased toward furnishing images and fragments, we are deprived of access to an historical perspective. In the absence of continuity and context, he says, "bits of information cannot be integrated into an intelligent and consistent whole."[5] We do not refuse to remember; neither do we find it exactly useless to remember. Rather, we are being rendered unfit to remember. For if remembering is to be something more than nostalgia, it requires a contextual basis—a theory, a vision, a metaphor—*something* within which facts can be organized and patterns discerned. The politics of image and instantaneous news provides no such context, is, in fact, hampered by attempts to provide any. A mirror records only what you are wearing today. It is silent about yesterday. With television, we vault ourselves into a continuous, incoherent present. "History," Henry Ford said, "is bunk." Henry Ford was a typographic optimist. "History," the Electric Plug replies, "doesn't exist."

If these conjectures make sense, then in this Orwell was wrong once again, at least for the Western democracies. He envisioned the demolition of history, but believed that it would be accomplished by the state; that some equivalent of the Ministry of Truth would systematically banish inconvenient facts and de-

stroy the records of the past. Certainly, this is the way of the Soviet Union, our modern-day Oceania. But as Huxley more accurately foretold it, nothing so crude as all that is required. Seemingly benign technologies devoted to providing the populace with a politics of image, instancy and therapy may disappear history just as effectively, perhaps more permanently, and without objection.

We ought also to look to Huxley, not Orwell, to understand the threat that television and other forms of imagery pose to the foundation of liberal democracy—namely, to freedom of information. Orwell quite reasonably supposed that the state, through naked suppression, would control the flow of information, particularly by the banning of books. In this prophecy, Orwell had history strongly on his side. For books have always been subjected to censorship in varying degrees wherever they have been an important part of the communication landscape. In ancient China, the *Analects* of Confucius were ordered destroyed by Emperor Chi Huang Ti. Ovid's banishment from Rome by Augustus was in part a result of his having written *Ars Amatoria*. Even in Athens, which set enduring standards of intellectual excellence, books were viewed with alarm. In *Areopagitica*, Milton provides an excellent review of the many examples of book censorship in Classical Greece, including the case of Protagoras, whose books were burned because he began one of his discourses with the confession that he did not know whether or not there were gods. But Milton is careful to observe that in all the cases before his own time, there were only two types of books that, as he puts it, "the magistrate cared to take notice of": books that were blasphemous and books that were libelous. Milton stresses this point because, writing almost two hundred years after Gutenberg, he knew that the magistrates of his own era, if unopposed, would disallow books of every conceivable subject matter. Milton knew, in other words, that it was in the printing press that censorship had found its true métier; that, in fact, information and ideas did not become a

profound cultural problem until the maturing of the Age of Print. Whatever dangers there may be in a word that is written, such a word is a hundred times more dangerous when stamped by a press. And the problem posed by typography was recognized early; for example, by Henry VIII, whose Star Chamber was authorized to deal with wayward books. It continued to be recognized by Elizabeth I, the Stuarts, and many other post-Gutenberg monarchs, including Pope Paul IV, in whose reign the first *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* was drawn. To paraphrase David Riesman only slightly, in a world of printing, information is the gunpowder of the mind; hence come the censors in their austere robes to dampen the explosion.

Thus, Orwell envisioned that (1) government control over (2) printed matter posed a serious threat for Western democracies. He was wrong on both counts. (He was, of course, right on both counts insofar as Russia, China and other pre-electronic cultures are concerned.) Orwell was, in effect, addressing himself to a problem of the Age of Print—in fact, to the same problem addressed by the men who wrote the United States Constitution. The Constitution was composed at a time when most free men had access to their communities through a leaflet, a newspaper or the spoken word. They were quite well positioned to share their political ideas with each other in forms and contexts over which they had competent control. Therefore, their greatest worry was the possibility of government tyranny. The Bill of Rights is largely a prescription for preventing government from restricting the flow of information and ideas. But the Founding Fathers did not foresee that tyranny by government might be superseded by another sort of problem altogether, namely, the corporate state, which through television now controls the flow of public discourse in America. I raise no strong objection to this fact (at least not here) and have no intention of launching into a standard-brand complaint against the corporate state. I merely note the fact with apprehension, as did George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication, when he wrote:

Television is the new state religion run by a private Ministry of Culture (the three networks), offering a universal curriculum for all people, financed by a form of hidden taxation without representation. You pay when you wash, not when you watch, and whether or not you care to watch. . . .⁶

Earlier in the same essay, Gerbner said:

Liberation cannot be accomplished by turning [television] off. Television is for most people the most attractive thing going any time of the day or night. We live in a world in which the vast majority will not turn off. If we don't get the message from the tube, we get it through other people.

I do not think Professor Gerbner meant to imply in these sentences that there is a conspiracy to take charge of our symbolic world by the men who run the "Ministry of Culture." I even suspect he would agree with me that if the faculty of the Annenberg School of Communication were to take over the three networks, viewers would hardly notice the difference. I believe he means to say—and in any case, *I* do—that in the Age of Television, our information environment is completely different from what it was in 1783; that we have less to fear from government restraints than from television glut; that, in fact, we have no way of protecting ourselves from information disseminated by corporate America; and that, therefore, the battles for liberty must be fought on different terrains from where they once were.

For example, I would venture the opinion that the traditional civil libertarian opposition to the banning of books from school libraries and from school curricula is now largely irrelevant. Such acts of censorship are annoying, of course, and must be opposed. But they are trivial. Even worse, they are distracting, in that they divert civil libertarians from confronting those questions that have to do with the claims of new technologies.

To put it plainly, a student's freedom to read is not seriously injured by someone's banning a book on Long Island or in Anaheim or anyplace else. But as Gerbner suggests, television clearly does impair the student's freedom to read, and it does so with innocent hands, so to speak. Television does not ban books, it simply displaces them.

The fight against censorship is a nineteenth-century issue which was largely won in the twentieth. What we are confronted with now is the problem posed by the economic and symbolic structure of television. Those who run television do not limit our access to information but in fact widen it. Our Ministry of Culture is Huxleyan, not Orwellian. It does everything possible to encourage us to watch continuously. But what we watch is a medium which presents information in a form that renders it simplistic, nonsubstantive, nonhistorical and noncontextual; that is to say, information packaged as entertainment. In America, we are never denied the opportunity to amuse ourselves.

Tyrants of all varieties have always known about the value of providing the masses with amusements as a means of pacifying discontent. But most of them could not have even hoped for a situation in which the masses would ignore that which does not amuse. That is why tyrants have always relied, and still do, on censorship. Censorship, after all, is the tribute tyrants pay to the assumption that a public knows the difference between serious discourse and entertainment—and cares. How delighted would be all the kings, czars and führers of the past (and commissars of the present) to know that censorship is not a necessity when all political discourse takes the form of a jest.

Politics and Self in the Age of Digital Re(pro)ducibility

Robert W. Williams

(abridged by N.B.Aldrich)

Globalization is very much about individuals and freedom—a claim all the more reinforced by some politicians in the face of international terrorism. Freedom, often framed as the capacity to think and act autonomously, is an essential characteristic of the individual in many liberal-democratic and neo-classical economic theories. The globalization of liberal-democratic values and market principles, it is often asserted, brings with it a bright future for individuals around the world and their freedoms. But, as this work argues, globalization does not necessarily yield all of the positive consequences so loudly heralded for individuality.

The individual in Western philosophical and political theories, especially after René Descartes, is theorized as the discrete self. That is to say, the essential part of the individual is the self, the unique and fundamentally autonomous entity in Western value systems. As analyzed by various conventional Western social sciences, the self is fundamental to our humanity: it is how we organize our personal experiences and it is the basis for our reflexive action in the world. In economics, the self is the agent of instrumentally rational decision-making. In political science, the self can be defined as the citizen who participates via voting or other political activities. In legal analysis, the self is the agent who is ultimately responsible for his/her behavior within society.

Common to the dominant conceptions of the individual self in Western social sciences are its distinctive properties of naturalness and non-reducibility. Such characteristics derive from the dominant Western values out of which the social sciences emerged, such as the social contract theories of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke and the works of the Scottish Enlightenment by Adam Smith and Bernard Mandeville (see Smith 1997). In liberal-democratic polities the citizen is the entity with selfhood and its attendant inalienable rights. In a market economy, the individual is the optimizer of costs and benefits in his/her interests and accordingly is "self-contained," i.e., the only one capable of so ascertaining personal interests. Certainly, the formation of the self is studied with regard to larger social(izing) processes, especially with regard to its subjectivity (i.e., a content of the self, like identity). For example, theoretical frameworks like symbolic interactionism consider that the self is formed in relation to others in society (see Sandstrom et al. 2001). The self, nevertheless, retains its aura of authenticity and its irreducible sanctity—that is, its putative individuality—in many Western value systems.

It is just such irreducibility and authenticity of the individual self that this work tackles. I seek to advance the argument made by Gilles Deleuze through his concept of the "dividual"—a physically embodied human subject that is endlessly divisible and reducible to data representations via the modern technologies of control, like computer-based systems. I offer an immanent critique of the self, specifically focusing on the relationship between the self and digital technology. Such technology is crucial to globalization, and points towards the Internet and its cyberspaces as the terrain ultimately to be examined in this paper.

Deleuze offers us a conceptual point of departure. His notion of the dividual grasps a vital part of the dynamics of modern technology: the intersection of human agency and high-technology in the constitution of selves. Deleuze allows us to extend the analysis of individuality derived from such thinkers as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in <u>Dialectic of Enlightenment</u> (1973), Erich Fromm in <u>Escape from Freedom</u> (1965), and Herbert Marcuse in <u>One-Dimensional Man</u> (1964). With a concept of dividuality we can address the complexity of a global(izing) society with is characteristic digital forms of communication and its cyberspaces. Hence, Deleuze's concept will be theoretically extended.

The paper advances a central theme: there is a dialectic of in/dividuality present in the conjuncture of globalizing capitalism and liberal-democratic policies. The relationships that reduce us as separate selves to digitally mediated signifiers and that "reproduce" those signifiers as dividuals also provide the potential for resistance against the oppressions resulting from digital re(pro)ducibility. Specifically, the very digitality that engenders oppression also gives rise to, and facilitates the practices of, new forms of opposition to the globalizing forces themselves. Accordingly, we also will have the opportunity to exercise reason in the promotion of the social good. We might be able thereby to practice the autonomy of reason so often touted in traditional conceptions of individuality. Herein the dynamics of in/dividuality will be examined with regard to cyberspace, at once a digitally created environment of the Internet as well as a vital terrain of resistance in the 21st century.

Certainly, many have theorized the effects and consequences of digital technology on humans and society. The rise of digital communications and automation has generated analyses gushing with optimistic forecasts. In keeping with this paper's focus on Internet-related technologies, we find the following included among the suggested advantages: the efficient provision of government services, the ease of conducting commerce, the creation of new communities, and the enhancement of communication across political borders and physical distance (e.g., see Bowman 2003; Negroponte 1995; Tsagarousianou et al. 1998; Weare et al. 1999). There are, however, also somber analyses filled with pessimistic conclusions about cyberpolitics. Such include arguments that Internet communities do not replicate the old-style public spaces of democracy, that human isolation and parochialism of views can be reinforced, and that political deliberation is weakened via cyberpolitics (e.g., Goldberg 1999; Ornstein 2000; Saco 2002; Sunstein 2001).

My analysis attempts to thread its way between the extreme cases. How should we theorize the emancipatory potentials of the Internet in the service of struggles against various forms of oppression (whether racial, class, gender, ableist, sexual, etc.)? As such, the paper sets forth the conditions for the positive use of cyberspace and cyber-activism, while also enumerating some of the crucial structural constraints on such activism.

Problematizing the Individuality of the Self

How distinctly and utterly "individual" is the self? This is a salient question in a world of ever-globalizing capitalism with its forces that affect our daily lives, and thereby exert influence on our selves. The conceptual boundaries that constitute the putative distinctiveness of our individuality are affected by the marketing and targeting of our selves as consumers of goods and services. Nowadays, marketing is not only directed as the "masses" but also includes the "niche-targeting" of consumers. Mass marketing involves the advertisement of consumer goods to all people as a more-or-less undifferentiated mass (albeit in terms of some distinctions, e.g., advertisements for gender-specific clothing in gender-related venues). Information is not gathered for specific consumers; rather,

advertisements are presented "spectacularly" for people to view or hear. Niche targeting, however, locates those consumers that might "want" particular products or particular brands of products (Klein 2000). This requires that data will be gathered, stored, and analyzed—processes facilitated by the expansion of new digital technologies.

To promote the pursuit of our "individual" desires, our demographic information is gathered into data banks, our Internet surfing preferences are stored as "cookies" that we accept when visiting Web sites, and our grocery purchases are monitored at check-outs so as to yield coupons on related items for later use. Such actions are trumpeted as positive. They make our consumption more efficient because relevant goods and services are proffered for sale, are displayed for easier selection, or are offered for edification and entertainment. So-called "personalization technologies" are common (Negroponte 1995): Amazon.com suggests other books to buy based on what books we key in as search terms, and TiVo tapes TV and cable shows for later viewing based on previous shows watched by the subscriber (Zaslow 2002). Certainly, numerous advertisements shout out how "we can have it our way." If we believe the hype, there has never been a better time for our selves and our unique individualities. Individuality is also the rallying cry of liberal-democratic governments charged with preserving societal order, national security, and the personal liberties of individuals. The latter are broadly inclusive of a varied mixture of civil and political freedoms as well as the rights to property and to privacy. The violence to individuality emerges when considering how both socio-political order/security and personal liberties are implemented in practice. Surveillance has been a major means used by governmental institutions both to secure societal order and to protect the safety of individuals (Lyon 1994). Surveillance includes not only observation, but also record keeping of the information gathered. Over time, government surveillance has increased as a response to major societal disruptions like civil unrest, economic depression, and wars. Most recently surveillance has been amplified after the September 11th terrorist acts. But when viewed historically, such increases in government surveillance are also part of trend that intensified in the wake of policy reforms which institutionalized the so-called managerial state and its welfare-state variant of the post-World War II capitalism (Lyon 1994).

As many mainstream pundits might argue, compromises often must be struck between the extremes of societal order and individuality. Nonetheless, problems have emerged when the same management techniques and values used by government agencies in the interests of managing a capitalist economy system (e.g., efficiency pursued via instrumentally rational means) are likewise used to manage the citizens. In such instances individuals are paternalistically administered as "clients" of a system that denies them some of the supposed autonomy of a sovereign self. Moreover, governmental policies to support social order can potentially threaten individuality, especially in its senses of civil and political freedoms and of privacy. For example, critics of the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush hold that it is not maintaining the proper protections of individual civil liberties and privacy in its war against global terrorism (Amnesty International 2002; Chang 2001; Cole and Dempsey 2002; Katyal 2001; Lyon 2001). As a practical consequence, social and political dissent, even peaceful forms of protest, against hegemonic values and practices has been, is being, and will continue to be, surveiled in the interests of order.

Thus we must ask: how individual is the self when it too is marketed and targeted by government organizations? How autonomous, sacrosanct, and centered is the individual when autonomy is defined as choosing from pre-selected political or consumer choices? When we are buffeted by multiple claims on our identity (such as the particularity of nationalism which can contravene the universals of humanitarianism)? When pandering to our psychological and physical fears are central features of marketing (whether for political or corporate campaigns)? When material inequities diminish our

capacity to achieve our highest aspirations (aspirations which themselves are often defined in terms of buying consumer goods)? All such questions interrogate the pre-given naturalness of monadic conceptions of individuals and thereby point us to the social construction of the content of what makes us individuals.

Deleuze's Concept of the "Dividual"

A prolific social theorist and philosopher, Gilles Deleuze sought new ways to theorize the potential for emancipation in an epoch where neither the proletariat nor the bourgeoisie were the historical agents of liberation (see Patton 2001). In his short, suggestive essay, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," Deleuze sets forth his analysis of how we are controlled by technologies (Deleuze 1992). He continues Michel Foucault's project begun in such works as Discipline and Punish (Foucault 1978). Foucault's disciplinary societies employed technologies, like factory assembly lines or hospital organizational structures, that physically placed people in time and space. By so doing, such institutional arrangements controlled their people. With reference to the panopticon, an architecture of surveillance discussed by Jeremy Bentham, Foucault wrote:

> Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up. [....] So [with the panopticon] it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behaviour, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application, the patient to the observation of the regulations. [....] He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault 1978: III.3)

Such an embodied practice of the disciplinary societies was reinforced in everyday life via what Foucault termed panopticism (Foucault 1980). He held that many people tend to conform to hegemonic norms in their everyday activities and relationships because of the interiorization of such norms via the presence of the gaze.

Deleuze argued that the technologies of disciplinary societies are being replaced with technology of a decidedly different type. Close-circuit television (CCTV) and computer monitoring software "scrutinize" our movements and interactions with others and with numerous electronic network interfaces (see also Lyon 1994). Other cases can be offered: the monitoring of computer use and key strokes in the workplace, the CCTV surveillance of traffic infractions, and the spy satellites which orbit the earth. Even Hollywood movies like "Enemy of the State" depict the use and abuse of technologies of control.

Such technologies can permit or deny entry through access points, as well as allow or disallow financial transactions at automated teller machines. Wrote Deleuze:

> The conception of a control mechanism, giving the position of any element within an open environment at any given instant (whether animal in a reserve or human in a corporation, as with an electronic collar), is not necessarily one of science fiction. Felix Guattari has imagined a city where one would be able to leave one's apartment, one's street, one's neighborhood, thanks to one's (dividual) electronic card that raises a given barrier; but the card could just as easily be rejected on a given day or between certain hours; what counts is

not the barrier but the computer that tracks each person's position—licit or illicit—and effects a universal modulation. (Deleuze 1992: section 3)

Technologies that open closed doors for us can just as easily keep them shut. Freedom and repression emanate from the same machines.

For Deleuze, the data gathered on us through the new technologies did not necessarily manifest our irreducible uniqueness. Rather, the very way that the data can be gathered about us and then used for and against us marks us as dividuals. Deleuze wrote (1992): "The numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information, or reject it. [....] Individuals have become 'dividuals' and masses [have become] samples, data, markets, or 'banks.'" For Deleuze, such technologies indicate that we as discrete selves are not in-divisible entities; on the contrary, we can be divided and subdivided endlessly. What starts as particular information about specific people—our selves—can be separated from us and recombined in new ways outside of our control. Such "recombinations" are based on the criteria deemed salient by those with access to the information, be they government officials or corporate marketeers. We live now, Deleuze held, within societies of control.

How can we be deemed individual (in its irreducible and autonomous sense of agency) when we are divided into those with and without access. The very notion of individuality itself implies that actors are not only entitled to, but also capable of, effecting their will on the world. Access to resources—and the material social relations that are implicated therein—is thus the prerequisite for the practices and Western philosophical discourses that constitute the core an individual. Indeed, the early thinkers in the social contract tradition (like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke) considered in varying ways how the survival of embodied selves in a hypothetical state of nature faced dangers insofar as a government did not secure the rights of property deemed so basic to the existence of individuality in the first place.

Dividuality and our Reducible Selves

Here, I provide a dialectical elaboration of Deleuze by focusing on two facets of "dividuality" that he did not develop in the "Postscript." First, the separation of physical selves from their representation as data offers both negative consequences as well as potentially positive uses for promoting social justice. Second, the individual selves in a mass-market society lose their aura of distinctiveness because the selves are able to be classified (and thereby manipulated) by the very data which are supposed to serve individual needs. Indeed, the manipulation of such information about individuals for marketing purposes highlights how the notion of "consumer sovereignty" is an overblown and contradictory term in an era of advanced globalization.

The processes of dividuality which operate via the technologies of control make distinctions that separate one from the many. But they also include the ways in which we ourselves are sub-divisible. That is, via the data collected on us, the technologies of control can separate who we are and what we are from our physical selves (see Poster 1990). The data become the representations of ourselves within the web of social relations; the data are the signifiers of our discrete preferences and habits. Borrowing from Laudon, such can be called our "data images" (Laudon 1986). Because I am not physically present I am thus reduced to my documented interests and behavior. Complex processes of self formation are thereby reified by a few formulae and data points in some electronic storage facility. The separation of our selves from our representations illuminates another aspect of dividuality. As data, we are classifiable in diverse ways: we are sorted into different categories, and can be evaluated for

different purposes. Are we potential customers or clients? (What have we purchased recently?) Are we a threat to national security? (What is our citizenship or visa status? Are we buying items that could build a bomb?) Our divisibility hence becomes the basis for our classifiability into salient, useful, and even profitable categories for the businesses and government agencies that manipulate the data. Despite the rhetoric of having "it" our own way, companies typically do not make individual items that will be purchased by only one person. (In a capitalist world economy where is the profit in that?) Over the last several centuries the aura of discrete items has given way to the commonness of their mass production—not only as Walter Benjamin analyzed with regard to art work and mass media content (1969), but also in terms of our everyday items of consumption. For instance, the distinctiveness of a Sunday sit-down dinner made from scratch gives way to a "sumptuous buffet" as advertised at a local eatery. Choice, thus, tends to be limited to the possibility of selecting from among different styles, colors, and flavors.

A contradiction of modern society is manifested here: the irreducible uniqueness of self, so touted by Western value systems, is actually quite reducible to generalizable preferences (Frankfurt Institute for Social Research 1972; Horkheimer 1989). We are catalogued via a summation of our discrete desires and habits, and we make our consumer choices within a preestablished range of items and their available permutations. The niche targeting of commodities does not negate or lessen the influence of that preestablished set of commodities; indeed, it reinforces the mechanisms and techniques that dividuate us because we can be catalogued by past behaviors and purchases and then solicited in our niche with the "appropriate" marketing inducements to purchase those specific brands (Klein 2000). As selves subjected to the technologies of control, we are all divisible entities.