Marcuse and the Crisis of the New Radicalism: From Politics to Religion?

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It is not a sign of disrespect to any major thinker if his thought is considered a symptom of wider phenomena that belong to whole social or cultural movements. In the case of Herbert Marcuse, in fact, such a treatment seems especially warranted. The chief interest of Marcuse's thought, accentuated by the writer's depth, erudition, and sophistication as a philosophical synthesizer, is that it exhibits in a curious and dramatic way the strains and stresses characterizing "New Left" radical thought as a whole in advanced industrial society. Marcuse's thought is situated almost exactly at the center point along the New Left spectrum, poised between and

sharing in two related but diverging tendencies. The New Left, to put it briefly, is an uneasy amalgam of two movements, two large, basic issues of protest and dissatisfaction. One has a global basis and gains expression in demands to achieve peace, prosperity, and freedom, with particular reference to the poor, ex-colonial part of the world. The other has a parochial basis and is articulated as the demand to improve the quality of life in advanced and affluent societies. It has been argued (by Marcuse and others) that these two radical concerns simply dovetail into each other, or even that they are necessarily "presupposed" by each other. But the claim, to say the least, is highly problematic, and the more one tries to comprehend the nature of these two tendencies in theoretical terms, the more aware one becomes of the difficulties.

On the side of demands concerned with the plight of the world's poor and the oppressed, the issues appear to be simple enough. Here (as exemplified by the radicalism of thinkers like Fanon or Guevara) one is still moving in the familiar world of radicalism understood as a *political* phenomenon. It is with the other component of New Left thought that disturbing elements enter and blur our traditional picture of "radicalism." The chief novelty of the New Left in advanced society, its spokesmen claim, has been its endeavor to transcend "politics" altogether. The new radicalism has been labeled "moral," "psychic," "artistic," "aesthetic," "cultural," "ideological," or even more vaguely "total," calling for changes in the nature of the "whole man." In view of this evident and rather confused search for an identity, the reappearance of the term "religion" cannot be without some significance. It has been employed to denote the character of the New Left by friend and foe alike.[1]

[1]Cf. P. Jacobs and S. Landau, *The New Radicals* (London: Penguin Books, 1967): "To be in the Movement is to search for a psychic community. . . ." (13) T. Roszak talks about the New Left in terms of a "grand cultural imperative," likening it to the beginnings of Christianity, in *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 42-44. Hazel Barnes thinks that "everywhere in the student protests one may be aware of an aura of the religious." *The University as the New Church* (London: Pitman & Sons, 1970), 9. In Timothy Leary's opinion "we are right in the middle of that most amazing social phenomenon, a religious renaissance." *The Politics of Ecstasy*

Now in what sense can the new radicalism be understood as a *religious* phenomenon? Obviously, meanings assigned to the term would vary with each commentator, and certain senses of "religion" should be discarded at the outset. If, for example, by "religion" is meant "belief in a superhuman personal deity," then the New Left (in most of its ramifications) will appear most decidedly irreligious in character. But this is too superficial an approach. As the often half-conscious gropings of both critics and adherents testify, there is a deeper and more fundamental meaning of "religion" and "religious," and that meaning may be precisely what we are looking for here.

In this article an attempt will be made to identify and contrast two strains in the tradition of radical thought, one of which will be called the "political" and the other the "religious" strain. It will be argued that although the two strains have coexisted through most of the history of modern Western culture, they represent latently and potentially *contradictory* tendencies, and that the incompatible nature of these tendencies is revealed in New Left thought to a degree not experienced before: that is the crisis of the new radicalism. Marcuse will be presented here as the thinker in whose doctrines the political and religious strains of radical thought are set on a spectacular collision course.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

It will be necessary, first, to make a few remarks on our conventional distinctions between "politics" and "religion" in general terms,

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(London: Paladin, 1970), 286. David Martin, in a recent collection, describes R. D. Laing's philosophy as religious, and the editor, Maurice Cranston, comments: "Conceivably this is also true of others who are dealt with in these pages; I have called them 'theorists', but perhaps they should be seen as prophets and preachers, breathing fire and brimstone in the wilderness of an irreligious age." M. Cranston, ed., *The New Left* (London: The Bodley Head, 1970), 13. (The collection includes a piece on Marcuse by Cranston himself.) For a discussion of the modern intellectual quest for religion see the last two chapters of F. L. Baumer, *Religion and the Rise of Scepticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960), and A. F. Skutch, *The Golden Core of Religion* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970).

before we can tackle the problems presented by radicalism. For the mainstream of Western consciousness the distinction certainly exists, and it is essential to note that our understanding of both religion and politics presupposes that these two idioms of thought and forms of activity should appear as mutually exclusive and contrasted to each other. Though definitions always impose certain restrictions and arbitrariness on a subject, we shall have to venture a few, so as to ease the way for the arguments to follow. What we have to find is the broadest, least restricted sense of both religion and politics. "Politics" relates, minimally, to social relations, to institutions, to social and legal aspects of authority, to problems connected with the realities (and unrealities) of power. In short, politics has to do with the *outer*, the "public realm," the inter-human dimension. Religion, in contrast, is defined as thought and activity primarily concerned with the *inner*, the intra-human dimension; it has to do, in the conventional understanding, with problems relating to morality and the spiritual value of human life, with ultimate explanations and the "salvation of the soul" (as sociologists of religion sometimes put it). For our purposes the contrast is best grasped in this form: politics concerns itself with human *relations*, religion concerns itself with a *way of life*. It is, of course, not asserted here that these two preoccupations are unrelated or that they are always contradictory. As we shall see, however, they can be opposed in certain circumstances.

A brief glance at the historical development of the separation will be instructive here. The distinction itself, it is to be noted, is a feature only of the modern age. In the beginning, in ancient Greek thought, the two spheres are hardly distinguished, and politics almost wholly dominates and determines religion. In the consciousness of antiquity, man is a being whose social relations, i.e., his belonging to a particular political community, defines his moral and spiritual awareness, his relation to himself and to anything that might be considered higher or larger than himself. In early and medieval Christianity (but starting with Plato and Stoicism) the roles are reversed: it is now religion that determines and rules over politics. Man's individuality, his soul, his awareness and acceptance of a transcendental and overarching spiritual authority are seen as the dominant factors that define not merely the moral rules

that he has individually to adhere to, but also the rules that explain and justify the customs of his political communities. The Renaissance marks the first stages of separation. At first, as exemplified chiefly in the writings of such thinkers as Marsilius and Machiavelli, there appears the fast-growing conviction in the "autonomy" of politics, signifying both the assertion that politics has its own independent rules of conduct, and the (implicit) admission that its scope and validity are restricted to a limited area of human life. Later and mainly as a response to this challenge, there develops a corresponding "autonomous" conception of religion (first crystallized in Luther and mainstream Reformation thought), which vindicates and reasserts the primacy of religion, but only as something confined to the spiritual and private sphere. With politics coming "down to earth" and concerning itself more and more with the mundane and actual needs of the community, religion is, as it were, "kicked upstairs," becoming an ultimate and remote sanction for judging customs and ways of life. So gradually we see the emergence of the now prevalent pattern, largely accepted throughout Western consciousness, in which politics plays one game and religion another; there is often interaction and cross-fertilization, but the two are essentially distinct and separate.

With radical thought, however, the situation is different. Here there has never been an acceptance of the separation; indeed, one of the best ways to understand post-Enlightenment radicalism is to see it as a series of attempts to re-establish a lost unity on ever higher levels. At this point, however, we can perceive a fundamental ambiguity in the radical position, and it is this ambiguity that leads ultimately to what is here termed a "crisis." For although radicalism is primarily a political phenomenon (radicals, as a rule, were always pioneers in attempts to achieve the complete "emancipation" of politics from religion and the "secularization" of the life of the community), radical thought has a double origin: it derives *both* from the modern notion of politics as a limited and "public" concern, *and* from the acute sense of deprivation and impoverishment that has accompanied the separation from the very beginning.

Radical thought from the Enlightenment onwards has attempted not merely to protect the community from the authority of religion, but to absorb and eliminate religion itself. This has been a long

and protracted process, starting with attacks on churches as institutions (Voltaire), continuing with assaults on the doctrine of spirit and transcendence (Holbach and the materialists), and culminating in the denial of the man-nature distinction (Feuerbach and the Left Hegelians). On the one hand, the modern radical has been firm in his acceptance of the assumptions on which the modern notion of politics rests: assumptions relating to the sovereignty of the community and the self-sufficiency of the individual human being. On the other hand, however, he has been sensitive to needs not attended to in a secular culture: needs relating to the knowledge of ultimate values and the belonging to a reality higher than the individual. When the radical takes upon himself the task of providing for religious *needs*, however, he cannot very easily avoid becoming tangled up with some of the *features* of religion. Hence the two strains in radicalism: the cause of unity can be furthered either by emphasizing the assumptions rooted in the notion of modern secular "politics," or by relying upon ideas and attitudes derived from our religious tradition. The important point to notice, of course, is that right up to the present the "political" tradition of radicalism has almost completely dominated the field, while the "religious" tradition has been muted. The prime example is Marx whose thought moved from the quasi-religion of Left Hegelianism to "Marxism," which is thoroughly political.

To elucidate the distinctions between the two strains, we can consider them under three headings that correspond to the three cardinal concerns of radicalism. The first relates to the radical's *criticism* of society. The political tradition begins with the "people." A certain kind of ground-level "democratism" (not necessarily a belief in "democracy") is, indeed, an integral aspect of the modern notion of politics. Politics, and *a fortiori* radical politics, conceives of values, power, and legitimacy as proceeding in an "ascending" order from the governed, the people, to government and institutions in general.[2] Thus the political radical has always presented his case as an articulation of the people's ultimate desires and wishes. His concern has been with human relations, and his

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[2] Cf. W. Ullman, *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1961), Introduction.

complaints have accordingly been couched in terms that refer to these relations: oppression, exploitation, enslavement. Political radicals have seen the raison d'être of their oppositional platforms in the unhappiness of other human beings, and in their visible and conscious suffering under the yoke of an unjust, inhuman, or decadent political and social system. Radicals would, of course, admit that in certain circumstances the oppressed may endure their situation, but they would nevertheless maintain that the radical programs they advocate are both in the interest of and in accordance with the wishes of the people. Religious radicalism, on the other hand, begins not with the people, or the putative (and possibly inarticulate) wishes of the people, but from an idealized norm of what human nature and society should become. Radical politics has assumed man to be good and rational, though sometimes misguided. For religious radicalism man appears reprobate, though, of course, capable of being saved. The religious radical has thus been concerned not so much with oppression, suffering, and unhappiness, as with sin, corruption, and degradation—the quality of a certain way of life. He, too, would abhor oppression, but he would often be more interested in the salvation of the perpetrator of injustice than with relieving the immediate suffering of the victim. Admittedly, the two positions are not very far removed from each other, and can sometimes overlap. Below, however, in my discussion of Marcuse's critique of advanced industrial society, I shall take the opportunity of further commenting on the differences between them.

The second point relates to the radical's *understanding* of the society he criticizes. Here again we can distinguish between two widely diverging tendencies, one typically political and the other typically religious, though here, too, overlaps and mutual interpenetration are not entirely absent. The political way of understanding society is to analyze it, to strive to comprehend it in terms of its own characteristics, life, and features, its own constituent parts. Radical thought in the political style has likewise tended to concentrate on objectionable features within society itself, leading to the discovery of "conflicts" between society's constituent parts. Thus we have had theories of the baleful character of aristocratic and monarchical government, later replaced by theories of class conflict

(and also conflicts of nations or races). The religious way of understanding society, in contrast, is not by analysis but by designation or holistic pronouncement. The religious radical attributes objectionable features in society not to any conflict of interest between classes or races, but to something, some non-human agency, that afflicts society and human nature as a whole. Erstwhile theological and quasi-theological formulations of this agency included the "devil," "original sin," "evil spirit," and the like, but more recent versions, such as "nature," "ignorance," "alienation," and "instinct," belong to the same category, as long as—the crucial point—they do not lead to a dichotomization of society, but leave society, for the purposes of radical reform or revolution, as one undifferentiated whole. "Man," it has been said,[3] is an apolitical term. It is very important to grasp this last point, for in the political tradition of radicalism it has not been unheard of to argue in terms of "conflicts of interest" that are at the same time attributed to some non-social or non-human factor. Thus in Rousseau inequality is connected with vanity, in Bentham sinister interest with ignorance, and in Marx exploitation with alienation. But the point is that with these and other radical thinkers of the modern age designation leads unilaterally to analysis, and it is then that the analytical part of the thinker's theory will be seen as relevant to the radical's struggle to change society. The religious understanding, it seems, is chiefly characterized by a fixation on, or tendency towards, simple holistic designation, i.e., pronouncing society and man to be suffering from a ubiquitous "imperfection" or some mysterious "illness." The consequences of this divergence are obvious. The political radical, since his immediate attention is on conflict, has tended to attribute primary importance to active political fight, involving institutional change. The religious radical, since he is preoccupied with a universal affliction, has tended on the other hand to be con-

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[3]See Marx's critique of the Left Hegelians, especially in *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The German Ideology*. Marcuse, incidentally, is presented as a "pre-Marxian" (i.e., Left Hegelian) thinker in A. C. MacIntyre's perceptive though unredeemingly hostile critique, *Marcuse* (London: Fontana, 1969), *passim*. As I shall argue, though the charge is essential correct, Marcuse's regression is not wholly "retrogressive."

cerned primarily with self-purification and exorcism, concentrating more on a change within the individual.

This leads us to the third point which relates to the radical's *program* in his endeavor to change man and society. Political radicalism, almost by definition, has been traditionally understood to mean efforts to change the institutions and the pattern of the distribution of power in society. Prior change in individuals has not, as a rule, been considered important, partly because of the democratic assumption (see above), and partly because it has been held that the existing structure of society actually prevents the development of radical consciousness. Religious change, on the other hand, has meant the primary (and sometimes exclusive) change of people's hearts and minds. Both strains of radicalism do, of course, stress the importance of "education" prior to change, but with one all-important difference. Political education tells the people why they are unhappy and how they can improve their situation, whereas religious education tells the people why they should no longer feel happy (i.e., that they are sinful) and how they can improve themselves (leading, in some instances, to an improvement of their situation). Forcible education in a new society (as long as it is regarded as "temporary") is compatible with politics, while religious education in radicalism does not have to envisage a permanent state of "unhappiness" in the future. Religious radicalism, while insisting on individual "conversion," may or may not involve intentions to change society as well. For many varieties of religious extremism institutional change has appeared not merely secondary but unimportant: it has been held that a new spirit can infuse and regenerate even corrupt institutions, or alternatively that converts to a new way of life can rise above the external institutional world. Finally, in the case of political radicalism we can usually find a more or less conscious distinction between the *activity to change* and *changed activity*. The political radical, acting on his assumptions of conflict and the necessity to fight, has tended to accept the "compromise" solution of struggling against a form of society with weapons suited to the nature of that society, and not to the society he wants eventually to achieve. Religious radicalism, since it insists on "total" change, with the emphasis on the individual human being, has tended on the other hand to conflate means and

ends, and hence to evaluate radical action in terms of its ideal, rather than in terms of the society it considers ought to be changed.

We have, then, the three antitheses between the political and religious strains: dissatisfaction versus sinfulness; conflict versus universal malady; and structural change versus individual conversion. We may now proceed with our examination of Marcuse.

MARCUSE'S CRITIQUE OF ADVANCED SOCIETY

To start with the Marcusean critique. Marcuse, of course, is a Marxist, and Marxism belongs to the political tradition. The overall framework of his criticism, therefore, is still primarily couched in terms of the effects of advanced society on those, within and without, who are not part of it. He calls attention to the openly oppressive, violent features of this society, often mentioning such defects as poverty, neo-colonialism, imperialist wars, and racial discrimination. But while he is not blind to evils that the political radical has been wont to notice, it is not an exaggeration to say that the central parts of his critique display a vastly different emphasis and concentration. Marcuse, we could say, has become Marcuse not because he restated Marxism in more moral and philosophical terms, but because he endeavored to redirect traditional radical criticism from the suffering underdog to the corrupt, degraded, misled agent of oppression and injustice. The tone of Marcuse's critique is the tone of a Saint Paul and Savonarola, only faintly resembling the customary idiom of modern political radicals. He is the scourge of a society that "degrades everything" and acts "in an increasingly inhuman way,"[4] in which there is a "complete degradation of man to an object," the "progressive brutalism and moronization of man."[5]

He fights "against the system's hypocritical morality,"[6] being concerned with "a *moral* rebellion, against the blasphemous religion of this society."[7] In Marcuse's opinion "the revolt at home against

[4]Herbert Marcuse, *Five Lectures* (London: Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1970), 86.

[5]Herbert Marcuse, "Liberation from the Affluent Society," in *The Dialectics of Liberation,* ed. by D. Cooper (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 181.

[6]*Five Lectures,* 86.

[7]Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (London: Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1969), 62. Emphasis in original.

home seems largely impulsive, its targets hard to define: nausea caused by 'the way of life', revolt as a matter of physical and mental hygiene."[8]   The focus is internal, the critique highlights the features of a society that, although behaving wickedly and immorally towards the outside world, reaches its climax of depravity in its behavior towards itself: people in advanced society inflict the heaviest wounds on their own minds and moral sensibilities.   So, "at this stage, the question is no longer: how can the individual satisfy his own needs without hurting others, but rather: how can he satisfy his needs without hurting himself . . .?"[9]   And he demands that "men must come to see it and to find their way from false to true consciousness, from their immediate to their real interest."[10]

But not only is Marcuse's attention focused on moral issues, on objectionable features in a certain way of life, not only does his tone resemble that of religious radicals; his substantive position rests on the unhesitating, open, and categorical repudiation of what has been identified above as the basic democratism of radical politics.   What does this mean?   Here we must enlarge a little on the point made above in this connection.   Identification of the "will" and "interest" of the people is a genuine problem, and quite obviously, political radicals, especially those of most recent times, have not always literally accepted (and could not accept) the democratic principle in full.   From Babeuf[11] to Lenin there have been numerous radical thinkers with conceptions of an "enlightened vanguard" having to coerce a "benighted" people.   As a distinguished radical scholar, Christian Bay, has expressed the point, in today's advanced society, with opinion governed by the media of mass communication, the political thinker has to be mindful of the

[8]Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (London: Sphere Books, 1969, with New Political Preface, 1966), 14. (First published in 1955.)

[9]*An Essay on Liberation*, 4.

[10]Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Sphere Books, 1968), 12. (First published in 1964.)

[11]See Maurice Cranston, "Herbert Marcuse," *Encounter*, 32 (March 1969), 38-50.   (Reprinted in M. Cranston, *The New Left*), where Cranston calls attention to some of Marcuse's radical ancestry.   Though very critical, this is a most insightful essay.

"potential freedom" of people, threats to which can go unnoticed, as the minds of people are "manipulated."[12] Professor Bay, therefore, would like to see the individual able to resist these threats, "insofar as the manipulation serves other interests at the expense of his own."[13] Elsewhere, Bay proposes to found politics "on the study of basic human needs as distinct from manifest wants and demands," adding that manifest demands are often the outcome of indoctrination.[14] Now perhaps we can make our distinction more exact and intelligible. The crucial ideas are "indoctrination" and "other interests." Bay and Lenin (and others of similar persuasion) remain within the traditional idiom of political radicalism insofar as they base their respective conceptions of "manipulation" and "indoctrination" upon a notion of some conflict of interest, and insofar as their dichotomies between "real" and "false" consciousness still identify "real" with "the individual's own" and "false" with something merely "external." Marcuse, however, often seems to sever even this tenuous link with the political tradition of radicalism. The concept of the "people's real will" can be stretched to quite a degree, but then it snaps and what we are left with is the higher (religious) norm prescribing how people ought to live their lives. Marcuse's central notion of "one-dimensionality," for example, goes considerably further than even the neo-Marxist concept of "alienation." While "alienation" still posits a gap between the individual self and society, the Marcusean critique sees the individual as wholly absorbed in and by his world. The actual desires and wishes of "one-dimensional man," therefore, are acknowledged to be genuine and natural, though Marcuse regards them as morally objectionable. His critique, as one commentator has put it, contains "infinite plasticity," and it "regresses into theology" inasmuch as Marcuse cannot falsify the false consciousness through "real contradictions within the existing."[15]

[12]Christian Bay, *The Structure of Freedom* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958).

[13]*Ibid.*, 319.

[14]Christian Bay, "The Cheerful Science of Dismal Politics," in *The Dissenting Academy*, ed. by T. Roszak (London: Penguin Books, 1967), 192.

[15]Wolfgang Fritz Haug, "Das Ganze und das ganz Andere," in *Antworten*

Marcuse asserts that in advanced society there is "a one-dimensional static identification of the individual with the others and with the administered reality principle."[16] "This identification is not illusion but reality . . . the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms."[17] The subjective need to change is repressed "firstly, by virtue of the actual satisfaction of needs, and secondly, by a massive scientific manipulation and administration of needs."[18] The present needs and satisfactions, Marcuse goes on, "to a great extent, have become the individual's own."[19] Advanced society has achieved this unprecedented degree of "one-dimensional" conformity "not by terror but by the more or less beneficial productivity and efficiency of the apparatus."[20] There is now "voluntary compliance" and "pre-established harmony between individual needs and socially required desires, goals, and aspirations."[21] Paradoxically perhaps, Marcuse's critique, seen in the light of more traditionally conceived political criticisms, depicts advanced society as almost a veritable paradise, where people do not simply endure a system, do not have to conceal or struggle against their feelings of unhappiness, but are unreservedly happy and contented. Advanced society "delivers the goods." "It is a good way of life—much better than before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change."[22] Individuals here can enjoy the "freedom from using the brain,"[23] and they are, in their "repressed" state, still "reasonably and often even exuberantly happy."[24] Statements of a similar kind could be cited from Mar-

auf Herbert Marcuse, ed. by Jurgen Habermas (Frankfurt: a.M. Suhrkamp, 1968), 65.

[16]*Five Lectures,* 47.

[17]*One Dimensional Man,* 23.

[18]"Liberation from the Affluent Society," in Cooper, ed., *Dialectics of Liberation,* 182.

[19]*One Dimensional Man,* 23.

[20]*Five Lectures,* 57.

[21]*One Dimensional Man,* 71.

[22]*Ibid.,* 27.

[23]*Ibid.,* 189.

[24]*Eros and Civilization,* 51.

cuse's writings almost ad infinitum, but these seem adequate to show the essential character of his critique of advanced society. The character of this critique is religious. Marcuse's attention is fixed on quality, moral value, a way of life, and his demons are perversion, degradation, corruption, and a shameful form of happiness and contentment. Marcuse, the radical thinker, claims no longer only to articulate the people's wishes and to contrapose them to the wishes of an outside oppressor or exploiter, he claims no longer simply to represent the people's interest as against the interest of some other group. His dichotomy of human needs is between two kinds, both of which are real, but one of which is higher and the other lower. Instead of asserting that he represents a "general will," he openly declares that his aim is "to transform the will itself, so that people no longer want what they now want."[25] Perhaps it should be emphasized here that Marcuse's arguments appear to a large extent valid, testifying to the courage, independence, and perspicuity of their author. But it is important to realize that Marcuse's arguments and accusations land him in a "dimension" different from the political tradition of radical criticism.

MARCUSE'S EXPLANATION

But let us proceed further. As we have seen, Marcuse's critique of advanced society, though containing (and emphasizing) motifs that can only be called religious, is nonetheless ostensibly derived from a framework that is still Marxist and still pronouncedly political. Now Marcuse often writes as though he would explain the phenomenon of "one-dimensionality" as well as the bureaucratic arrest in socialist states[26] by reference to the "vicious circle" of peaceful coexistence, and all his writings are liberally sprinkled with statements arguing that advanced society in the West still has a capitalist, i.e., antagonistic, class character, that "exploitation" is still going on, and that basic social conflicts, which give rise to the "moronization" of advanced society, are still ulti-

[25]*Five Lectures*, 77.
[26]See the unjustly neglected *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), a markedly "political" work of Marcuse.

mately derivable from contradictions in the productive process. There is no need to doubt that Marcuse's belief in the truth and explanatory power of these orthodox Marxian categories is genuine. The interesting question for us, however, is to see to what extent Marcuse as a *theorist* can accommodate these and other Marxian categories of explanation with other, equally if not more genuinely held, elements in his thought. Does the *logic* of his understanding of man and society render these Marxian categories necessary to the fabric of his thought, or does it reveal them as superfluous? On this reading of Marcuse the answer seems to be the latter; indeed, these other elements in the Marcusean understanding again seem to place Marcuse perilously near to typically religious moulds of explanation.

Marcuse tends consistently to obscure the identity of antagonistic forces in society, especially the adversary whom more orthodox radicals would designate as some kind of "ruling class." It is Marcuse's main thesis that in advanced society class rule is replaced by (and not merely disguised as) the rule of things. This society "alters the base of domination by gradually replacing personal dependence . . . with dependence on the 'objective order of things'. . . ."[27] "Society is indeed the whole which exercises its independent power over the individuals, and this Society is no unidentifiable 'ghost'. It has its empirical hard core in the system of institutions. . . ."[28] Again: "what actually dominates is the economic, political and cultural apparatus, which has become an indivisible unity constructed by social labour."[29] A random selection of terms used by Marcuse to denote the adversary would be interesting here: system of anonymous powers, system of subdued pluralism, the powers that be, total administration, anonymous power of technological society, They, the Masters, the Establishment, unmastered forces in society, introjected social controls, etc., etc. Not only are these terms lacking in definite political content,[30] while rich in evocative, quasi-religious flavor, but they suggest, sometimes openly but more

[27]*One Dimensional Man,* 120.
[28]*Ibid.,* 153.
[29]*Five Lectures,* 3.
[30]Cf. Michael Harrington writing on the "New Radicalism": "Big Business is part of it [the Establishment], of course, but then, so is Big Labor, and Big Labor's ally, Liberalism, and Liberalism's ally, Social Democracy, and so on.

often subliminally, that in advanced society *all* are victims, all, more or less equally, are deformed by "repression." Marcuse claims that repression now is "self-imposed in the ruling group itself."[31] "The masters, like the servants, submit to limitations on their instinctual gratification, on pleasure."[32]

This raises an interesting conceptual problem that Freudian neo-Marxists, including Marcuse, have not yet been able to solve. If, as Marcuse seems to assert, in advanced society all are consumers, all have the same "wants," then what is the point of calling one group "oppressors" and the other the "oppressed?" If, further, these wants are "manufactured" and are deemed pernicious, then obviously all members of society are victims of some force more powerful than themselves. If, on the other hand, these wants are regarded as "manufactured" only for the oppressed, while one sees them as natural and good for the so-called oppressors, then why should one regard these wants as pernicious? Surely they should appear as a blessing. In either case, the notions of "ruling" and "oppression" lose much of their political significance. In this instance, it is Marcuse's decided leaning to the former alternative that makes his frequent references to "vested interests," and his attempted salvaging of a Marxist-type conflict theory, no more than a well-meant lip-service to customary forms of political thought, which, logically speaking, are supernumerary to his explanations.[33]

As a means of defining a moral stance, this is fine; as sociology or as politics, it is empty." *Partisan Review,* 32 (Summer 1965), 197.

[31]*Eros and Civilization,* 65.

[32]*Five Lectures,* 21.

[33]More orthodox Marxist critiques of Marcuse, of course, stress this issue. A Soviet critic, for example, has recently made the point that Marcuse does not even notice private ownership, let alone see it as the root cause of exploitation. See S. Mozhnyagun, "Gerbert Markuze," *Literaturnaya Gazeta,* December 23, 1969, 13. (Translation is by courtesy of Mr. A. Wood, of the Russian Department, Hull University.) See also A. Zamoshkin and N. V. Motroshilova, "Is Marcuse's 'critical theory of society' critical?" *Soviet Review,* 11 (Spring 1970), 3-24. Göran Therborn, writing from the Althusserian point of view, considers that Marcuse's analysis of advanced society provides no concepts through which "real" contradictions can be discovered. "The Frankfurt School," *New Left Review,* 63 (October 1970), 65-96. See also Haug, "Das Ganze und das ganz Andere."

It may be remarked at this point, however, that Marcuse's preference for "repression" and "domination" over "exploitation" renders his theory more convincing and more homogeneous than some other Freud-inspired neo-Marxian attempts that are beset by the same kinds of problems. It is no doubt possible to condemn, with Marx and other political radicals, the "oppression" that obtains in certain societies. It is also possible to talk about the "repression of instincts" in the Freudian idiom. It is also possible (though not easy) to establish a theoretical connection between the two. What is not possible is to maintain innocently that political oppression and instinctual repression are identical or even continuous in meaning.[34]

The concept of "domination," his version of the perennial religious notion of evil, is defined by Marcuse in a characteristically broad manner. He writes in his latest book: "Domination is in effect whenever the individual's goals and purposes and the means of striving for and attaining them, are prescribed to him and performed by him as something prescribed. Domination can be exercized by men, by nature, by things—it can also be internal, exercized by the individual himself. . . ."[35] He adds that in this last case domination would appear as "autonomy." Of particular importance here is not Marcuse's apparent indifference to the distinctions between external and internal domination, his implied view that both these forms are just sub-species, manifestations of a deeper-lying, almost generic phenomenon in human life. What we have to notice is that Marcuse's indifference is only apparent, and that, as his arguments unfold, he comes to intimate rather strongly that in his hierarchy of evil "internal domination" (which parades as "autonomy") is the more objectionable of the two. In a revealing passage he talks about the price that previous generations have had to pay for political freedom (calling to mind, incidentally, Marx's famous denunciation of Luther in the former's Feuerbachian, religious, phase):

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[34]I think in particular two otherwise important works, Erich Fromm's *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Co., 1963, and Reimut Reiche's *Sexuality and Class Struggle* (London: New Left Books, 1970), suffer from this defect.

[35]*Five Lectures*, 1.

> Political freedom is developed on this double basis of moral compulsion: wrung from absolutism in bloody street conflicts and battles, it is set up, secured and neutralized in the self-discipline and self-renunciation of individuals. They have learned that their inalienable freedom is subject to duties not the least of which is the suppression of instinctual drives. Moral and physical compulsion have a common denominator—*domination*.[36]

Now this is an extreme position for Marcuse to take, and it is in sharp contrast to some of our cherished beliefs about the necessary price we have to pay for political freedom. This price has always (and rightly) been understood to involve the need for vigilance, both in the form of institutional militancy (e.g., the "safeguarding of democracy"), and in the shape of the internalization of certain basic moral rules. In the best case these rules do indeed appear "autonomous," "prescribed by the individual himself." Marcuse, however, seems to assert that "self-discipline" *itself* is pernicious, being just another form of "domination," and he goes even so far as to say that self-discipline "neutralizes" political achievements. Marcuse's strictures against "Kantian" morality suggest that at least in some of his moods he prefers a future society where "spontaneity" and "free instinctual gratification" are the main goods, leaving the question of political rule and political freedom conveniently obscured, to one where "self-renunciation" is consciously and deliberately accepted with a view to preserving political freedom. If, as seems likely, these two alternatives are empirically incompatible, it is not difficult to see which is the more "politically" radical of the two.[37]

What, to go a step further, is Marcuse's view of the cause and origin of domination in society? This question takes us right into the center of Marcuse's Freudian, quasi-religious philosophy. It is

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[36]*Ibid.*, 10. Emphasis in original.

[37]Cf. the opinion of a sympathetic commentator: " . . . a preoccupation with self-liberation lends itself too easily to domination by others. A case has been made that Zen quietism contributed significantly to the rise of militarism in Japan . . . and the Tibetans were doing their thing when the Red Chinese marched into their country." William Braden, *The Age of Aquarius: Technology and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971), 258.

not, of course, suggested that Freudian thought, even Freudian political thought, is itself religious in any meaningful (or even a very broad) sense of the term. Yet it cannot be denied that the original Freudian design itself was akin to some sort of religious quest, and it is not for nothing that Freud has been called the greatest Jewish prophet since Old Testament times. As Paul Robinson remarks, Freud "at the end of his life, identified his own intellectual venture with the religious mission of Moses."[38] And Marcuse sharply distinguishes between Freudian psychoanalytic science and Freudian "metapsychology," criticizing Freud's own secularist beliefs about the truth of science and religion,[39] and asserting that today "the function of science and of religion has changed" and "where religion still preserves the uncompromised aspirations for peace and happiness, its illusions still have a higher truth value than science which works for their elimination."[40] It seems, therefore, that it is not unreasonable to look upon Marcuse's adaptation of Freud as an attempt to turn "metapsychology" into a kind of modern humanistic theology, complete with an account of genesis, a categorical designation of goods and evils, a story of the fall, as well as a blueprint for future salvation. We shall deal here with only one point, however, that concerning the origin of evil, or domination.

It may come as a surprise that Marcuse appears to accept almost without any reservations the original Freudian myth of the killing of the primal father as *the* explanation. It is true that he voices some half-hearted disclaimers regarding the scientific verifiability

[38]Paul A. Robinson, *The Freudian Left* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 2.

[39]Freud's opinions on religion and science are conveniently reprinted from his *New Introductory Lectures* in *Contemporary Religious Thinkers*, ed. by J. Macquarrie (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). For a critique of Marcuse from a more conventional Freudian angle, see Heide Berndt and Reimut Reiche, "Die geschichtliche Dimension des Realitätsprinzips," in Habermas, *Antworten*.

[40]*Eros and Civilization*, 70. Cf. the interesting and little-known essay by Marcuse, "Marxism and the New Humanity: An Unfinished Revolution," in *Marxism and Radical Religion: Essays Toward a Revolutionary Humanism*, ed. by John C. Raines and Thomas Dean (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1970.)

and logical coherence of the story,[41] and acclaims only its "symbolic value." But since Marcuse is emphatic in his scathing criticism of science and conventional logic, the disclaimer should perhaps not be taken too seriously. Marcuse's pejorative view of "common sense" is well known from the pages of *One Dimensional Man,* thus his opinion that while the Freudian myth defies common sense it claims "a truth which common sense has been trained to forget,"[42] can be construed as a clear acceptance of the myth. Now the Freudian myth explains the origin of instinctual repression and ensuing "domination" strictly by reference to the nature of human instincts, in particular to the libidinal drive to obtain maximum sexual gratification. In the primal horde, ex hypothesi, the father kept all the women to himself, whereupon the other males, the sons, one day revolted and succeeded in killing him, taking the women and now obtaining the sexual pleasure hitherto denied them.[43] Marcuse, however, attempts in a rather confused way to supplement and reinterpret the myth by introducing a wholly extraneous category, "scarcity." His purpose is to show that the repression of instincts is an historical phenomenon, and not a human biological necessity. He argues, in the first place, that what Freud, in common with other "bourgeois apologists," regards as the natural, immutable scarcity of resources is merely the result of contrived maldistribution under an inegalitarian social system. This Marxian argument is by no means incorrect, except that it is not relevant to the question under consideration. Contrived scarcity may or may not be the principal *effect* of domination, but it can certainly not be regarded as its *cause.*

But what of "natural scarcity?" Marcuse sometimes indicates obliquely that this is where the answer lies (here even seeking Freud's authority), without, however, wholly committing himself. He merely says that domination is "enforced and sustained" by scarcity, which is, of course, not enough to settle the issue in favor

[41]*Ibid.,* 61.

[42]*Ibid.,* 62.

[43]Freud himself makes it clear that he is engaged in speculation. See *Totem and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), 141; *Moses and Monotheism* (London: Hogarth Press, 1939), 130-132.

of the desired Marxianized explanation. In other places Marcuse keeps falling back on formulations that are purely Freudian in character, as in his assertions about the primal horde: "The father monopolized for himself the woman (the supreme pleasure). . . . She was the aim of the sex instincts, and she was the mother in whom the son once had that integral peace which is the absence of all need and desire—the Nirvana before birth."[44] Thus what Marcuse can show at most is that instinctual repression gives rise *en passant* to political rule, economic exploitation, and the drudgery of labor. What he leaves essentially intact is the central Freudian argument to the effect that repression is and remains rooted in the elemental desire to possess and enjoy the bodies of other human beings.

The point assumes crucial importance in an evaluation of Marcuse's optimistic predictions regarding the present possibility of ending "domination" in society. Marcuse has some very interesting and seemingly plausible theses on the potentially "liberating" effects of advanced technology, on the reduction of labor time and the increase of free time, on the possibility of mankind's leaving behind the phase of the "struggle for existence" and embarking on the "pacification of existence"—all of which, however, (and alas) rest on a feeble foundation. All these arguments assume as their major first premise that the disappearance of natural scarcity has something important to do with repression and domination. But if, as seems to be the case, Marcuse is unable to demonstrate that these two phenomena are linked by more than historically contingent factors in the development of both instinct and technology, his optimistic belief in the immediate practicality of a "non-repressive civilization" rings somewhat hollow. Moreover, at times Marcuse seems to contradict even his own views on the end of scarcity, admitting for example that "the conquest of scarcity is still confined to small areas of advanced industrial society."[45] And in his latest book we read: " . . . neither nature nor poverty nor weakness compels the first suppression of instincts, which is the most important one for the evolution of culture, but rather the despotism of domi-

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[44]*Eros and Civilization*, 73.
[45]*One Dimensional Man*, 189.

nation. . . ."[46] The "despotism of domination" thus finally appears as its own cause and mainstay. On the whole, therefore, Marcuse's endeavor to unite the "outer" and the "inner," the concerns of political and religious radicalism, falls to the ground here in his attempted explanation of the roots of all evil in human life and society. These roots for him remain obstinately in an inner world and have only marginal relevance to politics.

We may briefly consider another issue under this heading. While Marcuse underplays the importance of conflict in society and is consequently ambiguous on the question of the adversary, tending towards the view that there is no human adversary at all, he appears much more forceful and markedly more "political" on the question of the protagonist, his "home team," as it were.[47] Who, what social group, is destined to bring about the revolutionary changes Marcuse desires? Searching for the "historical subject" of the revolution is one of the most persistently recurring themes in his writings, and Marcuse's Marxist conscience is evidently disturbed by his difficulties in finding it. Marcuse's fame, again, rests on his courageous break with Marxian orthodoxy, in that he asserts that the classical Marxian working class in advanced industrial society has ceased to be revolutionary in its needs and aspirations.[48] Marcuse toys with the various solutions, resorting sometimes to philosophy, sometimes to the nations of the developing third world. Most important in this context, however, is his advocacy of sundry new groups thrown up by advanced industrial society itself, an advocacy that has led to his much-criticized "elitism."

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[46]*Five Lectures,* 37.

[47]It is interesting to see that on the whole Marcuse's shorter pieces are much more Marxist and political than his full-length treatises. See, e.g., "Socialist Humanism?" in *Socialist Humanism,* ed. by E. Fromm (London: Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1967), 97-106; "On Changing the World: A Reply to Karl Miller," *Monthly Review,* 19 (October 1967), 42-48; "On Revolution" (Interview), in *Student Power,* ed. by A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 367-372; "Ethics and Revolution," in *Ethics and Society,* ed. by R. T. De George (London: Macmillan, 1968), 133-147.

[48]*One Dimensional Man,* 11, 32, 33, 39; *An Essay on Liberation,* 15. For a critique, see Paul Mattick, "The Limits of Integration," in *The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse,* ed. by K. H. Wolff and B. Moore, Jr. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 374-400.

To make just two points in this connection. First, Marcuse is well aware that in original Marxism the vaunted position of the working class rested on both "objective" and "subjective" considerations, i.e., the working class was assumed by Marx to be both able and willing to bring about the revolution: able because it was the basic productive class, and willing because it was excluded from the dubious blessings of early capitalist culture and prosperity. Marcuse's problem is that today these two desiderata are disunited, concretized in different groups,[49] and Marcuse's aim is to effect a new synthesis. It is suggested here, however, that Marcuse's approach to this question indicates not merely a radical reversion of the erstwhile Marxian position, but also its attempted transfer (or retransfer?) from a political idiom into a religious one. Marcuse seems to assume that revolutionary "ability" and revolutionary "need" are related only externally, that hence almost any pre-existing subjective "need" can be simply transformed into a revolutionary force once a suitable "vehicle" is found for it. But in Marx (even, to some extent, in the early Marx) these two aspects are internally related: the working class is not just excluded from capitalist society; it is excluded *because* it is the basic productive class. And the "subjective need" of the working class to revolt and overthrow capitalist society becomes important only because it is the genuine, irresistibly erupting need of the basic productive class. As Robinson remarks, when Marcuse turned to Freud, he "did not lose faith in the correctness or the relevance of Marxian theory, but the historical failure of the forces to which Marx had entrusted the revolution convinced him that European society had reached a stage where even more radical critical concepts were needed."[50] But the jettisoning of the "historical forces" takes the linchpin out of the Marxian system. In Marx the dialectic has an unmistakably political character: for him it is the will and the needs of the immense majority (the "people") that set the wheels of history in motion (leaving the currently fashionable structuralist interpretation alone for now). In Marcuse, in contrast, the dialectic issues out of a disembodied

[49]Herbert Marcuse, "Revolutionary Subject and Self-government," *Praxis*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1-2 (1969), 326-329.
[50]Robinson, *The Freudian Left*, 179.

will, and for him the motive force of historical change is provided by human needs that are acknowledged to be merely idealized projections.

It would be quite unfair, however, to assert that Marcuse on this score has nothing politically interesting to offer. The important point about his "elitism," which it appears has not yet been sufficiently emphasized,[51] is that it contains two different kinds of elitist conceptions; these are logically independent of each other, with one again revealing a political, the other a religious strain in his thought. Marcuse, as we have noted above, puts his faith in various new groups generated in advanced society itself. He is careful not to call them "classes" in the Marxian sense, but he regards them as the "detonator" or the "catalyst" of the revolution, serving an essentially preparatory function.

Here we have to ask the question: what makes any of these groups eligible to be the "catalyst?" Why should we believe that they, or anybody else, can and will lead us to a new world? Marcuse's thinking here again reveals a curious duality, an uneasy fluctuation between hardheaded political realism and conceptions of a very different kind. First, in the traditional idiom of elitist radical politics, Marcuse talks about the emergence of a "new working class." He emphatically denies that students today form a "déclassé group." "The role of students today as the intelligentsia out of which, as you know, the executives and leaders even of existing society are recruited, is historically more important than it perhaps was in the past."[52] Again: "it is the group from which the decisive holders of decisive positions will be recruited: scientists, researchers, technicians, engineers, even psychologists. . . ."[53] Marcuse explains why he thinks intellectuals are so important today: " . . . to the degree to which the share of labor in the material process of production declines, *intellectual* skills and capabilities become social and political factors. Today, the organized refusal to co-operate of the scientists, mathematicians, technicians, industrial psychologists, and

[51]Cf., however, MacIntyre, *Marcuse*, 88.
[52]*Five Lectures*, 71.
[53]"Liberation from the Affluent Society," Cooper, *Dialectics of Liberation*, 188.

public opinion pollsters may well accomplish what a strike can't achieve."[54]

Now there are several points here that should receive critical comment. It is essential to realize that this conception of Marcuse is squarely and wholly in the tradition of modern political theory. It shows clear resemblance not only to Mill's intellectual elitism and Lenin's conception of the revolutionary vanguard—these antecedents Marcuse would no doubt be ready to acknowledge as his intellectual predecessors—but also to conceptions deriving from the elitist tradition of sociological theory. Though at times Marcuse is at pains to assert that the "new working class" is an extension of the classical Marxian proletariat,[55] he is not able, in theoretical terms, to establish a connection between his ideas and traditional Marxism.

Is Marcuse's belief in the "new working class" a realistic one? We cannot, of course, go into a sociological analysis here, but we can focus attention on some of the assumptions that go into Marcuse's claim. The first assumption is that scientists, technicians, etc. are actually in such a strong, commanding position in today's advanced society that they can reasonably be expected to be *able*, objectively, to engineer or detonate revolutionary changes. Attractive and plausible though this assumption may appear at first, there does not seem to be much solid evidence behind it. Do scientists really control their inventions, are technicians really the masters of the technology they created? Would the intellectuals' refusal to cooperate with the system really make that great a difference? Has it done so up to date in, say, the United States? The claim is doubtful, to say the least. Second, Marcuse assumes that this new political elite composed of scientists, technicians, and intellectuals will in fact develop the need and will to revolt against the way of life of advanced society. So far there is very little evidence that this is happening, and inasmuch as it makes sense to talk about the revolutionary stirrings of the intelligentsia, it has been confined strictly to non-technical groups, such as writers, philoso-

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[54]*Eros and Civilization*, 20. Emphasis in original.
[55]Herbert Marcuse, "On the New Left" (Talk, December 4, 1968), in *The New Left: A Documentary History*, ed. by M. Teodori (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 471.

phers, artists, and clergymen. The behavior and aspirations of students, even in the case of "recruits" to the technical professions, characterize them only as students and are in no way indicative of the needs and outlooks they are likely to acquire when they reach established positions. What is more important here, however, is that Marcuse's expectation of a revolt detonated by future scientists clearly contradicts his own characterization of the essential nature of advanced society. Marcuse is reluctant to talk clearly about a "ruling class," but inasmuch as his theory can be said to make implicit references to one, it is precisely the group comprising "technicians, industrial psychologists and public opinion pollsters." If anybody benefits from the "moronization" of the masses, they certainly do; if advanced society in its present form serves anybody's interest, it certainly serves the interest of this group.

Finally, how is Marcuse's conception of a strong, new political elite capable of inaugurating the society of the future to be squared with another characteristic conception of his, namely, his celebrated espousal of Lumpenproletariat groups? What about the "outsiders and the poor, the unemployed and unemployable, the persecuted colored races, the inmates of prisons and mental institutions";[56] "the new bohème, the beatniks and hipsters, the peace creeps" who are the "poor refuge of defamed humanity";[57] the individual who "becomes authentic as outcast, drug addict, sick, genius?"[58] It is Marcuse's opinion that the "strongest impetus" to revolution comes from groups of this kind, and he insists that in the absence of a strong revolutionary party the so-called "infantile radicals" are "the weak and confused but true historical heirs of the great socialist tradition."[59] This may be true, as far as it goes. But there is an enormous, yawning gap between these "decadents" and the future "decisive holders of decisive positions." Can these two groups be expected to have any contact with each other, or even to understand and sympathize with each other's point of view? The very essence of a self-conscious Lumpenproletariat is its implacable opposition

[56] *One Dimensional Man*, 56.
[57] *Eros and Civilization*, 17.
[58] Herbert Marcuse, "The Individual in the 'Great Society,'" *Alternatives*, 1 (March-April 1966), 30.
[59] Teodori, *The New Left*, 473.

not only to holders of decisive positions but to the "decisive positions" themselves. And conversely it is also true (and has been borne out by recent political changes in both the United States and England) that the strengthening and articulation of the genuine outcast's opposition to the way of life of advanced society tend to confirm, rather than weaken, the conservative inclinations of mainstream groups, such as technicians. The few adherents gained by the outsiders' underground fraternity are more than matched by the number of those frightened away. Quite apart from the complications of a new working class, Marcuse's beliefs about the outcast present some problems of their own. Insofar as Marcuse imputes any capability to these groups of preparing or detonating any kind of revolution, this "preparation" and this "revolution" are very different in character from what genuine political elites can achieve. Outcasts, "pariah elites,"[60] cannot bring about political changes. What they can do, and what the "scum of the earth" have accomplished before them, is to prepare for a radical change in the heart and the mind, to influence and convert by example, to shock a "one-dimensional" populace into spiritual regeneration and the mending of their ways. While one would not wish to denigrate such purposes and achievements, it is better to see them for what they are and to distinguish them from more mundane and limited concerns.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM

This takes us to the third level of our inquiry, and it is here, in relation to practical programs and advice given to radicals, that the duality and ambiguity of Marcuse's thought sharpen into contradictory positions. On the one hand, Marcuse maintains that "inner" transformation by itself is meaningless and inadequate. He offers, for example, a Marxist-type explanation for the efficacy of the anti-Vietnam protest movement of American youth, calling attention to

[60]Reiche describes the activities of some groups formed in West Germany in the 1960s, inspired by Marcuse's ideas: ". . . Subversive Action is made up of ringleaders of organized disobedience. As a first step towards the emancipated society of the cohort, they declare themselves a pariah elite whose direct purpose is action." *Sexuality and Class Struggle*, 147.

its possibly crippling effects on a capitalist war economy. Also, though he insists that authentic socialism means more than a changeover in the ownership of the means of production, he nevertheless regards collectivization as a necessary first step towards creating the desired new society.[61] He argues, furthermore, that "organization demands counter-organization,"[62] and he calls for positive political action, advocating "uncivil disobedience" and "guerilla warfare."[63] His sensational and provocative essay on *Repressive Tolerance* contains not only valuable insights for fresh departures in a radical contemporary critique of political theory,[64] but, on a practical level, it dispenses political advice of, it must be admitted, a decidedly extremist character.

Marcuse's radical program, however, has another side to it. The very nature of his critique of advanced society as well as his understanding of domination prevent Marcuse's activist program from becoming clear-cut, single-minded, and unambiguous. In the first place, Marcuse is compelled to admit that a "revolution" in advanced society is not an immediate, practical possibility. The primary task, therefore, is to awaken the "brutalized, moronized mass," to engineer, in other words, a large-scale inner transformation. Second, Marcuse must also argue, in terms of his own explanation of the root evil in human life, that external, political, and social revolution is at best only a part of the solution, and that transformation must be deeper and more far-reaching. Domination he sees as "the counterrevolution anchored in the instinctual structure."[65] He observes that revolutionary transformations in the past have betrayed the cause of "liberation," because radicals have stopped short of changing their own needs and outlook on life, which were fashioned under the reign of instinctual repression. To prevent, therefore, yet another "psychic Thermidor,"[66] Marcuse insists on the

[61]*An Essay on Liberation*, 87.
[62]*Eros and Civilization*, 20.
[63]*An Essay on Liberation*, 68, 81.
[64]Cf. my "Notes on Marcuse and the Idea of Tolerance," in *Dissent and Disorder: Essays in Social Theory*, ed. by B. Parekh (Toronto: W.U.S. of Canada, 1971).
[65]*An Essay on Liberation*, 11.
[66]*Five Lectures*, 38.

necessity for a "transcendence within" existing conditions, the emergence of "new needs and aspirations in the individuals themselves," so that men may be "free for" the new society before they can be "free in" it.[67] "The situation presupposes . . . the emergence of a new type of man . . .";[68] "a type of man who is biologically incapable of fighting wars and creating suffering. . . ."[69] "The new human beings who we want to help to create—we must already strive to be these human beings right here and now."[70] We must have "men who have developed an instinctual barrier against cruelty, brutality, ugliness,"[71] and a revolution which "must be at the same time a revolution in perception. . . ."[72] Along with the development of new biological needs, Marcuse's conception "also implies the genesis of a new morality as the heir and the negation of the Judeo-Christian morality which up to now has characterized the history of Western civilization."[73]

Where does all this leave us? Marcuse's constructions are racing in two diametrically opposed directions. On the one hand, he envisions a new type of man who has transcended aggressiveness in himself, who is imbued with a love of humanity, who realizes his libidinal energy without repressive sublimation (or desublimation), who has rejected the "performance principle" and who is "incapable of fighting wars and creating suffering." And he expects, on the other hand, *this* man to accomplish the liberation of mankind from the clutches of a wicked, vicious, violent society, a world of cruel, inhuman oppression, a world of "masters" and "vested interests." How can this gap be bridged? The only way, it seems, lies through conceiving the task in terms of conversion, founded on a belief in the efficacy of teaching by example. This, of course, derives from the religious tradition. Marcuse relates to a Berlin student audience the story of a demonstration at Berkeley, when pro-

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[67]"The Individual in the 'Great Society,'" 33.

[68]"Liberation from the Affluent Society," in Cooper, ed., *Dialectics of Liberation,* 182.

[69]*Ibid.,* 184.

[70]Teodori, *The New Left,* 469.

[71]*An Essay on Liberation,* 21.

[72]*Ibid.,* 37.

[73]*Five Lectures,* 65.

testing students, meeting a police cordon on their way, sat down on the ground and proceeded to enjoy themselves "necking" and "petting." Marcuse's moral: " . . . I believe that a unity spontaneously and anarchically emerged here that perhaps in the end cannot fail to make an impression even on the enemy."[74] The example neatly illustrates the way in which political "demonstration" (in the transitive sense, concerned with the adversary) can turn into religious "demonstration" (intransitive, demonstration in the literal sense: displaying a way of life).[75]

Here we reach the point where the "cult of the immediately rewarding gesture"[76] takes over from politics, an instance of the manner in which "the New Left seeks consciously to anticipate, in its life within the existing order, the society it hopes to create."[77] The unresolved duality of Marcuse's thought, its fluctuation between the two tendencies, is well shown by the apparently untroubled way in which he links two very different concepts, "impression" and "the enemy," in one single sentence.

Now most importantly, there remains the question of how the two basic concerns making up New Left thought—the political emancipation of the third world and the qualitative transformation of advanced society—point towards one unitary ideal of man. It is one of Marcuse's most cherished ambitions to provide for an overall "critical philosophy" that does justice both to the existing fight waged by revolutionaries against the military-technological might of advanced society, and to the incipient internal revolt against the way of life of this society. But Marcuse fails in this. His attention is almost wholly focused on the internal scene, and his theoretical tools are specially forged to provide for an essentially religious critique of a degenerate, sinful, and moronic way of life.

The target of his critique is the consciousness of men who can

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[74]*Ibid.*, 93.

[75]As Braden confirms, "There has in fact occurred a fusion of New Left protest and hippie life styles. It has become increasingly difficult to determine where protest ends and life style begins." *Age of Aquarius*, 255.

[76]P. Connerton, "Shooting at the Clocks," *The Listener* (London), February 5, 1970, 186.

[77]Paul Breines, "Marcuse and the New Left in America," in Habermas, *Antworten,* 147.

conceive of life in only a "one-dimensional" manner, the outlook of people with whom, ex hypothesi, there is a chasm between "need" and "manifest want." In this context, of course, it makes good sense to stress the necessity of prior inner transformation. But for precisely this reason Marcuse is *theoretically unprepared* to deal with a situation where the will is already revolutionary, where insistence on the separateness of "need" and "want" would mean, in the radical perspective, a step leading backwards. Thus the only way in which Marcuse can accommodate the phenomenon of the now active, existing revolutionary in his overall scheme is by attempting to identify him with his ideal figure of the "new man." And this involves falsifications. When questioned on this subject by a member of his Berlin audience, Marcuse asserted that the needs of the Vietnamese to defend themselves against aggression were "really natural needs in the strictest sense; they are spontaneous."[78] And when further pressed on the incompatibility of the needs of the "new man" in advanced society with the need of industrialization in the third world, he remarked that "the need for freedom is not a luxury which only the metropoles can afford. The need for freedom which spontaneously appears in social revolution as an old need, is stifled in the capitalist world."[79] Linguistic analysis here comes back with a vengeance: Marcuse not only lumps together various conceptions in the abstract notion of "freedom," he also shows himself forgetful of his own distinction between the ideal of complete "freedom from domination" and the disparaged phenomenon of a political freedom that is "neutralized" in self-discipline and sacrifice. In truth, of course, armed revolution is a very different affair from the "impulsive revolt" against the "counterrevolution in the instinctual structure." Revolutionaries in Vietnam, Latin America, and elsewhere might at best be said to be engaged in fighting for a better world. What they are certainly not doing— and, the world being what it is, cannot be expected to do either—is to display *in their fight* the features of Marcuse's ideal "new man."

Marcuse, on the whole, is himself half aware of the self-contradictory positions contained in his philosophy, and his muted admis-

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[78]*Five Lectures*, 75.
[79]*Ibid.*, 77.

sions come to the surface, sometimes openly and sometimes implicitly. He confesses that the disputed priority of internal and external change is a vicious circle, a dialectic from which he cannot find the way out.[80] He also shows himself markedly uneasy about political methods, and his desire to distinguish between "revolutionary terror" and "acts of cruelty, brutality and torture," though laudable, obviously signifies an uphill struggle that Marcuse as a theorist is incapable of winning. His paradoxes come to a head in his celebrated disputes with Norman O. Brown and Charles A. Reich, New Left thinkers in whose doctrines the religious strain of radicalism is much stronger and more explicit than in Marcuse. The latter, in his review of *Love's Body*,[81] charges Brown with wanting to "abolish reality," having "carried the burden of radical thought to the farthest point: the point where sanity must appear as madness."[82] Marcuse is adamant in asserting that "the roots of repression are and remain real roots; consequently, their eradication remains a real and rational job."[83] Yet, at the same time, he is eager to reaffirm the (neo-Freudian) substantive position he and Brown hold in common: "we are asleep, we are dreaming, we are dead if we experience this as reality, as life, freedom, fulfillment."[84] Similarly, Marcuse rebuts in no uncertain terms Reich's belief in the adequacy of a purely "inner" transformation, and he considers that Reich's is a "false perspective, which transfigures social and political radicalism into moral rearmament." But again he fails to register any substantive disagreement with Reich's picture of a quasi-religious, quasi-mystical "Consciousness III," allowing that Reich's "dream" may even "come true."[85]

[80]*Ibid.*, 80, 99.

[81](New York: Random House, 1966).

[82]"Love Mystified: A Critique of Norman O. Brown," *Commentary*, 43 (February 1967), 71-75. Reprinted in Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (London: Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1968), 228.

[83]*Ibid.; Negations*, 235.

[84]*Ibid.; Negations*, 236.

[85]In the article, "Charles Reich—A Negative View," *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1970. (For the sake of fairness, it must be added here that Reich's *Greening of America* is, as radical criticism, much more politically oriented than comparable works by Marcuse.)

Perhaps it will be appropriate to end this section with a brief digression. From one perspective, Marcuse may indeed appear to be a thinker in whose radical thought the religious strain plays a prominent and sometimes overpowering role. But another perspective shows him to be a more orthodox kind of political theorist. There are several other thinkers in today's advanced society in whose radical philosophies religious motifs and concerns are much more strongly pronounced than in Marcuse, and whose positions can at times even be described as modern forms of religious extremism. Lest this characterization be misunderstood, it has to be made clear that by "religious extremism" we do not mean passivity or quietism in the realm of political action. Indeed, many of those whom one could describe as "religious extremists" would only be too willing to participate in concrete political action, be it disobedience or campaigning or some other action of a revolutionary nature. The point is that as *theorists*, as diagnosticians of advanced society and as architects of revolutionary programs of change, their preoccupation tends to be with the "inner" as opposed to the "outer," with the salvation of the individual as opposed to the restructuring of society.

The field is vast and we have to confine ourselves here to only a few names. For Norman Brown, "the essence of society is repression of the individual, and the essence of the individual is repression of himself."[86] For Charles Reich "the great error of our times has been the belief in structural or institutional solutions. The enemy is within each of us; so long as that is true, one structure is as bad as another."[87] Theodore Roszak, in the context of a skillful comparison of Brown and Marcuse, accuses the latter of "adament secularism"[88] and of the "politicization of human experience."[89] Roszak's diagnosis of society's ills also moves in the direction of holistic, religious designation, and correspondingly away from political analy-

[86] Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), 1.

[87] Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America* (London: Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1971), 262.

[88] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture,* 117.

[89] *Ibid.,* 119.

sis. For him the adversary is simply "technocracy," and he puts his faith in uncorrupted youth, contending—again in the idiom of religious radicalism—that "building the good society is not primarily a social, but a psychic task."[90] Here belongs also Ronald Laing, outstanding theorist of the British New Left, well known for his radical reinterpretation of the concepts of clinical psychiatry. In his opinion, "we are all murderers and prostitutes—no matter to what culture, society, class, nation one belongs," and "no one can begin to think, feel or act now except from the starting-point of his or her own alienation."[91] David Cooper considers that the new meaning of revolution is "the dissolution of a brain-washed self-image that one is viciously indoctrinated into by the kindest, closest, best-intentioned people in the world—one's parents and one's teachers."[92] Susan Sontag argues forcefully in favor of uniting the sexual and political revolution. As may be expected, she does not object to the "kids" taking drugs as a method of experimentation. But to what purpose? Miss Sontag's pronouncements in a recent symposium reveal that in her scheme of priorities, external political change occupies a lowly place: " . . . I believe them [the 'kids'] to be right. I am not arguing that they're going to prevail, or even that they're likely to change much of anything in this country. But a few of them may save their own souls."[93] And finally Timothy Leary's advice to revolutionaries is: "Quit school. Quit your job. Don't vote. Avoid all politics . . . Dismiss the Judaic-Christian-

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[90]*Ibid.*, 49.

[91]R. D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), 11.

[92]David Cooper, *The Death of the Family* (London: Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1971), 63.

[93]In the symposium, "What's happening to America?" *Partisan Review*, 34 (Winter 1967), 58. For a critique, see B. Feldman, "The Counterrevolution of Susan Sontag," *Dissent*, 14 (Sept.-Oct. 1967), 590-597. For some apt general comments on the "inner" revolution, see Irving Howe, "New Styles in Leftism," *Dissent*, 12 (Summer 1965), 295-323, quoted also in Jacobs and Landau. Reiche writes about the belief of German radical youth that marijuana was a "symbol of liberation which would spread from appearance to reality." He adds that in fact the new appearance "tended to stabilize the old reality." *Sexuality and Class Struggle*, 171. Cf. Braden, *Age of Aquarius*, 256.

Marxist-puritan-literary-existentialist suggestion that the drop-out is escape and that the conformist cop-out is reality."[94]   All this may be a far cry from Marcuse and his universe of discourse.   Yet it is essential to note that conceptions of this kind lie on the same plane as the critique of one-dimensionality and the advocacy of new biological needs as prerequisites of the revolution.   Marcuse's apparent theoretical moderation and catholicity gain a fresh illumination when seen in the context of thinkers in whose writings the same tendencies appear in clearer and hence more exaggerated forms.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis should enable us to append a few concluding remarks here about the crisis of radical thought and about Marcuse's achievements and failures.   With regard to the general problem, it is difficult not to sympathize at least to some extent with those who, like Marcuse, would put the emphasis on the soullessness and spiritual poverty of advanced society.   There are, certainly, new problems appearing on the horizon in advanced society, and these problems are peculiar to the stage of prosperity and fulfillment.   Affluence generates new needs, culminating in a quest for meaning, for purpose, for quality, for spiritual improvement—qualities that necessitate, *prima facie*, a drastic and painful revision of some cherished radical beliefs, notably those about the nature of politics and religion, and about democracy and the common man.   Since some problems peculiar to advanced society are no longer recognizable in traditional political terms, radical criticism tends more and more to be directed *at* some forms of democracy and the common man, questioning for the first time really seriously since the dawn of the modern age man's basic goodness and rationality.   This kind of radical criticism will naturally be drawn to assumptions and forms of argument that are derived from the religious tradition.   But politics is a different matter, and modern Western political thought has, on the progressive, radical side, always taken for granted the basic goodness, reasonableness, and maturity of the common man.   Hence the crisis: the radical political

[94]*The Politics of Ecstasy*, 286.

theorist, inasmuch as he is a *political* theorist, is compelled by the very terminology he has inherited to castigate advanced society for its "oppression" and "exploitation" of the people; and inasmuch as he is a *radical* theorist—one who claims to see far ahead—he must at the same time denounce the same people for creating and maintaining advanced society, and for being happy to live in it.

New Left thought in advanced society is the child of this crisis, and Marcuse's writings reveal the resulting strains in a most striking fashion. Marcuse is a thinker whose revolutionary political theories have reached the point where, as it were, political radicalism itself becomes conscious of its limitations and all but turns into its opposite. In a narrower vein, Marcuse could also be seen as the strange culmination of a strange strand of thought, Left Hegelianism. In the eyes of its founders, Left Hegelianism was principally a quest for the true religion. At Marx's hands the quest was secularized and politicized. The tendencies inherent in Marcuse's thought suggest that we may yet be witnesses to a slow but inevitable reversal of this process from politics back to religion.

Marcuse's chief merit as a critic of society has been to call attention to the spiritual poverty and meaninglessness of affluence, in terms that are easily recognizable by radicals nurtured on the Marxian and Freudian traditions. Though on the whole exaggerated, his observations are often valid and moving. It requires no adherence to the more extreme tenets of New Left ideology to see that "the antenna on every house, the transistor on every beach, the juke-box in every bar or restaurant are as many cries of desperation—not to be left alone, by himself, not to be separated from the Big Ones, not to be condemned to the emptiness or the hatred or the dreams of oneself."[95] Marcuse as a theorist, however, fails to live up to expectations raised by his ability to make pungent remarks. His failure appears to be twofold. First, it is a matter of *execution*. It is one thing to characterize vividly certain phenomena in advanced society, and it is quite another to be able to offer a sober, coherent explanation of these phenomena. Marcuse's suggestions are too ambiguous to amount to more than stimulating hints on problems that deserve more thorough and comprehensive answers. Even

[95]*Five Lectures,* 49.

when he is clear, consistent, and arguing in a single idiom (which is really not very often), Marcuse fails to account plausibly for the ills of advanced society, and his suggested remedies for ending them are too heterogeneous to be of much practical assistance to would-be revolutionaries.

The second and more important source of Marcuse's failure is a matter of *concentration*. Here, of course, it is not only Marcuse but a whole range of New Left thinkers who could justly be indicted. Again, it is one thing to be mindful of the changing face of advanced society and to notice its spiritual shortcomings. It is a wholly different thing to write as though these were the most important and immediate problems for radicals to deal with. Concentration on needs that are basically religious in nature presupposes, in a radical, that political problems are viewed as no longer of any consequence to anybody. To the extent that Marcuse stresses the inner aspects, he helps, quite unwittingly, to turn attention away from issues that remain obstinately in the area of traditional radical politics. Even advanced society at its most prosperous and seemingly most liberal apex is not free from problems of a traditional kind. And advanced society, after all, is not the whole world; its problems do not afflict those who, on the whole, have a better claim on the attention of radical thinkers. Poverty, exploitation, and political oppression in a world-wide context are issues a thousand times more pressing and more important than any parochial disease afflicting advanced society—though the latter, admittedly, has a fascination of its own that may be too tempting for thinkers with sensitivity and imagination. Marcuse's feelings about the plight of the poor and oppressed are not open to doubt, but something more than sympathy and stirring words are needed, especially if these are neutralized by tergiversation and false emphasis. To those about to storm their Bastilles, even well-meaning talk about psychic Thermidors may justifiably look ridiculous, if not offensive.