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Is Another World Possible?: Herbert Marcuse and Possibilities for 'Real' Change

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Robert Halperin, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Pero, Allan, *The University of Western Ontario*
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Abstract

It has been difficult to effect concrete changes in our society that might adequately approach confronting the intersecting crises of capitalism, inequality, and ecology that we face in our era. Herbert Marcuse's critical theory, and his notion of quantitative development leading to qualitative change, in combination with Hannah Arendt's theories of action, natality, and the will, provide us with an appropriate lens through which to view these crises and diagnose the problems at hand. Additionally, Thomas Kuhn's concepts of paradigms and 'normal science,' as well as Richard Rorty's distinction between movements and campaigns provide us with more concrete ideas of what 'quantitative development' means. Paul Ricoeur's theory of metaphor and metaphoricity can provide us with an understanding of what a guiding principle, such as inspiration or hope, can help us to achieve in attempting to effect concrete change. We must aim to make real the phrase 'another world is possible.'

Keywords

Summary for Lay Audience

In this thesis, my aim is to outline the value of Herbert Marcuse's critical theory for the current era. His diagnosis of the problems that Western society and its population faced during the 1950s–70s, though, is not completely adequate to address the problems that we face in our age. Therefore, I aim to augment his critical theory with Hannah Arendt's concepts of action, natality, and the will. Action is the uniquely human capacity to participate in the public sphere, especially in the context of politics—understood in the Ancient Greek sense of the word. Natality is the uniquely human capacity to introduce novelty into the world, which is to say that we can interrupt natural processes of biology and history. The will is the internal human capacity to project oneself into the future, willing that one does a certain thing and not another. It is characterized by the posture of an 'I-will,' and it aims to become an 'I-will-and-I-can.' The combination of Marcuse and Arendt's various theories and concepts leads us to an ideal of politics, as developed by Christopher Holman. I tease out the possibilities that this will present to us, but conclude that it is difficult for us to achieve that ideal in our present state. Therefore, I turn to Thomas Kuhn, Richard Rorty, and Paul Ricoeur. Each of these three thinkers provides us with concepts that allow us to imagine the quantitative steps that we can take now that will, hopefully, lead us to this ideal.

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I would like to thank Allan Pero for all of his help supervising me throughout the writing, researching, and revising of this thesis. His support was absolutely vital. I would also like to acknowledge my incredible teacher and mentor Elizabeth Edwards, who introduced me to Herbert Marcuse's thought several years ago, and Stephen Boos, who supervised my undergraduate thesis work, wherein I first wrote about Marcuse at length.

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1   Affluent Society? More Like…

The current era is replete with crises of capitalism. The system no longer "delivers the goods" as it did in the mid-20th century,[1] and the majority of the population's material conditions are inadequate relative to the system's well-publicized 'benefits.' This situation differs in significant respects from the conditions and context in which Herbert Marcuse wrote his strongest critiques; that is, what John Kenneth Galbraith called the 'affluent society.'[2] In that Golden Age of American capitalism, there was an expansive middle class, increased purchasing power, and—in the industrialized West—relatively widespread prosperity.[3] Labour had largely aligned itself with capital and management in order to preserve the status quo, and opposition to the established system appeared foolish, because the system, in general, delivered the goods. However, labour's accommodating posture and its overall openness to the given organization of society allowed for the slow atrophy of this apparently amicable situation. As the century drew to a close, wages grew stagnant, and globalization efforts after the collapse of the USSR dammed up economic prosperity for the masses. Successive recessions in the '80s and '90s, followed by the tech bubble burst in the early 2000s, and, finally, the "Great Recession" decimated the wages of vast swathes of workers in intersecting industries.[4] The 'precariat' ballooned and the situation for the majority of the population deteriorated further. We stand on very different ground than did Marcuse when he, at the peak of his popularity, tapped into the political consciousness of various protest movements and became known as the "guru" of the New Left. Despite the significant differences in our historical contexts, much of his economic, political, cultural, and psychological critique of the established system of post-World War II American society remains quite relevant—if not directly applicable to contemporary society.

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[1] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 84.

[2] See: John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958).

[3] See: Michael Forman, "Marcuse in the Crisis of Neoliberal Capitalism: Revisiting the Occupation," in *The Great Refusal: Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Movements*, eds. Andrew Lamas, Todd Wolfson, Peter Funke (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017).

[4] Ibid., 35–36.

Marcuse decries the integration of the working class, which is the result of intersecting economic, socio-cultural, political, and psychological factors, each of which—in unique ways—speaks to the Establishment's effective containment of opposition to the system it perpetuates. Marcuse describes advanced industrial society as "one-dimensional" because these various containment mechanisms maintain social control and circumscribe the possibilities of critical opposition to the established order. The three main features of affluent society in which Marcuse locates the mechanisms of containment are: the production of false needs; the new form of politics, which aligns the entire population against a perpetual Enemy, thereby securing both the "National Purpose" and the welfare-warfare state; and operationalism and positivism in sociology, political science, and analytic philosophy, which translate potentially liberating, transcendent concepts (e.g., freedom and democracy) into affirmative statements that prop up the status quo. Each of these features is bound up in the rapid proliferation and development of technology in society's productive apparatus. "Technological rationality has become political rationality,"[5] and thereby informs the organization of society. However, this rationality is irrational insofar as it has its *telos* in the amelioration of suffering and the elimination of toil, while it simultaneously serves to contain and restrict opposition to the established system in order to perpetuate this system. Through his use of dialectical logic and analysis, Marcuse critiques the mechanisms of containment, which produce and reproduce one-dimensional man in advanced industrial society, and his critical theory uncovers technological rationality's irrationality by dissecting the contradictions inherent in the established system itself.

In the first section of this chapter, I outline the aforementioned salient mechanisms of containment in order to provide a contextual framework through which we can understand the central question of Marcuse's work: "how can the people who have been the object of effective and productive domination by themselves create the conditions of freedom?"[6] Affluent society appears to be rational, effective, and productive; the masses are, generally,

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[5] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, xlviii.

[6] Ibid., 6.

quite satisfied and content with the established system. However, according to Marcuse, this satisfaction arises by virtue of manipulated consciousness and domination, from which people must liberate themselves. Thus, "the optimal goal," which ought to guide liberation, "is the replacement of false needs by true ones, the abandonment of repressive satisfaction."[7] Each of the factors outlined above is a manifestation of repression and domination. In the last analysis, the prospects of concrete opposition to the affluent society are bleak, and those potentially oppositional, revolutionary groups and individuals with whom Marcuse associates himself do not achieve the transformational change he envisions. In the second section, I discuss dialectical logic and Marcuse's concept of the distinction between 'what is' and 'what ought to be,' which will bring us to a theory of social change: quantitative development leading to qualitative change.[8] Marcuse's dialectical logic is essential to his critical theory insofar as he aims to, as Douglas Kellner writes, differentiate "negative features [of technology/technics] with positive potentials that could be used to democratize and enhance human life,"[9] without celebrating this technology "as inherently an instrument of liberation and progress."[10] Moreover, he aims to expose the repressive and oppressive tendencies of a society organized according to technological rationality, while he avoids "its technophobic denunciation as solely an instrument of domination."[11] I address both his criticisms of technology and his appreciation for the possibilities for liberation that it produces.

This chapter outlines the key critical elements of Marcuse's work, especially the overriding concepts at work in his critique of the modes of social control that he discovers in advanced industrial society. Although he provides some prescriptive actions, his work did not aim to be a guide for the future; rather, his goal was to critique the central means of oppression and domination. He did not believe it was possible to provide a blueprint for a new, better

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[7] Ibid., 7.

[8] Ibid., 221.

[9] Douglas Kellner, "Technology, War and Fascism: Marcuse in the 1940s," introduction to *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 7.

[10] Ibid., 6.

[11] Ibid.

society, because the institutions of the new society "cannot be determined a priori; they will develop, in trial and error, as the new society develops."[12] I conclude with an outline of the possibilities for liberation inherent in aesthetics and a 'new sensibility,' and Marcuse's move from a call for immediate revolution to a 'long march through the institutions.' Chapters two and three will address potential visions of a better society, incorporating Marcuse's work as well as the work of Hannah Arendt, Thomas Kuhn, and Richard Rorty, among others.

1.1   Containment Mechanisms: Shall We Be Released?

Marcuse develops the Marxian concepts of commodity fetishism, consumerism, and ideology into a cogent and powerful critical theory of modern consumer society. Beyond the economic and social domination which these features engender and enforce, Marcuse identifies the impacts they have on the psyche. He argues that consumer society manipulates and mutilates the personality, values, and needs of the populace, who now "recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs that it has produced."[13] Instead of personal, subjective existence, Marcuse sees in advanced industrial society the "extension" of the "mind and body" into the "object world."[14] And the fact that one recognizes himself in the objects and products with which he surrounds himself is "not illusion but reality. However, the reality constitutes a more progressive state of alienation. The latter has become entirely objective; the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence."[15] He does truly recognize himself in his commodities, but this is the self of a 'false consciousness.' The personal and private spheres of life collapse into the social and societal, which diminishes inner freedom: "The manifold processes of introjection seem to be ossified in almost mechanical reactions. The result is, not

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[12] Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 86.

[13] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 9.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 11.

adjustment but *mimesis*: an immediate identification of the individual with *his* society and, through it, with the society as a whole."[16] One-dimensional society implements mechanisms of containment and social control by employing both the system of production and the culture industry to fully integrate the individual in the system.

Advanced industrial society imposes false needs upon the populace, and these false needs serve to perpetuate and strengthen the system itself by creating products, advertising them, and selling them as vital necessities.[17] Insofar as it both creates and satisfies false needs, this system relies on always-increasing repression of the individual. We can distinguish false from true needs insofar as the former "are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice."[18] Although Marcuse contends that all human needs are historical, he sets up a crucial distinction between true and false needs based in this historicity. True needs are those that humans require in order to survive and live well, such as food and lodging, and these needs "have an unqualified claim for satisfaction … at the attainable level of satisfaction."[19] In other words, we have true, vital needs that demand satisfaction, but the satisfaction of these needs is conditioned by the degree of satisfaction which can be reasonably expected "under the optimal utilization of the material and intellectual resources available to man."[20] False needs, therefore, obtain their falseness by virtue of the organization and utilization of material and intellectual resources, which, in advanced industrial society, does not operate according to the 'optimal utilization' of available resources.

Advanced industrial society's organization of resources within the productive apparatus is repressive insofar as it denies the individual access to the 'attainable level of satisfaction,' while it compensates for this denial with commodities that grant him fleeting pleasures,

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[16] Ibid., 10.

[17] Herbert Marcuse, "Liberation from the Affluent Society," in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, eds. Stephen Bronner and Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1989), 280.

[18] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 4–5.

[19] Ibid., 5.

[20] Ibid., 6.

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palliating him—despite the promise of true satisfaction and fulfilment.[21] In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse identifies this sort of repression as 'surplus-repression,' as it is "the result of specific societal conditions sustained in the specific interest of domination."[22] Surplus-repression is not necessary for the psyche to develop naturally; it is, in a sense, 'leftover' repression from the stage(s) of societal development when humans needed to 'toil' for the sake of real productivity and survival. The concept of surplus-repression can be linked to Marx's concept of surplus-value, which is the excess value that labour produces, but for which the labourer is not compensated. For example, if a labourer is paid a wage of twelve dollars per hour, while he produces, through his labour, the value of twelve dollars every half-hour (e.g., he operates a machine that makes 'artisanal' doorknobs), then he is producing twelve dollars in surplus value every hour. Just as surplus-repression is repression over and above the repression that the psyche may employ in its development, surplus value is value that the worker creates in excess of his compensation. The need for toil is justified by the "excuse of scarcity," but this excuse "weakens as man's knowledge and control over nature enhances the means for fulfilling human needs with a minimum of toil."[23] As surplus-repression conditions the goals of society's productive apparatus, it begins to conform to the 'performance principle,' which is "*the* reality principle" of advanced industrial society.[24] Under rule of the performance principle, society is "acquisitive and antagonistic," and it is "in the process of constant expansion[;] … control over social labor now reproduces society on an enlarged scale and under improving conditions":

> For the vast majority of the population, the scope and mode of satisfaction are determined by their own labor; but their labor is work for an apparatus which they do not control, which operates as an independent power to which individuals must

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[21] Ibid., 5.

[22] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 88.

[23] Ibid., 92.

[24] Ibid., 129. The performance principle is a Marcusean neologism which, in a sense, 'Marxifies' the Freudian concept of the 'reality principle.'

> submit if they want to live. … Men do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions.[25]

In other words, the manner in which the establishment distributes and utilizes the available material and intellectual resources produces false needs in order to legitimize its own perpetuation and promote conformity with expected behaviours, which furthers the state of mimetic alienation whereby the individual immediately identifies with his society.

Through the organization of resources and the productive apparatus, surplus-repression serves to keep things the way they are, and this organization thereby functions as a mechanism of containment and a form of social control. The production of false needs—which includes the goods and services that gratify these needs—is one manifestation of surplus-repression in advanced industrial society. Moreover, the 'performance principle' constitutes new individual and social modes of experiencing the world, which transform the individual at both the psychological and social levels into an object, an automaton: "The efficient individual is the one whose performance is an action only insofar as it is the proper reaction to the objective requirements of the apparatus[;] … the former freedom of the economic subject was gradually submerged in the efficiency with which he performed services assigned to him."[26] The performance principle is not merely a mode of production in the labour process; rather, this new reality principle governs the totality of human experience in advanced industrial society because the ideology that the culture industry packages and sells is inextricable from the performance principle. In other words, the workers and labourers in the factories and office complexes operate under this principle not only while they work, but the entertainment they consume in their 'leisure time' reinforces ideological conformity, thereby ensuring that consumers want to look like the people on TV who look 'desirable,' be like the people who own what is being sold and those who sell what is to be owned. The performance principle holds sway over the individual both at work and at home:

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[25] Ibid., 45.

[26] Herbert Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," in *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 1, 45.

> In exchange for the commodities that enrich their life, the individuals sell not only their labor but also their free time. The better living is offset by the all-pervasive control over living. … The repressiveness of the whole lies to a high degree in its efficacy: it enhances the scope of material culture, facilitates the procurement of the necessities of life, makes comfort and luxury cheaper … while at the same time sustaining toil and destruction.[27]

The industries of consumption, buying and selling, advertising, and entertainment bolster the given, established way of life, and they reassure the individual that what they have is the best there is; however, if it is not, then they can buy better for less and finally live the life they have been dreaming of for all these years.

For Marcuse, whether or not this alienation, objectification, and repression is necessary remains a question; if it is not, then it can change or be changed, and the individual can achieve liberation. In *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, Douglas Kellner describes this situation: the social order "restricts [the individual's] freedom and possibilities for happiness, fulfilment and community, while providing commodities and a way of life that impedes development of a more rational social order."[28] Furthermore, the affluence of advanced industrial society "depends on production of waste and destruction, while its wealth rests on exploitation," and the productivity demanded by the performance principle "is 'repressive' because it forces unnecessary social labour and consumption on its population."[29] However, this need not be the case: the current level of technological development and the productive capacity of advanced industrial society could eliminate scarcity, in turn eliminating the need for toil, which would thus eliminate alienated labour.[30] Liberation from this situation would necessarily entail the individual himself

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[27] Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 100.

[28] Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 244.

[29] Ibid., 244–45.

[30] On this point, Marcuse favours automation of the most alienating aspects of labour. See Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, pp. 93, 152; *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 2, 16, 36–37. Although this chapter does not focus heavily on automation (my main focus is the containment of opposition and social control), I briefly address it below.

recognizing what his true needs are, distinguishing them from false needs, and rejecting the false needs in favour of the true ones. Once again, however, the dilemma arises: "how can people who have been the object of effective and productive domination by themselves create the conditions of freedom?"[31] The false needs and repressive organization of resources within the productive apparatus seem to preclude the possibility of people recognizing the oppressive situation in which they live and, therefore, achieving liberation.

Before moving on to the means by which Marcuse proposes we could achieve this liberation, we must address two other modes of social control: first, the new form of politics, which involves the union of previously opposed elements of society against a common Enemy, and allows for a "national purpose" and the welfare/warfare state; second, linguistic operationalism, which translates potentially liberating, transcendent concepts, such as freedom and democracy, into affirmative statements that prop up the status quo, thereby collapsing the critical dimension of the mind.

The United States emerges from the second World War as one of two major global powers and, since the New Deal and Keynesian economics had quelled much of the stateside radical Leftist movements,[32] the US is able to present itself as *the* champion of freedom, democracy, and happiness, all of which are threatened by the USSR and global communism. In Western advanced industrial society, "capital and labour are allied under the threat of Communism,"[33] and, to this end, we enter a new phase of societal development, unified in its purpose. "[T]he features of the Welfare State and the Warfare State" combine to form the "society of total mobilization," in which the following stabilizing forces emerge:

> concentration of the national economy on the needs of the big corporations, with the government as a stimulating, supporting, and sometimes even controlling force; hitching of this economy to a world-wide system of military alliances, monetary

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[31] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 6.

[32] Forman, "Marcuse in the Crisis of Neoliberal Capitalism," 31–32.

[33] Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 252.

arrangements, technical assistance and development schemes; gradual assimilation of blue-collar and white-collar population, of leadership types in business and labor.[34]

Those elements of society which, previously, had functioned as countervailing powers, such as capital and production, socio-economic classes, government, and political/state military and police forces, undermine their own strength as countervailing powers. They confront each other in the political, social, and economic spheres, but they "cancel each other out in a higher unification … [and] tend to make the whole immune against negation from within as well as without; … the Enemy [i.e. the USSR, the communist, the Bolshevik] is permanent. He is not in the emergency situation but in the normal state of affairs[;] … he is thus being built into the system as a cohesive power."[35] By virtue of the domestically and internationally recognized *real existence* of the permanent Enemy, it is perfectly legitimate for the state to demand that a highly motivated, productive, and efficient workforce demonstrate the utmost 'patriotism,'[36] and, furthermore, it is legitimate for the state to practice heightened military aggression on the world stage—cheered on by the population. The powerful groups and forces of society, such as government, labour, capital, mass media, and so on, oppose each other only superficially. The countervailing powers of advanced industrial society pose no threat to the system as a whole; rather, they oppose each other only insofar as such opposition affirms and reaffirms the legitimacy of the current system, thereby reproducing the system as it is. The Enemy is *without* and, relative to the Enemy's real negation of the system, domestic countervailing powers become mere alternatives *within* the system; moreover, the external Enemy's existence itself becomes a power within the system insofar as it serves to bolster the unity, cohesion, and legitimacy of the nation as a whole.

In order for this complete integration of countervailing powers to succeed, the state must provide at least enough to 'satisfy' the individual in advanced industrial society, to

[34] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 19.

[35] Ibid., 51.

[36] Read: nationalism.

compensate for the atrophying sphere of individual freedom and critical thought. "Mobilized against" the permanent Enemy, "capitalist society shows an internal union and cohesion unknown at previous stages of industrial civilization. It is a cohesion on very material grounds; mobilization against the enemy works as a mighty stimulus of production and employment, thus sustaining the high standard of living."[37] The 'national purpose' fuels the ever-increasing efficiency of the productive apparatus; meanwhile, the Welfare State, because it is "capable of raising the standard of *administered* living,"[38] becomes the means by which the possibilities of liberation, of opposing the system from *within*, shrink and become "socially useless" to the population.[39] Advanced industrial society requires "the intensified development and expansion of productivity," and freedom and opposition decline as "an objective societal process," because "the production and distribution of an increasing quantity of goods and services make compliance a rational technological attitude."[40] Marcuse does not argue that a rising standard of living is *necessarily* domination through the threat of the Enemy. He recognizes that productivity and the rising standard of living do not depend on the Enemy, "but their use for the containment of social change and perpetuation of servitude does [depend on the Enemy]. The Enemy is the common denominator of all doing and undoing. And the Enemy is … the real spectre of liberation."[41] The question is not whether a rising 'standard of living' is good, but whether the standard by which such life is measured is itself good or necessary; that is, by whose standard does society measure the goodness of the individual's life? Does this new, higher standard of living benefit the people whose lives it evaluates, or does it benefit those who profit from the means by which this standard 'rises,' thereby perpetuating unfreedom and repression?

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[37] Ibid., 21.

[38] Ibid., 48.

[39] Ibid., 2.

[40] Ibid., 48.

[41] Ibid., 51–52.

Fredric Jameson recognizes this aspect of Marcuse's thought as an analysis of the "nature of the *negative* itself."[42] The context that informs Marcuse's critical theory is an environment "in which the possibility of eliminating poverty and hunger definitively for the first time in history goes hand in hand with the technical possibility of unparalleled control and total organization in the realm of social life."[43] Thus, his critical theory raises the question of what happiness can mean in this world, that is, in a world in which people may not know what they truly want or need: can the individual's "subjective feeling of contentment" be an accurate litmus test of "the social good" when his world is one "in which brainwashing and manipulation exist as everyday mechanisms?"[44] This is why, as we will discuss below, Marcuse advocates for negative thinking, despairs at the loss of the critical dimension of the mind, and sees in utopian thinking a potent, negative antidote to the practical, positivist mentality of advanced industrial society.[45]

Marcuse's critical approach to the given concepts of advanced industrial society, such as the standard of living (described above), shows the irrationality in the system's rationality, the unfreedom of the system's freedom, and the undemocratic mechanisms in the system's democracy. Rather than opposing each other, these opposites are united in the established system to such an extent that, in this context, it becomes ridiculous to oppose the high standard of living on the basis of a claim that the society which has produced the 'good life' lacks some abstract notion of freedom. Advanced industrial society, which declaims the absolute freedom of its citizens, wields 'liberty' as

> a powerful instrument of domination. … Free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves. Free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear—that is, if they sustain alienation.[46]

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[42] Fredric Jameson, "Versions of a Marxist Hermeneutic," in *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974), 108.

[43] Ibid., 107.

[44] Ibid., 108.

[45] Ibid., 111.

[46] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 7–8.

Herein lies the irrationality of the system: the so-called freedoms and liberties of the citizen of advanced industrial society are only those that the system makes available to him. He is free to choose any option—so long as it is on this pregiven list of options. He cannot choose a different list, nor can he choose not to choose. Furthermore, he truly feels as though the options given by the system are, if not the only options, the best options. Here again, we come to the dilemma at the centre of Marcuse's critique: how do people begin to choose another world, society, or life if they cannot recognize that society's unfreedoms, which are sold to them as freedoms, are in fact unfreedoms, and that there are other possibilities? Marcuse attributes and correlates the closing of the universe of possibilities to various elements of advanced industrial society, but the most prominent objects of his criticisms are technological rationality and the one-dimensional language of operationalism. At this point, we will focus on the latter.

Within the universe of discourse, especially in the humanities and analytic philosophy, Marcuse diagnoses endemic positivism; there is an almost instinctual affirmation of 'what is,' as against the possibility of change and 'what ought to be' or 'what could be.' For the majority of the population, "the system delivers the goods,"[47] which leads to a new conformity with the way things are: "The Happy Consciousness … sustains a society … which prolongs and improves life more regularly than before. … The power over man which this society has acquired is daily absolved by its efficacy and productiveness."[48] The society of total mobilization is, in much the same way, the society of total administration, and it has its own discourse, which "is deprived of the mediations which are the stages of the process of cognition and cognitive evaluation. The concepts which comprehend the facts and thereby transcend the facts are losing their authentic linguistic representation," and the new "linguistic form militates against a development of meaning."[49] As an example, Marcuse cites what he calls the "self-validating hypotheses" that permeate one-dimensional language: "'free' are the institutions which operate (and are operated on) in

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[47] Ibid., 84.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 85–86.

the countries of the Free World; … 'Socialistic' are all encroachments on private enterprises not undertaken by private enterprise itself (or by government contracts)."[50] More troubling, though, is the way in which the populace has come to accept the contradictions at the core of these self-validating hypotheses: "That a political party which works for the defense and growth of capitalism is called 'Socialist,' and a despotic government 'democratic,' and a rigged election 'free'" are not new linguistic phenomena, but "the general acceptance of these lies by public and private opinion, the suppression of their monstrous content" is new.[51] 'The contradiction' is no longer an offense against logic; the rationality of our society incorporates the contradiction and deploys it for manipulative purposes. Marcuse draws a bizarre and novel element of modern public discourse to our attention: rather than hiding the contradictions in their logic, capital and state power tout them. This new unification of opposites, of contradictions in the language of daily life is one facet of the affirmative posture which has become typical of the individual in one-dimensional society.

The unification of opposites in the language of total administration serves to close the system against any opposition because it can incorporate any contradiction. The system can exhibit its contradictions because they symbolize the great tolerance of its institutions, its pluralism. "Nevertheless," Marcuse writes, this

> language testifies to the repressive character of this unity. This language speaks in constructions which impose upon the recipient the slanted and abridged meaning, the blocked development of content, the acceptance of that which is offered in the form in which it is offered. … It is the well-known technique of the advertisement industry, where it is methodically used for 'establishing an image' which sticks to the mind and to the product[.] … The reader or listener is expected to associate (and

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[50] Ibid., 14. See also: Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2001), 3–98. Perlstein dissects the manner in which the wealth of the anti-government conservative movement's proponents, especially Goldwater, grows on the foundation of New Deal-era government contracts and handouts, after which they turn around and decry the 'socialism' of the very same sorts of contracts.

[51] Ibid., 89.

does associate) with them a fixated structure of institutions, attitudes, aspirations, and he is expected to react in a fixated, specific manner.[52]

Here, again, Marcuse recognizes and criticizes the automatic reactions and mimetic behaviours engendered in the individual by the institutions of society.[53] To further illustrate his point, Marcuse quotes a *Time* magazine article about the governor of Georgia: "'Georgia's high-handed, low-browed governor … had the stage all set for one of his wild political rallies last week.' The governor, his function, his physical features, and his political practices are fused together in one indivisible and immutable structure."[54] In this example, the language assimilates all (potentially) incommensurate aspects of the governor into the description of him, which "leaves no space for distinction, development, differentiation of meaning; it moves and lives only as a whole."[55] We picture the governor in exactly the manner which the given image (and its giver) expects. The image is absolutely concrete; its meaning is fixed and non-conceptual. The language of total administration sacrifices the concept, and conceptual thought, at the altar of the image: a new idolatry. By means of the linguistic abridgment—and other mechanisms by which the concept is reduced to the given—operationalism "repels recognition of the factors behind the facts, and thus repels recognition of the facts, and of their historical content. … The unified, functional language is an irreconcilably anti-critical and anti-dialectical language."[56] This mode of thought and discourse suppresses history, and it thereby functions as a mechanism of containment and a mode of social control. The world, society, objects, and human relations all come to be understood in terms of what is given.

Things lose their historicity, and the possibilities of thinking, doing, and being otherwise collapse. In operational rationality, "the 'other' dimension of thought," that is, the "*historical* dimension—the potentiality as historical possibility, its realization as historical

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[52] Ibid., 90–91.

[53] Ibid., 10.

[54] Ibid., 92–93.

[55] Ibid., 93.

[56] Ibid., 97.

event" is suppressed, and this is "a *suppression of history*, … a political affair. It is suppression of the society's own past—and of its future, inasmuch as this future invokes the qualitative change, the negation of the present."[57] The suppression of the past is simultaneously the suppression of the future because it is in and through the recognition of one's contingency and historical context—the recognition that things could be different, that another world is possible—that one may resist and oppose the given world in order to create a different future than that projected by the dominant forces of the present. However, the prevailing mode of thought and behaviour denies this 'recognition through remembrance' because advanced industrial society's mode of production and its rationality—operationalist, technological rationality—inveigh against the alternatives. As it suppresses history and reduces concepts to images, the language of total administration "comes to rest in alternative techniques of manipulation and control. … It denies or absorbs the transcendent vocabulary; it does not search for but establishes and imposes truth and falsehood."[58] Crucially, however, while the people do not necessarily believe all that this language imposes as true and false, they behave just as the language demands: "One does not 'believe' the statement of an operational concept but it justifies itself in action—in getting the job done,"[59] for, as ever, the system 'delivers the goods.' One-dimensional man produces and reproduces the conformity that the established system enforces, Kellner writes, because society "systematically contains and eliminates opposition and dissent."[60] I will now discuss Marcuse's dialectical logic, and technological rationality and its irrationality. It is through technology that the system orchestrates its most powerful suppressions, and, simultaneously, it is through technology that real opposition to the system can produce qualitative change.

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 103.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 262–63.

1.2 Historicizing Possibility, De-Reifying What Is

Against advanced industrial society's suppression of history, Marcuse emerges as a staunch defender of dialectics and history. In his first English book, *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse lays out his understanding of the dialectical movement of history:

> The dialectical theory of society emphasized the essential potentialities and contradictions within this social whole, thereby stressing what could be done with society, and also exposing the inadequacy of its actual form. … Hegel's dialectic had set up no inexorable 'natural' law of history, but had quite clearly indicated that the path of man's historical practice lay in the direction of freedom.[61]

Although he is describing the Hegelian, dialectical theory of society, over the course of his career Marcuse builds on this foundational theory. Later, in *One-Dimensional Man*, determined to demonstrate the power of dialectical thought, Marcuse emphasizes the distinction between 'what is' and 'what ought to be,' and he develops a unique notion of the power of the imagination and of aesthetics in striving for liberation. Here, we can look to Henri Lefebvre and draw comparisons between Marcuse's dialectics and those of Lefebvre, as well as his critique of philosophical idealism and its constant abstraction. For Lefebvre, idealism "represented a systematic denigration of the lived experience of time, space and the body," and he sees it as "an expression of *alienation*, a loss of control over essential human capacities and powers that should by rights be firmly rooted in daily experience."[62] (I do not discuss it here, but Lefebvre was also critical of the 'needs' that he sees society producing in the individual, and which he sees to be another product of this alienation.[63]) Similarly, Marcuse writes that, against the operationalism and positivism that aim to preserve the established system and assimilate more and more of the world and its objects, dialectical logic "precludes all abstraction which leaves the concrete content [i.e.,

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[61] Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1955), 378–79.

[62] Michael Gardiner, "Utopia and Everyday Life in French Social Thought," in *Utopian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1995), 97.

[63] Ibid., 99.

what *is*,] alone and behind, uncomprehended."[64] Furthermore, Adorno's theory of negative dialectics provides us with a rigorous account of the ways in which dialectics can be so open-ended and refuse the absolute crystallization of the object. Shannon Brincat describes the anti-positivistic bent of dialecticians: "dialectics reaches few 'results' that the positivist would count as being a positive research 'result,' and it does not pretend to have discovered ontological first principles but instead operates in a 'perpetual state of suspended judgment.' This is … [something to be] celebrated, because it leads to ongoing and open-ended change that is not reducible to static 'answers.'"[65] Each society at every distinct stage of societal development is the manifestation and realization of the possibilities for change that are present in the world, which the society has chosen for itself.

As described above, Marcuse upholds a distinction between true and false human needs and, while the needs are historically conditioned, we can distinguish between them by virtue of the organization of the available resources. True needs are vital to human survival and, at any given historical stage, these needs are conditioned by the possibilities of their satisfaction in terms of the available resources.[66] Marcuse argues that each society is a historical project which realizes given possibilities, and "[h]istorical truth is comparative; the rationality of the possible depends on that of the actual, the truth of the transcending project on that of the project in realization."[67] Thus, we can determine the truth of a society *qua* historical project insofar as we can determine whether the "potentialities of the system have outgrown its institutions."[68] If the system, in and through its own development, produces possibilities which project greater freedom or complete liberation, and it goes on to suppress these possibilities, then the system is unfree and the needs it foists upon the populace are false because its potentialities have outgrown its institutions. Insofar as any given society organizes itself to maintain necessities which are no longer truly necessary,

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[64] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 140.

[65] Shannon Brincat, "Negativity and Open-Endedness in the Dialectic of World Politics," in *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol. 34, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 2009), 465.

[66] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 6.

[67] Ibid., 221.

[68] Ibid.

such as scarcity and toil, in order to maintain the established reality, the society (and, therefore, those few who control the production process within the system) has made a "determinate choice" to contain change that might lead to liberation and to maintain domination.[69] The historical conditioning of historical projects can be judged according to the following criteria, which are the 'determined' factors in historical development:

> (1) the specific contradictions which develop within a historical system as manifestations of the conflict between the potential and the actual; (2) the material and intellectual resources available to the respective system; (3) the extent of theoretical and practical freedom compatible with the system. These conditions leave open alternative possibilities of developing and utilizing the available resources, alternative possibilities of 'making a living,' of organizing man's struggle with nature.[70]

The point at issue is whether advanced industrial society maintains what *is* at the expense of what *ought to be*. Marcuse argues that it does—and that the mechanisms of containment and social control outlined above serve this purpose.

Despite these constraints on opposition to the system and the suppression of possibilities for liberation, the contradictions within the system potentially allow the individual to recognize the system's irrationality and grasp at these possibilities. Marcuse seizes upon technology and technological rationality as the most contradictory facets of the established system. Technology projects the amelioration of life's struggles, the end of alienated labour, and more loving relationships between humans as well as between humans and nature.[71] Simultaneously, however, technology is weaponized, and it becomes an instrument for further oppression (domestically and internationally), produces "profitable waste" which harms the environment and consumers through planned obsolescence,[72] and

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., 221–22.

[71] Ibid., 16.

[72] Ibid., 242.

continually produces more efficient means by which the masses may be dominated—socially, politically, militarily, privately, economically, and so on. The rationality of technology is irrational insofar as its spread and growth undermine its own purpose, that is, to overcome necessity and scarcity. Technological rationality thus aims to destroy the basis of technology's proliferation.

In advanced industrial society, possibilities for the amelioration of toil in production and life become realizable through technology. Marcuse notes that production itself has become highly mechanized, which could lead to automation of the most alienating portions of the productive process. However, in spite of this possibility, the workday has become only *partially automated*, while the system expects the worker to continue to carry out all but mechanical actions and reactions in the productive process: "mechanized work in which automatic and semi-automatic reactions fill the larger part (if not the whole) of labor time remains … exhausting, stupefying, inhuman slavery … [it] is expressive of *arrested, partial* automation, of the coexistence of automated, semi-automated, and non-automated sections within the same plant."[73] In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse discusses the fact that, in the 'normal' mode of work under the performance principle, the individual worker "does *not* satisfy *his* own impulses, needs, and faculties but performs a pre-established function," and while 'pleasure' exists in this labour, "either this pleasure is extraneous (anticipation of reward), or it is the satisfaction (itself a token of repression) of being well occupied, in the right place, of contributing one's part to the functioning of the apparatus."[74] The worker, alienated from himself while working, comes to function as a piece of machinery. By virtue of the very technology which aims to unbind humanity from the chains of necessity and toil, we move farther and farther from ourselves.

Writing during the Golden Age of capitalism that Fordism afforded, Marcuse could not foresee the crisis of Fordism itself that occurred in the late 1960s and '70s, at least in part due to the new developments in computerization and information technologies. In this latter, crisis environment, theories of neo- and post-Fordism attempted to discover what its

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[73] Ibid., 25.

[74] Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 220–21.

replacement would or could be. Nick Dyer-Witheford, in his account of the post-Fordist theories, describes how Alain Lipietz advances the argument that "the crisis of Fordism opens the way to a variety of alternative accumulation regimes. … One could either have neo-Fordist regimes—in which informatics duplicate and intensify traditional patterns of exploitation—or truly post-Fordist systems, which take advantage of the new technological opportunities for reskilling and responsibility."[75] However, critics of this argument say that this sort of optimistic analysis of the possibilities that technology presents does not adequately deal with the sort of specialization that occurs in these new systems. "'[F]lexible specialisation' segments the workforce between a 'core' of permanent skilled workers and a 'periphery' of casualized and temporary employees."[76] Moreover, Dyer-Witheford argues, "many theorists of post-Fordism are remarkably silent about the way automation and global communication have been deployed to swell the reserve army of the unemployed, in a way that ferociously undercuts the strength of movements struggling for improved conditions of work and life."[77] The post-Fordist theories, including that of Lipietz, possess an "emphasis on the historical adaptability of capital," which, "taken in conjunction [with] the general demoralisation of the left in the 1980s, has led to a very rapid acceptance that," after Fordism, only "another capitalist regime of accumulation" can emerge.[78] This acceptance "directs attention away from forms of action which might challenge" the completion of capitalist restructuring, thereby "shut[ting] the door on strategies where workers' knowledge of new production systems yield, not partnership with management, but new ways to challenge managerial command, and new ways in which emergent media networks are made to circulate struggles rather than commodities."[79] Although the collapse of Fordism was heralded as an opportunity for the

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[75] Nick Dyer-Witheford, "Marxisms," in *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 108–09, https://libcom.org/library/cyber-marx-nick-dyer-witheford.

[76] Ibid., 109.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., 113.

[79] Ibid.

individual's further disassociation from his alienating labour, it is likely that capital's restructuring has only added another link to the chain that binds.

To both Marx and orthodox Marxian theorists of Marcuse's era, the industrial working class is the revolutionary class—that is, the proletariat—because its existence is the negation of the established system. However, in advanced industrial society, technology has alleviated many of the burdens suffered by the nineteenth-century industrial working class, and the worker is no longer "the beast of burden, by the labor of his body procuring the necessities and luxuries of life while living in filth and poverty."[80] By the same token, the technology that lifts these burdens requires non-productive workers, such as engineers and technicians, to enter into the productive apparatus in order to maintain the instruments of production, which reduces the "'professional autonomy' of the laborer" because it dilutes the composition of the 'industrial working class.'[81] Marcuse recognizes that, while this autonomy "was rather his professional enslavement," the enslavement was "at the same time the source of his specific, professional power of negation—the power to stop a process which threatened him with annihilation as a human being."[82] Furthermore, these changes to his 'professional autonomy' "change the attitude and the consciousness of the laborer."[83] This integration reduces the labouring class's formerly negative consciousness through the dilution of its population, as non-productive workers such as engineers enter the factories in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the productive machinery. As a result of these changes, the group that constituted Marx's proletariat is no longer revolutionary; therefore, Kellner explains, the composition of the proletariat has changed because the proletariat "is pre-eminently a political concept denoting the subject of revolution. … Marcuse insists that today the industrial working class is no longer the radical negation of capitalist society and is therefore no longer *the* revolutionary class."[84] The quantitative change to the

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[80] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 25.

[81] Ibid., 28.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., 29

[84] Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 304.

working class, that is, its dilution by non-productive workers, leads to a qualitative change: the consciousness of the worker no longer negates the established system.

The interplay between quantitative and qualitative change is a central focus of *One-Dimensional Man*. Marcuse is searching for possibilities which may lead to qualitative change in the lives of individuals, such as real happiness and the gratification of true needs, but such change would require that the people themselves bring about their own liberation, and, as we have seen, this aporetic dilemma is central to Marcuse's project: "how can the people who have been the object of effective and productive domination by themselves create the conditions of freedom?"[85] Approaching the issue of the truth-value of historical projects, Marcuse argues that "quantitative development becomes qualitative change if it attains the very structure of an established system."[86] To an extent, this claim is subtraction by addition: through the development of potentialities for liberation by and through the system's internal growth and progress, we achieve a level of development that allows people to withdraw from the alienating production apparatus, thereby producing a qualitative change in consciousness. However, citing Marx, Marcuse elaborates that, in order for the quantitative change to produce this qualitative change, the revolutionary group must have the recognition of the need for liberation and the consciousness that will see this through *prior* to the quantitative change: "Transcendence beyond the established conditions (of thought and action) presupposes transcendence *within* these conditions. … [T]he rationality and logic invoked in the movement of thought and action is that of the given conditions to be transcended. The negation … is a historical project within and beyond an already going project, and its truth is a chance to be determined on these grounds."[87] However, according to Marcuse, the problem of achieving this transcendence within the system remains unsolved until a group or individual in advanced industrial society possesses the requisite revolutionary consciousness.[88] *One-Dimensional Man* concludes on this pessimistic note. Despite the breadth of the text's magnificent critique

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[85] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 6.

[86] Ibid., 221.

[87] Ibid., 223.

[88] Ibid., 253.

and diagnosis of the problems confronting the individual in advanced industrial society, Marcuse cannot find a suitable group to respond to the theory.

1.3 Conclusion: ~~Not~~ Too Shabby

Marcuse decries the lack of any strong drive for transformation coming from within advanced industrial society. At the end of *One-Dimensional Man*, he notes the opposition that the civil rights movement presents;[89] throughout the 1960s, he lauds the oppositional tendencies of the New Left and student groups;[90] in the late-1960s and through the 1970s he turns to the opposition to the system presented by African-American culture and "ghettos";[91] and, throughout his late career, he argues for the revolutionary potential of non-industrialized nations (many of which were, at the time, fighting for their independence from colonial powers or undergoing socialist revolutions). To Marcuse, these groups are capable of opposing the established system because they are outsiders, they are not yet integrated, and they represent the possibilities of various futures which diverge from the given future—toward which advanced industrial society trudges. Marcuse's focus on external groups—external insofar as they are not (yet) integrated—is the basis for Fromm's criticisms of his "catastrophic messianism."[92] However, Kellner argues that, in his 1970s writings, Marcuse "stresses disintegrating tendencies and societal *contradictions*, picturing society not as a closed, one-dimensional monolith, but as a system of contradictory, shifting tendencies which contains the possibilities of progressive transformation and/or barbaric regression."[93] After the popular uprisings of 1968, Marcuse publishes *An Essay on Liberation*, which partakes of the period's "revolutionary euphoria," while his next work, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, "articulates the political realism of a

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[89] Ibid., 256–57.

[90] Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 280–81.

[91] Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 57–58.

[92] Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1996), 133, quoted in Joan Braune, "Hope and Catastrophe: Messianism in Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse," in *The Great Refusal: Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Movements*, ed. Andrew Lamas, Todd Wolfson, and Peter Funke (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), 283.

[93] Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 292.

movement which saw in the early 1970s that it was facing a long and difficult struggle to transform the existing society."[94] Despite his guru-like role in the New Left and the student movements of the 1960s, by that decade's end Marcuse recognizes the daylight between, on the one hand, the goals and consciousness of the New Left and, on the other hand, the popular majority and the working class's satisfactions with the given reality.

In Marcuse's later texts, the influence of the New Left and the anti-war protesters on his thought is clear; however, in the late '60s and throughout the '70s he endorses revolutionary aesthetics and utopian socialism to a much greater degree than ever before. The role of the imagination in Marcuse's critical theory grows throughout this late period of his career, and it performs a vital function in the quantitative-qualitative change formula. In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse notes that the revolutionary consciousness must recognize "the total impossibility to continue to exist in this universe, so that the need for qualitative change is a matter of life and death."[95] And this recognition, he argues, is that of the aesthetic imagination: the foundation of what he terms "the new sensibility," which, as he describes in *An Essay on Liberation*,

> emerges in the struggle against violence and exploitation where this struggle is waged for essentially new ways and forms of life: negation of the entire Establishment, its morality, culture; affirmation of the right to build a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil terminates in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the *Form* of the society itself.[96]

In this text, Marcuse notes certain relatively minor reforms to the system that subvert the system insofar as they serve aesthetic needs rather than the false needs of advanced industrial society, such as "better zoning regulations" and "a modicum of protection from

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[94] Ibid., 299.

[95] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 23.

[96] Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 25.

noise and dirt."[97] He argues in turn that a "quantity of such reforms would turn into the quality of radical change to the degree to which they would critically weaken" the power of the privileged classes who exert pressure on the populace by the force of their economic and cultural magnitude.[98] Here, again, Marcuse asserts that quantitative development can become qualitative change—insofar as it has the proper *telos*; that is, so long as liberation is the cause and goal of the change. The quantity of such reforms may reach a critical mass, at which point the quantity undergoes a radical shift, becoming quality; this sort of change is analogous to exponential growth, as one small change may beget two more, each of which begets two more, and so on.

Unable to find a revolutionary group or subject which presents *real opposition* to the system, Marcuse moves to aesthetics and the imagination because, he argues, the aesthetic dimension always already portrays a world other than our own which functions according to the order of the beautiful, of Form. By virtue of Form, art "works in the established reality against the established reality," and it "alters experience by reconstructing the objects of experience … in word, tone, image. Why? Evidently, the 'language' of art must communicate a truth, an objectivity which is not accessible to ordinary language and … experience."[99] However, this aesthetic truth is essentially powerless to produce change in the given reality because, of course, it is the truth of art, which is *merely* a sensuous object. Art, within its domain, can sublimate and diminish pain and necessity, which run rampant in the given reality, but "the achievement is illusory, false, fictitious: … the pacifying conquest of matter, the transfiguration of the object remain unreal."[100] However, imagination remains; radical thought and the ability to imagine that another world is possible retain their force in the mind of the individual and the group.

In contrast, we can look to Adorno's aesthetics, which articulates a concept of art that possesses a more forceful redemptive character. Richard Wolin writes that, for Adorno,

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[97] Ibid., 28.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., 40. It is important to note that 'art' and 'aesthetics' include literature, visual art, theatre, and music.

[100] Ibid., 44.

"works of art possess a unique *saving power*," insofar as they "incorporate" the phenomena of our present reality "within the context of a *freely articulated, non-coercive totality*."[101] Thus, art can redeem the present reality, and the aesthetic form, which Adorno calls "free articulation,"[102] is a "positive alternative to the reigning principle of social organization,"[103] which is the instrumental-rational, utilitarian social order. However, again, this redemptive concept of aesthetics is not necessarily active or praxis-based; Adorno sloughs off the "*pragmatic dimension*" on which Wolin argues "the essence of aesthetic experience depends. … Because he tries to conceive of works of art primarily as vehicles of philosophical truth, the entire pragmatic side of works of art—their role in shaping, informing, and transforming the lives of historically existing individuals—falls out of account."[104] Moreover, Adorno's understanding of history and his historical context—the mid-twentieth century being one of the darkest periods of recent history—further solidified his "unreceptiveness to oppositional cultural forms with genuinely exoteric, generalizable potential."[105] All this being said, though, there is a weak utopianism within Adorno's aesthetic theory that may prove useful in our pursuit of a way out of the present historical trends and crises:

> art presents the familiar and everyday to us in a new and unexpected light, such that we are impelled to modify our habitual modes of thought and perception. Thus, authentic works of art are the arch-foes of all intellectual complacency and positivist affirmation. … Genuine works of art are intrinsically utopian insofar as they both highlight the indigent state of reality at present and seek to illuminate a path toward what has never-yet-been.[106]

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[101] Richard Wolin, "Utopia, Mimesis, and Reconciliation: A Redemptive Critique of Adorno's Aesthetic Theory," in *Representations*, no. 32 (Autumn, 1990), 40.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., 41.

[104] Ibid., 44.

[105] Ibid., 45.

[106] Ibid., 46.

Thus, once again, we affirm the role that aesthetics play in the provision of special insights into the repressive and oppressive forces within the present reality. Moreover, we reaffirm the power of the imagination, which allows us to envision different possible futures, both better and worse, that can provide hope and an impetus for the individual's active participation in the formation of a better future.

Advanced industrial society's technological infrastructure and the capacities of its productive apparatus, which have thus far always been deployed in the interest of domination, exploitation, and repression, render another world possible *in reality* insofar as the possibilities for liberation that they generate contradict the given established system. Additionally, technological rationality has co-opted the capabilities of the imagination in order to produce what were previously unimaginable horrors, such as firebombing, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and nuclear winter. Against this trend, Marcuse argues that we can and must transform the imagination and our technological infrastructure:

> the imagination, sustained by the achievements of science, could turn its productive power to the radical reconstruction of experience and the universe of experience. In this reconstruction, the historical *topos* of the aesthetic would change: it would find expression in the transformation of the *Lebenswelt*—society as a work of art.[107]

By the time he writes *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, however, Marcuse's belief in the possibility of immediate transformation wavers; his fear of a proto-fascistic consciousness within the United States pushes him toward a recognition of the need for political education for the masses. Without this education, no mass movement for human liberation will achieve popular support and will therefore be crushed; therefore, Marcuse argues for "an effectively organized radical Left," which will undertake the task of political education, thereby "dispelling the false and mutilated consciousness of the people so that they themselves experience their condition, and its abolition, as a vital need, and apprehend the ways and means of their liberation."[108] Marcuse argues not for neo-Stalinist, statist

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[107] Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 45.

[108] Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 28.

socialism (he is, in fact, quite critical of 'Soviet Marxism'[109]), nor even immediate radical revolutionary change, but, as Kellner writes, Marcuse is here proposing "less dramatic concepts of social transformation, calling for a 'long march through the institutions' and the development of 'counterinstitutions.'"[110] This more protracted social transformation, Marcuse believes, is the most feasible in late capitalism because the system's contradictions, which produce and promote the needs for liberation, simultaneously—and much more aggressively—produce a rapidly strengthening, militarized state power that aims to intimidate the individual who dares step out of line. This is the vehicle whereby proto-fascist tendencies in the United States could become truly fascistic:

> the courts, used more and more as political tribunals; the reduction of education and welfare in the richest country in the world; anti-democratic legislation, such as preventive detention and the no-knock laws; economic sanctions if you are politically and otherwise suspect; the intimidation and self censorship of the mass media. The fact that we cannot point to any charismatic leader, … any SS or SA here, simply means that they are not necessary in this country. If necessary, other organizations can perform the job, possibly more efficiently.[111]

In order for it to be possible to speak of the 'future of the Left,' there must remain a Left standing in the face of the established system's counterrevolution, as Kellner writes, "if a fascist solution is attempted to solve capitalism's contradictions, then it is of utmost importance that the radical opposition becomes stronger and offers a viable alternative in order to become an effective political force in a period of disintegration and change."[112] Therefore, the Left must refuse disintegration and, instead, focus its energies on organizing itself on its own terms, as well as in the context of already existing institutions.

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[109] See Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*.

[110] Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 306.

[111] Herbert Marcuse, "The Movement in a New Era of Repression: An Assessment," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 16 (1971–2), 8, quoted in Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 296.

[112] Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 296.

Marcuse's advocacy for a 'long march through the institutions' and for political education does not necessarily answer the dilemma at the heart of *One-Dimensional Man*; that is, the task of producing conditions in which the individual may recognize the inadequacy of the given society, its oppressive tendencies, and the possibility of living and being otherwise. Stuart Hall's concept of discursive struggle, which Fredric Jameson briefly discusses in *An American Utopia*, can help us to expand on the idea of the 'long march' and political education. Jameson argues that left-wing parties and individuals can

> serve as vehicles and platforms for some renewed public legitimation of hitherto repressed and stigmatized transformational policies. … [It] would be incumbent on our otherwise impotent social-democratic parties to 'talk socialism' and to breathe life back into the slogans withered and desiccated by the triumphant poison gas of Mrs. Thatcher's breath. … [S]urely the most important achievement of any such exercise in discursive struggle is the rehabilitation of nationalization, and behind that, the replacement of the universally detested target of 'big government' with the more stirring realities of collective commitment.[113]

Whether this sort of struggle can be effective in the current period is unclear; the sort of 'information warfare' that may have been productive at shifting opinions in the Thatcher years and the subsequent decades could prove to be an outdated understanding of how information is delivered and received. Social media and the massive amounts of money backing right-wing propaganda outfits might prove to be different in kind rather than degree with regard to the transmission of information and discourse. This is not to say that a discursive struggle such as Jameson and Hall suggest, and which Marcuse's 'long march' hints at, would be absolutely impotent or wrongheaded; rather, it simply may not be enough. Despite this fact, Marcuse's critical theory provides us indispensable tools of analysis: the true-false needs dichotomy, technological (ir)rationality, and the quantitative-qualitative change formula. In the following chapters, I develop these concepts further by putting them in dialogue with Hannah Arendt and Richard Rorty. Both of these thinkers

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[113] Fredric Jameson, "An American Utopia," in Jameson et al., *An American Utopia: Dual Power and the Universal Army*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (Brooklyn: Verso, 2016), 6–7.

straddle a similar blurred boundary to Marcuse's more explicitly political works. While they do not necessarily agree in terms of ideal socio-politico-economic systems, each is critical of the diminution of the political and the boundaries between it and the private sphere. Through Arendt's work, I develop a more robust analysis of politically *active* life; meanwhile, through Rorty's work, I address the possible manifestations and goals of political *action*. The collapse of the critical sphere of the mind as typified by one-dimensionality has its correlate in the collapse of the impetus for the individual to *be political* in the contemporary era, and my goal is to provide a framework through which we can imagine a more powerful Left.

2   Where there's a Will, there's Arendt

Hannah Arendt, like Marcuse, was a German-Jewish student of Martin Heidegger's, and she approaches the same politico-socio-economic issues of the mid-twentieth century as does Marcuse. She is explicitly (and obviously) neither a Marxist nor an advocate of revolutionary change, but she similarly diagnosed the problems that our society confronts: the weakening of the critical sphere of the mind; the rise of atomization in the public realm, and a concomitant, generalized apathy toward participation in public affairs; and an apparent unwillingness on the part of both the politically weak and powerful to enact changes that might improve the world in which we live.

Throughout her career, Arendt wrote and spoke about a variety of issues that ranged from the origins of totalitarianism to the unique faculties and capacities of the human mind, and there are many points of overlap between her thought and Marcuse's. In our context, Arendt's key concepts are: i) willing, which is a future-oriented faculty of the human mind, whose objects are *projects* that the individual envisions undertaking; ii) political freedom, which is distinct from philosophical freedom, i.e., the freedom of the will, on the one hand, and sovereignty (the errant interpolation of philosophical freedom to the political sphere) on the other hand, and which is the basis for Arendt's concept of *action*; and iii) natality, which is the uniquely human capacity for both spontaneity and the introduction of radically new things into the world, that is, our constitutive ability to *begin*. Each of these three concepts overlap and intersect at critical junctures. Their usefulness for answering Marcuse's question, which asks how it is possible for dominated and subjugated people to "create," for themselves, "the conditions of freedom,"[1] lies in this combination; in other words, none of these concepts is enough on its own. To illustrate a potential answer to Marcuse's question, we require: the future-orientedness of the will, the political freedom to act in the public sphere, and the capacity to introduce novelty into the world.

In this chapter, along with the discussion of Arendt's aforementioned crucial concepts, we delve deeper into both Marcuse's early writings about human essence, especially "The Concept

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[1] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 6.

of Essence,"[2] and his later work on various possibilities for effecting change in the face of the looming, and, in some cases, already underway, 'counterrevolution' in the West, especially *Counterrevolution and Revolt*. Through a discussion of these two thinkers' overlapping conceptions of the human capacity for creative expression, and a correlative outlining of the salient elements of Arendt's thought, we develop a potentially meaningful model for the sort of political action that might point us toward the possibilities for people taking up their own liberation and freedom on their own volition. I am indebted to Christopher Holman's work, *Politics as Radical Creation: Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt on Political Performativity*,[3] wherein he juxtaposes these two thinkers in precisely this way, and he argues that, in combination, Marcuse and Arendt's politico-social thought demand a performative mode of political action and participation. I draw from his analysis of this combination and conduct a discussion of its merits. Additionally, Holman develops a model of politics based on the idea of a system of revolutionary councils. I conclude that political performativity, and Arendtian action in the public sphere, are ideal as goals to strive for; however, the question of arriving at that ideal situation still requires a more robust theory of social change. Thus, despite the ingenuity of his argument, I believe we require a more pragmatic approach to making change in the present. I develop this approach in my third chapter, with particular reference to Rorty's work, *Achieving Our Country*, Kuhn's notions of paradigm shifts and revolutions, and Ricoeur's work on metaphor.

2.1   They Do Deny Me My Essence

Ontology and metaphysics have long been guided by the concept of essence, and this traditional understanding posits the essence of the human individual as a pure, static, unchanging form of Being. For Marcuse, though, essence has a different meaning, and in "The Concept of Essence," he outlines his concept of essence against the backdrop of the historical development of the traditional concept. Typically, essence is described as being in tension with

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[2] Herbert Marcuse, "The Concept of Essence," in *Negations*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 43–87.

[3] Christopher Holman, *Politics as Radical Creation: Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt on Political Performativity* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

appearance; that is, essence is seen as the pure, unchanging form of any given object, and appearance is the impure, contingent representation or (imperfect) actualization of that essence in the world. What follows is a brief description of the historical development of the concept of essence.

Although essence's function and position have changed throughout history, there remains a common core within the transformations, insofar as each of the concept's "manifold forms" include "the abstraction and isolation of the one true Being from the constantly changing multiplicity of appearances."[4] Throughout the bourgeois era, the concept of essence was part and parcel of the rationalist revolution in human thought that Descartes inaugurated: rational subjectivity, insofar as it is autonomous, "establish[es] and justif[ies] the ultimate essential truths on which all theoretical and practical truth depends. The essence of man and of things is contained in the freedom of the thinking individual, the *ego cogito*."[5] Thus, with Descartes' positioning of the essence of the individual within the freedom of thought—internal freedom— the actual question and problem of essence entered into "the sphere of cognitive subjectivity": "The question of essence—of the truth, unity, and authenticity of Being—became the question of the truth, unity, and authenticity of knowledge," and this remains a fundamental principle of freedom of the individual.[6] Cartesian radical doubt, combined with his mechanistic philosophy, "expressed the new, self-possessed individuality that appeared with demands for the free shaping of the conditions of life and for the subjection of nature and its newly discovered wealth."[7] However, the reality of bourgeois society pushes back against the possibilities for liberation that Descartes envisions with his practical philosophy, because the newly liberated individual, as soon as he steps into the world to act, "sees himself subjected to the laws of the commodity market, which operate as blind economic laws behind his back."[8]

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[4] Marcuse, "Concept of Essence," 43.

[5] Ibid., 44.

[6] Ibid., 51.

[7] Ibid., 48.

[8] Ibid., 49.

With Kantian philosophy, the characteristics of essence reappear within both the categories and the transcendental Ideas. Thus, reason becomes "the locus of the final unity, totality, and universality of knowledge: 'the faculty that unifies the rules of the understanding under principles.'"[9] Now, the "question of realizing the essence in existence" becomes "the problem of the transition from the concepts of theoretical to those of practical reason."[10] In other words, reason is the sphere within which such a realization becomes possible. Moreover, because Kant stipulates that "man's free reason" must be at one with

> the empirical world of necessity, freedom is hypostasized as a timeless occurrence: it can exercise its causality on the empirical world only insofar as the world has no effect whatsoever on it. Free reason is limited in function to furnishing the determining ground of actions, to 'beginning' them. Once begun, actions enter the unbreakable causal nexus of natural necessity, and they proceed in accordance with its laws forever after.[11]

Marcuse does not blame Kant and Descartes for the ways in which they limit human freedom to what one can cognize and think, thereby removing human freedom from the empirical, public world. In fact, he argues that the Kantian and Cartesian philosophical doctrines of essence mirror "the fate of a world in which rational human freedom always can take only the initial step freely, only to encounter afterward an uncontrolled necessity which remains contingent with respect to reason."[12] In other words, the fact that they limit human freedom in their philosophy correctly describes the experience of the individual in the world, as a sort of immanent (non)critique. This 'uncontrolled necessity' is not only the epistemological necessity of the categories and perception but also the necessity of participation in the economic relations that characterize bourgeois society. The individual's behaviour, and the realm of possible actions and decisions he can undertake, "are prescribed him by the conditions of a commodity-

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[9] Ibid., 53.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 54.

[12] Ibid.

producing society, and he must observe them if he does not want to go under."[13] Thus, even in this early stage of the bourgeois era, the reality is setting in that, in this society, the economic forces that the people have produced are coming to increasingly control the populace.

With the advent of the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment, essence loses even more of its connection to external freedom. Marcuse notes that, at this point, the possibilities of authoritarian and totalitarian domination reveal themselves. The concept of essence loses its 'free' character, as the thinking individual's "critical freedom" is bound to "pregiven, unconditionally valid necessities," and the concept of essence is no longer characterized by freedom and 'spontaneity,' but by "the receptivity of the intuition. Cognition culminates in recognition, where it remains fixated."[14] Then, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, phenomenology attempts to "reinvigorate bourgeois theory with the basic forces and concepts of German Idealism," but "material eidetics," following Husserl, have set in motion "the transition to a new stage: the preparation of thought for the ideology of authoritarian forms of domination."[15] Thus, from the beginning of the bourgeois era through to modern eidetics, "the concept of essence has followed a course leading from autonomy to heteronomy, from the proclamation of the free, rational individual to his surrender to the powers of the authoritarian state."[16] Finally, positivism launches an attack on metaphysics and its concept of essence. However, the positivist critique will become an ideological, 'essential' position, too, insofar as the basis of the critique lies within "its concept of fact," and, with this concept, "the facticity of an object of knowledge establishes … its 'reality' … [and] its cognitive equi-valence to every other reality."[17] And here we have essence as a factual description of reality: "the thesis of the essentiality of the facts is associated with absolute knowledge of reality, 'which is always essence' [quoting from Mortiz Schlick, the father of positivism]. Cognition, freed from the tension between facts and essence, becomes recognition."[18] Marcuse notes that the world that

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[13] Ibid., 49.

[14] Ibid., 44.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 44–45.

[17] Ibid., 64–65.

[18] Ibid., 65.

positivism claims is the only real world—the world that we 'recognize' rather than cognize—is "dominated by powers concerned with the preservation of this form of reality, in the interest of small and powerful economic groups, against the already real possibility of another form of reality."[19] With this final manifestation of the concept of essence, i.e., the positivistic one, "both the 'interest of freedom' and interest in the true happiness of the individual have disappeared," and those groups that are now dominant in society, who "developed and supported these interests" while their power grew, "oppose them under present forms of domination."[20] Such is the state of affairs in the traditional understanding of the concept of essence: no longer free, the human individual is subject to domination in and through his essential characteristics—inasmuch as these characteristics are described by the traditional understanding.

Despite the proponents of the traditional concept of essence becoming increasingly cozy with authoritarianism, a counter-trend emerges in the Hegelian understanding of essence and appearance and the tension between them. Hegel's thought is dialectical, and he understands essence as a process of overcoming in history. Essence is, therefore, a movement from "bad immediacy" toward "positing the sphere of beings … as that which it is in itself."[21] In other words, Hegel's concept of essence is of a "process in which 'mediated being' is posited through the overcoming of unmediated being; essence has a *history*. … Essence is conceived as something which 'has become,' as a 'result' that itself must reappear as a result and that enters into relation with the dynamic categories of the inessential, illusion, and appearance."[22] For Marcuse, as well as for Marx, though, Hegel's concept of essence stops short of its potential insofar as the movement that he describes is not concerned with any individual human or humanity itself; rather, the movement is ontological, and "it is the Being of beings which undergoes it and is its subject. … Man participates in this process only as the subject of cognition, insofar as he himself is rational Being."[23] Thus, Hegel's concept of essence, which

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[19] Ibid., 66.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 68.

[22] Ibid., 67–68.

[23] Ibid., 68.

is this process and tension between potentiality and actuality, essence and appearance, is transcendental and "always prior to all states of fact."[24] Although Hegel's concept of essence is not sufficiently human-focused for Marcuse, his influence on materialist social theory is critical because of his centring of the *historical* dimension of essence.

Essence is the process of the actualization of potentiality. The relation between essence and appearance, as understood by materialist theory, is "a historical disproportion[.] … On the basis of this theory the essence of man is understood in connection with those tendencies which have as their goal a new form of social life as the 'Idea' of that which practice must realize."[25] That is, the potentialities—of what could be and what could have been—that exist in the essence of man inform appearance. Materialist theory, typified by Marx's thought, understands the given facts "as appearances whose essence can be comprehended only in the context of particular historical tendencies aiming at a different form of reality,"[26] and these facts, when compared with their potentialities, "reveal themselves to be the 'bad' manifestations of a content which must be realized by doing away with these manifestations in opposition to the interests and powers connected with them."[27] So, whereas Hegel's theory centres Being and ontologizes the movement from potentiality to actuality, materialist theory centres humanity and concerns itself with human subjects. Marcuse writes that, in order for the individual to "achieve the liberation of becoming himself," humanity must "be freed from real need and real misery[.] … When the essence of man becomes the object of inquiry in this way, the relation of essence and appearance is posited as a historical disproportion,"[28] as we saw above. And this disproportion is actualized in concrete terms, such as economic inequality, hunger, and other forms of oppression, in given historical contexts. At the current stage of development, "real potentialities for the fulfillment of human life are at hand in all areas, potentialities which are not realized in the present social structure," thus, we have a "precise meaning" for "the

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[24] Ibid., 69.

[25] Ibid., 72.

[26] Ibid., 71.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 72.

concept of what could be, of inherent possibilities."[29] Specifically, Marcuse writes that there are several factors that determine what we can be in any given historical moment: "the measure of control of natural and social productive forces, the level of the organization of labor, the development of needs in relation to possibilities for their fulfillment[,] … the availability, as material to be appropriated, of a wealth of cultural values in all areas of life."[30] Thus, we can better understand the meaning of essence, and we can better understand what it is to be human, that is, "not only what can already be made of man today, what 'in itself' can already be today, but also … the real fulfillment of everything that man desires to be when he understands himself in terms of his potentialities."[31] Social theory, therefore, helps us understand what the meaning of the human individual's essence is: the form he can embody once he understands himself in terms of his potentialities and desires the fulfillment of this form.

However, 'embodiment' does not mean that the form is static or transcendental. Rather, essence "as process always remains indeterminate to the extent that [it] always depends on the possibility inherent in a given state, [which] is always produced through the interaction of the various elements that define necessarily contingent social and historical moments."[32] There is no total or final realization of human essence; instead, we must affirm the historical and contingent character of essence, which is "simply to recognize that there is no affirmation of the essential that assumes an eternal form."[33] In his review of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*, Marcuse writes that "[e]ssence and existence *separate* in [the individual]: his existence is a 'means' to the realization of his essence, or—in estrangement—his essence is a means to his mere physical existence."[34] When this separation of existence and essence occurs, and "if the real and free *task* of human praxis is the unification of both as factual realization, then the authentic task … is the *radical abolition* of" estranged labour.[35] In other words, the abolition

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 72–73.

[32] Holman, *Politics as Radical Creation*, 26.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism," in *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, trans. Joris de Bres (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 29.

[35] Ibid.

of estranged labour is a necessity, is the authentic task, because capitalism is characterized by "a catastrophe affecting the human essence."[36] Kellner writes that Marcuse, in his review of the *Manuscripts*, locates the ground and justification for revolution in "the contradiction between one's essential human needs and powers and the historical conditions of capitalist society. … [T]his contradiction involves the opposition between free, many-sided creative activity and alienated labour."[37] And Holman writes that the "primary way in which [the individual] expresses her intrinsic creativity, is through participation in processes of (nonalienated) labour, which Marcuse describes as 'the free and full realization of the whole man in his historical world.'"[38] So, for Marx and Marcuse, labour is bound up with both essence and freedom.

Marcuse sees labour as the possibility of an activity that enacts the creative potential of human essence, which is simultaneously an expression of human freedom. Holman writes that Marcuse's concept of labour is not economic but ontological, that it is the "general form of creativity, the faculty that generates the movement from existent to potentiality."[39] He goes on to explain that Marcuse, drawing from Hegel, argues that through labour "one becomes a being-for-self," that labour is "a form of creative self-objectification by which one makes oneself permanent in the objective world."[40] It is important to note that 'objectification' in this context is the human ability to create freely; that is, labouring is "continually work[ing] upon and consciously alter[ing] not only the world but one's essence as well. … For Marcuse the essence of labour lies not simply in self-expression but in the creative overcoming of subjective and objective reality."[41] Labour allows for the manifestation of essence and, simultaneously, self-overcoming through self-objectification in the world via creative expression. Beyond that, though, it also resembles the human essence, and it functions as a sort of external manifestation of that essence. Holman writes that labour is defined by "its process character. The continuous

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 84.

[38] Holman, *Politics as Radical Creation*, 26–27.

[39] Ibid., 27.

[40] Ibid., 28.

[41] Ibid., 28–29.

task of labour is the creation of a future world through an overcoming and transformation of the past. Because the content of this future world can never be fixed once and for all, labour is forever an indeterminate historical practice, persistently altering the nature of both the objective world and the subject."[42] Much like Marcuse's description of essence as historical, that is, as the process of overcoming through the inherent possibilities for the future and the actualization of these possibilities, labour is indeterminate and its task is creating a world through an overcoming of the past.

Whereas Holman places a lot of emphasis on the concept of labour that Marcuse develops in his review of Marx's *Manuscripts*, Kellner criticizes this early concept because it ontologizes labour. Kellner argues that we can see in the review "some of the weaknesses of Marcuse's early problematic before his work with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research," because of his "excessive ontological generalization."[43] The generalization in this essay lies in his "claim that labour follows 'the law of the object' and that it therefore inevitably contains 'externalization' and 'alienation', and is ontologically a 'burden'. The analysis is faulty because it eternalizes alienation and does not allow for creative, non-alienated labour."[44] Thus, Marcuse seems to ascribe characteristics of capitalist wage-labour to his ostensibly universal, ontological concept of labour; however, he departs from this sort of analysis later in his career, as his style moves more toward immanent critique. Moreover, following Marx in *Capital III*, Marcuse "excludes labour from the realm of freedom and authentic individuality by … severing human activity into … a realm of freedom which contains possibilities for creation of an authentic self, and a realm of necessity in which labour is in bondage to the domain of material production."[45] On this point, though, Holman agrees with Kellner, and he argues that we should criticize this exclusion. Marx argues that, even in a world in which labour is no longer alienated and is therefore "intrinsically gratifying, … the fact remains that the activities [i.e., labour and activities for the satisfaction of need] are undertaken in the service of ends

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[42] Ibid., 30–31.

[43] Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 89.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 89–90.

external to themselves."[46] Holman writes that, while Marcuse's review of the *Manuscripts* is crucial insofar as it contains the most in-depth exploration of labour and essence, he limits the possibilities that labour presents.[47]

Marcuse will eventually go beyond this interpretation, which bifurcates the sphere of human activity into one realm of freedom and another of necessity. Holman writes that Marcuse's rejection of this distinction "allows for the possibility of thinking of all spheres of human existence as potentially functioning as media for the expression of the human essence. Just as Marcuse will eventually interpret even socially necessary labour as a form of play," politics, too, will "eventually be able to be seen as an intrinsically gratifying and self-affirming activity that nevertheless also looks toward an externality: not the production of use-values, but rather of new institutional forms."[48] Marcuse does not describe or outline these new forms, but he does describe the future that social theory aims to create. He writes of a society that "disposes of the goods available to it in such a way that they are distributed in accordance with the true needs of the community."[49] However, one cannot reach these ideas only through philosophizing and contemplating the evidence of "mere perception," nor can one reach them through "a universal system of values in which [these ideas] are anchored."[50] Rather, the model of essence that social theory posits "is preserved better in human misery and suffering and the struggle to overcome them than in the forms and concepts of pure thought. This truth is 'indeterminate,'" and while we continue to measure it "against the idea of unconditionally certain knowledge," it will always be indeterminate, because "it is fulfilled only through historical action."[51] Ironic though it may be, Marcuse goes on to describe—in abstract, philosophical terms—materialist theory's dialectical concepts: they are able to "transcend the given social reality in the direction of another historical structure which is present as a tendency in the given reality," and the concept of essence "is rooted in this potential structure. In terms

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[46] Holman, *Politics as Radical Creation*, 33.

[47] Ibid., 32.

[48] Ibid., 34.

[49] Marcuse, "Concept of Essence," 73.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

of the positive concept of essence, all categories that describe the given form of existence as historically mutable become 'ironic': they contain their own negation."[52] Thus, this potential future is available in the present, as a sort of 'negation-in-waiting.' The given, unfree form of existence has within it a possible future form of free existence that is not yet given: we must take it, enact it, through historical practice and action. What remains is to decipher the means and methods for beginning this process.

Freedom is connected with becoming, potentiality, and labour, all of which are in turn bound up with essence. We know that Marcuse decries the bourgeois notion of freedom, which arises in the context of the bourgeois era's concept of essence: freedom recedes from the material world, and now the individual finds his freedom internally, in the *ego cogito*. The world in which the individual finds himself "becomes a merely 'external' world that is not rationally connected with man's authentic potential, his 'substance' or 'essence.'"[53] The individual turns inward, because that is where his freedom lies. The external world is uncertain and unfree, which "is countered by the certainty and freedom of thought as the individual's only remaining power base."[54] In bourgeois philosophy, essence becomes part and parcel of the individual's rational faculty "as that which is essential in man."[55] However, when freedom is found only in reason, "whole dimensions of existence become 'inessential,' of no bearing on man's essence."[56] Freedom, therefore, must not be merely internal, merely rational; there must be some form of social organization that can fulfill the individual's desire and need for freedom. The interests of materialist theory "aim at an organization of life in which the individual's fate depends no longer on chance and the blind necessity of uncontrolled economic relationships but rather on planned shaping of social potentialities. … [The] material conditions of life … can be organized through and by individuals' social freedom; that is, they can be linked to the

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[52] Ibid., 86.

[53] Ibid., 49–50.

[54] Ibid., 50.

[55] Ibid., 80.

[56] Ibid.

'essence' of the individual."[57] Later in his career, Marcuse will further develop the connection between essence and freedom that he describes in this early essay.

The connection between essence and freedom lies in the tension between 'is' and 'ought' that Marcuse discusses at great length in *One-Dimensional Man*. The tension between essence and appearance, potentiality and actuality, *is* and *ought*, "permeates the two-dimensional universe of discourse which is the universe of critical, abstract thought," and dialectical thought develops the contradictions between the two dimensions, thereby understanding the contradictions and the mediations between them as "historical process. Thus the 'other' dimension of thought appeared to be *historical* dimension—the potentiality as historical possibility, its realization as historical event."[58] Freedom must activate and integrate the becoming-structure of human essence; that is, it must incorporate the perpetual change and indeterminacy of human life. For a society to be free, its members must have both internal and external freedom; they must not be limited by external factors such as the economic, political, racist, sexist, or other oppressive and repressive forms of social containment (such as those we examined in the first chapter).

Marcuse has clearly argued against the internal freedom described by the bourgeois philosophy, and he does not want to limit the freedom of the individual to the private sphere. However, he acknowledges that the individual must be free internally and in the privacy of one's own home in order to be free in the public sphere. In *Eros and Civilization*: "human freedom is not only a private affair—but it is nothing at all unless it is *also* a private affair."[59] And again in *One-Dimensional Man*: The distinction between the public and private individual has collapsed, and the private space of the individual "has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality. Mass production and mass distribution claim the *entire* individual[.] … The result is, not adjustment but *mimesis*: an immediate identification of the individual with *his* society and, through it, with the society as a whole."[60] Thus, public unfreedom, which

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[57] Ibid., 77.

[58] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 97.

[59] Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 224–25.

[60] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 10.

allowed for the growth of the private, internally free rational subject, has now spread to the private sphere. Marcuse asks whether the established society, where the individual is not even free in his own home, can "rightfully claim that it respects the individual and that it is a free society? To be sure, a free society is defined by more, and by more fundamental achievements, than private autonomy. And yet, the absence of the latter vitiates even the most conspicuous institutions of economic and political freedom—by denying freedom at its hidden roots."[61] Everywhere unfree, rudderless, what hope is there for one-dimensional man?

2.2 Born Again (for the Very First Time)

Throughout her career, Hannah Arendt aimed to produce a rigorous theory of action, which she believed is the highest form of *public* living that humans can undertake. Her text, *The Human Condition*, deals with the tripartite division of the *vita activa*: labour, which revolves around the maintenance of life and objects of consumption; work, which produces use-objects and the physical structures that allow for the durability of the human world; and action, which involves speech and praxis and is the only part of the *vita activa* that "goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter."[62] Whereas *Human Condition* analyses the *vita activa*, Arendt's unfinished, final text, *The Life of the Mind*, deals with the *vita contemplativa*, which has its own tripartite division: thinking, willing, and judging. Despite Arendt's focus on the mind in this latter text, willing and its faculty, i.e., the will, reveals itself to be deeply connected with the possibilities of action in the appearing world. Through an analysis of the will and its spontaneity, Arendt's concept of action in the public realm becomes a powerful tool for political action in the contemporary era.

The will is a faculty of the mind, an inner domain, and it requires a withdrawal from the world. However, this withdrawal is only temporary, as the willing ego has "the intention of a later return," because its objects "are particulars with an established home in the appearing world."[63] Because of its unique connection to the appearing world, the withdrawal phase of the will "is

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[61] Ibid., 245.

[62] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7.

[63] Hannah Arendt, "Thinking," in *The Life of the Mind*, ed. Mary McCarthy (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 1:92.

characterized by the strongest form of reflexivity [of the mind's faculties], an acting back upon itself."[64] This connection differs from that of the thinking ego, which deals with 'de-sensed' objects that the mind represents through the power of memory and imagination. The will is "our mental organ for the future," just as "memory is our mental organ for the past," and it deals with "things, visible and invisibles, that have never existed at all,"[65] unlike thought-objects, which are re-presented through memory. Thus, rather than looking backward, as the mind does in remembrance, the willing ego looks toward the future, and it approaches those things that we can change or choose to do, but "whose accomplishment is by no means certain,"[66] because of the indeterminacy of the future.

Arendt calls the objects of the will 'projects,' due to the uncertainty of their accomplishment. It is only in looking backward, *post hoc*, that this uncertainty can become certainty and "a freely performed act loses its air of contingency under the impact of now being an accomplished fact[;] … the act appears to us now in the guise of necessity."[67] The willing ego thus approaches the fundamental uncertainty that characterizes the future with the goal of uniting its present 'I-will' or 'I-can' with its projected 'I-do' or 'I-have-done'; that is, "when willing-something will have changed into doing-it."[68] The projected I-do of the will is the affirmative, present-tense form of "I-will-*and*-I-can," which Arendt calls "the Will's delight."[69] However, prior to the fulfillment of the will's project, its "normal mood" is "impatience, disquiet, and worry,"[70] because the willing ego fears that the I-will might become an I-will-and-I-can*not*. (Below, I address this fear, insofar as it characterizes the early Christians' reversal of the notion of freedom, which is crucial for our understanding of the particular form of freedom that Arendt embraces and encourages.) In short, the will is the

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Hannah Arendt, "Willing," in *The Life of the Mind*, ed. Mary McCarthy (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 2:13.

[66] Ibid., 38.

[67] Ibid., 30.

[68] Ibid., 37.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

faculty of the mind that envisions the possibilities that the future may present to the self, and, in envisioning this future, it projects itself toward doing or having done any number of things.

The ways in which the will projects itself into the future beg the questions of what willing is and whether or not the will freely chooses its projects. This is a binary question for Arendt: "The will is either an organ of free spontaneity that interrupts all causal chains of motivation that would bind it or it is nothing but an illusion."[71] Despite the force of this either/or, in the final analysis, her answer is not so clear. Arendt's notion of the will and its freedom is quite ambiguous, as it changes throughout her career; at some points she appears to be completely opposed to the idea of the will, while at others she appears to endorse it. This ambiguity results from Arendt's attempts to position herself, on the one hand, in opposition to the will and its freedom as understood by the philosophical and political traditions, and, on the other hand, in favour of the will as a free, spontaneous faculty of the mind, which is not itself political but which prepares the self for action. What follows is an overview of her first, more famous conception of the will, which is primarily negative. In this conception, she excoriates the traditional understanding of the freedom of the will and its connection to the notion of political sovereignty. After this overview, I discuss the new understanding of the will that Arendt develops in *Life of the Mind*, through an exploration of her concept of natality.

In her essay, "What is Freedom?," Arendt mounts a strong critique of the will, but her aim is "not to fully discredit" it; rather, since she locates the origins of the willing faculty in the early Christians' withdrawal from politics and the public realm, she aims to "confine it to the realm of philosophical freedom, the freedom of the mind."[72] This is not to say that Arendt believes, like Descartes and Kant, that freedom properly speaking cannot exist in the public sphere. Instead, her point is that public freedom is not to be found in the will, despite the fact of the popular understanding of the 'freedom of the will' as that public freedom which must be protected against encroachment from authority.

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[71] Arendt, "Thinking," 1:213.

[72] Andreas Kalyvas, "From the Act to the Decision: Hannah Arendt and the Question of Decisionism," *Political Theory* 32, no. 3 (June 2004): 326, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4148157.

Through an historical account of the idea of the will and its freedom, Arendt aims to shrink the space of manifestation for the will in the public sphere. The Christian idea of an inner sense of freedom, located in the willing faculty of the mind, does not arise from an experience of the strength of the will and its freedom. Arendt argues instead that the will's impotence, "the experience of an I-will-and-can*not*,"[73] is the source of the sense of inner freedom, of freedom's internalization. Freedom only truly exists "where the I-will and the I-can coincide."[74] If one were unable to do what one willed, then one would be subject to necessity, which "may arise from the world, or from my own body, or from an insufficiency of talents, gifts, and qualities which are bestowed upon man by birth[;] … all these factors … condition the person from the outside as far as the I-will and the I-know … are concerned."[75] Arendt contends that the origin of the common understanding of the will is connected with the separation between freedom and politics that Christianity has engendered: "the early Christians, and especially Paul, discovered a kind of freedom which had no relation to politics, … occurring in the intercourse between me and myself, and outside of the intercourse between men. Free will and freedom became synonymous notions, and the presence of freedom was experienced in complete solitude."[76] The notion of the 'free will' as a faculty of the mind arose within the early Christian experience of public impotence and lack of freedom, so that the Christian concepts of freedom and free will revolve around *sovereignty*, "the ideal of a free will, independent from others."[77] This is a departure from the notion of freedom present in Greek antiquity, which was a state of being manifested in action and was explicitly political; for, according to Arendt, the *polis* was a place of action, and "to *be* free and to act are the same."[78] Arendt traces the transformations of the mode of freedom adopted by the early Christians through the philosophical tradition, and she discovers that freedom has been displaced from its original domain, the realm of politics, to the inner realm of the mind.

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[73] Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin, 1983), 162.

[74] Ibid., 160.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., 158.

[77] Ibid., 163.

[78] Ibid., 153.

Modernity is characterized by a separation of politics and freedom, which was brought about in large part by the political thinkers of the Enlightenment. Here we see a similarity between Arendt's understanding of the concept of freedom's trajectory throughout the bourgeois period and that of Marcuse. This separation typifies the common understanding of 'freedom,' which becomes relatively synonymous with sovereignty and becomes "a marginal phenomenon—which somehow forms the boundary government should not overstep unless life itself and its immediate interests and necessities are at stake."[79] This boundary exists because, in the modern age, "government" has "been identified with the total domain of the political" and is "considered to be the appointed protector not so much of freedom as of the life process, the interests of society and its individuals."[80] Andreas Kalyvas' interpretation of Arendt's writings about sovereignty, from *Human Condition* through *On Revolution*, is a crucial addition to the literature on the subject. In her early writings, Arendt indicts sovereignty's role in conjuring up "the practices of command and coercion, separating the ruler from the ruled and imposing a vertical and inegalitarian model of government"[81]; meanwhile, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt describes the ways in which sovereignty levels the plurality of the public sphere "by homogenizing and annihilating all differences and distinctions in the name of 'One Man of gigantic proportions.'"[82] These theoretical analyses of the impact of sovereignty on the public sphere and plurality characterize Arendt's writings.

In *On Revolution*, Arendt denounces the concept of the sovereign 'will of the people,' describing it as a major factor in undermining the cause of the French Revolution. Kalyvas writes that the sovereign popular will's "shaky and volatile nature was totally antithetical to order and stability. As the sovereign can never limit itself, similarly it can never establish an enduring constitutional order. … Unregulated and faced with no limitation, unshaped and boundless, the sovereign decision became vulnerable to its own transient and fluid dispositions

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[79] Ibid., 150.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Kalyvas, "From the Act to the Decision," 326.

[82] Ibid. One can also see this sort of language in the Enlightenment thinking regarding the social contract, sovereign authority, and so on.

to plunge finally into terror."[83] The infamous Terror of the 1790s in France grew out of the notion of the sovereign popular will, as the idea of sovereignty relies on "postulating an 'Other,' an enemy" in order to consolidate itself as "indivisible."[84] Therefore, Kalyvas writes, the popular will penalizes and incriminates "plurality and differences so that, on the one hand, they are perceived as real, concrete threats[,] … and on the other, they are rationalized as necessary symbolic referents … deployed to solidify the unity of the body politic by steering it away from any form of dissent and disagreement."[85] The revolutionaries' discovery of the unifying and homogenizing force of the postulation of an Other developed, and they extended "this oppositional logic to its ultimate consequences [and] discovered that the enemy could well be within each apparently virtuous citizen."[86] Thus, we can understand the Terror of 1793–94 as another form of the terrorism that the revolutionaries had initially identified with the monarchy. Robespierre's legitimation of the Terror—despite its resemblance to the despotism against which he claims to fight—can be seen as a recognition of this reversal and incorporation, which he attempts to explain away in the same manner that reactionaries tend to do, such as the Nazis' adoption of the practices described in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.[87] Barry Goldwater's defense of "extremism" and opposition to "moderation" fits the same mold.[88] One recognizes that people might see what one does as simply a repetition of that against which one fights, but says in response: 'No, when we do it, it is good; for we know who our Enemy is, and we know that we are good.' We can see a similarity here between this understanding of the Other within each citizen, who must be opposed and destroyed, and Marcuse's description of the external Enemy that the system incorporates into itself, which we described in the first chapter. The introduction of the freedom of the will into politics transforms it into the idea of popular sovereignty, which grants to the people the monarch's decision-making strength.

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[83] Ibid., 329.

[84] Ibid., 331.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., 331–32.

[87] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 2005), 358.

[88] Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2001), 391.

Arendt locates the source of many modern tragedies in this traditional understanding of freedom as free will and sovereignty. The "philosophical equation of freedom and free will … leads either to a denial of freedom—namely, if it is realized that whatever men may be, they are never sovereign—or to the insight that the freedom of one man, or a group, or a body politic can be purchased only at the price of the freedom … of all others."[89] The philosophical tradition inaugurated by Platonic philosophy abhors the freedom of action because of the ways in which it "seems to entangle its producer" in the unintended and unforeseen consequences of every act.[90] The freedom of action seems to force the actor "to forfeit his freedom the very moment he makes use of it," because he becomes responsible for consequences of which he had no foresight.[91] Therefore, the philosophical tradition shifts "from action to will-power, from freedom as a state of being manifest in action to the *liberum arbitrium* [the freedom to choose between two given options],"[92] which is the freedom of the will understood in the Christian sense: a will that is negatively free (i.e. 'free from' external influence, rather than 'free to' act) or sovereign.

During the Enlightenment, political philosophers such as Rousseau infuse political freedom with the philosophical understanding of freedom as the freedom of the will, thereby pushing sovereignty to the forefront of the popular conceptions of political freedom. Rousseau's political philosophy, which espouses the sovereignty of the body politic and the individual, relies on the conception of "political power in the strict image of individual will-power."[93] Against Rousseau, Arendt argues that a "community actually founded on this sovereign will would be built not on sand but on quicksand."[94] Instead, plurality, "the fact that not man but men live on the earth," means that "freedom and sovereignty are so little identical that they cannot even exist simultaneously. … If men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they

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[89] Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 164.

[90] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 233.

[91] Ibid., 234.

[92] Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 163.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 164.

must renounce."[95] Because of the illusory character of this understanding of freedom—as the sovereignty that the tradition associates with freedom—it can only be maintained "by the instruments of violence, that is, with essentially non-political means."[96] Furthermore, as Holman writes, because humans always inhabit the world plurally, "sovereignty remains an illusion. … The problem with sovereignty is that for the power that is generated between individuals, it substitutes the power of one individual or a group of individuals over all others."[97] To Arendt, the source of much of the modern age's revolutionary and state violence is the equation of free will and freedom, which we retain to this day. Even if we were to grant that a successful revolution requires revolutionary violence, it would not follow logically, by necessity, that the French Revolution was successful, unless the only benchmark of success is the overthrow of the ancient regime. The new constitution of 1791, crafted in the first phases of the revolution, was made essentially impotent by the first Assembly because of Robespierre's self-denying ordinance. What followed was several years of war, political (and non-political) executions and massacres of 'counter-revolutionaries' (in scare quotes because of the constantly shifting definition of the term), massive inflation, and suffering. Then, the arguably terrible Directory, which ushered in the Napoleon dictatorship, and, thus, more war.[98] By the revolutionaries' own definition(s), it is hard to describe this as a successful revolution. Again, it may be the case that a successful revolution does require revolutionary terror or violence, but it is not clear that the Terror of 1793–94 was necessary.

The crises of the contemporary era can be traced to the popular notion of sovereignty, or the will of the people. As I discuss further below, the transposition of the will's qualities to the political sphere, the world of human affairs, has led to an all-too common backlash against action of the sort that we must undertake to combat the crises. Across the globe, reactionary politicians and groups of people have obstructed attempts to curb carbon emissions, address economic inequalities, and fix discriminatory governmental and corporate policies. Although

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[95] Ibid., 164–65.

[96] Ibid., 164.

[97] Holman, *Politics as Radical Creation*, 103.

[98] See: William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 2002), especially chapters 6, 8–17.

I cannot address it here, it is important to note that, in some cases, it appears as though the economically and socially powerful in society weaponize cultural animus via propaganda to exploit people's naivety, while in other cases, rather than naivety, it seems that cynicism and atomization—issues that Arendt deals with in *Origins of Totalitarianism*—have taken hold of populations and politicians. The propaganda latches onto the naivety and cynicism and misdirects the populace toward other, false crises, some of which the propagandists themselves invent, and some of which they merely amplify, such as the QAnon conspiracy theory and its subsidiaries. However, in each case, there is overwhelming paralysis and stasis in the face of these mounting global crises, and we are not confronting the dilemmas that we face. This inaction can be explained at least in part by the equation of the free will with sovereignty in the world of human affairs; for, while the will produces the possibility of action, it is also characterized by an erratic temperament that can lead to paralysis.[99] In order to investigate potential solutions to these issues, i.e., the issues of the common notion of the 'will of the people' and global inaction in the face of the crises of the contemporary era, we must discuss Arendt's concept of natality, insofar as it relates to the will, and its role in preparing the self and the mind for action.

The concept of natality revolves around the human individual's capacity to 'begin'; that is, the ability to start something new by introducing unprecedented acts, objects, and events into the world. Following St. Augustine, Arendt argues that we have the capacity to begin because we are ourselves a beginning: "Man does not possess freedom so much as he, or better his coming into the world, is equated with the appearance of freedom in the universe[.] … Because he *is* a beginning, man can begin; to be human and to be free are one and the same. God created man in order to introduce into the world the faculty of beginning: freedom."[100] The capacity to begin, human natality, is part and parcel of what it means to be free, which is itself part of the essential structure of what it means to be human. And so, much like Marcuse's concept of essence as becoming and creation, for Arendt, "the human being is thus that being whose essence it is to begin or create."[101] Patricia Bowen-Moore divides natality into three categories:

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[99] Patricia Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 90, PDF.

[100] Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 167.

[101] Holman, *Politics as Radical Creation*, 95.

primary natality, political natality, and tertiary natality. Primary natality is the individual's factual birth (i.e., the birth of the person) and the power to begin, which are two sides of the same coin, and the experience of primary natality "characterises the pre-political status of human birth and human beginnings."[102] Political natality "constitutes man's 'second birth,'" which is a birth into the world of politics.[103] Tertiary natality corresponds to the mind's capacity for beginning within the context of thinking, willing, and judging: it "identifies the re-construction of the theoretical life from the aspect of its nascence."[104] For our purposes here, tertiary natality is the key component of Bowen-Moore's schema, but in order to properly outline the ways in which tertiary natality functions with respect to action, I must briefly discuss the other two natalities because each relates to the others in important ways.

As a concept, primary natality regards the birth of each individual human being as an unprecedented "miracle,"[105] which produces the individual's freedom to act. As a beginning, each birth is unprecedented, because each human enters into a world that is always anterior to the appearance of this absolutely new individual, and this novelty is unprecedented in the already-existing world.[106] The fact that the individual can begin something new, as a 'beginner,' is "conditioned by and dependent upon the possession of a principle for beginning. This is his natality, his *supreme capacity* for beginning."[107] The human being is a beginning insofar as his birth is a beginning, and, by virtue of his being a beginning, he is also a beginner: "The beginner's factual birth is, as it were, the installation of his capacity to initiate."[108] Before the individual's 'second birth,' this capacity to initiate is pre-political, but it produces the possibility of action; without it, "he could not exercise action of any sort. … Human natality, as the pre-condition for the exercise of action, anchors the beginner's potentiality for action of

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[102] Bowen-Moore, *Philosophy of Natality*, 21.

[103] Ibid., 42.

[104] Ibid., 70.

[105] Ibid., 22.

[106] Ibid., 22–23.

[107] Ibid., 23.

[108] Ibid., 26.

a political sort and so, ultimately, freedom."[109] Primary natality thus refers to the individual's inherent, structural capacity to begin, as Bowen-Moore writes that the individual's "intrinsic principle for novelty which belongs to him as part of his essential structure" grants him the capacity for action.[110] In the fact of his birth, which is his beginning, the individual himself begins; that is, his unprecedented beginning is his first act as a beginner, and this first act "establishes the condition for further beginnings as possible to it."[111] The concept of primary natality describes the individual's initiatory capacity; crucially, this capacity is an essential part of what it is to be human. Each human being is a beginner and, therefore, can begin. By dint of his being at all, each human has at his origin his first act as a beginner, namely, his birth, and this first act initiates the ability to act and initiate subsequent beginnings.

Factual birth, which is each person's first 'act,' is followed by his second birth—into the publicity of the realm of human affairs. This second birth is the way in which the beginner "commences action in the public world of human affairs[,] … the field of political freedom wherein the actor has the opportunity to individuate himself, his uniqueness, through distinctive words and deeds."[112] The world of human affairs, which exists before the individual's birth and will continue to exist after his death, is the locus of individuation because, insofar as human affairs are political, the world of human affairs is conditioned by plurality. Individuation requires plurality; we are unique and distinct by virtue of "the fact that not man but men live on the earth."[113] Distinctiveness requires contrast, and it is through this comparison that we can distinguish ourselves. The experience of plurality "corresponds to the fact that human beings are born into a world inhabited by others and to the fact that they have the power to form a community of actors."[114] Insofar as the world of human affairs is the realm of politics and, therefore, of freedom, plurality guarantees the reality of freedom; for Arendt, freedom is "entirely political," and its "reality is dependent upon the condition of human

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., 27.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., 48.

[113] Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 164.

[114] Bowen-Moore, *Philosophy of Natality*, 54.

plurality for its appearance."[115] Freedom is the capacity to "call something into being," in the world of human affairs, "which did not exist before."[116] Secondary, political natality, then, is our birth into the world of human affairs, which is characterized by plurality; within the realm of politics, we may enact our capacity to begin something completely new and unprecedented.

Tertiary natality differs from primary and political natality insofar as it centres on the capacities of the mind. Bowen-Moore investigates thinking, willing, and judging, but our focus here is only on willing and judging. Although Arendt's understanding of freedom is distinct from her understanding of the will, the two are closely related, because "freedom and its experience of spontaneity are the will's supreme and most far-reaching extension. Hence, the will and the experience of freedom share the condition of natality."[117] Bowen-Moore outlines the influence that Arendt draws from Augustine's and Duns Scotus' conceptions of the will and, in *Life of the Mind*, Arendt explores the ideas of these two Christian thinkers. Bowen-Moore writes that Augustine understands the will to be a source of action rather than a dictatorial presence in the mind, and Arendt adopts this understanding. The will

> is not freedom but a precondition of freedom: it prepares action and is the spring of action but itself is not action until its interior activity ceases. The will … anticipate[s] freedom insofar as it holds steadfast to its inherent erratic temperament and its autonomy as a power for beginning. … [It] anticipates the experience of contingency behind every act of an I-will and it is able to live with action's unpredictability prior to its rupture in history as an event already having been enacted.[118]

The will is able to begin new things, to embark upon new projects, because of its condition of natality; however, unlike political natality, which is manifested in action, willing is an internal capacity of the mind. Therefore, the natality of the will prepares the individual for action—in all of its indeterminateness and unpredictability—as the spring of action.

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[115] Ibid., 58.

[116] Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 151.

[117] Bowen-Moore, *Philosophy of Natality*, 86.

[118] Ibid., 88.

The contingency of the willing faculty, of the I-will, is a crucial element of Arendt's concept, which she incorporates from the philosophy of Duns Scotus. He "did not denigrate the idea of contingency but rather regarded it as a spontaneous beginning of something which cannot be predicted but which, once having occurred, could have been replaced by its opposite."[119] Just as it is for action, contingency is an essential part of willing, because both activities throw themselves and their agent into the indeterminate and unpredictable possibilities of the future. Action occurs in the present and its objects exist within the current world, but the consequences of every act can and do reverberate, perhaps, forever.[120] Meanwhile, the will's objects exist in the future, as projects; these futural objects are undetermined and subject to change, and, as projects, they are potential objects of action. In addition, the will "cannot be coerced to will one thing as if by some sort of necessity. … [Its] experience of the potentiality of freedom is guaranteed by the principle of contingency."[121] The freedom of the will lies in the spontaneity that accompanies its "causal contingency," because of its freedom from coercion, and its "unpredictability," because of the indeterminateness of the future where its projects lie.[122] And this freedom of the will, Bowen-Moore writes, "endows [the mind] with a certain self-confidence to act if it so wills. … [B]ut the inception of action is founded on the randomness of the contingent, the utter arbitrariness of beginnings."[123] The freedom of the will reveals itself in its spontaneity, its unpredictability, and its contingency; that is, by way of its tertiary natality, the willing faculty empowers the I-do of action by proclaiming I-can-*and*-I-will.

Despite the apparent strength of the willing faculty, it is not the political faculty of the mind. Instead, judgment is the key mental faculty that interpolates mental life to the political sphere; the will's "context is entirely interior" even though "its interests do indeed lie with the experience of action."[124] In the face of its freedom, its orientation toward the future's unpredictability, and its own causal contingency, "the willing activity can betray its inherent

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 233.

[121] Bowen-Moore, *Philosophy of Natality*, 89.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid., 89–90.

[124] Ibid., 90.

erratic behavior" by presenting the self with the opportunity to *not* will and to, instead, do nothing.[125] Judgment, on the other hand, approaches the plurality of the world and the possibilities for action granted to the self by freedom. It is the most political activity of the mind because "it takes the plurality of the world into account when it makes its pronouncements. … [It] reinstates the thinker and the actor in history … due to the simple fact that those who witness words and deeds form a judgement about them which, in turn, becomes part of a worldly reality."[126] Internally, insofar as it is a mental faculty, judging "particularises the generalities of thinking and the performance of the will's projects by withdrawing from these interests with a view to judging them impartially."[127] Simultaneously, Bowen-Moore writes, judging is characterized by its public context, and this publicity is "enhanced by the factor of impartiality," which is "essential in the formation of a judgement because by way of this speciality the mind can acquire a 'viewpoint from which to look upon, to watch, to form judgements … to reflect upon human affairs.'"[128] The judging faculty is able to gain this impartial viewpoint due to its "special capacity: imagination," which allows the individual "to imagine other people's points of view and to compare one's own judgement with the possible judgements of others by thinking from the other's perspective."[129] Through the judging faculty's reflection on the common world—the sphere of action and political affairs—it forms an impartial viewpoint from which to reflect on the possibilities of action that the will projects. Bowen-Moore writes that willing is "the spring of action whose potentiality is such that it can break into history through revelatory action and speech," and that the "political product" of judging "is a meaningful story told to the mind about the common world in which we live and take our bearings."[130] From its impartial viewpoint, judgment tells this story to the mind, thereby contextualizing the will's projects and particularizing them into possibilities for action; that is, possibilities of new and unprecedented acts.

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 92.

[127] Ibid., 93.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid., 95.

The concept of the will that Arendt analyzes in *Life of the Mind* differs from her earlier, more critical conception of it. The critical lens through which she initially views the will, though, is not a dismissal of the will but an attempt to show its interiority and the unique experience of its freedom. The common notion of freedom as sovereignty arises out of the transposition of the distinctly internal freedom of the will from the mind to the world of human affairs, and Arendt argues that this has had disastrous consequences for humanity. In *Life of the Mind*, though, her concept of the will becomes more entangled with natality and freedom, as she claims that "[t]he freedom of spontaneity is part and parcel of the human condition. Its mental organ is the will."[131] Here, Arendt ties the freedom of spontaneity, in the context of the human condition, to the will in much more explicit terms than she does in "What is Freedom?," where the will is understood in terms of—and criticized on the basis of—the Christian sense of the faculty. In *Life of the Mind*, Arendt writes of the influence of Epictetus' philosophy on Christian ideas of the will: "the heart of the matter [for Epictetus' thought] is the Will's power to assent or dissent, say Yes or No insofar, at any rate, as I myself am concerned."[132] Kalyvas writes that, in *Life of the Mind*, Arendt moves away from the understanding of the willing faculty that she criticizes in "What is Freedom?," toward the dual nature of the will, influenced by Kant, Duns Scotus, and Augustine, who transformed the idea of the will as *liberum arbitrium* and "reconceptualized it in terms of natality and the power to unpredictably start something new."[133] With this shift, the ambiguities of Arendt's concept of the will arise once again.

Kalyvas explores the possible reasons for Arendt's newer conception of the will and focuses his attention on natality and the individual's capacity to begin, which characterize humanity's freedom. He argues that the similarities between freedom and willing must have become much more apparent to Arendt insofar as her newer, prolonged discussion and analysis of the will in *Life of the Mind* reveals the extent to which the will "is the faculty of the unexpected and the singular and the source of extraordinary events."[134] Kalyvas thus emphasizes the will's

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[131] Arendt, "Willing," 2:110.

[132] Ibid., 83.

[133] Kalyvas, "From the Act to the Decision," 334.

[134] Ibid., 335.

connection to natality much more than does Bowen-Moore. This emphasis is a much more forceful interpretation of Arendt's concept, and his reflections on the potential strength of her concept of the will in relation to freedom and liberation represent a positive augmentation of the concept and make it more applicable and practicable in the contemporary era.

The will's futural orientation allows it to do its work within the inherent indeterminacy and unpredictability of the future. In fact, despite the will's characteristic 'disquiet,' this uncertainty is part and parcel of willing itself: the will "can conceive new projects and enact new undertakings that are not predetermined by anything other than itself," and it can "break with the constraints of time by perceiving/imagining what might never come into being."[135] Arendt's description of the natality of the will incorporates much of the language of freedom and action because the will is the spring of action, and freedom manifests itself in the political realm by way of action. Kalyvas writes that Arendt "insert[s] an element of volition" into her earlier concept of freedom; that is, in Arendt's new concept, "[o]ne must will to publicly reveal one's self in order to decide to participate in joint political activities. … It is part of one's freedom to affirm or negate entering into the public realm as an equal and to partake in a common project."[136] Through the will's preparatory activity, individuals "become lucid and reflective agents, determining who they want to be and how they want to disclose themselves."[137] Thus, according to Kalyvas, the individual wills his entrance into the public sphere and, in so doing, he is able to distinguish himself as a unique individual. However, the description of the will that he cites here is one that Arendt goes on to describe as a metaphysical fallacy: "now Arendt is able to declare that 'it is the will, whose subject matter is projects, not objects, which in a sense creates *the person* that can be blamed or praised and anyhow held responsible not merely for its actions but for its whole 'Being,' its *character*.'"[138] While it appears as though Arendt is endorsing this notion, she goes on to say: "The Marxian and existentialist notions, which play such a great role in twentieth-century thought and pretend that man is his own producer and maker, rest on these experiences, even though it is clear that

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid., 336–37.

[137] Ibid., 336.

[138] Ibid., 337. He is citing *Life of the Mind*, vol. 1, "Thinking."

nobody has 'made' himself or 'produced' his existence; this, I think, is the last of the metaphysical fallacies."[139] Although metaphysical fallacies are, of course, fallacious, Arendt argues that they spring from real experiences, that there is some truth to them; but this truth is misinterpreted by the thinking faculty.[140] In other words, the truth that the fallacy possesses is not logical truth but a deeper, more human truth: meaning. Arendt writes that the "basic fallacy, taking precedence over all specific metaphysical fallacies, is to interpret meaning on the model of truth."[141] The fallacies are attempts to decipher the meaning of particular human experiences, such as the experience of withdrawal from the world in the activity of thinking.[142] Therefore, while Kalyvas' interpretation of this newer concept of the will does provide the faculty with more strength to bring the actor into the political fold, it lacks grounding in Arendt's writing. However, this lack of grounding enables him to reflect on the possibilities that a more robust willing faculty would present to the individual in contemporary society, and I argue that these possibilities are a welcome augmentation to the concept.

Kalyvas concludes with several reflections on what might be gained from a 'less obscure' conception of the will's role in politics and the world of appearances. These reflections represent positive addenda to Arendt's concept of the will, despite his interpretation's departure from her writing, and these augmentations bring her concept into the contemporary era in a more practicable manner than would be otherwise possible. Concluding his essay, Kalyvas writes that the "faculty of the will … could have assisted her, as a mediating concept, to better articulate the various links between [freedom and liberation]."[143] If the will were to function as this mediating concept, then liberation would become a necessity for Arendt's politics. Therefore, a will that is subject to social, economic, and political constraints "becomes an inherent impediment to political action and public participation. In other words, only a will that is relatively liberated from the necessities and deprivations of life can decide to act."[144]

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[139] Arendt, "Thinking," 1:215.

[140] Ibid., 211.

[141] Ibid., 15.

[142] Ibid., 44.

[143] Kalyvas, "From the Act to the Decision," 339.

[144] Ibid.

And this sort of liberation is, according to Arendt, a pre-requisite for participation in the political sphere, but her interpretation of this liberation relies on voluntarism. Kalyvas writes that "a revision of the relationship between political freedom and the will" might solve the "rather unpleasant exclusionary republican elitism that restricted political participation to those who, as [Arendt] said, 'have a taste for public freedom.' All others are excluded on the ground of their own choice."[145] Arendt's voluntarist interpretation of the possibilities of participation in political action undermines the potential strength of her own theory of politics, especially within the contemporary era. Kalyvas asks the crucial question: "How are the 'self-excluded' genuinely able to choose when they have not liberated themselves from oppression and relations of domination, when, in other words, they remain subjugated?"[146] (This concluding question asked by Kalyvas, of course, echoes the guiding question of our work here, which Marcuse asks in *One-Dimensional Man*, and which I have referenced throughout this thesis.) The language of 'self-exclusion' when referring to those who remain subjugated in the contemporary era drips with condescension and ignorance, and Arendt's theory of natality and action seem to provide the groundwork for a much more liberatory theory of inclusion in political action than she herself lets on.

In the context of our reactionary politics and resurgent/insurgent right-wing extremism, which I have referred to as the 'contemporary era,' we require a more elaborate understanding of the possibilities of political action. If we are to confront the crises that appear to be slowly overwhelming humanity—but it is only a matter of time before this slowness becomes terrific speed—then we must be able to understand how we can work together, as a global species, to deal with them. Arendt's theory of political action includes the aforementioned element of self-exclusion—which, I would argue, is the mode of exclusion practiced by certain cynical actors on the right—but it does not include a robust understanding of subjugation and oppression; that is, self-exclusion as a concept excludes the possibility that there are many people who *would participate but cannot*, who experience "an I-will-and-can*not*."[147] These are the people

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[145] Ibid., 340.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 162.

who have been subject to oppression and domination for their entire lives, including prior generations of their families and communities. I believe that our aforementioned guiding question remains unanswered, but that the provision of an effective answer requires a robust theory of political action.

The willing faculty, in its natality, is a tool for the spontaneous generation of political possibilities, as the spring of action. Arendt's understanding of political freedom, which is a departure from and denial of the common idea of sovereignty, is a powerful conceptual tool for the introduction of novel and spontaneous events and newly liberated people into the public sphere. With the positive augmentations that Kalyvas provides in his essay, her theory could be the foundation of an answer to Marcuse's question—and the faculty of the will indicates the way into that foundation. Additionally, Holman provides several insights into the potential combination and juxtaposition of the political thought(s) of Arendt and Marcuse, which I will now discuss.

2.3 Seek (a System of Revolutionary) Councils

In his book, *Politics as Radical Creation: Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt on Political Performativity*, Christopher Holman develops a model of democratic politics that, he argues, can universalize the Marcusean understanding of essence, that is, the "capacity for creativity."[148] In order to do so, he juxtaposes the philosophical and political thought of both Arendt and Marcuse in such a way that the useful elements of both thinkers' theories are brought to the fore, while their relatively lackluster or inadequate elements are critiqued and, subsequently, tossed aside. (Such latter elements are, for example, Arendt's understanding of Marxism, which is quite shallow and rests on a clear lack of rigorous research and analysis.) Holman argues that the political model that he develops is one of a performative politics that encourages and manifests the human capacity for creative expression. The important elements of his model for our context are the notion of healthy agonistic political interactions, his response to the problem of foundation, and the role of revolutionary councils. Together, these elements form a cohesive vision of a performative, democratic politics, which could, I argue,

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[148] Holman, *Politics as Radical Creation*, 4.

be a useful motivating principle for politics today; however, I do not think that realizing this model is possible in our present context. I believe that more work must be done, and I make this case in the next chapter. For now, we must focus on the juxtaposition of Arendt and Marcuse that Holman develops in his book; it is a helpful guide for our endeavours into the possibilities of social change in the next chapter.

Holman develops the idea of an agonistic political sphere—explicitly not an antagonistic one—from Arendt's discussion of sovereignty and the will. She argues that the idea of sovereignty, and the freedom that the tradition has associated with the will, have wreaked havoc and violence on societies throughout history. Thus, of course, a healthy and robust political sphere must not provide oxygen to these commonly held beliefs about what government should or should not do, and what freedoms we do or do not have (freedom from interference vs. freedom to act). Instead, for Arendt, political interaction should not "give an expression to the sovereign will, but … maximize the conflictual interaction between nonidentical significations for the sake of the determination of action oriented toward changing the world[:] … a type of agonism rooted in the expression of the uniqueness of beings."[149] These 'nonidentical significations' refer to the manifestation of this expression of our uniqueness, i.e., the 'who' that I express when I speak or act in public. Crucially, these agonistic interactions in the public sphere approach the possibility of making *events*, which are "'occurrences that interrupt routine processes and routine procedures,' the historical accumulation and objectification of which constitute history."[150] However, Arendt notes that these interruptions of history and routine are not common because politics is uncommon: she

> concede[s] the historical rarity of great and glorious action, writing that 'politics as such has existed so rarely and in so few places that, historically speaking, only a few great epochs have known it and turned it into a reality.' … The recognition of the exceptionality of agonal action produces for Arendt a political imperative to reorganize human reality such that all citizens are able to express themselves performatively.[151]

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[149] Ibid., 103.

[150] Ibid., 103–04.

[151] Ibid., 105.

Thus, at issue here is the possibility of normalizing the rare occurrence of the introjection of the great and glorious into the everyday. Arendt desires "a qualitative reorganization of the nature of everyday politics," and Holman quotes from Hannah Pitkin, who argues that Arendt desires "'a general theory of ongoing free citizenship … [which] suit[s] people's everyday concerns, their ordinary low-profile interests and conflicts, without succumbing to triviality, apathy, or privatization. What was needed was a vision of 'normal,' ongoing, ordinary politics that was not really normal or ordinary.'"[152] Furthermore, it bears repeating that Arendt seeks the introjection of greatness and glory, which rarely occur in history, into the everyday, thereby infusing 'normal' politics with the unordinary. In order to achieve this goal, Arendt's concept of greatness cannot be a quality reserved solely for the privileged or the bourgeoisie. Rather, it is a sort of capacity for action in the face of subjugation, stasis, or even lethargy. For example, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, she refers to those who rose up and fought against the Nazis in the Warsaw ghetto as heroes who demonstrated their glory.[153] Holman argues that the possibility of this sort of qualitative reorganization of politics lies in Arendt's laudatory discussion of revolutionary councils and his own discussion of performative politics.

Before we explore the revolutionary council tradition, though, we should further examine Arendt's understanding of the way in which great acts interrupt the movement of human time and history, because the revolutionary councils themselves attempt to make actionable these sorts of interruptions. These interruptions are the great and glorious, and they are part and parcel of Arendt's concept of freedom, which is not the *liberum arbitrium*, the liberty to choose between two alternatives, nor is it the sort of liberty commonly associated with the post-Enlightenment liberal notion of freedom and liberation. As we discussed above, whereas Arendt understands freedom to be "substantively concerned with 'participation in public affairs, or admission to the public realm,'" over time, the "concept of freedom has been increasingly separated from considerations of political action, associated instead with 'the more or less free range of non-political activities which a given body politic will permit and

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[152] Ibid.

[153] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 12.

guarantee to those who constitute it.'"[154] Revolutionary action, in the context of the great revolutions in history, aims to reproduce for humanity the experience of its freedom, and, simultaneously, this reproduction expresses "the capacity to make something new," that is, natality: revolution aims at "change perceived as being the start of something new, as radical beginning," rather than mere change.[155] Revolutions introject "new flights and arcs" into human rectilinear history, which itself "cuts across cyclical organic life, interrupting [its] repetitive movement," and these revolutionary changes, these novel beginnings, "are the extraordinary, and it is precisely these events that … [are] deserving of having [their] substance preserved forever through remembrance[.] … The events that call out to be remembered are those that interrupt history's expected trajectory. It is these that deserve glory."[156] However, human revolutionary history can be—at least in part—described as a history of false starts and failure, because of the difficulty of producing a foundation; that is, the difficulty of building upon the action that springs from the spirit of the revolution, thereby turning it into a stable whole.

Arendt derives her concept of power from the distinction she makes between it and strength, which is limited to the individual. Unlike strength, power only exists between people and can only be held and exercised by a collective. Holman writes that power is the result of "individuals bind[ing] together into a We for the purpose of action."[157] In our context, foundation is the act of preserving "the power created through a collective generative act," that is, the attempt to concretize the revolutionary spirit by turning the capacity for beginning into a new beginning, thereby producing a "stable foundation for the principle of action that united them."[158] Arendt argues that only in America was this 'stable foundation' (produced in substantive part by human slavery) established in a revolution—despite the fact that the revolutionary spirit in America degraded quite rapidly and with it disappeared this foundation—because of that country's foundation generation's understanding of the necessity

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[154] Holman, *Politics as Radical Creation*, 109.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid., 104.

[157] Ibid., 112.

[158] Ibid.

of both public participation, resulting in their belief in the importance of local government and town councils,[159] and "augmentation" or amendment to the constitution, which "makes possible the reproduction of the ontological condition of human life."[160] However, the aforementioned degradation occurred because, whereas during the revolution the 'beginning' and 'preservation' aspects of foundation were unified, after the fact, the opposition between these two elements was not resolved. Holman recounts how abundant the revolutionary spirit was in America before the revolution, which resulted in a set of assumptions regarding the necessity for institutional structures that would preserve it:

> it was assumed that the revolutionary impulse toward political creation would continue to express itself unabated regardless of the specific structure of the political medium within which it was being expressed, [so] the recognition of the fundamental need to create institutions specifically oriented toward active citizen participation was lost; the concern became one of the need for foundation as such, the latter producing the Constitution and its new institutions, which focused not on freedom but liberty, and not on participation but representation.[161]

This sort of representative system, with its concomitant institutions that preserve 'liberty,' i.e., sovereignty, makes participation in the public realm for the average citizen both difficult and apparently unnecessary; for why would we have elected representatives if we were going to participate in the publicity of political life anyway? However, this sort of dichotomy is contrary to Arendt's vision of society, which both lauds and requires active public participation in public, social life.

Holman argues that a proper understanding of this vision requires that we grapple with Arendt's notion of the human capacity to begin and its manifestation in the revolutionary council tradition. The aforementioned dichotomy illustrates the philosophical concept of freedom, the negative 'freedom-from,' or sovereignty, and the rise of statism in the 19th and

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[159] Ibid.

[160] Ibid., 113.

[161] Ibid., 114.

20th centuries typifies this dichotomy. Arendt's understanding of political action, which she associates with glory in the public sphere, and her concept of natality, i.e., the human capacity for beginning, stand in stark contrast to statism "and its corresponding understanding of politics as rule, as expressed primarily in the form of the statesman who gives laws. Rulership is characterized by a relationship between two sets of individuals, one of whom knows and one of whom does not, the latter simply executing the orders of the former."[162] Statism—at least in the context of post-revolutionary states—is a function of the 'revolutionary party,' which Arendt counterposes to the 'revolutionary council.' She contends that, in revolutionary history, the party won out over the council, and that the council system itself contradicts "most Marxist theorizing on the nature of the political," which tended to view councils as "temporary organs that would dissolve after the revolution was completed."[163] Holman considers the notion of a 'completed revolution' antithetical to his idea of performative politics; instead, with Arendt, he sees in the council system a powerful mechanism for the manifestation of the sort of radical, novel action that she envisions. He discusses the nature of the council system in terms of "spontaneous practice," rather than the "practical application of certain fixed theoretical principles generated prior to political action" of the revolutionary party system.[164] He writes that Arendt's understanding of the council system is of its potential to function as "a specific mode of institutionalization," which can positively manifest the "interpenetrative flux of the wills of nonidentical 'whos,'" and it lends itself to "the democratic mediation of opinions between members of a political We, made for the sake of the radical generation of new political modes and orders."[165] Holman endorses Arendt's concept of political action, and her understanding of the powerful role that the revolutionary councils can play in her envisioned political order, because he sees major flaws in both Marx's and Marcuse's political theories, which lie in their "instrumentalist and managerialist models of political transformation."[166] He contends that, in fact, Arendt's theory of political action suits the Marxian dialectic and affirms

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[162] Ibid., 116.

[163] Ibid., 117.

[164] Ibid., 119.

[165] Ibid., 125.

[166] Ibid., 147.

Marcuse's understanding of human essence. While Arendt's understanding of labour and dialectics is quite flawed, if we were to juxtapose her understanding of action with Marx's and Marcuse's concepts of labour, as that activity which affirms the human essence as the capacity for creative expression and action, then we could develop a strong theory of political action that allows for the sustained production of new beginnings and requires the expression of new possibilities.

Holman thus locates in Arendt's discussions of the revolutionary councils a potential form the new politics can take; on the other hand, Marcuse, in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, only briefly discusses the council tradition, but in this brief passage he speaks of them quite approvingly. In fact, he sees the council tradition as affirming the potential power of workers to govern themselves: if we were to see workers begin to control

> individual factories or groups of factories … [we] would recapture a seminal achievement of the revolutionary tradition, namely, the 'councils' … as organizations of self-determination, self-government (or rather preparation for self-government) in local popular assemblies. … The historical heir of the authoritarian mass party (or rather, its self-perpetuating leadership) is not anarchy but a self-imposed discipline and authority—an authority which can only emerge in the struggle itself, recognized by those who wage the struggle. However, the … *immediate* expression of the opinion and will of the workers, farmers, neighbors … is not, per se, progressive and a force of social change. The councils will be the organs of revolution only to the degree to which they represent the people *in revolt*.[167]

Thus, even though Marcuse is here discussing specifically workers' councils, rather than purely political councils, he clearly draws a connection between these bodies and politics— insofar as he recognizes them as the 'heirs' of the mass parties. Holman writes that, if the councils institutionalize a new organization of labour "according to the logic of [the creative] impulse, then they also provide an institutional ground for the reorganization of politics

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[167] Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 44–45.

according to this same logic."[168] He goes on to argue that the councils are the sole political form that is "concerned with the actualization of the human capacity for self-overcoming."[169] The future political community that manifests this capacity must, in its very constitution, affirm impermanence and continually acknowledge the discrepancy between potential and actual. Therefore, the community must have a negative rather than a positive harmony, whereby it will be "capable of recognizing the impermanence not only of the individual's existence but of its own as well," and this recognition relies on a system of councils "that is always open to the movement of history, always willing to put into question and scrutinize the present existence through the dialectical analysis of this existence's potentialities."[170] Holman argues that this future form of the political community is a performative end in itself because it is "substantively oriented toward the generalization of the performative impulse, to a form of institutionalization which is able to accommodate creative contestation over matters of public concern within a non*ant*agonistic and non-surplus repressive context."[171] In other words, the ideal future political community is not antagonistic but agonistic, and, insofar as it is a performative end in itself, it encourages both joy in public life and human flourishing through the generalization of the creative impulse, which is human essence.

2.4   Conclusion: O Ideal, Where Art Thou?

At the end of this exploration, we have before us a clear vision of an ideal political community that encourages the consistent and thoroughgoing manifestation of the human essence, which is creative and spontaneous, and this community takes the form of a system of revolutionary councils—or a more modern cognate of the very same. Arendt's understanding of the will and natality aid us in formulating a more cohesive model that this community can take, insofar as these are inherent human capacities: the former a capacity for projecting the self into the future indeterminately, the latter an ability to introduce radically new things, events, and so on into the world. The system of revolutionary councils is the institutionalization of these capacities,

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[168] Holman, *Politics as Radical Creation*, 174.

[169] Ibid.,

[170] Ibid., 176.

[171] Ibid., 176–77.

that is, their objectification in the public realm, and, ideally, these councils would ensure the perpetuation of this objectification.

However, one major issue arises when we attempt to imagine the course that human civilization must take in order to reach this ideal world: how do we get there? There is no clear answer to this question in Holman, Arendt, or Marcuse—nor in their combination. Each of these authors offer us visions of possible better worlds, but none of them seem to offer a strong theory of social change. Marcuse had planned on developing such a theory,[172] but this project never came to fruition. Arendt and Holman's theory of change, developed from her understanding of the revolutionary councils and the revolutionary impulse, is, to my mind, insufficient insofar as neither author shows how we can implement such a society-wide system of councils; her discussion of them makes plain that there is not an example from history of such a system working on a large scale in (relative) perpetuity. Holman's ideal, i.e., a performative politics that incorporates both Marcuse's and Arendt's theories of society, action, and the individual, is something that I believe we should strive for, but the striving is the problem: how do we get there? And, again, the question that Marcuse raises in *One-Dimensional Man* remains unanswered: how do people who have been the objects of domination and subjugation liberate themselves from their condition?

In the next chapter, I develop my answer to this question. I argue that it is helpful for us to overlay Kuhn's notion of paradigm shifts on top of Marcuse's concept of quantitative change leading to qualitative change, because the paradigm shift itself is that border that we have, as yet been unable to cross: the border between potential and actual, between the present and the new beginning. In addition, I discuss Rorty's distinction between movements and campaigns, as well as Ricoeur's concept of metaphor and metaphoricity. The latter discussion is an analysis of the ways in which metaphor can inspire action through the telling of inspirational stories.

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[172] See: Herbert Marcuse, *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1998). See especially, "A History of the Doctrine of Social Change" and "Theories of Social Change," chapters two and three in that volume, respectively.

3   Three Wise Men?: Kuhn, Ricoeur, Rorty

Our discussion of the mechanisms of social containment left us with a question that has recurred throughout this thesis: how do people who have been the objects of domination and subjugation liberate themselves from this condition? And now, after discussing performative politics, we are confronted with a second question: how do we get to the ideal of performative politics with a system of (revolutionary) councils? The answers to both of these questions are not identical, but they are closely related. I argue that we can find them in a threefold juxtaposition of Marcuse's quantitative/qualitative change concept, Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, and Richard Rorty's discussion of the distinctions between movements and campaigns. As we have seen, Marcuse's dilemma regarding people's self-liberation is a central issue for this thesis; moreover, it is a major concern for any theory of social change that has as its premise an understanding of some form of social containment. Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, though, includes an understanding of the internal generation of revolutionary environments: through the practice of 'normal science,' anomalies and crises arise, which create an opening for the production and adoption of new paradigms that provide—or demonstrate the potential to provide—solutions to these issues.

Our problem, then, requires us to delineate his theory, and to subsequently search for a potential socio-political analogue for the practice of normal science. I argue that this analogue can be found in a combination of the quantitative/qualitative change schema and Rorty's concept of 'campaigns.' Moreover, Ricoeur's analysis of metaphor provides us with an understanding of the heuristic power of fiction and metaphor that can help guide action in the public sphere. First, we will briefly review Marcuse's quantitative/qualitative change concept, after which we will dive into Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions and normal science. Then, we will address Rorty's distinction between movements and campaigns, and his understanding of the inspirational power of stories. Finally, we will bring the concepts we have developed thus far into a discussion of Ricoeur's notions of the activity of metaphor, which will allow us to produce the beginnings of a concrete theory of social change.

3.1 Crisis as a Way of Life (but It's a Good Thing)

In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse recognizes the difficulties that confront us when we try to enact change in society. These difficulties arise at least in part due to the recalcitrance of the public at large; in other words, there is a qualitative difference between what changes Marcuse argues we need and what the public is willing and able to change. He believes that we need to discover extant possibilities that can qualitatively change people's lives, but he is, in general, hesitant to endorse top-down change. He thinks it is important for people to bring about their own liberation, which points to the central question that we have discussed several times, regarding people creating the conditions of their own freedom.[1] The impetus for qualitative change lacking from the outset, Marcuse develops a theory of social change that incorporates something reminiscent of a 'critical-mass' concept of change: "quantitative development becomes qualitative change if it attains the very structure of an established system."[2] At this point, though, we find ourselves in a difficult situation, which stipulates that those who would enact this development-leading-to-change must already possess a recognition of the need for this liberation, because it "presupposes transcendence *within* these conditions."[3] Therefore, we must discover some sort of internal psychological mechanism by which people can achieve this recognition, this transcendence. I discuss the possibilities that this development could produce below, in conjunction with Ricoeur's concept of metaphor. For now, let us develop the quantitative-qualitative change formula further.

Marcuse ties quantitative change to aesthetics in *An Essay on Liberation*, where he discusses the subversive possibilities that minor, relatively aesthetic, changes to the system present. He says that a "quantity" of reforms, such as "better zoning regulations" and "a modicum of protection from noise and dirt … would turn into the quality of radical change to the degree to which they would critically weaken the economic, political, and cultural pressure and power groups."[4] These changes would serve the individual's *true* needs rather than the externally

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[1] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 6.

[2] Ibid., 221.

[3] Ibid., 223.

[4] Herbert Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 28.

imposed false needs of advanced industrial society and, simultaneously, they would function as the sort of quantitative development that we described above. So long as this development occurs with the proper goal in mind, that is, the goal of liberation and the recognition of the impossibility of continuing "to exist in this universe, so that the need for qualitative change is a matter of life and death,"[5] then quantitative development presents us with a real possibility for qualitative change. Now, let us discuss Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, which displays what revolutionary possibilities the practice of 'normal science' presents.

Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions involves two fundamental mechanisms: normal science and paradigms, and both are crucial for our purposes here. Normal science is the quotidian practice of scientific work, such as research. It is "firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements," which provide(s) the "foundation for its further practice."[6] These achievements are paradigms, and scientific communities function through their internally accepted shared paradigm(s), according to which they "are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice. That commitment and the apparent consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal science, i.e., for the genesis and continuation of a particular research tradition."[7] A successful paradigm is not a measure of its total success solving any given problem; rather, a paradigm is successful if it possesses "a promise of success discoverable in selected and still incomplete examples."[8] Whereas the paradigm has this promise of potential success, normal science is "the actualization of that promise … achieved by extending the knowledge of those facts that the paradigm displays as particularly revealing, by increasing the extent of the match between those facts and the paradigm's predictions, and by further articulation of the paradigm itself."[9] In a sense, the paradigm is the framework within which scientists practice normal science, which in turn makes real the promise of success that lies at the core of the paradigm. We will discuss paradigms themselves in greater detail below because our discussion of them

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[5] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 23.

[6] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 10.

[7] Ibid., 11.

[8] Ibid., 24.

[9] Ibid.

must be part and parcel of our discussion of scientific revolutions; for now, let us focus our attention on normal science.

Kuhn describes normal science in terms of puzzle- and problem-solving because the practice of it is predicated on the existence of a solution, and the regular practice of normal science involves the research that aims to uncover said solution. However, this activity is also characterized by the repeated discovery of anomalies, and these discoveries have tended to lead to crisis moments for scientific communities. Although normal science does not aim at novelty, it is typical of scientific practice that novelty is produced in the form of new theories and new phenomena: "Discovery commences with the awareness of anomaly, i.e., with the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science. It then continues with a more or less extended exploration of the area of anomaly. And it closes only when the paradigm theory has been adjusted so that the anomalous has become the expected."[10] Sometimes, though, the awareness of anomaly does not lead to this sort of integration or introjection; instead, the sheer amount of anomalies grows until a crisis situation ensues. In three examples, which Kuhn notes are typical of the crisis situation, he says that "a novel theory emerged only after a pronounced failure in the normal problem-solving activity. … The novel theory seems a direct response to crisis. … The significance of crises is the indication they provide that an occasion for retooling [of the paradigm] has arrived."[11] Another crucial point that Kuhn raises about these crisis examples is that their solutions "had been at least partially anticipated during a period when there was no crisis in the corresponding science."[12] If we briefly foray into non-scientific analogues, Kuhn's thinking is potentially quite useful for us.

For if we were to recognize the crisis situations that we are currently in, such as crises of capital, of democracy, of ecology, etc., then it is possible that people might be willing to give something else a shot. However, it is obvious that, in Kuhn's thinking, it is *scientists* who make the leap of faith to a new system, and it is not obvious what potential analogue for scientists

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[10] Ibid., 53.

[11] Ibid., 75–76.

[12] Ibid., 75.

exists in the public sphere. (If we accept that Marcuse's 'revolutionary group' is this analogue, then we can develop the thought further, but we must also grapple with the fact that Marcuse, by the end of his career, decidedly drops the notion of 'revolutionary groups' altogether, instead advocating for the 'long march through the institutions.' We will discuss this further below.)

The crisis situation is the context within which paradigm shifts and scientific revolutions occur. When it becomes clear that an anomaly is more than "just another puzzle of normal science, the transition to crisis and to extraordinary science has begun."[13] When we reach a crisis moment, several things can happen: a solution can arise from within the existing paradigm, scientists may realize that no solution can come from their scientific field, or else "a crisis may end with the emergence of a new candidate for paradigm and with the ensuing battle over its acceptance."[14] The crisis does not merely reveal the holes in the established paradigm. It also "loosens the stereotypes and provides the incremental data necessary for a fundamental paradigm shift."[15] Movement from a collapsing paradigm into a new one is "far from a cumulative process[.] … During the transition period there will be a considerable but never complete overlap between the problems that can be solved by the old and by the new paradigm."[16] And, to continue the potential Marcusean analogy, Kuhn writes that the scientists that have invented new paradigms have tended to be "little committed by prior practice to the traditional rules of normal science, [and] are particularly likely to see that those rules no longer define a playable game and to conceive another set that can replace them."[17] This description of the inventive scientists who create new paradigms aligns quite closely with Marcuse's description, at the end of *One-Dimensional Man*, of the potentially revolutionary groups that he sees in the civil rights movement, the student movements, and so on: "They exist outside the democratic process; … their opposition is revolutionary even if their consciousness is not. … [It] is an elementary force which violates the rules of the game and, in doing so, reveals it

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[13] Ibid., 82–83.

[14] Ibid., 84.

[15] Ibid., 89.

[16] Ibid., 85.

[17] Ibid., 90.

as a rigged game."[18] So, again, we see some parallels that we will tease out in greater detail below; for now, it is sufficient to note that these avenues of exploration exist.

Kuhn also compares the scientific revolutions that he describes to political revolutions. Both types of revolutions come about through a "growing sense," which is usually "restricted to a segment" of the relevant community (i.e., political or scientific), "that existing institutions" or "an existing paradigm" have "ceased adequately to meet the problems" that arise in the relevant field or environment.[19] Moreover, Kuhn writes that both revolutions are predicated upon a "sense of malfunction that can lead to crisis."[20] He argues that the goals of political revolutions are prohibited by the institutions that they seek to change, and so, typically, a new set of institutions is proposed or produced that fulfill the needs or wishes of the revolutionaries. In the intervening period of time, though, there is usually a period in which "society is not fully governed by institutions at all."[21] Once a new set of institutions is proposed or produced, a polarization takes hold between competing camps (each favouring one set of institutions over the other). At this point, "*political recourse fails*," because revolutions are "partially extrapolitical or extrainstitutional events."[22] The sets of institutions, and the camps that support one set over the other, are incompatible: the communities become incommensurable. Kuhn writes that, similarly, the choice is between "incompatible modes of community life. … When paradigms enter, as they must, into a debate about paradigm choice, their role is necessarily circular. Each group uses its own paradigm to argue in that paradigm's defense. … It cannot be made logically or even probabilistically compelling for those who refuse to step into the circle."[23] Therefore, the attempt to convert others to one's own paradigm must be one of persuasion by virtue of the possibilities that the paradigm presents—it cannot be a conversion by way of proofs.

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[18] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 256–57.

[19] Kuhn, *Structure*, 92.

[20] Ibid., 93.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 93–94.

[23] Ibid., 94.

The possibilities that a new paradigm presents to the relevant community(s) are the main instrument(s) of conversion. Kuhn details the difficulties that confront those who attempt to convert the 'old guard' of the scientific community: "The source of resistance is the assurance that the older paradigm will ultimately solve all its problems, that nature can be shoved into the box the paradigm provides."[24] However, in the examples of successful paradigm shifts that he provides, it is clear that the "single most prevalent claim advanced by the proponents of a new paradigm is that they can solve the problems that have led the old one to a crisis."[25] Crucially, though, this is not always immediately the case; that is, typically, the new paradigm only presents a *promise* of being able to solve these problems, rather than being able to do so right away. Kuhn writes that the main "issue is which paradigm should in the future guide research on problems many of which neither competitor can yet claim to resolve completely."[26] Thus, the person who decides to follow the new paradigm must "have faith that the new paradigm will succeed with the many large problems that confront it, knowing only that the older paradigm has failed with a few. A decision of that kind can only be made on faith."[27] (Arendt, too, locates within the *promise* a guiding or binding principle for human action.)[28] Therefore, Kuhn argues that we cannot simply rely on crises to force novelty and conversions to new paradigms: "There must also be a basis, though it need be neither rational nor ultimately correct, for faith in the particular candidate chosen. … [I]f a paradigm is ever to triumph it must gain some first supporters[.] … Rather than a single group conversion, what occurs is an increasing shift in the distribution of professional allegiances."[29] Here, again, we may discover a potential analogue to our 'critical mass' theory of social change, which involves Marcuse's quantitative/qualitative change concept, but we will discuss this further below.

From Kuhn, we can gather a relatively barebones structure for the sort of 'revolution' that would incorporate the mode of social change we are looking for. We will add to this structure

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[24] Ibid., 151.

[25] Ibid., 152.

[26] Ibid., 156.

[27] Ibid., 157.

[28] Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*, 243–47.

[29] Ibid.

as we progress, but, for now, let us elucidate what we have thus far. The practice of normal science occurs within an already-existing paradigm, which dictates the relevant forms and objects of research. Normal science is a sort of problem- or puzzle-solving activity, and the problems and puzzles that it aims to solve are the problems that the paradigm itself points to as potentially solvable. However, in the course of this normal-scientific research, anomalies naturally arise that seem to be intractable or unsolvable within the parameters of the current paradigm. Sometimes scientists discover solutions to these anomalies within the paradigm; at other times, the anomalies remain unsolvable. At a certain point, if the quantity of anomalies grows, and the lack of solutions for them becomes overwhelming, the relevant scientific community enters into a 'crisis situation,' wherein a novel theory may be introduced. Some scientists may take a leap of faith and accept this new theory as a new, competing paradigm. If this occurs, then the competing paradigms may do metaphorical battle, and it is possible that this new paradigm takes hold within the community at large. The main reason that some may choose to subscribe to this new paradigm is not necessarily that it solves the specific problems that led to the crisis situation; rather, it is the *promise* of success in these areas that may convince some—or many—to jump ship and amass under the banner of the new paradigm.

The question for us in what follows is whether it is possible to develop a theory of social change in the public and political sphere(s) that can function in an analogous manner. I do not think that this is the appropriate venue to attempt to form the requisite analogical taxonomy, nor do I think that such an exercise would be particularly fruitful. However, I believe that Kuhn's model is helpful as a guide for further discussion, insofar as his vocabulary and conceptual framework provide useful signposts that may help ground our discussion. I believe that this is a fruitful exercise that sheds light on some of the ways out of the problems that confront all of us in the contemporary era—we can view what follows as analogous to the practice of 'normal science,' insofar as we attempt to solve pervasive problems and puzzles that confront us in contemporary society.

3.2   Unmoving Movements

In order to effect qualitative change in the structure of our society, Marcuse argues that we must first produce quantitative changes. Moreover, these quantitative changes must be attainable with regard to the level of production and available resources: "the critical theory

must abstract from the actual organization and utilization of society's resources, and from the results of this organization and utilization. … The 'possibilities' must be within the reach of the respective society; they must be definable goals of practice."[30] In *Eros and Civilization*, he provides an example of such a quantitative change that could lead to qualitative change: "the quantitative reduction in labor time and energy leads to a qualitative change in the human existence: the free rather than the labor time determines its content."[31] And, in *One-Dimensional Man*, as we have already discussed, he describes the quantitative change in the "occupational stratification" of the productive professions: "the number of non-production workers increases. This quantitative change refers back to a change in the character of the basic instruments of production … reducing the 'professional autonomy' of the laborer and integrating him with other professions which suffer and direct the technical ensemble."[32] Thus, the quantitative change—i.e., the introduction of non-production workers into the formerly productive workforce—leads to a qualitative change—i.e., the productive worker's 'professional autonomy' slips away from him. Later in *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse delineates his understanding of the quantitative/qualitative change formula in more detail:

> Historical truth is comparative; the rationality of the possible depends on that of the actual, the truth of the transcending project on that of the project in realization. … Continuity is preserved through rupture: quantitative development becomes qualitative change if it attains the very structure of an established system; the established rationality becomes irrational when, in the course of its *internal* development, the potentialities of the system have outgrown its institutions.[33]

And, crucially, this transcendence must occur within the already-existing system. Because such transcendence relies on the existing material conditions that can satisfy the possibilities that the system projects into the future, the transcending project must occur within the system itself:

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[30] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, xliii.

[31] Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 222.

[32] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 27–28.

[33] Ibid., 221.

Transcendence beyond the established conditions (of thought and action) presupposes transcendence *within* these conditions. This negative freedom—i.e., freedom from the oppressive and ideological power of given facts—is the *a priori* of the historical dialectic; it is the element of choice and decision in and against historical determination. None of the given alternatives is *by itself* determinate negation unless and until it is consciously seized in order to break the power of intolerable conditions and attain the more rational, more logical conditions rendered possible by the prevailing ones. … The negation proceeds on empirical grounds; it is a historical project within and beyond an already going project, and its truth is a chance to be determined on these grounds.[34]

Thus, according to these pronouncements on the possibilities for change that exist within the system that Marcuse decries as oppressive and repressive, we cannot simply destroy everything and build a better society. We must transform the current society with the proper, free end in mind, in order to make possible the complete break in the vicious circle that he envisions and deems absolutely necessary for the people's liberation.

Richard Rorty's text, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*, presents a strong vision of what kind of politics and what kind of action is required to carry out this sort of quantitative development. This is rather unexpected, since Rorty's text is quite antagonistic to the New Left—which he derisively calls the 'cultural Left'—and the leftist movements that have cropped up in the wake of the Sixties. His main, substantive critique of the contemporary Left is that it no longer aims to be an agent but a spectator, and it is thus no longer focused on economic or labour issues but cultural issues: "Leftists in the academy have permitted cultural politics to supplant real politics, and have collaborated with the Right in making cultural issues central to public debate. … The academic Left has no projects to propose to America, no vision of a country to be achieved by building a consensus on the need for specific reforms."[35] While the concepts of 'consensus' and 'reform' may seem anathema to the Marcusean project, my goal in this section is to describe the ways in which Rorty's

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[34] Ibid., 223.

[35] Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998), 14–15.

understanding of reform is not as moderate as it may appear, and that this understanding of reform is, in fact, exactly the sort of quantitative development that Marcuse claims is the prerequisite of qualitative change.

Rorty's focus on literature and the creative arts as vehicles of inspiration for a future that is better and more just than the present one aligns quite closely with Marcuse's understanding of the same. Thus, to begin we will outline Rorty's critiques of the contemporary Left (though they may not be as true today as they were in the late Nineties), as well as the laudatory endorsement he provides for the leftist politics of the early twentieth century. He focuses this discussion on Dewey's philosophy and Whitman's poetry because he sees them as the forefathers of the American civic religion of that era. Following this outline, we will discuss the distinction he makes between movements and campaigns, which will lead us into his view of the arts and literature as having strong, powerful inspirational value.

Whitman and Dewey represent a form of patriotism that Rorty does not see as toxic or overly nationalistic; instead, their patriotism is a sort of pride in what America *could* be, in the *promise* of America. And he also sees in this pride a move toward a more secularist vision of the people and the nation.[36] The secular vision allows Dewey and Whitman to view America "as an opportunity to see ultimate significance in a finite, human, historical project, rather than in something eternal and nonhuman. … It is a matter of forgetting about eternity. More generally, it is a matter of replacing shared knowledge of what is already real with social hope for what might become real."[37] This vision rejects Being as the stabilizing force of the nation's possibilities and, instead, incorporates Becoming into its essence, just as Marcuse's understanding of the concept of essence emphasizes change and Becoming. This understanding of what is possible requires the temporalization of action, and the "price of temporalization is contingency," which means that both Dewey and Whitman "had to grant the possibility that the vanguard of humanity may lose its way, and perhaps lead our species over a cliff."[38]

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[36] Ibid., 16.

[37] Ibid., 17–18.

[38] Ibid., 23.

Similarly, Arendt discusses the importance of contingency, which she draws from Duns Scotus.

She discovers in Scotus a conception of the will which not only accepts the role of contingency in life but, on the contrary, views contingency as a vital part of willing and living: "Scotus did not denigrate the idea of contingency but rather regarded it as a spontaneous beginning of something which cannot be predicted."[39] We can also turn to Althusser's theorization of contingency and the aleatory character of the encounter: "every encounter might not have taken place, although it did take place; but its possible nonexistence sheds light on the meaning of its aleatory being. … [N]othing in the elements of the encounter prefigures, before the actual encounter, the contours and determinations of the being that will emerge from it."[40] Through his discussion of the "contingency of necessity" and the "necessity of the contingency at its root,"[41] Althusser aims to show that things could be—and could have been—otherwise than they are and have become; that is, the ostensibly stable 'laws' of history "can change at the drop of a hat, revealing the aleatory basis that sustains them[.] … This is what strikes everyone so forcefully during the great commencements, turns or suspensions of history, … when the dice are, as it were, thrown back on to the table unexpectedly, or the cards are dealt out again without warning."[42] It is crucial that we understand 'the way things are' not as inevitable and unchangeable, for this would reinforce a positivistic, teleological, and, above all, false concept of history. Things could have been, could be—could *still* be—otherwise than they are.

Althusser criticizes Marx for abandoning his early conception of the mode of production, which is one that recognizes and builds upon the aleatory encounter of disparate elements (e.g., workers, owners, etc.), in favour of a concept of production that essentializes the proletariat, capitalism, and production. This first concept recognizes that the aforementioned elements "do not exist in history *so that* a mode of production may exist, they exist in history *in a 'floating'*

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[39] Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality*, 88.

[40] Louis Althusser, "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," in *Philosophy of the Encounter:* Later Writings, 1978–87, ed. François Matheron and Oliver Corpet, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006), 193.

[41] Ibid., 187.

[42] Ibid., 195–96.

state prior to their 'accumulation' and 'combination', each being the product of its own history, and none being the teleological product of the others or their history."[43] If we accept this concept, then we accept that things did not have to occur in the way that they did, and, therefore, the way things are, in our time, was not inevitable: we can effect change. However, Marx's later concept "leaves the aleatory nature of the 'encounter' and its 'taking-hold' to one side *in order to think solely in terms of the accomplished fact of the 'take' and, consequently, its predestination*."[44] Thus, when Marx and Engels describe the proletariat "as a 'product of big industry', … [they confuse] *the production of the proletariat with its capitalist reproduction on an extended scale*, as if the capitalist mode of production pre-existed one of its essential elements, an expropriated labour-force. … Everything is accomplished in advance; *the structure precedes its elements and reproduces them in order to reproduce the structure*."[45] If we accept this concept as a factual description of things, then we must accept the inevitability of the combination of the elements, and we must grant the essential and necessary connection between capitalism and the movement of history. Ellen Meiksins Wood discusses this concept, too, and she describes "accounts of the origin of capitalism" as being "fundamentally circular; they have assumed the prior existence of capitalism in order to explain its coming into being."[46] Against this traditional understanding of the origins of capitalism, which contends that capitalism is "a natural and inevitable consequence of human nature," Meiksins Wood posits that this system is, instead, "a late and localized product of very specific historical conditions."[47] Above all, like Althusser, Meiksins Wood emphasizes the specificity and contingency of the capitalist system.

Contingency figures into Dewey's philosophy insofar as "evaluative terms such as 'true' and 'right'" are no longer moored to "some antecedently existing thing—such as God's Will, or Moral Law, or the Intrinsic Nature of Objective Reality."[48] This unmooring means that

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[43] Ibid., 198.

[44] Ibid., 200.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London: Verso, 2017), 4.

[47] Ibid., 193.

[48] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 28.

progress is no longer teleological in the sense of being aimed at some specific, particular goal; now, we can "see it as a matter of solving more problems. Progress is, as Thomas Kuhn suggested, measured by the extent to which we have made ourselves better than we were in the past rather than by our increased proximity to a goal."[49] Thus, Rorty's pragmatism would have us move away from the over-theorization of the political and the social, away from the academization of leftist politics, away from discussions of "the infinite and the unrepresentable," because all of these features of the 'cultural Left' are obstacles that it places in front of itself, which, he argues, achieve nothing in the public sphere (however useful they may be for "individual quests for private perfection").[50] Instead, Rorty argues that, in order to think "about how to achieve our country," we need not

> worry about the correspondence theory of truth, the grounds of normativity, the impossibility of justice, or the infinite distance which separates us from the other. For those purposes, we can give both religion and philosophy a pass. We can just get on with trying to solve what Dewey called "the problems of men." To think about those problems means … deriving our moral identity, at least in part, from our citizenship in a democratic nation-state, and from leftist attempts to fulfill the promise of that nation.[51]

Rorty's critique of the cultural Left arises from this over-academization and over-theorization, which he argues results in a cynicism that simultaneously makes it difficult to achieve anything and obscures the possibilities for betterment and amelioration that the Left could present to the public at large. The Left is "convinced that the nation-state is obsolete," but the unfortunate reality is that "the government of our nation-state will be, for the foreseeable future, the only agent capable of making any real difference in the amount of selfishness and sadism inflicted on Americans. It is no comfort to those in danger of being immiserated by globalization to be told that, since national governments are now irrelevant, we must think up a replacement for

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 96–97.

[51] Ibid., 97.

such governments."[52] Here, Rorty's critique seems to be at its strongest, for he goes on to argue that all of this quibbling and squabbling amounts to nothing other than distractions among those who actually could change things for the better, i.e., the Left. Meanwhile, the "cosmopolitan super-rich do not think any replacements [for national governments] are needed, and they are likely to prevail."[53] That is, the Left spends its time infighting and declaiming the irrelevancy of the nation-state, while those with the money and power in society laugh—because they want nothing more than a weak and ineffectual Left "whose members are so busy unmasking the present that they have no time to discuss what laws need to be passed in order to create a better future."[54] In essence, Rorty's point is that the cultural Left is stuck in the academy, whereas the majority of the population "still want to feel patriotic. They still want to feel part of a nation which can take control of its destiny and make itself a better place."[55] If this is the case, then the Left must take account of this desire and incorporate it into a plan for this better future.

In order for the Left to actually achieve its goals, it must first delineate those goals; then, it must develop specific, quantifiable strategies, or 'campaigns,' to achieve these goals. (There must also be a positive and hopeful vision of the future that guides and structures these goals, which we discuss below in conjunction with Ricoeur's concept of metaphor.) According to Rorty, the main reason that the cultural Left remains weak is that it is, at its core, a Manichean movement: the cultural Left "will have a hard time transforming itself into a political Left … [because] it still dreams of being rescued by an angelic power called 'the people.' In this sense, 'the people' is the name of a redemptive preternatural force, a force whose demonic counterpart is named 'power' or 'the system.'"[56] This sort of thinking "produces dreams not of political reforms but of inexplicable, magical transformations."[57] And, because of this 'magical thinking,' Rorty argues, the cultural Left remains unpolitical and is light on the details of what

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[52] Ibid., 98.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 139.

[55] Ibid., 99.

[56] Ibid., 102.

[57] Ibid.

this better world that it envisions will look like (we can see this sort of magical thinking in Marcuse's refusal to provide anything beyond a brief sketch of the outline of the future, better society). However, this is insufficient for "the public which must be won over if the Left is to emerge from the academy into the public square[.] … The public, sensibly, has no interest in getting rid of capitalism until it is offered details about the alternatives. Nor should it be interested in participatory democracy … until it is told how deliberative assemblies will acquire the same know-how which only the technocrats presently possess."[58] The point here is not to say that it is incorrect for thinkers such as Marcuse to take the stance that it is impossible to provide a detailed vision of the future; instead, the point is that this stance is not politically useful, and Rorty argues that we have had enough of politically useless theorizing. The decision to avoid the description or articulation of a possible better future is a sure-fire way to hamstring the Left's ability to grow its popular base, which Rorty argues the Left must have in order to enact the changes that might lead to this better future. That is, it is not politically useful, though it may be conceptually sound. It is time to enact specific, quantifiable changes that help people *now*.

Rorty sees the contemporary Left as being too focused on movements, while he argues that it should be focused on campaigns. A campaign is "something finite, something that can be recognized to have succeeded or to have, so far, failed. Movements, by contrast, neither succeed nor fail. They are too big and too amorphous to do anything that simple."[59] Movements are all-or-nothing, and, to a movement, any one given campaign that it carries out is always only one part of a much larger whole; therefore, the movement usually incorporates more than just political or social campaigns. Movements tend to "levy contributions" from cultural areas, such as the arts, history, and philosophy, because they "provide a larger context within which politics is no longer just politics, but rather the matrix out of which will emerge something like Paul's 'new being in Christ' or Mao's 'new socialist man.'"[60] Membership in a movement offers a sense of purity to the individual: "The easiest way to assure oneself of this purity is to will one thing—but this requires seeing everything as part of a pattern whose center is that

[58] Ibid., 104.

[59] Ibid., 114.

[60] Ibid., 114–15.

single thing. Movements offer such a pattern, and thus offer such assurance of purity."[61] However, if one is swept up into a movement, and this ostensible purity turns out to be an illusion or is corrupted, then an entire worldview is corrupted along with it. Meanwhile, the advantage of the campaign is that "there is always another campaign to enlist in when the first fails or goes rancid. … [T]he impurity of a campaign can be taken in one's stride: such impurity is just what one expects of something finite and mortal."[62] (Arendt has much to say about movements, too, especially with regard to the movement of totalitarian movements, though I think the fact that both Rorty and Arendt criticize 'movements' is more of a coincidental misnomer than anything significant.) The examples that Rorty provides of 'campaigns' are: "the unionization of migrant farm workers, or the overthrow (by votes or by force) of a corrupt government, or socialized medicine, or legal recognition of gay marriage."[63] Clearly, one of these examples is not like the others, and it is odd that Rorty would include this example in a text that is quite adamantly anti-revolutionary.

Regardless, these examples of campaigns cut across social, economic, and personal boundaries, not fitting neatly in any of these categories. And this is reminiscent of Marcuse's examples of quantitative developments that he discusses in *An Essay on Liberation*: "the harmless drive for better zoning regulations[,] … decommercialization of nature, total urban reconstruction, … such action would become increasingly subversive of the institutions of capitalism and of their morality. The quantity of such reforms would turn into the quality of radical change."[64] And Rorty discusses quantitative changes in a very similar manner: "Someday, perhaps, cumulative piecemeal reforms will be found to have brought about revolutionary change. Such reforms might someday produce a presently unimaginable nonmarket economy, and much more widely distributed powers of decisionmaking. … But in the meantime, we should not let the abstractly described best be the enemy of the better."[65] What is so enticing about these theories of social change is that, in order to be potentially

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[61] Ibid., 117.

[62] Ibid., 118–19.

[63] Ibid., 114.

[64] Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 28.

[65] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 105.

successful, quantitative campaigns only require achievability and broad appeal (and each of these relies on the other). This is, of course, an oversimplification, lacking nuance, but the nuance comes in the details of the specific campaigns, and we can look to Kuhn's analysis of normal science for ideas of what that kind of practice might look like.

Let us think of campaigns in the same terms that Kuhn thinks of normal science: puzzle- or problem-solving within the bounds of the relevant paradigm. The solutions that we search for are those in which the paradigm itself promises success. For Kuhn, it is not science as a whole that possesses a paradigm; rather, any given scientific community, such as the community of quantum physicists, for example, possesses a paradigm and conducts normal science within its boundaries. For the sake of argument, then, let us take the populations of the group of Western liberal-democratic, capitalist nation-states as constituting a community. (This is, of course, a rather large, amorphous group of nations with particular differences, especially regarding governmental structures. For the sake of argument, I will be deploying circumstances that apply, for the most part, to Canada and the United States, especially because the Eurozone countries have a completely different economic regime than do Canada and the US.) To apply the normal science analogy to campaigns in the public sphere, we can see fights to raise the minimum wage, for affordable housing, the elimination of single-family zoning, and others along the same lines, as quantitative campaigns that function in the public sphere just as normal science does in the given scientific community. Each of the aforementioned goals is potentially available to us within the parameters of our current socio-politico-economic paradigm.

The paradigm itself, one could argue, has promised to be successful in these areas, but as of yet, clearly, the practice of 'normal living,' or 'normal politics,' has come up against anomalies, such as oligarchic mega-corporations and their monopolies, for example. Unlike the order of things in the '50s and '60s, the system no longer delivers the goods. Whether this is an anomaly, a crisis, or both, it is clear that this situation begs for a competing paradigm. I am not in a position here to argue that there is a competing paradigm that is superior to our current one (though there are many who would at this point propose socialism as that competitor). I hold a similar pessimism to Marcuse's near the end of his career; that is, I do not believe that a revolution in any traditional sense is the answer. Instead, I argue with Rorty that specific campaigns, which can be judged to have succeeded or failed, provide us with an

answer for now, and Marcuse seems to have adopted a similar view at different points in his career, specifically his theory of quantitative development leading to qualitative change. And, again, I am in no position here to propose specific campaigns that I believe will solve all of our problems—nor do I think that there should be any one voice that functions as this sort of top-down 'voice of change.' On the contrary, I believe that we, every one of us, need to discover inspiration in the world, whether that be in the arts, in other people, or elsewhere, that can guide us toward the goals that we believe should be accomplished. We, the Left, need to, as Rorty says, develop a vision of the world, which we presently live in, that does not ignore its flaws, but that does not devolve into a Manichean worldview. We need to see the promise in the world, the potential for betterment, the better things that can be, that should be.

3.3   Conclusion: Hope, Metaphor, and Inspiration

Appended to *Achieving Our Country* is an essay titled, "The Inspirational Value of Great Works." In this essay, Rorty describes the power that lies within great works of literature—though it could be ascribed to all artistic creations: "these works make people think there is more to this life than they ever imagined. … If it is to have inspirational value, a work must be allowed to recontextualize much of what you previously thought you knew; it cannot, at least at first, be itself recontextualized by what you already believe."[66] This understanding of inspiration, as a redescription of the world in a new context, is quite similar to Ricoeur's understanding of poetic metaphor and metaphoricity, which he argues describes "a less known domain—human reality—in the light of relationships within a fictitious but better known domain—the tragic tale."[67] For Ricoeur, the power of metaphor lies in its relation to the heuristic function of fiction and poetry. He sees metaphor not within the lens of semantics or semiotics but hermeneutics:

> metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality. … From this conjunction of fiction and redescription I conclude that the 'place' of metaphor … is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor

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[66] Ibid., 133.

[67] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin, John Costello (London: Routledge Classics, 2003), 289.

even discourse, but the copula of the verb *to be*. The metaphorical 'is' at once signifies both 'is not' and 'is like.'[68]

This concept of metaphor is non-traditional. Whereas the common definition of metaphor is that of a "word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea [that] is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them,"[69] Ricoeur expands the concept's domain from the 'word or phrase' to reality itself. That is, the metaphoricity of poems or stories does not merely suggest similarities between them and reality; rather, the meaning that this metaphoricity impresses upon the receiver (i.e., the reader, listener, etc.) can redescribe reality in terms of the poetic or the fictive itself.

Ricoeur draws much of his understanding of the 'redescription' of this world in terms of the potential, virtual world—of fiction, poetry, or imagined futures—from Mary Hesse's analysis of the metaphoricity of (scientific) models, and Hesse, in turn, draws from Max Black's interaction theory. In the interaction theory of metaphor there are two semantic systems: the 'primary' and the 'secondary' systems, each of which one can describe in literal language. The "metaphoric use of language in describing the primary system consists of transferring to it a word or words normally used in connection with the secondary system."[70] Moreover, for this transference and conjunction of semantic systems to work as a metaphor, "it is necessary that there should be patent falsehood or even absurdity in taking the conjunction literally."[71] A common example of a metaphor that abides by the rules of interaction theory is 'Man is a wolf.' Of course, man is not a wolf; the statement is false. However, in the conjunction of these two semantic systems (i.e., Man and Wolf), something *happens*: "The metaphor works by transferring the associated ideas and implications of the secondary [i.e., Wolf] to the primary [i.e., Man] system. These select, emphasize, or suppress features of the primary; new slants on the primary are illuminated; the primary is 'seen through' the frame of the secondary."[72] This

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[68] Ibid., 5–6.

[69] *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "metaphor," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphor.

[70] Mary Hesse, "The Explanatory Function of Metaphor," in *Models and Analogies in Science*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 158.

[71] Ibid., 160.

[72] Ibid., 162–63.

transference and conjunction of the secondary system to the primary system changes the associated ideas of the primary system; in other words, the primary system is "redescribed in terminology transferred from the secondary system."[73] Redescription explains how the model and metaphor produce new meaning and, therefore, allow for approximate prediction.

The orthodox view of the explanatory value of scientific models, Hesse claims, wrongly assumes that one can logically deduce the explanans from the explanandum; in fact, deducibility is quite rare. Rather, the relations between explanans and explanandum tend to be approximate, and the validity of this approximation cannot itself be deduced, "but is a complicated function of coherence with the rest of a theoretical system."[74] Beyond this first relation of approximation between the explanans and the explanandum, there is a further approximation: the explanandum is not the phenomenon itself that is to be explained but, rather, a description of it in language. Thus, we now have a phenomenon, a statement in the domain of the explanandum, and a statement in the domain of the explanans, neither of which is wholly deducible from the other. The orthodox view cannot properly account for prediction in theoretical explanation because, in order to be predictive, "general laws already present in the *explanans* were to incorporate events that are not yet observable."[75] In other words, because the orthodox view of explanation relies on deducibility from available empirical data, it cannot account for data which has not yet surfaced. Meanwhile, in the metaphoric view, because the primary system is redescribed in terms of the secondary, "it is to be expected that the original observation language will both be *shifted in meaning* and extended in vocabulary, and hence that predictions in the strong sense will become possible."[76] In order to understand how a scientific model can be both explanatory and predictive, we must understand how metaphor creates new meaning through the production of hypothetical or virtual worlds.

Ricoeur analyzes the meaning-making capabilities of metaphor through the concepts of *muthos* (tragic poetry) and *mimêsis* (mythological representation of "that which is human") from

[73] Ibid., 176.

[74] Ibid., 172.

[75] Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 286.

[76] Hesse, "The Explanatory Function of Metaphor," 176. Emphasis added.

Aristotle's *Poetics*,[77] and through various modern theories of metaphor. Like Hesse, Ricoeur's interpretation of metaphor comes, in part, from Max Black, and he writes that metaphor "cannot be translated without 'loss of *cognitive* content' [Black 46]. Being untranslatable, it carries new information; briefly, it tells us something."[78] This untranslatability of metaphor comes from Black's (and Ricoeur's) elevation of semantics over semiology, which makes the substitution of words in a metaphorical statement impossible.[79] If a metaphorical statement has the same meaning after a word-substitution, then the metaphorical term "carries no new information, since the absent term (if one exists) can be brought back in; and if there is no information conveyed, then metaphor has only an ornamental, decorative value."[80] But metaphor has more than ornamental value; it produces meaning by transference and conjunction. As Hesse explains, the metaphorical statement makes meaning insofar as the interaction between the primary and secondary semantic systems leaves certain elements out, highlights others, and frames features of the primary system in terms of the secondary.

The conjunction of the primary and secondary systems in a metaphorical statement produces meaning and, through this interaction, the metaphor implies something other than itself—it *suggests* a secondary level of signification or 'connotation.'[81] The distinction between denotation and connotation aligns with that between Frege's concepts of sense and reference, which is the difference between "*what* the proposition states [i.e. the sense, 'denotation'] … [and] *that about which* the sense is stated [i.e. the reference, 'connotation']."[82] Ricoeur is not merely interested in the structure of sense and reference; instead, he aims to discover what the metaphorical statement says about reality.[83] Therefore, he turns to the *Poetics* to discover metaphor's relation to *muthos* and *mimêsis*.

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[77] Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 45.

[78] Ibid., 101.

[79] Ibid., 87.

[80] Ibid., 21.

[81] Ibid., 105.

[82] Ibid., 256.

[83] Ibid., 255.

In order to gain access to Aristotle's conception of metaphor, Ricoeur looks to both the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*; for it is between the *lexis* (language-expression) of rhetoric and *muthos* (tragic poetry) that metaphor most properly comes to light. Crucially, Ricoeur notes that Aristotle appeals "to the characteristic of all metaphor, which is to point out or show, to 'make visible.' And this feature brings us to the heart of the problem of *lexis*, whose function … is to 'make discourse appear to the senses.'"[84] Thus, there is an element of *action* in metaphor—other than the notion of transference that we have already established—which serves to *make* something visible or tangible 'to the senses.' The activity of metaphor—the doing or making of *something*, the rendering-apparent or rendering-sensible—establishes, for Ricoeur, the connection between the metaphor of the *Rhetoric* and that of the *Poetics* because of the *mimêsis* that tragic *muthos* entails.

The transition from a discussion of *lexis* to one of *muthos* is a transition from speaking of the structural, linguistic elements of a text to the overall semantic network—the 'world'—of a text. *Muthos*, the interior organizing and ordering force of the text, is externally reflected in *lexis*, "which exteriorizes and makes explicit the internal order of *muthos*."[85] But *muthos* is subordinate to another poetic force: *mimêsis*.[86] Nonetheless, *mimêsis* and *muthos* together portray something much more powerful than mere imitation of reality via text:

> *muthos* is not just a rearrangement of human action into a more coherent form, but a structuring that elevates this action; so *mimêsis* preserves and represents that which is human, not just in its essential features, but in a way that makes it greater and nobler. There is thus a double tension proper to *mimêsis*: on the one hand, the imitation is at once a portrayal of human reality *and* an original creation; on the other, it is faithful to things as they are *and* it depicts them as higher and greater than they are.[87]

This tension inherent in *mimêsis*—as a faithful portrayal which, in its depiction, ennobles and aggrandizes that which it depicts—is key to understanding the function of metaphor in poetry.

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[84] Ibid., 38.

[85] Ibid., 41.

[86] Ibid., 45

[87] Ibid.

For, as mentioned above, Ricoeur is interested in what the metaphor says about reality, and it is through the tension of *mimêsis* that the metaphor has reference to a world—whether the real world or that of the text: "the subordination of *muthos* to *mimêsis* gives the stylistic process a global aim[.] … Related to the imitation of our actions at their best, [metaphor] takes part in the double tension [of *mimêsis*] that characterizes this imitation: submission to reality *and* fabulous invention, unaltering representation *and* ennobling elevation."[88] Through the workings of poetic metaphor (poetic because we are working through an outgrowth of *muthos*, i.e. tragic poetry) a world appears to our senses; that is, this 'mimetic' tension in metaphor is productive insofar as it suggests an exterior. It refers to the fictive world of the text, which itself refers to the 'real world,' or 'reality,' but is explicitly *not* reality; the phrase, "'It was and it was not,' … contains *in nuce* all that can be said about metaphorical truth."[89]

We must now address poetry, the realm of the poetic, and the poetic function in order to properly grasp the world to which the metaphor refers. As outlined above, insofar as a metaphorical statement is literally false, the metaphor refers not to the 'real' but to the 'metaphorical,' that is, it refers not to reality but to the 'world of the poem,' or the metaphorical realm. However, the world of the poem to which the metaphorical statement refers is not untrue; it is hypothetical. On this point, Ricoeur approaches the notion of the 'poetic hypothesis' developed by Northrop Frye, which is "the suggestion or proposal, in imaginative, fictive mode, of a world. Hence, suspension of real reference [i.e., reference to 'reality'] is the condition of access to the virtual mode of reference. … [T]he function of poetry [is] to establish another world … that corresponds to other possibilities of existence … that would be most deeply our own."[90] In other words, in the transference of meaning between semantic systems in the metaphorical statement, a world—the 'virtual' world of the text—is produced, to which, simultaneously, the metaphor refers as its truth. The virtual world of the text is not a container in which the metaphor exists and to which it refers; rather, the text and its world comprise a metaphorical network. Thus, as we saw above, the metaphor's referential function "should be carried by a metaphoric network[.] … [M]etaphoricity [in tragic *muthos*] consists in describing

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., 265.

[90] Ibid., 270–71.

a less known domain – human reality – in the light of relationships within a fictitious but better known domain – the tragic tale – utilizing all the strengths of 'systematic deployability' contained in that tale."[91] This 'describing in light of …' is the 'redescription' that Hesse attributes to metaphor, which she argues should also be attributed to scientific models. And Ricoeur, after elaborating Hesse's understanding of models and metaphor, writes that "what on the poetic side corresponds exactly to the model is not precisely what we have called the 'metaphorical statement,' … as the model consists in a complex network of statements, its exact analogue would be the extended metaphor – tale, allegory."[92] Thus, the model is predictive insofar as it produces a virtual world to which it refers. This new world established by the poetic imitates our world and our actions, "but this *mimêsis* passes through creation of a plot," and, as mentioned above, involves the description of human reality in the light of the fictitious reality of the tragic tale.[93]

There is a sense in which the new world that the poetic establishes has a heuristic function insofar as it articulates a mood that can provide guidance for action in the non-virtual world, i.e., *this* world. Ricoeur writes that the "feeling articulated by the poem … signifies … the elevation of feeling to the hypthetical [*sic*], and the creation of an affective fiction. … The paradox of the poetic can be summed up entirely in this, that the elevation of feeling to fiction is the condition of its mimetic use. Only a feeling transformed into myth can open and discover the world."[94] Thus, the poetic, as an 'affective fiction,' depicts human reality within the framework of the 'story,' the 'myth,' and this virtual redescription of *this* world can help guide our actions in *this* world. Kuhn, too, articulates a concept of world-creation that arises within a new paradigm: "the scientist with a new paradigm sees differently from the way he had seen before,"[95] "[c]onfronting the same constellation of objects as before and knowing that he does so, he nevertheless finds them transformed through and through in many of their details,"[96] and

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[91] Ibid., 288–89.

[92] Ibid., 287.

[93] Ibid., 289.

[94] Ibid., 290.

[95] Kuhn, *Structure*, 115.

[96] Ibid., 122.

"after a revolution scientists work in a different world."[97] For Kuhn, this 'new world' presents the scientist with an impetus for action, that is, the practice of normal scientific research. For Rorty, this 'recontextualization' is the inspiration for imagining and envisioning a new, better world. And, for Ricoeur, metaphor involves a sort of call to action, too.

Arendt similarly discusses the importance of *mimêsis*, the poetic, and stories (or narratives)—in the context of the discovery of the 'who' in the public realm, that is, the political agent or actor. It is not through action alone that one becomes a who; rather, it is through the story that is told of his actions. Julia Kristeva writes that narrative is able to "condense the action into an exemplary moment, to extract it from the continuous flow of time, and reveal a *who*. … Such a narrative … is fundamentally integrated into action."[98] The revelation of the who through this narrativized action is the means by which one individuates one's self: "it is in action, as an ability to launch a *beginning*, that the human condition of individuation is actualized. The 'living flux of action and speech' is demonstrated in *mimēsis*—which, according to Aristotle, Arendt emphasizes, does not indicate the imitation of an isolated character, but rather an 'imitation of action'—through 'plot.'"[99] Thus, we may consider Arendt's notion of the memorable narrative, the story of heroic action, in the same vein as the heuristic of the affective fiction that Ricoeur describes. This is that of the 'inspirational story' that Rorty believes the contemporary Left must tell about the country (that is, in his case, America) in order to be the agent for change that it ought to be.

Rorty, like Marcuse and Arendt, believes that the Left should not be implementing top-down changes, foisting the 'better world' upon the people. Instead, each of these thinkers desires that we ourselves take up our own betterment, our own liberation, as a task for ourselves. We must tell a true story about the possibilities that we can actualize without becoming pessimistic about our failures to realize these possibilities in the past and without becoming cynical about how realistic this actualization is. This story must be true in a unique way: this truth must arise in

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[97] Ibid., 134.

[98] Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt: Life is a Narrative*, trans. Frank Collins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 17–18.

[99] Ibid., 20.

the story's resonance with human essence, which we have described as becoming, natal, and open to radical novelty and possibility. We need to be open to smaller changes because a large enough quantity of small changes can be revolutionary. This does not mean that we should shy away from larger changes, but that we cannot get hung up on the mass movement; we cannot become mired in discourse that leads to totalizing images of what we could become, such as the 'new being in Christ' or the 'new socialist man.' We must tell ourselves an affective fiction about what we could accomplish and how much better our world could be, and this fiction must depict our world in the light of a fictive world, a mythological world. A concrete theory of social change must involve the recognition of our past failures that does not condemn our present to ineptitude and stasis, that does not condemn our future because of the sins of our past—or our present.

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Curriculum Vitae

Name: Robert Halperin

Post-secondary   University of King's College
Education and   Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
Degrees: 2014–2018 B.A.

                       The University of Western Ontario
                       London, Ontario, Canada
                       2019–2021 M.A. (in progress)

Honours and   Canada Graduate Scholarship—Master's
Awards: 2020–2021

Related Work   Teaching Assistant
Experience   The University of Western Ontario
                       2019–2021

Publications:

Halperin, Robert. (2018). "Everyone According to His Needs and Everyone According to His Deeds: 'Eumaeus' as a Critique of Messianic Revolutionary Marxism," *Hinge* 24: 74–82

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