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Herbert Marcuse: Beyond the Veils of Freedom Technicalities of Regimentation and Restrain in Liberal-Democratic Order

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ABSTRACT: The write-up below is situated around the critico-theoretical engagement of Herbert Marcuse with the problematic of one-dimensional existence. It attempts to explore the daedalian labyrinths of anti-democratic trends in advanced liberal-democratic industrial societies hidden wherein may be the minacious putative for the establishment of a cantankerous order of totalitarian regulation and prepotence.

Keywords: Marcuse, Freedom, Restrain, Liberal-Democracy, Rationality, Reason.

Diagnosing the problematic: Mapping the changing contours of Capitalism

Herbert Marcuse begins *One Dimensional Man* with a theoretical engagement with Marx's diagnosis of capitalism as a politico-economic system. For Marx, capitalism as a system was marked by an inevitable doom due to its inherently resident contradictions. In his understanding, the reasons responsible for the growth and expansion of the capitalist systems were also resident to the endemic causes responsible for its putative decline and demise as well.¹ Complexity of contradictions internally embedded in the logic of capitalist production, it was argued, lead to the development of a vicious circle of production and sale. For the owners cum controllers of the means of production to remain in business and also be viable enough to compete and prosper, the logic above compels them to incessantly embark upon a process that result in the production and consequent sale of unmanageable quantum of goods. Greater sale, however, can only be achieved through the marketing of the hitherto produced goods at ever more economical a price which in turn can only be achieved by either a reduction in the levels of profit or the basic cost of production. In this context, it needs to be emphasised that the essential driving motor of capitalism as a system which enables it to perpetuate and thrive, though, is the ceaseless pursuit of profit. Thus, in the absence of a possibility at reduction in profits, the only alternative that remains to be tweaked and squeezed is the most elementary component of production that is the cost of wages. This process, however, is not incumbent upon one or a few of the constituent

¹ According to Marx, contradictions of capitalism shall compel it to either pave way to a higher form of society or shall prevail upon it to stagnate and perish. In line with this thought, Marx's collaborator Friedrich Engels had supposedly opined that the alternatives available at the disposal of society to make a choice from are either 'socialism or barbarism'. A stronger and more articulate credence was lent to this thought by Rosa Luxemburg who in *The Crisis in German Social Democracy* better known as *The Junius Pamphlet* published in 1915 had written, "[b]ourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism". For details see <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1915/junius/ch01.htm>

entities within the system but is all pervasive and encompasses the capitalist system in its totality. Consequential outcome of such an unconstrained tendency, then, becomes the constitution of a condition marked by surplus commodity production along with heightened augmentation in the impoverishment of the proletariat.² An iniquitous condition, thereby, comes into existence as sequential product of these strategies whereby the owners/controllers of the means of production driven by an insatiable thirst for the enhancement of their material worth as well as conditions of existence enthusiastically contribute towards the creation of an unbridgeable interspace between themselves and the human subjects who operate as the working force. This process that is interminable subtraction of the value of labour conceptualised as seemingly amaranthine activity leading to the ever farther widening of the 'interspace', however, let Marx enunciate that a putative moment in time shall arrive when it shall become an impossibility for the working force to be wrenched and driven towards further impecuniousness. At that inescapable moment of absolute indigence the working human subject shall have by perforce rise in opposition and take recourse to an open act of rebellion in order to protect and ensure the physical survival of his own self and that of his kin. Following the deductive logic Marx, on a note informed with substantive conclusiveness, postulate that the excrescency built into the process analysed above ensure with considerable amount of certitude the inevitability of the revolution if not the much aspired eventual creation or the consequent establishment of a desiderated socialist or communist society. In words different, ever increasing paucity of the resources for survival shall with great certainty ensure the erection of the revolutionary barricades by the absolutely impoverished working class.

² Dominant elements of the capitalist system that is the factory and land owners take recourse to such business tactics due to the presumed comprehension that low payment of wages to the workers shall not only enhance their putative respective profits but will also not empower and enable the latter to purchase commodities produced by the rivals which in turn shall not permit the competitors to escape the domain of the level playing field. This practice, though self-defeatist, is also indulged in due to the further belief albeit unsubstantiated that it shall contribute to the profit and the consequent wellbeing of the capitalist class as a whole.

No matter how determinate and ensured the projection above may seem, such anticipated developments could not be translated into existential reality. Potentiality of a global revolution increasingly receded into the hazy domain of progressive apposite insignificance. Conceptualisation of Russian Revolution as a harbinger laden with the possibility to ignite revolutionary spark across the world also prematurely collapsed into the limited hope of enacting 'socialism in one country'. Failure of the European 'Red Republics' in the wake of the First World War in spite of the suppository conditions for them to succeed further added to the atmosphere of dejection coupled with acute disenchantment. Melancholy lapsed into acute concavity with the observation of the resilient tenacity of capitalism to survive not only the challenges of varying and extreme proportions but to also emerge out of this trial with the greater spell of desirable appeal over the 'suffering' subjects. Attitude of entreaty towards capitalism was further reinforced with an appreciation of its abilities to not merely overcome challenges borne out of occasional crisis and depressions but also due to its unequivocal committal to embark upon a prolonged process of stability and growth.

The above came as an unanticipated paradox for the thinkers with the Marxist persuasion. Ability of Capitalism to wean itself out of the mortifying mire though was not as exasperating for them as was its resurgent imprecation and enduring legitimacy peppered with buoyant reception. The enforced rumination became further loathsome when it got informed with the realisation that capitalism was succeeding in convincing the 'toiling masses' with the argument that instead of seeking redemption in programmes of radical transformation it was more rewarding to be active participant in the capitalist call for cooperation and the preservation of *status quo*. In words different, emergent conditions were permitting emotional and psychological appeal of capitalism as a system to gain decisive ascendancy over those propositions that advocated indulgence into the construction of society

premised upon humanist emancipatory ideals. Battle for the ‘hearts and minds’ of the ‘toiling masses’ was being lost.³

Furthermore, in Marcuse’s conceptualisation of this phenomenon, capitalism was set to loose nothing but gain more and more. He opined that longer endurance of these conditions shall contribute towards not only the negation of antagonistic postulates but will also operate as insurmountable detriment for the emergence of any putative opposition to it as well. Such a buoyant triumph of capitalism also gave birth to the pensive thought that a solution with an elemental semblance of permanence for the crisis of industrial society has possibly been developed. In a state of much vexation, it was also opined that possibly such a development, in effect, was indicative of the eradication of the ‘crisis’⁴ itself. Premise of such pronouncements was the reading of the prospect that the evolution of an all pervasive culture of consumerism shall lead to the generation of a process of automatic negation of the crisis of overproduction that had otherwise widely afflicted capitalism. It was also anticipated that ‘consumption as an end in itself’ shall become the exclusive philosophical justification of human existence.

Such propositions were, however, not in direct continuance of the diagnosis of capitalism that Marx had done before. For according to him, fundament to the capitalist social intercourse was the chasm that separated the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. This gulf which had hitherto divided and separated the ruling class from that of the ruled had now followed an unanticipated trajectory of progression wherein it had created an atomised mass of consumers importuned with an insatiable desire to consume the latest in commodity. Negativity borne out of alienating conditions of work and existence, thus, seemed to get subsumed under an all pervasive albeit dissolute sensation of the hedonistic gratification of desires generally perceived of as the dawn of perpetual happiness. To formulate differently, society, now, seemed to

³ For a comprehensive discussion about these developments, see Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*. London: Macmillan, 1984. Chapters 8, 9 & 10.

⁴ ‘Crisis’ of industrial society, in the present context, has reference to the phenomenon of over production.

have unbounded itself of the wrought that had wrenched it otherwise. This stood in much contra-distinction to the way in which Marx had anticipated the system to evolve as for him the ever increasing cleft between the ‘possessed’ and the ‘dispossessed’ was destined to bring about the inevitable clash between the two. Trajectory of capitalist development had, however, taken a completely different course all together wherein the ‘clash’ was being superseded by ‘convergence and cooperation’. Thus, for Marcuse, the critical task was to seek a plausible explanation for the paradox: did Marx err in his assessment and consequent diagnosis of modernity and capitalism or did a development completely unanticipated happen which forced the wheel of historical evolution to change its path from that of a relentless progression towards the establishment of a socialist society to a counter reaffirmation of faith in the perpetuation of capitalist order.

Constituting “One Dimensional Man”: Disciplining the subject in Liberal Democratic Society/State

Massive material reconstruction leading to the creation of the economic boom in the post Second World War period⁵ let many analysts to suggest that the resultant ‘positive’ surge in the evolution of the advanced industrial societies stood in substantial contradistinction to the Marxist comprehension of capitalism as a system. Euphoria and glee premised upon an enthusiastic reading of the emergent conditions as ‘it had never before been so good’ let many to make tall proclamations about the suppositious unfolding of a process leading to the ‘end of history’.⁶ Irreconcilable contradictions of capitalism were presumed to have been decisively overcome. Restoration of faith in capitalism’s ability to deliver prolonged and sustained ‘economic growth’ let to the understanding that meaningless and futile it would be to make indulgence into any kind of radical oppositional activity

⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes – The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*. London: Abacus, 1995. (See Chapter 9)

⁶ Thus, the underlying theme for Marcuse in his project was to explore the viability of the following theses that are albeit contradictory to each other: 1) the advanced industrial society is capable of containing qualitative change for the future; 2) the forces and tendencies exist which may break this containment and explode the society. For details, see Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, page xlv.

dedicated towards bringing about fundamental social reordering.⁷ The system accordingly becomes an agency exclusively engaged in safeguarding and promoting the interests of the rich through a regulative control of the masses. The argument of ‘levelling effect’ was presented as counter-balance to the Marx’s presumptions of the built in contradictions of capitalism operating as inherent limitations on its ability to enhance ‘economic growth’. Diagnosis of capitalism as being residence of an inescapable tendency towards indulgence into over-production and immiseration was branded as patently incorrect, false and misanthropist modes of thought. It was suggested that society in its totality should make endeavour to have commonality of interest in its overall growth and progress if the latter tends to prove itself sustainable in disposition.⁸

Distinction between the constituent elements of society as producers and consumers was presumed to be concepts without much of intellective logic as it was held that in this ‘common endeavour’ of collective production, there was possibility for everyone to transcend this line of demarcation and enjoy the benefits of a system whose fundamental operational stimulus was navigated by the principle which believed in the dictum ‘accumulate it high and dispense with it economically/affordably’. Disagreement, disenchantment and the causticity of the proletariat borne out of resentment with the capitalist system was proposed to be curtailed and overcome by creating avenues for them with the objective to facilitating greater participatory and directorial opportunities in the operational dynamics of the system itself. In words different, it was felt that it was in the interest of the system to appropriate than alienate those sections of the society that in the past had got disenchanted with it. The tools and techniques of this procedure, it was suggested, would need to traverse the simultaneous domains of ideological appropriation accompanied with the concomitant processes of economic reorganisation along with that of

⁷ “Under the conditions of a rising standard of living,” Marcuse writes, “non-conformity with the system itself appears to be socially useless, and the more so when it entails tangible economic and political disadvantages and threatens the smooth operation of the whole.” See Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, page 4.

⁸ Ralph Miliband. *The State in Capitalist Society*. New York: Basic Books, 1969.

the hopes of presumptive redistribution. This moment of hyper-hope and euphoria was essentially premised upon the presumed envisioning of the new order as bearer of a dispensation bereft of the troubles of old societal divisions. The ever widening unbridgeable distance between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ was now interpreted to be disappearing in the emergent socio-economic arrangement as it was argued that the typologies of the industrial society appeared to stand in difference with each other not because of substance but due to form.⁹

The triumphant statement of the “new order” analysed above, however, stood in much opposition to the way Marcuse perceived of this ‘new dawn’. The Marxist in him did not countenance at the proposition that the fundamental antagonism had been done away from the contemporary societal intercourse. In his intellectual discourse, the proposition that the social conflict was nearing a putative end was, in

⁹ Irrespective of the critico-differential ideological proclamations of norms and values as different from that of the West, the societies constituted on the supposed principles of ‘socialism’ did not differ much with the latter in terms of economic objectives and goals. The latter, too, laid substantial emphasis on creating conditions that would have enabled them to achieve economic growth coupled with increased productivity leading finally up to the attainment of higher standards of living for their workers. In this context, it is worth recalling that different leaders from the socialist block at varying points in time made regular indulgence in tall proclamations that their supreme objective was to leave either the United States or the West behind in bringing about the production of greater commodities at a rate achieved hitherto before. The communists, thus, had neither a different set of radical goals nor a divergent way from that of the West to achieve them. Achievement of material prosperity/bounty was the final objective of both regimes driven by the ideals communism and that of the liberal-democracy in the West. Remembrance be further made of the fact that since towards the end of the first decade following the Second World War, in Marcuse’s intellectual universe all industrial societies were being conceptualized as the varying manifestation of the same system. To reaffirm and add further substance to this mode of thought, he argued that both capitalism and communism “show the common features of late industrial civilization – centralization and regimentation supersede individual enterprise and autonomy; competition is organized and “rationalized”; there is joint rule of economic and political bureaucracies; the people are coordinated through the mass media of communication, entertainment industry, education. If these devices prove to be effective, democratic rights and institutions might be granted by the constitution and maintained without danger of their abuse in opposition to the system’. For further details, see *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958). Also see, Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 12-13

fact, a new endeavour on behalf of the bourgeoisie to conceptualise and present its hegemonic domination as the embodiment of rationality.¹⁰ Thus, he proposed that the perception about Marx having gone ashtray in his elemental assessment of capitalism was patently incorrect. Marx's analysis of the development of modernity, according to him, though was in need of substantial revision. In the light of such a realisation, Marcuse endeavoured onto an intellectual journey to revisit the fundamentals of Marxism with the objective to seek theoretical insights to analyse what seemed to many an 'oxymoron problematic' residually present in the new order.

The Frankfurt School sociologist extended and reaffirmed fresh validity to the original Marxist proposition that exploitation and alienation are inherently resident in the capitalist production process. The essential character of capitalist production exercise, therefore, does not have much of possibility to fundamentally alter itself as teeming millions who constitute society and participate in the process of production continue to sell their productive labour for others. However, it becomes an exercise if not in impossibility then certainly in excruciating difficulty to identify and differentiate the masters from the workers as appearance of all engaged in the same/similar activity fudges distinction. The nature of the work/activity, though, still makes

¹⁰ It is necessary to point out here that marching in consonance with the essentials of Marxist comprehension of the operative features of capitalism, Marcuse believed in the argument that the capitalist mode of production works with the fundamental objective to effectuate a disunion between the subject and its instinctual drives. As a consequence of it, the subject gets deprived of his agency to accomplish its destiny. Also the supposed creation of material abundance ostensibly meant to alleviate the existential condition of the former; instead of it being the emancipatory agent, it rather became an active and potent tool to drive him into the realm of passivity. It, further, coaxes the subject into becoming an efficient socio-technical instrument of managerial administration paradoxically marked by a resolute intent to operate as a mechanism for self-exploitation by capital and the powers in control of it i.e. primarily the government. Interestingly, the distinction between the latter set of categories, accordingly to Marcuse, too ceases to have any distinction as this process concretizes and evolves further.

undiluted indulgence into the act of expropriation.¹¹ Indispensable as well as the inalienable act of expropriation, consequently, renders the capitalist society not bereft of contention and antagonism no matter how symphonious and mellifluous an image of itself it may strive to project for the consumption of the self and others. Thus, a question with significant element of legitimacy arises that if there is no change of substance in the essence of the capitalist production exercise then why is such hypersonic rhetoric about the end of dissidence and dissension being created. Is there no ingredient of truth in this magniloquent discourse? Possibly none as it needs to be remembered that a system driven by the primary motive of profit and the maximisation of the same premised upon the expropriation of the value of labour is fundamentally incapable of bringing about equivalence in a society dominated by it. What, however, it is capable of doing and succeeded much in achieving so was to transfer and transpose the sites of antagonistic contestations to those areas of life that operate as territories of insignificance for the overall operation of the system. Thus, transposition of conflict from areas of direct quotidian relevance to that of the margins of insignificance was trumpeted by the defenders of the capitalist production exercise as the heralding of an era wherein the problem of contest and conflict was presumed to have been solved for good. However, the truth lied somewhere far beyond this proposition.

In effect what had transpired was the relative egress of the indispensable conflict between the classes from the principal areas of social life to those domains where the specifically resident social intercourses enjoyed very little intendment. The inalienable conflict between the classes, in fact, got transubstantiated to the domain of international relations between the economically industrialised and that of the developing territorial national entities. Resultant of this process was the absence of tangible observation on behalf of the human subject of the processes that signified an unfolding of class oppression and

¹¹ To illustrate it further, it is to suggest that the capitalist at a value that has the surplus element inbuilt into it dispenses off the production of a commodity by the worker in the market. The appropriation of the latter by the capitalist for the purposes best known to himself results in the exercise of expropriation which in turn forms the bedrock of capitalist production exercise.

conflict on a quotidian basis. The absence of critical tangibility of class conflict and oppression was further informed by the malleability that was cursively ingrained in the domain of professional engagements and undertakings. Absence of radical perceptive difference in the nature of employment lead to the construction of an optical delusion wherein it was conceptualised albeit in contradistinction to the actuality of the real existent conditions that the differences which informed the division of labour in an earlier period of modern epoch say in the form of industrial and agricultural workforce had now been subjected to cessation. This cessation of the critical difference in terms of the essential character of work profile, however, did not mean an end to the alterity in the nature of employment in this context as no efforts were undertaken to mitigate the distinction and difference in terms of status of the employees. Efficiency, effectiveness and efficacy, now, emerged as the catchall concepts with supreme bearing on the idea of distribution of dividends and remuneration for and among the working subjects. Further to this, the rearrangement and reorganisation of the industrial productive exercise with reference to the collective participation and responsibility was made to operate as impediments to any putative feeling of malcontent and dissatisfaction that the worker may have had towards his professional engagements. In words different, the working subject was attempted to be situated in conditions that practically translated itself as being deeply alienating to his professional engagement and social inhabitation.¹² The working subject, in effect, was expected to reside in an intellectual condition of being where his reflective abilities leading to a critical perception of either the actual conditions of existence or the qualitative profile of the professional engagement was supposed to become thoroughly circumscribed and inhibited. Fulfilment of material, sensual and biological quotidian needs was approached, celebrated and heralded as the exclusive need of the working subjects. 'One dimensional' societal being defined primarily with reference to the limited notion of a being engaged with the exclusive mono-dimensional activity of consumption, therefore, was desired to be constituted and

¹² Douglas Kellner. 2004. "Marcuse and the Quest for Radical Subjectivity." In *Herbert Marcuse – A Critical Reader*, edited by John Abromeit and W. Mark Cobb, 81-99. London: Routledge.

created.¹³ Pervasive alienation, hence, as Marcuse argued was attempted to be instituted both at the societal level of existence as well as in the diverse domains of activities constituting the very exercises that enable the production processes.

Be that as it may, the perceptive insights into the operative features of the advanced industrialised societies by the Frankfurt school sociologist also brought into attention yet another critical feature of the capitalist system as it operated in these socio-economic domains. The conflictual relationship that informed these economic setups did not causatum much manifestation in those relational structures that operated as connects between the employed and the employer. Deductively, therefore, it can be argued that predominant fount of antagonism in such socio-economic complexes neither emanated nor informed the relationship by which the workers and masters effected their connect with each other. This conflict rather evidenced itself between those elements who were part of the system and by that virtue revelled in and consumed of its ‘achievements’ and others who were located out of its purview and perceived of themselves as deprived and condemned.¹⁴

¹³ In this context note may be taken of the points made by Georg H. Fromm, *et al* in a review of the said text wherein they argued the following: 1) The concept of “one-dimensional man” asserts that there are other dimensions of human existence in addition to the present one and that these have been eliminated. It maintains that the spheres of existence formerly considered as private (e.g. sexuality) have now become part of the entire system of social domination of man by man, and it suggests that totalitarianism can be imposed without terror. 2) Technological rationality, which impoverishes *all* aspects of contemporary life, has developed the material bases of human freedom, but continues to serve the interests of suppression. There is logic of domination in technological progress under present conditions: not quantitative accumulation, but a qualitative “leap” is necessary to transform this apparatus of destruction into an apparatus of life. For details, see Georg H. Fromm, William Leiss, John David Ober, Arno Waserman, and Edward J. Wilkins, et al, One-Dimensional Man, *The New York Review of Books*, March 19, 1964, accessed August 10, 2016, <http://http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1964/03/19/one-dimensional-man-2/>

¹⁴ For a critical assessment of Marcuse’s premise that capitalism as a mode of production had in substantial measure repulsed the challenges given by the structural contradictions inherently resident within it, see Paul Mattick, *Critique of Marcuse – One Dimensional Man in Class Society*, (London: Merlin Press, 1972). Also see,

Thus, according to Marcuse, in spite of the altitudinous claims of the industrialised capitalist societies of having discovered an enduring solution to the inherent conflict, opposition and strife in their respective domains, a substantial section of the citizenry in such societal structures continued to reside on the margins of the these ‘affluent’ social setups and their economic dispossession made them perceive of their relationship with the society and the system that governed it, primarily, in terms of irreconcilable conflict and antagonism. Accordingly, the much trumpeted discussion about the ‘end of ideology’ in effect amounted to just being a thinly disguised veil, a new smokescreen to hide the increasing alienation of the entities residing on the margins as the latter had not been provided with any vital stake in either the continuance or the expansion of the regimes of capitalist production. This condition of divestiture further attained a critical dimension when a discernment was made that not only the dispossessed continued to remain alienated in substantial measure, spirited attempts were also made by the system to make them invisible and indiscernible to people at large. Perception towards them was developed and conducted in a way that amounted to a virtual denial of the reality of their existence since it was presumed that this class of people had no economic worth for the growth and the expansion of the capitalist production enterprise. It was understood that their existence was rather a detrimental force for the continuance of the system. Hence, in consonance with this self-serving obdurate economic assessment, all techniques and tools of the system which included means and methods of communication were invoked to create an impression that should have let people believe in the argument of the denial of the existence of such entities.¹⁵

This ‘attempt to deny’ also served other purposes. Combined with the accompanying presumptive faith borne out of the self-serving

David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990)

¹⁵ For a discursive analysis of the processes through which ideology operates, see Saroj R. Jha. 2016. “Problematizing Ideology and the Ideological Problematic: Althusserian Engagement with the Oxymoron.” *International Journal of Applied Social Sciences* 3.1&2: 39-52.

systemic propaganda of ‘all’ having a common stake and investment in the ‘system’, it was presumed that such a situation will withhold people from making any putative indulgence into thoughts and activities that may have the possibility to undermine the capitalist system and work against it. To explain it in a different phraseology, this technique of intellectual appropriation and regimen of control amounted to being a catalyst that was expected to dilute any potential concentration of rebellious and revolutionary activity that may be latently resident among the masses. Thus, the critical distinction between industrial societies in its nascent or early phase and that of the advanced stage, according to the Frankfurt School theorist, was that of a substantial improvement in its ability to contain possibilities of reaction and rebellion against it. In the advanced phase, industrial societies had developed competent effectual techniques of retrain to rein in alienation and consequent articulation of the same in the form of oppositional critiques of diverse kinds and forms. For Marcuse, such a mode of development stood much in opposition to Marx’s predictive diagnosis of the evolutionary path that capitalism was supposed to embark upon. It, in effect, posed an intellectualistic conundrum of considerable dimensions wherein the challenge was, now, to discover and comprehend the methods through which the industrial societies developed tools by recourse to which it enabled itself to manage and contain what had hitherto been understood to be unmanageable and uncontainable. Challenge was, now, to discern and fathom the archaeological structure of the techniques and intellectual regimes through recourse to which the advanced industrial social systems were able to communicate and convince the ‘wretched of the earth’ that in the very continuation of the state of their existential alienation laid the best possibilities of their salvation and emancipation. That the best option for the alienated to escape misery and divestiture was to extend their continual support to the perpetuation of the divide leading to the status quo, which otherwise was the very reason responsible for their penury and despondent condition. The situation, therefore, posed itself as not only inexplicable but its oxymoron ingredients added an element of flabbergast to it as well.

Technicalities of restrain: Regimentation through prepotence

An effort at the epistemic comprehension of the techniques by which this oxymoron problematic operated was, therefore, must to endeavour upon if an understanding of the ‘inexplicable’ had to be developed. The critical core of the problem was to decipher the archaeology of thought structures that helped not only constitute but also uphold the processes of legitimation of the system. A critical assessment, therefore, was required to make intellectual sense of the methods through which the regime of control and subjugation was developed into a process of habitual obligation and willing acceptance of domination. Moreover, it was of paramount importance to understand that how ‘an ideology perpetuating relations of domination’¹⁶ was perceived of as cogent, determinative and legitimate by both the dominators as well as the dominated. Thus, in order to understand the politico-economic structure of the present, it was mandatory to critically investigate the epistemic roots that had helped intellectual dispensation of the present to take its shape.

Etymological antecedents of the body of ideas operating as source for an exercise of legitimation of the present had its historical moorings in the eighteenth century Franco-British enlightenment discourse.¹⁷ Paramount pivot of the modern European enlightenment discourse revolved around the ideas of reason, rationality and the consequent ability of the human subject to master the riddles of history and the concomitant possibility of establishing a regime of coordinated direction and control over the processes of a putative future. Presumed discovery of the ‘inevitable laws’ of societal evolution, both past and future, was perceived of as ‘progress’ over a huge time frame of chaotic ‘regress’ and ‘ignorance’. This teleological enterprise, though, had

¹⁶ Simon Tormey. 1995. *Making Sense of Tyranny – Interpretations of Totalitarianism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, page 107.

¹⁷ Isaiah Berlin. 2013. *The Proper Study of Mankind – An Anthology of Essays*, edited by Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer, Prologue by Noel Annan, Introduction by Roger Hausheer, Second edition Forward by Andrew Marr. London: Vintage Books, page 243–345.

elements of instrumentalist reason surreptitiously built into it.¹⁸ Embedded epistemic instrumentalism in the Enlightenment discourse about progress led to the construction of an argument which suggested that the true possibility of human emancipation/freedom was dependent upon an end of human necessity. And an end of human necessity, it was concomitantly articulated, was only possible with the creation of conditions that shall help unleash the uninterrupted development of the forces of production.¹⁹ This view, further, held the opinion that the key to the satisfaction of ever increasing human material wants was dependent upon an enhancement of the technological mechanics of productive exercise. Thus, a direct uncritical correlation was drawn between the improvement in the technical abilities of machines and the gratification of human desires through an enhanced consumption of the extensive volume of commodities produced by the former.

Further to this expectation, in substantial measure, was also held the belief that freedom from a relentless engagement with the ‘bondage’ of productive exercise shall permit the human subject to explore and appreciate finer aspects of its abilities and capacities, a necessity much in need of satisfaction for a complete development of its potential and the making of social existence a meaningful activity. Thus, the logical thread that binds these arguments that is the Enlightenment, post-Enlightenment as well as the Marxist discourses, in the present context, is the assertion of an instrumentalist argument which is suggestive of the belief that the putative of a victorious triumph over alienation has an

¹⁸ With much euphemistic enthusiasm, enlightenment epistemological processes approached and celebrated the idea of progress, riding on the triumphant march of reason, without any substantial element of critical caution. For it the concept unfolded itself in terms of ever enhancing ability of the human agency to comprehend the phenomenon of the world in order to subject it to a regime of control and modulation with the objective to further the element of human happiness and contentment. Embedded in enlightenment discourse can, therefore, be found an uncritical reception of the idea of direct co-relation between the notion of the fulfillment of the Self and the human ability to master nature.

¹⁹ It needs to be noted that even Marx, who was otherwise extremely critical of the bourgeoisie developmental rhetoric, approached this element of enlightenment discourse with a mild countenance.

umbilical relationship with the progressive advancement of technology and scientific knowledge. However, this broad synonymity in approaches towards production and the advancement in technical knowhow and its critical function in the satisfaction of human expectations is incidentally also a site latently resident of much critical difference between the Marxists and the proponents of post-Enlightenment discourse. Alterity between the two primarily manifests itself in terms of perspectives that they invoke while interpreting the operative employability of the advancement in the techniques of the knowledge of performativity of mechanical tools in the process of productive exercise. To articulate it differently, it is to argue that the ideological difference between the Marxists and others are pivoted around the subject whose points of discussion revolve around the organisational techniques that may be invoked to arrange production along with the modes that might be enforced to exploit 'knowledge' to the best of human needs. The nature of conditions that may prevail between the organisation of the production exercise and the applicability/usability of the advancement in scientific knowledge, therefore, attains the centrality of focus in the Marxist assessment of the theme under discussion.

In consonance with the caution expressed above, intellectual dispensation persuaded by the left mode of socio-economic analysis hold the opinion that unencumbered reign of forces at play in the economic domain of social interactive space that is human interactions in the market is excessively laden with the possibility of mis-utilisation of social knowledge. Source of such suspicion emanates from the belief that knowledge is the collective resource of society as a whole and should therefore be used in, equal measure, for the benefit of all by it being under the collectivist command of societal totality. Liberals, however, locate themselves in juxtaposition to such Marxist suspicions. For them removal of the impedances upon the economic activities combined with an unrestricted use of knowledge is an essential prerequisite for the growth and continual expansion of gainful commercial proceeds.²⁰ Differences between these varying and

²⁰ Frederick von Hayek. 1944. *The Road to Serfdom*. London: Routledge, 2006. See John Stuart Mill. 1848. *Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their*

contesting ideologies aside, there is still a point of convergence and confluence between the two when it comes down to the assessment of the idea of 'progress'. There is a commonality of opinion in terms of 'progress' being evaluated with reference to the material conditions. Both these ideological modes of intellectual engagements agree upon the proposition that an incessant incremental increase in economic/material standards of existence premised upon a greater exploitation of the resources available to human kind shall let the society proceed towards the constitution of conditions wherein the idea and practice of liberty can be maximised. In words different, what this idea, in effect, signifies is the opinion that the encumbrances and impedances which operate as hindrances must be done away before the human subject would be set free to make an uninhibited indulgence in demiurgic pursuits that are essential for the fulfilment of a meaningful human existence. Paramount of these hindrance as stated before are economic exigencies operating as compulsory coercive indispensableness, emancipation from which becomes an absolute necessity if the human subject has to be made free of constant call of physical requisiteness. However, the idea that the human agency is permitted to operate without encumbrances in an atmosphere of nonchalant indifference within the larger project of *Logos* failed to stand on much firm ground when the processes of the latter were subjected to critical scrutiny. Marcuse, in consequence, opined that the faith conceptualised in terms of the practise of neutrality within *Logos* both by Marx and prior to him other thinkers of Enlightenment was rather euphemistic. On the contrary, for the critical theorist, the systemic desiderium to indulge in sequential ciphering and estimation operate in perfect harmonious conjunction with the contrarian appetite to make indulgence in restrictive circumscription, regulatory management and disciplinarian domination. Oppositional tendencies operating as elemental contradictions within the project, therefore, render the Enlightenment conceptualisation of science with reference to its utilitarian values bereft of meaning in its original sense. In words different, the modern dealings with/of science takes the element of

Applications to Social Philosophy, edited, with Introduction, by Stephen Nathanson. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc. 2004. Also see John Stuart Mill. 1859. *On Liberty*, edited by Edward Alexander. New York: Broadview Press, 1999.

utility away from the project as implicit within its undertaking due to modernist preponderancy becomes the idea whose objective is to have peremptory prepotence over human subject. This change in the objective of the project negotiated by the modernist disciplining of the enterprise,²¹ in consequence, operate as a catalyst with the power to alter the primum quæsitum of the undertaking itself. “Science”, thus in the words of Marcuse, “by virtue of its own method and concepts has projected and promoted a universe in which the domination of nature has remained linked to the domination of man – a link which tends to be fatal to this universe as a whole. Nature, scientifically comprehended and mastered reappears in the technical apparatus of production and destruction which sustains and improves the life of the individuals while subordinating them to the masters of the apparatus” (Marcuse 1964, 135).

²¹ Modernist intervention necessitated elementary modification in the enterprise of science. It prevailed upon it to modulate its ends in such a way that under its influence essential objectives of the scientific project came to have exclusive identification with the technical processes of comprehension, categorization and quantification. Derivative, in consequence, then became the epistemic discourse for which the construction/constitution of the world in a totality of referential framework with nothing situated/located outside its intellectual ambit became the primary task of the process. Imagination of totality was perceived of in such comprehensive detail that the element of unpredictable found neither any entertainment nor manifestation in this ‘order of things’. Obsessive control built into its regulatory structure refused to entertain even the idea lest the possibility of any element of spontaneity or indiscipline. Pursuit of ordered methodization of material actuality was presumed to stand in opposition to the putative inability to reign in the unknown and uncertain. The appetite for absolute control over the manifest along with the implicit and ambiguous constituted itself as the regulatory meridian around which the mutated project of science, now, came to have its operations organized and conducted. Thus, science conceptualized and comprehended by the thinkers of Enlightenment as a useful activity in the service of the human kind came to attain a different meaning and dimension for itself in the light of modernist mutative intervention. Authoritarian prepotency, therefore, implicitly attained the position of preponderant narrative in the project. The sub-statement of this narrative of control and regimentation is the unpronounced desideratum, which intends to subvert human autonomy and freedom and further render the human subject as conformist/re-conciliating automatons in order to make them qualified objects for quantification and consequent utilization.

Transmogrification of Science: Rationality as instrument of prepollence

Science, therefore, gets transmogrified into an agency/instrument in which get ensconced agendas that are much in divergence with the benign positive utilitarian objectives that were supposed to be associated with the project in its nascent stages. Process of science to an uncritical observer, though, manifests itself in the form of techniques meant to comprehend the myriad manifestations of nature. However, when perceived from the vantage point of a critical gaze, the whole enterprise becomes dependent upon the objectives of use that it is supposed to be subjected to. Subordination of the objectives of the enterprise to the desires of the regulating agencies makes the entire process bereft of any semblance of autonomous existence. In the light of such a development, derivative becomes the argument that the scientific enterprise in essence is a vehicle to carry forward the concealed/covert agenda with ulterior objectives to fulfil. This stands much in divergence with the way science in common parlance is both perceived of and interpreted to be (Marcuse 1964, 129).²²

Thus, an interpretation of the project of science with reference to the arguments analysed above oblige us to analyse the enterprise in ways beyond an understanding underlined by naivety of an approach. Discreet ingenuity having surreptitious presence in the project make it a complex process wherein its objectives and results should not be seen as dependent upon the human desires and proclivities. On the contrary, science represents a distinct world view, much at variance with the human/societal perception of the same subject. Project of science rather elevates itself to a point wherein it attains for itself an ideal with reference to which the “rationality of the organisation of social life” (Tormey 1995, 110) in its entirety is, now, expected to be measured and

²² For Marcuse hence, “formalization and functionalization are, prior to all application, the ‘pure form’ of a concrete societal practice. While science freed nature from inherent ends and stripped matter of all but quantifiable qualities, society freed men from the ‘natural’ hierarchy of personal dependence and related them to each other in accordance with quantifiable qualities – namely, as units of abstract labor power, calculable in units of time”.

demarcated.²³ Subjection of the quotidian existence to the process of rationalisation through recourse to the methods identified and demarcated by science, in Marcuse's opinion, escapes being an entity/process with the possibility to have elements of neutrality. It is so because 'instrumental reason' that resides in the deep recesses of this process subsumes within itself a strategy or project whose understated objective is to restitutively develop an image of societal life preconditioned to its particularist comprehension of the phenomenon.²⁴ Instrumental reason, thus, becomes a process embedded with a vision of a societal structure whose explicit objective is to instrumentalise social relations which in turn operates as the harbinger of human atomisation

²³ The most illustrative example of 'rationality of the organization of social life' in the twentieth century has been the introduction of production line in the processes of production. The objective of the given process otherwise popularly known as Taylorism was to do away with the embedded irregularity in the traditional production exercise with the simplified/ streamlined efficiency of the production line. The process in its essence advocated the view that in order to attain greater economy, efficiency and perfection the exercise of production be broken into parts. This, it was presumed, would help create a condition that shall have the potential to dispense with the excessive engagement of a particular individual with the production of a specific product in an extremely time consuming manner. On the contrary, it was postulated that the introduction of production line would lead the activity be broken into specific parts with greater focus and specialization as it was expected that the labor could, now, be trained to perform and unceasingly repeat a single task with the objective to attain greater perfection at/in job. In words different, this process can be interpreted to be symptomatic of the introduction of the scientific/technological principles into the place of work. In its essence, this effort was pregnant with the objective to cleanse the processes of production with all given or putative 'irrational extraneous considerations' such as the elements of interest and consequent satisfaction associated with the nature of work/task as well as the comfort and happiness of the worker. The paramount element that defined the whole process was the pursuit of an unceasing increase in output and the maximization of profit.

²⁴ In accordance with this idea, Herbert Read would opine that "in *One-Dimensional Man* Herbert Marcuse has moved on to what is the central problem of our civilization – how to reconcile originality and spontaneity and all the creative aspects of our human nature with a prevailing drive to rationality that tends to reduce all varieties of temperament and desire to one universal system of thought and behavior." Quoted in Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*.

and alienation in societal intercourse.²⁵ The challenge though is not limited to this possible undesirable. It attains unassailable proportions when it is realised that the said project has resilient capabilities built into its structure to equally neutralise every semblance of potentiality that there may be of an alternate humanist vision of organising social order.²⁶ Ever increasing rationalisation of social order dictated by the logic of instrumental reason and industrial production driven by the ratiocinative analytic of technological enterprise, further, compels us to revisit our conceptualisation of societal structure premised upon the argumentation of class.

In a social formation desirous of attaining societal stability by subjecting all aspects of human existence to the subordination of an idea inspired from the notion of technological rationality defined with exclusive reference to the necessities of efficiency in the exercise of production, the idea of political regulation perceived of in terms of domination by one class of another attains a sententious amount of irrelevance. Irrelevance is borne out of the fact that in such a social setup, character and evolution of societal life come to be influenced and determined by by the analytic of production process. Class, in consequence, ceases to be a critical factor as the enterprise of societal intercourse in relation to the apparatus of production is no more subject

²⁵ In such a scheme, constituent elements of a society attain their respective albeit specific positions in the societal order of things with reference to a criterion defined by the notion of presumed 'objectivity' measured in terms performance and efficiency. Consequently, a mechanistic conceptualization of human reflex and desires seeks replacement of the actual human engagement and cogitation. Thus, a society premised upon the principles of scientific organization carries within itself the putative possibilities of creating conditions that shall lead to the constituting of an atomized and alienating human existence.

²⁶ Marcuse attests the negativity of instrumental reason by further arguing "it shapes the entire universe of discourse and action, intellectual and material culture. In the medium of technology, culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system, which swallows up or repulses all alternatives. The productivity and growth potential of the system stabilize the society and contain technical progress within the framework of domination. Technological rationality has become political rationality." Marcuse 1964, 14.

to or regulated for/by the dominant class for the advancement of its specific interests.²⁷

Productive apparatus replacing class control and domination as the key function of regimentation and regulatory control brings into existence an issue which, now, stands in urgent need to have the critical focus of our intellectual engagement. Technological rationality, it is argued, not only instrumentalises social life and societal intercourse but has also the resilience and capability to virtually annihilate every putative concern or observant thought that shows the willingness or prowess to be at divergence with its vision of the ‘order of things’. Hence, efforts in diverse ways are invoked to regulate the lives of human subjects by restraining them from acting in accordance with their agency. In line with the objective stated, further potent efforts are made to modulate the paramount imperative of social organisation by converting it from being an enterprise driven in accordance with apperceiving desires and interests of groups to it being subjected to the idea of a cogency/rationality premised upon the understanding that, in effect, lays exclusive faith in the logic of technological expansion along with the enhancement of productive capabilities. Thus, in the event of an actualisation of this idea into the material establishment of an institutional order, as has been the case in western industrially advanced socio-economic spaces, it is most often than not observed that the technological logic mentioned above becomes philosophical justification of the enterprise as well. Also to attain the said objective ceaseless efforts are made to colloque reality to confirm to the idea that has its umbilical roots in the logic of instrumental/technological rationality. Every aspect of existential exercise, now, get subjected to evaluation with reference to efficacy/efficiency and performance/productivity and all possible that stands in juxtaposition to

²⁷ For Marcuse holds the opinion that “the technical apparatus of production and distribution (with an increasing sector of automation) functions, not as the sum-total of mere instruments which can be isolated from their social and political effects, but rather as a system which determines a priori the product of the apparatuses as well as the operations of servicing and extending it”. Marcuse 1964, 13.

this principle is wrought to its domain by an invocation of the idea of scientific and technological exigency.²⁸

Ordering of societal space and interpersonal human relationships in the light of the thesis postulated above, emanating from the intellectual quarters of technological rationality, is also informed with the potential to bring about a qualitative shift in the character of the relationship that, otherwise, operates as an epistemic connect between the ideological and the existential. Embedded in the new dispensation is the objective to transform the distinctive ‘space’ apparent in terms of the distance between the promises/objectives made by the ruling authority and the quotidian lived reality/experience of the subject population. At a rhetorical level, it should be remembered, that the explicit politico-economic as well as ideological proclamations of the liberal democratic dispensations have traditionally been the establishment of a system whose exclusive objective would be to promote equity, liberty and societal justice. However, when evaluated with reference to actual praxis, observant became the realisation that loftiness of such principles gets caught in the mire of compromise, mostly deliberate and partly unintended, as quotidian inequities of the human subject made the actual existent apparent in its stark nakedness. Such excruciating conditions, it can be argued, were borne due to the fact that the benefits of industrial advancements had most often than not been expropriated by the class with exclusive access to political and economic control of the resources for making indulgences in activities that had the least relevance to the majority of the human constituents of societal whole at large.²⁹ Comforts and extravagances of the materially powerful and influential, supposed glittering achievements of the industrial

²⁸ This assessment receives further attestation by Marcuse when he suggests, “the productive apparatus tends to become totalitarian to the extent to which it determines not only socially needed occupations, skills and attitudes, but also individual needs and aspirations. It thus obliterates the opposition between the private and public existence, between individual and social needs. Technology serves to initiate new, more effective, and more pleasant forms of social control and social cohesion.” Marcuse 1964, 13.

²⁹ For a wider discussion of the concept, see Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, (Chapters. 4,7,8).

advancements, were hence premised upon exasperating conditions of toil and peonage of the servile multitude. Derivative, in this context, then becomes the opinion that the tall pontifical claims of the liberal-democratic order were in essence smart albeit potent tools harnessed by the system to control, regiment, and submit the multitude of people condemned to live a life of modern day thralldom and enslavement. This was the prevalent narrative in the nascent days of industrial experience. In times contemporary though, with the expansion of industrial advancements and the institutionalised acceptance of the rhetoric of technological rationality, the said chronicle has undergone structural changes of substantial order.

Assimilative incorporation of an ideological narration of the phenomenon into the existent material actuality does away with the need to explore techniques that would permit the dispensation to make efforts with the objective to convert subjects to an existence of somnifacient opiates. Fusing of the ideological narrative into the existent reality also put an end to the need to develop an enterprise meant to bring about an aura of mass spell as developments of the kind assessed above operate as catalytic agents whose objective is to annihilate people's ability to differentiate between mendacity and veridicality. Project of annihilation though has not only been limited to the critical faculties/abilities of the people, it has rather invalidated their possibilities to have an existence with independent human agency itself. It can, therefore, be argued that imperatives borne out of the logic of technological rationality subsumes the intellectual human subject into a society which in its essence has itself been subjected to the processes of modification amounting to its structure being perfunctorily mechanised. As a result of it, excruciating alienation but methodised becomes manifest in the organisational and constitutive character of all societal practises.³⁰

³⁰ Marcuse endorses this argument by suggesting, "The productive apparatus and the goods and services which it produces 'sell' or impose the social system as a whole... The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood... Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations and objectives that, by their content,

‘Freedom of choice’ as an argument, thus, becomes logically challenged an assertion. Constitution of ‘one dimensional thought’ as a conscious product of manipulative indoctrination lead to the promotion of a consciousness premised upon erroneous fallaciousness.³¹ In a strange sense, though, the emergent consciousness informed with falsity remains exempted/immunised from the corrosive effects of its own fallacious prevarication. A gaze deeper into the structural and operative features of this mode of thinking reveal to the perceptive critical a pattern of mono-dimensional cogitation wherein the purpose of societal quaesitum is subjected to a process leading to the transcendence of the already predicated cosmos of disquisition and effectuation. Rationality of the system operating, in conjunction, with the evaluation of the social/human potential in terms of quantitative interpretation pose fundamental limits to the availability of diversity of choice as well as possibilities of multivarious perspectives.³²

transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its quantitative extension”. Marcuse 1964, 26-27.

³¹ In consonance with this understanding, Marcuse writes, “A comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization, a token of technical progress. Indeed, what could be more rational than the suppression of individuality in the mechanization of socially necessary but painful performances; the concentration of individual enterprises in more effective, more productive corporations; the regulation of free competition among unequally equipped economic subjects; the curtailment of prerogatives and national sovereignties which impede the international organizations of resources. The rights and liberties which were such vital factors in the origins and earlier stages of industrial society yield to a higher stage of this society: they are losing their traditional rationale and content.” Marcuse 1964, 3.

³² Fellow theorists of the Frankfurt School also registered views symmetrical to the arguments of Marcuse. For example, Adorno and Horkheimer argued that “the effrontery of the rhetorical question, “What do people want?” lies in the fact that it is addressed - as if to reflective individuals – to those very people who are deliberately to be deprived of their individuality”. For details, see Horkheimer, Max and Theodore Adorno. 1944. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, translated by Edmund Jephcott. California: Stanford University Press, 2002. pp. 26-27.

Limitation in the midst of abundance: Coercion through control of choice

Coercive control of the human subject by limiting the availability of choice finds its equal manifestation in the regimentation of socio-political institutions as well. Diversionary arguments celebrative of the unencumbered interaction in the economic space are, however, invoked to bolster and perpetuate the illusion of autonomy and freedom in other domains of life and activity. In actuality, though, no semblance of liberty finds any manifestation in such socio-political or economic spatial expressions. It can effectively be argued that in substantial measure such vacuous argumentation operate with the objective to create an ineffectual anachronistic spell/ aura of autonomy and freedom with their diverse possibilities of exercise and expression. Smartness built into this method of regulative disciplinary restrain though make it stand in stark contrast with those unsophisticated measures that take recourse to an exercise of brute and uncouth methods to dominate and reinforce authoritative control. Emergence of such an ingenuous disenfranchised ‘order of disciplinary regimentation’, however, brings into existence a rationalised notion of totalitarian dispensation wherein the human subject is lured into the false belief albeit with a huge ‘realistic’ manifest appeal that the idea of freedom and an unencumbered exercise of agency are in perfect sync with domination and authoritarian regulation. It is so because the ideological and intellectual construct of such an ‘order’ demonstrate itself as capacitating the voluntary participation of the very subjects who are otherwise its objects of regulatory restrain and control. ‘Illusion of freedom’, therefore, operate with the exclusive objective to create a spell of manumission and responsive accountability whose understated purpose otherwise is to develop an air of legitimacy for a system that seek to have totalitarian control over its subjects. In such a context, derivative then becomes the conclusion that any semblance of deliberation and consequent expression of subject’s autonomy as a competitive articulation of an exercise of free choice between the competing cogitation of systems or the forms of existence marks its presence by the actuality of its absence. Choice then becomes an exercise of choosing between “competing management teams, not competing ideas of good life” (Tormey 1995,

113). Thus, the process of free elections of masters should not be equated with the abolition of the system that enforces structural differentiation in terms of potent exercise of power between the unevenly empowered entities.³³ Dominance and resilience of these systems rather derive their sustenance from foreclosing and pre-empting the possibilities of any putative alternative mode of thought that may stand in variance with its given understanding of the structural functioning of the system.

Manipulative manoeuvres of the collectivity, therefore, become the *raison d'être* of the system. It is most manifest in those advanced set-ups where its performance is conducted with such high degree of finesse that it compels the subjects to uncritically permit themselves to identify their 'choice' with the decision representing the interests of the "apparatus". Monopolistic appropriation of regulative control over the tools and techniques of information and epistemic dissemination enable the system to formulate the preferences in such way that the latter appear to manifest incorporating within itself the putative necessities of all the constituent elements of the system. Perceived though from a different vantage point, it can be argued that the purpose of such manipulative measures is to maintain and enhance the unending and relentless processes of technological and production expansion from which the apparatus in actuality seeks its source of sustenance. In this context, the argument of 'repressive tolerance' comes to attain much of critical relevance.³⁴ In such socio-economic setups the functional meaning of the activities such as debates, discussions and exchange of ideas and opinions attain an air of illusory mirage around themselves. They are bereft of genuiness and are employed in the hope of manufacturing artificial legitimacy for the system. Axiomatic foundations of the system, therefore, are never subjected to critical scrutiny. On the contrary, spirited efforts are made to divert any

³³ For a theoretically contextualized discussion, see Marcuse 1964, 26-27.

³⁴ Marcuse, Herbert. 1969. "Repressive Tolerance." In *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, edited by Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, jr., and Herbert Marcuse, 95-137. Boston: Beacon Press.

putative engagement with those issues.³⁵ Freedom comes to get defined with reference to inherent limitations. Bounds of its expanse are demarcated with the given understanding that its exercise may not pose an existential challenge to the continuance of the system. Thus, criticism, opposition, demonstration and denunciation are strived to be controlled and manipulated albeit with an air of their practice being an unhindered exercise representative of the free expression of people's choice.³⁶ Human subjects are compelled to read the functioning of the system exclusively in terms of its ability to deliver material comfort and choices which too, on a critical note, appears to be an illusory presence. In such a state of existence, the situation comes to an end where the exercise of freedom becomes an extremely restricted and limited exercise. However, inspite of this embedded limitation, development of a paradoxical kind also happens. System's ability to deliver material comforts enables it to escape the gaze of critical scrutiny. Improving standards of existence and tangibility of material comforts make the subject inhabit a world wherein non-conformity, dissociation and condemnation of the system begin to appear to be exercises informed with societal futility. The subject, further, starts to have the feeling that such a denunciatory acts entail within themselves the possibility of destabilising the system that is otherwise perceived to be the fount of material and political advantages.³⁷ Structural and operative elements of

³⁵ Note may be taken of the argument that in the liberal-democratic dispensations, 'free criticism, discussion and opposition' through different media and methods are permitted to be conducted only to the extent that it neither should criticize nor deliberate upon those elements that form the essential character of the system. Thus, protests could be on issues different and divergent and could also be visibly and fiercely demonstrative but are restricted from making indulgences that may have the potential to suggest systemic alternatives to the reigning apparatus.

³⁶ Such a state of affairs, therefore, permit people to criticize the system of capitalism but restricts them from either indulging in or adhering to the alternatives to the idea of the given mode of production.

³⁷ Continuance of this system, according to Marcuse, "reduces the use-value of freedom". He further argues that such a system contributes, in substantial measure, to the constitution of a condition wherein the critical faculties of the subject begin to entertain the thought that "there is no reason to insist on self-determination if the

such a paradox enable the critical theorist in Marcuse to make the observation that “[t]his is the rational and material ground for the unification of opposites, for one-dimensional political behaviour”. His argument is, further, informed with the critical suggestion that it is “[o]n this ground the transcending forces within society are arrested, and qualitative change appears possible only as a change from without” (Marcuse 1964, 53).

Triumph of the regime of regulative restrain and epistemic control

For Marcuse, thus, the above constitutes the perfect conditions for the triumph of a totalitarian order. And the ingredients that make it a successful endeavour are the appropriation along with the projection of the oppositional modes of thought as an integral part of the illusion of freedom and toleration. Sophistication of this approach, therefore, permits a liberal order to engage in the institutionalisation of a totalitarian apparatus without the apparent manifestation of the characteristics associated with that kind of a dispensation. Consequently, an argument with much persuasion can be made that an absence of a visible display of force, unwarranted detentions, or the regulation of creative life of a society be it in the field of culture or literature is not mandatorily required for a system to be converted into totalitarian dispensation. On the contrary, as has been suggested through this analysis, the objective of totalitarian regimentation can be achieved or aspired to be attained through recourse to methods that are and can be used as a cloak with the potential to be used with great ease to cover the illiberal and anti-democratic temptations of the political dispensation that never otherwise stop making great proclamations of their commitment to the principles of freedom, democracy and the unhindered expression of agency of human subject.³⁸ Conceptual

administered life is comfortable and even the ‘good’ life”. For a wider discussion on this idea, see Marcuse 1964, 19 & 53.

³⁸ For Douglas Kellner, to uncover and highlight such nefarious designs of the system was at the heart of Marcuse’s analytical enterprise. In consequence, according to him, “the book reflects the stifling conformity of the era and provides a powerful critique of new modes of domination and social control.” See Douglas Kellner, Introduction to the Second Edition, *One-Dimensional Man – Studies in the ideology of advanced*

vision of the world shaped in conformity with the necessities of the ruling apparatus saps every protest of its critical function that is it being a negative denunciation and a potent critique of the system.³⁹ Such endeavours, on the contrary, are perceived of as routine manifestation of habitual opposition bearing actions that are thought to be a reflection of “the ceremonial part of practical behaviourism, its harmless negation” (Marcuse 1964, 28). In consequence, they are “digested by the status quo as part of its healthy diet” (Marcuse 1964, 28). Thus, the actions of protest and critique being at variance with the conceptual understanding of the people at large or any call for ‘transcendence’ are not interpreted by the system as a perilous danger to the dominant classes. Contrarily, it is rather believed that critique, opposition and protest not only legitimises but strengthens the system as well. Latter’s ability to be lenient and accommodative towards such moments of opposition and denunciatory negation is tacitly assumed to be the reflection of the system’s ability and willingness to transform and change from within the bounds of its regimented confines. Appropriation of the critique of the apparatus, further, contributes to the constitution of a faith which is premised upon the assumption that the ‘benign toleration’ of criticism by the system is symptomatic of the amenability of societal institution and structures to the preferences of the people. And since the operation of the system is presumed to represent the choice of the people, the latter is forced to entertain

industrial Society by Herbert Marcuse (London: Routledge, 2002), xi. See also Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984) Chapters: 7 -8

³⁹ Marcuse would endorse these ideas by suggesting, “[t]hese tendencies have engendered a mode of thought and behavior which undermines the very foundations of the traditional culture. The chief characteristic of this new mode of thought and behavior is the repression of all values, aspirations, and ideas which cannot be defined in terms of the operations and attitudes validated by the prevailing forms of rationality. The consequence is the weakening and even the disappearance of all genuinely radical critique, the integration of all opposition in the established system.” See Herbert Marcuse, prospectus for *One-Dimensional Man*, quoted by Douglas Kellner, Introduction to the Second Edition, *One-Dimensional Man – Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial Society* by Herbert Marcuse (London: Routledge, 2002), xii.

themselves with the idea albeit illusory that it is they who control the social and politico-economic mechanics of the ‘panopticon’.

This brings us to a point where it can be said that the much trumpeted pluralist credentials of the liberal-democratic order amounts to being nothing but an illusory charade masquerading as an accommodative and flexible system. It operates as a smokescreen for the preservation of those interests whose continual survival requires that the justification for the axiomatic foundations of the given order of society remains uncontested.⁴⁰ Opposition to such a state of affairs is rendered bereft of meaning as the approach to the system comes to be overwhelmingly defined by the consciousness that greater the availability, greater shall be need. Autonomy of the subject comes to be comprehended with its being made to be assessed in direct correlation with desire and its consequent continued satisfaction. Resultant of such an approach is the coming into existence of a ‘vicious circle of consumption’ that urges the subject to be at constant guard against the ideals emanating from powers situated beyond the confines of this structural arrangement which may have the potential to destabilise the system. Thus, a socio-politico-economic setup caught in the inescapable warp of such a seized state of existence disposes itself with much enthusiasm to curtail all putative avenues that may lead to the constitution of a condition defined with reference to criticism, denunciation, opposition and revolution. Marcuse terms these socio-politic-economic setups as ‘warfare states’ masquerading however with a cloak of welfarism around it and suggests that in such dispensations all possible efforts are undertaken to appropriate, subsume, negate, eliminate and finally, if need be, annihilate every possibility of spontaneity and specific characteristic that the human subject may desire to have attached to his individual being. The paradox, though, is that this macabre anti-human activity/spectacle is conducted in a surreptitiously illusory atmosphere of ‘democratic unfreedom’ garnished albeit with an unsuspecting air of comfort and reason along with finesse and beatitude (Marcuse 1964, 19). Citizens of such dispensations are led/forced to believe/reside in a state of inertia

⁴⁰ Brad Rose, “The Triumph of Social Control? A Look at Herbert Marcuse's "One Dimensional Man", 25 Years Later”, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 35 (1990), 55-68

premised upon the belief that activity may lead to a loss of comfort and enjoyment of the ‘services’ provided by the system. In a counterfactual manner, the ‘rationalised inactivity’ of the masses permit the logic and rationale of the system to become immunised against all possible challenges and putative fall.

According to Simon Tormey, thus, the axiomatic principle of the Marcusian conceptualisation of totalitarianism is the constitution of a ‘hermetically sealed’ world whose development is dependent upon the logic of ‘technological rationality’. It, in consequence, does not have much of a correlation with the ideas or workings of individuals, groups or classes (Tormey 1995, 114). Individual in such a given state of affairs becomes an inescapable prisoner of the iron cast grid-logic of the system and is continually subjected to the needs of the latter borne out of its manipulative desires. The said apparatus operates around the logic of unceasing material production and the consequent creation of ever growing demands for the consumerist consumption of the same. Reflective reactions of the subject become, therefore, a response controlled and determined by the apparatus that is much adept at escaping tangible processes of particularity and identification. It manifests itself as a face-less, subject-less dispensation with citizens being reduced to becoming instrumentalised cogs in the machine dependent upon the ever-changing machinations of the former. Constitution of this thoroughly administered, integrated and paradoxically a simpatico totality with an air of asphyxiatingly stifled condition, according to the critical theorist, forms the core of a ‘one-dimensional’ existence. This somnambulant mode of existence of the citizenry contributes, in substantial measure, to the constitution of a condition that can be conceptualised as a situation wherein total conformity leads to a triumph of positivity and the subjection of the former to a sequential array of mimetic impulses and mechanistic processes (Tormey 1995, 114). With the coming into existence of such an existential dispensation, there occurs an absolute reversal of liberated reason of the human subject, a triumph of the processes leading to a total annihilation of spontaneous impulses of the subject. The call of an end of ideological being seems, in such a context, to find a tangible realisation as this kind of an exasperating

condition leaves little few to escape the matrix of illusion by being a critical agency and having ability to reflect and be aware of their ideological dilemma.⁴¹

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⁴¹ For a broader discussion on contemporary relevance of Marcusean thesis albeit on divergent note, see Stephen Whitefield, "Refusing Marcuse: 50 Years After *One-Dimensional Man*," *Dissent*, Fall 2014.
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