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The Political Role of Technology²

Abstract

Author analyses the (political) role of technology in Marcuse's works. Contrary to critics' claims author demonstrates that Marcuse already in his early works perceived technology as a new protagonist of historical process. Author then follows in detail how Marcuse developed and elaborated this idea. In the end author proposes term "technoaesthetics" as a notion which describes new aesthetic society that Marcuse envisions.

Key Words: art, technology, technics, essence, liberation, repression, Marcuse, technological rationality, technoaesthetics.

Introduction

Marcuse's works characterizes lifelong searching for liberation and emancipation of the individuals. Following this quest Marcuse sought for the revolutionary potential first in the proletariat and then in the character of labor, instinctual drives, art and aesthetics. But technology also occupies significant place in his critical theory. It is precisely in technology which transformed not only the character of labor but societies in general that Marcuse sought the strongest revolutionary potential for the "qualitative change". Thus, it could be said that Marcuse perceived the technology as a new ontology.

In this paper I will attempt to demonstrate Marcuse's understanding of technology and its' political potential for liberation and emancipa-

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tion. Although Marcuse explicitly discussed technology in his perhaps best known works *Eros and Civilization* and *One Dimensional Man* I will consider the question of technology by analyzing complete works of Herbert Marcuse. This analysis is necessary in order to avoid misunderstandings about alleged inconsistency in Marcuse's thoughts on technology. For example, reflecting on the 50 years after publishing *One Dimensional Man* Whitfield argues: "Nor are *Eros and Civilization* and *One-Dimensional Man* entirely consistent. For example, *Eros and Civilization* envisions technology as a catalyst of emancipation, freeing humanity from drudgery and permitting a polymorphous sexuality to pervade utopia. The latter book repudiates technocratic bureaucracy, however, and condemns the exploitation of nature that scientific progress is supposed to achieve" (Whitfield 2014: 106). Whitfield has misconception about Marcuse's understanding of technology due to his unfamiliarity with Marcuse's complete opus and especially Marcuse's early works which are actually the keys for understanding his latter writings.³ Marcuse was consistent in thinking that technology could bring liberation. The only difference was that at first he thought that liberation is inherent in technological development and later he argued that it is political decision to use technology in a liberating way. This article will attempt to clarify fallacy regarding role of technology in Marcuse's works.

Before examining in detail the political role of technology it is important to note that the signs of the technology as a new ontology are already present in the essays from the 1920s to 1930s which can be located to Marcuse's "heideggerian-marxism" or "phenomenological marxism" period. In *On the Concrete Philosophy* Marcuse writes: "An example: in the intoxication of power that has accompanied advancements in technology and rationalization in contemporary society, it has been overlooked that the personal power of humans over nature and

3 Habermas (1968) argues that it is impossible to understand Marcuse especially *Eros and the Civilization* without studying his early works. Marcuse's critics also emphasized the importance and continuity of his early works. Farr argues: "Marcuse's work on Freud must be taken as only a moment within a larger more complex project" (Farr 2009: 63). Schoolman is also aware of this fact: "Criticism is focused largely upon Marcuse's thought as it took shape after 1933. But before the nightmarish shock of that year produced a dramatic turn in Marcuse's thinking, his early work had constituted a significant project that ought to be pursued by contemporary social theory..." (Schoolman 1984: xiii). Perhaps the best statement on this offers critic MacIntyre: "The importance of this early papers does not lie only in the fact that they constitute a first statement of the thesis which informs the whole of his later work. For on certain points they are more explicit than anything in the later work" (MacIntyre 1970: 16).

‘things’ has not increased, but decreased! Just as humans as ‘economic subjects and objects’ find themselves in thrall to a commodity economy that has become a self-sufficient ‘entity’, rather than in a situation where their industry is an appropriate mode of their existing, so it is that their tools-machines, means of transportation, electricity, light, power-have become for them so large and burdensome that, seen from the perspective of the individual, those people who use these tools must increasingly adapt their existences to suit them, must enter into their service. Indeed, it becomes clear that ever more lives are being consumed in order to keep them ‘functioning!’” (Marcuse 1929: 43-44).

Technological Rationality

Essay *Some Implications of Modern Technology* marks a turning point in Marcuse’s search for a subject of revolution. It is evident that Marcuse perceived proletariat’s impotence to bring about revolution due to its integration into society which was largely based upon rapid technological advancement which rendered physically exhausting labor obsolete. This fact offered Marcuse an argument that technology in itself holds catalytic potential for advancement of freedom and even more reduction of time spent at work.

But in order to fully understand Marcuse’s argument in this essay and in later works it is absolutely necessary to mention Marcuse’s philosophical debt to Martin Heidegger. Heidegger’s influence on Marcuse’s thought is unquestioned and it is also present in Marcuse’s dealings with technology. So in order to facilitate better understanding a brief outline of Heidegger’s essay *Question Concerning Technology* must be demonstrated.⁴

4 Heidegger’s influence on Marcuse should be noted here in order to dismiss Schoolman’s (1984) misinterpretation of Marcuse. Schoolman (1984) argues that Marcuse’s understanding of technology is largely influenced by Weber’s notion of rationality while Heidegger’s influence is menial. Schoolman’s (1984) argument is that Marcuse closely follows Weber according to whom domination is immanent to technological rationality. In the essay *Industrialization and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber* Marcuse is critical of Weber and he clearly demonstrates contrary to the Schoolman’s (1984) claim that: “But it is precisely here, at this most decisive point, where Weber’s analysis becomes self-criticism, that one can see how much this analysis has fallen prey to the identification of technical reason with bourgeois capitalist reason. This identification prevents him from seeing that not ‘pure’, formal, technical reason but the reason of domination erects the ‘shell of bondage’, and that the consummation of technical reason can well become the instrument for the liberation of man” (Marcuse

Heidegger differentiates between technics in Greek understanding and modern technic. In the former technics is part of the *poiesis*. It relates to a mode of production as well as art – technics which artist use in creating art. In the modern sense, Heidegger (1977) argues, technics is not part of *poiesis*. Modern technics is used for bringing-forth which means revealing something that is hidden. To put it in Heidegger's words: "What has the essence of technology to do with revealing? The answer: everything. For every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing (...) Instrumentality is considered to be fundamental characteristic of technology (...) Technology is therefore no more means. Technology is a way of revealing" (Heidegger 1977: 5). What Heidegger tries to demonstrate is that revealing (unconcealment) is not part of *poiesis* and that this way of revealing profoundly affects human perception of world and nature. So according to Heidegger the unconcealing in modern technic has a form, an essence of setting-in-order in the sense of challenging forth.⁵

1937: 167). As I tried to show it is precisely Heidegger's notion of "standing-reserve" that is central to Marcuse's understanding of technology. Like Heidegger Marcuse also sought liberating possibilities that technology could offer and this is so much unlike Weber's understanding: "On the basis of its own achievements, that is, of productive and calculable mechanization, this separation contains the potentiality of a qualitatively different rationality, in which separation from the means of production becomes the separation of man from the socially necessary labor that de-purposiveness would be no longer 'antinomical'; nor would administer automated production, formal and substantive purposiveness would be no longer 'antinomical'; nor would formal reason prevail indifferently among and over men. For, as 'congealed spirit', the machine is not neutral; technical reason is the social reason ruling a given society and can be changed in its very structure. As technical reason, it can become the technique of liberation. For Max Weber this possibility was utopian. Today it looks as if he was right. But if contemporary industrial society defeats and triumphs over its own potentialities, then this triumph is no longer that of Max Weber's bourgeois reason" (Marcuse 1937: 169).

Regarding Heidegger's "menial" influence on Marcuse it suffices to cite acknowledgments from Marcuse's habilitation: "Any contribution this work may make to the development and clarification of problems is indebted to the philosophical work of Martin Heidegger" (Marcuse 1987[1932]: 5).

- 5 To demonstrate how technology affects human understanding of world and nature Heidegger offers an example of Rhine river: "The hydroelectric plant is set into the current of the Rhine. It sets the Rhine to supplying its hydraulic pressure, which then sets the turbines turning. This turning sets those machines in motion whose thrust sets going the electric current for which the long-distance power station and its network of cables are set up to dispatch electricity. In the context of the interlocking processes pertaining to the orderly disposition of electrical energy, even the Rhine itself appears as something at our command. The hydroelectric plant is not built into the Rhine River as was the old wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds

According to Heidegger (1977) modern technic characterizes scientific relation to nature which is evident in the accumulation of energy resources ever ready to be distributed. This is what Heidegger (1977) calls “standing-reserve” (*Bestand*) and argues that this should be understood in terms of enframing and ordering. It is in the “standing-reserve” and not in the instrumental use of technic that Heidegger saw the greatest peril for men. That peril lies in the possibility that “standing-reserve” becomes the single mode of revealing. If this is to happen than man would be absorbed by technics by becoming himself part of “standing-reserve”. To put it in Heidegger’s words: “The essence of technology lies in Enframing. Its holding sway belongs within destining. Since destining at any given time starts man on a way of revealing, man, thus under way, is continually approaching the brink of the possibility of pursuing and pushing forward nothing but what is revealed in ordering, and of deriving all his standards on this basis. Through this the other possibility is blocked, that man might be admitted more and sooner and ever more primary to the essence of that which is unconcealed and to its unconcealment, in order that he might experience as his essence his needed belonging to revealing. Placed between these possibilities, man is endangered from out of destining. The destining of revealing is as such, in every one of its modes, and therefore necessarily, danger (...) yet when destining reigns in the mode of Enframing, it is the supreme danger. This danger attests itself to us in two ways. As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but does so, rather, exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve” (Heidegger 1977: 13-14).

Even though Heidegger’s treatment of modern technology is somehow pessimistic for the men’s destiny he still offers a glimpse of hope. As a dialectical thinker Heidegger believed that everything in itself

of years. Rather the river is dammed up into the power plant. What the river is now, namely, a water power supplier, derives from out of the essence of the power station. In order that we may even remotely consider the monstrousness that reigns here, let us ponder for a moment the contrast that speaks out of the two titles, “The Rhine” as dammed up into the power works, and ‘The Rhine’ as uttered out of the art work, in Hölderlin’s hymn by that name. But, it will be replied, the Rhine is still a river in the landscape, is it not? Perhaps. But how? In no other way than as an object on call for inspection by a tour group ordered there by the vacation industry. The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth” (Heidegger 1977: 7).

holds a negation which means that something is not what it is or that by negating itself could become something else. The same principle of negation applies to the essence “standing-reserve” of modern technology and offers a hope in deliverance. Heidegger demonstrates this saving possibility: “But what helps is it to us to look into the constellation of truth? We look into the danger and see the growth of the saving power. Through this we are not yet saved. But we are thereupon summoned to hope in the growing light of the saving power. How can this happen? Here and now and in little things, that we may foster the saving power in its increase. This includes holding always before our eyes the extreme danger. The coming to presence of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be consumed in ordering and that everything will present itself only in the unconcealedness of standing-reserve. Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it. But human reflection can ponder the fact that all saving power must be of a higher essence than what is endangered, though at the same time kindred to it” (Heidegger 1977: 18). Heidegger emphasized the power of reason in this liberation from “standing-reserve”. The reason alone needs to be guided and this guidance is found in art. The art by her poetic revealing counters technological mode of revealing. So the reasoning on technology must happen from the realm of aesthetics. On this question Heidegger concludes: “Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. Such a realm is art. But certainly only if reflection on art, for its part, does not shut its eyes to the constellation of truth

Comparing with Marcuse’s example it could be noted that he almost paraphrases Heidegger: “Let us take a simple example. A man who travels by automobile to a distant place chooses his route from the highway maps. Towns, lakes and mountains appear as obstacles to be bypassed. The countryside is shaped and organized by the highway: what one finds en route is a byproduct or annex of the highway. Numerous signs and posters tell the traveler what to do and think; they even request his attention to the beauties of nature or the hallmarks of history. Others have done the thinking for him, and perhaps for the better. Convenient parking spaces have been constructed where the broadest and most surprising view is open. Giant advertisements tell him when to stop and find the pause that refreshes. And all of this is indeed for his benefit, safety and comfort; he receives what he wants. Business, technics, human needs and nature are welded together into one rational and expedient mechanism. He will fare best who follows its directions, subordinating his spontaneity to the anonymous wisdom which ordered everything for him” (Marcuse 1941: 46).

after which we are questioning. Thus questioning, we bear witness to the crisis that in our sheer preoccupation with technology we do not yet experience the coming to presence of technology, that in our sheer aesthetic-mindedness we no longer guard and preserve the coming to presence of art. Yet the more questioningly we ponder the essence of technology, the more mysterious the essence of art becomes” (Heidegger 1977: 19).

Marcuse’s thoughts on technology are profoundly influenced by above mentioned Heidegger’s arguments. Especially Marcuse’s term “technological rationality” is deeply rooted in Heidegger’s understanding of “standing-reserve”. Where Heidegger thought of potential danger for men to be absorbed by technology Marcuse sought it already happened and termed it “technological rationality”. Following Heidegger Marcuse emphasized emancipatory potential in the essence of technology and in his latter works Marcuse developed Heidegger’s argument on art and technology furthermore by envisioning cooperation of technology and art in creating a new society. A detailed examination of Marcuse’s thoughts on technology follows.

Like Heidegger Marcuse also sees dualistic potential of technology: a danger and a liberation force: “Technics by itself can promote authoritarianism as well as liberty, scarcity as well as abundance, the extension as well as abolition of toil” (Marcuse 1941: 41). But while Heidegger thought that deliverance can be approached by thinking as a distinctive human category, Marcuse observed that the technological advancement created a new form of rationality – “technological rationality” which subdued humankind to technological apparatus. Marcuse describes this argument: “Technology, as a mode of production, as the totality of instruments, devices and contrivances which characterize the machine age is thus at the same time a mode of organizing and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent thought and behavior patterns, an instrument for control and domination (...) In the course of the technological process a new rationality and new standards of individuality have spread over society, different from and even opposed to those which initiated the march of technology” (Marcuse 1941: 41-42). What Marcuse observed was that the development of technology directly affected on the creation of new rationality and individuality. But Marcuse immediately emphasized that this is not due to the instrumentalist usage of technology (same as Heidegger (1977) argued) but that it is sole factor in its essence and development. In order to demon-

strate this argument Marcuse (1941) contrasts the idea of individuality in the 16th and 17th century with the new technological individuality. Marcuse argues that in the former the interest of the individual wasn't necessary overlapping with the interests of society and thus individual was free in criticizing dominant norms of society and in seeking and realizing true norms. The realization of these norms was possible in the liberal society as this mode of social organization offered possibilities for development of individual rationality. Marcuse (1941) argues that the individuality demonstrated itself in the sphere of free competition, goods and services which became integral part of society's necessity. In Marcuse's opinion development of mechanization and rationality based upon competitive effectiveness and in favoring companies with highly mechanized industrial equipment instead of individual entrepreneur abolished this 16th and 17th century idea of individualism. For Marcuse (1941) this kind of efficiency means profit and profit means profitable employment of the apparatus to the extent that it dictates quantitative production and distribution of goods and through this power technology affects entire rationality thus creating a new kind of rationality – technological rationality. Marcuse describes technological rationality as: “Under the impact of this apparatus, individualistic rationality has been transformed into technological rationality. It is by no means confined to the subjects and objects of large scale enterprises but characterizes the pervasive mode of thought and even the manifold forms of protest and rebellion. This rationality establishes standards of judgment and fosters attitudes which make men ready to accept and even to introcept the dictates of the apparatus” (Marcuse 1941: 44).

Marcuse (1941) argues that the individuality under the technological rationality is transformed into standardized efficiency in which the individual is considered efficient if his freedom and actions are in accordance with the objective demands of the apparatus. Under the technological rationality man internalizes the rationality of the machine.⁶ The categories in which man now thinks are: efficiency, productivity, feasibility, profitability, expediency and convenience. Marcuse explains this in detail: “The facts directing man's thought and action are not those of nature which must be accepted in order to be mastered, or those of

6 By using term “technological rationality” Marcuse attempts to describe the effect that advanced industrial civilization has on men. This term elaborates Marx observation which early industrial society had on man: “Machine accommodates itself to the weakness of man in order to make a machine out of the weak man” (Marx 1985: 290).

society which must be changed because they no longer correspond to human needs and potentialities. Rather are they those of the machine process, which itself appears as the embodiment of rationality and expediency” (Marcuse 1941: 46).

The key insight is that the individual is not deprived of his individuality by some external force as it was for example the organization of capital which moments would be abolished by revolution as Marx argued. Instead, the individual is deprived of his autonomy and individuality by the same rationality under which he is living. This is one factor in explaining the diminishment of revolutionary consciousness: “Today, the prevailing type of individual is no longer capable of seizing the fateful moment which constitutes his freedom. He has changed his function; from a unit of resistance and autonomy, he has passed to one of ductility and adjustment. It is this function which associates individuals in masses” (Marcuse 1941: 55).

Marcuse concludes his early thoughts on technology in the same optimistic tone as Heidegger (1977) did. In technology Marcuse sees an opportunity for individual development. This opportunity presents itself namely in the technological capability of reducing necessary time spent at work.⁷ To put it in Marcuse’s words: “Technological progress would make it possible to decrease the time and energy spent in the production of the necessities of life, and a gradual reduction of scarcity and abolition of competitive pursuits could permit the self to develop from its natural roots. The less time and energy man has to expend in maintaining his life and that of society, the greater the possibility that he can “individualize” the sphere of his human realization. Beyond the realm of necessity, the essential differences between men could unfold themselves: everyone could think and act by himself, speak his own language, have his own emotions and follow his own passions” (Marcuse 1941: 64).

In the following lines I will examine how Marcuse perceived emancipatory but also oppressive role of technology.

7 It should be noted that in Marcuse’s theory liberation means liberation from the burden and duration of work. In *On the Philosophical Foundations of the concept of Labor in Economics* Marcuse (1933) demonstrated that individual passions and development comes on the other side of the labor medal – the play which is strictly reserved for leisure time. Thus freedom for Marcuse means minimizing labor time and increasing leisure time. Marcuse saw in technology an opportunity for this.

Technology as a Liberator and/or Oppressor

In *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse offered his vision of the possibility of non-repressive civilization. This possibility is partly possible due to the technological advancement which helped in abolishment of toil. In order to understand possibility of civilization without repression and the role of technology in it a brief overview of Freud's thoughts on civilization is necessary.

Freud (1962) understands development of individual as a permanent conflict between *eros* and *thanatos*. The conflict of this two human's basics instincts is similar to the development of civilization through conflict also. Conflict of the civilization takes form as the conflict between pleasure principle and reality principle. While pleasure principle seeks to maximize gratification, reality principle imposes restrictions upon pleasure principle demanding negation of instincts and postponing of gratification. Renunciation of instincts is then a pre-requirement for the development of civilization. Freud (1962) enumerates two basic renunciations which are demanded by civilization: renunciation of sexual gratification and renunciation of aggression. According to Freud (1962) civilization became increasingly the men's business. Since the men don't have unlimited quantities of sexual energy (libido) they have to make a distribution of their libido. In doing so civilization exploits sexual energy for its' further advancement. In order to eliminate aggression among members of the same group civilization tends to bind members of the community by libidinal ties. Civilization uses its utmost effort to advance strong identification of the members. Thus, once again sexual energy had to be restricted in order to establish friendship relations. Regarding further development of civilization Freud offers somehow pessimistic conclusion arguing that the with its development civilization would require even more restrictions: "... to represent the sense of guilt as the most important problem in the development of civilization and to show that the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt" (Freud 1962: 81).

The main problem of Freud's theory of civilization's development is that he considered repression to be universal principle. In other words Freud theory is lacking a differentiation of historical epochs. In one word Freud's theory is ahistorical. Marcuse (1974[1956]) immediately detects this deficiency and argues that the necessity for repression

is always historical and that it is caused by the societal production and reproduction conditioned by the scarcity of material goods. In order to differentiate more clearly between basic biological and socially conditioned repression Marcuse introduces the terms “surplus repression” and “performance principle”: “the restrictions necessitated by social domination. This is distinguished from (basic) repression: the ‘modifications’ of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization. Performance principle [is] the prevailing historical form of the reality principle” (Marcuse 1974: 33). As it was mentioned earlier labor is the central category of Marcuse’s critical theory. Marcuse understands freedom in terms of transformation of character of labor. And it is precisely notion of labor that is behind the “surplus repression” and “performance principle”. Repression and restriction of instincts was needed in the historical era of material scarcity which demanded toil in order to provide for basic needs. But advancement of modern industrial civilization owes much to the rapid development of technology which in turn changes the amount of energy and time spent at labor. In other words technology holds negating potential for overcoming the “kingdom of necessity”. To put it in Marcuse’s words: “The available resources make for a qualitative change in the human needs. Rationalization and mechanization of labor tend to reduce the quantum of instinctual energy channeled into toil (alienated labor), thus freeing energy for the attainment of objectives set by the free play of individual faculties. Technology operates against the repressive utilization of energy in so far as it minimizes the time necessary for the production of the necessities of life, thus saving time for the development of needs beyond the realm of necessity and of necessary waste” (Marcuse 1974: 63). The main argument is that the technology can liberate *eros* or in other words that the comprehensive satisfaction of needs can be achieved without toil. This in turn is possible only with the changed characteristic of labor. Marcuse emphasizes this possibility: “This quality would reflect the prevalent satisfaction of the basic human needs (most primitive at the first, vastly extended and refined at the second stage), sexual as well as social: food, housing, clothing, leisure. This satisfaction would be (and this is the important point) *without toil* - that is, without the rule of alienated labor over the human existence” (Marcuse 1974: 94). In *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse envisages a welfare society where productivity is not conditioned by instinctual repression and alienated labor. Owing to the technology and growing mechanization of work a returning of libidinal energy to *eros* is possible. Technology thus has potential of eliminating

alienated labor. The technology's liberating potential clearly contradicts Freud's conclusion about further development of civilization and on the other side it complements Freud's theory of individual development by offering a possibility to liberate *eros*. Question of technology is also an important part of Marcuse's analysis of soviet marxism.⁸ Marcuse (1958) argued that technological development of western societies enables parallel sustention of military industry and raising living standard. Marcuse (1958) argues that this means that soviet society actually supports stability and unity of capitalistic society. Soviet society placed enormous efforts in technological and industrial development. Marcuse (1958) considers an attempt to win economic and technological race with western society crucial factor of soviet marxism. According to Marcuse soviet's society should be partly criticized on technological basis: "In its most visible form, the link is in the technical economic basis common to both systems, i.e., mechanized (and increasingly mechanized) industry as the mainspring of societal organization in all spheres of life. As against this common technical-economic denominator stands the very different institutional structure-private enterprise here, nationalized enterprise there" (Marcuse 1958: 5-6). Marcuse perceived in the soviet society the same factors which hindered the development of individuality and autonomy in the western society. In other words in his analysis Marcuse applies previously mentioned concept of "technological rationality" in order to demonstrate devastating effect of technology on individual: "... the same mechanization and rationalization generated attitudes of standardized conformity and precise submission to the machine which required adjustment and reaction rather than autonomy and spontaneity. If nationalization and centralization of the industrial apparatus goes hand in hand with (...) the subjugation and enforcement of labor as a fulltime occupation, progress in industrialization is tantamount to progress in domination: attendance to the machine, the scientific work process, becomes totalitarian, affecting all spheres of life" (Marcuse 1958: 84). From this citation it could be noted that the soviet's technological

8 *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* is usually omitted from the bibliography of those who are critical as well as of those who are sympathetic to Marcuse's theory. The reason for omitting is that the *Soviet Marxism* was written during Marcuse's work in the Russian Institute and it was written by the order from CIA. Marcuse himself didn't consider it part of his main thought current. Nevertheless *Soviet Marxism* is important in Marcuse's theory since in it he develops further notion of "technological rationality", demonstrates distortion of Marx theory which in turn testifies to Marcuse's commitment to Marx. In conclusion *Soviet Marxism* is an eastern counterpart of *One Dimensional Man*.

development not only hadn't liberated individuals but subjected them even more to the production apparatus. Marcuse introduces the term "new rationality" for which he considers to be an adequate description of soviet's reality.⁹ Term "new rationality" is actually augmented notion of previously mentioned and demonstrated "technological rationality". It is Marcuse's contention that the soviet's "new rationality" largely uses "technological rationality". What Marcuse attempted to demonstrate is that in its essence soviet society just like capitalist society is repressive and that it uses technology in the same repressive way as its capitalistic counterpart. This draws a conclusion that soviet and capitalist society share the same technical base.

It was previously mentioned that in *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse considered that technological development *per se* can initiate social transformation. But now Marcuse learned that technology can produce even more repression regardless of the better standard of living. It is now important to note that Marcuse perceives social transformation solely as a political decision to use technology for different (liberating) purposes: "Modern machinery is susceptible to capitalist as well as socialist utilization. This amounts to saying that mature capitalism and socialism have the same technical base, and that the historical decision as to how this base is to be used is a political decision (...) No matter how high the level of technical progress and material culture, of labor productivity and efficiency, the change from socialist necessity to socialist freedom can only be the result of conscious effort and decision. The maintenance of repressive production relations enables the Soviet state, with the instrumentalities of universal control, to regiment the consciousness of the underlying population" (Marcuse 1958: 185-190).

In *One Dimensional Man* Marcuse offers his final critical statement on technology. Thus *One Dimensional Man* should be read as Marcuse's attempt to create critical theory of technologically advanced societies. While before he emphasized neutral or even liberating character of technology Marcuse (1964) is now certain that the domination is immanent to technology: "In the face of the totalitarian features of this society, the traditional notion of the "neutrality" of technology can no

9 In its usage in soviet's analysis term "new rationality" has a wider and more comprehensive meaning than the term "new rationality". Detail examination of the "new rationality" would be out of the paper's scope but it should be noted that according to Marcuse "new rationality" incorporates a set for creating social reality: "technological rationality", pragmatic production of desired attitudes, ideological character of language and ritualization and magic usage of Marx's theory.

longer be maintained. Technology as such cannot be isolated from the use to which it is put; the technological society is a system of domination which operates already in the concept and construction of techniques” (Marcuse 1964: xlvi). Marcuse’s main (Hegelian) thesis is that technologically advanced societies produced and enabled technologicalization of lordship. In other words Marcuse noticed proletariat’s integration and with it the disappearance of revolutionary consciousness. This integration was possible on the technological basis. Marcuse observes the changes in structure and function of the two antagonistic classes and argues: “And to the degree to which technical progress assures the growth and cohesion of communist society, the very idea of qualitative change recedes before the realistic notions of a non-explosive evolution” (Marcuse 1964: xliii). Technological basis resemble to mitigate the gap between two antagonistic classes. It is precisely in this resemblance that Marcuse finds ideological function of technology in suppressing the revolution: “Here, the so-called equalization of class distinctions reveals its ideological function. If the worker and his boss enjoy the same television program and visit the same resort places, if the typist is as attractively made up as the daughter of her employer (...) then this assimilation indicates not the disappearance of classes, but the extent to which the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the Establishment are shared by the underlying population” (Marcuse 1964: 10).

Technological advancement also altered the definition of a laborer. In Marx’s theory laborer was understood as a manual laborer who by toil consumes his power. Satisfaction of needs was largely basic and it consisted in nourishment and sleep. Both of them helped laborer to regain his strength in order to perform same toil tomorrow. Marcuse (1964) noticed that technology overcame this physiological and biological fact of Marx’s era: “The technological change which tends to do away with the machine as individual instrument of production, as ‘absolute unit’, seems to cancel the Marxian notion of the ‘organic composition of capital’ and with it the theory of the creation of surplus value” (Marcuse 1964: 31). According to Marcuse (1964) the crucial change is that instead of laborer it is a machine that creates surplus value. Transition from classical to advanced capitalism abolished Hegelian and Marxian relation of lordship, serfdom and overcoming. Marcuse describes this change: “The capitalist bosses and owners are losing their identity as responsible agents; they are assuming the function of bureaucrats in a corporate machine. Within the vast hierarchy of executive and managerial boards extending far beyond the individual establishment into

the scientific laboratory and research institute, the national government and national purpose, the tangible source of exploitation disappears behind the facade of objective rationality (...) And this mutual dependence is no longer the dialectical relationship between Master and Servant, which has been broken in the struggle for mutual recognition, but rather a vicious circle which encloses both the Master and the Servant” (Marcuse 1964: 35-36). Marcuse believes that the containment of social change is dependable on the level in which the politics of “technological rationality” is able to elevate standard of living by efficient subjection of science and technological inventions. Marcuse sums up: “... the highest stage of capitalist development corresponds, in the advanced capitalist countries, to a low of revolutionary potential” (Marcuse 1972: 5).

Marx argued that the movement of history is influenced by specific social organization of production and in that sense it is evident that Marx considered character of technology to be neutral: “In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist” (Marx 2010[1847]: 73). But Marcuse differs here from Marx in perceiving the totalitarian character of technology. According to Marcuse (1964) this totalitarian character of technology is evident in the subjugation of men and nature to the logos of technics. The implications of this are impossibility of human autonomy and freedom in serving the technical apparatus which raises conformity and productivity of labor. For Marcuse this implies that human relations will obtain character of technological functioning.¹⁰ Or in other words technological reification will become dominant mode of social reality: “Only in

10 In effect Marcuse is influenced by Lukács’ (1971) understanding of mutual relation between reification and consciousness. Lukács (1971) understood reification as a historical form of thingness in which relations among people obtain character of commodity – human relations become as relations among things. According to Lukács social reality could be penetrated only by piercing through commodity relations. To put it in Lukács’ words: It stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of men; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things which he can ‘own’ or ‘dispose of’ like the various objects of external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations could be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic ‘qualities’ into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process” (Lukács 1971: 100). As it may be noticed Marcuse shares Lukács’ concept of reification but instead of commodities Marcuse argues that insight into reified social relations is possible through technology.

the medium of technology, man and nature become fungible objects of organization. The universal effectiveness and productivity of the apparatus under which they are subsumed veil the particular interests that organize the apparatus. In other words, technology has become the great vehicle of reification - reification in its most mature and effective form” (Marcuse 1964: 172).

Technoaesthetics¹¹ and Liberation

The crucial insight that Marcuse draws from thematization of technology is the conclusion on further development of “historical project” towards “greater historical truth” and the inherent possibility of unison between men and nature. This relationship of harmony with nature is possible on the technological grounds and Marcuse describes it with term “pacification of existence”: “Pacification of existence means the development of man’s struggle with man and with nature, under conditions where the competing needs, desires, and aspirations are no longer organized by vested interests in domination and scarcity - an organization which perpetuates the destructive forms of this struggle” (Marcuse 1964: 18). Pacification of existence towards which Marcuse points is not only concentrated to the abolishment of alienated labor but also to the reorganization of technological basis of society. Both abolishment of alienated labor and reorganization of technological basis are requirements for qualitative change. Marcuse describes this qualitative change: “The technological transformation is at the same time political transformation, but the political change would turn into qualitative social change only to the degree to which it would alter the direction of technical progress - that is, develop a new technology. For the established technology has become an instrument of destructive politics. Such qualitative change would be transition to a higher stage of civilization if technics were designed and utilized for the pacification of the struggle

11 I propose to introduce term “technoaesthetics” since I consider it to be coincidental within framework of Marcuse’s theory. In the last instance Marcuse sought possible the synergy of technology and art in a creation of beautiful humane society. For this synergy to happen technology ought to be imbued with the main aesthetical principle - the beauty. Thus, “technoaesthetics” relates first to invention and creation of aestheticized technology imbued with beauty. And second aesthetics would attain technological instrumentality it would become *techné*. The next lines will attempt to elaborate in detail that the term “technoaesthetics” comprehends well Marcuse’s main argument on art and technology.

for existence” (Marcuse 1964: 232). Marcuse understands this qualitative change as a methodical political action in which technology is liberated from its instrumental use and deployed towards creation of a more humane society. The pacification of existence is thus possible by completion of technological project: “If the completion of the technological project involves a break with the prevailing technological rationality, the break in turn depends on the continued existence of the technical base itself. For it is this base which has rendered possible the satisfaction of needs and the reduction of toil - it remains the very base of all forms of human freedom. The qualitative change rather lies in the reconstruction of this base - that is, in its development with a view of different ends” (Marcuse 1964: 236). The technological achievement renders possible to calculate what it means to live a better life: “For example, what is calculable is the minimum of labor with which, and the extent to which, the vital needs of all members of a society could be satisfied (...) calculable is the degree to which, under the same conditions, care could be provided for the ill, the infirm, and the aged” (Marcuse 1964: 236-237). The pacification of existence thus presupposes the qualitative change in usage of technology. It negates both the destructive efficiency and performance principle. As a regulating idea in using technology pacification of existence tend to exploit liberating potential of technology. This qualitative turn in its usage Marcuse describes: “To the degree to which the goal of pacification determines the Logos of technics, it alters the relation between technology and its primary object, Nature. Pacification presupposes mastery of Nature, which is and remains the object opposed to the developing subject. But there are two kinds of mastery: a repressive and a liberating one (...) In the process of civilization, Nature ceases to be mere Nature to the degree to which the struggle of blind forces is comprehended and mastered in the light of freedom” (Marcuse 1964: 240-241).

The reality of reason on which Marcuse insists throughout his works is possible by transcending technological rationality to a post-technological rationality where a principle of beauty fuses with a principle of social organization. What Marcuse proposes is the cooperation of art and technics towards creation of aestheticized society. This cooperation is possible on the fact that both technology and art hold vision of better and more beautiful world with the difference in arts' incapability to translate these ideas into creation of society. Marcuse describes this cooperation of art and technology: “Technique, assuming the features of

art, would translate subjective sensibility into objective form, into reality” (Marcuse 1969: 24).

The cooperation of art and technology and pacification of existence are two determinants of the new society, namely the aesthetic ethos. The aesthetic ethos places a principle of beauty as a new organizing principle of society. The aesthetic as a new form of society is possible on the basis of scientific and technological development. According to this the idea of beauty wouldn't pertained exclusively to the art as Marcuse (1937b) argued in *The Affirmative Character of Culture*. On the basis of a given civilizational development aesthetic can change its historical topos. Society can become a subject of aesthetics and that in turn would affect the affirmative character of culture. The cooperation of art and technic would change them both. Art would define the construction and the form of machines while at the same time art would receive some technical denotations. Their product would be society as a work of art and beauty an important characteristic of human's freedom. This is implicated in the term “technoaesthetics”. Here is Marcuse's final statement and his vision of artistic society: “In the reconstruction of society for the attainment of this goal, reality altogether would assume a *Form* expressive of the new goal. The essentially aesthetic quality of this *Form* would make it a work of art, but inasmuch as the *Form* is to emerge in the social process of production, art would have changed its traditional locus and function in society: it would have become a productive force in the material as well as cultural transformation. And as such force, art would be an integral factor in shaping the quality and the ‘appearance’ of things, in shaping the reality, the way of life. This would mean the *Aufhebung* of art: end of the segregation of the aesthetic from the real, but also end of the commercial unification of business and beauty, exploitation and pleasure. Art would recapture some of its more primitive ‘technical’ connotations: as the art of preparing (cooking!), cultivating, growing things, giving them a form which neither violates neither their matter nor the sensitivity...” (Marcuse 1969: 31-32).

Conclusion

I have attempted to demonstrate the significance and role of technology in Marcuse's thought. In this attempt I considered the question of technology on a complete Marcuse's opus. Marcuse was perhaps one of the first political and social theorists to perceive the technology as a new

protagonist of historical process while other theorists still attempted to find theoretical basis to explain absence of proletariat's revolution and still considered proletariat to be the subject of revolution. Essay *Some Implications of Modern Technology* is a landmark but I have demonstrated that Marcuse already during his "phenomenological marxism" perhaps unconsciously questions the role of proletariat and hints on technology as a possible subject of social change. I have also attempted to demonstrate critic's serious misconception of Marcuse's understanding of technology due to critic's unawareness of Heidegger's influence. To avoid this misconception and to answer critics I have demonstrated Heidegger's treatment of technology and the extent to which it had influence on Marcuse. Even in the *Eros and Civilization* where the emphasis is on synthesis of Freud's and Marx's theory technology has significant theoretical place. It is precisely due to the technological advancement that opened Marcuse's imagination to envisage liberated *eros* and civilization without repression. In his last statement Marcuse argued that technology and art can change their functions. Art would not be any more beautiful appearance and technology would be delivered from its destructive use. In cooperation technology and art, as Marcuse thought it, could bring qualitative change – society as a work of art. But this decision is strictly a political one.

I consider that these thoughts still resonate within contemporary society if only to remember us that contemporary civilization has enough resources, enough scientific knowledge and advanced technology to end misery, hunger, deprivation etc. The decision is, as Marcuse argued, political one.

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