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Part III

Artful Thinking
Shierry Weber Nicholsen

The Persistence of Passionate Subjectivity: Eros and Other in Marcuse, by Way of Adorno

It sometimes happened that despite its chocolate and its toy model of a mine, the salon inside my Aunt Lehmann's flat did not have as much to say to me as the vestibule in which the old servant woman took my coat from me as though it had been a burden, and pressed my cap down on my head as though she were trying to bless me.

—Walter Benjamin, A Berlin Childhood ca. 1900

When I asked myself, as I was preparing to write this essay, what relevance Marcuse does indeed have for us in the 1990s, I remembered both how immediately Marcuse spoke to us in the 1960s and 1970s and how a few years ago, realizing that I had “forgotten” Marcuse, I began asking colleagues and friends, “What happened to Marcuse?”—meaning, of course, “Have we really forgotten Marcuse, and if so, why?” In reflecting on Marcuse’s at least partial or temporary oblivion, I was struck with the fact that the work of his colleague and contemporary Theodor Adorno has maintained a high profile in contemporary critical thought, and this despite the fact that Marcuse lived for a decade after Adorno’s death. Witness to this apparent contrast between the fate of Marcuse’s work and the fate of Adorno’s is Fredric Jameson’s recent book on Adorno, to which my title alludes: Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic. Labeling Marcuse the thinker of the 1960s, Jameson proposes that Adorno may provide an appropriate model of dialectical thought for our own time: “There is some chance that [Adorno] may turn out to have been the analyst of our own period, which he did not live to see, and in which late capitalism has all but succeeded in eliminating the final loopholes of nature and the Unconscious, of subversion and the aesthetic,
of individual and collective praxis alike, and, with a final fillip, in eliminating any memory trace of what thereby no longer existed in the henceforth postmodern landscape. Although my reflections have not led me to disagree with Jameson about Adorno, they have also convinced me that we cannot relegate Marcuse to the alleged oblivion of the 1960s.

Here I will recapitulate the train of thought that arose in me in response to the question of Marcuse's contemporary relevance. My train of thought surprised me, I must admit, not so much because of the views of Adorno and Marcuse that emerged but because it took me into two spheres—that of aesthetic experience and textual form on the one hand and that of nature, science, and technology on the other—whose connection has certainly been noted but not explored in depth by the Frankfurt School. My reflections suggest both that this conjunction can be profitably explored on the basis of the “critical theory of experience” implicit in the Frankfurt School's work and that the divergence between the two spheres can provide the motor for further development in that critical theory.

What my essay represents, then, is a meditation on the truth of Adorno's and Marcuse's work as it emerges in the afterlife of that work and as it becomes visible through an examination of the relationship of the two men's work. The meditation covers a great deal of ground, certainly, and in the brief scope of the present essay I can do no more than sketch out the various points in its trajectory, leaving, of necessity, some gaps, some sharp curves and rough edges, and some points in embryonic form.

The Trajectory of Marcuse's Eclipse

Let me begin by noting some of the common ground Marcuse and Adorno share. It includes the basic premises of Frankfurt School critical social theory and ranges from the critique of instrumental reason in the name of another reason more compatible with the sensuous and the non-identical, to the explication of the aesthetic dimension as a locus of utopian potential, as a promesse de bonheur, or promise of happiness, in Stendhal's phrase. For both men subjective experience is the locus of an experiential dialectics of oppression and liberation. It is the experiential
arena of one-dimensionalization and administratization—Marcuse’s concept of one-dimensional society and Adorno’s concept of the totally administered society are congruent—but also the arena of reflection, critical awareness, and thought in its objectivity. It is the locus of aesthetic experience and the locus of the experience and definition of needs and possibilities for political praxis. Central to both Marcuse’s and Adorno’s explanation of subjective experience is the relationship of eros to other—hence the phrase “passionate subjectivity” in my title. For both men, in short, the critique of a totalizing and leveling social reality and of the deformations of consciousness that accompany and support it has as its reverse side an attempt to uncover the dimension of erotic, sensuous, subjective experience and to link that dimension with an alternative and more utopian future for humankind.

And yet, during at least the 1980s, Adorno in some sense eclipsed Marcuse. This can be understood as a quasi-deliberate move on Marcuse’s part to hide the innermost core of his thought behind Adorno’s aesthetics in order to protect it during a particularly repressive phase of intellectual and cultural history and also as a fate curiously reflected in and appropriate to the presentational forms of the two men’s work. Marcuse’s own thought in fact furnishes a useful description of the trajectory that leads to his apparent oblivion and to the importance of Adorno as the carrier of the Frankfurt School’s conception of a relationship between eros and other. As we know, Eros and Civilization and One-Dimensional Man, arguably Marcuse’s most important works, which date from the 1950s and 1960s, as a pair expound the tradition within psychoanalytic theory of the possibility of a reconciled sensuous subjectivity—the spread of erotic relationships in a positively sublimated, as opposed to a repressively desublimated, form. Imagination and fantasy, the same aspects of subjective experience that can serve as a bridge between sensuousness and reason, provide a vehicle for the new demands and needs expressed by a rebellious subjectivity. The conjunction of imagination, eros, and a rebellious subjectivity seemed to describe well important aspects of the experience of those who participated in the social movements of the 1960s. At the same time, One-Dimensional Man in particular described the forces within the affluent society that worked to eliminate from awareness precisely that dimension of subjectivity. These forces, whose strength became increas-
ingly evident after the decade of the 1960s, were also at least initially recognizable in the experience of those same participants.

Given how well Marcuse's two major books articulate the play of forces at work in the 1960s and then the 1970s, it is not surprising that in the 1970s, the last decade of Marcuse's life, his work should in its own way articulate the next turning in the historical dynamic. And this is what I believe we see in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse's last book, published in 1978. In this brief volume, Marcuse offers his counterposition to orthodox Marxist theories of art. He takes the position, consonant with *Eros and Civilization*, that the kind of sublimation that occurs through submission to artistic form produces a consciousness whose affinity is with eros and that transcends specific historical situations, thereby approaching the universal. Although Adorno himself would not appeal to universals in this way—a point to which I will return later—in this assertion of the validity of art as art Marcuse concurs with Adorno. In fact, he explicitly acknowledges his general debt to Adorno's aesthetic theory at the beginning of his book.

*The Aesthetic Dimension* had, if I am not mistaken, very little impact in comparison with Marcuse's earlier works, however dear the topic was to Marcuse personally. It did not seem to speak directly to the rebellious subjectivity as his previous work had. Further, while its presentational form is in many respects similar to that of Marcuse's earlier books, in a work devoted to art as such it draws attention to itself with its striking plainness. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that *The Aesthetic Dimension* is a set of assertions without detail or argumentation, neither social-scientific, nor directly political, nor literary.

The contrast between the presentational form of *The Aesthetic Dimension* and that of Adorno's work on aesthetics, to which Marcuse links his, is compelling. This contrast signals, I believe, the very specific culturally and historically determined purpose that Marcuse was following in *The Aesthetic Dimension*. He was attempting, I would argue, to take the imagination and its utopian potential, as explicated in *Eros and Civilization*, and to lodge it within the aesthetic dimension in the narrower sense of the aesthetic experience of works of art and culture. So lodged, it would be safe to some degree both from the ideological battles of a troubled Left and from one-dimensionalization. And he placed it explicitly—and, by virtue of the contrast in presentational form, emphatically—un-
under the aegis of Adorno's aesthetic work, which, for reasons I shall examine shortly, could be expected not to lose its impact.

Marcuse himself indicates that the ascendance of a negatively totalizing one-dimensional society in the 1970s has made political action far more problematic than it hitherto seemed and has consequently made it more necessary to turn to the aesthetic as the repository of emancipatory potential:

What appears in art as remote from the praxis of change demands recognition as a necessary element in a future praxis of liberation—as the "science of the beautiful," the "science of redemption and fulfillment." Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world. The movement of the sixties tended toward a sweeping transformation of subjectivity and nature, of sensibility, imagination, and reason. It opened a new vista of things, an ingress of the superstructure into the base. Today, the movement is encapsulated, isolated, and defensive, and an embarrassed leftist bureaucracy is quick to condemn the movement as impotent, intellectual elitism.

"Encapsulated, isolated, and defensive": from the conjunction of these statements about art and the movement, we can infer that like Brecht, whom he admired more than Adorno did, Marcuse resorted to a kind of "peasant cunning" to deal with one-dimensionalization. He hid his thought under an almost platitudinous shell where it would remain inconspicuous, and he counted, one might say, on Adorno to bring the explosive force of the link they had forged between the imagination, the erotic, and emancipation through to another time.

Adorno's work does in fact preserve the experiential force of this link, thus demonstrating the shrewdness of Marcuse's move. The images of encapsulation and protective shell should call to mind an image that Adorno himself repeatedly invoked with regard to critical theory: that of Flaschenpost, the message in the bottle, cast upon the waters, perhaps to reach an audience and perhaps not, perhaps to be acted on and perhaps not. It is as though virtually all of Adorno's work, with its reliance on the interpretation of geistige Gebilde, cultural-intellectual works, incorporated the stance that Marcuse expressed in his last book. Hence, of
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course, it is not surprising that Adorno is repeatedly charged with the “impotent, intellectual elitism” that Marcuse mentions.

But in Adorno’s case the encapsulation, the form, is not only appropriate to the demands of the historical period but also part of the content of the thought: The bottle is part of the message, so to speak. The very form of Adorno’s work embodies the possibility of something definitively other, a more reconciled existence, which is linked with the possibility of authentic negative experience in a situation in which consciousness is threatened with the dismantling of its very capacity for critical reason. This is not only what allows Adorno’s thought to survive but also what gives it its fascination and, as Jameson points out, its unique role in a postmodern period that is fascinated with form but unable to critically conceive of something other. Adorno’s message is kept alive in the experience of reading him, and in this sense the Flaschenpost has reached land.

The Eros of Language in Adorno’s Writings

Adorno’s work highlights the role of presentational form in a critical theory of experience. The fundamental notion of Adorno’s aesthetic theory is that aesthetic form, in embodying the essence of a negative reality, also negates that reality in the name of another possibility, that of a reconciled existence. The complex structures of negation that make up aesthetic form do not of themselves constitute a utopian reality, nor do they represent a political practice; they only point negatively to something other. In this regard, the affirmative qualities of art have an ideological as well as a utopian moment, and conversely the hermeticism and meaninglessness of modern art have a negative but utopian import. The break with meaning, Adorno tells us, “which the work does not bridge but rather, lovingly and hopefully, makes the agent of its form, remains, the figure of a substance that transcends it. It expresses meaning through its ascetic stance toward meaning.” This is the means by which the mere edge of a critical consciousness can be maintained in the present situation.

Adorno’s own writing participates in this dialectic. It has a distinctly hermetic quality in that it refuses to participate fully in standard academic discourse, creating instead a repertoire of quasi-private imagistic terms. It refrains from orderly argumentation and the standard paragraphing that reflects it, proceeding instead through conjunctions of pa-
adoxical formulations related by association. It combines essayistic form with an impersonal, abstract aphoristic form which permits no semblance of an easy give-and-take between writer and reader.

The hermetically evoked reconciliation that characterizes utopia for Adorno is also a quasi-Kantian reconciliation of reason and sensuousness, in which the "nonidentical"—which for Adorno means the individual, concrete and embodied—can find a place. Reconciliation in this sense occupies a prominent place in Adorno's theory and practice of aesthetic form, primarily in terms of language. For Adorno, in the ongoing struggle between a deductive, logical-conceptual communicative language and a pure expressive, sensuous language, the debased communicative form of language tends more and more to get the upper hand. In Adorno's own writing, rebellion against the hegemony of communicative language is embodied in a movement away from argumentation and example and toward what he calls "logicity," in which the writing maintains both the semblance of logical coherence and the sense of a quasi-sensuous aesthetic connectedness. This logicity is another face of Adorno's hermeticism.

If the utopian moment is a moment of reconciliation, both among humans and between reason and the sensuous, then in a world that hinders reconciliation, erotic reconciliation is itself the object of erotic longing. In Adorno's work, it is the other within language, that which is present only as possibility, that stands in for this erotic reconciliation and becomes the object of erotic longing. Adorno evokes the other within language in the image of Rauschen, the German word for such murmuring, expressive, but indistinct sounds of nature as the rustling of trees, the rushing of a brook, or the surging of the surf. A line from the German poet Rudolf Borchardt that Adorno cites repeatedly may be taken as his touchstone: Ich habe nichts als Rauschen, (I have nothing but murmuring). Rauschen, which is akin to Rausch (ecstasy), evokes the essence of language as an erotic object in itself; this is the utopian and nonidentical element concealed beneath the surface of a language that appears to be pressed inexorably into the service of an administered world. In a similar way, a foreign language is the other of one's own language, and Adorno defends his use of Fremdwörter, foreign or loan words, in terms of their erotic appeal. His rebellious use of foreign words as a schoolboy during the First World War, when there was an effort to "Germanize" all words, was, he tells us, "hardly due to political considerations. Rather, since lan-
language is erotically charged in its words, at least for the kind of person who is capable of expression, love drives us to foreign words. . . . The early craving for foreign words is like the craving for foreign and if possible exotic girls; what lures us is a kind of exogamy of language, which would like to escape from the sphere of what is always the same."

The experience of negation and utopian possibility, of potential erotic reconciliation, that is sedimented in the work of art, and in analogous ways in Adorno’s work as well, enables the reader (or viewer, or listener) to have the same kind of subjective experience. Such experience, which is what authentic aesthetic experience and, in its own way, authentic philosophical experience would be, requires a mimetic activity on the part of the reader. The reader must imitate in his own experience the process and structure that are sedimented in the work’s form, in much the same way that the work itself imitates not the surface but the essence of reality and possibility. The way in which Adorno describes this mimetic activity evokes a relationship, one of cooperation rather than domination: Aesthetic understanding, he says, needs to be thought of as “a kind of following along afterward [Nachfahren], as the coexecution [Mitvollzug] of the tensions sedimented in the work of art, the processes that have congealed and become objectified in it. One does not understand a work of art when one translates it into concepts . . . but rather when one is immersed in its immanent movement.” This is the kind of interaction to which the aesthetic work, and Adorno’s own work, invites the reader. It is both ascetic and sensuous, for it is through an asceticism that recognizes the sensuous dimension and the longing for it, and an asceticism toward meaning for the sake of a meaningfulness that may someday be realized, that Adorno embodies, negatively, the possibility of erotic relations with the other. He embodies it in both the content and the formal aspects of his writings, which include his abstention from philosophical argumentation and his use of foreign words. It is in this form that the Flaschenpost engages the subjective experience of the contemporary reader.

The Eros of Solidarity and Participation in Marcuse’s Writings

Adorno’s viability derives, I believe, from the aspects of his presentational form I have just explicated. But this raises the question of what role Marc-
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curse's presentational form plays in his early success, his eclipse, and his potential reemergence from under Adorno's skirts, so to speak. Marcuse's writing does not itself encapsulate the aesthetic experience and ensure its survival, but an examination of his presentational form can help us to see why he spoke to us in the 1960s and can suggest the role he may play in the present. I have already noted Marcuse's appeal to universals in his defense of the aesthetic. The universal has a crucial place in Marcuse's project, and I will use a passage from his argument about the philosophical value of universals, which appears in *One-Dimensional Man*, to explore the way his presentational form embodies his conception of the relationship of eros to other. We shall see that an appeal to the universal is part of the formal structure of his writing.

In his argument Marcuse attacks analytic philosophy's dismissal of universals in its attempt to dissolve them into specific acts and processes. The universal, he argues, represents the totality that, as background, restricts the nature of individual acts. It is "the concrete objective ground of their functioning in the given social and historical context, . . . the established state of affairs which determines the life of individuals." The mind, accordingly, is different from specific mental processes or dispositions:

"Negatively present" [in an individual] are the specific "environmental" forces which precondition his mind for the spontaneous repulsion of certain data, conditions, relations. They are present as repelled material. Their absence is a reality—a positive factor that explains his actual mental processes, the meaning of his words and behavior. Meaning for whom? Not only for the professional philosopher, whose task it is to rectify the wrong that pervades the universe of ordinary discourse, but also for those who suffer this wrong although they may not be aware of it—for Joe Doe and Richard Roe.7

Striking in this passage is the conjunction of a "negative-positive" dialectical pattern of thought with a simple and straightforward vocabulary that avoids technical definitions, as Adorno's does, yet is, unlike Adorno's, amply redundant in such a way as to appeal to ordinary understanding. Also striking are the question "meaning for whom?" and the direct appeal to the suffering of the ordinary individual, for whom Joe Doe and
Richard Roe stand in. There is no careful crafting of sentences and no use of metaphor or figurative speech. Instead, we find an interesting conjunction of a rhetoric of direct appeal, of solidarity invoked between speaker and audience, with an appeal to the absent totality as a tool of critical thought. The presentational form, in other words, is not itself an embodiment of aesthetic experience, as Adorno’s is, but rather a conjunction of the philosophical with what we might call the political. Whereas Adorno appeals to the otherness in language, which the reader is to experience by reconstructing aesthetic experience, Marcuse uses an eros of empathy to establish a bridge of solidarity across the reader’s otherness.

We might expect to see a more aesthetic element in Marcuse’s discussion of the universals of beauty. In the case of beauty, he argues, the universal encompasses not the forces of repression so much as the disjunction between what is and what might be: “The irreducible difference between the universal and its particulars seems to be rooted in the primary experience of the unconquerable difference between potentiality and actuality—between two dimensions of the one experienced world.” What we see, however, is that Marcuse focuses not on geistige Gebilde, works of culture and intellect, but rather on aesthetic experience in the broadest sense, the range of aesthetic experiences that ordinary people may have (just as in Eros and Civilization his focus was on fantasy and imagination as such rather than on works of art):

Talking of a beautiful girl, a beautiful landscape, a beautiful picture, I certainly have very different things in mind. What is common to all of them—“beauty”—is neither a mysterious entity, nor a mysterious word. On the contrary, nothing is perhaps more directly and clearly experienced than the appearance of “beauty” in various beautiful objects. The boy friend and the philosopher, the artist and the mortician may “define” it in very different ways, but they all define the same specific state or condition—some quality or qualities which make the beautiful contrast with other objects. In this vagueness and directness, beauty is experienced in the beautiful—that is, it is seen, heard, smelled, touched, felt, comprehended.

Marcuse’s presentation, which has its own kind of “vagueness and directness,” appeals to ordinary experience as already containing a sense of
something other, and it also shows the universal of beauty spanning the
range of subjective experience, from the mental to the sensory—"seen,
heard, smelled, touched, felt, comprehended." In terms of classical aes-
thetics, Marcuse is bridging this Kunstschöne and the Naturschöne, the
beauty of art and the beauty of nature. He is also bridging the "lower"
sphere of direct sensuous experience and the "higher" sphere of reason,
concepts, and metaphysics. Direct, qualitative experience is the locus of
this reconciliation of opposites: "The unpurged experience seems to be
more familiar with the abstract and universal than is the analytic philo-
sophy: it seems to be embedded in a metaphysical world."10 While in one
sense the plainness of Marcuse's form seems to reflect his insistence on
bridging a spectrum that reaches from direct sensuous experience to the
most abstract sphere, it is also important to note that the sensuous element
as such is not present in his writing; it must be supplied by the reader's ex-
perience. Again, just as Marcuse is interested in linking the extreme ends
of the spectrum rather than focusing on works of art, arguably at the cen-
ter of the spectrum, so his eros reaches outward to the reader rather than
being contained as a murmuring within his writing.

The universals in Marcuse, which are both qualitative and abstract, bridge
not only sensuousness and reason but also the possible and the empirical, in a
way that is quite different from Adorno's project. For Marcuse, the universals,
as tools of critical social thought and indicators of human potential, are dis-
ussable in terms of objective historical potentialities. This is why, unlike
Adorno, he talks not about utopia but rather about empirically demonstrable
possibilities for a qualitatively different life in society (for example, in "The
End of Utopia" in Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia).11 If
the necessary material and intellectual forces for a qualitative transformation
are at hand, then the free society is not unfeasible or impossible; it is simply
that strong counterforces have hitherto prevented its realization. The "criteria
for the rationality of a transcendent project" that Marcuse lays out at the end
of One-Dimensional Man show very clearly the nature of his bridging of the
empirical and the universal. On the one hand, a transcendent project (that is,
a project for qualitative social change) "must be in accordance with the real
possibilities open at the attained level of the material and intellectual culture";
on the other hand, the project's rationality will be indicated by the fact that
"its realization offers a greater chance for the pacification of existence, within
the framework of institutions which offer a greater chance for the free devel-
For Marcuse, then, historical empirical assessment considers both the “resources” available and human needs and faculties, i.e., the “subjective factor” of direct experience. In addition, both needs/faculties and resources span the range between the physical and sensuous and the mental and social. Again, however, the empirical itself is not present in Marcuse’s writing but is rather invoked in connection with the reader’s historical situation on the one hand and the universal as absent possibility on the other.

To recapitulate: If we consider *One-Dimensional Man* and the essays on related topics collected in *Five Lectures* to represent the most advanced aspects of Marcuse’s project, it becomes apparent that his use of universals is indicative of an important strategic difference between his and Adorno’s attempts to keep the experience of unrealized possibility alive and in awareness. Marcuse’s attempt is more broad-based, appealing more directly to the solidarity of individuals linked through eros while at the same time evoking the possibility—a negative or absent one for which he provides no specific images—of an extension to some intuitively felt need that people sense in their current subjective experience. For Marcuse, the relationship of eros to other, the relationship of exogamy that Adorno embodied in aesthetic form, is formulated as the “pacification of existence.” What this means is the extension of peaceful, life-supporting relationships in all directions. The extension of eros to other also means that the absent other, the possibility of freedom, is linked with the qualitative dimensions of current empirical existence. Accordingly, just as Adorno’s project of creating aesthetic form in language is meant to embody and demonstrate a direct erotic linking with the other, so Marcuse’s linking of an absent, abstract, metaphysical other with the qualitative and empirical dimensions of his readers’ ordinary experiencing is meant to project an erotic link with the absent other, a link that is mediated by the imagination as the locus in which subjectivity, sensuousness, and possibility coexist.
then it makes sense that Marcuse would have spoken to us in the 1960s, when such new dimensions of experience were indeed emerging and when new empirical possibilities were being explored. But what this consonance with the memory of the 1960s hides from us is the fact that by its very form, by virtue of its appeal to the reader “out there” and to what is empirically possible in a specific historical period, Marcuse’s form demands and requires readers in whom these possibilities can emerge. Thus it both resonates with such readers and provides an incitement for any reader to become such a reader. In a way strikingly different from the hermetic Adorno’s, the project of Marcuse’s work requires readers in the present to participate in undertaking it. His project, which might be termed a “critical theory of sensuous experience,” takes the form, as it were, of a proposal. Accordingly, although it emphasizes empirical possibility, it does not contain the empirical work itself but rather appeals to whatever empirical possibilities are currently being explored or can emerge into exploration. On the other hand, this kind of open communicative appeal may leave the dimension of language itself unreflected in a way that is problematic; this is a point to which I will return.

One of the reasons Marcuse’s work is now ripe for reemergence is that this conjunction of the erotic, the empirical, and the universal has been and is under discussion side by side with the postmodernist fascination with aesthetic form and jouissance to which Adorno seems to speak. Empirical questions concerning environmental issues, along with what might be thought of as qualitative universal questions of the relationship of human to nonhuman “nature”—the erotic or sensuous question of our participation, via sensibility, desires, needs, the body, in the larger natural environment—have become central to one version of the present crisis. Accordingly, we can expect that Marcuse’s project of a critical theory of sensuous experience will appeal to and engage with those who are open to experience in this area or involved in empirical work in this area. And in fact the suggestions Marcuse makes in *One-Dimensional Man* and elsewhere about science and the domination of nature have prompted a great deal of response over the years. Those suggestions illustrate the kind of partnership between experience and empirical work that Marcuse’s project implies and evokes.

Marcuse explicitly links the imagination with science and technology (which he does not, as Andrew Feenberg has pointed out, differentiate):
"In the light of the capabilities of advanced industrial civilization, is not all play of the imagination playing with technical possibilities, which can be tested as to their chances of realization? The romantic idea of a 'science of the imagination' seems to assume an ever more empirical aspect." Essential to Marcuse's argument is the claim that a "pacified existence" is an empirical possibility, a possibility that is linked with the capacities of science and technology: "Science and technology has rendered possible the translation of values into technical tasks." There are sufficient resources currently available to provide a pacified existence for all, albeit at a lesser standard of living than that currently enjoyed or aspired to by some.

At the same time, Marcuse argues that science as we know it "has projected and promoted a universe in which the domination of nature has remained linked to the domination of man." Thus he proposes a shift in the scientific project: "Its hypotheses, without losing their rational character, would develop in an essentially different experiential context (that of a pacified world); consequently, science would arrive at essentially different concepts of nature and establish essentially different facts." He adds, however, that he does not intend by this notion of a different scientific project any such "obscurantist ideas" as some sort of "qualitative physics."

Marcuse's statements raise the question of whether a different, erotic attitude toward nature—"the project of nature as opposing partner instead of object," in Habermas's words—would provide the basis for a different kind of science or rationality altogether, or whether in fact there is only one kind of rationality on which science must necessarily be based, even though we might find alternative ways of fulfilling human needs and develop alternative technologies within the context of the one and only scientific rationality. Although some readers argue that Marcuse's suggestions are ambiguous or contradictory, I would propose another interpretation: that Marcuse's lack of resolution reflects the fact that he is directing our attention to the conjunction of the imaginative, the sensuous, the empirical, and the universal in his statements about nature, science, and technology. His emphatic rejection of "obscurantist ideas" indicates that his project calls not for a specific radical alternative to current science so much as for an imaginative meditation on and further development of the relationships suggested by this conjunction. It
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calls, in other words, for further reflection, and imagining of the interaction between an altered experiential relationship to nature and alternative forms of scientific and technological activity.

The conjunction with which I am concerned can be seen in the interweaving of two slightly different trains of thought in Marcuse’s suggestions. Both involve notions of human needs (nature) and of technical possibilities. The first train of thought, which has its starting point in felt needs, can be summarized as follows: 1) it is possible for genuine (universalizable) human needs to emerge in subjective experience; 2) how to satisfy those needs is in some sense an empirical, technical question; and 3) empirically, it seems to be the case that current resources are adequate to satisfy genuine needs, though not false needs.

The second train of thought originates in science: 1) science as we know it has evolved in the social context of the domination of both human beings and nature; 2) science as we know it is not leading to the satisfaction of genuine human needs; 3) science can be redirected in the service of a pacified life; and 4) this would involve different goals, which would lead to the construction of different concepts and the discovery of different facts.

Each of these trains of thought is itself fraught with ambiguity and in need of empirical investigation, and each of them involves slightly different linkages between the erotic, the universal, the empirical, and the technical. Their sequence is more a suggestive juxtaposition than an attempted proof. This is consonant with the form of Marcuse’s work, which invites and requires the reader’s experiential reflections and empirical activities.

If we formulate Marcuse’s suggestions in terms of possible relationships rather than in terms of claims, we arrive at the following: A different attitude toward nature in the broadest sense could result from as well as facilitate different subjective experiences, which could in turn suggest different investigative methods and raise different questions for theorizing and for empirical examination. Such work could in turn suggest different technical possibilities, which would again in turn require evaluation, through empirical examination and rational discourse, in the context of reflection on emergent experience.

Since, as I have said, all these suggestions depend on the collaboration of the readership, let me now provide a small sample of some of the re-
flections and empirical work that in my view contribute to the further development of the project Marcuse is proposing. The examples are taken from the domain I have been discussing: that of our relationship to nature (which, again, in the present context includes human needs) and the role of science and technology in that relationship.

1. There is a body of work that attempts, from a socially critical perspective, to empiricize the range of human needs and render them quantifiable as a preliminary step to pursuing their fulfillment. A recent example is Len Doyal and Ian Gough’s *Theory of Human Needs,* which attempts to delineate the spectrum of human needs—from food and shelter, to psychological security in childhood, to political systems that permit critical thought. Doyal and Gough then present the various schemata currently used to measure these needs. Clearly their work is directed precisely toward the calculation of what Marcuse calls “the available range of freedom from want.” An example of a very focused study along similar lines is the work of Roger Colton for the National Consumer Law Center on the appropriate criteria for measuring fuel needs in low-income groups in the United States.

2. There is work in environmental philosophy that attempts to redefine our relationships with animals and the nonhuman environment in general by drawing on the dimension of emergent or generally unacknowledged experience. Marcuse’s notion of an erotic relationship with nature has been explicitly invoked in this connection by Bill Devall, an American spokesperson for the deep ecology movement. In a discussion of the “ecological self,” Devall asserts that “recalling eros from banishment and integrating it through our practice requires moving from our minimal self further into wild territory. . . . In Marcuse’s terms, what is required is a new radical sensibility that draws on the qualitative, elementary, preconscious world of experience.”

Extending erotic relationships to nonhuman nature involves, as Devall indicates, transformations in the sphere of sensuousness and in the sphere of psyche or self. J. Baird Callicott, an environmental philosopher, gives an eloquent personal example of the kind of solidarity toward which it is possible to move, and the kind of altered physical and psychic experience this solidarity entails:

If the world is one's body, and not only does one's consciousness live in its specific content the world around, but the very structure of one's
psyche and rational faculties are formed through adaptive interaction with the ecological organization of nature, then one's self, both physically and psychologically, merges in a gradient from its central core outwardly into the environment. One cannot thus draw hard-and-fast boundaries between oneself, either physically or spiritually, and the environment.

For me this realization took concrete form as I stood, two decades and an ecological education later, on the banks of the Mississippi River where I roamed as a boy. As I gazed at the brown silt-choked waters absorbing a black plume of industrial and municipal sewage from Memphis, and as my eye tracked bits of some unknown beige froth floating continually down from Cincinnati, Louisville, or St. Louis, I experienced a palpable pain. It was not distinctly locatable in any of my extremities, nor was it like a headache or nausea. Still, it was very real. I had no plans to swim in the river, no need to drink from it, no intention of buying real estate on its shores. My narrowly personal interests were not affected, and yet somehow I was personally injured. It occurred to me then, in a flash of self-discovery, that the river was part of me. And I recalled a line from Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*—"One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds." 25

Here an altered attitude, itself shaped in interaction with knowledge and experience, gives rise to a new dimension of bodily need, a new capacity for felt suffering that serves as an indicator of a dimension in which existence is not pacific.

3. In the philosophy of environmental ethics and animal rights, we see how arguments about such an erotic relationship with nonhuman nature can lead directly to a critique of false scientific assumptions about relationships between humans, other species, and the nonhuman environment. The philosopher Mary Midgeley's *Animals and Why They Matter*, which involves an extensive critique of behaviorism in psychology, is a case in point. Midgeley argues, for instance, that science incorrectly assumes that a rigid "species barrier" exists between humans and other species, in which consciousness is denied to species other than our own; on the contrary, there is abundant evidence that both humans and animals rely on "reading" one another's signals with great accuracy and that such
mutual reading is the basis for relationships between humans and domestic animals and pets. Midgeley goes on to distinguish between social duties, which we have toward those animals with whom we have formed social or kinlike bonds, and ecological duties, which we have toward all manner of other beings, arising from the fact that we are one species among many. While the former duties might be experienced in terms of a "response to consciousness," the latter, which embraces other species as well as rivers, mountains, and so on, might require a still-wider imaginative extension of our point of view. Such arguments can contribute to the fleshing out of our conception of a pacified existence, which may then furnish goals to be served by empirical investigation.

4. A particularly striking example of such empirical investigation is found in the agroecological work carried on at the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas, under the direction of Wes Jackson. The underlying assumption of this work is that there can be an erotic relationship between humans and nature and that this would entail a human agriculture modeled on natural ecosystems, as indicated by the title of a book expounding these ideas, *Farming in Nature's Image*. (Remember that for Adorno aesthetic experience requires that the reader or spectator "follow along," reconstructing the work in her own experience.) The authors make it quite clear that the Land Institute's work is concerned with a redirection of science that would explore different concepts and yield different facts:

If we approached agriculture with more of a nurturing attitude, we would create a fundamentally different research program, right down to the questions researchers ask. For instance, pests would no longer be seen as the enemy that must be eliminated, but as an inevitable part of the agroecosystem, albeit a part that must be controlled. High numbers of pests would become the fever, the warning symptom that all is not well within the system. Researchers would seek the causes of ill health rather than seeking simply to eliminate the symptoms. They would no longer ask, "How can we kill this pest?" but rather, "Why is this species population so high? What happened to its natural enemies? What is it about our crop system that is so attractive to this species? What can we do to bolster the health of the system, improve its resistance to this pest, and reduce the pest's numbers?"
The focus of the Land Institute's efforts is an agriculture appropriate for prairie areas, based on the key aspects of the natural prairie ecosystem, which features polycultures of perennial grasses mixed with legumes and composites. The specific technical work of the institute, then, is directed toward finding appropriate mixtures of these species for a polyculture agriculture so that an overabundance of seed will be produced, which can then be harvested. The differences between this work and current biotechnological research seem to constitute a redirection rather than a dramatic rejection of "normal science." The Land Institute's work involves, for instance, more interdisciplinary cooperation over longer time periods (since the behavior of the species mixtures over a period of years must be investigated), the participation of a broader range of constituent groups (such as farmers), and different patterns of funding suitable to this more broadly participatory and longer-term research.

Such are the diverse but interrelated kinds of work about which Marcuse's project asks us to think in conjunction. Their vitality and abundance bodes well for Marcuse's reemergence. He suggests—and my examples are intended to underline that suggestion—the possibility of a traversable path from emergent experience in these areas to revised technical efforts to fulfill redefined human needs. This will be a difficult path to map, given that it must traverse the complex terrain sketched out in the debates around Marcuse's suggestions about science and technology. It is difficult in another way as well, in that the whole dimension of sensuous experience that is crucial here—the dimension I have been referring to as "eros and other"—poses problems of how that experience may be expressed in words and in what modes it may be communicated. It is here that Adorno, with his refined dialectic of aesthetic experience and textual form, can again contribute to Marcuse's project. The emergence of new needs and new forms of experience involves a moment of reflection and articulation as well as a moment of experimentation, and that reflection and articulation may well require a language that will share some features with Adorno's notion of the erotically foreign element in language. Adorno's notion of logicity may prove valuable in suggesting what an attempt to communicate about the experience of landscape would sound like, or in articulating the kind of intersubjectivity among species that would form the basis for considerations of environmental ethics, or in describing the kind of pain that J. Baird Callicott experienced in viewing the pol-
luted Mississippi. Conversely, the emergence of new needs and new experience takes place against the background of a reexperiencing of pain, deprivation, suffering, and numbness that have been occluded from consciousness—a reemergent negative awareness whose most accurate formulation may require the kind of textual dialectics we find in Adorno.

The dialectic of sensuous and aesthetic experience found in the implicit partnership between Marcuse and Adorno suggests that a critical theory of experience should be a central part of the Frankfurt School’s contribution to redefining and fulfilling human needs in a more pacified world. How fruitful Marcuse’s project eventually becomes, and the extent to which it can help lay the foundation for that kind of critical theory of experience, will depend in turn on our own efforts to pursue his call for imaginative and experiential reflections.

Notes

5. Ibid., 1:187.
6. Ibid., 2:297.
8. Ibid., 209–10.
10. Ibid., 211.
13. As Jürgen Habermas puts it in another context, “The investigation of social-scientific hypotheses is not Marcuse’s goal. Marcuse’s arguments have to be construed instead as part of a grand practical discourse in which the point is not the verification of empirical assertions but the identification and justification of universalizable interests.” “Herbert Marcuse: On Art and Revolution,” in Jürgen


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 166. Of the possibility of a science not based on the domination of nature, Habermas has this to say: "The concept of a categorically different science and technology is as empty as the idea of a universal reconciliation is without basis." "Theodor Adorno: The Primal History of Subjectivity—Self-Affirmation Gone Wild," in *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, 110.

19. Ibid., 166-76; see also the discussion in David Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy* (New York: Paragon Books, 1990), 87ff.


23. Roger Colton, *Credit and Collection Activities under Different Utility Low-Income Programs* (Boston: National Consumer Law Center, 1992), provides a multistate evaluation of low-income energy needs, using different definitions of the term "need."


