

# *SOCIOPOLITICS: MARX AND MARCUSE*

Sociopolítica: *Marx y Marcuse*

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## ABSTRACT

By deciphering capitalist social forms of dependence of the political sphere relative to society, Marx discovers *sociopolitics*. Within it, the nexus between politics and social life occurs in a double key. On one side, politics is taken in its *social dependence*; on the other side, the focus must shift to the very *social form determined by this dependence*. In sociopolitics, as a domination structure commanding social reproduction, power is in an immanent relation to the social forms of production in society. Beyond coercion or convincing, the *social sphere is in itself political*, with its common social objective condition of organization in a social determined form. Marcuse follows Marx interpretation. For him, the objective condition characterizes a society as dependency on capital.

*Key words:* Sociopolitics, Marx, Marcuse, Social Forms of Society, Capital Dependent Socialization, Counterhegemonic Socialization, Self-determination.

## RESUMEN

Al descifrar las formas sociales capitalistas de dependencia de la esfera política en relación con la sociedad, Marx descubre la sociopolítica. Dentro de ella, el nexo entre la política y la vida social se produce en una doble clave. Por un lado, la política es enfocada en su *dependencia social*, por otro lado, el foco debe cambiar hacia *la forma social determinada por esta dependencia*. En la sociopolítica, en cuanto estructura de dominación que controla la reproducción social, el poder está en una relación inmanente con las formas sociales de producción en la sociedad. Más allá de la coerción o de la convicción, *la esfera social es en sí misma política*, con su condición objetiva social de organización en una forma social determinada. Marcuse sigue la interpretación de Marx. Para él, la condición objetiva caracteriza a una sociedad en cuanto dependencia del capital.

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*Palabras clave:* Sociopolítica, Marx, Marcuse, Formas sociales de la sociedad, Socialización Dependiente del Capital, Socialización Contra-hegemónica, Autodeterminación.

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In sociopolitics, as a domination structure commanding social reproduction, power is in an immanent relation to the social forms of production in society. Beyond coercion or convincing, the *social sphere is in itself political*, with its common social objective condition of organization in a social determined form.

As Marx points out in the *Grundrisse*, the human being is a political animal not only in the sense of the social as collectivity, but as a specific and determined social form of the social, already produced and in the reproduction process. Men individuate in the midst of a socialization, submitting themselves to the rationality of the accumulation of capital and its contradictions. As capital is a contradiction by itself, in capitalist socialization there is a dialectics of domination and liberation of abstract capitalistic labor.

Marcuse follows Marx interpretation. For him, the objective condition characterizes a society as dependency on capital. As referred in *One-dimensional Man*, this dependency is in the social subject's social form, rather than an imposition from the outside. The dependency is an outcome of the capitalist mode of production at the needs-engendering level – need of surplus labor – that is made universal.

To Marcuse, the political dispute is a *dispute of forms of society*: between the capital dependent society and a socialization form in which the need of surplus labor no longer suffices to the free development of the individualities produced in existing society. As stated in *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, “the individual liberation must incorporate the universal in the particular protest, and the images and the values of a future free society must appear in the personal relationships within the unfree society.” In the present situation, *transformation is linked with an anticipation of the possibility of an other – counterhegemonic – socialization as self-determination*. “The time of the wholesale rejection of the ‘liberals’ has passed – or has not yet

come. Radicalism has much to gain from the legitimate protest against war, inflation and unemployment, from the defense of civil rights (...) Presenting the facts and forces that made civilization what it is and what it could be tomorrow – that is political education”.

## 1 MARX AND THE DISCOVERY OF SOCIOPOLITICS.

In *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction* Karl Marx introduces what is to be his most original contribution to the apprehension of politics: the presentation of the necessary nexus between politics and social life. This nexus is developed along two dimensions of the “criticism of politics”.<sup>1</sup> On one side, politics is taken in its *social dependence*, over the path from politics to social life. On the other side, the focal point of politics must shift to the very *social form determined by this dependence*, which should not be taken for granted as a pre-supposition; instead, it should be presented according to its conditioning in concrete social life. Critical politics must make the critique of practical politics by referring it to its social dependence. Yet simultaneously it must make the critique of the foundations of such practice, apprehending those as socially conditioned too.

If in Germany politics is apprehended in a theoretical-philosophical context rather than in a historical-practical sense, as stated by Marx, the task should not be the mere negation of this theoretical-philosophical apprehension. Rather, it should be its overcoming through its actualization, that is, by discovering the reason for this specific apprehension and removing it. There is a positive dimension, a “practical energy”<sup>2</sup> in this theoretical-philosophical apprehension that is socially determined and should not be overlooked, for it is a reflection of reality. This is explained in the beginning of the aforementioned text in connection with a criticism of religion that seeks to transcend itself as religion proper. That is, the criticism of religion must take into account that

“Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who either not yet won through to himself or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man, state, society. This state and this

<sup>1</sup> Karl MARX, *Early Writings*. London: Penguin, 1977, p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world because they are an inverted world.”<sup>3</sup>

The criticism of religion leads, by analogy, to the context of State and society. Hegel, for example, does not situate the State on the historical and social level; he assumes his concept as an a priori assumption, beyond the reach of critique. The Hegelian analysis of State is philosophical, thus the criticism of the State is limited by the philosophical assumption that has not been subjected to any critique. Hegel's critique of the State coexists with the uncritical affirmation of the philosophy of State and right. Thus, to Marx, the biggest effect of this Hegelian concept of critique was that “It believed that it could realize philosophy without transcending it”<sup>4</sup>. That is, realize philosophy without taking it as specific historical outcome.

Likewise, the political nexus unveiled in the criticism of religion assumes politics in particular terms: a given configuration of State and society. To Marx, just as in the criticism of religion, the criticism of the State and the right must be translated into criticism of politics in its limited form whereby politics takes place within the frame of the State and society<sup>5</sup>. It is not enough to refer religion to human social life; it is necessary to explain why in certain social conditions the need of religion developed. Analogously, the philosophy of the State and right must account for the need for the development of the State and the laws to build on certain social conditions.

Philosophy in Germany, Marx continues, is “theoretical conscience” of what other countries “*did*”<sup>6</sup>. Hence, critical practice in Germany solely exists as philosophical criticism, as theoretical criticism. That is, it exists on the level of humanity but not on the political level. At the theoretical level of humanity, criticism makes abstraction of real man, which is only possible because it also refers to a “state itself [that] makes abstraction of real man, or satisfies the whole of man only in imagination”<sup>7</sup>.

Yet, as a famous quote by Marx emphasizes, there is “another politics”, one that goes beyond its habitual sense to become politics as *human emancipation*:

“Clearly the weapon of criticism cannot replace the criticism of weapons, and material force must be overthrown by material force. But theory also becomes a

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

material force once it has gripped the masses. Theory is capable of gripping masses when it demonstrates *ad hominem*, and it demonstrates *ad hominem* as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp things by the root. But for man the root is man himself.”<sup>8</sup>

Demonstration *ad hominem*, to Marx, will take place by following the making of politics on the basis of the special conditions existing in Germany. It is necessary to demonstrate a “material base” for criticism to present itself as “material force”<sup>9</sup>, that is, as a force that “does”.

“Theory is realized in a people only in so far as it is a realization of the people’s needs. But will the enormous gap that exists between the demands of German thought and the responses of German reality now correspond to the same gap both between civil society and the state and civil society and itself? Will the theoretical needs be directly practical needs? It is not enough that thought should strive to realize itself; reality must itself strive towards thought.”<sup>10</sup>

The relations that lead from theoretical criticism to material base must be construed as corresponding to a need developed in actual human social life. Theoretical forms should not be assumed – that is, they should not correspond to parameters uncritically accepted, out of social context; for example, accepted just because they are “rational” or universal, and opposed to “irrational” forms. Yet, this rationality should be explained as corresponding to certain actual material and social conditions. In so far as reality needs to develop theoretically, it will be possible to withdraw from this theoretical position to the social demands accounting for it. However, Marx notes that, in the existing conditions, that is not what is happening. In Germany, there is an abyss between rational theoretical demands and actual reality responses. “In this way Germany must participate more and more, if not in the reason, then at least in the unreason even of those state forms which have progressed beyond its own *status quo*.”<sup>11</sup>

In these conditions, on the basis of the State in its socially existing form, politics as rational realization of demands is an impossibility. It is politics of a limited reach for it is imposed on the basis of preexisting frames. It is politics

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

“which leaves the pillars of the building standing. (...) Its basis is the fact that *one part of civil society* emancipates itself and attains *universal* domination, that one particular class undertakes from its *particular situation* the universal emancipation of society. This class liberates the whole of society, but only on condition that the whole of society finds itself in the same situation as this class, e.g. possesses or can easily acquire money and education.”<sup>12</sup>

A particular class can lay claim to the realization of its demands only in the name of the universal rights of society. The social forms of the State that reality presents in Germany, however, do not correspond to this condition.

“So where is the positive possibility of German emancipation? *This is our answer.* In the formation of a class with radical claims, a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere which has a universal character because of its universal suffering and which lays claim to no particular right because the wrong it suffers is not a particular wrong but wrong in general.”<sup>13</sup>

Social dependence – in civil society – imposes limits that, once apprehended as impositions, reveal the social conditions for their overcoming, though only at the civil society level. It is imperative to go beyond this civil society dependence. It is necessary to form a “class” that depends on civil society but at the same time is out of it, not constrained by the imposition of this social frame. The formation of this class – the proletarian class – is related to the development of the capitalist mode of production in Germany, which moves forward in society even as it keeps the State as demarcator of political partners.

By deciphering these capitalist social forms of dependence of the political sphere relative to society, Marx discovers *sociopolitics*. Within it, as a structure of domination that commands the reproduction of society, there is a nexus that is immanent in the very social forms of production in society; which corresponds to human needs and is not imposed.

In industrial capitalism, with the development of the proletarian class and of capitalism’s abstract work, *sociopolitics* arises clearly for the first time. It is only with the capitalist bourgeois society that there occurs social insertion in terms of a form that is determined, specific, and that, at the same time, can become universal.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 253/254.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

Thus are developed organizing structures fit to dominate the reproduction process of social formation as a whole, also equipped to subject forms of power formerly closely linked to the State structure. In the bourgeois civil society of industrial capitalism, social insertion itself, intermediated by the mode of production, *politicizes* man.

The opposite situation – the absence of politics – is exactly what Marx has in mind when, in face of the slow development of class society in early nineteenth-century Germany, stated that a “German Aristotle who wishes to construct his ‘Politics’ on the basis of our society would begin by writing: Man is a social but wholly unpolitical animal. (...) The only political person is the King.”<sup>14</sup>

The *Grundrisse* – written by Marx about one and a half decade after *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right. Introduction* – begin precisely by showing this new *sociopolitical* actual reality bred in the context of capitalist accumulation classes.

## 2 THE SOCIAL POWER OF CAPITAL

To Marx, production itself is always production that is historically determined in terms of a definite stage of social development. In the introduction to the *Grundrisse* he explains that,

“Whenever we speak of production, then, what is meant is always production at a definite stage of social development – production by social individuals. (...) in order to talk about production at all we must either pursue the process of historic development through its different phases, or declare beforehand that we are dealing with a specific historic epoch such as e.g. modern bourgeois production, which is indeed our particular theme.”<sup>15</sup>

Each form of production engenders, according to Marx, its own form of legal relations, its own forms of government, in correspondence with the domination structure and in combination with the social nexuses emanating from the mode of production.

By the same token, whenever we speak of society, we are speaking of a concrete society at a definite stage of social development, a society of social individuals. In

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 201 and 203.

<sup>15</sup> Karl MARX, *Grundrisse*. London: Penguin, 1981, p. 85.

choosing a given epoch, such as the contemporary capitalist society, this is focused on some specific stage in social development.

“Every form of production creates its own legal relations, form of government, etc. In bringing things which are organically related into an accidental relation, into a merely reflective connection, they display their crudity and lack of conceptual understanding. All the bourgeois economists are aware of is that production can be carried on better under the modern police than e.g. on the principle of might makes right. They forget only that this principle is also a legal relation, and that the right of the stronger prevails in their ‘constitutional republic’ as well, only in another form.

When the social conditions corresponding to a specific stage of production are only just arising, or when they are already dying out, there are, naturally, disturbances in production, although to different degrees and with different effects.”<sup>16</sup>

This way conditions are ensured so that social reproduction in a determined situation can persevere. Yet, the conditions of reproduction are always conditioned by the specificities of production, which leads to the need to characterize in each particular situation the nexuses between the sociopolitical sphere and the productive sphere. Marx describes, for instance, reproduction in a given social development stage that is sustained by slave labor.

“To steal a slave is to steal the instrument of production directly. But then the production of the country for which the slave is stolen must be structured to allow of slave labour, or (as in the southern part of America etc.) a mode of production corresponding to the slave must be created.

Laws may perpetuate an instrument of production, e.g. land, in certain families. These laws achieve economic significance only when large-scale landed property is in harmony with the society’s production, as e. g. in England. In France, small-scale agriculture survived despite the great landed estates, hence the latter were smashed by the revolution. But can laws perpetuate the small-scale allotment? Despite these laws, ownership is again becoming concentrated. The influence of laws in stabilizing relations of distribution, and hence their effect on production, requires to be determined in each specific instance.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

These conditions might even be construed by thought as universal determinations that appear as general conditions in every production as if they were “rational”. But, actually, they are just abstract moments of any actual and historical production stage. They constitute a specific stage of social development that is linked to a given mode of production. The conditions of production are imposed from the outside on men and that shapes their experience with politics realized precisely to reproduce these conditions. “Rationality” here is only claimed to legitimize this imposition as universal need.

The introduction to the *Grundrisse* insists precisely on the specific social determination of that abstract, rational moment. To Marx, economists once devoted to general - rational - forms of production, should devote themselves to historical forms.

“The real subject retains its autonomous existence outside the head just as before; namely as long as the head’s conduct is merely speculative, merely theoretical. Hence, in the theoretical method, too, the subject, society, must always be kept in mind as the presupposition.”<sup>18</sup>

Rather than being taken for granted, as a presupposition, society must be subjected to critique. Here we can use something formulated by Marx in his *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right. Introduction*. This criticism is two-dimensional. It is both a critical analysis of society and the reality thereto, and, at the same time, also critical of the “universal determinations” that condition society’s apprehension. That is, “resolute negation of the whole manner of the German consciousness in politics and right as practiced hereto”<sup>19</sup> as a presupposition. Or, in other terms, negation of the *political culture* whereby society is considered “rational”. The critique of society entails a critique of politics and vice-versa. Politics would heretofore be apprehended as domination experienced by individuals insofar as they, given their insertion in a given mode of production, are actively engaged in the reproduction of a society’s specific form.

To Marx, the focal point of political analysis is the social and historical level of a given mode of production, in a specific social form that is consistent with a structure of power and a social-legal order. That is, what is under criticism is not only society (or the State), but even the *social* (now in its political sense), that is, the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

social form that formulates apprehension by society (or the State). It is about deciphering the conditions and outcomes of socially determined politics. Society develops on the basis of a social form assumed in material production. The *social* as a condition dominates men who must live in collectives, which might define what politics is for them, as certain forms of government and legislation. *The social is political* insofar as it is a socially determined frame wherein all men are inserted according to a production that is geared to meet their needs. To Marx, this situation only arises clearly with the hegemony of the capitalist mode of production.

“It was an immense step forward for Adam Smith to throw out every limiting specification of wealth-creating activity (...) With the abstract universality of wealth creating activity we now have the universality of the object defined as wealth, the product as such or again labour as such, but labour as past, objectified labour.”<sup>20</sup>

The form of society linked to the capitalist mode of production, sustained on abstract labor and on indifference towards the concrete forms of productive labor, admits of any labor, therefore, it realizes in practice the abstraction of labor. Thus, it makes it possible for capital, as the abstract labor it is, to turn into dominant social form in society. This stems from the hegemony arising from the *universalization* of the social form of abstract labor in the wealth-producing mode that is no longer of products designed to meet specific needs. The generalization of abstract labor – at the social level – is consistent with “objectified labor, of the past” and its relation with living labor, with objectification; this is a political relation, wherein abstract labor prevails over living labor. It is thus made clear that the economic framework results from “social and political operations”<sup>21</sup>, which it turns into relations of dependence. “Le marché et le capital ne sont pas seulement un regroupement cohérent de forces économiques, ils constituent plutôt une force sociale et politique condensée qui dicte un code pour l’orientation des structures de dépendance dans le champ social.”<sup>22</sup>

Insofar as “capital is the all-dominating economic power of bourgeois society”<sup>23</sup>, it lies at the center of *sociopower* in contemporary society. Capital does not require politics imposed from the outside organizing the economy all along the history of

<sup>20</sup> Karl MARX, *Grundrisse*. London: Penguin, 1981, p. 104.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph VOGL, *Le Spectre du Capital*. Paris: Diaphanes, 2013, p. 246

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>23</sup> Karl MARX, *Grundrisse*, op. cit., p. 107.

societies. Now “the point is not the historic position of the economic relations in the succession of different forms of society. (...) Rather, their order within modern bourgeois society.”<sup>24</sup>

Politics no longer solely refers to the external imposing of conditions on those participating in production by means of the State and laws that “perpetuate tools of production”<sup>25</sup>, thus engendering the historical diversity of human societies. Rather, it is inherent to the very social form that characterizes production. That is, politics refers to the constitution itself of a social form of society relative to a given mode of production. The “rationality” of political domination is no longer an issue, since social “rationality” itself constitutes the political nexus of domination. Politics is no longer about imposing social reproduction conditions, as the slave mode of production, for example. Rather, it is engendered inside the social mode of production as a society’s social form: a society of abstract labor or objectified, prior, labor, which is, precisely, capital.

I have already pointed that, to Marx, capitalism as a historically determined mode of production means the discovery of a *sociopolitics*, that is, a political practice derived from social relations determined within the framework of capitalist production. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx unveils the essence of this *sociopolitics*: in the capitalist mode of production founded on abstract labor “the worker is related to the product of his labor as to an alien object”<sup>26</sup>. There is a shift between “objectification, at the production of the worker, and the estrangement, the loss of the object, of his product”<sup>27</sup>. A translation of objectification into alienation that “is true of man’s relationship to his labor, to the product of his labor and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men, and to the labor and the object of the labor of other men.”<sup>28</sup>

In the context of the process of production itself, objectification and alienation are counterposed, giving rise to a political domination structure within society. “The relation of the worker to labor creates the relation of the capitalist – or whatever other word one chooses for the master of labor – to that labor”<sup>29</sup>. Social relation between capitalists and proletarians takes place under the social form of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>26</sup> Karl MARX, *Early Writings*, op. cit., p. 324.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 331.

domination: it is a political relation that arises from the social framework of the mode of production. The history of the autonomy of politics is shifted from the sphere of the State to the sphere of the class politics that is inaugurated jointly with the capitalist mode of production.

The social mode of production is conducive to capitalist class politics. The experiment of abstraction as the socially dominant form of capitalist labor is conducive to the formation of the proletarian class. It is precisely the experience in abstraction that is carried out in face of objectified labor, and that is vital to the proletarian class, that makes it: it is fit to be, simultaneously, particular class and potentially universal class.

“Workers have a far better chance to understand the working of capitalism than do capitalists. (...) what constitutes the lives of workers, the abstractions which they start out to make sense of their society are likely to include (...) especially “labor”, which puts the activity that is chiefly responsible for social change at the front and center of their thinking.”<sup>30</sup>

By producing socially and in line with the ongoing mode of production, men implement the social forms with which they concretely shape their own society. Within this capitalist *socialization*, when constituting themselves as individuals, that is, by *individuating*, men become political subjects, rather than experiencing the political sphere as external imposition. They carry out, on a daily basis, organization and domination practices that shape policies designed to ensure that the reproduction of the mode of production will prevail in a given social context.

“The more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual, and hence also the producing individual, appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole (...) Only in the eighteenth century, in ‘civil society’, do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards its private purposes, as external necessity. But the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social (from this standpoint, general) relations. The human being is in the most literal sense a ζῷον πολιτικόν, not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Bertell OLLMAN, *Dance of the Dialectic*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003, p. 101.

<sup>31</sup> Karl MARX, *Grundrisse*, op. cit., p. 84.

To Marx, there is an interpretive shift with the development of civil society: heretofore society's apprehension will always be placed in the framework of social reproduction, for there always is interaction between social beings and forms of society, dismissing the understanding whereby society is produced by "individuals" that preceded it. The social in its specific historical form - thereby, already "produced" and in the "reproduction" process - constitutes the point of departure. When Marx points out that man only individuates himself in society, "society" here means not only the social as collectivity, but a determined and specific social form of the social, which corresponds to a "mode" of production equally construed as historically determined production in certain conditions rather than production in general. The aforementioned "individuation of the individual", in turn, also means an individual in a socially determined frame, with the same characteristics as "society".

In the evolution of this process, for the first time, as noted by Marx, the various forms of social interaction - the capitalist relations of production - are opposed to the external needs of individuals, thus turned into mere means to their private ends. Then, for the first time, there is an individuation - that is, there is "isolation" in relation to the social in its specific social form - in a context of social relations that are highly developed on a universal perspective: the relations developed in capitalism. In this *socialization* there develops a very specific relation of domination, namely capitalist relations of production, imposed on individuals who are social beings under the social form of "productive forces".

Hegel, as we know, had interpreted the novelty of the development of civil society as tension between the particular (individual) and the universal (society) that is to be harmonized by the State as the embodiment of an "order of reason" that is to be upheld at all costs. To Marx, however, this order cannot be a presupposition immune to the reach of critique. It is also worth deciphering this "order" as being specifically determined by particular conditions of production.

Most importantly, men must be characterized as "social beings". Now, no longer in the simple sense of social interrelationship, but in the sense that, as products of the process of social reproduction, they exhibit a particular social form of "individuation". To this individuation also corresponds a social form of "society", a "socialization" that even comes to show itself as "universal society". Capitalist socialization imposes itself now as "society", over and beyond its historically conditioned determinations. It can do without an externally imposed domination, in that society is organized universally by its immanent dependence on capital. It thus

takes on a “naturalized” – and no longer “social” – shape as if it were the only possible socialization.

Moreover, socialization, as a form of a specific society, is characterized by its general – social, in this case, capitalist – form of individuation present in it: the Marcusean “one-dimensional man” should be remembered here. The work by Marcuse referred to herein deciphers precisely the conditions of this one-dimensionality in the dynamics of the nexus between socialization and individuation it exhibits. To Marx it is not up to the State to harmonize the universal/particular opposition. These interrelate as the historical social reproduction process unfolds in a succession of socializations and individuations. In their specificity, both exhibit their respective framing of the link between universal and particular. Marx suggests an apprehension of politics, present as a structure of power in the specific social formation, where the duplicity between “State” and “society” does not exist, but within which there arise nexuses of domination that stem from the reproductive dynamics itself.

### 3 MARCUSE’S CHALLENGE

Reception of these remarks by Marx in the *Grundrisse* lies at the heart of the understanding of capitalist society in its contemporary, specific form as approached by Herbert Marcuse in *One-dimensional Man* by building on its particular form of *individuation*.

The one-dimensionality-engendering capitalist rationality should, according to Marcuse, be replaced by “another rationality” – which appears as “irrational” or abstract in the social context of capitalist rationality. When we focus on the forces that are conducive to this replacement, there arises a great difficulty: they need to get support from the existing society, as clearly stated towards the end of the book. By doing so, they would reproduce the one-dimensionality and would stop being antagonistic forces.

To Marcuse it is necessary to consider

“(…) the critical theory precisely at the point of its greatest weakness – its inability to demonstrate the liberating tendencies *within* the established society.

The critical theory of society was, at the time of its origin, confronted with the presence of real forces (...) *in* the established society which moved (...) toward more rational and freer institutions by abolishing the existing ones which had

become obstacles to progress. (...) without the demonstration of such forces, the critique of society would still be valid and rational, but it would be incapable of translating its rationality into historic practice terms. The conclusion? “Liberation of inherent possibilities” no longer adequately expresses the historical alternative.”<sup>32</sup>

With the present totalitarian tendency in capitalist society, potential for transformation is annulled by the development process itself of productive forces. Within the framework of the technological rationality of capitalist production itself, a transition between antagonistic forces fighting each other is an illusion. However, this fight goes beyond traditional forms.

“The totalitarian tendencies of the one dimensional society render the traditional ways and means of protest ineffective – perhaps even dangerous because they preserve the illusion of popular sovereignty. This illusion contains some truth: “the people”, previously the ferment of social change, have “moved up” to become the ferment of social cohesion. Here, rather than in the redistribution of wealth and equalization of classes, is the new stratification characteristic of advanced industrial society.”<sup>33</sup>

With the totalitarian tendency of society, the popular base, the “people”, is conservative. The one-dimensional social formation is a determined capitalist socialization that manifests the tendency to take over the whole of society. Its characteristic is “the people [as]... ferment of... cohesion”. According to *One-dimensional Man*, the situation would be altogether different in another capitalist socialization of the established society, as the one named “bourgeois liberal” society<sup>34</sup>. In it, “the people” would exhibit representations both of such socialization and of potential forms other than that of capitalist socialization, and from their clashing interests would arise the forces of social change. To Marcuse, totalitarian socialization of society is responsible for uniformity that prompts social cohesion.

Moreover, in its social totalitarian form, the “outcasts and outsiders”, who could represent forces that violate the rules of society, “hit the system from without”<sup>35</sup>. They exist “outside the democratic process”<sup>36</sup>. This “refusing to play the game may

<sup>32</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon, 1991, p. 255.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>34</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*. Boston: Beacon, 1972, p. 25.

<sup>35</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *One-Dimensional Man*, op. cit., p. 256.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period”<sup>37</sup>. The potential forces of change lie without the very social context that is to be transformed. The difficulty in revealing the immanence of the forces of social change in the existing society persists as the focal point of the end of *One-dimensional Man*.

However, in the aforementioned paragraph<sup>38</sup>, the way is paved for an approach that will enable the next step, as expressed in his following work, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*. The similarity is remarkable between the situations described in the quote above, on page 256 of *One-dimensional Man*, and those on page 14 of *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*.

The paragraph from *One-dimensional Man* describes one nexus of the one-dimensional form of socialization, as form of society, with its “people” base rather than “class” base. With social totality, the form of the one-dimensional society eludes the exclusive context of the rationality emanating from the process of capitalist social labor and its class-based structure. Heretofore it comprises a set of human beings and their living conditions, translated into exploitation and accrual; that is, a set under an objective condition: that of being dependent on capital. “This is the dynamic of monopoly capitalism: the subjection of the entire population to the rule of capital (...) if this modifies the original concept of class (...) it is due to changes in the *reality* of capitalism which have to be conceptualized in the *theory*...”<sup>39</sup>

The present stage of capitalist development, termed as a kind of inward imperialism – “the internal expansion of the market, the counterpart to external imperialism”<sup>40</sup> – by Marcuse, steers its energy, as organization of capital, toward a society’s own *inside*, therein preventing the rooting of the forces of change. Right in the beginning of *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, Marcuse notes the character of power in the new times by drawing attention to the dominant tendency of capitalism “to organize the *entire* society in its interest and image”<sup>41</sup>.

To that end, the author contends,

“Capital now produces, for the majority of the population, not so much privation as steered satisfaction of material needs, while making the entire human being – intelligence and sense – into an object of administration, geared to

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 257

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 256

<sup>39</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

produce and reproduce not only the goals but also the values and promises of the system, its ideological heaven. Behind the technological veil, behind the political veil of democracy, appears the reality, the universal servitude, the loss of human dignity in a prefabricated freedom of choice. And the power structure is no longer “sublimated” in the style of a liberalistic culture, no longer even hypocritical (thus retaining at least the “formalities”, the shell of dignity), but brutal, throwing off all pretensions of truth and justice.”<sup>42</sup>

In this reality,

“The separation from control over the means of production defines the common *objective* condition of the wage and salary earners: the condition of exploitation – they reproduce capital. The extension of exploitation to a larger part of the population, accompanied by a high standard of living, is the reality behind the façade of the *consumer* society; this reality is the unifying force which integrates, behind the back of the individuals, the widely different and conflicting classes of the underlying population.”<sup>43</sup>

Under the appearance of consumer “society” that becomes universal, there lies the reality of forces that integrate conflicting classes. They can be characterized as a power structure geared to producing and reproducing objectives, as well as the system’s values. No longer are there the coercion or convincing – “weapons” or “religion” – that organize the forces of conflicting classes in this reality, but rather a common social objective condition that organizes, socially, all the capital-reproducing agents. The relation of dependence on capital is the objective condition for the realization of social life; here what unifies the domination and, therefore, also “the struggle against domination is the dependence on capital”<sup>44</sup>. As a tendency toward complete “organization of society”, it is the actualization of a “form of society”<sup>45</sup>. Even though Marcuse does not use this expression, it is adequate to designate this social form as capitalist *socialization*, where the political function of the integrating social force is revealed.

The power of this integration is so overwhelming that the form of society thus engendered by the nexus with capital as objective condition may present itself either in the form of bourgeois-democracy or in the form of fascism, depending on

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfgang Leo MAAR, “The Critique of Domination as Rational Dependency”, in *Radical Philosophy Review*. Vol.19, n. 1, pp. 217-228, 2016, p. 227.

<sup>45</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, op. cit., p. 24 and 29.

the underlying relation of forces<sup>46</sup>. Both these forms constitute political constructions built on the a priori of capitalist society. Still, it is worth emphasizing that what appears to be a priori is a political and historical construction within the framework of the capitalist mode of production. The “socialization policy”, therefore, determines the form of society and social life. In the nexus between, on one hand, the society and, on the other, socialization lies the key to apprehending politics in a dynamic perspective and in its two social dimensions simultaneously: either the political dimension *at* the level of the established society, or its dimension in the context of the *production or reproduction of society* itself, in its forms.

To concretely understand politics as social transformation, it is certainly necessary to apprehend society in its specific socialization. Only by focusing on this socialization and its power are we able to keep track of the organization dynamic of the existing in its entirety, beyond the reach of the rationality emanating from the capitalist labor process.

Marcuse characterizes the objective condition that is common to all of these forms of society as “dependency on capital”<sup>47</sup>. This dependency is as deep as it is immanent in the social subject’s social form, rather than an imposition from the outside. As stated in *One-dimensional Man*, to Marcuse this is not about an imposition of the mode of production that imposes onto the social totality the “rationality” of capitalist social labor. In other words, this is not about the constitution of a new one-dimensional configuration of society. In his introduction to the book, Douglas Kellner emphasizes quite appropriately that “the adjective ‘one-dimensional’ describes practices that conform to pre-existing structures, norms and behavior”<sup>48</sup>. The one-dimensional man is formed in a capitalist “socialization” which he, at the same time, reproduces.

This is about an outcome of the capitalist mode of production at the needs-engendering level – need of surplus labor – that is made universal. The individualization process itself as linked to the capitalist society, in which the need of surplus labor as a vital need is created, imposes a loss of autonomy as a result of the dependency on capital associated with this need. The needs and their satisfaction characterize a society from the perspective of human goals, of essential social contents –

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>48</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *One-Dimensional Man*, op. cit., p. xxvii.

unlike what happens when the reference is rationality, situated at the level of interests.

Marcuse seeks thus to objectively situate in the existing society, as a material need, the dynamic of social production and reproduction. That is what distinguishes the approach adopted in *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* from that in *One-dimensional Man*.

In *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* Marcuse starts precisely by addressing this problem, yet he follows the path taken before him by Marx, of a dispute between diverse “forms of society”, different *socializations* in the field of society reproduction. To Marcuse, as well as to Marx, at the level of the creation of needs – which characterizes the existing society – the engendering itself of the need of surplus labor leads to the generation, on a progressive scale, of other material needs, which the mode of production is itself unable to meet. In this sense, by action of capitalism itself the immanence is assured in the existing society to the forces driving the transformation of socialization. “Freedom is preserved”, whether for engendering the need of “surplus value”, or for generating new needs associated with the productivity gain thus developed in the capitalist socialization.

To Marcuse, “The technical achievements of capitalism break into the world of frustration, unhappiness, repression. Capitalism has opened a new dimension, which is at one and the same time the living space of capitalism and its negation.”<sup>49</sup> Here once again reference to the *Grundrisse* is crucial. According to Marx, “Capital itself is the moving contradiction, (in) that it presses to reduce labor time to a minimum, while it posits labor time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth.”<sup>50</sup>

By liberating time by means of the minimization of abstract labor activity, the capitalist mode of production engenders a space for human development, a social context of “free development of individualities”<sup>51</sup>. That is, men also individuate themselves in social forms that are not based on abstract work, thus contributing to non-capitalist social reproduction. To Marcuse, the “universal need for work other than and above the necessities is here stipulated as developing out of the

<sup>49</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> Karl MARX, *Grundrisse*, op. cit., p. 706.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 706

individual needs – only under such conditions would the individuals themselves determine the objects, priorities, and direction of their work. (...)”<sup>52</sup>

Consistent with individuation – in accordance with the scheme that links society and individual in social life in its reproductive dynamic, that is, creation of needs and their satisfaction – a new social form of society develops. It is not the interests but the needs that express themselves in this social form. Society no longer presents itself as generalization that builds on the rationality of capitalist labor, but as form of life and values. The new form of society, the “socialization” corresponding to this individuation, contains in the individuals themselves – temporally non one-dimensional and in their autonomy – the elements that, in the process of their reproduction, will produce forces of change in social life. Dependency on capital – expressed as the creation of the need of surplus labor – takes place at the level of individual freedom. It is no longer about irrationality in the working process, with the conflict between the objectification arising from concrete work and alienation in relation to the production resulting from abstract labor and its indifference to the specific product. But what is in question now is the irrationality present in social totality, given the incompatibility between meeting “real” needs and the “false” need of surplus labor imposed on the organization’s dependency by capital. By increasing social productivity, new “real” needs are simultaneously implemented whose satisfaction is, at the same, rendered unfeasible. Marcuse designates this creation of needs whose satisfaction is rendered impossible as the irrationality of the whole.

“The historical locus of the revolution is that stage of development where the satisfaction of basic needs creates needs which transcend the state capitalist and the state socialist society. (...)”

The growth of these needs ... express the awareness that, from the beginning, the satisfaction of vital material needs must, in the revolution, proceed under the horizon of self-determination – of men and women who assert their freedom, their humanity, in the satisfaction of their vital material needs. The human being is and remains an animal, but an animal which fulfills and preserves his or her animal-being by making it part of him- or her-self, his or her freedom as a Subject.”<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

If human beings can only individuate themselves in society, by doing so by means of a “social form” or a *socialization* that is not centered on abstract labor, i.e., as a contradictory result of the process itself of capitalist accumulation, which reduces the need for abstract labor, they promote “the free development of individualities”<sup>54</sup>. For this individuation, the sole need of “surplus labor” no longer suffices. To Marx, as well as to Marcuse, the distinction between “real” and “false” needs allows them to differentiate the “heteronomous” social formation from that whose horizon is one of autonomy of human pursuits. Yet this distinction can only be sustained by the existing irrationality that is reproduced in social socialization, not on the basis of individuals. Politics, geared directly to the human being for the purpose of constituting self-determination in the realm of socialization, is impotent. Human beings reproduce or allow their “animal-being” to continue by making it – with needs not restricted by the general wealth of merchandise – part of themselves, of their freedom as subjects, individuated in a given socialization process. That is, they even apply freedom to the shaping of their needs, as self-determination. Depending on the form taken by these needs, even socialization is “heteronomous”.

In view of the potential for social evolution towards society autonomously organized, guided by human ends that are not imposed by capital and its mode of production, the key target of politics, therefore, must be mediated by socialization as form of society in its power structure.

#### 4 SOCIALIZATION AS POLITICS

The fascist totalitarianism of the mass society of the first half of the twentieth century meant an experience in a form of concrete society capable of organizing and immobilizing the contradictions of the capitalist society outlined above. “It is itself the terroristic organization of the capitalist contradictions (...) it may well destroy any revolutionary potential for an indefinite time”<sup>55</sup>.

In this experience, a dynamic approach to society as social formation is critical. But, besides that, it becomes clear that there is a *structure of power linked to the “form of society”*. This happens when the organization of society in accordance with this given form finds itself apt to intervene in the dynamic of society, that is, in its

<sup>54</sup> Karl MARX, *Grundrisse*, op. cit., p. 706.

<sup>55</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, op. cit., p. 28.

historical evolution. That is the main pursuit of politics. On the other hand, as to the “form” of society, within “the framework of the objective conditions, the alternatives (fascism or socialism) depend on the intelligence and the will, the consciousness and the sensibility, of human beings. It depends on their still-existing *freedom*.”<sup>56</sup>

The social form is linked to the imposition of a given *socialization*, apprehended as political process of social reproduction, as noted earlier. In the early 1970s, to Marcuse, “the initiative and the power are with the counterrevolution, which may culminate in such a barbarian civilization”<sup>57</sup>. The counterrevolution represents, therefore, a socialization politics with a tendency to form structures of power that are equipped to stabilize capitalist society by indefinitely annulling contradictions that might result in the development of forces of social change. It is a form of society that avoids the presence of transformative social forces within the existing social formation.

We have seen that the difficulty in showing how the potential transformative social forces find support in an existing society is precisely the theme with which Marcuse ends the book *One-dimensional Man*. Thus, by facing this issue in the terms set above, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* is the continuation of the previous book.

Drawing from the reading of *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, *One-dimensional Man* can be interpreted as a presentation from the perspective of social reproduction, as an *individuation* process based on the rationality present in the capitalist mode of production, which constitutes a watershed in the context of socialization politics proper. The one-dimensional process of individuation in the context of a society’s hegemonic rationality, by means of the consolidation of a social rationality arising from productive rationality, forms a “one-dimensionality” that jeopardizes freedom. This would result in a demarcation of socialization, thus made favorable to perpetuating that rationality in the existing social process of production and, this way, capable of reinforcing the established social structure.

To Marcuse, and for this reason it is so relevant to link the aforementioned two books and to consider them as a set developed in two parts, just as outlined for the *individuation* process in *One-dimensional Man*, also the structure of power underlying the *socialization* process in *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* is based on the organization of forces materialized in the context of *material and social construction*. This is so much so that, in the latter work, rational dependency is deciphered as “depen-

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

dency on capital” that engenders the need of “surplus labor”, which is, in turn, to be added to other human needs in the individuation process as governed by capitalist society. That is why the aforementioned dependency on capital even comes to affect the masses not directly absorbed in the production process, a situation that calls for a broader apprehension of class, translated into “all dependent classes against capital”<sup>58</sup>.

The forces engendered in the context of the contradictions arising from the capitalist mode of production cannot be referred to interests but, rather, to material needs other than and above the specific context of social labor: what is at issue is the “material reproduction of society”<sup>59</sup>. That is why political education refers to the “intellect” and the “senses” alike.

However, even as there is this continuity between *One-dimensional Man* and *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, there is a striking difference between them: socialization is a structure of social power that manifests *autonomy* in relation to the results of the individuation process. A heteronomous social form might be engendered. With today’s social totality, contradictions manifest themselves without the framework of rationality that emanates from the capitalist process of social labor and its class-based structure. Moreover, dependency on capital does not express itself solely in the one-dimensionality of the rationality underlying the process of social labor; in mass society, life is generally turned into object of exploitation and accrual. Likewise, contradictions also manifest themselves in broader and more complex ways. The critique of one-dimensionality must comprise society’s way of life and values.

As rightly pointed by Negt and Kluge, in their book *Public Sphere and Experience*, “The labor power found *within an individual* is simultaneously mobilized and disqualified (...) The tendency of a complete silencing of the intellect, to the extent that it represents a danger to the system, is paralleled by its complete activation for individual functions. Herbert Marcuse’s notion of “one-dimensional man” is not sufficient to describing this state of affairs.”<sup>60</sup>

It does not suffice to criticize what shows itself as “one-dimensional man”. The contradictions arising from this one-dimensionality must be framed in a socializa-

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>60</sup> Oskar NEG, & Alexander KLUGE, *Public Sphere and Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 170.

tion that organizes them in a given way. This organization, in turn, goes beyond the scope of social activities construed as one-dimensional.

“The contradictory nature of the public horizon of experience structured by capitalism also strikes individuals who are oppressed by the system and who engage in protest movements against it. It is conceivable – the events of May 1968 in France confirm this fact – that challenges to the capitalist system in the form of strikes, sporadic uprisings, and revolutionary movements are capable of actualizing themselves at any given moment precisely because the abstractly aggregated faculties of individuals are inwardly organized against one another. For this reason, a range of human faculties can momentarily coalesce in such movements and turn into a sudden potential for resistance whose power can in no way be explained as deriving from the complex of functionally organized faculties.”<sup>61</sup>

These contradictions take place within the framework of socialization as a form of established society, which relies on a power structure that organizes in line with the foundations of capitalist society, with its needs, its habits, and its consolidated values. These foundations are not questioned unless there is a different socialization. *The criticism of one-dimensionality must heretofore encompass socialization*, over and beyond the scope of criticism of one-dimensional practices in context.

The relations between personal reality and social reality persist as the nexus between individuation and socialization. The contradictions are also present in the individual’s particular existence, in that in the established capitalist society radical critique of society is also within it. The movement’s inaugural moment can be found in the relation itself with contradictions as “comprehended contradictions”<sup>62</sup>.

“(…) in other words, the individual liberation (refusal) must incorporate the universal in the particular protest, and the images and values of a future free society must appear in the personal relationships within the unfree society. (...) Awareness of the brute fact that, in an unfree society, no particular individual and no particular group can be free must be present in every effort to create conditions of effective refusal to the Establishment.”<sup>63</sup>

Joining the struggle for public policies (geared to satisfy needs arisen in a context of human self-determination, in terms of education, health, housing, etc.,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>62</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

incompatible with the inequality resulting from the capitalist accumulation derived from the formation of the need of surplus labor) prompts people to “experience their condition and its abolition, as vital need, and apprehend the ways and means of their liberation”<sup>64</sup>. It is a way of creating unbearable habits, even impossible to those who accept the social order. It is the *revolt* against the foundations of capitalist society materialized in existing living conditions, revolt that might lead to *counterhegemonic socialization* in opposition to *counterrevolution*.

“The time of the wholesale rejection of the ‘liberals’ has passed – or has not yet come. Radicalism has much to gain from the ‘legitimate’ protest against war, inflation and unemployment, from the defense of civil rights (...)

Presenting the facts and forces that made civilization what it is today and what it could be tomorrow – that is political education.”<sup>65</sup>

Therefore, *a socialization with a libertarian character is advanced in the particular context of individual life* wherein may develop forces fit to break with dependence on capital. In this sense, in the aforementioned book *Public Sphere and Experience*, published more or less at the same time that *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* was published, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge propose a “proletarian public sphere”<sup>66</sup> set up according to a “political economy of labor” rationality that is critical of the political economy underlying the capitalist mode of production. As an arena for debating and criticizing living conditions, it can be seen as part of a process of political education and struggle focusing on an alternative. A socialization whose organization in sociopolitical terms not only stops hindering the development of social forces of change, but also liberates men way beyond the social shackles that oppress them as socialized men forced to individuate themselves in the capitalist bourgeois society. That is, *a socialization attuned with a sociopolitics* that must “proceed under the horizon of *self-determination* of men and women who assert their freedom, their humanity, in the satisfaction of their vital material needs”<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>66</sup> Oskar NEGТ, & Alexander KLUGE, *Public Sphere and Experience*, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>67</sup> Herbert MARCUSE, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, op. cit., p. 18.