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Edwards, Caroline (2013) From Eros to Eschaton: Herbert Marcuse's liberation of time. *Telos: Critical Theory Of the Contemporary* 2013 (165), pp. 91-114. ISSN 0090-6514. (Submitted)

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This is a pre-print (i.e. final draft pre-refereeing) version of an article published in the journal *Telos*, Issue 165 (Winter 2013), pp. 91-114.

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**Caroline Edwards**

**From Eros to *Eschaton*: Herbert Marcuse's Liberation of Time**

**Abstract:**

This article explores what Gershom Scholem has called Herbert Marcuse's "unacknowledged ties to [his] Jewish heritage." At the core of Marcuse's vision of transformed, non-repressive social relations is a struggle over time, which rests upon a distinctly Jewish approach to the twin questions of remembrance and redemption. One example of this approach is the temporal dialectic between alienated labor time and the timelessness of pleasure's desire for eternity which underpins Marcuse's analysis in *Eros and Civilisation* (1956). This dialectic rests upon Marcuse's reading of the Freudian opposition between life-affirming Eros and the death drive; which he traces through a phylogenetic reading of primal society's recurring crime of patricide that continues to haunt advanced industrial capitalism.

I argue that we should read Marcuse's privileging of the Freudian *Eros-Thanatos* dualism as tacitly redefining political struggle through the affirmation of a redemptive model of cyclical time, which responds to a Jewish apocalyptic-utopian tradition. I consider the ways in which Marcuse's later writings in such texts as "Liberation from the Affluent Society" (1968) *An*

*Essay on Liberation* (1969), *Five Lectures* (1970) and *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (1972) reveal the liberation of time to be grounded in the uncovering of nature's "erotic cathexis." Cyclical time thus offers Marcuse an Orphic recourse with which to confront the linear time of advanced industrial capitalism. In reading Marcuse's delinearization of time through a reformulated understanding of Judeo-Christian eschatology, I conclude, we are afforded a fuller account of the way in which time underpins Marcuse's appeals to utopia.

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## **Article:**

The German rediscovery of messianism in the first decade of the twentieth century gave voice to a new way of thinking about the utopian future that privileged redemption in its denunciation of progressivist notions of Enlightenment rationality. Profoundly uneasy with the growing anti-liberal and anti-Semitic upper classes of the Weimar Republic, the German-Jewish "generation of 1914" drew inspiration from the figure of the Messiah in answer to the nineteenth-century utopian-socialist dream of scientific rationality. "Messianism of our era," as Gershom Scholem wrote, "proves its immense force precisely in this form of the revolutionary apocalypse, and no longer in the form of a rational utopia (if one may call it that) of eternal progress as the Enlightenment's surrogate for Redemption."<sup>1</sup> With the collapse of the philosophical, political, cultural and aesthetic frames of reference that had bolstered European bourgeois culture – which reached its nadir with the onset of the First World War – there emerged a renewal of interest in eschatology.

## **Secularizing eschatological time**

Derived from the Greek ἔσχατος (*eschatos*, meaning "last"), eschatology loosely refers to the theological study of last or final things. Israelite eschatology refers more particularly to the "expectation of a future eon radically discontinuous with the present," whilst Christian eschatology has predominantly been identified as "presuppos[ing] a linear view of time."<sup>2</sup> Broadly speaking, Judeo-Christian eschatological frameworks have had a

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<sup>1</sup> Gershom Scholem qtd in Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity*, trans. Hope Heaney (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Bill T. Arnold, "Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism" in Jerry L. Walls (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 23-39 (p. 24); Stephen T. Davis, "Eschatology and Resurrection" in Jerry L. Walls (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 384-398 (p. 384). We should note, however, that feminist biblical scholars in particular critique the "linear understanding of time that is unjustly applied to the interpretation of early Christianity." See Luise Schottroff, Silvia Schroer and Marie Theres Wacker, *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women's Perspective*, trans. Martin and Barbara Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1988), p. 216.

fundamental impact upon the way in which the Western world conceives of time: both in the sense, as phenomenologists describe, of *universal time* (referred to as clock-time, historical time or objective time) and in the sense of a *subjective experience of time* (lived time or human temporality). Both *universal* and *subjective* temporal economies encountered a radical shift with the emergence of the modern in Western philosophy, as older cyclical temporalities were replaced by a linear model of historical time predicated upon Christian eschatology.<sup>3</sup> Enlightenment hopes for the construction of a better world were thus shaped in axiomatic ways by Judeo-Christian narratives of hope and transcendence, and the teleologies of science, rationality and progress secularized particular eschatological themes. As Max L. Stackhouse writes, thinkers such as Kant, Hegel and Marx can be described as offering “heretical legacies of the biblical traditions translated into utopian teleologies.”<sup>4</sup>

This revival of eschatological ideas became secularized in the early twentieth century through the (unorthodox) Marxist projects of such thinkers as Theodor Adorno, Ernst Bloch, Erich Fromm, Georg Lukács, Martin Buber and Walter Benjamin. What had, during the nineteenth century, been overshadowed by a focus on a Christian kerygma – that pronounced that the Jesus of the Gospels was “the moral paragon of modern, liberal man” – now came to the fore: the rediscovery of St. Paul and the promise of salvation.<sup>5</sup> This renewed interest was, as Anson Rabinbach notes, at once secular *and* theological: grounded in an “[a]pocalyptic, catastrophic, utopian and pessimistic” reading of messianism.<sup>6</sup> The cataclysmic destruction and human sacrifice exacted in the trenches profoundly affected the German-Jewish theologian and philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, whose monumental study *The Star of Redemption* (1921) was actually written on the Macedonian battlefield. For Rosenzweig, the nineteenth-century liberal model of social and historical progress had irreversibly disintegrated, leading him to reject the metaphysical Hegelian marriage of historical totality with truth, and to assert that redemption would come through scaled-down instances of religious affirmation, not through historical progress: “We see God in every ethical event, but not in one complete Whole, not in history.”<sup>7</sup> The relationship between a detotalized understanding of historical time and redemption thus reached its apogee in those Marxist and utopian traditions of thought that produced the German-Jewish “generation of 1914.”<sup>8</sup> As Michael Löwy and

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Osborne, “Modernism and Philosophy” in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gasiorek, Deborah Longworth and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 388-409 (p. 392).

<sup>4</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, “Ethics and Eschatology” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 548-562 (p. 552).

<sup>5</sup> This point is made by Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, “‘To Brush History Against the Grain’: The Eschatology of the Frankfurt School and Ernst Bloch,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 (4) (1983): 631-650 (pp. 631-2).

<sup>6</sup> Anson Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism,” *New German Critique* 34 (1985): 78-124 (p. 81). Martin Buber also discusses the “socialist secularization of eschatology” through the Talmudic, Messianic overtones of what he calls a “dispossessed Marxism.” Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 8-10.

<sup>7</sup> Rosenzweig qtd Mendes-Flohr, “To Brush History Against the Grain,” p. 632

<sup>8</sup> For a useful discussion of the “generation of 1914” see Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1978).

Renee B. Larrier note, various intellectual strands converge in modern Jewish messianism between 1900 and 1933 around the central problematic of European crisis. Such intellectual groups as “anarchistic religious Jews” (including Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem), “religious Jewish anarchists” (Gustav Landauer, Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin) and “assimilated, atheist-religious, anarcho-Bolshevik Jews” (Georg Lukács, Ernst Toller, Ernst Bloch) thus crystallize around what Lukács described in 1910 as “anti-capitalist romanticism.”<sup>9</sup>

The revival of Marxism in the Weimar period thus imbued from Jewish messianism what Anson Rabinbach has signified as four chief elements: its retrospective analytical perspective; its apocalyptic tone; its ethical ambivalence concerning the liberatory or eschatological possibilities of salvation in “this world”; and its redemptive utopian preoccupation.<sup>10</sup> “The only philosophy which can be responsibly practised in the face of despair,” writes Adorno, is thus:

the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption. [...] Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light.<sup>11</sup>

Adorno’s utopian-redemptive mode of contemplation – with its focus trained on the estranging possibilities of “the messianic light” – corresponds to the more secular development of utopian temporality in Frankfurt School critical theory, in which the role that memory can play in collective dreams of revolutionary futural emancipation becomes cardinal. However, even in this secular treatment of utopian interventions into what Walter Benjamin famously termed “homogeneous, empty time,” the Jewish tradition of historical redemption can still be identified as offering crucial intellectual sustenance to Marxist-utopian theories of social transformation.<sup>12</sup> As Ehud Luz argues, the commandment to remember is “associated with the idea of the covenant between the people of Israel and God, their commitment to each other.”<sup>13</sup> Under the influence of Lurianic mysticism in the late sixteenth century this remembrance had assumed a less politically quietist cast, reclaiming redemption from the realm of divine mysticism through the gradual, agglutinated work of rectification by individuals (*tikkun*). “[M]emory of the past and hope for the future come together in the present,” writes Luz, “to create a totality that transforms the meaning of objective time.” *Teshuvah* ruptures causality and delinearizes time, reconfiguring time-consciousness

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Löwy and Renee B. Larrier, “Jewish Messianism and Libertarian Utopia in Central Europe (1900-1933),” *New German Critique* 20 (2) (1980): 105-115 (pp. 112-113); Georg Lukács qtd Ibid, p. 110.

<sup>10</sup> Rabinbach, p. 84-7.

<sup>11</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974), p. 247.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 253-64 (p. 261).

<sup>13</sup> Ehud Luz, “Utopia and Return: One the Structure of Utopian Thinking and Its Relation to Jewish-Christian Tradition,” *The Journal of Religion* 73 (3) (1993): 357-377 (p. 361).

until man's misdeeds become cast "in a new light so that they are perceived as having some redeeming feature."<sup>14</sup> Although still notionally theurgic, Lurianic mysticism opened up utopian possibilities for collective human endeavour through the process of man's return towards God and his authentic self undertaken in *teshuvah*.<sup>15</sup>

According to this reading, the struggle of collective memory in Judaism reveals its status as a utopian religion. Gershom Scholem has similarly commented on the congruence of ideas between the messianic regulative ideal of Jewish messianism and the secularized apocalyptic theory of revolution. He argues that any qualitative difference between these two traditions involves a "transposal of terminology," in which the "Utopia of the world-transforming revolution" is shifted onto the register of eschatology:<sup>16</sup>

That is the attitude behind the writings of the most important ideologists of revolutionary messianism, such as Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, whose acknowledged or unacknowledged ties to their Jewish heritage are evident.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, much ink has been spilled on delineating the messianic-Judaic overtones of Bloch, Benjamin and Adorno;<sup>18</sup> but Herbert Marcuse's "unacknowledged ties to [his] Jewish heritage" (unacknowledged both in the sense of unattributed in his own writings, as well as unexamined by critical scholarship) remain curiously underexplored. Like his contemporaries Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith and Hans Jonas – all of whom also studied under Heidegger – Marcuse, as Richard Wolin observes, can be described as one of several intellectual "non-Jewish Jews who thought of themselves as proverbial 'Germans of Jewish origin'."<sup>19</sup> Although Marcuse himself rarely

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 366-9.

<sup>16</sup> Gershom Scholem, "Reflections on Jewish Theology" in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner J. Dunnhauser (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), pp. 261-297 (p. 287).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, Anson Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism," *New German Critique* 34 (1985): 78-124 (p. 81) and *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals Between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997) (p. 28); Michael Löwy and Renee B. Larrier, "Jewish Messianism and Libertarian Utopia in Central Europe (1900-1933)," *New German Critique* 20 (2) (1980): 105-115; Warren S. Goldstein, "Messianism and Marxism: Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch's Dialectical Theories of Secularization," *Critical Sociology* 27 (2) (2001): 246-281 (p. 246); Richard Wolin, "From Messianism to Materialism: The Later Aesthetics of Walter Benjamin," *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 81-108 (p. 93); Frances Daly, "The Fate of Hope in Hollow Spaces: Ernst Bloch's Messianism" in Wayne Cristaudo and Wendy Baker (eds) *Messianism, Apocalypse and Redemption in Twentieth Century German Thought* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2006), pp. 79-94; Wayne Whitson Floyd Jr., "Transcendence in the Light of Redemption: Adorno and the Legacy of Rosenzweig and Benjamin," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 61 (3) (1993): 539-551; Bram Mertens, "'Hope, Yes, But Not For Us': Messianism and Redemption in the Work of Walter Benjamin," *Messianism, Apocalypse and Redemption in 20th Century German Thought*, ed. Wayne Cristaudo and Wendy Baker (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2006), pp. 63-77.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 5.

talked about his own Jewish background, Peter Marcuse has said of the family that: “We were certainly Jewish; we would never have been in the US otherwise. My father was *bar mitzvah*’d, and to my knowledge his parents were relatively observant. But he himself was strictly secular.”<sup>20</sup>

It will be my argument in this article that at the core of Marcuse’s vision of transformed, non-repressive social relations is *a struggle over time*. Although it is infrequently mentioned in his writings, time is fundamental to interrogating a number of Marcuse’s central ideas, including: his theorization of repressive society under advanced industrial capitalism; his championing of a more concrete understanding of utopia as both necessary and achievable; his distinction between “real” and “false” needs; his Fourierist recalibration of the relationship between work and libidinal pleasure; his reworking of Freud’s primal horde with its historically recurring crime of patricide and filial rebellion; and his invocation of a Schillerian “aesthetic ethos” and development of a “radical sensibility.” Marcuse’s framing of this temporal struggle rests upon a distinctly Jewish approach to the twin questions of *remembrance* and *redemption*. I will consider the ways in which we might read Marcuse’s privileging of cyclical time over the linear time of capitalist teleology through the prism of a reformulated Judeo-Christian eschatology, understood outside of its relationship with the so-called “secularized eschatologies” of shining modernity or hyper-technologized capitalist progress. It becomes possible through a reconsideration of pre-Hellenized Hebrew Scripture and early Christian thought to uncover eschatology’s *earthliness*; and it is my argument that Marcuse’s recourse to cyclical time would be productively read as encompassing the radical political overtones of utopian Jewish messianism. As Richard Wolin writes:

if one digs beneath the surface, one detects in Marcuse’s political thought a palpable indebtedness to the tradition of Jewish Messianism that became a rite of passage for Central European Jewish intellectuals who came of age circa World War I.<sup>21</sup>

In reading Marcuse’s appeals to non-repressive society via a consideration of the messianic connotations “beneath the surface,” we are afforded a fuller account of the way in which time underpins Marcuse’s appeals to utopia in a concrete, rather than speculative, framework – as the futural *not yet* germinates within the present time through its encounter with the redeemed memories of the past. This temporal redemption can be read as indebted to the secularized tradition of Jewish messianism evident also in the utopian philosophy of Ernst Bloch. Meanwhile, Marcuse’s later writings in such texts as “Liberation from the Affluent Society” (1968) *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), *Five Lectures* (1970) and *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (1972) reveal the liberation of time to be grounded in the uncovering of nature’s “erotic cathexis.” This article will conclude with a consideration of the recalibration of transcendence by the “ecocritical turn,” which in recent years has produced its

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Marcuse, “Herbert Marcuse’s ‘Identity,’” in: *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, eds. John Abromeit and W. Mark Cobb (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 249. Zvi Tauber discusses Marcuse’s Jewish identity in more detail in “Herbert Marcuse on Jewish Identity, the Holocaust and Israel,” *Telos*, Issue 165 (Winter 2013), pp. 115-135.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

own discourse of ecoeschatology,<sup>22</sup> uncovering the “earthliness” of immanent and historical hope within the Hebrew Scriptures. In reading Marcuse’s delinearization of time through a reformulated understanding of Judeo-Christian eschatology, I conclude, we are afforded a fuller account of the way in which time underpins Marcuse’s appeals to utopia.

### **Timelessness: *Eros* and the death drive**

Having arrived in the United States in 1934, Marcuse began addressing the apparent political impotence of the working class and the impossibility of revolution within mature capitalist societies. Revolutions had failed, as Paul Tillich argued, because “they expected to heal society without at the same time healing individuals who are the bearers of society.”<sup>23</sup> Masking class antagonisms through the socially mandated consumption of luxury commodities thus revealed the apex of reified social relations under advanced industrial capitalism, through the production and regulation of desire. As Marcuse writes in his 1956 text *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, “[t]he definition of the standard of living in terms of automobiles, television sets, airplanes and tractors,” all too easily “serves to justify the perpetuation of repression.”<sup>24</sup> In this libertarian reconstitution of Freudian theory, Marcuse privileges memory as a crucial cognitive process in the necessary reorientation of Marxism (codified as “critical theory”),<sup>25</sup> a tool with which the individual subject could relate him/herself to the failed or unrecorded revolutionary attempts through history and realize the repressive basis of civilized “progress.” Moreover, since the politicization of psychology had catapulted individual existence into the melee of public discourse, “private disorder,” as Marcuse writes, “reflects more directly than before the disorder of the whole” (*EC xi*).

Freud’s metapsychology in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) unequivocally grounds the repressive basis of civilized progress in a diachronic modification of man’s instinctual nature. Thus the libidinal and primitive “pleasure ego” is confronted with the harsh actuality of the reality principle, whose primary function is to guard against actual or perceived “sensations of unpleasure” generated by the pleasure ego’s incompatibility with the strictures of civilized life.<sup>26</sup> Marcuse argues that Freud’s analysis of

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<sup>22</sup> For a good introduction to the emerging field of ecoeschatology, see Celia Deane-Drummond, “Eco-eschatology” in *Eco-Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008), pp. 164-178.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Tillich, *Political Expectation*, ed. James L. Adams, trans. William R. Grout, Walter Bense, and James L. Adams (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 168.

<sup>24</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), p. 153. All subsequent citations of this text will be referenced parenthetically as (*EC*).

<sup>25</sup> As Vincent Geoghegan notes, Marcuse referred to his philosophical approach as critical theory rather than Marxism. Similarly, the planned *Institut für Marxismus* was renamed the *Institut für Sozialforschung*, after it had moved to the USA in 1934, partly as a result of the fear of academic alienation at Columbia University where the Institute was offered temporary accommodation (Geoghegan, *Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse* [London: Pluto Press, 1981], pp. 20-1.)

<sup>26</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, ed. James Strachey, trans. Joan Riviere (London: The Hogarth Press, 1975), pp. 4-5.



repression conflates biological and socio-historical instinctual transformations, which allows Marcuse to emphasize the contingency of a unique mode of repression brought about by advanced industrial capitalism's specific reality principle; what he terms the "performance principle" (*EC* 35). Wage labor, under the performance principle, thus alienates the worker from the completed products of his own labor, divorcing the unmediated activity of his labor outside of the sphere of exchange value, rupturing his essential "species-being," and dividing him from other workers through *the regulation of time*.<sup>27</sup> This regulation of time demands libidinal sacrifices, underscoring the inherently unstable antagonism at the heart of advanced industrial capitalism, as Marcuse writes:

Man exists only *part-time*, during the working days, as an instrument of alienated performance; the rest of the time he is free for himself. (If the average working day, including preparation and travel to and from work, amounts to ten hours, and if the biological needs for sleep and nourishment require another ten hours, the free time would be four out of each twenty-four hours throughout the greater part of the individual's life.) This free time would be potentially available for pleasure (*EC* 47; italics in original).

Here Marcuse explicitly alludes to the universalization of clock time, whose precise calibrations of social life into punctual units of commodified labor also engendered a disciplinary regimentation of "free time." "Labor time," as he writes, "which is the largest part of the individual's life-time, is painful time, for alienated labor is absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle" (*EC* 45). Similarly, E. P. Thompson analyzes the shift in "time-sense" inaugurated through the radical restructuring of working practices and social habits brought about by the disciplining of clock time in England during the Industrial Revolution; writing that "in mature capitalist society all time must be consumed, marketed, put to *use*; it is offensive for the labour force merely to 'pass the time'."<sup>28</sup> For Marcuse, establishing an alternative mode of "pass[ing] the time" is central to the reversal of capitalism's tightly governed desublimation of those forms of desire that maintain social cohesion and the productive regulation of sexuality (as he later explores in more detail in *One-Dimensional Man*). In metapsychological terms, advanced industrial capitalism's attacks on individual libido also result in the emasculation of Eros's power for utilizing the death instinct in its building of culture. Thus "the perpetual restrictions on Eros ultimately weaken the life instincts and thus strengthen and release the very forces against which they were 'called up' – those of destruction" (*EC* 44).

The negation of pleasure is thus grounded in a consideration of alienated labor: outlining clock time's exploitation as the bearer of advanced industrial capitalism's performance principle, with its homogenized

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<sup>27</sup> Marcuse's argument here derives from Karl Marx's theory of the alienation of labor in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), pp. 74-78.

<sup>28</sup> E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 58 (1) (1967): 56-97 (pp. 90-1; italics in original).

compression of all social life into the units of time optimal to the production and consumption of commodities. For Marcuse, this repressive temporality is, however, dialectically wedded to the *timeless eternity of pleasure* as mediated through the repressed id, which demands its own instinctual satisfaction and contains the germs of recalcitrant subjectivity. Against industrial capitalist society's compartmentalization of time into units of productivity – with free time denoting the “rest” necessary to the laborer's optimal performance on return to work – Marcuse thus posits an alternative mode of temporality grounded in “the eternity of pleasure”:

Timelessness is the ideal of pleasure. Time has no power over the id, the original domain of the pleasure principle. But the ego, through which alone pleasure becomes real, is in its entirety subject to time (*EC* 231).

Marcuse's analysis of the “temporal reduction” of the libido (*EC* 48) is thus predicated upon the “timelessness” of pleasure; a temporal conflict suggested in Freud's opposition of the two generative forces of civilization: the life-enabling, libidinal forces of Eros and the “death drive,” or *Todestrieb*.<sup>29</sup> As several critics have observed, temporality underpins many of Freud's psychoanalytical discoveries. The conception of “belatedness” (*Nachträglichkeit*; also translated as “deferred action”), for example, draws attention to Freud's concern with temporality through its emphasis on the “re-arrangement” or “re-transcription” of memory traces, as Jean Laplanche argues.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the narrativization of psychic transformations undertaken in the “talking cure” reveals its mediation between phenomenological and cosmological times, whilst Freud's introduction in the *Interpretation of Dreams* of “screen memories,” or the residual traces (“day-residues”) of dreams, offers evidence of our unconscious childhood past.<sup>31</sup> Finally, Freud's discovery of the unconscious in a 1915 metapsychological paper announced its “timelessness” or atemporality; and the 1920 introduction of the death drive was similarly framed in atemporal terms, as its titanic clash with the pleasure principle of *Eros*, argues Freud, is enacted against the psychic backdrop of desire's indifference to temporal regulation. Exhibiting a metaphysical tone previously unexplored in his clinical and technical papers,<sup>32</sup> Freud writes in his late metapsychological works that:

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<sup>29</sup> As C. Fred Alford reminds us, although Freud did not employ the term *Thanatos* in his writings, it has “become common to employ thanatos as a synonym for the *Todestrieb*, especially when contrasting the *Todestrieb* to eros.” C. Fred Alford, “Freud and Violence” in Anthony Elliott (ed.), *Freud 2000* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 61-87 (p. 63). Marcuse, for instance, refers to this dualism as the opposition between Eros and Thanatos throughout *Eros and Civilisation*.

<sup>30</sup> John Fletcher, “The Letter in the Unconscious: The Enigmatic signifier in the Work of Jean Laplanche” in John Fletcher and Martin Stanton (eds), *Jean Laplanche: Seduction, Translation, Drives* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1992), p. 112.

<sup>31</sup> David Wood observes the mediation between phenomenological and cosmological times in *Time After Time* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 32; for Freud's references to “screen memories” and “day-residues,” see *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1952), pp. 173n, 228.

<sup>32</sup> Although we should note that Freud's discovery of the “timeless” character of the unconscious in his 1915 metapsychological paper is prefigured throughout his oeuvre. Adrian Johnston, “The Temporal Repressed in Freudian Psychoanalysis” in *Time Driven*:

There is nothing in the id that corresponds to the idea of time; there is no recognition of the passage of time, and – a thing that is most remarkable and awaits consideration in philosophical thought – no alteration in its mental processes is produced by the passage of time. Wishful impulses which have never passed beyond the id, but impressions, too, which have been sunk into the id by repression, are virtually immortal.<sup>33</sup>

As Adrian Johnston argues, the substitution in his 1933 *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* of the timelessness of the “id” for his earlier positing of the timelessness of the “unconscious” reveals a crucial slippage in Freud’s hypostatization of the unconscious. As Jean Laplanche suggests, the later treatment of atemporality indicates that it is the id which is ignorant of time, whilst the unconscious is in fact temporalized.<sup>34</sup> Freud’s positing of the timelessness of the unconscious has therefore been read by critics as lapsing into quasi-metaphysical claims of the shrouded depths of psychic pre-consciousness; offering a recondite mode of mental processing that Lacan warned was “pre-ontological.”<sup>35</sup>

### ***Temps retrouvé: redemption of the hopes of the past***

It is my argument that this slippage in Freud’s temporalization of the unconscious has some interesting consequences for Marcuse’s own application of what is generally referred to by critics as the *Eros-Todestrieb* dualism. Johnston’s reading of Freud’s metapsychological theory of memory through phenomenological categories of lived time reveals psychoanalysis’s “irreconcilable tension between time and eternity, between temporality and timelessness.”<sup>36</sup> Marcuse’s utilization of the Freudian dualism between *temporality* and *timelessness* also raises pertinent questions concerning the Judeo-Christian eschatological underpinning of received notions of clock time and utopian futurity. Rational clock time, as Hannah Spahn argues, can be read as “a continuation and modification of the linear time of the Judeo-Christian tradition.”<sup>37</sup> However, if considered in relation to a more radical tradition of Jewish thinking that grounds utopian possibility within a redemptive mode of recollection or remembrance – what we might, in the spirit of Ricoeur’s lectures on Freud, call an *archaeo-eschatology* – Marcuse’s delineation of the libidinal transformation of subjectivity in his mature utopian philosophy offers us perhaps the clearest glimpse of those

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*Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. 5-22 (p. 7).

<sup>33</sup> Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. 24 Vols. (Vol. 22), ed. and trans. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-1974), p. 74.

<sup>34</sup> Johnston, pp. 15-16.

<sup>35</sup> Jean Laplanche qtd Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> Hannah Spahn, “Rational Time” in *Thomas Jefferson, Time and History* (Charlottesville, CA: University of Virginia Press, 2011), p. 35.

unacknowledged ties to his Jewish heritage I mentioned earlier. Freud's late theory of instincts allows Marcuse to reposition the question of revolutionary agency through the framework of remembrance's "negative" or critical powers, in which the crime of patricide recurs throughout history in the form of a "return of the repressed," continually re-enacting the generational rebellion against established authority. The task, then, becomes an archaeological undertaking in which the ontogenetic repression of the individual is approached through sublimated instinctual memories at the phylogenetic level. This process of unearthing civilization's earliest rebellion would thus uncover those radicalized Proustian *temps retrouvé* whose alternatives to the repressive present offer anticipatory glimpses for ruptural modes of futurity. As Marcuse writes: "Recalling the dominion of the primal pleasure principle, where freedom from want was a necessity, the id carries the memory traces of this state forward into every present future: it projects the past into the future" (*EC* 33).

Marcuse's arguably uncritical employment of the Freudian notion of the timeless unconscious also raises issues concerning the influence of Jewish and Christian eschatologies on linear models of historical progress. As Jacques Derrida argues, "the unconscious is no doubt timeless only from the standpoint of a certain vulgar conception of time";<sup>38</sup> and it could similarly be contended that conflated accounts of a singularized or "deconstructed" Judeo-Christian eschatology are predicated upon vulgar notions of teleological projection. Certainly, the understanding of eternity as a timeless, otherworldly realm of fulfilled expectation that posits a self-contained exteriority inaccessible to our here-and-now is a misreading of Jewish messianism. As David Novak reminds us, the Jewish doctrine of the Messiah works "to project the future out of the past." Thus, "due to its political character [messianism] will always be more immediately relevant to this-worldly concerns."<sup>39</sup> Messianic philosophy is, however, frequently criticized for inducing anticipations of the future that breed passivity and hopes for salvific transcendence. It remains crucial, therefore, to distinguish what Ernst Bloch called "human-eschatological, explosively posited messianism" from "static, apologetic myth;" not least because the metaphysical specter of what Derrida refers to as the "messianic extremity" raises significant problems in terms of positing *a time that is somehow paradoxically exterior to time*.<sup>40</sup>

We might, therefore, apprehend messianism through a temporal framework that avoids the transcendent exteriority of an eternal horizon and focuses its gaze instead upon alternative understandings of messianic rupture. As Michael Löwy quotes in his study of Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History":

it is not a matter of awaiting the Messiah, as in the dominant tradition of rabbinical Judaism, *but of bringing about his coming*. [...] Benjamin belongs to the dissident tradition of those

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<sup>38</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 196-231 (p. 215).

<sup>39</sup> Novak, p. 126.

<sup>40</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope, Vol. 3*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), pp. 1193; Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 45.

who were known as the *dohakei haketz*, those who 'hasten the end of time' [my italics].<sup>41</sup>

Despite his avowed secularism, it is my argument that Marcuse's libertarian Freudo-Marxism in *Eros and Civilisation* can be identified as belonging to the *dohakei haketz* tradition of Judaic messianism. Indeed, several critics have noted this congruence of Hegelian Marxist dialectics with messianic utopianism at work in Marcuse's oeuvre. Jürgen Habermas describes Marcuse's "chiliastic trust" in the project of rupturing linear historical time through a rescuing of pre-historical instinctual structures. Similarly, Adrian Johnston argues that Marcuse's historicisation of Freud offers a "messianic prediction of a possible 'libidinal liberation'."<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, R. N. Berki argues that Marcuse's critique of the sinful life of capitalist modernity is couched in "the tone of a Saint Paul and Savonarola," owing more to the idiom of religious radicalism than to post-Enlightenment political radicalism:

it is not unreasonable to look upon Marcuse's adaptation of Freud as an attempt to turn "metapsychology" into a kind of modern humanistic theology, complete with an account of genesis, a categorical designation of goods and evils, a story of the fall, as well as a blueprint for future salvation.<sup>43</sup>

If Marcuse's reformulation of the Freudian timeless unconscious constructs a "modern humanistic theology," we should remind ourselves that Freud's own model of primal repression (*Urverdrängung*) reframes the Jewish obligation to remember within the psychoanalytic framework of the primal prehistory of mankind. As Paul Ricoeur writes, Freud's thesis in *Moses and Monotheism* is contingent upon re-reading the "truth" of religion as enacting the repetition of civilization's memory of patricide in which Yahweh comes to represent "the sublime resurgence of the father of the horde."<sup>44</sup>

In the context of Jewish utopian messianism, then, the "Great Refusal" of Orpheus-as-liberator (*EC* 236) can thus be read as *enacting a hastening of the end of time* through the political tradition of messianic rupture; seizing the historical opportunity to resist capitalism's reified "Happy Consciousness" and refusing an apathetic acceptance of death as ontological essence. For Marcuse, Orpheus instructs us to realize that death cannot be reduced to any pure negation of being since *the end of time is signified by utopia, not death*.<sup>45</sup> Unlike Prometheus, who toils beneath the mighty albatross of progress, the legendary heroes Orpheus and Narcissus thus possess a vitally antagonistic relationship with the reality of the performance principle that militates against what Marcuse calls "the temporal dismemberment of pleasure" (*EC*

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<sup>41</sup> Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2005), p. 104. Löwy cites Yosef Haïm Yerushalmi's theory of "messianic activism" in *Zahor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> Habermas, pp. 9-10; Johnston, p. 244.

<sup>43</sup> (Berki 65, 74).

<sup>44</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 244.

<sup>45</sup> Emmanuel Levinas makes a similar point in *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 98-99.

47). This mutilation of the time of pleasure must therefore be met with a commitment to the total negation of established society and subsequent instantiation of qualitative change. As Marcuse recalls in his lecture delivered at The Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation held at the Camden Roundhouse in July 1967:

Walter Benjamin quotes reports that during the Paris Commune, in all corners of the city of Paris there were people shooting at the clocks on the towers of the churches, palaces and so on, thereby consciously or half-consciously expressing the need that somehow time has to be arrested; that at least the prevailing, the established time continuum has to be arrested, and that a new time has to begin – a very strong emphasis on the qualitative difference and on the totality of the rupture between the new society and the old.<sup>46</sup>

This arrest of the “established time continuum” can be read as being predicated upon the Orphic and Narcissistic myths whose rebellion signifies “the desperate effort to arrest the flow of time” (EC 191). Marcuse’s Hellenistic sources are interesting in this regard. The “aesthetic dimension” signified a powerfully utopian aspect of experience for Marcuse, and his privileging of literature as a crucial indicator of the aesthetic dimension can be traced throughout his intellectual career: from his doctoral dissertation on the German *Künstlerroman*, or “novel of the artist” (completed at the University of Freiburg in 1922), throughout his philosophical writings until his final work, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, published two years before Marcuse’s death in 1979. Ernst Bloch, who similarly examined the *Künstlerroman* in his essay “A Philosophical View of the Novel of the Artist” (1965), similarly drew on Hellenistic literary figures, privileging Odysseus and Prometheus as “Venturers Beyond the Limits,” or exemplars of the artistic defiance of death (in company with Mozart’s Don Giovanni, Goethe’s Faust, Cervantes’ Don Quixote and Shakespeare’s Prospero) who articulate that “something is missing, the fair moment is yet to come.”<sup>47</sup> If we consider Marcuse’s literary interests alongside those of Ernst Bloch, we can therefore identify an interesting engagement between avant-garde modernism (indeed, the term “Great Refusal” is borrowed from the surrealists),<sup>48</sup> Schillerian Idealist aesthetics and a Goethean critique of Romanticism which is prefaced with recourse to the Greek “age of epic poetry” where, as Marcuse writes, “life was

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<sup>46</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “Liberation from the Affluent Society” in *The Dialectics of Liberation*, ed. David Cooper (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 175-192 (p. 177). Subsequently referred to as (LAS).

<sup>47</sup> Bloch’s argument in this essay is expanded in *The Principle of Hope*, Vol. 3, p. 1014. A comparative reading of Bloch and Marcuse, which would benefit from a fuller consideration in critical scholarship, is also apt given Marcuse’s comments at a conference he attended in the 1960s with Ernst Bloch: “I am happy and honoured to talk to you in the presence of Ernst Bloch today, whose work *Geist der Utopie*, published more than forty years ago, has influenced at least my generation, and has shown how realistic utopian concepts can be, how close to action, how close to practice.” These comments are recollected in his 1969 essay of “The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration,” *Praxis* 5 (1-2) (1969): 20-25 (p. 20).

<sup>48</sup> Wolin, Op. cit., p. 14.

itself art and mythology life, the public property of the people.”<sup>49</sup> His invocation of a non-repressive Schillerian “aesthetic ethos” that develops its own “radical sensibility” via the mythological figures of Orpheus and Narcissus thus reveals, as similarly Hellenistic ur-texts certainly do for Bloch, Marcuse’s intellectual inheritance of a tradition that Russell Jacoby has called “iconoclastic utopianism.” As Jacoby writes: “[i]n the same way that God could not be depicted for the Jews, the future could not be described for the iconoclastic utopians; it could only be approached through hints and parables.”<sup>50</sup> Marcuse’s invocation of non-repressive Narcissistic sexuality and Orphic creativity can thus be read as an allegorical illustration of a utopian futurity whose temporal reconciliation with the timelessness of eternity is consistent with the messianic tradition of iconoclastic utopianism.

According to this messianic tradition we might then wonder whether Marcuse’s utilisation of Hellenistic designations belies a rejection of standard linear time that obscures its Jewish origins. However, as Zvi Tauber writes in this issue, after his death Marcuse’s wife Erica Sherover-Marcuse and his son Peter Marcuse wrote that “[t]he aspect of the Jewish tradition with which Herbert most strongly identified is the importance it places on the struggle for justice in this life, in this world: its insistence on the ongoing effort “to use life to help bring about a better life”.<sup>51</sup> This familial insistence that Marcuse’s strongest association with Judaism lay in his insistence upon “justice in this life, in this world” suggests Marcuse’s adherence to a secular understanding of Jewish messianism; what, as I referred to above, Michael Löwy has called the “dissident tradition” of *dohakei haketz* whose hastening of the end of time fundamentally opposes rabbinical Judaism’s positing of Messiah-as-transcendence. Indeed, this reading of the secular Jewish intellectual currents that animate Marcuse’s delinearized utopian temporality of arrest is indicated by Marcuse’s comments in interview. Whilst he did not overtly position such ruptural temporalities and their utopian potential within any Jewish messianic genealogy in his philosophical works, when asked about his Jewish influences in interview Marcuse said that he was not inspired by the Talmud and Torah but by the “prophetic recasting of the revolutionary imagination,” in which he read Exodus as a revolutionary movement, whose memory is ritually enacted in Jewish families during Passover ceremonies each year.<sup>52</sup> Ernst Bloch similarly examines Exodus as a revolutionary movement in *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of Exodus and the Kingdom* (1968).<sup>53</sup> Offering an anthropocentric reading of the Bible’s revolutionary and utopian impulses, Bloch asserts that the conservative ethos of Judaeo-Christian

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<sup>49</sup> Marcuse qtd in Douglas Kellner, “Origins: Politics, Art and Philosophy in the Young Marcuse” in *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 13-37 (p. 20).

<sup>50</sup> Russell Jacoby, *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. xv.

<sup>51</sup> Zvi Tauber, “Herbert Marcuse on Jewish Identity, the Holocaust and Israel,” *Telos*, Issue 165 (Winter 2013), pp. 115-135. Tauber cites Erica Sherover-Marcuse and Peter Marcuse, “To the Editors”, *New York Review of Books*, September 27, 1979; “An Open Letter to Friends of Herbert Marcuse,” *New German Critique* (No. 18, Fall 1979), p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> Herbert Marcuse qtd Eliot Ratzman, “Marcuse and Monotheism: Sources for Jewish Liberation A/theology,” Presentation at Critical Refusals Conference, University of Pennsylvania, October 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of Exodus and the Kingdom*, trans. J. T. Swann (London: Verso, 2009). Subsequently referred to as (AC).

theology is rooted in Greek thought, which he describes as “being-oriented and anti-historical” (AC 44). The retrogressive focus of the Platonic philosophy of *anamnesis* in traditional biblical scholarship thus prevents what Bloch sees as the utopian “Novum” underpinning the revolutionary, historical struggles in the Bible: the “buoyant expectation” of the Exodus from Egypt mapped out in Job, with its messianic, “anti-Yahweh” message, and the Eschaton expressed in the Book of Revelations, whose strong feelings of dissatisfaction directly challenge religious institutionalism (AC 44-5, 14-15, 24).

Marcuse can similarly be identified as differentiating between conservative and progressive strands of Jewish messianic thinking in his analysis of the utopian imagination. His intellectual recourse to Eros’ act of patricidal remembrance can be read as echoing what Gershom Scholem calls the “restorative tendency” of rabbinic Judaism. Nourished by a utopian impulse which projects upon the past its Messianic hope, the restorative aspect is also dialectically in tension with the vision of a completely different, new time whose ruptural qualities negate Judaism’s conservative impulse towards *Halakhah*, or the preservation of religious law.<sup>54</sup> The three tendencies of *conservative*, *restorative* and *utopian* Judaism, argues Scholem, thus offer a messianic temporal structure at odds with itself; straining towards the restoration of an idealized projection of the past, whilst simultaneously shaping the referent of a transformative utopian vision that would negate such conservation. With its internal tensions, this messianic structure does, however, signal a mode of imagined temporal rebellion whose fundamental alterity (or, in Marcuse’s words “negativity”) offers a total rejection of “technological rationality” (EC 85). Radical memory invokes the “timeless past and forbidden future” that the civilized ego under the reified social relations of capitalism must continually reassert (EC 245-6). “The authentic utopia,” as Marcuse writes in *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1978), is “grounded in recollection.”<sup>55</sup> This interrelationship, however, does not suggest that the revolutionary task should be to conserve or elevate the past but rather, as Adorno and Horkheimer famously observe in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, to actuate “the redemption of the hopes of the past.”<sup>56</sup> As Marcuse is careful to qualify, the symbolic defeat of time enacted by such figures as Eros and Orpheus, can only remain “artistic and spurious” unless it is wedded to concrete events, since “remembrance is no real weapon unless it is translated into historical action” (EC 233).

### **Ecological time: from Eros to Eschaton**

Although it might at first glance appear hopelessly abstruse, the dismantling of the performance principle through invoking an Orphic time of cathected potentiality needs, however, to begin somewhere. As Marcuse contends, “we

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<sup>54</sup> Gershom Scholem, “Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, trans. Michael A. Meyer and Hillel Halkin (New York Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 1-36 (pp. 3-4).

<sup>55</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, trans. Herbert Marcuse and Erica Sherover (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 73.

<sup>56</sup> Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997), p. xv.



must begin formulating these features, no matter how metaphysical, no matter how Utopian” (*LAS* 177-178). In “Progress and Freud’s Theory of Instincts” (1956)<sup>57</sup> Marcuse discusses the internal, psychic dynamics through which individuals negate their own possible liberation – what he memorably terms the “psychic Thermidor” (*FL* 38). Here he argues that it remains possible to replace a repressive reality (performance) principle with a qualitatively different mode of production and consumption. In terms of the Freudian instinctual framework, the de-industrialization of Fordist labor would therefore release the individual from an alienated sphere of robotized existence and would consequently abolish the temporal distinction between alienated labor and free time. Work would be liberated to become play, as “the force of the instinctual energy released by mechanized labor would no longer have to be expended on unpleasurable activity and could be changed back into erotic energy” (*FL* 39-40).

This idea is given further consideration in Marcuse’s later text *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), in which he discusses the temporal division between the two realms of freedom and labor, or leisure (*EL* 20-1). Socialism, he argues, must overcome the presupposition that human freedom could only ever occur beyond the factory gates, and should perforce interrogate the Fourierist possibility that socially necessary labor could become play (*EL* 21-2). The *eroticization of a liberated time of labor-as-play* is central to Marcuse’s glimpses of the “concrete,” rather than “abstract,” utopian possibility (to use Ernst Bloch’s distinction)<sup>58</sup> that lies dormant within the workplace. Under the reality principle of advanced industrial capitalism, Eros has become localized into monogamous, reproductive sexuality, reducing the organism’s pleasure principle into a serviceable instrument of labor by draining its erotic energy and harnessing its gratification into social productivity (*FL* 34-5). However, in order to broach the question of what a qualitatively different futurity would look like we need to refer to a later text in Marcuse’s oeuvre: his essay on “Nature and Revolution” in *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (1972).<sup>59</sup> It is in this text that we find the beginnings of a more fully fleshed out consideration of what an eroticized, Fourierist mode of non-repressive work might encompass, and in the remainder of this article I shall read this text through recent scholarship on “the greening of eschatology.”

In “Nature and Revolution” Marcuse argues that nature is gradually being rediscovered “as an ally in the struggle against exploitative societies in which the violation of nature aggravates the violation of man” (*NR* 59). Nature, therefore, must be understood as a historical category rather than an unchanging ontological essence since man encounters the landscape in an *always-already mediated sense*. In advanced industrial capitalism nature

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<sup>57</sup> Translated into English and published in the collection *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro and Shierry M. Weber (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 28-43. Subsequently referred to as (*FL*). “Progress and Freud’s Theory of Instincts” derives from two lectures originally delivered in 1956 to commemorate Sigmund Freud’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

<sup>58</sup> Bloch distinguishes concrete utopian anticipation from “merely abstract utopianizing” in *The Principle of Hope, Vol. 1*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986), p. 157.

<sup>59</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “Nature and Revolution” in *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), pp. 59-78. Subsequently referred to as (*NR*).

thus confronts man through the highly technologized and commercialized topography of industrial-scale agribusiness; with its tightly-controlled patchwork of private property, militarized-industrial sites, and the outsourcing of refuse and pollutants into specialized zones of waste management. Thus, “the violation of nature is inseparable,” writes Marcuse, “from the economy of capitalism” (NR 61). Man’s solidarity with nature rests on the double meaning of “nature” as Marx employs the term in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*: both external nature, as well as man’s own “species being” or “essence” (*Gattungswesen*).<sup>60</sup> In discussing the emancipation of the senses posed in Marx’s text, Marcuse argues that Marx’s “outrageously unscientific, metaphysical notion” (NR 65) of species-being still contains a residual trace of “the hubris of domination” (NR 69) in its conception of the natural world as crafted through congealed human labor and its positing of the potential of a “humanized” nature to respond to man’s liberated gratification. The Marxist conception of nature, Marcuse argues, thus fails to conceive of nature as “a subject in its own right”: “as a *cosmos* with its own potentialities, necessities, and chances” (NR 60, 69; italics in original). However, this conception retains some usefulness in its recapturing of the ancient understanding of the primacy of *recollection* in the acquisition of knowledge:

Recollection thus is not remembrance of a Golden Past (which never existed), of childhood innocence, primitive man, et cetera. Recollection as epistemological faculty rather is synthesis, reassembling the bits and fragments which can be found in the distorted humanity and distorted nature (NR 70).

Marcuse’s reading of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* thus reveals his fundamental critique of linear teleology. Freedom, as a “regulative concept of reason,” moves man “not toward Heaven or Paradise” but “an ever more peaceful, joyful struggle with the inexorable resistance of society and nature” (NR 70-1). In order to understand this non-alienated sensibility, which is capable of experiencing “the erotic energy of nature” (NR 74), we need to consider our opening question of the replacement of pre-industrial cyclical temporalities by a linear understanding of historical time modeled upon a “deconstructed” Judeo-Christian eschatology. For Marcuse, such teleology has become synonymous with capitalism’s driving logic of productivity, and the instantiation of a non-repressive transformation of society would liberate our instinctual structure. As he writes in “Progress and Freud’s Theory of Instincts,” under such transformation:

[a]lienated labor would be transformed into the free play of human faculties and forces. In consequence all *contentless transcendence* would come to a close, and freedom would no longer be an eternally failing project. Productivity would define

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<sup>60</sup> Marx writes that “[i]n tearing away from man the object of his production ... estranged labor tears from him his species life, his real species objectivity, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him (Marx 77).

itself in relation to receptivity, existence would be experienced not as continually expanding and unfulfilled becoming but as existence or being with what is and can be. *Time would not seem linear, as a perpetual line or rising curve, but cyclical*, as the return contained in Nietzsche's idea of the 'perpetuity of pleasure' (*FL* 40-1; my italics).

It is my argument that Marcuse's most concrete glimpses of a utopian transformation of society – as illustrated through his references to a Schillerian culture of sensuous receptivity to art, an Orphic understanding of deregulated pleasure and defiance of the finitude of death, and the Fourierist transformation of work into play – are predicated upon a delinearization of historical time. This finds its clearest expression in a cyclical model of time in which, as Adorno writes, "[t]he image of what is oldest in nature" thus "reverses dialectically into the cipher of the not-yet-existing, the possible."<sup>61</sup>

Undulating between the pre-history of nature and the *not yet* of natural futurity, this alternative temporal modality cannot be understood outside of the eschatological framework to which, I contend, it is directly responding. It remains crucial to distinguish, then, between various conflated understandings of the "last days," or *Eschaton*. Whilst the glinting dream of capitalist technological modernity is frequently cited as a secularized Judeo-Christian temporal narrative, we should recall that there are multiple readings of eschatology. In her 1994 essay "Eschatology, Ecology and a Green Ecumenacy," Catherine Keller argues that modernity's faith in progress and capitalism's triumphalist conservative realism are "bastardized" eschatologies. In their imagined conquest of nature these teleological projects uncover weaknesses already inherent within the biblical texts: including the "patriarchal privilege" of history over nature, the dissociation of hopes for the future from immanentist understandings of present struggle, appeals to coercive power, and the hierarchical nature of religious authority.<sup>62</sup> Keller's argument is that Jewish and Christian theologies fundamentally need to renegotiate the meaning of *Eschaton*. Whilst traditional eschatology's indifference towards nature leads to an unqualified quietism that is complicit with the earth's destruction – reducing faith to "the hope for an *afterlife* rather than for *life itself*"<sup>63</sup> – this is the result, argues Keller, of the transcendental reorientation of spirit by Hellenized theologies. Earlier Christian theology and Hebrew scripture, by contrast, are rich in ecological resonance and insisted on the resurrection's "bodiliness."

In her repositioning of the "earthliness" of the resurrection, Keller's "ecoeschatology"<sup>64</sup> offers a useful recalibration of the non-transcendent function of hope in the Hebrew Scriptures. This historicization of eschatology is vital if we are to confront current ecoscarcities and recover what Marcuse called "the erotic cathexis" of man's natural environment (*NR* 60). There can

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<sup>61</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Nature as 'Not Yet'" in *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, ed. Laurence Coupe (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 81-83 (p. 83).

<sup>62</sup> Catherine Keller, "Eschatology, Ecology and a Green Ecumenacy" in Rebecca S. Chopp and Mark Lewis Taylor (eds), *Reconstructing Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), pp. 326-345 (pp. 335, 340).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 329, 331; italics in original.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

be no liberation of man's lived temporal experience from the repressive strictures of the performance principle without the liberation of the natural environment from the yoke of objectification; with its tacit condoning of the rapacious extraction of surplus value from a dwindling sphere of biodiversity. Cyclical time thus offers Marcuse an Orphic recourse with which to confront the linear time of advanced industrial capitalism; a time of receptivity between man and nature that refutes "all contentless transcendence" (*FL* 40) and releases the free play of human energies. Moreover, this delinearization responds to, and is shaped by, the utopian function of redeemed collective memory that is central to Judaism. As I have outlined above, Freud can be read as explicitly invoking the power of such radicalized *temps retrouvé* in his phylogenetic reading of the pre-historical rebellion of patricide as an instinctual forerunner of the rebellion against an authoritarian Yahweh; and we should read Marcuse's own privileging of the Freudian *Eros-Todestrieb* dualism as latently redefining political struggle through the affirmation of a redemptive model of cyclical time. This time responds to the Jewish apocalyptic-utopian tradition of eschatological salvation within this world; a time, which as Ernst Bloch writes, lies "midway between memory and prophecy."<sup>65</sup>

An ecocritical reading of biblical scripture that repositions the relationship between nature and eschatology thus responds to Marcuse's call for the "liberation from time which unites man with god, man with nature" (*EC* 162). Perhaps using a reformulated understanding of *eco*eschatology we can pose significant questions concerning theology's complicity with the aggressive hyper-industrialization of the planet's ecological diversity. Confronting the growing chasm between the two increasingly polarized registers of "mere theology" and "radical atheism" is a vital task in the twenty-first-century and productive solutions to capitalism's egregious excesses – both, in Marx's formulation, of man's internal nature as well as of the beleaguered environment with its looming ecocatastrophe – must find themselves able to move between these two discursive registers in a common front against the continued exploitation and degradation of our finite natural resources. In this task, Marcuse remains a crucial figure since his philosophy offers us, as R. N. Berki writes, a productive tension in which "the political and the religious strains of radical thought" collide.<sup>66</sup>

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### **Acknowledgment:**

I am grateful to Professor Andrew Lamas at the University of Pennsylvania for organising a scholarship which enabled me to attend the International Herbert Marcuse Society 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference at Philadelphia in October 2011. This article is developed out of the paper I delivered at that conference.

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<sup>65</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 200.

<sup>66</sup> Berki, p. 58.