



**Herbert Marcuse on Art
and Reality:
The Question of Negativity**

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Abstract:

The relationship between art and reality is not without complications. It determines the main role of both art and reality. This determination of role precisely can tell us about the nature of art itself: whether art is only for entertainment and enjoyment, or if it stimulates temporary Schein, i. e. illusion, or if it would only be a revolt. This study analyzes the German American philosopher Herbert Marcuse's vision of art, in the light of the major concept of negativity. It explores and illustrates how art can revolt against the repression of society, in the age of capitalism and the reification of art. By exploring the meaning of the concept of negativity, which Marcuse sets in tension with the idealist concept of Schein, sometimes coming to replace it, the study argues that Marcuse has introduced an important vision of what true art is and deeper insights as for which role art should play.

Key words : Marcuse – art and reality – negativity – Schein – reification – Alienation – Autonomy.

الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة العلاقة المعقدة بين الفن والواقع. حيث تحدد هذه العلاقة دور كلاً منهما وتخبّرنا بما هي حقيقة الفن. تحلل هذه الدراسة رؤية الفيلسوف الألماني الأمريكي هيربرت ماركوزه للفن والبديل الذي يطرحه لمفهوم الوهم الفني، وهو السلب. فماركوزه يرى أن وظيفة الفن الأساسية هي سلب الواقع. ومن هنا تنتبع هذه الدراسة تبلور فكرة السلب عند ماركوزه ورؤيته لكيف يكون الفن سالبا للواقع من خلال وضع شروط للعمل الفني الحقيقي الذي من شأنه مواجهة الرأسمالية وما ينتج عنها من تشيؤ.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

ماركوزه – الفن والواقع – السلب – الوهم الفني – التشيؤ – الاغتراب – استقلالية الفن



Introduction

On its deepest level, art is a protest against that which is. By that very token, art is a 'political' matter: if left to itself, it may endanger law and order. (Marcuse, Soviet Marxism 132)

Art is not what affirms; it is what negates. The possibility of art, as Marcuse argues, is in its ability to 'protest against' what subjects individuals to their societies. It is a 'protest against' reality itself as well. After refusing the affirmative quality of art, the character which affirms the oppression and suppression of society, the art that also transfers any need of happiness and freedom into illusory internal rejoicing of the soul, Marcuse argues that art, through its negativity, can protest against domination. For him, art should be negative to rebel against repression by societies. The negativity of art, according to Marcuse, recreates Schein according to its criteria, and it shapes not only the relation between individuals and their society, but it also determines the relation between art and reality .

The question of negativity, in Marcuse's aesthetics, is what this study attempts to reveal. The study proposes that this negativity is the central component in Marcuse's aesthetics. Marcuse offers a solution for eliminating the control of societies through the negativity in art rather than through the illusory traditional solution. Negativity is also a weapon that confronts reification and decreasing humanity's value. In this study, the influence of negativity on reification will also be explored. It also will focus on the negative dialectic of genuine art ; namely, the unresolved dialectic of affirmation and negation. It will clarify the function of art and its role not only against the domination of the fascist societies but also the advanced industrial capitalist and socialist societies, in Marcuse's writings. His critique of the socialist societies is considered an expectation of the failure of the Soviet Union.

There are two main points to discuss in this study. The first section will theoretically focus on the centrality of negativity and the meaning of the concept of Schein in Marcuse's aesthetics. The second section will analytically address the relationship between negativity and happy consciousness and great refusal, clarify the nature of the relation between negativity and Schein, and show what true art is for Marcuse ; in the end, it will submit the preconditions of true art that draws the relation between art and reality in Marcuse's writings.



Art as Negativity

According to Marcuse, societies practice repression on individuals. This repression can be divided into two realms: the obvious repression and the hidden repression. The first realm of repression takes the forms of war, fascist power, killing, torture, and refusing the freedom of expression and criticism. This refusal can affect art itself as well if it produces any counter-power against society. This type of repression forces art to be idealistic as an affirmative power; namely, Schein which is devoted to glorifying the ugliness of reality and beautifying the suffering of individuals. The term Schein is a German word which means illusion, appearance, or semblance. Marcuse refuses the idealistic concept of Schein that stimulates deceptive illusions.

The second realm is the hidden repression, which mainly exists in advanced industrial societies. It can be found in the form of reification. In his analysis of the history of reification, Frederic Vandenberghe defines the concept by saying that "reification metaphorically refers to the transformation of human properties, relations, processes, actions, concepts, etc. into res, into things that act as pseudo-persons, endowed with a life of their own" (12993). The concept refers to the way in which humanity is unconsciously stolen and is turned into an object. This can be exemplified the transforming of workers into tools of production, the hidden exploitations of individuals by producing many unnecessary products that have no significance, and in the absence of real satisfaction and fulfilment. When man enters this closed circle, he is not aware of being reified. He falls prey to increasing discontent for no obvious reasons.

The second realm of total comfortability has a bad result. For Marcuse, this realm causes what he calls the happy consciousness. His concept of the happy consciousness means that the consciousness of people is drowned in illusory satisfaction imposed by advanced industrial criteria of society. As Kellner, in Marcuse's Challenge to Education, clarifies

[h]appy consciousness signifies the loss of critical thought, which is accomplished by a simultaneous liquidation of potential sources of opposition to an established society that are available to individuals, such as the media, everyday language, and aesthetic representations (music, popular literature, film, etc.). (9)



The 'liquidation' of the possibilities of man indicates that man has lost every potential for critique and become a tool in the hand of society. Happy consciousness becomes the core of reification. It is the mode that makes man happy as he is able to choose from many choices and options. What he sees as a choice is an imposition in its roots. False happiness, as a result of happy consciousness, indicates the urge for acquisitiveness which is ardent desire to possess more and more without stopping; if man wants to acquire more and more paintings, for example, and he has an artistic taste, this may indicate that he belongs to higher classes. Reification affects the core of art, as art becomes just a product or a commodity. Marcuse aims to fight repression by the stolen sources and potentials of individuals.

This long introduction to 'that which is' that Marcuse refers to in his writings is to clarify why art should be 'a protest,' as it is a major component of the revolt against society. If art loses its negative function, failure will be the result of any opposition. Therefore, society "itself is no longer primarily characterized by contradictions and conflicts. Each form of resistance or opposition is apparently neutralized or integrated by a coherent and overall structure of domination" (Winter 74). It is not the immersion and the preoccupation of man in reality. Rather, it is the disappearance and the total erosion of man in the established order. Marcuse sees that art should protest against the arbitrariness of society or any attempt that tries to impose control and domination on art. Therefore, art, for Marcuse, takes the form of negativity; however, the question is: how does negativity appear in the work of art?

The negativity of art appears as a rebellion. Marcuse tends to use negativity as "the political potential of art" (Counterrevolution and Revolt 103). It emerges, in Marcuse's argument, as a radical artistic reaction against all types of domination. This negativity is formulated in art so that it can oppose mere affirmation. Therefore, Schein as the centrality of art is replaced by the power of indictment. Art should be negative. "Art is thus the great force of negation" (Marcuse, Art and Liberation 132). It is no longer a decoration or an ornament; art is the force of man against society, it refuses to accept society as it is. Moreover, it asserts that this mere affirmation is an image of deception. Therefore, negativity is the total indictment of the images of reification inside society, and it deliberately focuses on what the forgotten potentials are. In the light of his description of negativity, Marcuse clarifies that

[w]hether ritualized or not, art contains the
rationality of negation. In its advanced posi-



tions, it is the Great Refusal—the protest against that which is. The modes in which man and things are made to appear, to sing and sound and speak, are modes of refuting, breaking, and recreating their factual existence. But these modes of negation pay tribute to the antagonistic society to which they are linked. Separated from the sphere of labor where society reproduces itself and its misery, the world of art which they create remains, with all its truth, a privilege and an illusion. (One-Dimensional Man 66-67)

Herbert Marcuse on Art and Reality

Although negativity, for Marcuse, happens inside the framework of art, its influence simultaneously transcends the work of art itself. The power of negativity directly tends towards consciousness. Hence, it represents the unresolved conflict between art and society. Art, by virtue of its negativity, makes all the human capabilities and desires revolt against what is imposed by the repressive forces of society. On the opposite side, what is imposed by society aggressively suppresses not only the negative potential of art but also extends to repress individuals themselves. Therefore, negativity represents the existence “in spite of capital and its imperatives and against the infernal continuum of the history it has made and would make for the future is merely to be and thus the negation of that which negates us” (Garland 57). Negativity protests, according to Marcuse, against the power of the subjugation of society.

Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, first published in 1856, is a good example to clarify the influence of the repressive power of society on individuals and how the meaning of negativity of art is embodied. In this novel, Marcuse sees that there is an obvious tension between the depressing gloomy bourgeois reality and the world of dreams. The inability of Emma Bovary, the heroine, to feel happy as her discontent and dissatisfaction, is the centrality of the novel. “It seemed to her that some places in the world make you happy, like a plant that won’t grow in any other soil” (Flaubert 35).

The depressive state is the controlling mode throughout the novel. As the bad reality affects Emma’s relationship to her husband when her love transforms into disgust, leading to her cheating on him; thus, this also leads



to a tense relationship to her daughter. Flaubert tries, throughout the novel, to clarify the contradiction between her hopes and dreams and the misery of reality. This contradiction is represented in the huge gap between reality and romantic novels that Emma always reads. "She both wanted to die and to live in Paris" (Flaubert 51). According to Marcuse, the novel transfers the bourgeoisie reality as it is into an imagined story and clarifies the oppression imposed by society upon her humane possibilities. Society transforms people into miserable and vulnerable creatures. Marcuse, in his analysis, sees that Emma's society, "the society that was still to come has 'solved' her problem by suppressing it," (One-Dimensional man 65) did not understand her ambition and dreams; it had no mercy for her psychological weakness.

Art as negativity is transfigured in the great refusal. Marcuse refers to "the Great Refusal" as rejecting subjection to the established order and its indirect imposition of the happy consciousness. In his *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse writes that great refusal is "the protest against unnecessary repression, the struggle for the ultimate form of freedom" (149). By virtue of its negativity, art has a political potential that indirectly constitutes and reshapes the great refusal of individuals. It opens the eyes to refuse what is imposed upon them, and it also considered individuals' rescue from immersion in society. In "Radical Politics, Marcuse, and The New Left," Kellner writes, in his description of such term, according to Marcuse's thought,

[t]he "Great Refusal" is a highly complex and multidimensional term that signifies at once individual rebellion and opposition to the existing system of domination and oppression... and oppositional thought that rejects the dominant modes of thinking and behavior.

(10)

The Great Refusal, which is the negation of the established societies, can begin from artworks. Art can be the way to reshape the radical consciousness of individuals. Kellner, in his writing about Marcuse, refers to the total opposition between the Great Refusal and the happy consciousness. If society indirectly offers happy consciousness, art as a protest should indirectly constitute the great refusal of this consciousness. By this token, refusal is the mode in which individuals restore their freedom and the hope to establish a better future.



Marcuse also refers to “L’invitation au voyage” [Invitation to a Voyage] a poem by Charles Baudelaire as a perfect model of the great refusal. In this section, we attempt to provide an analysis of Baudelaire’s poem under the concept of great refusal. In this poem, Baudelaire invites his beloved to a new land, a different place where beauty, calm, peace and reassurance. The poem is like a dream; however, Baudelaire indirectly rejects his reality. This appears in considering the new land, as Karen A. Harrington clarifies, the refuge from “the noxiousness of the city and constraints of reality” (114).

“L’invitation au voyage” is full of features that contradict those of Baudelaire’s reality. Through his imagination and depiction of another different land, Baudelaire criticizes the existing reality, and indirectly shows the differences between the two realities. The imagined land is “where everything is beautiful, rich, quiet, honest; where order is the likeness and the mirror of luxury; where life is fat, and sweet to breathe; where disorder, tumult, and the unexpected are shut out; where happiness is wedded to silence; ... where all, dear love, is made in your image” (Smith 41). The poem itself is transferred into a great refusal of the established reality as this refusal not only extends to his society but also to the closed things that surround him, like the house.

Marcuse focuses on the refrain; “There, all is order and leisure, / Luxury, beauty, and pleasure” (Baudelaire 109). He sees that the conjunction of “order” and “beauty” refers to that this order must be a nonrepressive one. According to Marcuse, the language of the poem is “the revolt against culture based on toil, domination, and renunciation” (Eros and Civilization 164). The great refusal is greatly embodied in “L’invitation au voyage.”

If art is a protest, a crucial question arises here. Does this art, for Marcuse, only depend on the power of negativity? However, what does ‘this’ here refer to? Does it refer to true art? Here, one should ask: what is true art? Before answering the first question, the second question should be clarified, as the first question is essentially based on the second question.

Marcuse uses some words; for instance, genuine and authentic in order to indicate true art. He determines, according to his aesthetic theory, the meaning of true art in order to absolve art of exploitation. He argues that authentic art is constituted in two ways, which are negativity and revolution, as authentic art is both negative and revolutionary. Marcuse says that “I would claim that all authentic art is negative, in the sense that it refuses to obey the established reality...” (“The Philosophy of Art and Politics” 226). Moreover, he writes that “every authentic work of art would be revolutiona-



ry, i.e., subversive of perception and understanding, an indictment of the established reality..." (The Aesthetic Dimension xi). They may seem that they are separated categories, but both bear the same essence, which is the great refusal against the repressive forces of societies.

To be genuine, negative and revolutionary art has preconditions. In the second letter to Chicago surrealists, Marcuse clarifies that 'the revolutionary praxis' cannot create true art. Nevertheless, art is indirectly considered one of the main components of revolution. Why indirectly? This art has a revolutionary force; namely, the ability of art to negate. According to Marcuse, this ability is the political potential of art that protest against domination. Any integration between art and praxis invalidates the truth of art. Marcuse writes that "authentic art is in its very substance revolutionary and, precisely for this reason, free from the requirements of any specific revolutionary praxis" (Art and liberation 189).

According to Marcuse, Goethe's literary works are the representation of the authenticity of art. He finds that the revolutionary character of authentic art is exemplified in Goethe's Elective Affinities (The Aesthetic Dimension xi). Marcuse sees that Goethe did not fall into the trap of Schein. Instead, he understood the nature of this illusion and revealed the confusing characteristic of beauty, which hovering between deception and consolation ("The Affirmative Character of Culture" 103). Marcuse considers Goethe's writings, according to Kellner clarification, a critique of romanticism; as Goethe prepares the way to Marcuse to "[criticize] the romantic tendency to withdraw from everyday reality and to create ideal fantasy worlds, as well as the romantic belief that the artist is the highest form of human reality" ("Marcuse, Art, and Liberation" 12). Marcuse also mentions different works by Goethe; for example, The Sorrows of Young Werther, Sturm und Drang, Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Calling, Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, Elective Affinities, Iphigenia in Tauris, Faust, and Egmont, considering his writings the standard of true art.

Returning to the first question, does art depend only on the power of negativity? To answer this question, one needs to clarify the relation Marcuse sees between Schein and negativity. The answer to this question also determines the essence of true art and how this art genuinely is.

Although Marcuse overcomes the idealistic notion of art as Schein, he modifies the concept of Schein to work under the framework of negativity. He argues that there is a significant tension between them, as the power of negativity limits Schein from being an affirmative character of the forces



of society. In Marcuse's viewpoint, art as negation is the power that denies and accuses any affirmation; however, this negativity also adds a new dimension to the power of Schein. Schein, in Marcuse's philosophy, is no longer the power that suppresses individuals, it becomes the ground of negativity. "Art's power of negation lies in the otherness from the society and values it negates" (Miles, *An Aesthetic of Liberation* 134). The significance of the new role of Schein, which is art's otherness, is transfigured in its prevention of negativity from being a political tool in the hand of society.

The work of art cannot ignore Schein or negativity as the existence of both is inevitable for art. First, the existence of Schein does not abolish the existence of negativity inside the work of art, though, the existence of negativity does not substitute for the illusory character of art, Schein. Art cannot depend only on one element whether it is Schein or negativity as the existence of one element alone does not constitute true art. Second, the absence of Schein is the total prevalence of the negativity of art, and this means that art negates itself, and maybe turns into a direct tool that can be exploited by politics. As Marcuse writes: "... I described the relation between art and politics as a unity of opposites, an antagonistic unity which must always remain antagonistic" (*Art and Liberation* 232). Moreover, the absence of negativity simply means a total prevalence of Schein, which makes art just an affirmation of the status quo, and this means a return to the idealist concept as a mere semblance of reality; this intends that art affirms itself as a tool to be also used by society. Therefore, the dialectical relationship prevents art from falling prey to the exploitation of society.

The inevitable existence of negativity and Schein constitutes an unresolved dialectical relationship between negation and affirmation, which establishes the authenticity of the work of art. Authentic art is a mode of Schein that is in continuing negation, and negativity that cannot get out of the illusory realm of art that takes its actuality from reality. It is a repeated idea in Marcuse's writings, which precisely affirms the quality and the harmony of his ideas. Marcuse argues:

The interplay between the affirmation and the indictment of that which is, between ideology and truth, pertains to the very structure of art. But in the authentic works, the affirmation does not cancel the indictment: reconciliation and hope still preserve the memory of things past. (*The Aesthetic Dimension* 10)



Affirmation here means that the work of art - story, novel, etc., - transfers reality as it is without beautification ; namely, the image of the actual reality in a story. The indictment here means that the actual reality that is no longer acceptable; if there is no room for beautification, there is no room for acceptance. The interplay between affirmation and negation constitutes a negative dialectic. Affirmation includes negation, at the same time, negation breaks this affirmation.

Baudelaire's "L'invitation au voyage" is also a great witness to the relation between Schein and negativity. As mentioned above, the poem is like a dream. This dream or illusion exists for Baudelaire in order to make negativity of his reality appear. The dream here is employed under the effect of negativity, not to beautify the exiting reality. It is an invitation to destroy the established reality and construct a better society based on peace and beauty without being restrained by the complicated exigencies of life. If here illusion is in the dream itself, negativity is in the hope of constructing a better society.

Marcuse also analyzes Bertolt Brecht's poem "The Lovers," in his Counterrevolution and Revolt, in order to prove his theory. According to his analysis of the poem, Marcuse shows that Schein must be employed under the framework of negativity; he sees that the cranes symbolize "[t]he image of liberation...without mastery and domination" (Counterrevolution and Revolt 120). However, he brilliantly draws, through his analysis, the co-existence of Schein and negativity in the work of art; he writes that: "[t]he end is illusion: love seems to give duration, to conquer time and space, to evade destruction. But the illusion cannot deny the reality which it invokes: the cranes are, in their sky, with their clouds. The end is also denial of the illusion, insistence on its reality, realization" (Counterrevolution and Revolt 120). Here the existence of Schein is transfigured in 'the end of illusion,' then its function is changed as it 'cannot deny the reality;' finally the existence of negativity appears in 'denial of the illusion.'

For authentic art, the new formulation of Schein cannot terminate negativity; similarly, negativity also cannot undermine Schein. According to Marcuse, the new formulation of Schein creates a better world, not by illusory sense; as "[t]he affirmative character of art has yet another source: it is in the commitment of art to Eros, the deep affirmation of the Life Instincts in their fight against instinctual and social oppression" (The Aesthetic Dimension 10-11). On the contrary, this better world can be realized by refusing the existing one. Such a world is not the one in which good overcomes evil. Rather, the better world is where this evil is revealed, and its ugliness is



appeared not as a beautiful image. Through this negative dialectic, art can negate repressive societies.

The authenticity of artworks consists of two major characteristics; according to Marcuse, authentic art is the one that shatters society and at the same time transcends it. This is clear in both Kafka's writings and Shakespeare's plays. On the one hand, Kafka's writings, according to Marcuse, represents the negation of reality. Reality cannot affect and subject the works of Kafka; on the contrary, Kafka's works denies and resists reality. Marcuse sees that his works

can shatter the established universe... From the beginning, the links with the given reality are cut by calling things by their names, which turn out to be misnomers. The discrepancy between that which the name says and that which is becomes unconquerable. (Counterrevolution and Revolt 101)

The heroes of these works find themselves surrounded by the repression of their societies ; every ordinary meaning in these artistic works turns to be a counter-meaning to the types of domination. These works, according to Marcuse, have the revolutionary character of art that is negation. Art is Marcuse's means to remove the veil of what is hidden.

On the other hand, Marcuse finds art that transcends reality transfigured in Shakespeare's plays, especially Hamlet. In his interview with Larry Hartwick, Marcuse sees that one can learn nothing about Shakespeare's society; however, this play is the product of certain age and society. According to Marcuse's clarification, "[h]ow much can you learn from these plays about the real workings of the society in which Shakespeare lived? I would say absolutely nothing" (Art and Liberation 219). The transcendence of art is represented in Shakespeare's sentence "To be, or not to be..." (Hamlet 77), the sentence that Marcuse focuses on in his analysis. "To be or, or not to be" transcends society as a whole and becomes a sentence for all humanity. For Marcuse, Shakespeare's sentence "transcends any kind of social determination. And it will prove true, in different forms, for every and any kind of society" (Art and Liberation 219).

Lucien Goldmann clarifies, in an essay entailed, "Understanding Marcuse," that the "dialectical philosophy had defined man by the double dimension of his adaption and his transcendence of reality, that is, by the real and possible" (129). This relation may apply to art. Every work of art



bear 'the real' and 'the possible.' 'The real' is represented in the ability of art to transfer the actual reality, and 'the possible' is represented in the main role of art to negate the actual and anticipate another possible reality. If Goldmann indicates that the interplay between 'the real' and 'the possible' constitutes the dual dimension of man, the same relation also constitutes the dual dimension of art. That means that the authenticity of art should be constituted by 'the real' which is actual and 'the possible' which is hopeful; that also means that art should have two-dimensionality: affirmation and negation, simultaneously. Therefore, one will reach Marcuse's statement saying that "[i]n the form of the oeuvre, the actual circumstances are placed in another dimension where the given reality shows itself as that which it is. Thus, it tells the truth about itself; its language ceases to be that of deception, ignorance, and submission" (One-Dimensional Man 65).

Art should be still an illusion, according to Marcuse, but this illusion is permeated by negation. Thus, art takes its reality from the ability to transcend and negate the existed reality. Art is real because its circumstances, events and heroes are taken from the established order, as it gives them the ability to negate the ugly reality. Marcuse refuses one-dimensional art; in the same way he refuses man's one-dimensionality.

It is important to mention that Marcuse's notion of negativity protects him from easily falling into the trap of idealism; as he perfectly takes Schein to the indirect world of praxis. He advocates the requirement of the existence of Schein, but he calls for Schein which works under the umbrella of negativity and is in tension with it. For Marcuse, the power of negativity should be widespread on all side of the realm of Schein. Marcuse himself condemns idealism as being the affirmative power of man's oppression. He writes: "the history of idealism is also the history of its coming to terms with the established order" ("Affirmative Character of Culture" 85). The reconciliation with society is totally refused by Marcuse; he rejects art that is under the monopoly of established reality.

Throughout his writings, Marcuse refuses any integration between art and reality. Negation takes place in the way of the indictment of Schein, as this Schein essentially exists to be broken and denied by negativity. Malcolm Miles in his essay "Eco-aesthetic Dimensions" argues that true art, according to Marcuse, is produced through society, but at the same time it must indict this society rather than affirm it. He thus writes, "[a]rt is socially produced, a product of its time, but equally a means of standing back to speak against a society's institutions: ... leading to the emergence of a new consciousness as well as new perceptions. Art offers beautiful illusion..."



(7). The co-existence of the two realms, negativity and Schein, inside the framework of art, and the subjection of Schein to negativity create authentic art. Marcuse thus writes, in his "Art as Form of Reality:" "[a]s part of the established culture, Art is affirmative, sustaining this culture; as alienation from the established reality, Art is a negating force. The history of Art can be understood as the harmonization of this antagonism" (Art and Liberation 143). Art stands against the established order and helps the word 'No' to be adopted by individuals in the face of repression and suppression.

The reason behind Marcuse's refusal of the existence of one realm - whether negativity or Schein - alone in the work of art is that the co-existence of two realms is the only way for art to eliminate and negate the exploitative world. If the balance between the two realms is upset, art loses the tension between affirmation and negation. Thus, art is no longer considered authentic art. In the light of this discussion, Marcuse writes:

Where this tension between affirmation and negation, between pleasure and sorrow, higher and material culture no longer prevails, where the work no longer sustains the dialectical unity of what is and what can (and ought to) be, art lost its truth, has lost itself. (Counterrevolution and Revolt 92-93)

The relationship between the dual poles of art makes individuals' consciousness indirectly aware of all powers of exploitation, injustice, and repression. By the power of negation, affirmation turns against itself. In the condition of the disappearance of the negative dialectic between affirmation and negation, art loses its truth and political function and becomes a puppet and tool in the hand of repressive forces. In this case, society suppresses art and makes it weak and submissive. To create such a work of art, which is true and authentic, for Marcuse, it should preserve the permanent and unresolved tension between affirmation and negation.

The co-existence of the two realms creates such a new aesthetic universe. This universe consists of aesthetic form and content. Aesthetic form, according to Marcuse, is the style of the work of art, he writes

[a]esthetic form means the total qualities (harmony, rhythm, contrast) which make an oeuvre a self-contained whole, with a structure and order of its own (the style). By virtue of these qualities the work of art transforms



the order prevailing in reality... Words, sounds, images, from another dimension 'bracket' and invalidate the right of the established reality for the sake of a reconciliation still to come. (Counterrevolution and Revolt 81)

The content and form of art turn to destructive force ; both are revolt and revolution against the established reality by virtue of the continuing negation of the realm of Schein. The aesthetic universe of art is both form and content. Marcuse refuses the dialectic relation between form and content. He considers both in a unity, which constitutes the truth of the work of art. He clarifies that the aesthetic form "is not opposed to content, not even dialectically. In the work of art, form becomes content and vice versa" (The Aesthetic Dimension 41). According to Marcuse, the aesthetic universe, that is both content and form, shapes the authenticity of art.

The moment of perception is a moment of realization. This realization is represented when the power of negativity overcomes and destroys any affirmative power in the illusory realm of art, Schein in the aesthetic form. Consciously, as a writer, like Kafka, tries to produce this moment inside the work of art, it also happens inside reality when people recognize its cruelty; one can say the moment of perception constitutes the transformation process of individuals' happy consciousness into the refusing negative consciousness. The eyes are opened to see the deception inherent in the established reality. The negation of Schein inside the work of art indicates the replacement of illusion produced by and is inherent in society.

Art, according to Marcuse, reveals the bad meaning of Schein that exists in and is imposed by the established order. Marcuse argues that art as negativity leaks to individuals' consciousness, which have to believe that Schein already lies in the established reality in many forms, such as the illusory freedom, the hidden repression, and the imposed deception.

To evaluate, genuine art shows that illusion mainly lies in reality. In Counterrevolution and Revolt, Marcuse clarifies that we are confronted by the Schein of reality as "the illusion is in reality itself - not in the work of art" (101). By this Marcusean hypothesis, one may be confused: how is the illusion of art more real than the truth imposed by reality? At the moment of perception and realization, one becomes aware that the aesthetic universe of art is the destruction of 'what is,' and the revival of the dead potentials. When potentials are awakened, man is able to distinguish between real and



false. Marcuse shows that "... the world is inverted – it is the given reality, the ordinary world which now appears as untrue, as false, as deceptive reality" (The Aesthetic Dimension 54). Consequently, negativity provokes consciousness against Schein that is already inherent in society and replaces it with the power of the negativity represented in the great refusal.

Therefore, Marcuse tends to determine that the authenticity of art depends on significant quality. According to him, art should be art for its own sake. It means that "art needs no justification, that it needs serve no political, didactic, or other end" (Britannica). Marcuse finds that true art is not associated with politics, religion, economy, or class, but that which tends to realize liberation and at the same time achieve happiness. However, liberation and happiness may be temporary and commit to the frame of the aesthetic form. This liberation, in turn, has a revelation, in the sense of revealing the domination and opening the eyes upon the exploitation of society. True art bears liberation, which frees from the didactic tendency. As Marcuse writes: "... art is 'art for art's sake' inasmuch as the aesthetic form reveals tabooed and repressed dimensions of reality: aspects of liberation" (The Aesthetic Dimension 19). The only purpose of authentic art is to free the consciousness of individuals out of repression and suppression. To achieve that, art requires releasing the individual's imaginative power. Therefore, Marcuse uses Kant's concept of "purposiveness without purpose" (Eros and Civilization 177) to create a free world of play that permits the individual to be liberated from his restraints. In other words, "the individual is to throw himself into the work of art for its own sake. His purpose is the work of art itself, even when, we may say especially the work of art has no explicit external purpose" (Rae 390). The lack of purpose has a purpose in Marcuse's aesthetics; namely, it liberates art from the roots of reality. Art for its own sake is the quality of authentic revolutionary and negative art.

Thus, Marcuse turns into the content of art and its ability to make a change. He rejects art that is too ideal or too realistic. In the overly ideal art, the content suggests false liberation and happiness. In the overly realistic art, the content may represent false hope when it is exploited by politics. The authentic content of art is that which refuses to be politicalized or commodified under the repressive forces of societies. This exploitation happens to both art and artist and transfers them into an object. This kind of art is considered as the power that represses the individual himself and removes his consciousness and imagination into the realm of impossibility.

Genuine art, according to Marcuse, has preconditions that prevent it from falsehood and deception of reality. These preconditions can mainly be



found in main qualities, the study will evaluate them. In the beginning, the negative dialectical relation between affirmation and negation is a crucial precondition of true art. Schein, in Marcuse's aesthetics, has a distance from reality that ground the way to the negative potential. According to Marcuse, the authentic transformed content, whether realistic or imaginative, by virtue of negativity, does not subject to the established order. "Only the transformed reality is the reality of art... [which] renders possible the new perception, experience, understanding of the world in the aesthetic reception..." as Marcuse argues ("Letters to the Chicago Surrealists" 189).

The transhistorical character of art is another precondition of authentic art. As Marcuse proposes, it means that the work of art, and by virtue of the aesthetic form, has the validity of transcending "every and any particular stage of the historical process, but not transcending the historical process as a whole" ("The Philosophy of Art and Politics" 219). In this respect, Marcuse means that art has the ability to remain valid even if there is a long time from its creation. Authentic content of art is not related to a specific historical character of any class. For him, art is valid to all classes at any era. "By virtue of its transhistorical," Marcuse contends, "universal truths, art appeals to a consciousness which is not only that of a particular class, but that of human beings as 'species beings,' developing all their life-enhancing faculties" (The Aesthetic Dimension 29).

Alienation as the representation of the genuine negativity of art is considered a precondition of authentic art. Marcuse protest against the alienation of reality by artistic alienation. For him, art must represent alienation. If alienation means the non-belonging of something to what it should belong to, similarity, according to Marcuse, art also should be alienated from everyday life and society as a whole. The moment that art has belonged to the established reality, it is the moment of falsehood, exploitation and deception. Hence, this alienation creates the distance between art and reality; it is related to the realm of Schein and founds the way to negativity; Marcuse writes:

The artistic alienation makes the work of art, the universe of art, essentially unreal _ it creates a world which does not exist, a world of Schein, appearance, illusion. But in this transformation of reality into illusion, and only in it, appears the subversive truth of art. (Counterrevolution and Revolt 98)



Marcuse determines two potentials of alienation that are seemingly opposite. However, they are related to each other. The alienation that separated art from reality is the same alienation that creates a relationship between art and reality. Alienation gives art the estrangement, or the 'subversive truth' to deny reality, and break its affirmation. This alienation "relates art to society: it preserves the class content _ and makes it transparent" (Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* 97); it is, moreover, the cause of preventing art from the immersion in reality: "Art must remain alienation," (Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* 103). Alienation is the quality that preserves the essence of art as an art and shapes its negativity.

Art can accept or refuse alienation. Charles Reitz argues for two modes of alienation: "[a]rt against alienation" and "[a]rt as alienation" (1). On the one hand, art against alienation means that this art is against the alienating mode imposed by society and labour upon individuals, and art can also be considered alienation in itself; it is the mode in which art separates itself from domination and fights the alienation of societies, on the other. With this state, it can be imagined that a better society is one in which artistic alienation defeats the alienation of society.

The dilemma of artistic alienation is in its dual opposition that lies in the relation between art and reality. First, the distance between art and reality, according to Marcuse, should not be a considerable distance in order to keep the power of negativity effective. If the distance is so far away, art will be faced with the idealistic mode; it is totally divorced from reality. This state makes art and all its functions beautify reality and makes the power of negation be converted into abstraction. Marcuse discusses this in his conversation with Larry Hartwick in 1978, few months before his death, saying:

If and when practically all dimensions of human existence are socially managed, then, obviously, art, in order to be able to communicate its proper truths, must be able to break this totalization in consciousness and perception and to intensify the estrangement ... But if this estrangement goes so far that the work of art no longer communicates, then any link with the reality is lost in the negation of reality; it becomes an abstract negation. ("On the Aesthetic Dimension" 223)

Second, if the distance between art and reality is extremely close or even non-existent, art will lose its estranging and alienating power to



become an element of social control. It will be subjected to reality. Artistic alienation will disappear; the power of negativity will be deactivated, and Schein will be duplicated. Thus, art will not be able to deny or negate society; rather, art will be dissolved into society; this art will lose itself to reach its end. Marcuse calls it the integrated alienation, indicating that even the alienation of art can vanish in the power of society. He writes:

The artistic alienation has become as functional as the architecture of the new theaters and concert halls in which it is performed... Domination has its own aesthetics, and democratic domination has its democratic aesthetics. It is good that almost everyone can now have the fine arts at his fingertips, by just turning a knob on his set, or by just stepping into his drugstore. In this diffusion, however, they become cogs in a culture-machine which re-makes their content. (One-Dimensional Man 68)

The artistic alienation grounds the autonomy of art as a feature of its authenticity. Marcuse foregrounds this point in his critique of Marxist aesthetics. The autonomy of art lies in the principle of emptying art from falsehood; this principle that releases art from political and economic affairs is also applied to the monopoly of the social class, which considers its art the only authentic and revolutionary art. Authentic art seriously constitutes the principle of emptying art. The essence of this principle mainly depends on the autonomy of art; namely, the transcendence of art and its freedom from being subjected to the established reality. In this process, art empties itself from the restraints of reality; it is autonomous when it is separated from the direct political potential. Art is not a weapon that is exploited by the societal powers to control people at all times. Marcuse writes:

I see the political potential of art in art itself, in the aesthetic form as such. Furthermore, I argue that by virtue of its aesthetic form, art is largely autonomous vis a vis the given social relations. In its autonomy art both protests these relations, and at the same time transcends them. Thereby art subverts the dominant consciousness, the ordinary experience. (The Aesthetic Dimension ix)



Moreover, the autonomy of art is represented in the separation of art from the realm of production. When art is autonomous, it is prevented from being subjected to the market and its fashion; for instance, the trend of the best-seller, the advertising of commodity inside the work of art, or dealing with the work of art itself as a commodity that makes art subject to laws of the market. If art becomes firmly rooted in reality and rejects to empty itself from the affairs of the world, then this art is deceptive and false.

The revolutionary potential of art is essentially autonomous. Clearly, it is not integrated with the social politics and praxis; it can be found in the literary symbolic language of art, in art as alienation, or in its autonomous and negating character. Art tends to indirectness. Therefore, Marcuse argues that there is no autonomous art without commitment to the aesthetic form:

In the aesthetic form, the autonomy of art constitutes itself. It was forced upon art through the separation of mental and material labor, as a result of the prevailing relations of domination. Dissociation from the process of production became a refuge and a vantage point from which to denounce the reality established through domination. (The Aesthetic Dimension 17-18)

As a result of creating another different world in art from reality, the autonomy of art is constituted ; it bears the independence from reality and rejection that art is subjected to its control. This is the link between the autonomy and negativity of art. If art transcends society, by virtue of its autonomy, it will prepare the way to the power of indictment. Autonomy prevents art from being dissolved in politics. As Agger clarifies, “actually art is most political where it provokes in us memory and dream that liberate us from the flattened horizon of one-dimensional perception” (Agger 332). Agger also warns about the “denial” of autonomy and considers it “the denial of the autonomy of subjectivity” (331). The relation between the autonomy of art and its negativity appears as the indirect role of art in the process of changing society.

However, the tendency of using the style only, according to Marcuse, is called “false autonomy.” It is the very concern with form and neglecting the revolutionary and negative content of art. Despite his insistence on aesthetic form, the focus on absolute form is described by Marcuse as follows:



Neither is the truth of art a matter of style alone. There is in art an abstract, illusory autonomy: private arbitrary invention of something new, a technique which remains extraneous to the content, or technique without content, form without matter. Such empty autonomy robs art of its own concreteness which pays tribute to that which is, even in its negation. (The Aesthetic Dimension 40-41)

Marcuse often argues for the importance and significance of the aesthetic form, but he also insists on the importance of the harmony between form and content. In the state of transfiguration, content and form are not separated; they are considered one thing. Hence, this transfiguration constitutes the subversion of art. Here appears the negativity that indicts the transfigured content limits the powers of Schein and prevents it from being transformed into idealistic Schein. This process cannot be achieved without distinguishing art by the feature of true autonomy. Without this autonomy, art will turn into an object that is controlled by the repressive forces of society and loses its truth. This can be called the destroying of the transfiguration in art.

Marcuse thus wants to determine the function of true art where he warns about the reification of art. Thus, the function of authentic art is not restricted to enjoyment, it has the effect of change that becomes the aim of true art. This change happens inside the limits of both the work of art and the psyche of individual; thus, the change happens in society as a result of the new consciousness of individuals, as the biological need to change.

Art, however, has the ability to refuse the established reality. It gives hope for a new better society. Marcuse definitely says that the true functions of art are represented in four points, "... (1) to negate our present society, (2) to anticipate the trends of future society, (3) to criticize destructive or alienating trends, and (4) to suggest 'images' of creative and unalienating ones" (Art and Liberation 228). Authentic art does not bear reconciliation with and affirmation of society; rather, it is the art that represents the break of affirmation, the exploitation of reality, injustice, commoditization and reification. Its direct effect tends towards the perception and senses of individual. It "[fosters] the development of the real, vital and sensual needs and inspiring actions that transcends the present condition" (Kellner, Marcuse's Challenge of Education 19); it reveals what is forbidden and declares the



truth that is obliterated. Therefore, the true function of art is to be a Great Refusal to the ugliness of whatever savage reality.

Conclusion

In the end, and according to Marcuse, art should protest against the domination of societies ; art should be negative. At the same time, this negativity should not cancel the role of Schein in the work of art in order not to be transformed into abstract negation. However, negativity reshapes the role of Schein. Marcuse refuses deceptive illusion and refuses to consider art only for entertainment and enjoyment; at the same time, he refuses to deal with art as a political tool resulting from considering art only for revolt. Thus, authentic art is the art that preserves the co-existence of both negativity and Schein that works under the framework of negativity. Art is genuine when it negates, not when affirms.

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