

6th BSA Postgraduate Conference

Beyond Human: The Aesthetics of Nature and Technology

Reframing Technology: Aesthetics and Nature in the Critical Philosophy of Herbert Marcuse

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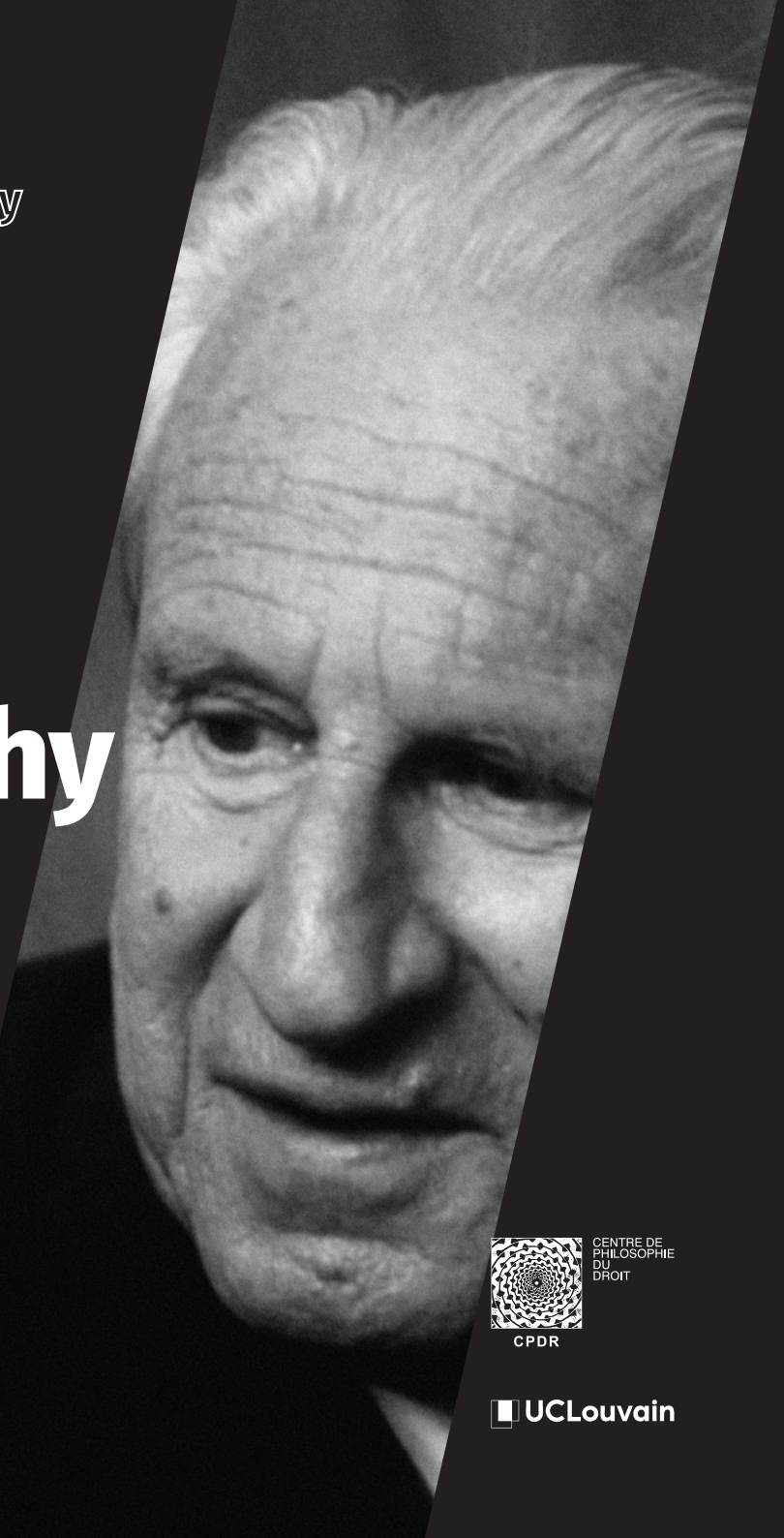
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1 Diagnostis_
**The critique of the
instrumentalization of *Reason***

2 Philosophical influence_
> Kant > Schiller

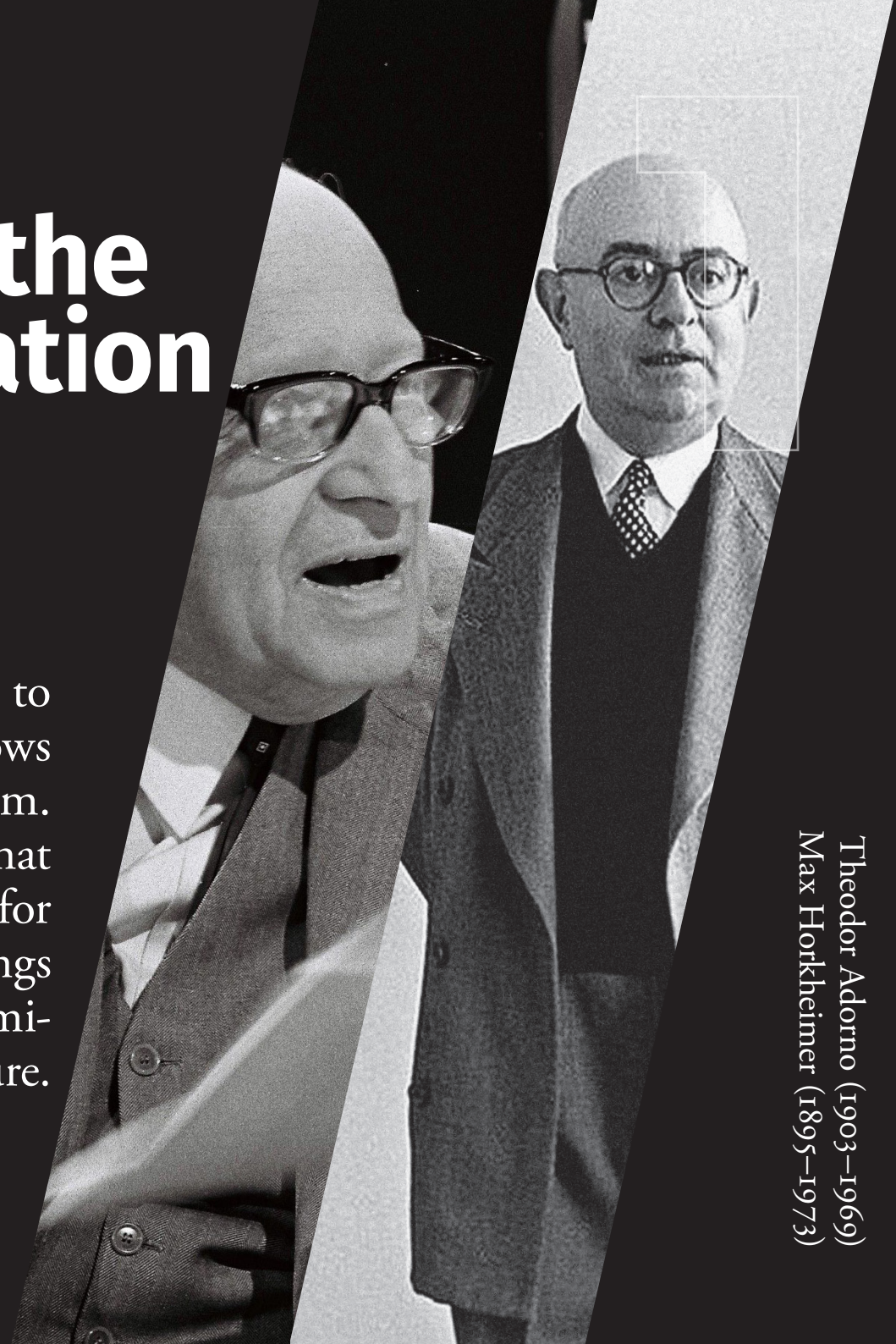
3 Proposition_
A new concept of *technique*

1 Diagnosis_

The critique of the instrumentalization of Reason

« Enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings. He knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things to the extent that he can make them. Their “in-itself” becomes “for him.” In their transformation the essence of things is revealed as always the same, a substrate of domination. This identity constitutes the unity of nature.

HORKHEIMER & ADORNO,
Dialectic of Enlightenment, 1947



Theodor Adorno (1903–1969)
Max Horkheimer (1895–1973)

Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979)



1933

Marcuse joins the
Institut für Sozialforschung,
Frankfurt an Main

Habitations-schrift
*Hegel's Ontology and the
Theory of Historicity*
...

Reason and Revolution

Eros and Civilization

The Soviet Marxisme

One-Dimensional Man

An Essay on Liberation
*Counterrevolution and
Revolt*

*Die Permanenz
der Kunst*

1932

1941

1955

1958

1964

1969

1972

1977

Facing alienation



The transformation of society eliminates the original relation of substructure and superstructure. In a rational reality, the labor process should not determine the general existence of men; to the contrary, their needs should determine the labor process. Not that the labor process is regulated in accordance with a plan, but the interest determining the regulation becomes important: it is rational only if this interest is that of the freedom and happiness.

MARCUSE, “Philosophy and Critical Theory,” 1937.

2 Philosophical influence

> Immanuel Kant

Critique of Judgement (1790)
[Kritik der Urteilskraft]

- ***imagination*** as an expressive medium of ***human freedom***
- The ***purposiveness*** [Zweckmäßigkeit] of nature



Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

2 Philosophical influence_

> Immanuel Kant



- The *aesthetic perception* is accompanied by ***pleasure***
- Pleasure derives from the perception of the ***pure form of an object***
- An object represented in its pure form is “beautiful.” Such representation is the work/the play of imagination

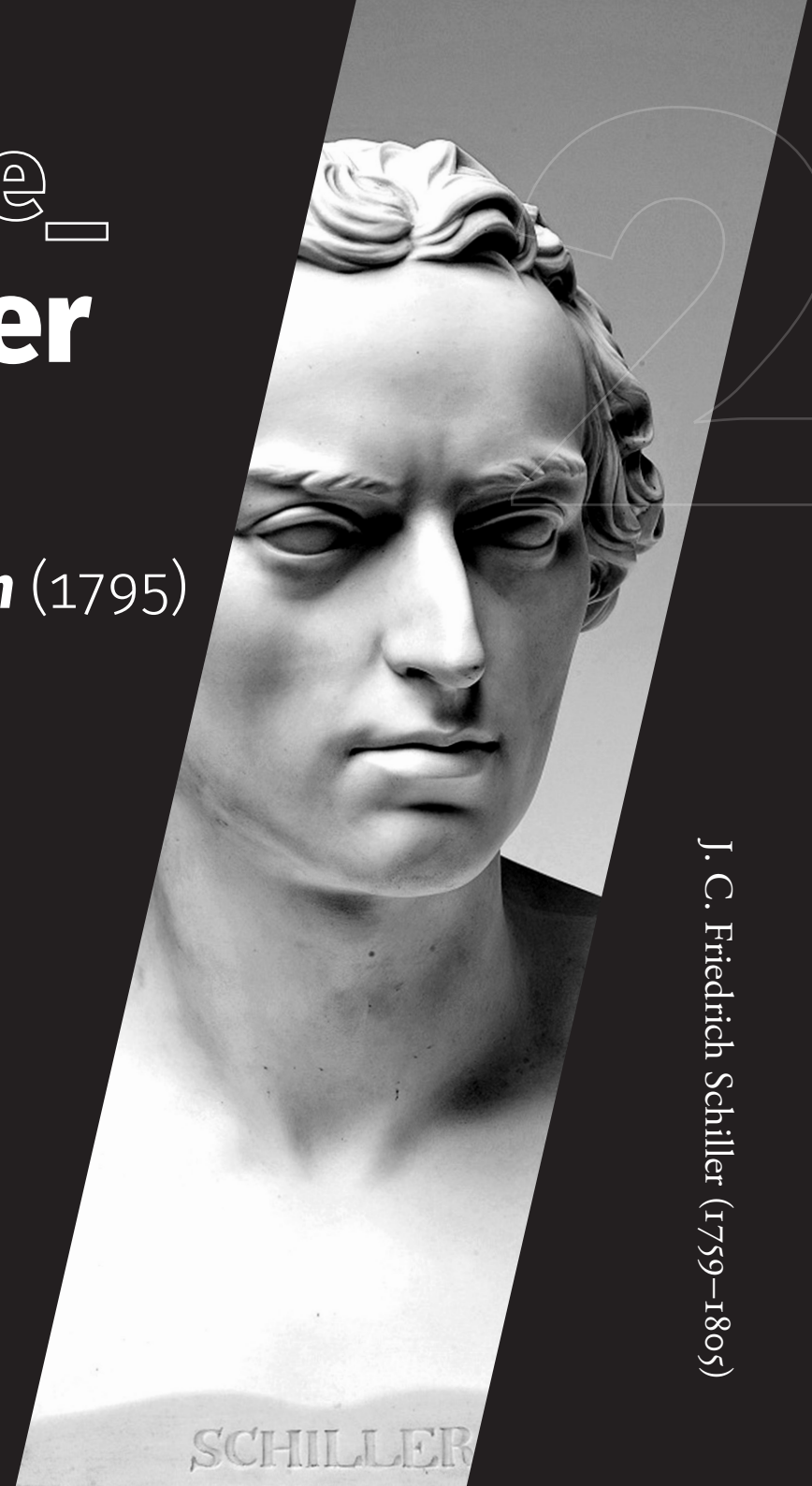
2 Historical influence_

> Friedrich Schiller

Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man (1795)
[*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*]

- Harmony between the two main human instincts

« [...] we are urged by two contrary forces which, because they impel us to realize their object, are very properly called impulses.



J. C. Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805)

Sense drive



The first of these impulses, which I shall name the *sensuous*, proceeds from the physical existence of Man or from his sensuous nature, and is concerned with setting him within the bounds of time and turning him into matter; not with giving him matter, since that is the province of a free activity of the person, which matter receives and distinguishes from the persisting self. By matter I here mean nothing but alteration, or reality which occupies time; consequently this impulse demands that there should be alteration, that time should have content. This condition of merely occupied time is called sensation, and it is this alone through which physical existence proclaims itself.

SCHILLER, *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man*,
Letter XII.

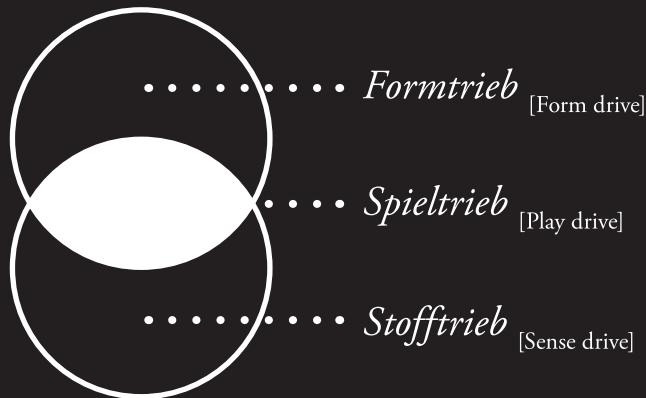
Form drive



The second of these impulses, which we may call the formal impulse, proceeds from Man's absolute existence or from his rational nature, and strives to set him at liberty, to bring harmony into the diversity of his manifestation, and to maintain his person throughout every change of circumstance. As this person, being an absolute indivisible unity, can never be at variance with itself, since we are ourselves to all eternity, that impulse which insists on affirming the personality can never demand anything other than what it must demand to all eternity; it therefore decides for ever as it decides for the moment, and enjoins for the moment what it enjoins for ever. Consequently it embraces the whole time series, which is as much as to say it annuls time and change; it wishes the actual to be necessary and eternal, and the eternal and necessary to be actual; in other words, it aims at truth and right.

SCHILLER, *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man*,
Letter XII.

Play drive



[...] since the sense impulse sways us physically and the form impulse morally, the one leaves our formal, and the other our material constitution contingent; that is to say, it is fortuitous whether our happiness agrees with our perfection or the other way about. So the play impulse, in which both operate in combination, will at the same time make our formal and our material constitution, our perfection and our happiness, contingent; it will therefore, just because it makes them both contingent, and because contingency vanishes with necessity, abolish the contingency in them both, and consequently bring form into the material and reality into the form. In proportion as it lessens the dynamic influence of the sensations and emotions, it will bring them in harmony with rational ideas; and in proportion as it deprives the laws of reason of their moral compulsion, it will reconcile them with the interest of the senses.

SCHILLER, *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man*,
Letter xv.

3 Proposition_

A new concept of technique

An Essay on Liberation (1969)

Counterrevolution and Revolt (1972)

- New Sensibility
- New Technique



New sensibility



The new sensibility, which expresses the ascent of the life instincts over aggressiveness and guilt, would foster, on a social scale, the vital need for the abolition of injustice and misery and would shape the further evolution of the “standard of living.” The life instincts would find rational expression (sublimation) in planning the distribution of the socially necessary labor time within and among the various branches of production, thus setting priorities of goals and choices: not only what to produce but also the “form” of the product.

MARCUSE, *An Essay on Liberation*, p. 23.

Technique



The liberated consciousness would promote the development of a science and technology free to discover and realize the possibilities of things and men in the protection and gratification of life, playing with the potentialities of form and matter for the attainment of this goal. Technique would then tend to become art, and art would tend to form reality: the opposition between imagination and reason, higher and lower faculties, poetic and scientific thought, would be invalidated. Emergence of a new Reality Principle: under which a new sensibility and a desublimated scientific intelligence would combine in the creation of an *aesthetic ethos*.

MARCUSE, *An Essay on Liberation*, p. 24.

Final considerations

Civil Society movements

Art

— Creation of *new sensibilities*

Thank You