

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The *gaya scienza* and the aesthetic ethos: Marcuse's appropriation of Nietzsche in *An Essay on Liberation*

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New ears for new music. New eyes for what is most distant. A new conscience for truths that have so far remained mute.

Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*

The new sensibility and the new consciousness which are to project and guide such reconstruction demand a new language to define and communicate the new "values."

Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*

I

In his *Essay on Liberation* Marcuse draws on Nietzsche explicitly in his formulation of the *gaya scienza*, or the aesthetic ethos of liberation. In this article, I demonstrate that Marcuse's usage of Nietzsche runs much deeper. In addition to his interest in the *gaya scienza*, Marcuse articulates distinctively Nietzschean critiques of the self-undermining logic of modernity, the repressive effects of entrance into society, and the Great Refusal (or, for Nietzsche, the transvaluation of all values) that can bring about a new mode of human life.

Once I have established the numerous ways in which Marcuse's work can be understood as an extension of Nietzsche's, I offer an analysis of the various differences between the two thinkers' positions. Marcuse, publishing eight decades later, was confronted with a qualitatively different modernity from that of Nietzsche and subsequently reformulated Nietzsche's critiques. Understandably, Marcuse did not elaborate on his departures from Nietzsche, but these discontinuities are instructive in understanding the relationship between the two thinkers. Among these differences are their opposed attitudes towards cruelty and suffering, their discussion of solidarity, the contents of aestheticism, and the status of politics and its emancipatory possibilities.

Finally, in an attempt to bring Nietzsche and Marcuse into productive conversation, I offer an *Aufhebung*, or sublation, of the two thinkers' work. I seek to alleviate the tension between Nietzsche's individualism and Marcuse's socialism by elaborating on the extent to which Nietzschean individuals' self-creation is inextricably bound up with their culture. Further, I give an alternative formulation of solidarity that is reconcilable with Nietzsche's perspectivism and experimentalism. Finally, I respond to both Marcuse's claim that an aesthetic ethos is inevitably political and to Nietzsche's general rejection of the State by offering views of socialism and democracy that are qualitatively

different from the type of socialism and democracy that Nietzsche critiqued. The intent here is not simply to meld the two thinkers' projects, but rather to understand what Marcuse gains or loses by using Nietzsche in this way. Given Marcuse's grounding in Nietzsche, this section demonstrates how Marcuse's interest in solidarity can be tempered or protected from the woes of solidarity gone awry by a backwards look at Nietzsche. On these grounds, we can use this critical engagement across different historical contexts to inform contemporary politics that draw on issues of individualism, solidarity, self-creation, and agonism.

While studies of the two thinkers individually are voluminous, this article contributes to the surprisingly barren literature on their intersection.¹ Aside from a dissertation written by David Murphy, which examines Nietzsche and Marcuse's critiques of one-dimensional society by invoking Hegel's theory of alienation (Murphy, 2009), scholarly treatment of the intersection between Nietzsche and Marcuse is limited to Christopher Holman's argument that Marcuse turns to Nietzsche and the will to power when he fails to extract a logos of gratification from Freud (Holman, 2012). This account, however, focuses primarily on *Eros and Civilization*, with the effect of largely ignoring *An Essay on Liberation*. This article seeks to occupy two scholarly vacuums: first, by discussing the specifically aesthetic politics of Nietzsche and Marcuse's thought and second, by providing a sustained analysis of the Nietzschean currents running through *An Essay on Liberation*, a largely understudied text in Marcuse's oeuvre.

II

In *An Essay on Liberation*, the concept of the *gaya scienza* is explicitly invoked twice and implicitly referenced once via Nietzsche's *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*. The first instance appears to be a reference to technology, narrowly understood, that has been freed of the dominating rationality that guides it. Marcuse explains that "science and technology would have to change their present direction and goal" such that they can be "reconstructed" with a "new sensibility." It is this usage of science and technology "without exploitation and [human] toil" that initially constitutes the *gaya scienza* (Marcuse, 1969, p. 19).

Marcuse's second invocation of Nietzsche appears to come closer to Nietzsche's own portrayal of the *gaya scienza*. Marcuse explains that

An instinctual transformation is conceivable as a factor of social change only if it enters the social division of labor, the production relations themselves. They would be shaped by men and women who have the good conscience of being human, tender, sensuous, who are no longer ashamed of themselves—for "the token of freedom attained, that is, no longer being ashamed of ourselves." (Nietzsche, Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, Book III, 275). (Marcuse, 1969, p. 21)

Here, Marcuse explicitly invokes Nietzsche to articulate the aesthetic ethos he claims is constitutive of socialism by inserting an in-text citation to Nietzsche's work, which serves not only to make clear the conceptual tradition on which he is drawing, but also reinforces his own usage of the phrase *gaya scienza*, given that the book he quotes is titled *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, or *gaya scienza* in German.

Marcuse's third mention of the *gaya scienza* appears to center once again on science and technology, but he simultaneously makes it clear that these technologies form the basis for an aesthetic sensibility free of shame. He explains:

The imagination, unifying sensibility and reason becomes "productive" as it becomes practical: a guiding force in the reconstruction of reality—reconstruction with the help of a gaya scienza, a science and technology released from their service to destruction and exploitation, and thus free for the liberating exigencies of the imagination. (Marcuse, 1969, p. 31)

Once again, Marcuse focuses on how science and technology are misused by a dominating form of rationality and could, through critical and aesthetic reconstruction, result in the liberation of mankind from these constraints.

These references, along with various other sprinklings of Nietzschean parlance (for instance, the phrase “transvaluation of all values” appears at least three times in the text [see pp. 6, 22 and 54]), clearly demonstrate that Marcuse was utilizing Nietzsche as conceptual scaffolding for his understanding of aesthetic liberation in the *Essay*.

III

In order to understand the relationship between Marcuse's *An Essay on Liberation* with Nietzsche, we must investigate not only the instances of explicit citation, but also their thematic similarities. These continuities can be grouped into four broad categories: modernity as shot through with a self-undermining logic; the critique of modern man as repressed, normalized and subject to internalized guilt; the Refusal, or moral rebellion that upsets the ossified norms of modernity; and finally, the aesthetic path to liberation or autonomy that follows. By taking each one of these similarities in turn, we can see to what extent Marcuse builds on Nietzsche's work.

Marcuse's critique of modernity is familiar. A member of the first wave of critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt School, he found that the rationality born out of the Enlightenment had become instrumental and destructive. This position is perhaps most visibly articulated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in which Adorno and Horkheimer explain that Enlightenment rationality itself has been implicated from the beginning with the notion of domination. They trace the subject-object division as far back as Odysseus, whose cunning is played out in modernity as the estrangement of mankind from nature, exacerbated by the apprehension of nature for the sake of its own domination. This narrative is then elaborated with respect to the Enlightenment: Kant's formalism and systematizing assert the scientific derivability of the world, and the solidification of the subject as against the worldly object (the noumenal and phenomenal worlds, and so on). Kantian formalism, however, cannot ground itself in a non-circular way and therefore cannot generate binding moral duties. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, this very fact allows thinkers like Nietzsche and Sade to invert and eviscerate Kantian rationality. By showing that Enlightenment rationality has no recourse to eternal truth (or something similar), its logic is reduced to mere technical rationality, devoid of moral influence and no criterion for legitimating action. It becomes clear that “Science itself has no awareness of itself; it is merely a tool” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 66). In the final analysis, the promise of deducing moral obligations from a priori systematizing rationalization was undercut, and in its place grew an unrestrained formalism of domination.

Marcuse takes up this narrative from the viewpoint of the *Lebenswelt*, emphasizing the problematic instantiation of this dominating rationality in the capitalist market. More problematically, the logic of the marketplace is all-encompassing and self-perpetuating. Dependence on an exploitative apparatus only retrenches the logic of the system and, moreover, perpetuates one's servitude to it (Marcuse, 1969, p. 4). This system of logic denies that which is distinctively human:

All the [human] needs and satisfactions are permeated with the exigencies of profit and exploitation. The entire realm of competitive performances and standardized fun, all the symbols of status, prestige, power, of advertised virility and charm, of commercialized beauty—this entire realm kills in its citizens the very disposition, the organs, for the alternative: freedom without exploitation. (Marcuse, 1969, p. 17)

Enlightenment turns back on its progenitors in an ironic reversal of Odysseus's use of reason to overcome myth: that very reason now subjects us to the same domination. Perhaps most worrying is the extent to which this hollowed-out rationality operates without its victim's noticing. Marcuse explains that “Capitalist progress thus not only reduces the environment of freedom, the ‘open space’ of the human existence, but also the ‘longing,’ the need for such an environment” (Marcuse, 1969, p. 18).

There is a clear parallel between Marcuse's critique of Enlightenment rationality as self-undermining and Nietzsche's view that the tradition (most notably, of course, Christianity and Western metaphysics) undercuts itself. In his *Will to Power* he asks “What does nihilism mean? *That the highest values devalue themselves.* The aim is lacking;

'why?' finds no answer" (Nietzsche, 1968, §2). The Nietzschean critique of modernity is in many ways similar to that of Adorno and Horkheimer, as well as that of Marcuse: recourse to moral duties derived a priori is no longer tenable, and an abyss of meaninglessness gapes under humanity. The madman of *The Gay Science* proclaims the fall of the tradition: "'Whither is god?' he cried; 'I will tell you. *We have killed him—you and I!*" (Nietzsche, 1974, §125). Nietzsche dispatches the possibility of universal systemization associated with Kant, explaining that no view is capable of apprehending the whole (assuming that such a whole exists), and that untruth, over and against truth, is a condition of life. This position is the basis for his perspectivism and experimentalism: the continual self-overcoming of a self-fashioning (or rather, self-legislating) individual is coherent only when universality is unobtainable. Being only makes sense as Becoming when Being itself has fallen. Nietzsche critiques the Enlightenment impulse to rationalize the world: "I mistrust all systematizers and I avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity" (Nietzsche, 1982, §26). This systemization, the gradual and complete disenchantment (and thereby domination) of the world, is what is left after a priori morality becomes untenable. For Marcuse, we saw that the logic of the Enlightenment was instantiated in the market and it blotted out autonomy by closing off choice (or even the knowledge of choice). Similarly, for Nietzsche the Enlightenment hangover is the sustained faith in an otherworldly metaphysics, which, with help from the ascetic priests and their directing of *ressentiment* inwards, makes impossible autonomous self-fashioning.

Nietzsche and Marcuse share a critical account of modernity. Both view it as offering unfulfillable promises (that of the salvation of truth in Nietzsche, or of moral certitude for both), betraying itself by means of its own devices (the will to truth for Nietzsche, and the instrumental logic of domination for the critical theorists), and finally culminating in an empty formalism which is self-perpetuating in modern society. Given this theoretical backdrop, it is altogether unsurprising that there are striking similarities in Nietzsche and Marcuse's critiques of what the modern human has become. Indeed, Marcuse telegraphs the Nietzschean theme within which he frames the *Essay* as far back as his *Eros and Civilization*; explaining that "Nietzsche exposes the gigantic fallacy on which Western philosophy and morality were built—namely, the transformation of facts into essences, of historical into metaphysical conditions," which ultimately culminates in the "growing degeneration of the life instincts—the decline of man" (Marcuse, 1966, p. 121).

We are confronted with a logic of domination so deeply ingrained that a *happy* conscience, a uniquely modern condition, is indeed possible. The happy conscience that Marcuse articulates in *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse, 1992) is encapsulated in one of Nietzsche's most famous images: the Last Man. Their extreme contemptibility is grounded in their happy denial of their own nature. They turn away from reality towards an already-devalued metaphysical eternity and attempt only to mitigate the pain of existence: "'We have discovered happiness,' say the last men, and blink thereby....A little poison now and then; that maketh pleasant dreams. And much poison at last for a pleasant death" (Nietzsche, 1997, §5, Prologue). This satisfied absence of a critical conscience is mirrored in Marcuse's claim that "loss of conscience due to the satisfactory liberties granted by an unfree society makes for a *happy consciousness* which facilitates acceptance of the misdeeds of this society" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 76). For Marcuse, the extent to which the market is inseparable from the logic of domination, coupled with the various amenities of capitalistic life (such as the culture industry) inures people to their own domination and instead makes them crave their own subjugation. A similar logic is present in Nietzsche's work: the ascetic priest gives the sickly meaning for their suffering, and thereby subjects them to the life-denying lie of Christianity. The sickly are trapped inasmuch as they are too weak of will to legislate over themselves; their own inability to live autonomously forces them to happily accept whatever doctrine most painlessly imbues their life with meaning.

For both Nietzsche and Marcuse, entangled in this happy conscience is the bad or false conscience.² For Marcuse, it is the repressive power of society more broadly, but specifically the commodity form of the market, that brings about this internalization: the totalizing scope of the market and its intrusion into art represses the power of imagination (Marcuse, 1969, p. 29). Moreover, the false needs brought about by the market only perpetuate the repression of those who need to engage with the system in order to survive (Marcuse, 1969, p. 51). False consciousness, for Marcuse, is the market's repression of human autonomy or imagination by which the victims believe that their perpetuation of the system benefits them or affords them a moment beyond its grasp.

Bad conscience, for Nietzsche, represents a similar moment in the psychological formation of humanity on its journey into society. In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche explains that the weak harbor a deep-seated *ressentiment* towards the noble class of men. Because the weak could not in any physical sense overcome the noble caste, they instead effected an imagined revenge in which the noble valuation of good (that which is noble) and bad (that which is not noble) was reversed; the slavish revaluation held that what was now good was bad in the previous noble valuation, and what was evil was what the noble classified as good. The slavish revaluation was an immediately reactionary response to their inability to exert their power in the real world. In Essay II of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche explains that bad conscience arises from the internalization of a radically insurmountable guilt, exacerbating the conviction with which the slavish valuation was held. Entrance into society, which prohibits slavish types from externalizing their instincts, necessitates a reversal in target:

All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly turn inward—this is what I can the internalization of man....Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction—all this turned against the possessors of such instinct: that is the origin of the "bad conscience." (Nietzsche, 1967, p. §16, Essay II)

While Marcuse's false conscience and Nietzsche's bad conscience are not identical, inasmuch as Marcuse's conception refers to happiness despite the loss of conscious guilt in capitalistic consumption and Nietzsche's conception emphasizes the internalization of guilt that produces the life-negating loss of meaning and the turn toward meekness in modernity, the two psychological states serve a similar role: to ready the bearer for the satisfied acceptance of their own domination.³ In *An Essay on Liberation*, the false conscience that individuals internalize out of the inability to think otherwise entails an unreflective happiness in response to the satiation of their imagined needs. Similarly, the bad conscience in the *Genealogy of Morals* primes slavish types to extend and reify their imagined revenge on the noble and live happily in light of this constructed and ossified story.

Notably, Marcuse's articulation of repression as a function of the market upon humans as consumers hinges on his sublation of the Freudian account of instinctual repression at both the individual and community levels. Using Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* (trans. 2010) to frame the history of man as "the history of repression" (Marcuse, 1966, p. 11), and to articulate a non-repressive society realized in socialism, Marcuse looks first to the Freudian history of ontogenetic and phylogenetic repression before ultimately going beyond it in his *Eros and Civilization*. With respect to the individual (ontogenesis), the three layers of the mental structure stand in relation to each other insofar as the ego serves to repress and control the instinctual drives of the id in order to "minimize conflicts with the reality," while the superego is the "coagulation" of "societal and cultural influences" into a "powerful representative of established morality," that is, repetition and normalization (Marcuse, 1966, pp. 29–32). Coextensive with the creation of the ego and superego is the internalization of self-punishment (Marcuse, 1966, p. 33) and a splitting of the "unity of the personality as a whole," an internal turning against oneself (Marcuse, 1966, p. 53) that bears a striking resemblance to Nietzsche's claim that socialization results in the turning of drives in and against oneself (Nietzsche, 1967, §16, Essay II).

Phylogenetically, or with respect to the repressive civilization, Marcuse points to Freud's articulation of the "unconscious sense of guilt and the unconscious need for punishment, [which] seem to be out of proportion with the actual 'sinful' impulses of the individual" (Marcuse, 1966, p. 55). Perhaps most strikingly, Marcuse shows that Freud's phylogenetic account hinges on repression as a means of self-preservation in the face of patriarchal suppression (Marcuse, 1966, p. 63), the deification of the patriarchal figure's powers (Marcuse, 1966, p. 66), and the perpetuation of self-domination by way of restoring the repressive father (Marcuse, 1966, p. 67). Notably, this resembles Nietzsche's discussion of Christian self-denial as a way of self-preservation in the face of the noble caste (Nietzsche, 1967, Essay I), the transfiguration of a culture's ancestors into deities through a sublation of the creditor–debtor relationship (Nietzsche, 1967, §19, Essay II), and the perpetration of this internalized guilt at the hands of the ascetic priests (Nietzsche, 1967, Essay III). While Marcuse's articulation of repression in mass culture resonates with Nietzsche's condemnation of decadent European culture, Marcuse's understanding of, but ultimate break with, the Freudian tradition of ontogenetic and phylogenetic repression demonstrates a marked conceptual continuity with Nietzsche

based on attention to the socially generative self-imposed repression of guilt. Marcuse's dialectical engagement with Freud's attention to instinctual repression makes the critical kinship between Marcuse and Nietzsche all the less surprising. Indeed, later in *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse explains that for Nietzsche, in a way similar both to Freud's own account as well as to the thesis of *Eros*, "progress [in civilization] became of necessity progressive repression" (Marcuse, 1966, p. 120).

If the critique of the tradition and its effects on modern society are Nietzsche and Marcuse's schematic continuities, they share a specific and explicit moment of unison in their discussion of the *gaya scienza*. Marcuse articulates his conception in terms of freedom from the repressive powers of the market. What is important is its two-part movement: the release from domination combined with the reclaiming of imagination; it is a "science and technology released from their service to destruction and exploitation, and thus free for the liberating exigencies of the imagination" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 31). More than this, we should recall that Marcuse makes explicit reference to Nietzsche's *Gay Science*, explaining that the *gaya scienza* that he champions similarly entails liberation from shame, and by extension, false consciousness (Marcuse, 1969, p. 21). It is telling that Marcuse quotes Nietzsche's exposition of liberation: "What is the seal of liberation?—No longer being ashamed in front of oneself," (Nietzsche, 1974, §275) which resembles his first presentation of the Great Refusal in *Eros and Civilization*: "This Great Refusal is the protest against unnecessary repression, the struggle for the ultimate form of freedom—to live without anxiety" (Marcuse, 1966, p. 150).

This conception of the release from shame, the "ascent of the life instincts over aggressiveness and guilt" signifies a necessary overcoming of the self-perpetuation of bad or false conscience. In Nietzsche's words, he wants people "to share not suffering but joy" (Nietzsche, 1974, §338). The *gaya scienza* is positioned against the traditional and repressed disposition constitutive of modernity—it requires a critique and rejection of decadent forms of oppression. Marcuse expresses this revolt as the "Great Refusal," an attempt to effect a radical transvaluation of all values. It is worth noting that as early as *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse hints that the Nietzschean transvaluation should be understood as doing something quite similar to the Great Refusal: "For Nietzsche, the liberation depends on the reversal of the sense of guilt; mankind must come to associate the bad conscience not with the affirmation but with the denial of the life instincts, not with the rebellion but with the acceptance of repressive ideals" (Marcuse, 1966, p. 124). Despite presenting this in Freudian language, Marcuse makes it clear that release from civilization's repressive ideologies and one's own internalized guilt are prerequisites for liberation.

In order to situate this move within Nietzsche and Marcuse's broader critical frameworks, it is instructive to consult another of Nietzsche's more famous images. In the first of Zarathustra's discourses, "The Three Metamorphoses", he recounts the transformation of a camel into a lion, then into a human baby. The camel signifies the load-bearing soul depressed under the weight of the tradition: "kneeleth it down like the camel, and wanteth to be well-laden" (Nietzsche, 1997, §1). The second stage of metamorphosis is the lion, the noble revolt against the tradition: "freedom will it capture, and lordship in its own wilderness" (Nietzsche, 1997, §1). The lion's refusal, however, is reactionary and unrestrained. In order to transcend this wild rejection and create new values, one needs the innocence of the child: "Innocence in the child, and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a game, a self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea" (Nietzsche, 1997, §1).

In their shared critical arc both Nietzsche and Marcuse explain the self-debasing and oppressive ineptitude of the tradition (the camel), the necessity of a refusal or rejection of this dominant morality (the lion) and the *gaya scienza* that can flourish once mankind fully realizes its uniquely human capacity to esteem or evaluate. The distinctive thrust of *An Essay on Liberation* is its articulation of both the possibility of refusal and the aesthetic valuation that could follow. Marcuse employs the Nietzschean terminology of the "transvaluation of values" to express the radical nature of his position. Indeed, Marcuse explains that the totalizing oppression of Enlightenment rationality necessitates a revolt into the "second nature" of society, "into these ingrown patterns," otherwise "social change will remain 'incomplete,' even self-defeating" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 11). Thus, Marcuse acknowledges society's deep level of saturation of self-negation. In the same way that Nietzsche's philological genealogy affords us insight into the reactionary reversal of valuation that damns modernity, Marcuse claims that a similarly radical inquiry into the substratum of society is necessary to overcome it. Anything less would be ineffective and ultimately be encapsulated within the already-existing system. What is necessary for rebellion is a qualitatively different way of life (Marcuse, 1969, p. 22). Moreover, in order to break

through the “memory repression of organized labor,” uncivil disobedience is sometimes necessary (Marcuse, 1969, p. 69). In the final analysis, what is needed is the

negation of the entire Establishment, its morality, culture; affirmation of a right to build a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil terminates in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the Form of the society itself. (Marcuse, 1969, p. 24)

In the same way that Nietzsche moves beyond the purely reactionary (and therefore not active) lion towards the esteeming child, Marcuse explains that the Great Refusal is not simply the slavish negation of the status quo but instead a necessary precursor to a realm of possible liberation. Rebellion in itself is rendered harmless when it does not give way to a more liberated conscience. Immediate denial is a desublimation that “leaves the traditional culture, the illusionist art behind unmastered: their truth and their claims remain valid—next to and together with the rebellion, within the same given society” (Marcuse, 1969, p. 47). In the same way that slavish negation is mere reactive reversal that only retrenches the status quo, goalless desublimation either culminates in more repressive desublimation or the “domestication and normalization” of the techniques of the refusal.

This brings us to yet another important continuity between Nietzsche and Marcuse: the aesthetic sensibility that follows the Great Refusal. Marcuse explains that the “critical analysis of this society calls for new categories: moral, political, aesthetic” (Marcuse, 1969, p. 7). The “new type of man” hinges on the 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, 1969, p. 24). The aesthetic ethos dispenses with the technical formalism sustained by the empty promise of the Enlightenment. In this way, the aesthetic ethos is the groundwork for the *gaya scienza* in that it allows for the joyful affirmation of life and the possibility for liberation. This “new sensorium” of the aesthetic environment is the kernel of Marcuse’s project: the Great Refusal finds its place in the Nietzschean analogy given that it is not simply reactionary and goalless, but is instead a means by which the *gaya scienza* of an aesthetic ethos can emerge.

Nietzsche’s aestheticism entails a similar rejection of ossified tradition in favor of a more human table of values. At the close of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche laments the inescapable propensity of thoughts to become stagnant and reified: “You [my thoughts] have already taken off your novelty, and some of you are ready, I fear, to become truths” (Nietzsche, 1989, §296). That is, he rails against the acceptance of Enlightenment platitudes in favor of an aesthetic experimentalism that grounds valuation, and by extension freedom from the tradition, in the distinctly human experience.

IV

A similar conception of Enlightenment’s self-destruction, the ill-effect it has on society and the *gaya scienza* from the Great Refusal all stand out as fundamental similarities in Nietzsche and Marcuse’s work. What we should now look to are Marcuse’s departures from the work of Nietzsche. Central amongst these are the role of solidarity in Marcuse’s work; his treatment of cruelty and suffering or exploitation; the ends or form of aestheticism in Nietzsche’s experimentalism; and finally the treatment of the political in terms of the aesthetic in *Essay on Liberation*. Though Marcuse explicitly invokes Nietzsche in his appropriation of the *gaya scienza*, Marcuse’s prescriptions seem to be at least in tension with, and at most in complete contradiction to, Nietzsche’s work.

Let us first look to Marcuse’s sustained presentation of solidarity in *An Essay on Liberation*. Marcuse makes it immediately clear that solidarity is both already-existing and repressed, but nevertheless necessary:

We would then have, this side of all “values,” an instinctual foundation for solidarity among human beings—a solidarity which has been effectively repressed in line with the requirements of class society but which now appears as a precondition for liberation. (Marcuse, 1969, p. 10)

Moreover, this solidarity contains the double movement of bringing about liberation while also shaping life in a liberating way:

the transformation [i.e. the Great Refusal and gaya scienza] is conceivable only as the way in which free men ... shape their life in solidarity, and build an environment in which the struggle for existence loses its ugly and aggressive features. (Marcuse, 1969, p. 46)

That is, the new aesthetic ethos is predicated on the realization of an intrinsic solidarity of humankind that is repressed and distorted by the logic of the market. Superficially, we might worry that the focus on solidarity is in tension with Marcuse's simultaneous acknowledgment of the importance of the outsider, which he mentions could take the form of the intelligentsia, student movements or African American groups. This concern is dispatched when we recall the role of the outsider: to create sufficient disruption from the logic of Enlightenment domination so that a new aesthetic ethos can erupt out of humanity's realization that it shares this feeling of solidarity. Indeed, Marcuse describes the solidarity as taking hold "internationally" and "spontaneously" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 52). In the same way that the Frankfurt School generally transcended the doctrinaire Marxist position that the proletariat was the agent of liberation, Marcuse locates this potential elsewhere.

While the emphasis on solidarity is clearly an inheritance from Marx, we need to examine the question of Marcuse's utilization of Nietzsche's work. In the general Frankfurt School tradition of western Marxism, Marcuse envisions solidarity as instantiated in socialism "which a society divided into antagonistic classes and nations cannot achieve" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 14). Marcuse's aim is a classless society (hence the Marxian sublation of class struggle) that is uniquely capable of producing autonomy (Marcuse, 1969, pp. 88–89). The logic is clear: autonomy is repressed by Enlightenment rationality as instantiated in the market and in other governing institutions. The only possibility of escaping this self-perpetuating oppression is by casting off the logic of the capitalist marketplace and bringing about a classless society in the form of socialism, on the grounds that material domination will be undercut and class domination will by definition be ended.

Marcuse's notion of solidarity departs from that of Nietzsche inasmuch as solidarity is rarely, if ever, mentioned in any substantive way in his works. The notion of solidarity, if not problematized by Marcuse's discussion of the outsider, appears in tension with Nietzsche's outsider. Zarathustra, for instance, is engaged in isolated conscious self-overcoming; his first retreat into the mountains affords him the distance and solitude necessary for the realization that God is dead. We should at this point recall two important passages. The final section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which Nietzsche grieves the ossification and reification of his own thoughts, exemplifies the exceedingly personal nature of this self-fashioning. Thus, the reading of Nietzsche as a radical individualist places him in acute tension with any conception of solidarity contingent on others.

Second, if we look to the famous formulation of the eternal recurrence in the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche emphasizes the reader's *loneliest loneliness* (*einsamste Einsamkeit*) during which the demon approaches (Nietzsche, 1974, §341). The joyful affirmation of eternity and the "gnashing of the teeth" are intimately linked to the immediately individual disposition of the reader. While paying careful attention to Nietzsche's ontology shows that every one of our interactions with others plays a part in our life (Nehemas, 1985) we are not presented with a way in which any specific substantive conception of solidarity accounts for or makes possible the affirmative "yea!" to life.

Further still, the specific concept "socialism" is harshly critiqued as "the logical conclusion of the *tyranny* of the least and dumbest" (Nietzsche, 1968, §125). That is, Nietzsche fully expects socialism to exacerbate and extend his critique of modern society in the face of modernity. Whereas for Marcuse autonomy and an aesthetic ethos find themselves instantiated in socialism, Nietzsche explicitly refuses this desideratum. For the active person, the principle of growth (articulated elsewhere as the will to power) is the basis for action. For Nietzsche, socialism cripples this "morality of development" and instead nurtures a "will to negate life" (Nietzsche, 1968, §125).

With respect to socialism as a vehicle of liberation, Nietzsche and Marcuse are diametrically opposed. We can see how this position flows from Nietzsche's general insistence on self-fashioning: a socialistic ethos almost inevitably brings about a principle of solidarity that implicates and consumes individuals within their society. For Marcuse, the outsider, the potential agent of the moral revolution, must maintain a critical distance from modern Enlightenment culture. In Nietzsche, this idea is taken further yet: the philosopher (or free spirit, sovereign individual, higher man, *Übermensch*, and so on) must maintain a critical distance from modern society *and* from other individuals. This principle

underlies Nietzsche's dialectical agonism: "In one's friend one shall have one's best enemy. Thou shalt be closest unto him with thy heart when thou withstandest him" (Nietzsche, 1974, §14). Nietzsche's central concern is the viability and sustainability of an aesthetic mode of self-fashioning: he would have critiqued Marcuse's proposed aesthetic socialism on the grounds that the idea of a "shared solidarity of aesthetic valuation" already misunderstands the intimate nature of autonomy, and moreover that a socialistic environment would not lead to the cultivation of this ethos, but rather to its decline.

The other side of the coin of the "socialistic mediocrity" that Nietzsche articulates is the productive potential of the "pathos of distance". Marcuse's advocacy of a classless society and, moreover, his assertion that happiness is unattainable in a society with classes, put him firmly in contradiction with Nietzsche (Marcuse, 1969, p. 14). Marcuse's logic appears clear enough: socialism offers the possibility of transcending the always-already dominating logic of capitalism while ensuring that domination via social inequality is mitigated. The critical distance discussed above is articulated in terms of its necessity for creativity:

Without that pathos of distance which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata—when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance—that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either—the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states. (Nietzsche, 1989, §257)

Bracketing the ink spilled and trees felled arguing that Nietzsche favors an institutionally instantiated administration of coercive domination of the weak, it is at least clear that he draws a conceptual link between aesthetic self-overcoming and difference. To the extent that Nietzsche sees socialism producing a solidarity that potentially collapses the (*pathos of*) distance, he would reject Marcuse's proposal straight away.

Another dimension of Marcuse's notion of solidarity is implied in Nietzsche's discussion of cruelty and exploitation. *An Essay on Liberation* outlines a society that has transcended modernity: it would entail a "less compromised, less guilty, less exploited humanity" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 71). In the same way, Marcuse articulates the traits of the new aesthetic ethos: "men who would speak a different language, have different gestures, follow different impulses; men who have developed an instinctual barrier against cruelty, brutality, ugliness" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 21). The socialist society of liberation here appears to transcend hardship in favor of joyous play. Because the absence of hardship is related to Nietzsche's critique of socialism it is instructive to look back briefly at the image of the Last Man and bring the two arguments together.

The Last Man represents both the sterility of solidarity and the modern aversion to pain or suffering ("A little poison now and then: that maketh pleasant dreams. And much poison at last for a pleasant death" [Nietzsche, 1997, §5, Prologue]). Here, Nietzsche claims that the life-denying normalizing mediocrity of socialism precludes the possibility of a pathos of distance or will to development and therefore cultivates the conditions in which the Last Man can emerge.

More than his negative critiques of such modern coddling, Nietzsche also outlines the utility of cruelty. His repeated admonishments to "become hard!" and his continual assertions that "truth is hard" owe themselves to the painful difficulty of self-overcoming. It is not simply that a moral revolution of aesthetic valuation would bring about an era of painless and cruelty-free liberation, as Nietzsche might accuse Marcuse of hoping for. Harkening back yet again to Nietzsche's characterization of autonomy, sovereign individuals must take a critical distance not only from their society or peers, but also from their own convictions. Because Marcuse wants to transcend the cruelty that Nietzsche sees as necessary for self-creation, he cannot wholeheartedly embrace Nietzsche's understanding of the *gaya scienza*.

What's more, the aestheticism of Nietzsche and Marcuse diverge given the utopian socialistic form of liberation presented in *An Essay on Liberation*. Nietzschean self-fashioning necessitates a continual self-overcoming that is temporally unbounded and more importantly has no *telos* or final "arrived" state. The Marcusean project, an attempt to meld the Nietzschean revaluation of all values with the Marxist revolution against the repressive and reifying forces of

capitalism ultimately undercuts “real” Nietzschean aestheticism. By this, I mean that the experimentalism of *The Gay Science* is problematized by the determinate end of socialism in Marcuse. The qualitatively different sphere of the aesthetic ethos may cohere with Nietzsche’s attempt to transcend guilt, but it does not capture the continual self-creation entailed by Nietzsche’s perspectival position. Moreover, Nietzsche would balk at the claim that Marcuse’s aesthetically informed socialism is the condition of “liberation and autonomy” for each individual. While the two thinkers share a certain disdain for modern morality and the urge to overthrow it, Nietzsche, who painstakingly articulates the individual agency and introspection that precipitate such reevaluation, would be concerned that Marcuse focuses too much on the societal level, especially in *An Essay on Liberation*.

The tension between the centrality of the individual in Nietzsche’s work and the importance of the solidarity of the community in Marcuse’s essay underline the specifically political dimension of their disagreement. Because Nietzsche rejects the socialistic conception of liberation, we should be attentive to both his and Marcuse’s treatment of the political as against the aesthetic. Marcuse presents an explicitly political vehicle for his aesthetic revolution, and claims that “the political protest, assuming a total character, reaches into a dimension which, as aesthetic dimension, has been essentially apolitical” (Marcuse, 1969, p. 30). Prior apolitical attempts to transcend the capitalist marketplace have been subsumed and normalized by it. It is, then, only a distinctively *political* protest that can see beyond the veil of domination: “the political protest activates in this [aesthetic] dimension precisely the foundational, organic elements: the human sensibility which rebels against the dictates of repressive reason, and, in doing so, invokes the sensuous power of the imagination” (Marcuse, 1969, p. 30). Furthermore, the aesthetic is dialectically intertwined with political protest: not only is the outcome the aesthetic ethos, but the means of protest are in themselves aesthetic as well: “giving flowers to the police” along with “the erotic belligerency in the songs of protest; the sensuousness of long hair, of the body unsoiled by plastic cleanliness” are all methods of disrupting the perpetual rationality of domination. Marcuse offers an *Aufhebung* of the aesthetic and political, such that the aesthetic is recruited in order to explode the current political structure, while bringing about a new aesthetic politics.

For Nietzsche, the relationship between politics and anything like an aesthetic ethos is much more antagonistic. Scholars who impute to him support for an institutionalized regime of aristocratic domination of the weak by the strong⁴ misrepresent Nietzsche. His discussion of cruelty is delimited to cruelty against one’s self and the self-denying tradition. When Zarathustra asks: “Oh my brethren, am I then cruel? But I say: ‘what falleth, that shall one also push!’” he is speaking about the perceived cruelty of proclaiming that God is dead to a world not yet ready to hear the news (Nietzsche, 1997, §56). The most damning discussion of cruelty, found in Section 11 of the *Genealogy of Morals* describes the animalistic cruelty of the “splendid *blond beast*.” Despite this clearly hyperbolic formulation aimed at arousing emotion, we should recall that the blond beast is the second stage of the three metamorphoses in *Zarathustra*. It is not that Nietzsche champions or celebrates purely reactionary, naturalistic cruelty—he instead believed it must be used to bring about the childlike innocence necessary to live without guilt. Indeed, for Nietzsche “the noble human being, too, helps the unfortunate, but not, or almost not, from pity, but prompted more by an urge begotten by excess of power” (Nietzsche, 1989, §260).

That is, Nietzsche’s idea of nobility is aesthetic *self*-creation that involves hardness towards one’s own dispositions, not an outwardly reactive ethic of cruelty. That the latter reading is incorrect is shown by a statement made as early as *Daybreak*:

It goes without saying that I do not deny—unless I am a fool—that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged—but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided for other reasons than hitherto. We have to learn to think differently—in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain more: to feel differently (Nietzsche, 1997, §103).

Moreover, we should be precise with respect to the role that cruelty plays in both Nietzsche and Marcuse’s accounts. As stated above, Nietzsche’s notion of cruelty is self-directed, and actions that could be seen to be cruel are instrumental in bringing about the downfall of sickly tables of values. In a similar vein, Marcuse allows for some revolutionary or

transformative violence as a means to the Great Refusal. Crucially, though both thinkers accept some role for cruelty and that it is indispensable for the realization of the aesthetic ethos, neither believes in the institutionalization of brute physical cruelty.

Once we have dismissed this interpretation of Nietzsche we can reassess his political views. Most relevant here is his aversion to democracy, which he rejects using many of the same arguments as in his dismissal of socialism. In his condemnation of European morality as “herd animal morality,” Nietzsche claims that “the *democratic* movement is the heir of the Christian movement” (Nietzsche, 1989, §202). The life-denying celebration of the yet-to-be-received realm of Being encourages a herd morality that is only exacerbated by the animating principle of democracy: “equality.” Nietzsche states his position without reservation: “the democratic movement is not only a form of the decay of political organization but a form of the decay, namely the diminution, of man, making him mediocre and lowering his value” (Nietzsche, 1989, §203). Given the “softhearted and effeminate taste” of democracy, we can hardly claim that Nietzsche sees his *gaya scienza* as instantiated in democracy or socialism, both systems being shot through, he claims, with a slavish obsession with decadent equality. For Nietzsche, the animating principle of these systems makes impossible the pathos of distance. If socialism is the economic instantiation of the pursuit of leveling equivalence and democracy is its political and cultural counterpart, Nietzsche would reject the Marcusean conception of liberation. Perhaps this is why scholars like Holman claim that “on the question of Nietzsche’s politics, Marcuse is silent, suggesting perhaps that such a politics—however it might be interpreted—was too much marked by the terrible past to provide any help for an emancipatory project” (Holman, 2012, p. 101).

V

Despite the considerable continuities and the repeated invocation of “transvaluation of all values,” “*gaya scienza*” and the “aesthetic ethos,” the project of *An Essay on Liberation* marks a clear departure from Nietzsche’s work. After having discussed the foundational role of Nietzsche in Marcuse’s philosophy and the tensions between the two thinkers’ developed work, we must (on pain of being *insufficiently dialectical*) outline the *Aufhebung*, or sublation, of the two positions. Marcuse provides a preliminary sublation of the Nietzschean position, in which it is reformulated in terms of an explicitly political project. Moreover, Marcuse moves beyond the Nietzschean emphasis on the individual and instead focuses on the necessity of a society and its solidarity.

My concern is that by emphasizing solidarity and its political instantiation Marcuse runs the risk that this aesthetic ethos may devolve into vicious mythology or repression that both he and Nietzsche intended to avoid. Thus, bringing Marcuse’s Nietzsche-grounded *Essay* back into conversation with Nietzsche himself would necessitate carving out a place for agonistic individual autonomy while underlining the importance of social solidarity, as well as providing a defense of a specifically political instantiation of the “transvaluation” while adequately responding to Nietzsche’s critiques of democracy, socialism, and herd morality.

Perhaps the early 20th century Jungen and Youth Movement’s attempts to bring Nietzsche’s affirmative disposition and socialism together represent a step towards what Marcuse envisioned. Unfortunately, such early attempts to meld these traditions relied on a decidedly stylized and often one-dimensional understanding of Nietzsche. The Jungen and *Nationalsoziale Verein*, for instance, invoked Nietzsche as a philosopher of self-liberation, independence and *Individualität* in order to critique the state as an instrument of ideological oppression (Thomas, 1983, pp. 10, 13–14). Rather than trying to use Nietzsche’s aestheticism and self-creative works to bolster or inform a new ethos of socialism, they instead discounted Nietzsche’s dismissals of socialism and suggested that despite his complaints, “his thinking was closely related to the ‘ultimate urges and objectives’ of the socialist movement, and more so than he or any socialist ever realized” (Thomas, 1983, p. 41).

Though Nietzsche was understood simply as the herald of liberation from repressive tendencies, insufficient attention was paid to his worries that these very same repressive tendencies would reproduce themselves in socialism. While drawing heavily on the experimentalism and perspectivism present in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, these early German movements undertheorized the critical role of agonism and difference in self-formation. It appears that

Marcuse may be broadly in the tradition of this usage of Nietzsche, but his decision to invoke Nietzsche is not reducible to these movements. Moreover, Marcuse moves beyond them by preserving conceptual room to accommodate agonism and difference. Crucially, the relationship between the agonistically constituted individual and their community is left obscure.

In order to address the tension between the individual and society, we may examine Jeffrey Church's interpretation of Nietzsche (*vis-à-vis* Hegel), in which the importance of the community in self-formation is emphasized. According to him, the healthy community is "one that fosters and houses these individual [self-fashioning, aesthetic] personalities" (Church, 2014, p. 153). As we know, a critical agonistic distance between individuals and their social surroundings is formative. More importantly, however, is the extent to which individuals fashion themselves with respect to their community (as opposed to in spite of it). Church emphasizes the *kalos*, or noble, superabundance of life that affirms a society "unified amidst their diversity" (Church, 2014, p. 158). That is, society is not simply a negative influence against which individuals creates themselves, but it is rather the dialectical other that both repulses and inspires. In addition, the sovereign individual seeks to erect moral structures, attempting to "shape the self-understanding and the good of the community" (Church, 2014, p. 158). Those free spirits that Nietzsche regularly praises (Goethe, Shakespeare, and so on) have, through their own radical self-creation, incontrovertibly shaped the society that came after. We see that Nietzsche does not completely jettison the category of the social in his description of self-overcoming; instead, it is the interpersonal groundwork upon which a conception of solidarity can be formed.

Moreover, we can look to contemporary appropriations of Nietzsche to make sense of what solidarity would look like that does not stifle the possibility of individual growth or collapse the pathos of distance. Political theorists like Richard Rorty seek to create room for individual self-fashioning while maintaining solidarity through a shared view of the contingency of humanity and revulsion towards suffering (Rorty, 1989, p. xvi). Rorty, like Marcuse, makes clear breaks from Nietzsche and goes so far as to claim that Nietzsche's politics must be discounted as "useless" (Rorty, 1989, p. 83). It cannot be overlooked that Rorty and Marcuse's visions of solidarity are substantively different. Rorty's non-foundational solidarity, which centers on aversion to suffering, operates in the public sphere and is at odds with Marcuse's decidedly more radical aesthetic ethos as instantiated in socialism, which fundamentally redefines the way in which humans interact with each other and the world. What is instructive, however, is the articulation of solidarity that does not have to encompass a conception of the good, a determinate idea of Being or Becoming, or idea of the complete human being. That is, solidarity on such terms provides a means for celebrating society that does not obscure the experimentalism inherent in Nietzschean perspectivism; there is no prized conception of what it means to be, but instead a celebration of difference, growth, and becoming.

Problematically, Rorty's use of Nietzsche's work operates with a strong distinction between the public and the private sphere. This reification of a public sphere, along with the underlying assumption that such spheres can meaningfully be differentiated, is in tension with Nietzsche's understanding of the human as a confluence of drives. Indeed, Nietzsche describes our conscience or subjectivity as being characterized by the "noise and struggle of our underworld of utility organs working with and against one another," with each experience mediating this internal battle (Nietzsche, 1967, §1, Essay II). This interconnectedness, in turn, is why Nietzsche explains that one must affirm even the smallest detail in the eternal return. We can replace Rorty's position with a post-liberal conception of the individual as a bundle of drives, that are both opaque to and at war with the individual. This internal agonism, out of which grows the self-sublimation of *The Gay Science* and *Zarathustra*, serves as a microcosm of an agonistic, aesthetic ethos of solidarity amenable to both Nietzsche and Marcuse. In this way, we might draw on a conception of solidarity based on difference and Becoming without succumbing to a distinctly liberal division between the public and the private as well as avoiding having to posit a transparent, autonomous subject.

The status of politics is inevitably raised in the discussion of Marcuse's *Essay* in relation to Nietzsche's work. Marcuse's explicit claim that the aesthetic and political on their own only retrench the status quo, and that the only way to transcend this stasis is to make the aesthetic political, is clearly in tension with Nietzsche's dismissal of democracy, and more importantly, socialism. In addition to his condemnation of certain political and economic forms like democracy and socialism, Nietzsche's condemnation of the state, understood as the concrete apparatus through

which these political and economic forms are realized, is immediately followed by the illumination of a possible moment of reconciliation with Marcuse:

A state is called the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly lieth it also, and this lie creepeth from its mouth: "I, the state, am the people." It is a lie! Creators were they who created peoples, and hung a faith and a love over them: thus they served life. (Nietzsche, 1997, §11)

Nietzsche draws a distinction between the state and culture and simultaneously underlines the society-forming capacities of creative individuals. That is, the state is corrosive of culture to the extent that it gives form to democratic or socialistic sickness, which thereby neuters culture of its internal critical distance and tension. In this way, Marcuse can look back to Nietzsche to articulate a new politics capable of supporting an aesthetically conscious *Bildung*.

Marcuse provides us with the conceptual tools to articulate provisionally a solidarity of this kind. With respect to solidarity and cooperation, Marcuse claims that "not all their forms are liberating" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 88). In addition, he responds to the common misunderstanding that Nietzsche was a fascist by explaining that "Fascism and militarism have developed a deadly efficient solidarity" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 88). Thus, by differentiating the liberating solidarity of socialism from the oppressive solidarity of fascism and militarism, Marcuse singles out aesthetic solidarity over one based on ideology or myth as having emancipatory capacities. By drawing attention to this distinction while simultaneously invoking Nietzsche, Marcuse demonstrates that he does not understand Nietzschean aesthetic self-fashioning as resulting in or leading to political regimes of domination. Ultimately, Marcuse attempts to define socialism in such a way that it is emancipatory for the individual: "Socialist solidarity is autonomy: self-determination begins at home—and that is with every I, and the We whom the I chooses" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 88). Using this notion, we can envision a solidarity in socialism that preserves internal as well as interpersonal agonism while giving appropriate attention to the individual so as not to be overcome with what Nietzsche claims would be a "middling solidarity of mediocrity".

It is not the case that Nietzsche's negative evaluation of democracy and socialism are immediately applicable to Marcuse's use of the terms socialism or democracy, per se. Marcuse's qualitatively different socialism may be able to transcend the problem of democratic equality by severing the link between solidarity and herd morality. Moreover, rather than equality, creative freedom would be the animating principle of the aesthetic ethos, mitigating what Nietzsche sees to be the degenerative effects of equality. The *Aufhebung* of Marcuse and Nietzsche alleviates the tension between creativity and (ostensibly) normalizing solidarity. If Nietzsche's view of the free spirit is a dialectical monism,⁵ in which one's own convictions and power are sublated into the next stage of existence, society in Marcuse's essay can be regarded as similarly self-overcoming. In describing the *Lebenswelt* as a society fashioned as a work of art, Marcuse gives us an embryonic view that can be grasped only at this point in my argument: the society represents an internal dialectic of self-overcoming, much like the Nietzschean individual. Because individuals hold themselves, their peers, and their society at an agonistic and creative distance, the society has the internal agonism necessary to become a people. The non-foundational solidarity inspired by Marcuse can in this way be wedded to contemporary agonistic appropriations of Nietzsche (William Connolly [1995], for instance, articulates a democratic agonism based largely on a Nietzschean refashioning of epistemes.) Thus, we can transcend the conception of solidarity that potentially leads to mediocrity without reifying a strict distinction between the public and the private (like Rorty) while still leaving room for a socially engaged citizen (albeit agonistically).

Finally, given the conceptual possibility of such a society and its aesthetic solidarity we seem to run up against one last problem: namely, that this aesthetic solidarity depends on the agonism of aesthetically self-fashioning individuals, who demand this very aesthetic solidarity in order to self-create. Subsequently, this *ouroboros* appears to preclude a possible point of entry, or way of bringing about an aesthetic ethos or *gaya scienza*.

Although this seeming impasse is initially arresting, Nietzsche and Marcuse give us some resources to circumvent this chicken and egg problem. For Nietzsche, it appears that an aesthetic agonistic solidarity is contingent on self-fashioning individuals but not vice versa. We might recall Zarathustra, who refashions himself with respect to the (decidedly life-denying) townspeople who dismiss his assertions that god is dead. This very gulf is constitutive

of the self-fashioning individual (recall the creative pathos of distance); and while friendly agonism between peers (Nietzsche, 1974, §14) might be the foundation for an aesthetic ethos, this aesthetic ethos is not conceptually primary to the creation of self-legislating individuals themselves. It is for this reason that Nietzsche can write about certain free spirits (like Napoleon, Shakespeare and Goethe) while simultaneously calling for the yet-to-come transvaluation of all values.

Similarly, in Marcuse we may recall his reference to certain pockets of resistance, notably among student movements and African American groups. Though Marcuse would not go so far as to say that these pockets constitute aesthetic freedom in the fully realized form that socialism would provide, he does point to them as the harbingers of the Great Refusal. On these grounds, an aesthetic ethos can be formed through the mounting resistance on the part of these groups, while their capacity to live an emancipated life free of guilt and domination escalates in proportion to their repeated subversion of the dominating logic of capitalist ideology. Once again, the agonistic ethos to which I referred above is contingent on the resistance of subversive groups, or outsiders, while these outsiders can begin to mobilize and act prior to the creation of the aesthetic ethos.

When taken together in the way I outlined above, we see that in the sublated account an agonistic ethos of aesthetic liberation is achieved through a process of revolt, understood as both a transvaluation of the values of the dominant ideology as well as a (Great) refusal of the crushing logic of capitalism. Both Marcuse and Nietzsche isolate actors who represent the embryonic form of this aesthetic ethos and play a crucial role in bringing about the aesthetic ethos. Consequently, in both accounts, as well as the sublated account, the existence of an agonistic, aesthetic ethos is not a necessary condition for the existence of individuals who might bring it about, but it nevertheless allows for the existence and cultivation of self-overcoming individuals after the revolt against, or the transvaluation of, modern systems of domination.

VI

I described above the general continuities between Nietzsche and Marcuse that draw the two together. Among these are a shared critique of the self-undermining logic of modernity and its subsequent repressive tendencies towards society. Further yet, Marcuse articulates a Great Refusal that clearly draws from the Nietzschean imperative to overcome the ossified moral platitudes of modernity. Finally, the aesthetic ethos, or the transvaluation of all values so as to obtain the *gaya scienza*, is a clear signifier of Nietzsche's centrality in Marcuse's thought.

Despite the deep similarities and continuities explored above, it is clear that Nietzsche and Marcuse's work are in conflict as they stand. Central here is the content or exposition of the aesthetic ethos. Nietzsche's experimentalism is by definition open-ended and continuous, whereas Marcuse seems to hypostatize aesthetic socialism into some sort of utopia. In the same way, Marcuse's interest in ending cruelty or hardship conflict with Nietzsche's demand for hardness as a central vehicle of self-creation. Further, Marcuse's reliance on solidarity problematizes the agonism that Nietzsche finds central to avoiding democratic degeneration. Finally, Marcuse's observation that the aesthetic will inevitably have to become political in order to be efficacious is diametrically opposed to Nietzsche's rejection of the state apparatus.

In the final analysis, however, it is clear that Marcuse offers an *Aufhebung* of the aesthetic and political, but in doing so alienates his relationship with Nietzsche. If we bring Marcuse's usage of Nietzsche directly into conversation with Nietzsche's writings, we can address some of the more nebulous aspects of Marcuse's aesthetic ethos. In order to confront the two authors' conflict on the importance of the individual over society or vice versa, we have to articulate a conception of the autonomous person who interacts with society agonistically, using it to fashion themselves against but also as the vehicle for their own "magnificent moral structures." This way, we do not slip into the homogenizing socialism that Nietzsche would critique for collapsing the pathos of distance, nor the radical Nietzschean individual that Marcuse would characterize as politically ineffective. Relatedly, despite the absence of the idea of solidarity in Nietzsche's work, we can talk about it in terms of what it means to be a people. That

is, we can recoup the Marcusean urge for solidarity by articulating it minimally, or as not celebrating a particular mode of Being but rather the experience of Becoming. In this way, we can move toward articulating a solidarity that does not devolve into life-denying homogeneity or, more worryingly, xenophobic fascism predicated on a central mythology.

Further, we can transcend the antagonism of Nietzsche's rejection of the state and Marcuse's observation that social change is inevitably political by appreciating the effect that an aesthetic ethos or *gaya scienza* could have on the political. That is, Nietzsche's association of politics with a leveling equality can be answered with Marcuse's claim that his socialism would be one of autonomy and liberation. In other words, Nietzsche's aversion to socialism and democracy is contingent on equality as an animating principle, and if we redefine socialism and democracy in terms of a non-repressive culture that preserves critical autonomy while cultivating a solidarity in difference, we can productively sublimate the projects of the two thinkers.

NOTES

¹ Scholarly attention to the relationship between Nietzsche and Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School more broadly is voluminous, but it often focuses on Nietzsche's relationship with Adorno (see Baur, 1999; Liatsos, 2001; Plass, 2015; Rampley, 2000), or with Habermas (see Babich 2014), to the effect of minimizing the discussion of Nietzsche's relationship with Marcuse specifically.

² For Nietzsche, it appears clear that the bad conscience chronologically and conceptually precedes the happy conscience of the Last Men. I am not arguing, however, that for Marcuse the false conscience and happy conscience are conceptually or chronologically differentiated, but I am instead pointing to different aspects of a single psychological phenomenon: I use the term 'false conscience' to emphasize societal repression and the acceptance of false needs, and the term 'happy conscience' to emphasize the cheerful and unreflective disposition with which this repression takes place.

³ One should not, however, discount the crucial role of the internalization of guilt in Marcuse's work. While the false conscience picks out a predisposition toward consumption in the marketplace, this orientation, along with the capitalist ideology that makes it possible, is predicated on a civilization that represses the ego's sense of guilt at the urge to transgress restrictions (such as in the Oedipal situation), forcing it into the id such that a "great part" of the sense of guilt remains unconscious" (Marcuse, 1966, p. 32).

⁴ This reading has its roots in Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche's influence over Friedrich Nietzsche's writings and Will to Power, and ranges from his misuse by the Nazis (for example, Alfred Rosenberg's likening of National Socialism to Nietzsche's work) all the way to contemporary academic scholarship; an example of which occurs in Taureck (2014). Taureck explains that "the results of emancipation can only be maintained on condition that society is transformed into a governmental hierarchy . . . Nietzsche seeks a strong separation between rulers and those who are governed . . . he [Nietzsche] favored the caste system of ancient oriental societies . . . [Nietzsche] wished to select rulers based on their biological, racial superiority" (pp. 124–125).

⁵ The term "dialectical monism" is used by Walter Kaufmann to describe Nietzschean sublimation and self-overcoming (Kaufmann, 2013).

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How to cite this article: Simpson S. The *gaya scienza* and the aesthetic ethos: Marcuse's appropriation of Nietzsche in *An Essay on Liberation*. *Constellations*. 2017;24:356–371. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12288>