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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Karin A. E. Volkwein entitled "Toward a New Conception of Sport: Herbert Marcuse's Theory of Play." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

William Morgan
William Morgan, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Joy D. Wessens
James O. Powell
Robert A. Gamba

Accepted for the Council:

Cewminkel
Vice Provost
and Dean of the Graduate School

TOWARD A NEW CONCEPTION OF SPORT:
HERBERT MARCUSE'S THEORY OF PLAY

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Karin A. E. Volkwein

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Meinen Eltern

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to criticize the main social theories of sport offered to date by both the Right and the Left, and (2) to develop a new theory of sport based on Herbert Marcuse's notion of play. Conservative theories, I argue, idealize sport by claiming it resides in a separate realm of freedom, above and beyond the political and economic constraints of everyday life. By contrast, the New Left argues that sport is preeminently a social practice, and thus insist on a strong linkage between sport and everyday social reality. The main criticism I will advance against both theories is that they fail to realize that the realm of sport can neither be explained as an autonomous realm of freedom separated from the realm of necessity, nor solely as a simple product of the economic and social relations of society.

An alternative approach to the study of sport, I argue, is suggested by the German social philosopher and theorist Herbert Marcuse who insisted that cultural endeavors such as sport can be best understood in terms of their complex and manifold relation to other related activities. Just, then, as Marcuse conceived of "unalienated labor" as a curious admixture of work and play, a similar case can be made that sport be construed as a distinctive amalgam of play and sport. Such a conception of sport, I conclude, preserves its autonomous standing without insulating it from the rest of social reality, and at the same time presents an alternative understanding of sport against which its current degraded status can be critically assessed.

But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.
Only where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done
For Heaven and the future's sake.

Robert Frost
"Two Tramps in Mud Time"
(1936, last verse)

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INTRODUCTION

THE CORRUPTION OF CONTEMPORARY SPORT

Americans spend millions of dollars on sport. Sport has become "big business." In fact, the political magazine Spiegel points out that expenses for sport are only slightly lower than they are for the strongest element of the American economy, the automobile industry.¹ This statement is striking, but it actually seems to be more impressive and beneficial for the economy than for sport as such. What is left of sport here? What effect, in short, does this mass infusion of capital into the world of sport have on it as a human enterprise?

There is no doubt that sport occupies a prominent place in the hearts and the minds of the masses. But what sort of place that is, and in particular its precise social and political importance, is a matter of considerable dispute. Since the beginning of this century sport has been widely dissected, by conservatives, who argue that sport operates within the realm of freedom, and so, lies outside the deterministic nexus of capitalist economics and politics, and by Leftists, who argue that sport reproduces the repressive features of capitalism and serves as an ideological tool of the latter.

Christopher Lasch, arguing from the Left, in The Culture of Narcissism contests that sport has become business, which for him comprises only one facet of what he calls the "degradation" of sport. He points out that the principle of "winning at all costs" is the primary element of contemporary sport in modern society. Other characteristics such as fun and enjoyment, cooperation and competence are subordinated to the mania for winning and, thus, have lost their footing. The rise of spectator sports is further

¹ Spiegel, Hamburg/West Germany, December 1987.

related to the rise of mass production. Lasch notes that "these developments have destroyed the values of athletics.... Commercialization has turned play into work" (Lasch, p. 102).

'Sports are not separate and apart from life, a special 'Wonderland' where everything is pure and sacred and above criticism,' but a business subject to the same standards and open to the same scrutiny as any other (Lasch, p. 124).

Thus, Lasch traces the degradation of sport to its bureaucratization, its commercialization, its mass consumption and its overemphasis on winning. Apparently then, sport and work are no longer two separate entities.

Contrarily, conservative thinkers typically take for granted the separation of work and leisure, work and sport. They claim that sport is rooted in freedom and so is largely untouched by economic and political concerns. Hence, for them work and sport are quite separate domains.

These and other controversial claims that have been raised for and against sport, leave us with a rather blurred picture of the status of contemporary sport. That is, there does not seem to be any clear answer as to the question of sport's social significance. On one hand, we are confronted with the palpable "degradation" of sport, its corruption by commercial and political interests (Lasch, 1978), while on the other hand, sport is portrayed as an autonomous, and generally humane endeavor. What are we to make of this situation? Herbert Marcuse's theory of play, I argue, offers an important answer to these questions, and deserves our careful attention as we assess the social significance of contemporary sport.

Herbert Marcuse, one of the leaders of the New Left movement in the sixties, has criticized advanced modern capitalism for its dehumanizing and exploitative economic system. But it is clear that Marcuse is not pessimistic about the future of our society. On

the contrary, he seems fairly optimistic regarding the possibility of social change, the liberation of mankind; and it is here that his notion of play enters the picture. For it is that notion that undergirds his optimism. Play involves liberating forces, Marcuse argued; and even though Marcuse did not connect his notion of play to sport, I am proposing that such link can provide a theoretical basis for resolving the sorts of theoretically contradictory claims made on behalf of sport above, and for practically resolving the corruption of sport in contemporary society.

It should be noted that the New Left has not been kindly disposed to sport as a revolutionary force, despite the working class's obvious attraction to it. At the end of the 19th century, with the rationalization of the work process and creation of a formal concept of leisure in industrial societies, sport gradually became an important part of the lives of the working class. What previously had been a privilege of the bourgeois elite, now became a passionate concern of the workers. Workers started to organize sport themselves. In 1928 the worker's sport organizations, which occurred in almost every European country and in some countries in North and South America and Asia as well, counted over two million members. They had sponsored their own Olympics, which had more participants and spectators than the so-called legitimate Olympic games (Steinberg, p. 233). This movement sought to oppose bourgeois sport with its emphasis on athletic competition. The workers sought a "humanistic alternative" to bourgeois sport supporting less competitive physical activities integrating everybody, and providing "personal fulfillment and mutual respect" (Wheeler, p. 196-206).

But soon questions concerning the political importance of such movements occurred. Critics proposed that "workers had more important things to do than engage in frivolous pursuits" (Wheeler, p. 195). It was also argued that workers simply engaged in sport because they could not find the satisfaction and pleasure at work

anymore, and thus, they needed a release, an escape. These criticisms notwithstanding, Marxist ideologues eventually became interested in sport, especially when it grew all too clear that the Right had successfully used sport to promote its own interests. In particular, sport was used by the dominant class to enhance their political power and to increase the productive capacity of capitalism. However, in the interwar period the worker's sport movement weakened considerably and was dealt a decisive blow by Hitler who signalled them out for direct attack.

In the tumultuous years of the sixties, the Leftist critique of sport developed anew with the aim to determine the function and role of sport in society. Again, controversial opinions were raised. The New Left, a group of neo-Marxist thinkers who were convinced that a critique of sport needs to begin with an analysis of the general political and economical social system, rejected the bourgeois notion of sport as play. They claimed that sport is really work and that any attempt to link it to play is ideological. The New Left attacked the adoption of work-like behaviors in the realm of modern sport: its reliance on rationalization, the repressive performance principle, inhuman competition, the commodification of sport, and the general use of sport as medium for the stabilization of the dominant social system, and more (Bernett, p. 231). The conservative response, on the contrary, championed play as an independent realm of social reality, which allowed them to de-politicize sport by arguing that sport and politics do not mix. They celebrated the "ludique" itself: "the play principle which could be accorded a primary historical role at the origin of society..." (Hoberman, p. 41). But such theories are isolated from any historical and social context. They ignore the division of classes and conflicts and the inequality of power in society and sport.

As noted above, the New Left criticism of sport is not entirely original, and reiterates previous criticisms of sport made by the Left. But what is novel about the New Left critique, aside from its

different time frame and historical situation, is its strident, more radical tone. Previously, the Left had mainly criticized certain kinds of bourgeois sport and had called for its liberation and an equal access for everybody. Now the New Left emphasizes that only on the basis of social and political analysis can an adequate account of sport be given:

...the declared aim is the emancipation of all power structures, and the critique - previously provided by the activism of the students - calls for a new practice in sport freed from any social and political power (Bernett, p. 231).

Although New Left thinkers do not share a monolithic conception of modern sport, they do operate from a common frame of reference. That is, they focus on the economic, political, and ideological connections of sport that have been previously ignored. They analyze sport in terms of its relationship and correspondence to the mode of production of any given social period and come up with a fairly negative picture of modern sport. Marcuse's remarks on play, on the contrary, indicate a more positive view of play and sport. His extensive comments on play are interesting because he does not approach sport from the sport-work constellation the New Left operates with, but he still acknowledges that there are obvious links between sport and society, between sport and work. Thus, Marcuse's notion of play opens up a different view of the relationship between sport and society.

Marcuse was searching for a way of life and experience that would be at once free from necessity and productive in a creative way. Only in such an experience can one realize true freedom and overcome the reduction of man to a part of nature. Throughout his thinking, Marcuse overcomes the strict Marxist separation of the realm of freedom from the realm of necessity. He suggests a merging of the realm of freedom into the realm of necessity, of play into work, which will lead to an altogether different life,

where a "new sensibility" will arise. This is exemplified best in what Marcuse calls "playful work," as evident, for example, in the work of artists who are able presumably to express themselves through their productive activity. The same can be said of sport: the players express themselves in a similar way through their performances in sport.

...in a simple throw of the ball by the player there might be a greater realization of the freedom of mankind than in the overwhelming achievement in technical work.²

The concept of play as promising life-fulfillment, freedom, and liberation for men is central to Marcuse's social theory. It is of central importance for the achievement of a more humane, new society which is based on "playful work" rather than alienated work. In my analysis, I will propose an understanding of sport as "playful sport" as derived from Marcuse's notion of play. I will argue further that Marcuse's theory of play as applied to sport overcomes the deficiencies of both conservative and New Left treatment of sport, and so resolves the central theoretical and practical dilemmas raised by their respective analysis.

My inquiry is divided into four chapters. Following the introduction, I will critically examine various theories of sport. In Chapter I, I will investigate the theories of Johan Huizinga, Michael Novak, Allen Guttmann and Hans Lenk, who I classify as conservative thinkers, while in Chapter II the New Left response to sport will be analyzed. A critique of both the conservative as well as the New Left views of sport given in each chapter will provide the grounds for Herbert Marcuse's theory of play, which will be developed in Chapter III. Marcuse's conception of sport has to be

² See Marcuse "On the Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Labor in Economics," p. 16.

derived from his larger social theory through piecing together the various comments he has made about play - since he has never developed a play theory as such. In addition, the relation Marcuse sees between play and work, and between play and social theory will be investigated. This analysis will set up a new conception of sport understood as "playful sport," which I will derive from Marcuse's notion of "playful work." The final Chapter IV will assess the emancipatory capacity of playful sport through the eyes of Marcuse, in the larger context of society. The importance of such an understanding of sport for social theory will be emphasized by means of pointing out the social conditions for such an implementation.

CHAPTER I

THE CONSERVATIVE VIEW OF SPORT

1. Introduction

"At the origin of the great ideological division between Left and Right which has given shape to the modern political era, there stands a riddle of apparently scholastic obscurity: Which came first in human prehistory - labor or play?" (Hoberman, p. 23) While the Leftist thinkers such as Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, and others emphasize the primacy of labor, conservatives such as Schiller, Ortega y Gasset, Huizinga, etc. posit the primacy of the ludic element in life (Hoberman, p. 23). Both groups operate from fairly different assumptions about man and life. Their viewpoints regarding sport range from very positive, optimistic interpretations to fairly negative, pessimistic analyses. Play as well receives positive and negative recognition in relation to rest and activity, relaxation and tension, harmony and conflict, freedom and restriction, repetition and exploration.

The richness and contradictions of these explanations of play are the result of a formal distinction between work and "not-work." The understanding of play as "not-work" legitimizes the exclusion of social reality (work) from the theories of play. In the twentieth century we mainly find investigations of play based on experience and reason. In the nineteenth century, the idealistic reasoning of Schiller, Jean Paul, Schleiermacher and others was followed by the natural scientific explanations of Spencer, Hall, Carr, and others. Some functions of play such as relaxation, rest, and training were later described by Freud as a "compulsion of repetition," by Stern as "serious play," by Heckhausen as an "activity circle," by Piaget as "accommodation/ assimilation" (Eichler, p. 39). In recent years, what is called a "phenomenological approach," which searches for the very essence of play, has gained importance for the explanation

of play. One of the main representatives of this movement, Johan Huizinga, provided an all-encompassing account of play. Huizinga's designation of "play as culture" exerted a major influence on societal and scientific definitions of play, and thus, on the social value system as a whole.

In this chapter, I intend to look critically at some of the most influential conservative views of play and sport as represented by Johan Huizinga, Michael Novak, Allen Guttmann, and Hans Lenk. What makes these thinkers' views conservative is that they all suggest that play came absolutely first in human history and that it is totally separated from the realm of work. Since play is not contaminated by alienated work, so the argument of the conservatives goes, it needs no major radical overhaul, and its pretension of freedom is construed to be real rather than ideal. Further, the conservative view supports the status quo view of play and sport which differentiates between work and leisure time and denies their interconnections. Play is described as "the motor of history" (Huizinga), as "natural religion" (Novak), and as "positive freedom" (Guttmann and Lenk).

2. Johan Huizinga

Huizinga regards play as cultural phenomenon sui generis:

For many years the conviction has grown upon me that civilization arises and unfolds in and as play.... Play is older than culture.... In play there is something 'at play' which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to action. All pure play means something.... Now this last named element, the 'fun' of playing, resists all analysis, all logical interpretation... Here we have to do with an absolutely primary category of life, familiar to everybody at a glance right down to the animal level. We may well call play a 'totality' in the modern sense of the word, and it is a totality that we must try to understand and evaluate.... In acknowledging play you acknowledge mind... Play only becomes possible, thinkable and understandable when an

influx of "mind" breaks down the absolute determinism of the cosmos (Huizinga, Foreword and pp. 1-3).

Huizinga wants to approach the term play "where biology and psychology leave off" because he sees play as a certain quality of action "which is different from 'ordinary' [daily] life" (p. 4). With this determination of the essence or totality of play Huizinga separates play from ordinary life and from work. But the exact distinction between play and ordinary life somehow remains unclear, a fact which becomes obvious in his description of the characteristics of play. His understanding of play involves a simple negation of work:

...we might call...[play] a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious," but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner (Huizinga, p. 13).

Huizinga clearly distinguishes play from ordinary life, but as soon as he elaborates more precisely on the play characteristics (in Chapter 1) the encroachment on ordinary life becomes evident. Some of the above cited criteria for play could also be used for an explanation of relations in working situations. Work, for example, is also framed by certain boundaries of time and space, and is similarly based on rules and entails an element of tension.

Huizinga recognizes and analyzes the presence of play in the various forms of cultural life: in language, in law, in war, science, poetry, philosophy, and in art. But Huizinga ignores the structural similarities between work and play. Despite the claim that play is the negation of work, they cannot simply be explained as opposites, because certain characteristics that are found in play and work are virtually common to every kind of activity. Thus, the task remains

to point out why identical structures of actions and motivations are sometimes referred to as play and other times as work.

A central obstacle to answering this question might be created by the "seriousness" which is inherent to both work and play. As Rousseau and Locke observed long ago (see Eichler, p. 44), the same kind of seriousness can be found in children's play as in work, but only if the seriousness evident in each is, so to speak, cut out of the "same cloth." Play is unthinkable without seriousness, and therefore, it should have close connection to work in this respect. The theoretical literature on play struggles with the problem of distinguishing between work and play in regard to seriousness. Huizinga, for example, has resolved the problem through exaggerating the importance of play. He says that "the two terms are not of equal value: play is positive, earnest negative.... The play concept as such is of a higher order than is seriousness. For seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness" (Huizinga, p. 45).

However, in most theories of play the phenomenon of the separation between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom, is treated as a basic characteristic of human life that is not questioned any further. This treatment of play comports with the common "ideology" that separates the realm of necessity (work) from the realm of freedom (play). Such separation has several consequences for the individual as well as for the society. A polarization of play versus work legitimizes the social practice of the separation of work and leisure, and thus, it isolates the economic processes, contributes to functionalization, to inhuman work situations, and to the social isolation of people in their leisure times (Eichler, pp. 46-47).

In sum, Huizinga treats play as a phenomenon which is isolated from any socio-economic forces and is separated from the work-world. Here play is treated simply as an end in itself, an intrinsic good. In this respect, the phenomenological approach preserves the ideology of the elite who carefully distinguish between the realm

of freedom and the realm of necessity, between leisure and work. A similar idealistic notion of play and sport can be found in Michael Novak's book The Joy of Sport.

3. Michael Novak

Novak explains sport as a "natural religion:"

...sports are at their heart a spiritual activity, a natural religion, a tribute to grace, beauty, and excellence (Novak, p. 338).

The parallels Novak finds between religion and sport are of various kinds: the similar ways in which the institutions of sports and "civil religions" are organized, the ceremonies of sports and churches, "the deep natural impulse" of freedom inherent in both, the symbolic meaning and a longing for perfection, etc. (Novak, p. 19). Hence, Novak attaches exclusively positive characteristics to sports. For example, in sport he finds pure beauty. Sport is a form of "godliness, ...sport is the most universal form of art, ...sports are our chief civilizing agent" (Novak, p. 24ff). "...the realities of sports [are]: community, courage, harmony of mind and body, beauty, excellence. Let the world burn, these realities endure," Novak claims (Novak, p. 145). He even goes so far as to claim that "sports are the highest products of civilization and the most accessible, lived, experiential sources of the civilizing spirit. In sports law and liberty were born" (p. 42).

For Novak and Huizinga, sports are one of the most valuable parts of human civilization and play stands at the origin of it; as Novak claims: "Play is the most human activity. It is the first act of freedom. It is the [first] origin of law" (p. 32).

Another important parallel between Novak's and Huizinga's arguments is found in their separation of sport and work or play and work. Both authors distinguish clearly between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity. Play is the "kingdom of Ends,"

and work is the "kingdom of Means." Play, and thus sports as well, belong to the realm of freedom.

Play is not tied to necessity, except to the necessity of the human spirit to exercise its freedom, to enjoy something that is not practical, or productive, or required for gaining food or shelter.... Play is reality. Work is diversity and escape (Novak, pp. 33 and 40).

Although Novak acknowledges that certain sports in colleges and professional sports such as football, for example, are a lot like work, he nonetheless claims that "...football hardly celebrates the capitalist virtues exalted in the pages of *Wall Street Journal*. Its virtues are those of the early unions: brotherhood, lovely when voluntary, and enforced by clubbing scabs and strikebreakers when it was not" (p. 90). Though Novak acknowledges the ties between sport and work, his interest is solely in pointing out the intrinsic values of sports; thus, he virtually ignores any external factors that influence the realm of sport. He glorifies sport in a way true believers glorify their religions. Novak's book as the whole is a statement of his conviction and beliefs, but not an empirical sociological investigation. Gruneau points out correctly that Novak's work is virtually innocent of sociology, political economy, or social history (Gruneau, p. 31). Hence, there is not much objectivity or impartiality in his analysis. However, it can hardly be denied that his work is a "rich source of speculative material" on the nature of sport and play (Gruneau, p. 31).

Novak cherishes sport the same way Huizinga cherishes play. Sport and play are the well-springs of human life:

And in sports, earth makes visible to the human mind the great struggle of being and non-being that constitutes every living thing. (Novak, p. 134)... Sports are a delight because they are an aside. They are our liberty (p. 217).

Such statements do not require any further explanation. The subjectivity is evident. My criticism of this kind of investigation of sport is that neither Novak nor Huizinga, because they are too captured by their fascination with play and sport, are even aware of their support of the status quo, for example, when they claim that sport and work are two separate entities, and alike. They want sport and play to be something holy and sacred, something purely good, "a religion," something without any negative influences whatsoever. Therefore, Novak challenges the Left's ideology that holds that sport is simply work.

There is no greater sacrilege than politicizing sports; nothing more imperceptive, more crippled in intelligence. To fail to recognize in each thing its uniqueness is a sin of the intellect (Novak, p. 217).

Novak suggests that politics and secular struggles are opiates of western societies. A resolution for him can only lie in a commitment to order and bounded space. What kind of order; what bounded space?

In sum, Novak's analysis of sport is very limited and rather subjective. His book is value-laden and unscientific. His description of the abuse of sport, which he indeed regards as rather "harmless," is revealing (see Novak, p. 307ff); for, he is convinced that minor adjustments or "reforms" are sufficient in order to make sports better. Novak does not deal with the origins of the flaws of today's sport such as the overemphasis on competing and winning or the practices of drug-abuse and cheating, for example. Novak and Huizinga simply underplay the extent to which sports and play can be understood, as what Gruneau describes as "historically constituted features of social arrangements whose fixed limits can very well be as repressive as they are liberating" (Gruneau, p. 32).

4. Allen Guttman

Guttman in his book From Ritual to Record investigates sport from a historical-philosophical perspective, from which he attempts to interpret the social conditions that led to the rise of modern sports. He gives a universal definition of sport as a "playful physical contest," which belongs to the realm of freedom because it is non-utilitarian and pursued for its own sake (Guttman, pp. 4-7). Modern sports for Guttman are characterized by seven factors, "secularism, equality of opportunity to compete and in the conditions of competition, specialization of roles, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification, the quest for records" (p. 16). Although Guttman realizes that sport in modern times contains many restrictions through organization, regulations, bureaucratization, rules, and more, he still entertains the notion that positive freedom is involved in sport. In order to support his argument, Guttman criticizes the Marxist and neo-Marxist critique of sport which examine sport largely through economic principles. Guttman argues that the realm of modern sport cannot solely be explained through economic relations; it also contains human expression and spontaneity. Guttman agrees with the leftist critics that sport today is abused in various ways, but he argues that not all abuses can be explained in terms of capitalism (p. 75).

Most of the diseases of modern sports...have infected all modern societies and cannot be associated simply with commercialization: an overemphasis on winning, cheating, the use of drugs, the training of small children for highly competitive sports, and the tendency to turn every form of play into some kind of contest.... The crux of the matter for us is whether the abuses represent the distortion of modern sports or the very essence of the phenomenon (Guttman, pp. 73 and 75).

Guttman himself is inclined to explain sport through what he calls a "Weberian perspective," which emphasizes the growth of the scientific world view as the "basic explanatory factor" influencing the nature of modern sports. That is, Max Weber has analyzed social organizations on the basis of their transitions from traditional to modern society. Guttman uses such an approach for the explanation of the nature of sport and ascertains that modern sports hold forth the possibility of "relative if not absolute freedom." How is this notion of freedom to be understood? Guttman claims that modern sport offers us a sense of autonomy and freedom, which we cannot find in daily work: "In sport we can discover the euphoric sense of wholeness, autonomy, and potency which is often denied us in the dreary rounds of routinized work that are the fate of most men and women" (p. 157).

Further, Guttman shows that Americans prefer team sport over individual sports, which for him reflects two different notions of freedom: negative freedom or freedom "from," which simply means to be freed from responsibilities and obligations, and positive freedom or freedom "to," which means that the submission to social order increases opportunities to act out individual choices. The latter means that the rules in society allow people something more than they can achieve alone.

Guttman certainly sees that there are many troublesome situations in modern society, in which the loss of personal freedom is sometimes greater than the gain of social freedom that stems from collective organizations. But on the whole, Guttman concludes, there is a greater increase of freedom in the last two centuries, and modern sports are the beneficiaries of this increase. Even though certain similarities might be found between sport and work, Guttman argues, contra the neo-Marxists, that freedom and autonomy are represented in sport to a larger extent than in work. For Guttman, the neo-Marxist view that sport and work are the same is only partly true, because it overemphasizes work-like situations in sports. But perhaps Guttman overstates his case as

well when he claims that the "secret of modern sports is...that we gain a great deal more than we lose" or that "when we are weary of modern sports, there is always another option" (pp. 160-161). The other option for Guttmann is, following Roger Bannister's lead, to run "barefoot, on firm dry sand, by the sea" (p. 160). The question remains, if this indeed is another option or not rather a form of escape. If a competing athlete, for example, would choose this option, he ceases to "play the game," because he denies the rules of the activity as such. Thus, it is doubtful if there are true alternatives in the way modern sport is conducted and organized, which still allow for the realization of positive freedom.

Guttmann's distinction between positive and negative freedom is intended to convince us that we are living in a society which restricts us in some sense, but also gives us freedom to explore things we could not do before. Hence, our society is not so bad and requires only a few minor adjustments. Guttmann in his conclusion, justifies sport in modern society by stating that there is less alienation in sports than elsewhere in the modern world.

Nevertheless, alienation, restrictions and repression exist in modern sport, especially in top-level sport. Gruneau criticizes Guttmann for failing to lay out more precisely the positive and negative features of modern sport as they are present in our society. "The problem is that Guttmann wants to make abstract universal connections between play and freedom and play and sports, while at the same time allowing for the idea that the major characteristics of sports are socially conditioned" (Gruneau, p. 44). When Guttmann sees regulations and organizations of sport as something which guarantees freedom, he overlooks the fact that this is not always the case. In our modern society, there is still another side of sport, which is that the rules and regulations limit spontaneous expression as, for example, in team sport. In top-level sport, we find even more regulations and restrictions of the individual, where spontaneity and creativity are often sacrificed.

In sum, Guttmann has given a necessary critique of the neo-Marxist view of modern sport showing that economic factors are indeed essential, but not sufficient to any satisfactory interpretation of modern sport. But he seems to overstate human agency in making "positive freedom" a universal condition of sport and a specific feature of liberal democracy. The linkage between sport and social reality cannot be denied. But, at least, he does try "to show how economic factors and the related question of necessity are 'absolutely essential to any satisfactory interpretation of the nature of modern sport'" (Gruneau, p. 41).

As we have seen, Huizinga, Novak and Guttmann lapse into forms of idealist abstraction as ways of explaining the nature and significance of sport and its role in social development. Gruneau remarks correctly that "all three have tended either to ignore or underplay the significance of material history as a part of the constituting processes of the institutions of the players, and of the rules, traditions, beliefs, and organizations which define play, game and sporting activities at different historical moments" (Gruneau, p. 50). Thus, I agree with Gruneau that "we will have to be more sensitive to the dialectical relationship between socially structured possibilities and human agency" (Gruneau, p. 51).

5. Hans Lenk

Lenk has also countered that the parallels between work and sport drawn by the New Left³ are inadequate because he finds less alienation in sport than elsewhere in the world. He acknowledges that we live in an achievement oriented society, but for him achievement is a "human universal," a natural function of human beings, which is not socially conditioned (Lenk, 1979, p. 1). This claim stands in direct contrast to the arguments made by the members of the New Left, who say that achievement is a product of

³ For an explanation of the term "New Left" see first page of Chapter II.

industrialization and is produced by capitalist society. Alienation and manipulation are directly related to achievement, and are distortions created by the achievement oriented society. Thus, the New Left opposes any positive assessment of achievement. Lenk, on the other hand, wants to protect this "natural phenomenon" and sees sport as the best way of doing it, by means of nurturing the achievement impulse in human beings.

Sport is further characterized by Lenk as a vehicle where we test ourselves, where we learn about ourselves and others:

Sport...may be and should be a genuine vehicle of human creativity and an active achieving life (Lenk, 1983, p. 335).

Lenk even ascribes to sport the emancipatory potential for self-development and self-reflection. In addition, sport serves as a stimulating substitute for adventures, and is of great educational value (Lenk, 1979, p. 6 and 1973b, p. 105).

For Lenk, manipulation, understood as a tendency to influence under pressure and threat, is present everywhere in social life, whenever people live and interact together starting in early childhood. Thus, manipulation is inseparable from the education of youngsters. Lenk accepts manipulation as a pervasive problem, and thus, that it is also found in the realm of sport, especially in top-level sport. But he argues that this phenomenon is totally overstated by the social critics, and that the question whether there is manipulation in sport cannot be answered simply with "yes" or "no." Lenk asks, who can say what desires are the real desires of a person and not desires created by somebody else? Manipulation is a normative or a value matter; that is, it is neither true nor false.

Throughout his works, Lenk argues that Marxists inspired social theories of sport are false social critiques, and are often reactionary. Because the neo-Marxists are not really after improving our society, according to Lenk, they are not really social

critics in any significant respect (1979, p. 2). In fact, Lenk sees them as a danger to society insofar as they denigrate the achievement behavior that is needed to sustain a prosperous, modern society. Thus, Lenk's proposals about ways to improve modern sports, especially top-level sport do not require revamping the whole system. He suggests that we need an "enlightenment program" for the athletes in order to prevent too much manipulation; and the public should be informed about the emancipated and critical athlete through the media; and lastly, philosophical as well as social philosophical analysis and the discussions of achievement behavior should be undertaken and supported in a broader manner. Lenk believes that once those adjustments are made in sport and society, changes toward emancipation, which he surely finds in top-level sport, could be introduced and reinforced through education (Lenk, 1973b, p. 105f).

For Lenk, sport remains a subdivision of the realm of freedom in that the athlete chooses whether or not to participate. It is precisely in this freely chosen world of sports that one can identify with "the product of one's work," for example, with one's performance as an athlete. In the achievements in sport, one can experience a sense of wholeness denied elsewhere. And sport liberates in the sense that "athletic achievement is...unambiguously one's *own*, contrary to the achievement of assembly line production" (Lenk, 1973a, p. 21).

In sum, Lenk, as do other conservative thinkers, differentiates clearly between sport and work and refuses to acknowledge similarities between the two realms. Lenk argues, paralleling Guttman, that sport is not alienated work in Marx's sense. For him, the neo-Marxist argument that sport is like work is as ideological as the idealistic notion that sport is pure play (Lenk, 1973b, p. 85). Although Lenk looks at sport as much more diversified in his "pluralistic" approach, that is, he considers sport in its social relations to other phenomena in our society, he still holds onto the belief that sport remains an unalienated area in our

otherwise alienated lives. For example, Lenk acknowledges that there are some shortcomings in the way modern sport is actually conducted such as an overemphasis on winning, or the way various training procedures are carried out, which need criticism, especially in top-level sports. Nevertheless, Lenk still holds that the athlete is not alienated through his sportive achievement, he is rather given the chance to find out more about himself. Thus, Lenk concludes that the social critique regarding the achievement principle in alienated work cannot simply be transformed to sport.

6. Summary

As I have shown, all conservative thinkers have in common that they separate the realm of play and sport from the realm of work in ways which distort its present social reality. They treat the phenomena play and sport as isolated areas. All conservative approaches condemn utilitarianism and emphasize "positive freedom" as the central feature of play and sport. Thus, they basically support the main-stream thinking about sport, although some of the conservatives request some changes or minor adjustments for our society. Guttmann and Lenk especially put their view of sport in a social and historical context which provides the important insight that sport is not just a glorious sphere of freedom, but that it is also abused in today's society. This approach actually has the potential to explain the complex phenomenon of contemporary sport better than the purely idealistic conceptions of Huizinga and Novak. Problems society has to deal with today regarding sport, such as violence, use of drugs, overemphasizing on winning, cheating, and so forth, are acknowledged by thinkers such as Guttmann and Lenk, but they are not sufficiently traced to socio-economic sources. They rather argue that, although there are certain constraints obvious in contemporary sport, sport still provides us with "positive freedom"; and whatever real gains we have made over the years in sport, we just have to accept the few negative consequences.

Further, they also have a basically positive view of the society in which sport is situated as one that for the most part extends rather than restricts our freedom.

Lasch has criticized the formal separation between sport and work effectively saying that "it is paradoxical to set up a sphere of leisure uncontaminated by the world of work and politics."

Play has always by its very nature, set itself off from workaday life; yet it retains an organic connection with the life of the community, by virtue of its capacity to dramatize reality and to offer a convincing representation of the community's values (Lasch, pp. 122-123).

Traditional theories of sport tell us that sport ought to be "above" politics and that its essence is corrupted and debased by any manner of social entanglement. And even Guttmann and Lenk, although they do acknowledge that there are various relationships and influences between social reality and sport, nevertheless state that sport still provides human freedom and little in the way of constraints. For example, Guttmann characterizes many negative influences in the area of play and sport as harmless and "not always repressive." This view results in the understanding that contemporary sport as an institution does not require radical reconstruction or transformation; all it needs is adjustment. The claim that "positive freedom" stems from the established rules of order and authority supports the common (conservative) ideology, which separates play and work and sport and work. Laurence Hinman, a representative of a more critical leftist view, considers such a separation as incorrect:

The division which exists between work and leisure serves to perpetuate the alienation of both spheres, trivializing the freedom and creativity found in leisure and justifying the absence of those qualities in the world-transformative activity of work (Hinman, p. 200).

This claim takes us to the New Left response to sport. The New Left thinkers are much more sensitive to the similarities between both work and sport and analyze their mutual influences and dependencies. Thus, their critique of sport is based on a socio-economic historical examination of our society, which penetrates further in explaining the complex phenomenon of sport than the "idealistic" analysis of the conservative party.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW LEFT RESPONSE TO SPORT

1. Introduction

The term "New Left" originated in the sixties in the United States. The American student movement and similar movements in other countries called themselves the "New Left" in order to designate their program, which was to be socialist but different from the established socialist parties, and to be Marxist but different from established communist parties (Kirsch, p. 8). Kirsch mentions four distinct tendencies of this new "Leftism": (1) The New Left groups wanted to radically change the economic, political, and social relations of society "hier und jetzt" (here and now). (2) They called for a global revolution, because partial reforms could not change the capitalist system as a whole. (3) The New Left called for liberation of work, sex, academic achievement, and proposed communism as total and universal liberation. (4) Role models for a total revolution were found in political leaders of the third world (Kirsch, pp. 8-9). The central theme of the New Left is their claim for "emancipation." Although "emancipation" is found in the Paris Manuscripts written by Marx in 1844, it is not a common term in Marx's philosophy and thus is essentially original to the New Left.

Jean-Marie Brohm points out that the student movements had ignored sport, because they were not aware of the "essential repressive nature of sport." Young people considered sport as "a past-time for boy-scouts" (Brohm, p. 38). However, since they were fighting all the structures of the state, sport was still indirectly a target of the revolutionary struggle (Brohm, p. 40). But critical sport theory, at that time, was created by only a few Leftist intellectuals, primarily by Marxist radicals in France and West-Germany from 1968 on (Hoberman, p. 111). Their critique of

sport in general was directed against bourgeois society. Kurt Salamun claims that the scientific orientation of the New Left thinkers who discussed sport from a philosophical, political, and sociological perspective, clearly evolved from the "critical theory" of the Frankfurt School; while Kerstin Kirsch objects correctly that not all arguments from the New Left can be exclusively traced back to the thoughts of the Frankfurt School because of the acceptance of certain vulgar Marxist claims by some of the New Left thinkers (p. 121). Salamun points out that the critical social theory of this school, whose main representatives are Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas, have brought forth a "critical emancipatory pedagogy" and, thus, have had a substantial influence on the theoretical discussion of sport (p. 354). It is clear that critical theory with its emancipatory aim differs from traditional theory, which it takes issue with for ignoring historical materialism and social determinism. Pointing out the inadequacy of empirical studies, the method of inquiry of critical theory also stands in contrast to positivistic, idealistic and scientific kinds of investigation: "The empirical positivistic sciences are recognized as an instrument of self-perpetuation of the present society, which limits every historical development that advances/ benefits humanity"⁴ (Kirsch, p. 12).

The investigation of sport among the New Left thinkers reflects a certain view that sport has to be understood as a social phenomenon that requires, therefore, sociological and political analysis. Thus, a critique of sport needs to start out with an inquiry of the general political and economical social system. The New Left offers a general critique of the capitalist system and

⁴ My translation of the original German text: "... die empirisch- positivistischen Wissenschaften werden als "Selbsterhaltungsinstrument" der gegenwärtigen Gesellschaft erkannt, das jede geschichtliche Fortentwicklung zugunsten des Menschen eindämmt."

attacks specifically the following features in the realm of sport: the work-oriented rationalization, the repressive performance principle, the inhumane principle of competition, the commodity character of sports, the usage of sport for the perpetuation of the system, and more (Kirsch, p. 2). The aim of the New Left critique is, as pointed out earlier, to enlighten and to work toward a general emancipation of the people regarding dominating features in their social system. Thus, the critical analysis of sport given by the New Left demands a new practice of sport under a non-repressive social system. It has to be pointed out that critical sport theory does not form a unified whole. The existing leftist theories of sport can be divided into two groups⁵, one looking at sport from a vulgar Marxist perspective and the other approaching sport from a hegemonic point of view, which will now be discussed.

2. Vulgar Marxist's Approach

The work of the vulgar Marxists has been influenced by the Marxist tradition, which places labor at the forefront of any investigation of sport. The vulgar version of the leftist theories of sport is based on Marx's claim that base shapes superstructure. In regard to sport, this means, that sport is a specific social form created/ influenced by the capitalist mode of production. Jean-Marie Brohm, Bero Rigauer, and Gerhard Vinnai among others, mostly French and German writers⁶, argue that sport is a mirror or a microcosm of modern capitalist society, an integral part of a system of class domination and exploitation. These writers draw

⁵ Morgan differentiates between two major versions of the critical theory of sport, what he calls the vulgar Marxist and the hegemonic sport theory (see Morgan, "'Radical' Social Theory of Sport: A Critique and a Conceptual Emendation," 1985).

⁶ The major works of the vulgar Marxist critics are: Jean-Marie Brohm Sport - A Prison of Measured Time, Bero Rigauer Sport and Work, Gerhard Vinnai Fussball-Sport als Ideologie and various other essays, Jac-Olaf Böhme/ Gadow/ Güldenpfennig/ Jensen/ Pfister Sport im Spätkapitalismus, among others.

many parallels between the working world and the realm of sport and claim that the same characteristics are found in both arenas of life. Sport is viewed as:

- (1) a form of commodity and a work-like system of actions,
- (2) an instrument for the repression of human needs, and
- (3) a phenomenon of manipulation that encourages conformity (see Salamun, pp. 361-367). In the following, these major arguments will be examined more closely.

2.1. Sport as commodity and a work-like system of action

The thesis that sport merely duplicates the work world is explicitly examined by Brohm, Rigauer, Vinnai, and other German writers. This view argues against conservative approaches that view sport as the opposite of work, as a realm of freedom and self-determination. Rigauer, for example, supports his thesis of the doubling of the work world in drawing important parallels between sport, mainly top-level sports, and work. He finds the same fundamental characteristics in sport as in capitalist social processes. These include discipline, authority, competition, goal-oriented rationality, organization, and bureaucratization (Rigauer, p. 1). Because all these characteristics are found in both work and sport, Rigauer concludes that sport is not only like work, it is work per se. In this sense, sport reproduces all the repressive features of our social system and, in so doing, stabilizes it. Thus, Rigauer argues, sport as well as work is characterized as a realm of alienation and technical rationality. In addition, Rigauer notices an inhumane achievement principle in sport which is based solely on competition. He also claims that rationalization and functionalism -- for example, the standardization of sporting equipment and facilities, and else -- drastically reduce the possibility of decision-making by the sport participant himself and his chances of gaining self-fulfillment through the sporting activity. All the described features Rigauer finds in today's top-level sport,

diminish the freedom of the individual and put man in a repressive system of rules (Rigauer, pp. 20ff, 28ff, 50ff).

Another argument of the New Left is that sport is an instrument of capitalism, specifically of its motive to make a profit. Vinnai criticizes the money-making in professional sport, where the individual sportive achievement becomes a commodity and the athletes themselves are reduced to interchangeable objects on the market. The bodies of the athletes become a commodity.⁷ For example, in football or soccer one speaks of a "30,000-dollar-forward" (Vinnai, 1970, p. 42). Furthermore, Vinnai dismisses the usage of sport for conservative political reasons such as the stabilization of the power of a country, national representation, and more. Vinnai claims that the "goals on the soccer-field are the very goals of the dominant class" (1970, p. 91).⁸ Unfortunately he does not develop this claim any further.

Brohm also accuses sport for turning the human body into an instrument for reproducing production relations in an ideological way, and for being "geared into the mechanisms of the capitalist system" - profit orientation, and alike (pp. 176-177). In sport, Brohm detects the same principles as in work. He mentions the principle of maximum output and the "principles of mechanized labour," which include the division of labour, the encouragement of automatic reflexes, the formalization of all movements, etc." (Brohm, p. 179). Thus, Brohm comes to the same conclusion as Rigauer and Vinnai, which is that sport functions as a stabilizing factor for the existing system. Sport is a "new type of opiate for the people" (Brohm, p. 178).

⁷ See also Rittner, p. 42.

⁸ The original German text says: "Die Tore auf dem Fussballfeld sind die Eigentore der Beherrschten."

2.2. Sport as instrument of repression of human needs

Thinkers of the New Left also view sport as an instrument of repression, which hinders the free development and satisfaction of individual needs. Vinnai argues that the joy of pleasure, or the right to sensuality, or the right to laziness are dimensions foreign to the image of an athlete as well as to the performance principle and competition in today's sport (Vinnai, 1972a, p. 19).

A special point several leftist thinkers have made regarding sport is its function of repression, especially in the realm of sexuality. "Sport is a powerful factor of sexual repression," Brohm claims; that is, "sexual pleasure is replaced with pleasure in painful movements" (pp. 179-180). Further, Brohm accuses the educators for channeling sexual activities into sporting effort, and thus repressing it and using sport for "adapting to bourgeois monogamy" (p. 180). Here sport is seen as a pleasure-restricted realm, which focuses on the sexual interest of the body that becomes a commodity, for example, in body building. Thus, the liberation of sensuality is repressed through a conformation "of the body of the dead machine" (Vinnai, 1972b, p. 25).

The New Left believes that sport works against human liberation. The revolutionary potential of sexuality is repressed through sport, and thus, has no potential for assisting in the transformation of capitalist society, whatsoever. In addition to repressing sexuality, sport is also used as compensation. Sport does so, for example, through directing aggression originated through repression of sexuality in capitalist society into harmless situations in a sportive contest.

Finally, Brohm also mentions that sport is a realm of endeavor where people suffer, because the values of capitalist society are played out in sport and men and women cannot fulfill their own human needs. Hence, sport represents a traditional repressive morality and works as a libidinal substitute (Brohm, pp.15ff and 23ff).

In sum, in the eyes of the vulgar Marxist critics, sport supports the dominant social system through directing aggressions and repressing a "principle of free sexuality" (Böhme et al., p. 38).

2.3. Sport as phenomenon of manipulation and conformity

One of the central arguments of the vulgar Marxist critique of sport as it is organized and practiced in today's industrial society is that sport helps men to adjust to the alienated conditions of life in our society through manipulation, which is basically understood as adjustment to bourgeois ideology. Brohm states that sport is the ideal instrument for manipulating minds and bodies (1978, p. 33). An important part of the adjustment process is that men learn certain patterns of behavior in sport which support the goals of capitalist society: discipline, striving for achievement, competition, dependencies on authorities, and conformity. According to Rigauer and Vinnai, even youngsters become acquainted with the requirements and regulations of the inhumane work world through sport because of the confrontation with the performance principle, time constraints, standardized movements, and more.

It is interesting that some leftist thinkers draw parallels between the hypotheses of conformity and that of compensation in sport and explain one through the other. Böhme et al., for example, state that, on one hand, sport is used as compensation for frustrations which are originated through alienated work processes (school, housing, and more). On the other hand, since sport in capitalist society is alienated as well, it also causes frustrations. Thus, one never understands the origins of the frustrations altogether. Hence, power and alienation of the capitalist state remain the same; sport merely helps the individuals cope with this. Sport does so through compensation of the repressed needs in providing modified action for the spectator and the participant (Böhme et al., p. 83). The function of compensation in sport becomes an important movement for the adjustment of people to

the social power structure of their lives. Sport is a dubious phenomenon; on one hand, it seems to help individuals compensate for the frustrations inherent in the working process, but on the other hand, sport teaches exactly those inhumane working conditions which will cause new frustrations again and again.

Among the vulgar Marxists there exist a number of global speculative hypotheses about the function of compensation in sport, but they are not yet empirically verified. This is also true for their argument that sport compensates for disappointments which must inevitably arise in an achievement-oriented society among those who will never be able to reach the top in the achievement hierarchy. Sport, on the other hand, because of its relatively clear structure, provides many possibilities for one's identifying with the members of the sporting elite; and thus, sport helps individuals forget disappointments and dissatisfactions generated by their failure in the competition of the work world - at least for a while. But sport does not only play a role of adjustment because of the compensation of the frustrations and inhumanity in modern industrial society, sport also supports the ideology that this society indeed is a performance society, this means that the elite of the society achieved those privileged positions through objective achievements. "That this ideology indeed supports the ruling class, is obvious.... The social positions of power are covered up with the principle of achievement..." (Hack, p. 122).

Summing up the main characteristics of the vulgar Marxist critique of sport, it becomes obvious that their strength is their sensitivity to the association of sport with political power, dominant social forces, and work. They claim that sport is in direct relation to the dominant mode of production and doubt that sport has any critical potential to initiate a transformation process of our society. This does not mean that the vulgar Marxists altogether deny the existence of a play element in sport, understood as a free, spontaneous, and joyful activity. But even if

there is such a thing as play inherent in sport, they would argue that it cannot survive in a capitalist society, because contemporary sport is based on the achievement principle. The critical resolution of the vulgar Marxist thinkers is that in order to change sport, society has to change also: "The changes necessary for sports must be part of the changes in society" (Rigauer, p. 105). In fact, they are asking for a radical transformation of society before sport as well as other social phenomena can become free. Unfortunately, most vulgar Marxist writers have not provided us with a more detailed outline for a possible emancipation of sport. Rigauer is an exception. He points out the following preconditions for a new "self-conception" of sport:

1. The dissolution of work-like structures of behavior. To achieve this goal it is necessary to do away with repressive measures of rationalization and to unmask the fetish of achievement. ...
2. The dissolution of conformist thought and behavior...[and] the democratization of the whole enterprise of sport. ...
3. Politization of sport. ...
4. The de-idealizing of sports movement...[,which should be based] on empirical reality and on enlightened principles... (Rigauer, pp. 103-104).⁹

Rigauer concludes that these emancipatory conditions of sport cannot be achieved through a piecemeal social change; society has to change as a whole. Sport can only arrive at "the stage of critical self-awareness" in a different society (Rigauer, p. 105).

Vinnai also does not preclude the possibility for a change of sport in his writings. He seems to request a resurrection of the original play element in sport, which he, for example, recognizes at the origins of soccer, but which vanished later on with the organization and commercialization of the game (Vinnai, 1970, p.

⁹ Rigauer's view on a possible emancipation of sport is discussed further in chapter IV, section 3.

15). But as to what kind of sport we could have in a socialist society and its possible connection with other social phenomena, the authors leave us in the dark.

3. Critique of the Vulgar Marxist Approach

Having established some central theses of the vulgar Marxist approach of sport it is necessary now to point out the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments. The positive aspects of their responses are certainly their critique of an overemphasis on discipline, authority, and the power-ideology in sport which we still encounter today among sport teachers and sport theorists. Another important point is their argument regarding the interaction between sport and politics. Only upon recognition of the massive economic and political interests and influences in the realm of sport, can one come to consider to what extent these alienated influences should be accepted or eliminated from sport. And lastly, the arguments of the leftist sport critics, although they are often global and undifferentiated, still approach correctly the misconduct and negative tendencies in modern sport, such as: the "blind" striving for achievement and records, the bureaucratic tendencies in sport, and the negative outcomes of professionalism and commercialization of sport which cause health-related and environmental damages (Salamun, pp. 367-368).

As to the numerous weaknesses of the vulgar Marxist approach to sport there is, first of all, the dichotomy they see between pleasure and performance. The strict separation of pleasure and performance allows for the false conclusion that only spontaneous and purposeless activities can create joyful experiences, while other activities that are rule-governed and achievement oriented can not. Hoberman states correctly that the vulgar Marxists "idealize the domain of play, of the *ludique*," when Brohm, for example, says that sport is "nothing but the *systematic perversion*

of the *agonal*¹⁰ ludic instinct by competition" and when Vinnai "sees in modern soccer a loss of 'playful charm' (spielerischer Reiz)" (Hoberman, p. 240). A similar false conclusion is found in the statement that the adjustment to a system of rules in sport includes the complete conformity with the capitalist social system. Salamun objects that it is possible to participate in sport in capitalist society without becoming absorbed into all capitalist subsystems¹¹ (Salamun, p. 370).

Another major shortcoming of vulgar Marxist sport theory is the view that sport is just another outcome or product of capitalist society, "a simple ideological reflex of the dominant social mode of production" (Morgan, 1985, p. 57). Wilhelm Hopf in this context criticizes the Marxist sport critics correctly stating "that one can make analogies between the labor process and sport...[and] not come to grips with the real problem, which is explaining the realm of sport" (p. 78). The vulgar Marxists have the tendency to make assumptions about sport which are too broad and general, and thus overstated, and they reduce sport to economic terms that govern society at large. Many conclusions, which are solely derived from observations of specific practices in top-level sport, are drawn incorrectly for sport in general. Rigauer in Sport and Work, for example, emphasizes that conformity of work is only found in top-level sport and not in all realms of the sportive practice. But later on in his work he makes the assumption that "every assertion about the phenomenon of top-level sports is relevant for sports in general, for top-level sports today are the driving force of the whole system of sports" (Rigauer, p. 79). This argument actually

¹⁰ The term *agonal* stems from the ancient Greek *agon* meaning "a contest in which prizes were awarded in any of a number of events, as athletics, drama, music, poetry, and painting" (The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, 1987).

¹¹ This statement does not exclude that the same abuses of sport are present in *our* so-called "communist" societies, where the corruption of sport might even be more obvious; - but this is not the focus of our discussion here.

represents "fake radicalism," which displaces a "dialectical"¹² in favor of a reductionist analysis. Gruneau's judgement is harsher: it is "...just plain silly to argue for a theory of institutional development and cultural production which relegates sport to the objectified status of a simple reflection of abstract capitalist categories" (p. 37). Furthermore, a number of questions arise which the vulgar Marxists seem to be unable to resolve with their approach to sport, such as why, if sport is just like work, is sport so popular in contrast to work?

In this context it has to be said that the distinction between top-level sport and amateur or recreational sport is insufficient for grasping the complex phenomenon of contemporary sport in a theoretical analysis. There are good grounds for thinking that sport is not a homogeneous entity and that there are crucial differences between levels and types of sport, between professional and amateur, local and national sport, and else, which the vulgar Marxists in their sport theory simply ignore. The hegemonic approach, which will be examined now, appears to take some of these concerns into consideration.

4. Hegemonic Sport Theory

The hegemonic¹³ theory of sport, which is understood as "a critical revision of Marxist theory" based on key themes from Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, is similar to the vulgar

¹² The term "dialectical" here is used simply in terms of looking at a subject/phenomenon from different angles in a critical fashion.

¹³ The Greek term *hegemonia* refers to leadership or supremacy. For further detail, see Gorman (1982) who describes hegemony as "control...over people's ideas. Capitalism, for example, thrives through bourgeois control and manipulation of a massive network of cultural institutions - schools, churches, parties, newspapers, media, and private associations - the extant mode of production" (p. 111). Or look at Parry's work who defines hegemony as "a political strategy which employs a relation of intellectual and moral leadership in order to bring about a state of affairs in which a certain group holds dominance" (p. 435).

Marxist theory in that it "retains the view that sport is foremost a social endeavor," but differs from that theory in its rejection of "any mechanistic account which makes sport a mere repository of capitalist beliefs and practices" (Morgan, 1985, p. 57). Thinkers like Richard Gruneau and John Hargreaves, who are the major proponents of hegemonic theory, do not necessarily disagree with the critique of sport given by the vulgar Marxist, but their argument seems to be more sophisticated because they also look at issues of social class in relation to sport and do not solely view sport as a reflection of the dominant mode of production. Sport needs to be treated in a more differentiated manner, they argue, than it has been by the vulgar Marxists. Hegemonic theory examines sport as a phenomenon with features that are not wholly negative.

...while sports are undoubtedly satisfying, they can promote social integration, and they may be used to control people, that is to say, both their harmonizing and their controlling and exploitative aspects need to be taken into account... (Hargreaves, 1986, p. 3).

Sporting activity can never be adequately explained purely as an instrument of social harmony, or as a means of self-expression or as a vehicle for satisfying individual needs, because this ignores the division and conflicts and the inequality of power in society and sport. Hence, a theory of sport that attempts to encompass sport as a whole and takes its social and historical context into account is needed. To exert such an enormous appeal, sport must be significantly different from work and everyday existence.

Hargreaves treats sport as a cultural formation, and argues that it is neither an ideological institution nor is it completely innocent ideologically; or as Gruneau states it: "sport is free and unfree." Sport is able to reproduce power relations because it plays different roles in relation to different cultures (Hargreaves, 1986, pp. 8-9). Gruneau and Hargreaves emphasize the autonomy of sport

in that sport embodies an irreducible element of play. Even in organized sports, they argue, the ludic impulse is always present to some degree.

It is play's profane side that can never be completely incorporated into modes of domination or mystified by some higher purpose other than "fun" expressed in play for its own sake (Gruneau, p. 150).

The ludic element is inherently irreducible to programming for profit and control: the more the desire to play is frustrated and reduced, the less it works as entertainment, and the less efficacious sport is for control purposes. The more the ludic element is present the less efficacious it is an instrument of control (Hargreaves, 1986, p. 222).

Hargreaves elaborates on the phenomenon of play as existing in any kind and type of sport, even though there are regulations and rules which structure it. His argument goes somewhat like this: rules are intended to be neutral and are designed to ensure the equality of the contest. Sport involves some elements of contest between participants which create a unique excitement. Thus, sport contains dramatic form and ritual practices. All these features of sport such as play-acting, contest, uncertainty, dramatic expression are actually present in play (Hargreaves, 1986, pp. 1-15). Hence, even the most organized and rule-governed sports are only exciting for the participants as well as the spectators to the degree that they preserve some kind of ludic element. However, Hargreaves is also aware of the increasing tendency of sport to become one more commodity, as the vulgar Marxists argue. This tension, Hargreaves describes, actually exhibits an "ambivalent tendency to accommodate subordinate groups and to stimulate resistance and rebellion in certain ways" (Hargreaves, 1986, p. 10).

Gruneau also argues that the realm of sport holds out a promise of freedom, but only freedom *from* constraints. What sport actually delivers is limited and shaped by the existing social

conditions. "Even when recreational sport seems to present an opportunity for escape, it may be no more than a substitute for alienating work in a repressive polity rather than a real alternative to existing structural arrangements" (Ingham/ Hardy, p. 87).

Both, Gruneau and Hargreaves, characterize the tension of sport. The problem of ludic structure and structural reproduction lies in the fact that the production of sport is not insulated from general social processes. But Gruneau wishes to avoid the danger of economism stating that the vulgar Marxists treat sport as merely determined in the abstract and negative sense of the term. Thus, Gruneau holds onto the possibility that sport, as a cultural formation, can retain some autonomy vis-a-vis the focus and economic relations of production; and therefore, sport can be part of the active, constitutive realm of a development of sport either in oppositional or radically transformative terms.

...profane playing...is often...one of the few ways in which any one human agent can challenge the forces of repression. ...the profane side of play is counterproductive (Gruneau, p. 150).

In this regard sport can help to indicate an "alternative structure" to capitalist life, which "would demand that nonclass elements consciously link various struggles - against bureaucratization, sexual and racial oppression, and the constraints imposed on social life by the hierarchical and repressive feature of state power - with the broader forms of class struggle for creating a more humanely rational society" (Gruneau, p. 153). Gruneau believes that the critique of sport is one important attempt "to discern the alternatives within which human reason and freedom can make history" (p. 153).

5. Critique of the Hegemonic Sport Theory

Hegemonic theory has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is particularly effective in emphasizing that sport cannot solely be explained as a reflection of the dominant mode of production, as the vulgar Marxists do; nor can it be explained as an instrument of social harmony or an isolated cultural phenomenon, as the conservative thinkers do. Hegemonic theorists rather claim that for an adequate explanation of sport both perceptions need to be taken into account. This attempt shall encompass sport as a whole and explain sport within its social and historical context.

But hegemonic theory seems to be somehow problematic in that it underplays "the impact of the economic forces on lived social experience," which the vulgar Marxists tend to overplay. Morgan remarks:

What it underplays here is not the connection between cultural and material production, but the extent to which social agents from less privileged classes have been co-opted by the economic logic of the privileged class. For what passes as a rational, commonsensical way of life for the working class is itself grounded in the very same economic ethos which determines such a life for the bourgeois class (Morgan, 1985, p. 59).

What is problematic about the hegemonic view is that it separates sport from the realm of necessity, as Gruneau states: "...sport actually does maintain an important *degree of autonomy* from the dominant economic and political structures which govern the world of necessity" (p. 149). Thus, Gruneau argues for sport being distinct from everyday existence. This formal separation rescues sport's ability to dramatize critically social life, his further argument goes. But we have to reply that sport at the same time is connected to the material production and reproduction of human life. Hegemonic theory appears inconsistent in saying that one cannot separate sport in any cultural form from the social context,

but then in supposing just such a formal separation of sport from the realm of necessity.

6. Summary and Preview

Both arguments of the New Left, the vulgar Marxist as well as the hegemonic theory, eschew the idealist thesis that sport is an autonomous realm of practice divorced from general social process. They share the view that sport is preeminently a social practice, and thus insist on a strong linkage between sport and social reality. But it is not possible for them to agree upon sport's transformative potential (Ingham/ Hardy, p. 92). Although both groups of the New Left thinkers do not agree upon *one* concept of sport, their critique fulfills important functions. They all point out the economic, political, and ideological connections of sport that have not been recognized before. Their critique also lays out problems in sport in the realm of social practice, such as the social status of the athlete, bureaucratization, and more. And last but not least, the New Left explains the importance of value judgments and political expectations for the social behavior of sporting participants and spectators. The New Left recognizes that we are indeed in need of critical reflection and creative thought for an adequate concept of contemporary sport.

The next task will be to point toward a more adequate approach to the study of sport derived from my criticism given of both the New Left and the traditional conservative thinkers. My main criticism against both categories of thinkers, the conservatives as well as the New Left, is that they fail to realize that the realm of sport can neither be explained solely through economic and social relations in society, nor merely as an autonomous realm of freedom separated from the realm of necessity. The hegemonic approach, although it views sport in both realms, underplays the impact of economic forces in various social areas. But its critical insight makes the hegemonic theory superior to the conservative and vulgar Marxist sport theory. Nonetheless, both major views of

sport fall short of their critical attempt to comprehend sport. Hence we need some sort of theory that better explains the degradation of sport and how it can appropriately be rescued.

At this point, I want to turn to Herbert Marcuse's notion of play, because it represents an alternative view to the theories discussed above. Marcuse calls for an understanding of cultural endeavors like sport in terms of the integration of play (the realm of freedom) into work (the realm of necessity). I want to argue with Marcuse that play and work are not mere opposites, but continua, which need a new social definition. The point is not to resolve the contrasts between play and work, but rather to make visible the social relations and interdependencies. In this way, our current understanding of "work" and "play" might vanish and make room for a completely different notion based on humanized work and qualified play. Such a concept preserves sport's autonomy and its freedom without insulating it from social reality.

CHAPTER III

MARCUSE'S THEORY OF PLAY

1. Introduction

Existing conservative and New Leftist theories of sport differentiate strictly between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom; that is, the conservatives place sport within the realm of freedom and the New Left view sport as part of the realm of necessity. The conservatives do so by overemphasizing play as an autonomous realm of freedom in society, while the New Left see sport mainly as an economic enterprise in capitalist society. The division between the two spheres of life, work and leisure, "serves to perpetuate the alienation of both spheres, trivializing the freedom and creativity found in leisure and justifying the absence of those qualities in the world-transformative activity of work" (Hinman, p. 200). The New Left simply put sport in the alienated labor camp, dismissing any positive features about present sport. The conservative view, on the other hand, ignores the present degradation of sport and thus stabilizes the alienated system of capitalism. Hence, present sport theories lead us into a "dead end" with their restricted and false determination of sport.

Herbert Marcuse's position attempts to reconcile the split between labor and leisure, work and play, found in capitalist society (EC, p. 204).¹⁴ Leisure and work are not two separate

¹⁴ When citing Marcuse's books and essays I will use the following abbreviations:

AD - The Aesthetic Dimension

CR - Counterrevolution and Revolt

EC - Eros and Civilization

EoL - An Essay on Liberation

FL - Five Lectures

KG1/2 - Kultur und Gesellschaft 1 and 2

ODM - One-Dimensional Man

NE - Negations

PF - "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics"

RR - Reason and Revolution

SM - Soviet Marxism

realms in life. By looking at both spheres independently one does not realize that the alienation in leisure is the result of alienated labor. "In this sense," writes Hinman in support of Marcuse's view, "the critique of alienated leisure must lead us back to the problem of alienated labor, for the key to the problem of alienated leisure is not to be found in leisure itself but in alienated labor and in overcoming the split between work and play" (Hinman, p. 200).

The question arises as to what human activity could become if the alienation of both work and play in capitalist society were overcome. A closer consideration of Marcuse's notion of play shall provide the answer to this question. In particular, I will argue that Marcuse's concept of play overcomes the dichotomy between work and play. It does so because Marcuse overcomes the split between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom, between work and play, proposing a transformation of work into play. I will further argue that such transformation (the transformative potential of play) is the prerequisite for liberated and emancipated sport.

I will now consider Marcuse's theory of play, which shall provide the basis for the investigation of the relationship between play and sport. Marcuse's theory of play cannot be understood without situating it within the larger context of his critical social theory. Since Marcuse never developed a theory of play as such in his manifold writings, it will be my task to examine his works and piece together such a theory. At times it might seem that Marcuse has not had a clear, unambiguous understanding of play, but it needs to be pointed out that his philosophy of play has generally remained consistent.

Although the context of the remarks on play is ultimately important and cannot be ignored, for the purpose of clarity I first will present the features and characteristics Marcuse ascribes to play. Secondly, the relation between play and work, which is

crucial to Marcuse's theory of play, will be investigated. And thirdly, I will determine the position and role of play within Marcuse's larger critical social theory.

2. Characteristics of Play

Marcuse derives his notion of play largely from Friedrich Schiller's theory of play¹⁵, which was designed to overcome the historical separation of sensuality and reason through aesthetics (On the Aesthetic Education of Man, 1795). Schiller developed a conception of what one might call "sensuous reason," which can be achieved through the play impulse. In play, Schiller found an "erotic rationality," which he linked directly to freedom.

...man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and *he is only completely a man when he plays* (Schiller, 1988, p. 453).

Marcuse follows Schiller's example. In his treatment of play, Marcuse is explicitly concerned with identifying the dynamics of liberation. The play impulse is understood as the vehicle of the liberation of man from inhuman existential conditions. It has the potential of solving the conflict between reason and sensuousness, and thus it leads to freedom. Play and freedom as well as play and liberation are inseparable. Thus, for a correct understanding of Marcuse's notion of play, we ultimately have to keep this linkage in mind. In fact, the connection between play and liberation is one of the main characteristics of Marcuse's treatment of play, which will become more evident throughout this chapter.

Marcuse continues to refer to Schiller when he characterizes play as *non-serious* and *free*. The aim of playing is not "with" something, but "rather it is the play of life itself. ...Man is free

¹⁵ Berthold Langerbein elaborates on the parallels between Schiller's and Marcuse's notion of play and argues that Marcuse had simply taken over Schiller's concept without alteration (p. 63).

when the 'reality loses its seriousness' and when its necessity 'becomes light' (*leicht*)" (EC, p. 187). Engaged in play man is free because his actions are not determined by any goal outside of the activity, rather play is pursued for its own sake. "One places oneself beyond the objects and becomes 'free' from them," Marcuse says in one of his earliest writings (PF, p. 14). In play one is cut off from the constraints and seriousness one faces in daily life, especially in work. Play is non-serious in so far as it is not necessary for self-preservation; it lies outside the "struggle for existence" (EC, p. 195). This does not mean, however, that one is not taking play seriously. On the contrary, while engaged in play one takes the activity very seriously. Lets take Janet, for example, who is sitting at the end of a row of chairs in the living room when her father comes in and attempts to hug and kiss her. He is not paying any attention to what his child is doing; thus, Janet gets quite upset and tells her father: "Dad, this is a train! You cannot kiss the engine!" - Janet obviously takes her playing very seriously and does not understand how her dad could ignore that.¹⁶

However, play is considered non-serious in that it does not take reality seriously. This means during play, the player is living in "another world," another reality which has its own rules. In the "'free play' of creative imagination...a reality with quite different standards is recognized. ...[play] does not engage the human existence in the ordinary way of life; it is 'unreal'" (EC, p. 185). Absorbed in this "other reality," the player forgets about the real world. This does not mean that play conceals or denies reality. The term "non-serious" here refers to the fact that play is different from other daily instrumentally oriented activities. Play is non-instrumentally oriented, that is, it is done purely for the fun of it, for its own sake. The goal of play is not outside the activity. It is found in the activity as such. Thus, the aim of play

¹⁶ The example is found in a slightly different version in Huizinga's "The Nature of Play," p. 3.

lies in itself, or rather "play is an aim in itself" (EC, p. 215). Marcuse emphasizes that "it is the purpose and not the content which marks an activity as such play or work" (EC, p. 215). While work always has its purpose outside of the activity, the purpose of play is play itself: "the free play of human faculties and desires" (EC, p. 195).

Play belongs to the dimension of freedom in so far as "one does entirely as one pleases with objects; one places oneself beyond them and becomes 'free' from them" (PF, p. 14). This freedom is denied in labor. Through the process of objectification, labor distances one from self-being. In contrast, while playing one truly comes to oneself. Although in play, one is concerned and occupied with objects as well as in labor, the function of the objects is completely different in both spheres. Marcuse explains:

While playing, one does not conform to objects, toward their immanent lawfulness as it were (given through their specific objectification), nor towards what requires their 'objective content' [*Sachhaltigkeit*] (in the way that labor must conform to the objective content of its object in the handling, use, and formation of it). Rather play *abolishes* this 'objective' content and lawfulness and puts in its place another lawfulness, created by man himself, to which the player freely adheres on his own will..." (PF, p. 14).

Play is decisive, Marcuse continues, in that it enables a "self-positing transcendence of objectivity (*sich - hinwegsetzen*) [by which] one comes precisely to *oneself*, in a dimension of *freedom* denied in labor" (PF, p. 14). In play, the players experience a different reality, which they create themselves. The players determine the rules and laws of the activity. They are confronted with their own self, "which is to come into its own, to become a self in and against the world that destroys the self" (CR, p. 88). This experience, Marcuse argues, is ultimately satisfying and

fulfilling; it creates tremendous pleasure, enjoyment, and gratification, which one hardly finds in other dimensions of life.

Another important feature of play is that it is done simply "for gaining pleasure" (FL, p.20):

'The fundamental feature of play is, that it is gratifying in itself, without serving any other purpose than that of instinctual gratification' (EC, p. 214).

Marcuse describes play as entirely subject to the pleasure principle. The pleasure one receives when playing stems from the experience of freedom found in play. As Marcuse notes,

In a single toss of a ball, the player achieves an infinitely greater triumph of human freedom over objectification than in the most powerful accomplishment of technical labor (PF, p. 14f).

Sportive movements which are self-determined can be self-fulfilling; and thus very pleasurable: "pleasure is in the movement itself in so far as it activates...[erotic] zones" (EC, p. 214).

Marcuse identifies the movement of the body and its different body parts for the sake of pleasure, as erotic activity, as *play*: all erotic pleasurable activities are play. In the movement the player realizes oneself.

Additionally, play as a mode of self-realization is very important for Marcuse in that it contributes to creating a new sensibility, new ways of seeing, hearing, and feeling (EoL, pp. 23-48). In play, especially in sportive movements, one becomes more sensitive to one's body, the environment, and others who are engaged in the playing activity. This is because the entire focus of the player is the activity as such; the player is absorbed by the play and its context. Thus, play can lead to what Marcuse calls a "new sensibility." Play creates a certain sensuousness, which is denied in daily routines. Play captures the person as a whole: it

provides the opportunity to explore the body and the mind at the same time.

Furthermore, Marcuse's notion of play is associated with *life-fulfillment*. In Eros and Civilization Marcuse cites examples of the archetypal images of liberation and self-fulfillment, which are playful in the sense that they do not operate under the reality principle. Orpheus and Narcissus express an experience of being which embodies an alternative reality principle. Orpheus and Narcissus are "images of joy and fulfillment; the voice which does not command but sings..." (EC, p. 162). Marcuse shows how these archetypes of gratification symbolize a new reality principle through their "revolt against culture based on toil, domination and renunciation" (EC, p. 164). Narcissus symbolizes non-repressive sublimation, a diffusion of sexuality throughout one's activities; and Orpheus stands for a non-repressive creativity whose songs and music represent the values of pacification, gratification, and harmony (EC, pp. 168-70). Both figures represent an ideal of the released Eros, a state of peace and beauty, a redemption of pleasure and a halt of time.

The stoppage of time is another important characteristic of play, which Marcuse mentions only briefly at the end of Eros and Civilization: "...joy wants eternity.' Timelessness is the ideal of pleasure" (p. 231). Although Marcuse himself does not directly connect play with timelessness, we can infer from his previous elaborations on play, where he describes play as essentially pleasurable activity, that play only occurs in moments where time is "unimportant" and "forgettable." That does not mean that time actually stops. Since men are living in history, time is their constant "threat": "for all finite things the hour of their birth is the hour of their death" (EC, p. 231). But for people playing, time loses its threat. As human beings living in time we cannot escape

history literally, but we can "forget"¹⁷ about it; for example, in phantasy and in play. "But the fatal enemy of lasting gratification is time" (EC, p. 191). Hence, pleasure strives for eternity, but will it ever reach it? Play then is only "a free play of individual faculties" in moments where time loses its threatening character; that is, at times without any restrictions or limitations from the outside. Under the present conditions of life play will always have a beginning and an end; play cannot be a constant state of being.

Play has no duration of performance: it occurs essentially in 'intervals,' 'between' the times of other activities that continually dominate human existence. ...play is essentially particular without duration and happens only temporarily, at times" (PF, p. 15f).

Thus, play is limited and restricted by time. But during the play one is totally immersed in the activity as such, forgetting about the threats of reality; one is "lost in the moment."

Play might be experienced as a momentary escape from instrumentally oriented activities, and thus it appears as unreal. But Marcuse emphasizes throughout his writings that although this might presently be the case, under altogether different circumstances play can ultimately merge into the reality of work. He conceives a utopian state, "a genuinely humane civilization," where "the human existence will be play rather than toil, and man will live in display rather than need. ...Then, man is free 'to play' with his faculties and potentials and with those of nature, and only by 'playing' with them he is free" (EC, p. 188).

¹⁷ "Forgetting" in relation to play is to be understood as a positive instance in so far as in play one transcends time. That is, one is not determined by external objectivities and functions that are not inherent to the playful activity. Thus, in play one can "forget" about external threats and limitations one experiences in daily life. In play one becomes totally immersed into the activity as such. Time loses its threat. "Forgetting" allows one to "lose oneself" *and* become fully oneself.

Marcuse further links play to *phantasy*. He defines phantasy as "one mental activity that retains a high degree of freedom from the reality principle..., and as a thought process with its own laws and truth values" (EC, p. 140). As such, phantasy is the opposite of reality. Phantasy as well as play is free from any repression; it exhibits desire and gratification. Phantasy becomes "mere play, daydreaming" (EC, p. 142), which is opposed to reality proceeding according to the laws of reason. I need to point out that phantasy for Marcuse is not a mere illusion, *Schein*. He rather "insists that it must and can become real, that behind the illusion lies knowledge " (EC, p. 143). Phantasy can become real when it takes form, which it does in art or play, for example. Art or play then have the power to "reject" and "protest" against the organization of life by the logic of reason alone. In so far as play does not operate within the frame of reality and reason, Marcuse describes it as unproductive and useless. Play is unproductive and useless "precisely because it cancels the repressive and exploitative traits of labor and leisure; it 'just plays' with the reality" (EC, p. 195). Play does not take reality seriously, it is superfluous.

It might seem as if Marcuse has made no progress beyond Schiller, because Schiller also emphasizes that play belongs to the realm of freedom and that humanity is in need of a society based on play rather than toil. Furthermore, Marcuse uses a very similar terminology to Schiller's in his explication of play, for example, in his description of play and beauty or play and life-fulfillment, and more (see Schiller, 1988, p. 451ff and EC, p. 187ff), but the way Marcuse constructs his notion of utopia differs widely from the idealist intention of the eighteenth century. Both Marcuse and Schiller, asked how "beauty" could ever become socially "productive" and play a vehicle of liberation. Marcuse believes over Schiller that the twentieth century finally had achieved the ability to conquer any material want and, thus, would be able to provide a basis for a free development of culture. Thus, another major

characteristic Marcuse ascribes to play is its social significance,¹⁸ which goes beyond Schiller's notion of play.

Marcuse's theory of play can develop to its fullest potential only in a non-repressive society. Play is a mode of activity that can only become an all pervasive reality in an altogether different economic, social, and political order. In capitalist society, man does not have much time to play because his life is preoccupied and dominated by work.¹⁹ In his spare leisure time, Marcuse argues, man is not able to fully enjoy play because leisure time is also controlled by the forces of capitalist society. Hence, Marcuse seeks liberation for our society as a whole. How can this be achieved?

Marcuse faces various difficulties trying to answer this question. For example, Marcuse found himself confronted by the problem that sensuality does not have "dynamic forces," simply because sensuality belongs to the realm of Müssiggang und Genuss (idleness and pleasure). Thus, sensuality could not be changed into a "productive sensuality," which could go beyond and deny the truth of the established order. Sensuality is passive. Hence, it cannot lead to the liberation of man nor can it contribute to a possible social transformation. Here Marcuse follows Hegel's insight: "The philosophy of Western civilization culminates in the idea that the truth lies in the negation of the principle that governs this civilization" (EC, p. 116). Sensuality as a feature of art and play can remain only in a completely different social setting but not an

¹⁸ The social significance of play will be investigated in more detail in section 4 of this chapter.

¹⁹ Many repressive features Marcuse criticizes in the capitalist system can also be found in the existing so-called "socialist" societies. In his book Soviet Marxism Marcuse makes clear that both forms of society are flawed and that bureaucratic, state socialism differs widely from "ideal socialism," which Marcuse in his later writings refers to mostly as "qualitatively different society" in order to avoid misunderstandings. Thus, when Marcuse critically opposes the capitalist system, he does not necessarily exclude other forms of societies that show similar features from his critical judgment.

achievement oriented society. Happiness of man and beauty of life are altogether different from technological rationality in capitalist society. Structures of beauty and freedom would be what Kant calls in his Critique of Judgment: Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck (purposiveness without purpose) and Gesetzmässigkeit ohne Gesetz (lawfulness without law).

Marcuse was searching for a way of life and experience which could meet the two criteria of "being free from necessity" and "being creative and productive." Only within the two spheres can one realize freedom and overcome the reduction of humans as simply a part of nature.

Beauty as such, was thought to become the aim and realization of social work because it can fulfill the inner and outer nature of human beings. While Marcuse's more realistic utopia calls for freedom and liberation of the people through radical reduction of work time and through automation and technology (EC, pp. 222-223), Marcuse's dream is that the entire working processes can be converted into playful activity²⁰ (EC, pp. 212-215). One will only be free when one plays and one's society will become a piece of art. This claim is already made in Marcuse's very first piece of writing Der Deutsche Künstlerroman (1922).²¹

In sum, Marcuse's understanding of play can be characterized as an activity which is ultimately free and non-serious, unproductive and useless, insofar as play is not necessary for survival. It has no purpose outside the activity as such, and thus it is non-instrumentally oriented. Play has its own truth and its own laws and rules it follows, which are created by the players themselves. In play the limitations of the existing reality are exposed, - even

²⁰ This topic will be specifically considered in section 3 of this chapter.

²¹ "Der Deutsche Künstlerroman" is Marcuse's dissertation completed in 1922 for the doctoral degree awarded the following year from the University of Freiburg, which is published in: Herbert Marcuse's Schriften, Bd. 1, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988. Pp. 7-333 (see Langerbein, p. 69).

time seems to come to a momentary halt. In play a more satisfying, a more equitable and just order is celebrated. It is, perhaps, through this feature of play that freedom is most forcefully expressed. As Marcuse writes, freedom "is the faculty (and activity) of men 'synthesizing' (organizing) the data of experience so that they reveal their own (objective) negativity, namely, the degree to which they are the data of domination. And this radically critical synthesis of experience occurs in light of the real possibility of a 'better world to live in,' in light of the possible reduction of pain, cruelty, injustice and stupidity" (CR, p. 216). For Marcuse, play affirms the possibility of a "better world," where gratification and life-fulfillment, which is found in play, becomes the primary experience of human beings. Beauty, creativity, and phantasy constitute the "free play of human faculties."

The above features suggest a further characteristic of play, which refers to work as a direct counter phenomenon. The conclusion that play then simply is the opposite of work can hardly be avoided. Indeed, Marcuse, especially in his early writings, claims such. How then, the reader might wonder, does Marcuse's theory of play differ from the conservative viewpoint, which places play within the realm of freedom strictly separated from the realm of necessity. Does not Marcuse do exactly the same? In order to fully comprehend Marcuse's theory of play, it is important to look at the relation between play and work, which Marcuse elaborates quite extensively, before one can make an informed judgment about this issue.

3. Play and Work

In early historical epoches such as the classical Greek and Roman periods work had little value. The Greek ideal of life was associated with leisure (Musse), music, dance, and sophisticated conversations. In the sixteenth century this vita contemplativa (Musse) was replaced by the vita activa (work). Thus, work gained

more and more importance. Through industrialization work became the central value of bourgeois society. The ideal of Musse was lost. Today, although the strong emphasis on work seems to have diminished, the realm of work is still strictly separated from the realm of play. The realm of necessity (work), as Marx calls it, still has priority over the realm of freedom (play). However, Marcuse raises some hope for a gradual integration of the realm of freedom *into* the realm of necessity, of the play element into the work world.

Marcuse's conception of freedom is based on a different form of work and play than that which we know and experience in Western capitalist society today. Under a "socialist" system, play is substituted for work. "Work becomes play," Marcuse states throughout his writings. This statement suggests two different interpretations: (a) that work is replaced or negated by play, and (b) that play is integrated into work. Marcuse certainly argues for the transformation of work into play, but whether or not he wants to abolish labor altogether remains in question.

Excursus

Before pursuing the discussion on the abolition/ transformation of work by Marcuse in more detail, his particular understanding and usage of the terms work, playful work, and play, which is slightly different from that of Marx, needs to be clarified. Marcuse and Marx have two distinct visions of the constituent elements of human life. While Marx emphasizes that "work" is the basic element of human development and expression,²² Marcuse believes

²² For Marx work is not inherently oppressive and unfree as it is for Marcuse; it rather is a form of life which is abused in capitalist society and therefore needs to be changed. Marx thought that work is to be considered as a means to express human personality (The German Ideology, pp. 31-32). Work for Marx is a uniquely human activity; in contrast to the animals, "man produces when he is free from physical needs and truly produces in freedom therefore" (Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, p. 75). Work can thus be an end-in-itself, a "joy" (Ibid., p. 79). Considered abstractly, work is self-realization of the human personality.

that "play" and playful activities provide the possibility for true self-experience and life-fulfillment.

Marcuse sharply distinguishes play from "productive labor," which even in a cooperative society would remain wed to the realm of necessity. As long as work is directed toward some external goal, it is necessity-bound, and thus "alienated" from man because it does not contribute to the full development of his human faculties.

The realm of necessity, of labor, is one of unfreedom because the human existence in this realm is determined by objectivities and functions that are not its own and that do not allow the free play of human faculties and desires. ...Necessary labor is a system of essentially inhuman, mechanical, and routine activities; in such a system, individuality cannot be a value and an end in itself" (EC, p. 195).

Thus, [alienated] work²³ exists only in the realm of necessity. The realm of freedom, on the contrary, is characterized by activities that hold one's own creative and independent aspirations as its prime goal. This is best approximated by the term "play."

Marcuse does not deny that there is a form of "work" that can provide great personal satisfaction, for example, "creative" work done by an artist (EC, p. 84). This form of work indeed can be playful when it is done just for its own sake and not for reasons which lie outside the activity as such. Even though an artist might eventually sell his "works" or creations, this does not disprove that the creation of the piece of art was inherently playful. As Marcuse argues, "It is the purpose and not the content which marks

²³ In many of his writings Marcuse does not distinguish between *alienated work* and *work*; he uses these terms interchangeably as one and the same - especially in his later writings after 1950: "I have wavered in the terminology between the abolition of labor and the abolition of alienated labor because in the usage labor and alienated labor have become identical" (FL, p. 78).

an activity as play or work" (EC, p. 215). Thus, Marcuse might not want to call the "work" of an artist work anymore, but rather "playful work." That is, "playful work" still resides within the realm of necessity, but it also contains elements of play in that the activity is inherently pleasurable and self-determined. But there also is the work that the majority performs, which more often feels like toil and drudgery than self-confirming activity (RR, p. 66 and EC, p. 85). Thus, Marcuse is opposed to any notion of *alienated* work as a model for human liberation: only "work" activities that are inherently playful adequately serve such a model.

In sum, Marcuse's notion of work and play involves a threefold distinction. There is, first of all, work that is preoccupied with the satisfaction of human needs. There is, second, play that divorces itself altogether from the realm of necessity, and delights in its own freedom. And finally, there is playful work that, though mindful of its obligation to service human needs, is nonetheless self-determined and pleasurable. It is playful work, therefore, that builds the bridge between work and play and makes up the transformative potential of work becoming play. This argument will be considered more fully in the following investigation of Marcuse's notion on the transformation/ abolition of work.

Marcuse's "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics" (1933) marks his first attempt to characterize work as a *fundamental* aspect of human activity. Here Marcuse explains work as objectified useful activity (Tun). Work in this sense is directed toward an external goal. "Labor as such is not an 'end-in-itself': it is not self-contained and does not contain its own 'goal'" (PF, p. 29). The self-contained and the not self-contained Tun are explained as opposed activities. The goal of the self-contained activity is not the product, but the "real fulfillment of human existence in its duration and permanence" (PF, p. 29). In

work the object has priority over the subject, the laborer. "In his activity he [the worker] allows himself to be directed by the thing" - even before a separation between labor and product takes place (PF, p. 25). For Marcuse, the priority of the object is the starting point for the alienation of labor, - as it was for Hegel. Marcuse explains alienation as an essential characteristic of work: "man can achieve his own self only by passing through otherness; by passing through 'externalization' and 'alienation'" (PF, p. 25). This means that work and alienation belong together; they cannot be separated. Playful work, then, still bears the stamp of the realm of necessity, while play, which allegedly can neglect the otherness of the object, takes place *beyond* the realm of necessity. Marcuse thus explains that the "burden-some character of labor...is negatively rooted in the very essence of human existence" (PF, p. 25).

While the product-oriented activity of labor focuses on the object itself, the praxis of play focuses on the activity as such. The praxis-oriented activity lacks the element of alienation. This is the kind of activity that is self-contained and belongs to the realm of freedom. This means, that this kind of praxis lies beyond mere necessity (PF, p. 31). Aside from his characterization of work and play, Marcuse briefly sketches out a conception of playful work. As he argues,

The overcoming of the socio-economic division of the totality of existence into modes opposed to each other, and the transformation of material production and reproduction...in a praxis controlled, limited, and completed by these dimensions, and deriving its fulfillment from them are the conditions making possible the restitution of existence of its true labor. Labor, free from alienation and reification, can again become what it essentially is: the free and full realization of the whole man in his historical world (PF, p. 36).

As noted, Marcuse describes such free activity as playful work. Unalienated labor then could be playful work for Marcuse, who actually hardly ever uses the term "unalienated labor" in his writings.

Marcuse explains play as "counter-concept" to labor (PF, p. 14).²⁴ He says that in play one is also "concerned and occupied with objects," but in a different way; that is: the "player" determines what to do with the objects and not vice versa - as it is in alienated labor and apparently to a lesser extent in playful work.

In play the "objectivity" of objects and their effects, and the actuality of the objective world with which one is usually forced constantly to deal, thus learning to respect it, are almost temporarily suspended. For once, one does entirely as one pleases with objects; one places oneself beyond them and becomes "free" from them. This is what is decisive: in this self-positing transcendence of objectivity [*sich-hinwegsetzen*] one becomes precisely to *oneself*, in a dimension of *freedom* denied in labor (PF, p. 14).

Marcuse here clearly separates two spheres in human life, work and play. Both activities have a different function in life. Events of play are associated with "self-distraction, relaxing oneself, forgetting oneself and recuperating oneself" (PF, p. 15), which are moments that are (usually) denied in work. Play also has no "duration of performance," which is typical for work: "[play] occurs essentially in 'intervals,' 'between' the times of other activities that continually dominate human existence" (PF, p. 15). Again, work and play are characterized as oppositional phenomena in human life.

²⁴ In this early piece, Marcuse mainly describes play and work as two opposed entities. Although at the end of his essay the threefold distinction of work, playful work, and play is already indicated (see previous paragraph), it is fully developed only in his later writings.

It has to be pointed out that Marcuse's interest in this essay is not play but labor. He elaborates on play here for the purpose of clarification of the concept of labor. There is no mentioning of abolishing labor but rather a search for making work more humane, less alienated, which Marcuse finds in a praxis-oriented activity (Tun) or playful work. But it is noticeable that Marcuse elaborates quite extensively on his notion of play in this early work, which later will become one of the central concerns in Marcuse's argument on liberation.

In this early work, "On the Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Labor in Economics," Marcuse could not yet anticipate an order of life without work at all, which he develops more clearly in his later writings. But his basic general notion of work and its connection to alienation, which he establishes here, remains roughly the same. Nevertheless, at the end of the essay Marcuse already mentions that the "realm of freedom can only begin where labor determined by necessity stops" (PF, pp. 36-37). But this realm of freedom "can only unfold on the basis of the realm of necessity" (PF, p. 37). This last statement suggests a change of work into another kind of activity (playful work), which can only develop on the basis of the realm of necessity (work), but can ultimately become play. Hence, Marcuse here seems to have in mind a gradual transformation of work into a more playful, self-determined activity, rather than an abolition of work altogether, but he does not spell it out at this point as clearly as he does in his later writings.

In conclusion, Marcuse's early essay indirectly suggests a transformation of work into an activity that is self-fulfilling and done for its own sake; this could be play.²⁵ But nowhere in his

²⁵ It can also be argued here that changes in the realm of necessity expedite the abolition of labor (and the realm of necessity) and so the replacement of the realm of freedom for the realm of necessity, but Marcuse's threefold distinction of work, playful work, and play clearly suggests the transformation point rather than the abolition of labor.

early writings does Marcuse talk about the abolition of labor as such.

In his essay "Zur Kritik des Hedonismus" (in KG 1, 1938), Marcuse for the first time describes "free" activities generally as *erotic* activities. There he develops his notion of the relation between work and sensuous pleasure. The critique Marcuse gives regarding hedonism, -- and I do not want to follow his argument in detail here --, seems to suggest that work can be turned into, that is transformed into, a sensuous pleasurable activity. This impression might be correct, because otherwise, Marcuse's critique of the hedonism for its separation between work and happiness, which is understood as a social fact, would not make much sense. Hence, Marcuse's interest is the overcoming of work, a transformation of work into pleasurable activity. Again, Marcuse does not indicate that a total abolition of work is possible, he rather searches for a way to improve work. And Marcuse still believes that the betterment of work -- that is, changing work into a pleasurable, playful, and self-determined activity -- could be achieved *only* on the basis of the realm of necessity.

The main focus of the essay is the organization of material production in a way that men will have the possibility to experience happiness, which is compatible with the transformation of work into pleasure. The happiness Marcuse speaks of generally lies outside the realm of material production (KG 1, pp. 158-162). The realm of necessity, Marcuse says, will remain and the production process will still mean sacrifice for the individual (KG 1, p. 161). But for the first time Marcuse speaks of the possibility of (some) work becoming a sensuous (and playful) activity.

In his writings after 1950, Marcuse actually talks about the possibility of "work becoming play." He argues that work could be changed by a transformation of work into an "erotic" activity. Marcuse argues for this claim in Eros and Civilization by synthesizing Freud's understanding of the Eros as primary life

instinct with his notion of labor influenced by Marx. How did Marcuse go about this?

Following Freud, Marcuse distinguishes between the reality principle and the pleasure principle. While the reality principle is oriented toward production, the pleasure principle is not. In the modern industrial period, the reality principle became more important, but in the pre-modern, non-production oriented period as in classical Greek and Roman societies, the pleasure principle was of primary importance. Thus, in a civilization where the pleasure principle is dominant Eros is the primary "force."

In Marcuse's later works, sensuous pleasure is often equivalent with erotic pleasure. Thus, the striving of the Eros under the pleasure principle, that is to gain pleasure from all parts of the body, is not a striving against civilization. Moreover, this force of the Eros is an essential civilizing factor: people form relationships and produce because they enjoy it.

The *work* that has contributed so essentially to the development of man from animal is *originally libidinous*.... Man begins working because he finds pleasure in work, not only after work, pleasure in the play of his faculties and the fulfillment of his life needs, not as a means of life but as life itself. Man begins the cultivation of nature and of himself, cooperation, in order to secure and perpetuate the gaining of pleasure ("Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts," in FL, p. 20).

Early civilization under the pleasure principle, -- Marcuse points out that "civilization arises from pleasure" ("Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts," p. 19) -- was superseded by a civilization that reigns under the reality principle. The "other" civilization, in which we are still living today, is based on labor production. And along with productive and goal-oriented activity Marcuse notices a loss of the Eros of the human body, because an "erotic" body, so Marcuse's argument goes, cannot become an instrument of labor

activity. Also, the activity of a human subject that exists in a timeless and useless manner of enjoying erotic pleasure is not compatible with a goal-oriented objectified activity, such as labor.

The connection between the rise of the reality principle and the necessary decline of the Eros in the human organism is mentioned in Marcuse's various late writings. In Eros and Civilization, for example, he says:

Under the rule of the performance principle, body and mind are made into instruments of alienated labor; they can function as such instruments only if they renounce the freedom of the libidinal subject-object which the human organism primarily is and desires" (EC, p. 46).

The loss of Eros is a process that negates the erotic pleasure of all parts of the human body. The result of this historical process is the rise of sexuality, which is exclusively oriented toward the genitals (EC, pp. 49-50). Marcuse characterizes the process and its results as the transformation of the Eros into sexuality (EC, p. 216). The reduction of Eros to sexuality culminates in the development of the monogamous family, and thus, Eros (sexuality) becomes reduced to a "function," the function of reproduction. "From an autonomous principle governing the entire organism it [the very nature of sexuality] is turned into a means to an end" (EC, p. 41). The result of the loss of the Eros and the narrow focus on the genital sexuality is summed by Marcuse as follows:

Its result is not only the conversion of the organism into an instrument of unpleasurable labor but also and above all the devaluation of happiness and pleasure as ends in themselves, the subordination of happiness and gratification to social productivity... ("Progress and Freud's Theory of Instincts", pp. 34-35).

Marcuse argues for a "resurrection" of the Eros *within* the activity of production, that is within work. Happiness, pleasure

and gratification shall emerge into the work world. The resurrection of the Eros is the resexualizing of the human body as a whole, that is the revitalizing of the erotic pleasure (EC, p. 271): "The body in its eternity [in socialist society] would become an object of cathexis, a thing to be enjoyed, an instrument of pleasure" (EC, p. 201). The resurrection of the Eros that is not only geared toward sexuality is closely connected with the transformation of work into playful, non-instrumentally oriented activities. Marcuse seeks to transform the Eros that today is only geared toward sexuality into what it used to be, the gain of pleasure from all parts of the body. Integrating the (new) Eros into work means making work more pleasurable, enjoyable, and self-fulfilling; and thus, transforming work into a new *qualitatively different* activity (play), but not abolishing work altogether.

Marcuse's understanding of socialism is the overcoming of the civilization under the reality principle, which can be achieved through making work more pleasurable and erotic (Gespräche mit Herbert Marcuse, p. 85), and thus more playful. How can this be achieved? In his essay "Liberation from the Affluent Society" (1978) Marcuse writes:

It is identical with the transition from capitalism to socialism, if socialism is defined in its most utopian terms: Namely, among others, as the abolition of labor, the termination of the struggle for existence - that is to say life as an end in itself and no longer as a means to an end (p.184).

And in Gespräche mit Herbert Marcuse he says:

For me the idea of the abolition of labor - not only of the obvious alienated labor - still remains a political program....

I mean labor, which one does in order to live/ survive (pp. 104-5).²⁶

Here Marcuse talks about the *abolition* of *all* work that is instrumentally-oriented, all work that is a means to an end. The abolition of labor cited above refers to an elimination of work which is done for survival. Marcuse calls for a replacement of work by a new form of activity, a self-determined activity that is not geared toward a means to an end but rather is an end-in-itself.

It needs to be clarified that when Marcuse talks about the abolition of labor as cited above, he does so in reference to an altogether different utopian social order which he calls "socialism." That is, under socialism, Marcuse sees all types of work which are done for survival abolished/ eliminated: "alienated labor time would not only be reduced to a minimum but would disappear and life would consist of free time" (FL, p. 39). Hence, for Marcuse the ultimate goal of social change, a change from capitalism to socialism, seems to be the abolition of alienated labor, the labor that serves as a means to an end, and the resurrection of play, an activity with an end-in-itself. But Marcuse does not have in mind a complete abolition of work in all forms.

In Five Lectures (1970) Marcuse was asked what he means by the "abolition of work":

Question. Are you saying that labor should be completely abolished, or that it should be made free of misery?

Marcuse. I have wavered in terminology between the abolition of labor and the abolition of alienated labor because in the usage labor and alienated labor have become identical. That is the justification for this ambiguity. I believe that labor as such cannot be abolished. To affirm

²⁶ The original text says: "Für mich ist die Idee der Abschaffung der Arbeit - nicht nur der offenkundig entfremdeten Arbeit - nach wie vor ein politisches Programm. ...ich meine Arbeit, die man leistet, um leben zu können."

the contrary would be in fact to repudiate what Marx called the metabolic exchange between man and nature. Some modification of existence through labor is inevitable, but in this utopian hypothesis labor would be so different from labor as we know it or normally conceive of it that the idea of the convergence of labor and play does not diverge too far from the possibilities (FL, p. 78).

It follows from here that Marcuse's notion of the abolition of (alienated) work and the transformation of work into play seem to be compatible. The "abolition of work" refers to the elimination of the repressive features of alienated work, while the "transformation of work" characterizes the development of work into a different kind of activity based on the principle of freedom. By eliminating the alienated portion of work, work can become free again, and it can be transformed into a playful activity. This interpretation allows for the two notions, abolition and transformation of work, to coexist: We abolish the inhumane character of work as it is performed under the capitalist system and allow for the characteristics of play to merge into the realm of work. Thus, work will be transformed into an altogether different activity.

The state of socialism can only be achieved through a period of transition from capitalism to socialism. This transition, however, is based on a gradual transformation of our present social conditions, where labor is the most important human activity, to the utopian conditions, where play becomes the central occupation of men. The transitional process, as I interpret Marcuse, might involve several different stages: the abolition of alienated work, the integration of play into work (playful work), and the transformation of work (activity with means to an end) into play (activity with end-in-itself).

Marcuse does not elaborate on his notion of the abolition of alienated labor in greater detail, but he talks a lot about the transformation of work into play. He points out that the

transformation of work into a non-instrumentally oriented activity is a transformation into erotic play, which is an end-in-itself.

Thus, we read in Eros and Civilization:

'Play is an aim in itself.... Component instincts and auto-erotic activities seek pleasure with no ulterior consequences'.... Work on the other hand serves ends outside itself - namely the ends of self-preservation.... If work were accompanied by a reactivation of...eroticism, it would tend to become gratifying in itself without losing its *work* content. Now it is precisely such a reactivation of polymorphous eroticism which appeared as the consequence of the conquest of scarcity and alienation. The altered social conditions would therefore create an instinctual basis for the transformation of work into play (EC, pp. 215-216).

In this passage Marcuse describes how work can gradually become more pleasurable and gratifying, while it still remains "work." But this different kind of work, playful work, is done with a different purpose, while the content of work still remains the same. The purpose of the new type of work will be to achieve gratification and pleasure; work will become a self-determined, pleasurable activity with an intrinsic value. The new type of work will not solely serve as a means to an end as it does in capitalist society. The elimination of the repressive features of work in capitalism, such as scarcity, alienation, and more, will lead to a possible integration of the Eros back into work. Marcuse argues that this change of the work activity will provide the basis for the transformation of work into play.

Marcuse often describes the non-instrumentally oriented activity as "free play of the human faculties," as realization of these faculties. Now the question arises whether the description of the transformation of work is compatible with the non-instrumentally oriented activity - with erotic play. Marcuse answers this question positively:

The problem of work, of socially useful activity, without (repressive) sublimation can now be restated. It emerged as the problem of a change in the character of work by virtue of which the latter would be assimilated to play - the free play of human faculties (EC, p. 214).

This quote clearly suggests that the *character* of work needs to be changed, not that we have to get rid off work completely. In the new society work will be transformed into an activity whose function will be essentially different, and which will occur under altogether changed conditions (EoL, pp. 92-92). This change of work calls for an integration of play into work. Under socialism, there will be a qualitatively different kind of work, which one might not want to call work anymore, but rather refer to as "the free play of human faculties."

To sensitize the whole human organism would mean to transform any objectified activity into an erotic pleasurable activity. Thus, for Marcuse the free play of human faculties refers to erotic pleasurable activities, to play, because all objectified activities become erotic: work will become a function of the Eros, and its goal will be the creation of a sensuous environment (EoL, pp. 92-93). Work relations will become libidinal relations (EC, p. 151). Even the "work" of an artist or the "work" of a scientist, then, will also be transformed into play under socialism ("The End of Utopia," in FL, p. 68).

Another important aspect of the transformation of work is the change of the character of the labor division: In the socialist society, this change would mean to be constantly creating new areas of activities, which will make possible the free play of human faculties instead of suppressing them (EoL, p. 20). Since free play for Marcuse has an erotic character, we can say that the different realms of activities in a socialist production of material life will be different kinds of playful, erotic pleasurable activities.

As we have seen throughout his manifold writings, Marcuse argues for a transformation of work into play rather than a complete abolition of all work in order to achieve freedom. The character of work has to be changed from alienated to liberated, libidinal "work," to play, which can only be achieved upon the abolition of alienated work. Since work is just one part of the more complex social reality, for work to be changed society consequently will have to be changed as well. A transformation of capitalism into a "qualitatively different society" (socialism) involves several changes, which partly precondition the transformation of society. Such preconditions and consequences of the transformation of work and for the liberation of mankind in general are: a new relationship between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity, a different technology, and a new type of man with a new sensibility and different needs. These conditions will now be represented in more detail showing their connections to the transformation of work.

Directly connected with the transformation of work is the change in the relationship between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity, which differs from Marx' notion as it is established in Capital. Marcuse recalls the classical Marxian concept which strictly separates the two realms in life. The realm of necessity for Marx "forever remains a realm of unfreedom" (Marcuse, "The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity - A Reconsideration," 1969, p. 22). Marcuse further explains that "this conception epitomizes the division of the human existence into labor time and free time, the division between reason, rationality on the one hand, and pleasure, joy, fulfillment on the other hand, the division between alienated and non-alienated labor" ("The Realm of Freedom...", p. 22). Freedom, in this concept, is subordinated to productivity; "the realm of freedom [for Marx] can be conceived of and can exist only beyond the realm of necessity" (FL, p. 62). For Marx, the division between the two realms remains: even if labor would be organized as much as possible, it still

"remains labor in and of the realm of necessity and thereby unfree" (FL, p. 63).

Contrary to Marx, Marcuse believes "that one of the new possibilities, which gives an indication of the qualitative difference between the free and the unfree society, is that of letting the realm of freedom appear within the realm of necessity - in labor and not only beyond labor" (FL, p. 63). How can this happen?

Marcuse argues that the achievement of the technical progress in capitalist society allows for a twofold development: "the extension of the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom" and for "the extension of the realm of freedom, or rather the realm of possible freedom to the realm of necessity " ("The Realm of Freedom...", p. 23):

The growing productivity of labor tends to transform the work process into a technical process in which the human agent of production plays increasingly the role of a supervisor, inventor and experimenter. ...The work process itself, the socially necessary work, becomes in its rationality, subject to the free play of the mind, of imagination, the free play with the pleasurable possibilities of things and nature " ("The Realm of Freedom...", p. 23).

Thus, a possible realization of the merging of the realm of freedom into the realm of necessity can occur only when the material and intellectual forces for the transformation are technically at hand. "The development of the productive forces beyond their capitalist organization suggests the possibility of freedom *within* the realm of necessity" (EoL, p. 21).

Marcuse's argument for the integration of the two realms of life is parallel to his claim of the integration and transformation of work into play. Integrating the realm of freedom (play) into the realm of necessity (work) increases the potential of freedom within the realm of necessity, which then can lead to a possible

transformation of the realm of necessity based on a different kind of work ("The Realm of Freedom...", p. 24). In conclusion, for Marcuse the two realms of life can merge, while for Marx they forever remained two separate entities.

Another precondition for the transformation of work is the transformation of our present technology that is oriented toward an increase in productivity. The possibility of the transformation of this character of technology has to be given before the transformation of work can occur. If work is not to be abolished but transformed, technology can be redesigned so that it is more humane. A more humane technology might be achieved either through a reduced pace of industrial development or through the rise of automation or both, - Marcuse is not very clear on this point.²⁷ As long as the machines are instrumentally oriented, that is, geared to the production of objects that satisfy definite human needs, they are directing the people engaged in the production process toward this instrumentally oriented process. The abolition of an instrumentally oriented technology can only happen if men and women decide to cancel their activity as "work," that is the repressive features of work. Only then will people also abolish the instrumentally oriented technology.

Marcuse imagined the abolition of instrumentally oriented technology through the rise of automation in the production process.

It becomes possible to envisage a state in which there is no productivity resulting from and conditioning renunciation and no alienated labor: a state in which the growing mechanization of labor enables an ever larger part of the instinctual energy that had to be withdrawn for alienated

²⁷ It could be argued that automation is the most efficient instrumental technology, and because of its efficiency as a labor-saver rather than a labor transformer allows people to do things other than work. A reduced pace of industrial development, on the contrary, follows from the transformation of work.

labor to return to its original form, in other words, to be changed back into energy of the life instincts. It would no longer be the case that time spent in alienated labor occupied the major portion of life and the free time left to the individual for the gratification of his own needs was a mere remainder. Instead, alienated labor time would not only be reduced to a minimum but would disappear and life would consist of free time. ...Men's basic experience would be no longer that of life as a struggle for existence but rather that of enjoyment of life. Alienated labor would be transformed into the free play of human faculties and forces" (FL, pp. 39-40).

Marcuse explains that the increasing automation provides people with the opportunity to step outside of the production process and to realize themselves in free time as a subject through engagement in many different activities which are truly gratifying. Then, people will go back to the production process as "subjects" and will create a non-instrumentally oriented process. That is, people who experience themselves as subjects can change the whole system of machinery into non-instrumentally oriented activities (ODM, p. 189; EC, pp. 222-3), and thus will transform work into playful work, which ultimately can become play.

"In the technology of pacification," Marcuse says, "aesthetic categories would enter to the degree to which the productive machinery is constructed with a view of the free play of faculties" (ODM, p. 188). This is compatible with the transformation of labor. In An Essay on Liberation (1969) Marcuse writes: "Technique would then tend to become art and art would tend to form reality" (p. 24). "The term 'aesthetic,' in its dual connotation of 'pertaining to the senses' and 'pertaining to art,' may serve to designate the quality of the productive-creative process in an environment of freedom. Technique, assuming the features of art, would translate subjective sensibility into objective form, into reality" (EC, p. 212). Again, this seems to fit with the conception of labor as

"craft" labor, which presupposes the transformation rather than the abolition of labor.

Marcuse is convinced that technology can be changed. In some of his later writings he talks about a "qualitative different technology" ("The End of Utopia," in FL, 1967), which is geared toward the satisfaction of needs rather than increasing profit. In his essay "Socialist Humanism" (1965), he stresses that "a fundamental change in the direction of technical progress, a total reconstruction of the technical apparatus" goes along with the transformation of work (p. 99). Marcuse's opinion regarding the political possibility to abolish the instrumentally oriented technology seems to be rather complicated. But the abolition of the repressive usage of technology in general calls for a transformation of the whole system of machinery into a non-instrumentally oriented activity, that is an activity that is based on self-determined, erotic pleasurable moments. The playful activity with technology is described by Marcuse as "playing with the possibilities of things, with their combination, order, form, and so forth.... If no longer under the pressure of necessity, this activity will have no other aim than growth in the consciousness and enjoyment of freedom. Indeed, technical productivity might then be the very opposite of specialization..." (SM, p. 210). In this regard, Marcuse talks about "the convergence of technology and art and the convergence of work and play" ("The End of Utopia," p. 68).

Another important characteristic which Marcuse directly connects with the transformation of instrumentally oriented technology into non-instrumentally oriented technology is the transformation of human needs (FL, p. 65): Existing needs that reproduce repressive society ought to be changed into "qualitatively new human needs" that can be satisfied with "products" that are "created" through non-instrumentally oriented activities and technology.

The new needs, which are really the determinate negation of existing needs, first make their appearance as the negation of the needs that sustain the present system of domination and the negation of the values on which they are based: ...the negation of the needs for the struggle of existence...; the negation of the need to earn one's living; the negation of the performance principle, of competition; the negation of the need for wasteful, ruinous productivity...; and the negation of the vital need for the deceitful repression of the instincts. These needs would be negated in the vital biological need for peace, ...the need for calm, the need to be alone, with oneself or with others whom one has chosen oneself, the need for the beautiful, the need for "undeserved" happiness - all this not simply in the form of individual needs but as a social productive force, as social needs that can be activated through the direction and disposition of productive forces.

In the form of a social productive force, these new vital needs would make possible a total technical reorganization of the concrete world of human life... (FL, p. 67).

Along with the transformation of human needs has to go a change of human beings from "repressed" beings into "liberated" beings. A new qualitatively different society

...presupposes a type of man with a different sensitivity as well as consciousness: men who would speak a different language, have different gestures, follow different impulses; men who have developed an instinctual barrier against cruelty, brutality, ugliness (EoL, p. 21).

Marcuse describes a liberated person who, when engaged in work, is engaged in "liberated work" because his/her instinctual transformation will enter the social division of labor as well as every other sphere of his/her life. What Marcuse calls "libidinal work" is essentially compatible with play, where the determination for the activity comes from the inside of the individual based on a "new sensitivity." In Eros and Civilization,

Marcuse characterizes the new "socialist" man as *homo ludens* (EC, p. 162). The new type of men and women are "creating, in solidarity and in their own initiative, their own environment, their own *Lebenswelt*, their own 'property'" ("The Realm of Freedom...", p. 23). It follows that work can become play, in the sense that play is integrated into work, only under the conditions of different people: "men and women who have good conscience of being human, tender, sensuous, who are no longer ashamed of themselves" (EoL, p. 21). The *new* people not only develop *new* needs but also a *new* sensibility, which for Marcuse is "the medium in which social change becomes an individual need, the mediation between the political practice of 'changing' the world and the drive for personal liberation" (CR, p. 59).

Marcuse sets all his hope for a change, the liberation of our society, on these different individuals, the development of *real* needs, and the rise of a non-instrumentally oriented technology. Liberation here is understood as "the radical *transformation* of the technical and natural universe in accordance with the emancipated sensibility (and rationality) of man" (CR, p. 108), which involves a long process of education (CR, p. 134).

In sum, the transformation of labor is essentially understood by Marcuse as a change of work, an instrumentally oriented activity, into play, a non-instrumentally oriented activity. The transformation of work involves two aspects: the material aspect and the aspect of the relations between people in production. The material aspect means that individuals are not longer occupied with alienated labor but they are rather active in a playful and creative fashion: the product will develop like a piece of art. The aspect of the relation means that people produce in an end-in-itself fashion (playfully), which is gratifying and self-fulfilling.

Marcuse believes that the technological development of productive forces we have today allows for such transformation of work into play. It cannot be our concern here to investigate how

far the instrumentally oriented character of our technology can be changed into a non-instrumentally oriented one in order to make possible a transformation of work. But the abolition of the instrumental orientation of our production is an important idea. That is, the instrumentally oriented activities in the technological development should be modified and reduced constantly in order to make room for a "self-sufficient" activity.

In conclusion, Marcuse's elaborations of the transformation of work into play are characterized by him as the establishment of the realm of freedom *within* the realm of necessity (FL, p. 63; EoL, p. 21). Thus, the two realms are not necessarily separated anymore. Marcuse suggests that the realm of freedom can merge with the realm of necessity. A resurrection of the play element into the work world calls for a transformation not only of work and the realm of necessity but also for a transformation of cultural values, and thus, a change of society as a whole. Marcuse throughout his works requests a "qualitatively new society," which is based on a different economical system, new more sensitive men and women with different needs, and on play rather than work.

But play does not only become important when the above named changes have been achieved, it might also contribute to the occurrence of these changes. Thus, a concept of play that can provide the basis for the liberation of human beings and nature is very important for social theory, a theory that seeks betterment for life and the world. In order to fully comprehend Marcuse's concept of play, it is important to investigate what position play has within his social theory.

4. Play and Social Theory

Marcuse's notion of play is closely connected with his theory of freedom and unfreedom in capitalist society and its "redemption." Thus, for a correct understanding of Marcuse's play theory, it is necessary to depict his analysis of advanced capitalism, which he outlines in his book One-Dimensional Man (1964). In this analysis,

I attempt to show that for Marcuse, play is a crucial element for the liberation of human kind.

In One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse reconstructs Marx's social theory and questions such central features of his theory as the notion of capitalist crisis and the revolutionary role of the working class in making possible socialist revolution. Capitalism is characterized as oppressive. Marcuse's main criticism is that the development of modern industry and technological rationality undermines the basis of individual rationality through the increasing domination by the technical-social apparatus (ODM, p. 417). The efficiency and power of the advanced industrial society overwhelms the individual, who has gradually lost the earlier traits of critical rationality, i.e. autonomy, the power of negation, and so forth; in this respect, Marcuse speaks of a "one-dimensional society" and "one-dimensional man."

The characteristic themes in One-Dimensional Man are: the role of technology and technological rationality, administration and bureaucracy, the capitalist state, mass media, and consumerism. All of the above produce both a decline in revolutionary potential of the working class and a decline of individuality, freedom, and democracy. In "late industrial society," Marcuse saw that the apparatus of planning and management had produced new forms of social control and a "society without opposition" that closed off possibilities of social change. The changed conditions in advanced industrial society made previous forms of class struggle, as Marx saw it, obsolete. Marcuse claims that the subject is gradually absorbed in the technical world of objects and is reduced to an object itself in the labor process. The technical world takes control over the individual and allows changes only within its own institutions and parameters. In this sense, society is "one-dimensional" and "has become a universal means of domination" (ODM, p. 56).

The concept of "one-dimensionality" refers to conformity to existing thoughts and to a lack of critical and alternative

dimensions in capitalist society and thus, a loss of the capacity for liberation. The one-dimensional man has lost individuality, freedom, and the ability to dissent and to control his own destiny. The private space, the dimension of negation and individuality, in which one may become and remain a self, is being whittled away by society. Vital needs, values, hopes, fears, and more are now manipulated by society, from the outside. Authentic individuality, including autonomy, the capacity to think, choose and act, the ability for creative action and critical reflection has diminished. On the contrary, one-dimensional man is governed by the social domination of thought and behavior, unreflective and non-critical acceptance of needs, ideas, feelings, and powerlessness. One-dimensional man has also lost self-determination, will and power; he does not know his true needs because his needs are not his own - they are administered and superimposed (ODM, p. 9). In this respect, Marcuse speaks of reification and alienation.

Marcuse thinks that alienation is far more widespread than in Marx's days. People are not only alienated from themselves during their labor time (- Marx talks about "alienated labor" -), but they are also alienated in the spheres of consumption and leisure. Men are increasingly alienated from their fundamental potential for creative individuality. Life-autonomy and freedom vanish. This alienation results in a "complete degrading of man to an object.... There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms" (ODM, p. 11).

Marcuse urges liberation from this alienation. One must become conscious of one's own conditioning and one's self to be able to discern one's true needs (ODM, p. 7). Liberation from false needs involves the rejection and refusal of a whole system of needs and the affirmation of other needs that contradict the established ones. Marcuse regards art and play as an alternative source for the expression of truly human needs and possibilities for the negation of unfreedom and the promise of happiness denied in the world of labor and everyday affairs. He claims that

...prior to the advent of this cultural reconciliation, literature and art were essentially alienation, sustaining and protecting the contradiction - the unhappy consciousness of the divided world, the defeated possibilities, the hopes unfulfilled, and the promises betrayed. They were a rational, cognitive force, revealing a dimension of man and nature which was repressed and repelled in reality (ODM, p. 61).

Art is the "Great Refusal," the protest against that which is (ODM, p. 63). Marcuse does not deny that art today is also integrated in one-dimensional society; on this point, he agrees with Marx who had claimed that art was an important feature of bourgeois ideology. Art is transformed into a mass-produced commodity for entertainment and indoctrination; for example, advertisement. Although Marcuse's hope that art and aesthetic education could be an emancipatory force appears to be dashed in one-dimensional society, he still continues to press for a critical role for art. Especially in his last book, The Aesthetic Dimension (1978), Marcuse confirms again the "Great Refusal" that art provides. Marcuse is a visionary utopian animated by the sense that life could be as it exists in art, play, and dreams, if only revolution could take place that would eliminate society's repressive features. Consequently, the theory of one-dimensional society and domination must be seen in the light of his notion of the potential for liberation.

Marcuse finds the self-negation of historical materialism in the liberation of Eros. In Eros and Civilization (1955), he states that the release of one's repressed sexuality would bring about the reordering of society. The abolition of alienated labor and the use of socialized means of production for the free development of individuals can occur only when Eros is freed and "labor becomes play" (EC, pp. 204-5).

In Eros and Civilization, Marcuse countered Freud's pessimism concerning the possibility of attaining happiness in civilization. Since history has not prepared the way for revolution as Marx had expected, Marcuse turned to nature in search of a foundation for revolution. He refutes Freud's argument that a non-repressive society is impossible, which Freud based on the distinction between the "pleasure principle" and the "reality principle." Both principles "govern" men and women, Marcuse counterargues: The pleasure principle suggests one seeking immediate and complete gratification; however, one comes to realize that "full and painless gratification" of one's needs is impossible. The reality principle is equivalent to necessity, restraint, and control. Eventually, the reality principle subjugates the pleasure principle, and one's desire for pleasure is manipulated. Thus, the reality principle changes the form, timing, and substance of pleasure (EC, p. 13). The conflict between the two principles begins when one becomes conscious of needs and seeks to satisfy those needs in the world. Marcuse characterizes the transformation from the pleasure principle to the reality principle as a change from immediate satisfaction to delayed satisfaction, from play to work, and from absence of repression to security (EC, p. 12). Although the reality principle dominates the pleasure principle, the latter remains in the unconscious and holds out the promise of redemption. Marcuse states that "the full force of the pleasure principle not only survives in the unconscious but also affects in manifold ways the very reality which has superseded it" (EC, p. 15). It might seem that the triumph of the reality principle prepares the ground for a reversal of this triumph.

One of the major reasons that the pleasure principle has not been able to dominate is the prominence of the performance principle in capitalist society. The performance principle, the prevailing historical form of the reality principle, refers to the specific organization and distribution of scarcity. Marcuse believes that the procurement and distribution of goods for the

satisfaction of needs has been organized against the best interests of the individual. Instead, the distribution of goods as well as the effort for overcoming scarcity, i.e., the mode of work, have been imposed upon individuals. This domination varies in form (EC, pp. 32-34). For example, "a society in which all members normally work for a living requires other modes of repression than a society in which labor is the exclusive province of one specific group" (EC, p. 34).

The additional controls resulting from the performance principle's mode of domination, are "surplus-repression." Surplus-repression is different for each specific institution of domination, for example, the taboos required to sustain monogamous marriage, or the conformity of life organized around the machine (ODM, pp. 22-23). Under the latter example, one's life is patterned to the demands of the machine. One vacations not when one wants but when the production schedule allows it. One is only an interchangeable part in society (ODM, pp. 80-81). Leisure is the time to be filled until one returns to work. Television and organized recreation, symbolic rather than real participation, preoccupies the individual until he/she returns to work (EC, pp. 43 and 94).

In Eros and Civilization, Marcuse suggests that increased anxiety, increased leisure, and increased affluence possibly reduce one's ability to reproduce capitalist culture (p. 90). In his later work, One-Dimensional Man, on the contrary, Marcuse finds repression of the individual in every sphere of life including leisure. However, he does not deny that social change might happen once a certain state of technology and automatization has been achieved. Technology and affluence have removed the necessity of perpetuating the current performance principle. Now Marcuse argues that "the only pertinent question is whether a state of civilization can be reasonably envisaged, in which human needs are fulfilled in such a manner that surplus-repression can be eliminated (EC, p. 137). How can that happen?"

In Eros and Civilization, Marcuse argues that there can be reconciliation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle (p. 176). This can be achieved through a transformation of libido resolving the antagonism of sexuality and work. Work would no longer be alienated, rather it would be *play*. For the individual, the expanding realm of freedom becomes "truly a realm of play -- of free play of individual faculties" (EC, p. 204). Marcuse wants to preserve the pleasure principle, of which play is a part, for a better life in the future. In his discussion, he stresses the liberating potential of phantasy and the recollection of pleasurable and euphoric experiences rather than the unpleasant and traumatic experiences stressed by Freud. Along with memory, phantasy provides images of a better life by speaking the language of the pleasure principle and its demands for gratification. The pleasure principle, and thus play as well, have a critical-revolutionary potential for Marcuse: the play impulse is the "vehicle of liberation" (EC, p. 187).

The non-repressive civilization, as Marcuse sees it, requires a "new reality principle," liberated human beings, and a radical social reconstruction. In The Aesthetic Dimension, Marcuse speaks of "another" reality principle, which he envisages in the world of art: "it communicates truths not communicable in another language; *it contradicts*" (AD, p. 10). Thus, art shows a way out of the one-dimensionality of society, man, and thought, because art is "two-dimensional": "Art stands under the law of the given, while transcending this law" (AD, p. 11).

In The Aesthetic Dimension, Marcuse explains in lyric expressions the "two-dimensionality" of the aesthetics, which seems to be too difficult to be grasped in ordinary language. That is why he speaks of a *new* reality principle that is different from daily life experiences. It transcends both the pleasure and the reality principle and points to another new reality, where both principles are not simply denied nor just combined, but in their unification they build something new. The "new" refers to utopian

state of being still reaching into the present world. Art, in Marcuse's eyes, holds the power through its "Beauty " -- the aesthetic dimension -- not only to connect both 'worlds' but also to serve as a guide to a non-repressive state of a truly human and liberated existence. Play is an essential and important part of the new reality principle. One could even state that under socialism play will be one of the dominant features next to art and phantasy; play will be the essential activity of human beings, and not work - as it is in capitalist society. This can be achieved through a transformation of work into play - as explained in the previous section.

Here, I want to sum up that the concept of play promising life-fulfillment, freedom, and liberation for men and women is essential to Marcuse's social theory; it is of central importance for the achievement of a more humane, new altogether different society which is based on play rather than work. This notion provides the grounds for a "new qualitatively different" conception of sport, which I will lay out in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

TOWARD A "QUALITATIVELY DIFFERENT" FORM OF SPORT

1. Introduction

In modern industrial societies we are confronted with a process through which work is pushed back increasingly in favor of play and leisure.²⁸ This evolution demonstrates the significance of a reevaluation of work and play in society. Throughout the last hundred years, play and leisure have gained greater importance because the higher level of material production and technology has lightened people's work and provided a great deal of the population with more leisure time. Thus, Runkel proposes that work will become associated more and more with play-like elements such as self-determination and joy, for example (p. 125). This gradual interpenetration of formerly opposed activities, work and play, presents an important element of the evolution of play (Runkel, p. 125). Runkel believes that we have reached a point in history where work and play can interpenetrate again, just as they did in societies prior to industrialization where men did not strictly demarcate between work and play.

It has been a dream of mankind to live a life devoted to Musse (play) rather than work; for example, in the age of antiquity work was despised by the "free citizens" (Eichler, p. 182). Today the industrial evolution has reached a technological level that provides the possibility of our using machines as "modern slaves," which will lighten people's work. Thus, humans will be freed from the necessity to work and will have time to play. The development of play, then, is dependent on the evolution of society. The relation between play and work is ultimately important for the development of sport as well, in so far as sport is directly influenced by the

²⁸ While this statement might not be true for some professionals, it certainly is relevant for the majority of the people in our society, the working class.

social and political order of our society. As previously discussed, sport cannot be understood correctly if treated as a separate realm, apart from the rest of the social world. Unfortunately, today's sport has already emerged as a sub-system of the social order, simply through institutionalization and the formation of national and international sport organizations. The connection and interrelation between work and sport can hardly be denied. But in order to achieve a better, more humane, "qualitatively different" concept of sport (playful sport), work, as Marcuse puts it, must become more play-like.

It will be my task, in this chapter, to integrate play and sport into a social theory, which will build the theoretical basis for a new conception of sport. My discussion will attempt to show that playful sport differs from conservative and New Left sport theories in that it holds that sport is neither a separate realm of reality nor simply a clone of the work world. Both viewpoints are incomplete and do not acknowledge the co-existence of work and play in the broader social context. Marcuse attempts to overcome such a one-sided view through the integration of play into work, which provides the basis for a new conception of sport, "playful sport," which I will present in the last two parts of this chapter.

2. Marcuse versus the Conservatives

The main problem with conservative sport theories is their strict separation of sport and work. The separation argument actually legitimizes the polarization of work and leisure as it is commonly practiced in capitalist society. This practice supports the independence of economic growth, functionalization and abstraction in the work process, as well as social isolation during leisure time. Raising play onto an isolated platform, separated from the rest of culture, instantly proposes work as a counter-concept, which then (as opposed to play) is labelled as inhumane (as opposed to humane), as determined from the outside (versus self-determined), and as repressive (versus free). Such a

classification of play and work completely ignores the idea that play does not solely take place apart from work, but rather that elements of play can also be found in work, as Robert Holland shows (see especially pp. 26-33). He states that the conventional approaches of leisure and work, play and work, are not sufficient for explaining social reality: "In defining leisure [and play] by its position along an arbitrary freedom and constraint scale, and dehistoricizing its relationship with social labor, leisure [and play] research has moved outside of the realm of lived cultures and material circumstances" (Holland, p. 33). Holland's conception of "leisure in work," as well as Marcuse's notion of "playful work," remind us

that human experience cannot be easily compartmentalized into convenient sectors of leisure [play] and work and evaluated in terms of such loaded concepts as freedom and constraint. We have to start rethinking conventional definitions and asking ourselves such difficult questions as just what this thing we call leisure [or play] is, what its properties and determinations are, and how it articulates with other spheres of production and reproduction. This involves locating leisure [and play] historically, relationally, and politically" (Holland, p. 33).

Holland here wants to convey the notion that play and work are not two separate concepts, -just as Marcuse claims for play and work-, but rather human activities that take place in the production and reproduction of society. In other words, both scholars pursue, contra the conservative approach, a "multi-dimensional"²⁹ understanding of social life rather than a static segmented one.

Although work and play are often placed at opposite ends by conservative theorists, in reality they still can be experienced in an integrated way, especially by members of the dominant class,

²⁹ I am using Marcuse's language here: multi- dimensional as opposed to "one-dimensional."

who indeed have the possibility to let elements of play infuse their work. Therefore, the view that separates work and play, and that emphasizes play over work is one-sided and faulty; such view ignores the co-existence of work and play. "Work and play are not two kinds of activity, which are necessarily separated but rather two different aspects of human activity. This activity, when encountered in its fullness, goes beyond the traditional categories of work and play" (Hinman, 1975, p. 329). Marcuse proposes an activity that transcends the dichotomy existing between work and play by arguing for a transformation of work into play (playful work). Capitalist society, however, undermines this transformation by its process of socialization. That means the tendency to view work and play as two distinct and necessary separate kinds of human activity is rooted deeply in most of today's life, and thus influences us from early childhood on. Even if we had more actual leisure time, this situation would not change. The juxtaposition of work and play is at the foundation of many "existential problems encountered in the lived experience of the conflict between work and play" (Hinman, 1975, p. 328). A separation between work and leisure, between work and play, will always result in alienated work and the trivialization of leisure and play. Hinman claims that as long as there is a division between play and work, neither one can "become meaningful and fully human" (1975, p. 328).

While a critical analysis can show that the increase of leisure time does not offer a solution to the problem of alienation, it remains the task of revolutionary *praxis* to determine whether in fact we shall overcome this alienation between work and leisure [play] (Hinman, 1978, p. 222).

Hence, a new theory of play cannot be established by abolishing work. It rather has to acknowledge its connections to work and leisure, which is adequately described in Marcuse's notion of the

transformation of work into a more playful and self-fulfilling activity.³⁰ It follows that a *new* conception of sport also has to be established on the basis of the relation between play and work and not its separation. Such a basis is ultimately important for "qualitatively different" sport in that it recognizes that sport is neither all play nor all work. Such concept might be characterized as something in between, as "playful sport."³¹

Another reason the ideological split between play and work has to be overcome is that it prevents play from transforming the everyday world. The "critical potential" inherent in play, that is the possibility to reach *beyond* reality and thus to look at reality from a more distant position, allows for, among other things, critical reflection. A critical position may influence other spheres of life as well, for example, work. Play affords a mode of self-realization indispensable to human emancipation and has the potential for realizing a self-reflective knowledge that "retains the insoluble tension between idea and reality, the potential and the actual" (CR, p. 70). But play can only influence the realm of work if the separation between work and play is overcome. "Playful work" or what Hinman describes as "unalienated 'praxis'...involves precisely the overcoming of the necessity for this distinction; it is free, creative human activity which has *both* intrinsic *and* extrinsic value, meaning and purpose" (Hinman, 1978, p. 201). Hinman nicely contrasts this notion of "unalienated praxis" with its alienated forms:

In contrast to this, alienated labor is activity which lacks intrinsic value, meaning and purpose; alienated leisure is activity which lacks extrinsic value, meaning and purpose. When alienation is overcome, each of these activities gains

³⁰ Hinman supports Marcuse's view, saying that "it may be possible to eliminate the servile character of work in reality by means of changes in the social and economic conditions under which we work" (1975, p. 330).

³¹ The concept of "playful sport" will be laid out in section four of this chapter.

the qualities it was lacking in its alienated state and the two kinds of activity become one in...[playful work]" (Hinman, 1978, p. 201).

If play is no longer isolated from work, the trivialization of play disappears and its intrinsic meaning, purpose and value can penetrate fully into the world of human affairs. As long as true freedom for the conservatives is solely found in play and not work at all, there will be no demand for the world of work to be transformed into a free and more humane world. That is, "the separation of work from [play]...functions to support the lack of freedom found in contemporary work by encouraging the individual to seek true freedom elsewhere" (Hinman, 1975, p. 341). The separation argument of the conservative view justifies the order of the present social system and suggests that the individual find true freedom elsewhere (that is not in work but in play). But work and play "do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they are interrelated products of human activity that have been created and struggled over in particular socio-historical, economic and cultural contexts" (Holland, p. 18). These interrelations between work and play have been mystified by the conservatives and require a radical reconstruction.

In conclusion, especially today where we face a possible increase in non-work time and the problem of overcoming alienated labor, we are in need of an alternative model in which the separation between work and play can be bridged. Marcuse's notion is that the alienation found in work and play can only be overcome in *playful work* in which the necessary division between work and play is itself overcome. Marcuse is in search of a fully humane activity that is free, conscious and creative. Playful work "retains many of the characteristics traditionally associated with play, but fundamentally transforms them by destroying their isolation from humanity's primary species-activity" (Hinman, 1978, pp. 207-209). What exactly work and play will be, then, might be very different from what we can presently imagine. However, the theoretical

solution can only be the first step toward solving the practical problem of the separation of work and play in our society and provides the basic grounds for a new conception of sport as "playful sport."

3. Marcuse versus the New Left

New Left sport theorists condemn sport for being a repressive and manipulative instrument of capitalism. Such judgment does not allow for any positive determination of sport, whatsoever. Moreover, they view sport as being a virtual replica of work: "The mirror theory of sport, like all reductionist interpretations, makes no allowance for the autonomy of cultural traditions" (Lasch, p. 204). Although the Leftist theorists do not deny that there might be a chance to rescue sport from its degeneration, they have little to say about how this might be accomplished. Rigauer, Vinnai, Böhme, and others, who note the repressive effects sport has on capitalist society, have an ambiguous notion of sport. For the most part they reject sport altogether, but in some of their remarks rays of hope for a positive correction of sport seem to shine through. Rigauer, for example, states that sport would be able to disintegrate the capitalist patterns of behavior if it were not based on achievement and competition. In order to understand this line of argument, it is necessary to differentiate between commodity and recreational sport. That is, the New Left certainly disapproves of commodity sport, but recreational sport might still have the capacity to withstand "the continual danger of taking on work-like, conformist, and non-political models of thought" (Rigauer, p. 103). Rigauer, at some point, does think that play can be part of sport, but he rejects that notion later on.

Recreational sports are something else again; the less the form of athletic action is rule-bound and subordinated to the value of achievement, the more likely that action is to disintegrate the behavioral patterns of industrial society....

Sports could develop a new self-conception (Rigauer, p. 103).

In this passage, Rigauer does suggest a better and tighter relation between unalienated work and sport, but unfortunately, Rigauer does not develop a new conception of sport. He is convinced that we can only have new sport when we have a new society. His analysis of sport fails to consider adequately the play-sport relation, because for the New Left any link between play and sport is ideological. But why should we reject this relation altogether as an ideological one? Does sport not have an element of play that can be redeemed and appealed to in the development of a new society?

Following Marcuse, we could argue that the emancipatory potential of sport lies in play, which still is present in various degrees in most forms of sport. While Vinnai seems to acknowledge that play is inherent in sport, he also cannot conceive a resurrection of the play element in sport either. He states,

Soccer, which in the beginning still allowed for playful moments, excluded them more and more. Wherever soccer provides us with any playful experiences, this can only happen during a private game among friends but not during the organized and institutionalized forms of soccer anymore (1970, p. 15).³²

Most New Left thinkers devalue the positive, playful character of sport, although they do realize its presence. But in their purely negative critique of sport, they radically reject sport altogether because of its ideological, manipulative and repressive functions. Marcuse's conception of play, on the contrary, proposes some hope for emancipated sport.

³² The original German text says: "Der Fussballsport, der spielerische Momente in seinen Anfängen noch duldet, hat diese zunehmend ausgeschieden. Wo er noch ans Spiel erinnert, muss er sich der Organisation wie dem Markt entziehen und wird als privatisierender Rest im Bekanntenkreis gepflegt."

The question arises as to what are the conditions for a positive change of sport that might contribute to an emancipation of society at large? With Marcuse we have seen in the previous chapter that the emancipation of the individual cannot happen without a change of society and its production process as well. Emancipation of the individual is dependent on the emancipation of society as a whole. The vicious circle of the reproduction of the given conditions under capitalism cannot be broken through changes in sport alone. Thus, emancipation of sport only makes sense, if it is oriented toward a more complete emancipation of the whole system: "The changes necessary for sport must be part of the changes in society" (Rigauer, p. 105). Members of the New Left agree with this statement; but the problems with the New Left sport theories arise where the task of developing a concrete new conception of sport begins.

In sum, the main criticism against the New Left sport theories is that they reduce sport simply to an economic outgrowth of capitalist society. This view is limited because it ignores sport's potential as a possible side of resistance against the repressive forces of the capitalist system. This failure is revealed in the New Left's almost complete rejection of sport.

To be sure, Marcuse did not propose a new conception of sport either. But he did provide the grounds for the development of such a conception. That is, Marcuse has articulated a new understanding of play and work, which culminates in the overcoming of the split between the two into "playful work." This new conception of playful work, I argue, can be transposed to "playful sport."

4. Playful Sport

Sport certainly is an outgrowth of society and can only fully be understood if looked at it from its historical development, but at the same time sport is dictated by its own regulations, and thus, it goes *beyond* capitalist rationalization. If sport is not distinct from the social order in one way or the other, it is not playful, and

it ceases to be sport, it rather becomes business, the New Left argues. But with Marcuse I want to argue that such a view is one-sided and faulty. Max Horkheimer has pointed out the risks that are involved when sport is solely used for purposes that are distinct from the activity as such, when sport becomes a means to an end:

As long as it [sport] is only an instrument, and consciously recognized as such, it may be used in the service of profit, politics, egotism or just as a pastime. Whether it serves health is, in my view, problematic. But all these ends, whether good or problematic, will destroy sport if they are allowed to dominate it totally, will prevent its being an expression of freedom. In this respect sport is like art, literature and philosophy, and all the springs of the productive imagination. To preserve its freedom, to allow it to make its own decisions and dictate its own regulations, in spite of all the powerful influences from outside, seems to me to be the historic task of all those who are seriously concerned with sport (Horkheimer, p. 185).

Sport, as well as play, has to be recognized as a phenomenon with its own values, norms, regulations, actions, organizations and more, which, in turn, can only be understood in terms of its social background. Sport, then, is in some sense a "world" of its own; that is, sport is autonomous in that it allows for experiences, movements, forms and contents that stand in contrast to everyday social reality. The notion of "playful sport" will reveal how this is to be understood.

At the center of playful sport stands *play* as described through the eyes of Marcuse in the previous chapter. Before it can be determined what in particular playful sport is, a general conception of sport needs to be established. This problem can be investigated by addressing the following questions: What distinguishes sport from any other activity of life? What is intrinsic to sport? Current literature in the philosophy of sport provides us with the following answers.

(a) According to Bernard Suits, the main characteristics of sport are that the activity is goal-oriented, that it involves certain means of achieving the goal, that it is based on rules, and that it requires a lusory attitude (p. 39).

(b) Kenneth Schmitz sums up the main features of sport as "the sense of immediacy, exhilaration, rule-directed behavior, and the indeterminacy of a specific outcome" (p. 30). For him sport is an extension of play with the emphasis on performance and competition.

(c) Robert Simon explains sport as an activity "through which we have fun, develop our potentialities, and learn to enjoy meeting challenges. ...[sports] provide a context in which we stretch our bodily skills and capacities as agents to their limits in the pursuit of excellence" (p. 30). The main features Simon ascribes to sport are competition (understood as mutually acceptable quest for excellence), "improving one's own personal performance", an aesthetic goal (doing the movement with skill and grace), and rules (pp. 13-15).

(d) Christopher Lasch points out that sport is based on "artificial boundaries" (rules); it enlists skill and intelligence; it is useless ("no contribution to the struggle of man against nature"); and it is set up to meet a challenge for the players (pp. 182-216).

It is obvious that the four accounts of the "nature" of sport above overlap. Without getting into a discussion of each particular view, I rather want to investigate those intrinsic features of sport most writers agree upon. Sport, then, can be described tentatively as the pursuit of excellence based on physical skill and performance in a competitive setting following certain rules.

This basic determination of sport explains what all kinds of sportive activities have in common, and thus, distinguishes them from other activities in life. First, the goal of each sportive activity can be characterized as the pursuit of excellence in physical skills (bodily movements). As Simon points out correctly, this goal is mainly pursued in a competitive setting, and thus,

"competition seems almost built into the very nature of sport" (p. 13). But there are sports like fishing and skiing, for example, which do not necessarily involve competition. "Indeed, virtually any sport can be played noncompetitively" (Simon, p. 14). Whether or not a sportive activity is a competitive one depends upon whether one is trying to defeat an opponent. But this conceptual point should not be misconstrued to read that the only (psychological) motive one may have in competing is the aim to win. For I may enjoy the test of competition itself rather than the product, or I may relish the exercise of physical skill in sport. If the interest of the sportive participants is not geared exclusively toward winning *per se* but rather toward the *process* of competition, the emphasis of the activity is, then, on the pursuit of excellence. Such a focus stresses the mutual quest for excellence, which places a greater premium on cooperation and fosters a regard for one's opponent as a partner in the struggle for excellence. Competition, more narrowly understood as the subjugation of one person by another, on the other hand, seems to restrict the sportive activity in that it draws the attention of the participants away from the activity as such to the outcome of a particular sport. This notion of competition appears to be simply "product-oriented," while the mutual quest for excellence stresses the process of the sportive activity and is, therefore, more comprehensive. In this regard, a determination of the central element of sport as the "mutual quest for excellence" is more adequate than the commonly used term "competition."

A second feature all sports have in common is that the mutual quest for excellence based on human performance takes place within a certain set of rules. Suits and Simon distinguish between constitutive rules and the rules of skill and strategy. Constitutive rules are rules that "set out all the conditions which must be met in playing the game," while the rules of skill operate "*within* the area circumscribed by constitutive rules" (Suits, p. 41). Rules of strategy give "advice how to play the game well" (Simon, p. 15).

Thus, the rules that determine what it is to play that particular game are the constitutive rules, since the failure to comply with the rules is a failure to play the game at all (Suits, p. 41). Rules in the context of sport, then, refer mainly to constitutive rules.

Sport is distinguished from other aspects of reality by the constitutive rules, because these rules "prohibit use of the most efficient means for reaching a goal" (Suits, p. 41). In everyday life we are taught to reach a particular goal by choosing the most efficient way to achieve it, while in sports "the simplest, easiest, and most direct approach to achieving such a goal is always ruled out in favour of a more complex, more difficult, and more indirect approach" (Suits, p. 41). Hence constitutive rules place obstacles in the path leading to a goal. Sport, explained by Suits as essentially being games, "require[s] the overcoming of *unnecessary* obstacles, and in ordinary life an unnecessary obstacle is simply a contradiction in terms" (p. 44).

Thirdly, all four writers agree that sport is quite distinct from ordinary life. Suits states that people engage in sport purely for the fun of it; "they can realize in themselves capacities not realizable...in the pursuit of ordinary activities" (p. 43). In this sense, sport as well as games and play represents an "intrinsic good" (Suits, p. 47). Simon agrees that sport contains an "intrinsic worth," which for him is the pursuit of excellence (p. 31).

Sports are activities through which we have fun, develop our potentialities, and learn to enjoy meeting challenges; they are no matters of life and death. ...they provide a context in which we can stretch our bodily skills and capacities as agents to their limits in the pursuit of excellence (Simon, p. 31).

Schmitz refers to sport as being a "suspension of the ordinary"; "sport is in its origin and intention a movement into transcendence..." (p. 30). And lastly, Lasch describes sport as distinct from everyday life:

Games...satisfy the need for free fantasy and the search for gratuitous difficulty.... They recreate the freedom, the remembered perfection of childhood, and mark it off from ordinary life with artificial boundaries, within which the only constraints are the rules to which the players freely submit" (Lasch, p. 181-182).

In sum, sport can be characterized as *a pursuit of excellence in/through bodily movements in the face of challenge following certain rules that mark the activity off from ordinary life.*

However, it must be emphasized that these described intrinsic features of sport are an ideal. Today's sport may not confirm to such an ideal, since it is put in the service of education, health, character-development, etc.; thus, sport is used as a means to an end. "If so, the ideal provides grounds for criticizing actual behavior which deviates substantially from it" (Simon, p. 32).

So far, the description of sport seems to lack one important feature, which is the play element inherent in sport. But, as will be more apparent in my subsequent discussion, the emphasis on the mutual quest for excellence is already enlivened by an element of play. Schmitz's claim, that sport is derived from play, implicitly shows this to be the case.

...sport is primarily an extension of play, ...it rests upon and derives its central values from play. On this basis it will be maintained that a generous acceptance of the play element in sport is essential for the full realization of this latter form of human behavior (Schmitz, p. 25).

This argument suggests that sport is derived from play; it implies that the spirit of play is present in sport, which makes it playful sport. Unfortunately, play has ceased to exist in most of today's sports, a point which I will explore after the notion of playful sport has been established.

For now, I wish to present my conception of playful sport, which will be based on Marcuse's conception of play. The focus of my

discussion here is on the following questions: In what sense is Marcuse's notion of play compatible with sport? What do play and sport have in common and where do they differ? A comparison and contrast of the characteristics of play with the above mentioned intrinsic features of sport will lead to the establishment of the conception of playful sport.

To begin, let us recall the characteristics of play. According to Marcuse, play is a free, non-serious, unproductive, useless, enjoyable activity. Play, in essence, is non-instrumentally oriented; that is, there is no purpose outside of the activity itself. Furthermore, play creates and follows its own rules and is, thus, distinct from the reality of everyday life. These characteristics of play shall be examined briefly, placing special emphasis on the way in which they are related to sport and playful sport.

First, play is described as non-serious and free. The freedom of play appears to be arbitrary and capricious in that the activity is cut off from pragmatic concerns. Play is purely engaged in for its own sake, for no other purpose than that which lies *within* the activity as such, pleasure and enjoyment. Sport, on the other hand, has as its aim the pursuit of bodily excellence. The engagement in sport is more or less voluntarily, but the activity is directed toward improving bodily movements and skills, which excludes other play activities, such as building a sand-castle for example. But no sportive activity excludes the spirit of play as such. The freedom found in play is distinguished from the freedom experienced in sport in so far as "it is bought at the expense of stepping outside of everyday existence," which involves a suspension of the everyday world (Hinman, 1978, p. 203). In contrast to this, playful sport *transforms* rather than *suspends* the everyday world and one's self. Hence, playful sport is rooted more deeply in the world than is our experience of more basic forms of play.

Second, play is useless and unproductive. Sport is also useless and unproductive, but unlike play it is also based on standards of

excellence. That is, while sport places a premium on skillful performance, no such concern is apparent in play as such. But this tension between play and sport is easily overcome by our conception of playful sport. For sport does not exclude the element of play in general, only those forms which do not contribute to its pursuit of excellence - for example, playing with mashed potatoes. That is, although playful sport is geared toward the mutual quest for excellence, the activity can take place in a playful setting, and it could be argued that that playful setting is crucial to its pursuit of excellence. Thus, playful sport is both goal-oriented (in that the activity provides a challenge to the other) and useless (in that it does not contribute to the production process of society at large). The goal-oriented aspects of playful sport are then immanent to the activity and do not follow any external goals outside the activity whatsoever. This characterization of playful sport marks it off from everyday concerns - just as playful work. In this regard, playful sport contributes to the expansion of one's self in terms of understanding and self-mastery, because it allows for experiences that go *beyond* experiences in everyday life.

Third, play is enjoyable, and so is sport. This point does not require extensive analysis for obvious reasons. Both activities can be enjoyed in various ways. In fact, people engage in play and sport because they want to have fun and enjoy themselves. Enjoyment, therefore, lies at the roots of the activities. But enjoyment in sport is distorted sometimes. That is, sport is even enjoyed in its alienated form, for reasons that lie outside the activity; for example, in professional sport when victory is celebrated because of the economic pay-off. Play, on the other hand, is celebrated and enjoyed for reasons that are intrinsic to the activity. And playful sport shares with play an emphasis on intrinsic satisfaction that is derived from the accomplishment of a skillful performance.

Finally, play is a rule-governed enterprise. These rules distinguish it from ordinary life in that they are not established on principles governing daily life, for example, instrumental

efficiency. For, as previously noted, sport also follows certain rules that are created in order to make the activity more challenging, more interesting and difficult. Rules in sport, therefore, are constructed in such a way that the players cannot reach their goals too easily, because this takes away the challenge and thus the fun and enjoyment from the activity. The difference, however, between rules in play and rules in sport is that the former are generally less fixed than the latter, and that rules in sport are designed to put the accent on skillful physical performance. Hence, rules in play can be altered in a variety of ways, while rules in sport have to be set up in accordance with the basic idea of providing a skillful challenge for the players.

In sum, playful sport is a free, creative, enjoyable human activity, which is distinguished from everyday reality by the rules the players apply to it. In addition, playful sport is characterized as being both goal-oriented and useless. What makes playful sport a unique experience in human life is that it is derived from everyday reality while at the same time it transcends that reality. Thus, the activity contributes to the experience of oneself in ways one could not duplicate in daily life. Finally, playful sport is to be understood in much the same sense as Marcuse understood playful work; that is, it has both intrinsic and extrinsic value, meaning and purpose. What differentiates playful work from playful sport then, is not that one belongs to the realm of necessity and the other to the realm of freedom, but that playful sport pursues in a focused and contrived way bodily excellence.

Marcuse claims such "Doppelcharacter" (double character) for play; that is, play is distinct from and interconnected with the social fabric of our lives at the same time. Lasch supports Marcuse's view saying that "play has always, by its very nature, set itself off from workaday life; yet it retains an organic connection with the life of the community, by virtue of its capacity to dramatize reality and to offer a convincing representation of the community's values" (p. 216). This can be made fruitful for sport

as well; if play is going to be reintroduced into the reality of sport, then sport is not to be treated as just another business nor as an isolated, marginal feature of human life. Playful sport rescues sport from its isolated platform of freedom and from its degradation to a form of business. It shows "what is" and "what can be"; and the struggle between the two provides a dynamic experience and allows for the emancipation of sport.

Throughout this analysis of the relationship between play and sport, the emphasis has been on the ways in which playful sport is differentiated from play as such. Next, I want to investigate in which way playful sport differs from the kind of sport where the play element is largely absent. Schmitz refers to "three abuses which can kill the spirit of play within sport and reduce [playful] sport to something less than a human endeavor. These include the exaggeration of the importance of victory, an exaggeration of the value of efficiency, and the exploitation of the commercial possibilities of sport (pp. 30-32). These characteristics, which unfortunately are reflected in most sports in modern societies, are alien to playful sport. They are attached to sport from the outside and jeopardize the activity in that sport loses its intrinsic purpose, meaning and value, - sport ceases to be playful. "Play ceases when the primary reasons for undertaking it are alien to the values of the play-world itself" (Schmitz, p. 31).

In the following, each of the three abuses of sport will be examined, emphasizing the way in which they destroy the spirit of play. First, an exaggeration of the importance of victory, for example, might lead to brutalization of sport, which stands in direct contrast to the promise of freedom and exhilaration provided through the play spirit in sport. Achieving something is not wrong per se. Only if winning becomes the all important and the only part in sport that matters, is sport reduced to a function, a means to an end. Sport can indeed have ends, but if they dominate the activity totally, the humanity of the sportive participants is reduced and sport ceases to be an expression of freedom. The emphasis in

sport, then, is shifting from the appreciation of the performance, the pure joy of the movement itself, to the detachment of the outcome of the game from its proper context. Playful sport, on the contrary, emphasizes the pursuit of excellence without losing sight of the enjoyment of the human movements. The emphasis is neither strictly on the competition nor on the outcome of the game, but rather on the entire process.

Secondly, the spirit of play in sport also ceases when the value of efficiency is exaggerated, which is promoted through the rationalization of techniques in sport. The overemphasis of training and competition leads to "dehumanization." "An ultimate and limitless demand for proficiency forced upon players and sport at the cost of all other values including those of play will diminish all who participate - players, staff and spectators" (Schmitz, p. 32). If play is no longer essential to sport, sport indeed is reduced to another form of business where values of work, such as efficiency, control and production dominate the activity. Playful sport, on the contrary, does not purely operate under the efficiency principle, rather the emphasis is on gaining pleasure and enjoying oneself. In this sense, only playful sport can be part of the drive to humanization in that the athletes, for example, are no longer reduced to "machines" (their bodies) or their sportive achievements. The stress then is on excellence that does not divorce itself from pleasure.

And thirdly, the commercialization of sport is alien to the activity as such. Sport here is used as means to an end, for making profit, in which the pursuit of excellence becomes the pursuit of financial well-being. This value is not a part of the essential nature of sport and play; it is derived from the work-world and imposed on sport from the outside. The tremendous increase of spectator sport, for example, is just one of several consequences resulting from the exclusion of play from sport.

The genuine essence of play cannot be present when it is play only for the spectators, as in the gladiatorial contests of the Roman circus in which contestants were often compelled against their wishes to face wild beasts or even one another. ...On the side of the spectator in professional and even in other organized sport, what threatens the purity of the spirit of play is the reduction of the players to hirelings, and the game to something which is expected to deliver to the spectator a period of pleasure for money paid (Schmitz, pp. 31-32).

The commercialization of sport, the rise of spectators, and professional sport as such "pervert sport into just another profitable pleasure industry" (Schmitz, p. 32). Under these conditions, sport is alienated and largely severed from play. Playful sport can only enter the world of sport if the play element inherent in it is preserved.

In conclusion, if the play element is not acknowledged in sport, sport's intrinsic value, meaning, and purpose is distorted. Hence, the exaggeration and overemphasis of victory, competition, efficiency in sport as well as its commercialization have to be eliminated in order to preserve playful sport. A resurrection of the play element in sport requires, therefore, a transformation of cultural values and a change of our present sport and of society as a whole. Hence, playful sport does not only become important when social changes occur, it might even contribute to the change of society. Playful sport could contribute to this change simply because it allows for experiences that are different from those of larger, capitalist society. Thus, a concept of playful sport might contribute in its own small way to the emancipation and liberation of mankind.

5. Liberation and Emancipation through Playful Sport

Marcuse, and also Theodor Adorno (1970), trying to determine moments in the historical process which leave room for the free development of men, point to art as a representative for a better,

non-alienated society.³³ Furthermore, Marcuse argues with Schiller that *play* also entails the promise of rescuing mankind from its inhuman existential conditions:

...in order to solve the political problem, 'one must pass through the aesthetic, since it is beauty that leads to freedom.' The play impulse is the vehicle of liberation...[and] the manifestation of an existence without fear and anxiety, and thus the manifestation of freedom itself (EC, p. 187).

I will argue that sport as well could contribute to the achievement of a better society and of liberated and emancipated individuals, but not in its existing form and not under the social conditions of capitalism. It is the concept of "playful sport" which can contribute to the liberation of mankind. Playful sport, just like art, is capable of presenting possibilities to experience a better, more just and humane social order, even in our present society. This claim is not valid for sport in general, but only for a form of sport that allows for the free development of human needs, such as playful sport.

The free society, one that has overcome alienation, should allow for the free development of the Eros and the senses, so that sport could be freed from being a "substitute"; the free society should also organize collectively the production process and its products, so that work (and sport) could be freed from being a commodity. If we would produce for the satisfaction of our needs instead of the expansion of production, we would have to transform all values of society, which would alter sport as well and would give it a new form and direction. Playful sport could still have values such as health and achievement, but they would mean something different. Health, for example, would not be equivalent to the ability to work,

³³ See Adorno's Ästhetische Theorie, Marcuse's Counterrevolution and Revolt, Eros and Civilization (particularly pp. 172-196) and The Aesthetic Dimension.

but it would rather stand for the ability to enjoy, as it once was for the Greek aristocrats. The particular goals and meanings of sport in such a qualitatively different society cannot be explicated on purely theoretical grounds alone; this rather is a matter of theory and practice together. In the following, I will briefly discuss some general points how the degradation of today's sport could be overcome through the implementation of playful sport.

1. The basic principle of playful sport should be oriented toward play and playful experiences rather than achievement and competition. If the play element is integrated into sport, sport will have a different goal and direction; the enjoyment of the activity as such is not reducible to winning. Under these conditions, the scoring and the outcome of a game would be of secondary interest, if of an interest at all; the activity (play) as such would provide the satisfaction for the sport participants. Thus, the emphasis on the performance principle should be altered to emphasize the pleasure principle. This calls for cooperative and communicative behavior among the sport participants, which set an example for effective social behavior. Such a reconstruction of sport would involve the change of certain kinds of sport so that, for example, both genders would have the possibility to play together if they want to.

2. Authoritative training and coaching should be eliminated. The aim should be for athletes to learn a variety of movements; they should not be restricted to learning only a few skills with the emphasis on conditioning and perfecting of those skills. In order to reach such goals, the specific learning process has to be explained to the individual so that one could determine oneself which specific movements and sports one wants to engage in. It is obvious that the ability of performing a variety of physical movements and games alone does not contribute to reaching (toward) emancipation; but rather the playful learning process as

such can provide and create communication and discussions and alike, which will enable the individual to break through traditional taboos and to find out more about him/herself, who one is. In addition, a variety of physical skills and the ability to perform will contribute to a person's self-esteem and self-worth.

3. Through play the idea of cooperation and communication versus competition can be reintroduced anew into sport. *Social* behavior can best be learned in and through play; "for in play we learn to be equal" (Hearn, p. 160). The contradiction between the competition principle and the quest for comradeship in sport needs to be resolved along the lines suggested by Simon's notion of competition as a mutual quest for excellence. New forms of sport need to be created, which will allow for more creativity and demand initiative; and the old forms of institutionalized games with their disciplined and autocratic rules and behavior need to be abandoned.

4. All forms of playful sport should be based on democratic decision making, which can be altered according to the needs and wants of the individuals or institutions engaged in the sportive activity. Rules and regulations in sport should also be subject to democratic decision making processes in order to ensure the element of challenge. In addition, different forms of organizing sport in schools and at universities will set an example for society to change other areas of cultural life as well with the ultimate goal of changing capitalist society altogether.

5. Marcuse points out the importance of education for the achievement of a general transformation of society,³⁴ which is also helpful for the change of sport. In the following I want to

³⁴ The theory of "liberation through education" is advocated emphatically by Paulo Freire; see especially his book A Pedagogy for Liberation.

point out some aspects of education that are important for the emancipation of sport.

5.1. The individual should be encouraged to reflect critically on the structures and problems of certain sports and the place of sport in society. That means learning to reflect and to analyze critically the structure and processes of sport is as important as learning certain skills.

The playful celebration of freedom is nonrational in origin and by itself incapable of producing human emancipation. Ultimately, the celebration of freedom must receive rational articulation.... play must be informed by critical discourse and vice versa (Hearn, p. 160).

According to Marcuse, "the forms of freedom and happiness which [play] invokes claim to deliver the historical *reality*. In its refusal to accept as final the limitations imposed upon freedom and happiness by the reality principle, in its refusal to forget what *can be*, lies the critical function of [play]" (EC, pp. 148-149). Marcuse thus regards play as containing the possibility of critical reflection which enables transcendence of the present reality. Play's transcendent (expressive and creative) qualities enable play to go beyond rather than merely adapt to reality and give play its critical thrust: "'play' creates its own universe of 'seriousness' which is *not* that of the given reality, but rather its negation" (CR, p. 113). In play, we can become aware of what *can be* and not only what is; thus, play initiates a tension between reality and possibility. Attaining distance from reality allows for critical reflection. As a function of the activity, play provides people with a kind of distance from their situation, allowing them to reflect critically upon it and, if desirable, to try to change their situation. Hence, play becomes ultimately important for a betterment of society and sport, in that it retains the potential for highlighting

the negativity of prevailing social reality and, thereby, makes change possible.

5.2. Playful sport should leave room for self-directed learning.

"Self direction in learning is a process in which the learner makes a decision to learn in order to achieve a goal, formulates a plan to reach the goal, and takes action toward the goal" (Peters, p. 1).

This implies that the learner is in control of setting a goal and laying out a plan of how to achieve it and act accordingly. To preserve the freedom in sport, the people who are engaged in the activity ought to make their own decisions and dictate its own regulations in spite of all the powerful influences from the outside (Horkheimer, p. 185). The process of self-directed learning excludes mostly the interference by others. But playful sport also includes learning experiences of another sort: organized by others or through books, and more.

5.3. Teachers will find themselves in a very different role: "Those who are educated have a commitment to use their knowledge to help men and women realize and enjoy truly human capabilities" (CR, p. 47). For sport this would mean that the teacher not only is an expert in many different skills of movement, but the teacher should also encourage the students to reflect and discuss issues in sport and its place in society.

5.4. Education for liberation is always political education.

According to Francis Hearn, when the playful experience of people is kept distinct from the reality of everyday life, the appearance of freedom is sustained in the presence of unfreedom (p. 156), which suggests that sport can be a catalyst for change rather than a product of change. Sport in its non-distorted form (playful sport), serves as revitalizing, not an impoverishing force; the play impulse continues to promote confrontation. Marcuse demands politicizing of play, that is, playful experiences, for example in sport, have to

be linked to theoretical analysis. Politicizing sport refers to the establishment of a general awareness of the sport participants that sport and work, sport and politics are not two separate entities. "To prepare the grounds for this development makes the emancipation of *consciousness* still the primary task.... Political practice still depends on theory: ...on education" (CR, p. 132). A permanent reflection on, and critical awareness of, sportive issues in regard to the general social development should be reinforced in order to contest the alienation of sport. Hence, education in and through playful sport should be political education for it to be liberating.

Marcuse claims that "people must liberate themselves" (CR, p. 46). How can that take place?

Self-liberation is self-education but as such it *presupposes* education by others.... All authentic education is political education, and in a class society, political education is unthinkable without leadership, educated and tested in theory and practice of radical opposition. The function of this leadership is to 'translate' spontaneous protest into organized action which has the chance to develop and to transcend immediate needs and aspirations toward the radical reconstruction of society: transformation of immediate into organized spontaneity (CR, p. 47).

Marcuse calls for a direct confrontation with the political order, which should also take place in sport in order to carry out the rational claims for liberation and emancipation. If one accepts the premise for social emancipation, one needs to cooperate with all people who raise critical voices against the present social system for the fight against the irrational and ideological claims of the people in power. What Marcuse claims for art, can also be stated for play; it "cannot change the world, but it could contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of men and women who could

change the world" (AD, p. 32).³⁵ Any emancipatory efforts and changes in sport can already be part of a global "revolutionary" process, which overcomes the capitalist class and power structures. Its success will not at least be determined by the strength and efforts of the individuals working toward such a change. "The need for radical change must be rooted in the subjectivity of individuals themselves, in their intelligence and their passions, their drives and their goals" (AD, p. 3).

6. Summary

In sum, while the conservative sport theorists are protecting the present social system, the New Left wants to abolish the capitalist system altogether. Marcuse, on the other hand, holds the notion of a gradual transformation of capitalist society into a new, "qualitatively different" society. These different agendas are reflected in the diverse criticism of sport and its possible liberation. The conservatives see no need for changing sport; while the New Left cannot foresee a positive regard for sport under the present social system, and leave us, therefore, without a concrete alternative; but with Marcuse we can propose a new conception of sport through transforming play into sport, and thus, make it "playful sport." Playful sport, just as playful work, neither belongs solely to the reality principle (as members of New Left argue) nor exclusively to the pleasure principle (as the conservatives argue); playful sport points *beyond* both principles representing a "qualitatively different" form of sport -- different from how the conservatives and the New Left perceive it. It needs to be pointed out that the transformation process of play into sport has to go along with a general transformation of society as a whole.

³⁵ Marcuse says that he does not feel qualified "to talk about music and the visual arts," but he does believe "that what holds true for literature...may also apply to these arts" (AD, p. 32). Without getting into a closer discussion on what art is, I think Marcuse would not deny that play and art have a lot in common, and thus, that play can be a form of art and vice versa.

A resurrection of play, playful work, and playful sport requires a transformation of cultural values; it calls for a new, liberated form of play; new, more sensitive human beings; a different economic system; as well as a new, qualitatively different society - as Marcuse calls for throughout his works. Play not only becomes important when such changes have been achieved, which is what the New Left would argue, but play also can contribute to such changes. Play as a mode of self-realization has potential significance for Marcuse in that it is capable of creating a new sensibility, new ways of seeing, hearing and feeling through which new and transcendent cultural symbols, such as playful sport, can be formulated (EoL, pp. 23-48). Thus, a concept of play that will help to liberate men and the world is very important for social theory and sport.

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VITA

Karin A. E. Volkwein was born in Breitenbach/ Kassel, Federal Republic of Germany on April 4, 1959. She graduated from high school, Jacob-Grimm-Schule in Kassel, in June 1978. She attended the Philipps-Universität at Marburg to study Sport Science, Religious Studies, and Pedagogy. By June 1984 she graduated with the "First Staatsexamen," comparable to Masters of Science degree, in all subjects. The following year she came to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville as an exchange student. In the fall of 1985 she started her doctoral studies with a major emphasis in Philosophy and Sociology of Sport and accepted a graduate teaching assistantship in the Department of Physical Education & Dance and later in the Evening School of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She completed her Doctor of Philosophy degree in May 1989. After graduation she will continue teaching for the Evening School while in search for a position as an assistant professor at a university in the United States.