

THE HUMAN SOUL, FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM UNDER CAPITALISM  
THROUGH CRONENBERG'S FILMS

BESTE YAMALIOĞLU

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

2015

THE HUMAN SOUL, FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM UNDER CAPITALISM  
THROUGH CRONENBERG'S FILMS

Thesis submitted to the  
Institute for the Graduate Studies in Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Philosophy

by

Beste Yamalıoğlu

Boğaziçi University

2015

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Beste Yamalıoğlu, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

Signature.....

Date .....27.05.2015.....

## ABSTRACT

### The Human Soul, Free Will and Determinism under Capitalism

#### through Cronenberg's Films

In this thesis, I will explore the effects of capitalism on human nature, in particular on whether we have free will or not, as portrayed in David Cronenberg films. In the first half I will make an introduction to determinism and relate the debate between compatibilism and incompatibilism. Then I will deal with the question of whether there is a human nature, and if there is whether it is fixed or not, historical or ahistorical, based on a basic comparison of Sartre, Marx and Freud on this issue. I will give Sartre's defense of free will and Marx's historical account of human nature. In the second half, I will describe Freud's deterministic human nature concept and analyze Cronenberg's main characters who think they have free will while they are living in fully determined worlds regarding these issues. Are they in self-deception (if incompatibilism is right) or not (if compatibilism is right)? Using Marcuse's arguments I will argue that they are in self-deception and this is a feature of how capitalism shapes individual psychodynamics. At the end of the thesis I will explore Marcuse's optimism about the future as based on compatibilism compared with Cronenberg's pessimism that is based on his incompatibilist ideas. I will try to see whether an alternative society is possible in which technology is used as a means for emancipation. Here I will compare and relate Marcuse's, Haraway's and Wilde's arguments on the emancipator potentials of technology.

## ÖZET

### Cronenberg Sineması Üzerinden

#### Kapitalizmde İnsan Ruhu, Özgür İrade ve Belirlenimcilik

Bu tezde, David Cronenberg filmleri aracılığıyla kapitalizmin insan doğası üzerindeki etkilerini özgür iradenin varlığı bağlamında araştıracağım. Tezin ilk bölümünde belirlenimciliğe bir giriş yapacağım ve belirlenimciliğin türleri olan uyşumculuk ve uyşmazcılık tartışmasından bahsedeceğim. İkinci bölümde insan doğası var mı, var ise deışken mi deęil mi, tarihsel mi deęil mi gibi soruları Sartre'ın ve Marx'ın argümanları üzerinden ele alacağım. Burada Sartre'ın özgür irade savunmasını Marx'ın tarihsel insan doğası anlayışı ile irdeleyeceğim. Üçüncü bölümde Freud'un belirlenimci insan doğası anlayışını inceleyip kendilerini Sartre'cı zanneden Freudyen Cronenberg karakterlerinden örnekler vereceğim. Dördüncü bölümde, Marcuse'nin argümanlarını kullanarak bu kendini aldatma sisteminin kapitalizmden kaynaklandığını iddia edeceğim. Tezin sonunda Marcuse'nin uyşumculuktan ileri gelen iyimserliği ile Cronenberg'in uyşmazcılıktan kaynaklanan kötümserliğini karşılaştırıp, Marcuse'nin yolunu seçerek kapitalizme alternatif sistemlerin mümkün olup olmadığını araştıracağım. Bu olasılıklar arasında teknolojinin özgürleştirici bir araç olarak kullanıldığı sistemleri Marcuse'nin, Haraway'ın ve Wilde'ın argümanları üzerinden inceleyeceğim.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not be possible without the support of many people. Many thanks go to my advisor, Yıldız Silier, who has read my numerous drafts and shared her ideas with me. Also thanks go to my committee members, Murat Ba and Ferda Keskin who offered guidance and support. I would like to thank my mother, Sezer Yamalıoğlu and father, Bülent Yamalıoğlu without them I could never find the courage to start such a journey. I also would like to thank my directors Azize Tan and Gülin Üstün who were always very insightful in this process. Also thanks go to my friends Can Eren, Begüm Özcan, my sister Öykü Yamalıoğlu and my cousin Gizem Akman who offered love and support during this process.

*Dedicated to Cem Altinsaray*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: SARTRE’S DEFENSE OF FREE WILL AND MARX’S HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF HUMAN NATURE .....	14
2.1 Sartre on the absence of human nature and the presence of free will.....	14
2.2 Marx's historical account of human nature, free will and determinism....	20
CHAPTER 3: FREUD’S DETERMINISTIC ACCOUNT OF HUMAN NATURE.....	35
CHAPTER 4: MARCUSE’S THEORY OF EMANCIPATION AS AN OPTIMISTIC ALTERNATIVE TO CRONENBERG'S PESSIMISM .....	58
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	78
APPENDIX: THE MAIN CHARACTER LIST OF THE FILMS.....	84
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	86

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Let us suppose that you are the most popular game designer in the world and you create an artificial game world in which you can connect and play as if it is your reality. The rival company tries to kill you and meanwhile they destroy your game pod. The only way you can learn whether there is a permanent damage in your game is to play the game. You play the game. At the end of this game you realize that you are the player in another game in which you are the most popular game designer in the world. You kill the designer of the game with the charge of damaging the sense of reality of the whole human race. This is exactly what happens to Allegra Geller (see Appendix) in *eXistenZ*.

Now imagine that you are the owner of a TV channel in which you screen soft porn movies, claiming that your purpose is to liberate the fantasies and needs of the public, though your main purpose is to make more money through showing things that are hard to access otherwise. Then your desire to make more money by increasing the number of TV spectators leads you to try a new broadcast form, Videodrome, which includes torture and murder in its content, even though you know that it is something dangerous. At the end of this, you become the first victim of your plan. You get a brain tumor that is formed by the waves that come from Videodrome broadcasting. It was made with the intention to control the minds of North Americans and now it turns out that its main distributor, the owner of the TV channel, is the one whose mind is under control. The main character of the movie *Videodrome*, Max Renn (see Appendix), is the executive in charge of Civic TV, and what I have told above is exactly what happens to him.

If these two main characters do not appeal to you, then try to think of yourself as a scientist who is isolated from the world as much as possible to focus on the invention of a teleportation system, your masterpiece that originates only from your interest and curiosity. You do not have any concern about serving humanity. You just want to do something tremendous, something that will be applauded by the rest of the world. You do not think about its consequences; you keep everything as a secret since you do not want any help from others. This must be your success. Somehow the Telepod only transports inanimate objects; it does not work properly for living things. Later on, you make some experiments on a baboon that you can finally transport. But you have not tested the baboon in order to see whether it is healthy or not. One day, because of your extreme jealousy toward your girlfriend, combined with the effect of alcohol, you decide to try the Telepod to transport yourself. You do not notice that there is a fly in the Telepod during the transportation. You have merged with the fly at a genetic level and you start to be transformed into a fly, which you enjoy in the beginning, whilst the physical transformation is not so visible. At the end, you turn into a mutant thing that is destructive, and you are destroyed by the same person you love. This is what Seth Brundle (see Appendix) goes through in the film *The Fly*.

All the films I have mentioned above tell me one thing: Even though you appear to be the person in charge, creative and powerful, rich, popular, successful, intelligent, reasonable, self-confident, in reality you can be the one who is manipulated, dependent on other people, the slave of your feelings and in self-deception. In each of these films, Cronenberg inserts similar characters in different situations and tries to show us that in each case there is something that goes wrong about the choices of the characters, a discrepancy between their intentions and

consequences of their actions. There is almost no difference between these main characters in terms of their motivational status. They all seem to be self-governing subjects, having the power to control their destinies. But apparently there is something wrong in this system since although the characters seem to choose the best way to reach their goals, in the end something they had never estimated happens. All these people turn into victims of the processes they had started. We may claim that all three characters share the same ancient vice, hubris, since they try to play God's role by creating new creatures or even new realities. We can also ask ourselves: How is it that hubris, which was one of the worst vices in ancient times, now becomes a virtue in capitalism, as the trait of a successful entrepreneur? Cronenberg explicitly says that he is an atheist in one of his interviews in *The New York Times*.

I'm an atheist, and so I have a philosophical problem with demonology and supporting the mythology of Satan, which involves God and heaven and hell and all that stuff. I am not a nonbeliever. I'm an antibeliever - I think it's a destructive philosophy. (Siegler 2012).

Hence it seems improbable that he has a moralistic attitude towards individuals who break the line between God and humans.

Before I start to give the general conceptual framework of the thesis I would like to highlight some points. In this thesis I will be comparing different kinds of determinism and I will try to relate metaphysical determinism with economical, ideological and psychological aspects in which our actions are constrained. So, I will try to relate two different frameworks in which determinism is analyzed. On the one hand, metaphysical determinism searches for the particular causes of our actions and choices without taking the social structure into account. On the other hand, Marx's version of economic determinism, Freud's version of psychological determinism and Marcuse's type of technological determinism tries to build a bridge between agency

and the social and economic structure. I will try to relate these two different conceptual frameworks and their corresponding ideas about freedom. Whereas free will plays a key role in the metaphysical account, conditions for free agency will be dominant in the other accounts. Even though free will in the sense of choosing between various options to satisfy one's desires is possible under capitalism, I will argue that free will is necessary but not sufficient to achieve free agency and that free agency is not possible under capitalism. What I mean by free agency is the ability to choose freely, deliberately, being conscious of one's motivations, real needs, and the circumstances which shape our needs

In the second chapter, in order to clarify the dynamics between human nature and free will under this system, I will examine three conceptual possibilities and I will try to figure out which one would be the best explanation for Cronenberg's world.

First, I will explore Sartre's account, where free will exists, although there is no human nature; that will allow me to reveal why having free will is not sufficient to have full freedom and free agency in capitalism. Second, I will consider Marx's account in which there is a changing human nature and a dialectical relationship between free will and determinism. Third, I will analyze Freud's account, in which there is a fixed human nature but no free will. If we translate their views to the modern terminology in the free will versus determinism debate, then whereas Sartre and Freud defend incompatibilism (or strong determinism), i.e. that free will and determinism are incompatible, Marx would defend a kind of compatibilism (or soft determinism), i.e. that free will and determinism can coexist. Then I will focus on Marcuse's compatibility account, which synthesizes Marx's and Freud's perspectives. Marcuse will show us a way of overcoming Cronenberg's pessimism

about liberation, by opening up the possibility of building an alternative society where technology can be used in an emancipator way. In this way, the tragic fates of Cronenberg's characters could be avoided if we have a society where our common self-deceptions can be avoided and where freedom of choice and free agency can be developed.

Now, I will briefly explain the main compatibilist and incompatibilist arguments after explaining the different kinds of determinism that we will refer to in this thesis. Let us start from metaphysical determinism. As Murat Baç writes using Taylor's argument:

Determinism is the claim that 'in case of everything that exists, there are antecedent conditions, known or unknown, which, because they are given, mean that thing could not be other than they are.' More loosely, it says that everything... is causally determined (Taylor 1992, p.36).

Basically determinism can be examined under two main headings: hard determinism and soft determinism. Let me first explain hard determinism and see whether it is applicable to the system we live in. Hard determinists basically claim that determinism is incompatible with free will. That is why philosophers who think like this are called 'incompatibilists'. Incompatibilism roughly means that there is no free agent or free act in determinism, Weatherford argues, as explained by Baron d'Holbach.

Man's life is a line that nature commands him to describe upon the surface of the earth, without his ever being able to swerve from it, even for an instant. He is born without his own consent; his organization does in nowise depend upon himself; his ideas come to him involuntarily; his habits are in the power of those who cause him to contract; he is unceasingly modified by causes, whether visible or concealed, over which he has no control. (Weatherford 1991)

So, incompatibilism is a philosophical thesis about the relevance of determinism to free will: that the truth of determinism rules out the existence of free will. The

incompatibilist believes that if determinism turned out to be true, it would also be true that we do not have, and have never had, free will (Vihvelin 2015). D'Holbach links mechanistic psychology<sup>1</sup> (which is widely accepted) with the mechanistic conception of nature<sup>2</sup> (which is less widely accepted). For him, if we accept determinism in one of these we need to accept the other as deterministic also. (Weatherford 1991)

Again as d'Holbach argues, the fact that we do not always see the obstacles or limits to our action does not mean that we are free agents. In the article 'Causal Determinants, Reasons, and Substantive Autonomy: A Critical Approach to Agency', Murat Baç also argues that 'falsity of determinism is not sufficient to show that libertarian is right, i.e., that we have free will' (Baç 2007). The motive which causes us to will is always necessary and independent of us (Weatherford 1991).

Can we make an analogy between this "necessary and independent" motive with the motives such as greed, ambition, search for fame etc. that are reproduced by capitalism? Since capitalism in today's terms is not only an economical system but its conventions are applicable to all other spheres, such as education, media and the social system in general. The interreaction between these systems, also shape norms and values. In order to survive (in the sense of not being socially excluded) in such a system one needs to adjust to its 'normal', namely its values. In the metaphysical context of strong determinism, the lack of freedom is due to causal necessitation in antecedent physical conditions. On the contrary, in the economic-psychological-ideological contexts, which I will focus on, the lack of freedom is due to an inability

---

<sup>1</sup> Mechanistic psychology means processes and behaviors can be explained in the same way that mechanical and physiological processes are explained.

<sup>2</sup> The word "mechanical" in the phrase "mechanical view of nature" had two different but related meanings, as E. J. Dijksterhuis has noted. On the one hand it meant "reducible to the principles of mechanics", the science of bodies acted on by forces. On the other hand it meant "like a machine", the operation of which could be explained by mechanical principles (Greene 1999).

to be aware of the factors that shape one's actions and choices and the lack of rational access to other options. Capitalism is a system that is mostly based on the notion of profit. That is why competition is very common within this system. Competition necessitates the values such as ambition and greed on the way to success. The passionate, ambitious and greedy characters should be the ones whose id is stronger in the Freudian theory since if the id gets too strong, impulses and self-gratification can take over the person's life (Heffner 2015). But capitalism does not allow its inhabitants to develop these values to the extent that they can constitute a risk to the existence, authority and continuity of the whole system. So, the super-ego of the individuals should also be strong to keep the id under control, since the main job of superego is to control the id's impulses, especially those which society forbids, such as sex and aggression (Mcleod 2008)<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile the ego constantly tries to find a balance between them<sup>4</sup>.

The ego operates according to the reality principle, working out realistic ways of satisfying the id's demands, often compromising or postponing satisfaction to avoid negative consequences of society. The ego considers social realities and norms, etiquette and rules in deciding how to behave (Mcleod 2008).

I argue that this system of dynamics creates individuals who think they are autonomous and have self-mastery but in fact they can only be autonomous as far as the system allows them to be. I mean the system creates illusions by which the individuals think themselves as fully autonomous agents through hiding the boundaries. This will be the basic justification of my argument in the third chapter that it is true that the Freudian system of psychodynamics is valid under capitalism.

---

<sup>3</sup> In this context, capitalism works as a social super-ego imposing its values and rules on the inhabitants living within the system. So even if the id is too strong and you desire to be included in competition more and more since you are inclined to self-gratification through adapting to the system, the system works as a super-ego and limits you within the society in order to prevent you from being strong enough to be a threat to the system.

<sup>4</sup> So the ego will adopt capitalist values as the reality principle since they are the prevailing ones and adjust the behaviors accordingly.

However, this does not mean that it should also be valid for whole systems. In other words, there may be other alternative systems under which we do not have to organize the id, ego and super-ego as in the Freudian theory and in accordance with the new organization we can act as free agents. As Marcuse argues, repression can take different forms in various social production modes (Marcuse 1962). This I will explain deeply in the fourth chapter.

Now turning to our debate on incompatibilism, I think incompatibilism is true only within certain kinds of systems, such as capitalism. Moreover, the incompatibilism I will argue for the capitalist system is not in the sense that we cannot cause or control our actions in the right way but in the sense that we do not have the power or ability to choose otherwise, since the system defines the limits; at some point, most of our actions are manipulated by the system. The latter is about choice. For hard determinism, though we are always under the illusion that we have a choice, actually what we do is our only option. This does not mean that we cannot make choices. Determinism is totally compatible with making choices and those choices' being causally effective.

Here again I do not talk about causal determinism in which any kind of freedom is denied. What I have in mind is an economically determinist system in which you can choose. But the limits of your choices are determined by the system. In Raymond Williams' account of Marx, determinism is the setting of limits and such limits are 'external' to individuals only in the sense that they are 'inherited' and individuals 'enter into' them (or are born into them) not in the sense that they are controlling and unchangeable (Ferraro 1992).

Every choice we make is dependent upon the antecedent states such as beliefs, desires and volitions. But this is only in the sense that a chess- playing computer

makes choices, which is not enough for free will, since each move it makes is determined in accordance with the reaction of the person playing against it. For free will, we should have a genuine choice in each case and there should be more than one option that we can genuinely choose.

Now, let us evaluate the basic arguments of the compatibilist (soft determinist) position that holds that determinism and free will are compatible.

There is a difference between causally determined behavior and constrained behavior. Since it is (they say) constraint that is the opposite of freedom, it is possible for actions to be both free and causally determined. (Weatherford 1991)

Also, in his article Murat Baç defines soft determinism as follows:

Soft determinism has it that voluntary behavior is nonetheless free to the extent that it is unconstrained and also that in the absence of such constraints, the causes of voluntary behavior are certain states, events or conditions within the agent himself. (Baç 2007)

But then Baç gives the example of a scientist who places an electronic chip within the cerebral cortex of a person and sends signals to the chip by means of a remote control device in order to manipulate his/her desires, which is an inner state of that person. If what soft determinists argue is enough to claim the existence of free will, we have to say that the action this person does is out of free will since there is no external constraint. But there is an external constraint. The inner state of the person that causes him/her to act is manipulated through the chip that is an external intervention.

Of course, the chip here is used as a metaphor. We do not need to have chips in our brains in order to be manipulated. Our inner states, moral values (due to the constitution of superego, which will be discussed later) or our desires or even needs can also be manipulated ideologically. Since we can never know whether there is an

external constraint or not, we cannot claim the existence of free will. On the other hand, the main character of the *Matrix*, Neo, could be given as a counter example to this case. He is living in an artificial reality about which he does not have a clue at first. After he is conscious of the artificiality of the world he lives in, he becomes able to compare and contrast his choices. So in this case, he might have free will and his choice of the red pill could be evidence to it. Of course, as one may suspect the reality of that world, he might also suspect the choices that are made in that world. However, I think this would be an extreme case of skepticism that will lead us to a cycle as in the case of *eXistenZ* and *Thirteenth Floor* (dir. Josef Rusnak, 1999).

In order to be able to make such an argument we need to assume that we are free in every action if there is no obstacle to our action. However, even though there is no obstacle on the surface, this does not mean that our motivation or will to do that action is free. I believe the opposite might be the case. Our motivation and will might be directed by an external power that is independent of us. Moreover, it might be the case that we are not aware of this external power. This is the main reason why it might be the case that we are all in self-deception. Looking at our actions and their reasons at a superficial level, we all suppose that we can choose freely. However, our deep-down motivations affect our will so we cannot easily argue about their freedom.

D'Holbach gives an example of this:

A prisoner loaded with chains is compelled to remain in prison; but he is not a free agent in the desire to emancipate himself; his chains prevent him from acting, but they do not prevent him from willing; he would save himself if they would loose his fetters; but he would not save himself as a free agent; fear or the idea of punishment would be sufficient motives for his action (Weatherford 1991).

This situation is very similar to what happened to Ted Pikul and Allegra Geller (see Appendix) in *eXistenZ*. By the end of the film, not only the characters but also all the

audience believe in the reality of that they had gone through. Moreover, there was no clue that what happens outside the game *eXistenZ* is artificial. So, all of their actions, such as deciding to play the game, taking the game pod to the repairman seem very real and out of free will. However, at the end of the film, we realize that all of the actions are due to another game, which means all the inner states - their beliefs, judgments, motivations, desires, etc.- are manipulated through another game. It seems to me that the main assumption behind all these is that we can always say an agent could have acted otherwise than he did. This assumption is taken for granted as the criterion of freedom.

Let me give Weatherford's example for this:

We once had criteria that all agreed suffice to distinguish mortal animate things from immortal animate things (I have an immortal soul, but the goldfish does not). Now many are convinced that all animate things are mortal and the criteria, though universal, were mistaken. Likewise for absolute motion and simultaneity. Likewise for ghosts, witches, demons and curses. All of these concepts had criteria of application that were nearly universally accepted although in fact nothing fulfilled the definition at all (Weatherford 1991).

So if we follow what Weatherford argues, which I would suggest to do since it is completely plausible and applicable to our argument, we come to the conclusion that just because we have a criterion that is applied universally, we cannot assume that there is free will. An example could be taking the question whether an agent can do otherwise than what s/he did as a criterion to understand the existence of free will. Even though we can say 'yes' to this question, it does not mean that we have free will. The main reason for this is that even if we think there is another choice, how do we know that that choice is not determined? So the application of this criterion does not fulfill the definition of free will. Weatherford completes his example with the following argument:

If determinism is true, the incompatibilists say, that is exactly the situation of 'free acts': we thought we knew how to identify them but it turned out, because of an unknown factor, that none of them was really free at all (Weatherford 1991).

Incompatibilists define free will in such an extreme way that for a person to have free will, her motivations and actions have to be completely independent of antecedent determining causes. But since humans are social creatures, they are essentially interdependent. So influencing others and being influenced by them is common to all humans. Being isolated from others, detachment from all cultural, political, economic influences would be a non-realistic model for free will. Since the incompatibilists often define free will in such a demanding way, they easily conclude that free will is impossible. Yes, free will is indeed impossible with this impossible definition. The best counter attack to incompatibilism, I should note here, is randomness. Imagine the world is such that there is neither a set of direct nor a set of indirect causal determinants to human behavior. Then it should follow that human behavior is out of mere chance. Of course, this situation eliminates moral responsibility.

But now we must ask how it is that I come to make my choice. Either it is an accident that I choose to act as I do or it is not. If it is an accident, then it is merely a matter of chance that I did not choose otherwise; and if it is merely a matter of chance that I did not choose otherwise, it is surely irrational to hold me morally responsible for choosing as I did. But if it is not an accident that I choose to do one thing rather than another, then presumably there is some causal explanation of my choice: and in that case we are led back to determinism (Ayers 1954).

I will adopt d'Holbach's view in order to give a justification of my argument that links capitalism with the Freudian system of psychodynamics. As I have explained above, d'Holbach held a metaphysical view of determinism that I will be using as a metaphor to explain what I mean by psychological determinism and its relation with the Freudian theory. In order to understand psychological determinism,

I would like to give a brief definition of what classical conditioning is in John Watson's sense, since I find it very related to psychological determinism and to clarifying what it means. Classical conditioning basically argues that humans respond in a certain way to a certain stimuli (Hall 1998). So if you can control the stimuli, you can control the behavior. Thus, response is conditional. Weatherford defines psychological determinism in his book *The Implications of Determinism* as 'the theory that human beliefs and actions follow ineluctably from the combination of experience and anterior psychological conditions' (Weatherford 1991).

So I have given a brief summary of the contemporary determinism debate, compatibilism and incompatibilism. Now I would like to introduce the kind of determinisms that will take place throughout this thesis. I have already mentioned hard determinism (incompatibilism) and soft determinism (compatibilism). In the second half of the next chapter, where I will examine Marx's historical account of human nature and free will, I will also introduce economic determinism as a compatibilist attitude. The following chapter will be on Freud's deterministic concept of human nature, where I will be discussing psychological determinism as an incompatibilist account. The fourth chapter will be on Marcuse and his compatibilist approach to technology as a way out of Freudian determinism; in it I will be also mentioning technological determinism in order to compare it with Marcuse's account on technology.

## CHAPTER 2

### SARTRE'S DEFENSE OF FREE WILL AND MARX'S HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF HUMAN NATURE

#### 2.1 Sartre on the absence of human nature and the presence of free will

Before starting this chapter, I would like to note that the first part, which is basically about Sartre's argument on the absence of human nature and the presence of free will, will not be directly related to the rest of the thesis. The rest will deal with the existence of human nature (either fixed or modifiable) and the idea of free will not be directly related with the existence of human nature but rather directly related with the prevailing system since it determines the limits of freedom of choice. However I would like to add Sartre's framework in order to see a picture in which free will could be something that is totally separate from whatever system we are living in since it is something we as human beings existentially have. The option of using it or escaping it, which Sartre mentions as blind faith, may depend on the system that we are living in. Though I will not examine this possibility deeply in this thesis but will rather give a brief definition, it may be a title for another discussion based on what will be argued here. Sartre has a firm belief in the existence of free will based on the absence of a fixed human nature.

That means man first exists, encounters himself and emerges in the world, to be defined afterwards. Thus there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it... Man becomes nothing other than what is actually done, not what he will want to be. (Sartre 1945)

Since there is always another choice one can make in every situation, the past can never determine the present, so assuming free will means denying determinism for Sartre. If this is the case, we can never argue that the social system manipulates

human nature, as I mentioned above. We become fully responsible for our choices even when we cannot always control their consequences.

Can we find a similarity between Sartre's account and Cronenberg's characters? Like Sartre, Cronenberg argues we are all thrown into the world (Beard 2006). So, both of them ask, as human beings that are thrown into the world, how do they decide what they should do? Sartre believes that all our actions are based on our free choices. Similarly Cronenberg claims:

The title *eXistenZ* is a reference to the existentialist's accepting total responsibility for his actions. When Sartre says, 'Man is condemned to be free,' the statement means 'condemned' because it's scary to be free, and the responsibility is yours. 'Free' because if you see clearly into the depths of your own being, you are free. (Busack 1999)

In Cronenberg's films, it seems to me that human beings first emerge in the world that had already been structured. However, for Sartre, although 'facticity' which refers to the past, is always determined, we are always free to re-interpret the past in a different way. Our action in the present is not two-dimensional (where there is a direct causal link between the past and the present), but rather it is three-dimensional. By projecting our actions into the future, we transcend the past and the present. This is why humans are always not determined, which is a precondition of their freedom for Sartre. At the moment of choice, the pendulum swings between the past and the future and since there is always another option we can choose from, we have freedom of choice, which does not mean being free to choose anything we want. Freedom of choice implies being free to try, rather than being free to succeed. It is this indeterminacy that is the basis of Sartre's notion of free will. We are not objects, determined by external factors, but rather subjects, who have a capacity for self-determination in the sense explained above.

Have we created the world around us, for Sartre? Yes and no. Yes, because there are never bare facts: 'my world' consists of my interpretation of those facts. However, Sartre does not claim that my interpretation is always right for me; rather, he claims that most people are in self-deception, because they constantly run away from their freedom, claiming that since they are merely objects living in a determined world, there is nothing they can do to change the system or themselves. Being mere puppets, rather than subjects, they claim no exit is possible. This is the way in which they escape from the immense responsibility that freedom would bring, a responsibility not only for themselves but also for the whole humanity. Sartre calls this being in 'blind faith', which is the main form of self-deception for him.

In contrast, Cronenberg has a completely different understanding of self-deception. Whereas people who try to escape from their essential freedom are in self-deception for Sartre, people who suppose that they are acting out of free will are in self-deception for Cronenberg. In Sartre's terms for Cronenberg, though we are mere puppets we act as if we are subjects. Here, we should emphasize their different accounts of freedom. For Cronenberg, a person would be free if he had total control over his motivations and his life. This seems similar to freedom as autonomy that leans towards omnipotence. In contrast, Sartre is more modest about what freedom involves: only the existence of another choice, not being fully determined (i.e. I could have chosen something different, although I did not do it, because acting in social conformity was easier for me.) Sartre claims rejecting that humans have free will is a kind of self-deception. Cronenberg opposes Sartre and asserts that assuming humans have free will is a form of self-deception.

*eXistenZ* is a film that is planned to give this sense. Allegra Geller (see Appendix) is the designer of the world of *eXistenZ*. This is why we expect her to be

the one who is in full control (i.e. to have absolute free will) since there is nothing in that world outside of her design that can limit her actions. However, at the end of the film, we realize that the world in which Allegra Geller is the ultimate designer and in control is actually structured by someone else. I think this is depicted for us to realize that there is no ultimate designer. But we can have the illusion that we are in control or at least that we know who is in control. Since this is merely an illusion or something that we can never know for sure, we cannot assume that our actions are based on our free will. I believe as far as we do not know the real motivation behind the structure of the world we are living in, or whether such a motivation exists or not, we cannot know whether free will exists or not.

The essence of Cronenberg's characters is shaped in line with the conventions of the system. Hence, in contrast to Sartre, we can argue that even if God does not exist, it is still possible that human nature exists. In other words, even if there is no God to conceive human nature and assuming that my existence comes before my essence, still my concrete social existence can shape my essence (i.e. the powers and needs in my nature). So, I think Sartre's argument is not enough to reject the existence of human nature. Later on in the article, Sartre argues:

It is not possible to find in each man the universal essence called human nature, but there is a human universality in condition. Any purpose, even that of the Chinese, or the idiot or the child can be understood by a European, given enough information. In this sense, there is a universality of man; but it is not a given, it is something perpetually re-built. (Sartre 1945)

The reason why Sartre thinks so is that he sees existentialism as a discovery of us as well as others in the cogito. That he explains by saying, 'We discover an intersubjective world where each man has to decide what he is and what others are' (Sartre 1945). But if the universality of man he was mentioning is perpetually re-built, it has to be something re-built in the system. So it is affected by the system.

That is why all the decisions we make to define both ourselves and others are influenced by the conventions of the system. Thus, all the concepts, institutions and deliberation forms are affected by these conventions. From the fact that our human nature is largely shaped by the system, can we conclude that there is no escape from the system? Cronenberg would say 'yes', but Marcuse would say 'no'. Though they are answering basically the same question, they have different contexts in mind that we should note here. As I have said before, Cronenberg would most probably argue that our human nature is shaped by the system and there is no escape from the system. Of course, this is an ideological problem that is caused by the ideologically deterministic structure of the system we are living in. Moreover, for Cronenberg as I have mentioned and will mention several times, there is no hope for human beings, in which you can imagine an alternative. On the other hand, for Marcuse, this is an epistemic problem. If we can figure out an alternative way to live, we can escape from the reality. So it is about access. This will be discussed in the last chapter.

If we consider all these dynamics (human nature, free will and capitalism) as a chain, can we claim that free will is an illusion, in contrast to what Sartre defends? Sartre would not argue that we have full autonomy in that we can shape ourselves independently from external factors and social influences. He merely emphasizes the option of non-conformity, potentially available to each individual, without denying that a lack of material opportunities or lack of critical thinking can limit the scope of our actual choices.

The main weakness of existentialism is its inability to explain how capitalism shapes our actions and motivations in such a way that it transforms us from free subjects into fully determined subjects. Most people living in capitalism do not have free will, since they are not aware of the existence of other options outside the

system. Capitalism is a system that gives its inhabitants the illusion of being fully able to control their destinies. When people try to act in favor of their self-interest, their actions in fact serve the reproduction of capitalism. So we do not always begin from the subjective, as Sartre claims, but rather we always begin from the system and then internalize it as if it were the subjective.

Capitalism does not only modify our motivations; furthermore, it modifies them in such a way that the consequences of the actions would serve the continuity of the system. So, as against what we will always want to be, the system keeps turning us toward its interest through calculating the consequences. That means what is done under capitalism is not fully owned by the agents. Both the motivations and the following consequences are modified. In *eXistenZ* when Pikul is in the factory in which they cut frogs for making game pods, though it is his first time, Yevgeny Nourish says, 'You seem to know what you're doing'. But he does not know it. He must do it because the game demands it. It is just the way capitalism works. Most of the time, we do not know what we are doing or why we are doing it. It is just because the system demands so. Our experiences and their meanings are shaped by the society in which we live. So what Cronenberg characters experience is due to capitalism; this is the main reason why these characters adopt capitalistic values such as greed, ambition to have individual achievements and thereby distinguish themselves from others. Although they think that they freely choose those goals, they are mostly mistaken.

Existentialism is too strict in holding that 'there are no excuses'. How could we expect people who are so much manipulated by capitalism to be non-conformist and imagine new options for them? Hence, existentialism holds individuals responsible for things that they are powerless to change. For Sartre, no matter which

society an individual lives in, one has a duty to embrace his/her freedom. On the other hand, taking free will as something to be historically expanded, as a goal rather as a natural starting point for all, Marx's account of human nature could reveal the social conditions under which human emancipation could be achieved.

## 2.2 Marx's historical account of human nature, free will and determinism

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living (Marx 1954).

Marx's words above can be taken as one of his clearest statements of the compatibilist position. On the basis of this statement, various Marxists have interpreted freedom as not the absence of determination and necessity but as the knowledge of necessity (Engels 1877). This view originates in Hegel, where the Spirit's self-knowledge, knowing its concrete determinations, makes it free by overcoming the duality between object (the known) and subject (the knower). Marx proposes another way in which the duality between subject and object can be overcome, through non-alienated production:

Through this production, nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labor is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created. (Marx 1844)

The two quotations above show that for Marx, although human beings can transform both their own natures and the external world, they cannot change the whole system merely by using their free will. In order to understand Marx's account we should use *freedom of choice* within a specific socio-historical context, rather than *free will*, which a metaphysical concept that is absolute (it either exists or not). It is like humans are in a system where the limits are predetermined and revolution is

an attempt to change those limits, by achieving class consciousness and engaging in class struggle, rather than by using their free will individualistically. In order to understand the main theoretical basis of Marx's compatibilist position regarding the free will versus determinism debate<sup>5</sup>, we should first analyze his account of human nature. According to Marx a non- fixed human nature exists that is both shaped by socio-economic structures and also has the power to transform this social structure. Let us see whether Marx's dynamic account of human nature is more useful than Sartre's account for understanding Cronenberg's characters. In order to understand the Marxist account of human nature, we first need to understand the historicist attitude. For S. Sayers, historicist philosophers since Hegel criticize the essentialist approach, which has identified 'natural' and 'essential' human characteristics as the foundation for social explanation and moral values (Sayers 1998). In contrast, for historicist philosophers there is no absolute distinction between the natural and the social since human beings are essentially social beings (Sayers 1998). This is a very important assumption in explaining both Marx's ideas as well as the issue I will discuss in the next chapter regarding the relationship between repression and being antisocial and its consequences.

In *German Ideology*, where he explains historical materialism, Marx says, 'The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals' (Marx 1845). This premise gives some universal and trans-historical features to human beings. In order to live and to make history we first need to satisfy

---

<sup>5</sup> There are two interpretations of Marx. On the one hand, Marxists who claim Marx to be an economical and technological determinist are Plekhanov (positivist Marxism), Althusser (structuralist Marxism) and G.A Cohen (analytical Marxism). On the other hand, those who defend anti deterministic account of Marx are Erich Fromm (humanist Marxism) and Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Paul Sweezy, Ellen Meiksins Wood (historical school of Marxism) (Ferraro 1992)

our basic needs such as eating, drinking, clothing, etc. So at least at the basic material level, it is evident that there is a universal human nature.

What distinguishes humans from other animals is that they constantly create new needs. For Marx, the production and satisfaction of these new needs are in parallel with the emergence of new forms of productive activity. So there is a dialectical relation between these two, which brings us to the conclusion that ‘by acting on the external world and changing it, (man) at the same time changes his own nature’ (Marx 1961). Thus, in Marx’s account, we always develop our nature (powers, needs and capacities) along with the transformation of the external world. This is why human nature is not fixed but it is rather progressive. This expansion of human nature would also have increased our free will, if it was not the case that alienated labor leads to alienated consciousness (rather than the consciousness of alienation) in most people.

The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. (Marx 1859)

There is a significant debate on whether historical materialism is a kind of determinism or a possibility theory. We briefly need to consider this debate to answer the question whether Marx accepts or rejects determinism. In the Marxist account, there are two dynamics: structure and agent. In a determinist system, one would argue that the structure determines the agent or in an agent-based account, it is claimed that revolutionary agents with free will determine the direction of history. However, Marx does not choose one of these accounts, but rather he combines them by arguing that these two dynamics are interdependent, in his distinctive account of historical materialism.

This view of history is a marked change from the traditional method of historical interpretation, and presents us with the assertion that ‘history makes man’ just as much as ‘man makes history’. (Iglesias 2014)

For Marx, this process is materialist since developments in the substructure of economic life, such as those in production, the division of labor and technology have an enormous impact on the superstructure of the political, legal, social, cultural, psychological and religious dimensions of human society (Iglesias 2014). Marx calls this dependency ‘economic determinism’. The question is whether it is possible to have free will within the system of economic determinism. According to Marx, freedom of choice has degrees depending on the social conditions and on one’s level of class consciousness. This aspect of having degrees makes the Marxist account a compatibilist one, as follows:

Marx’s conception of economic determinism has a number of implications for what is generally understood as “freedom of the will”; the range of possible courses of action and belief are always already suggested by the environment from which they arise and flourish, and yet the choices we make among them are always, in one way or another, influenced and directed by our values, attitudes, and beliefs. But these, in turn, are determined and directed by the contingent environment in which we find ourselves, and for Marx, that environment itself arises from general economic conditions. Generally speaking, Marx does indeed reject the traditional idealistic assertion of libertarian free will that the human agent is capable of making choices and taking action independently of any external influence. (Iglesias 2014)

Therefore, a Marxist economic determinist would allow human beings to make choices though it is a limited type of making choices.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production. (Marx 1845)

As we produce and develop new activities and needs and evolve the mode of production, capitalism, and the State start to dominate us. All our production and efforts are now directed to reproduce the system when we try to satisfy our needs. Even if we satisfy some of our needs they are the ones that are created by the system artificially to give us an artificial feeling of satisfaction (as will be discussed in the chapter on Marcuse). Now the human nature we build on the universal features of ours has to be progressive i.e. expansion of needs, powers and capacities but in fact it turns into something monotonous and under coercion. Moreover it is insinuated.

I would like to criticize Marx's optimism, by claiming that although the expansion of free will, meaning freedom of choice, might be the case for the inhabitants of an alternative system of production, in capitalism expanding the freedom of choice does not mean anything, since the problem is not the ability to make choices. Rather, the problem is related with the system within which you make the choices. What is determined is that area, not the ability to make choices. This is the main reason why I consider the people living in the capitalist mode of production as having illusionary free will. They are able to make choices but in various alternatives which are already determined by the system. What would be the case if you attempted to make a choice that is outside the limits of the system? I believe the person who attempts it is a person who is a threat to the continuity of the system, so this person would be stopped by the system in one way or another (either long before that action or systematically after the action(In Cronenberg's films, those who try to remain as unique people, who rebel or who act out of free will (make free choices or make free decisions) are eventually eliminated. Imagine that you are aware of how the system works and you want to destroy it. This is your choice. In order to do that, you already have to be in the system. But the system develops so systematically that

you will always be the one who is destroyed, as in the last part of *eXistenZ* where in case of any threat to the game that may come from him (as the metaphor of the system) Allegra places a bomb in Pikul's bioport, meaning these kind of possibilities are eliminated long before their awareness. So, it is not impossible to act with free will, but it is almost impossible to survive while you are acting with your free will. Of course, the film *Matrix* can be given as a counterexample to this claim. Even though Neo prefers the red pill by using his free will, he still survives and even saves the planet. But both Neo saving the world and Pikul not able to save the world present an individualistic framework that Marx would criticize.

Can we claim that our activity under capitalism is neither free nor conscious? Not really, because for Marx, alienated labor does not mean unfree labor and this is based on his progressivist account of history. He talks about freedom in relative terms. Marx seems to argue that the worker is freer than the feudal serf, when his personal dependence on the lord is replaced by an impersonal dependence on market forces in capitalism. Furthermore, alienation is not merely negative. As Sayers argues, for Marx freedom does not simply mean the absence of alienation, but rather the overcoming of alienation (Sayers 1998).

How does capitalism transform human nature for Marx? Greed can be taken as a common motivation for most people in capitalism, which is encouraged by the system itself. It increases the competition among both workers and employers. This is at such a level that human beings turn into machines that only do their jobs and cannot relate to other people or nature in non-instrumental ways. According to Fromm's interpretation of Marx, if one does not relate himself actively to others and to nature, then he loses himself, his drives lose their human qualities and he becomes a sick, fragmented, crippled human being (Fromm 1973). In the *The Fly* (Cronenberg,

The Fly 1986) what is depicted by Cronenberg is exactly this transformation.

Through imposing these relative appetites as things that belong to our nature, the system turns human beings into robots that act as the system dictates and thereby guarantee its existence.

In both *The Fly* and *Dead Ringers*, as in the *Wall Street*, the environment in which all this happens is an unabashedly commercial one. In *The Fly*, Seth operates privately seeking funding and financiers outside the regular channels that subsidies and sponsor health care and scientific research. In *Dead Ringers*, Mantle twins have their own privately sponsored, commercially run, clinic. They treat rich people, patients who can afford services. This atmosphere of the commercialization of science fits, of course, the neo-liberal economics and politics of the 1980's. (Mathijs 2008)

Still in Marx's account, it is possible to act partly out of free will in the capitalist system. Accepting the fact that there are some external limits to our lives and these limits affect us and our choices does not follow the annihilation of free will.

Moreover, Marx accepts that there are and will always be some external limits in all possible systems. Marx says in *German Ideology*, 'Its premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions' (Marx 1845). But you can always choose even within those limits. According to Marx we cannot assume free will apart from the conditions we are living in. The main reason for this is that we are the producers of our conceptions and ideas and we are conditioned by a definite development of productive forces.

Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with his their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. (Marx 1845)

However, for Marx, this being conditioned by the mode of production does not mean that we are stuck in the system. Although capitalism extends freedom of choice it

prevents the development of free agency through alienation. The achievement of class consciousness would be an important step to increase freedom for Marx. This model cannot be valid for Cronenberg's world. Cronenberg's position is highly deterministic. He accepts that there is always a chance to be opposed to the system but for him it is a hopeless effort. Cronenberg recommends 'Continue to wrest control from the world, from the universe, from reality, even though it might be hopeless' (D. Shaw 2012). Here it is clear that Cronenberg's view has a tension in itself. He never explains why he believes in continuing fighting to control or change the world while he depicts a nearly fatalistic account of world in which nobody is in control, we are fumbling around the dark.

When describing how capitalism distorts human nature, Marx uses the analogy of the divided self. In capitalism, we have divided selves where 'private man' (our pursuit of private interests) dominates the 'public man' (our concern for public interests) because our nature is transformed in such a way that we act selfishly and our social relation are based on treating others as a means only (Marx 1843).

As we have seen, the social structure transforms individuals and these individuals reproduce the system. This is why in order to understand the tragedy of the main characters in Cronenberg's films, examining human nature by itself is not enough. The circumstances and the social structure in which these choices are made are also very important to explain why the results are always in contradiction with the motivations of the characters in these films. For example, the reasons why Allegra Geller (see Appendix) goes into a game business, in which artificial reality has to be created, and why Seth Brundle (see Appendix) wants to invent by himself rather than working with a team or why Max Renn (see Appendix) is so passionate about making people experience something unique in his TV channel should be

explored in relation to the social system they are living in. These characters all feel the need to make a difference in the world by them, in order to be visible and to be appreciated by others.

These people act as a part of civil society. Marx argues that the principle of the civil society is practical need and egoism and the god of practical need and self-interest is money (Marx 1843). So ‘money becomes the estranged essence of people that dominates them.’ It is estranged since people’s main motivation under capitalism is self-interest, whereas cultivation of genuine social relations is necessary to overcome our divided selves. Furthermore, not only the greed for money but also the desire for fame and prestige can be included in those motivations encouraged by capitalism. It is in this way that the human world dissolves into the world of atomistic individuals who are opposed to one another (Marx 1843). In *On The Jewish Question* Marx argues:

Practical need, the rationale of which is self- interest, is passive and does not expand at will, but finds itself enlarged as a result of the continuous development of social conditions. (Marx 1843)

What I argue is the following: People make decisions in accordance with the features of their human nature<sup>6</sup>. They choose how to act in accordance with their motivations. But we cannot analyze the real meaning of their actions by assuming that they have freedom of choice, because the system or social structure manipulates human nature, so that all the decisions one makes turn out to work for the benefit of the system and against the interests of the agent.

The principle of individualism, the pursuit of self-interest, was conditioned upon the proposition that self-interest was rational, that is to say, that it resulted from and was constantly guided and controlled by autonomous thinking. The rational self-interest did not coincide with the individual’s

---

<sup>6</sup> Assuming that there is a human nature that is mostly includes our needs, motivations, desires etc.

immediate self-interest, for the latter depended upon the standards and requirements of the prevailing social order, placed there not by his autonomous thought and conscience but by external authorities. (Marcuse 1941)

It seems that capitalism offers people individuality through presenting more options and giving them the chance to choose. But the choice is always among the ones that are presented to them, where the scope of freedom of choice is very limited. Of course options would always be limited for all humans anywhere and anytime. It cannot be peculiar to capitalism. But we can either know those limits or those will be natural limits<sup>7</sup> instead of being limits that are drawn by the mode of production for the system we are living in. In capitalism, since our powers, needs and capacities are modified in accordance with the system, most of the times we do not have free will to determine our motivations and create our own choices. Having some freedom of choice leads us to believe that we also have a free will. Sartre also thought that the existence of another option was sufficient to conclude that we have free will. However I am not convinced by this minimalistic account of free will. I would like to argue that free will has degrees; the more genuine freedom of choice we have, the more our free will is expanded.

We can now focus on Cronenberg's characters to understand why having free will is almost impossible under capitalism. Can we argue that those characters are living in a deterministic world? In one of his interviews conducted by William Beard and Pier Handling in May 1983 Cronenberg says:

I actually think that is the way the world works that we are in fact fumbling around in the dark. Nobody's in control. There is only the appearance of control, or on the part of individual people the illusion of control. (Shaw, David Cronenberg 1999)

---

<sup>7</sup> With the term *natural* I mean the limits that do not go beyond the capacity, motivations, needs, powers of a person who would like to choose.

The idea that ‘nobody is in control’ can be seen as a fatalist attitude but actually it is not. I think Cronenberg’s position is much more deterministic. His determinist attitude is represented in his films by the system and its institutions as the authoritarian structure (Siegler 2012). In contrast, Marx argues that even though we are social beings and are affected by the same social structure (i.e. prone to have divided selves), still corresponding to our different levels of consciousness we also have different motivations and actions; we may comply or rebel, not based on our individualistic free will, but rather based on how we interpret reality. For Cronenberg, since the individual completely internalizes the social values, she can never be herself and create her own values. Being unique can only be an illusion since it is not allowed in such a deterministic framework. Those people who try to be unique always transform into victims at the end. In *eXistenZ* this is very clearly depicted: When we start to watch the film, we suppose that Allegra Geller (see Appendix) is a game designer who even takes the risk of been killed by rival companies in order to present her new game. She seems to be making choices based on her free will, but at the end of the film, we see that she cannot make free choices. In the film *Videodrome* Max (see Appendix) seems very confident in claiming for *Videodrome* that it has almost no production costs and you cannot take your eyes off it –an almost prophetic reference to reality television (Cronenberg, *Videodrome* 1983). He seems as if he knows and controls every single thing about broadcasting. The only thing that would make a TV show good for him is the proportion of its budget and the number of viewers. This attitude illustrates what Marx considers the activity turning into an end in itself. So we can obviously say that Max Renn (see Appendix) is an example of a person who internalizes capitalistic values since all he pursues is self-gratification and profit. His entire work aims at these two. He has no

concerns about ethics or responsibility. Moreover, he seems very happy with that, as we have seen in the TV show scene. Is this tendency a result of his choice? No. He lives in the system that he has to adopt. Otherwise he would be the one that is eliminated. This elimination does not have to be as bloody as the ones in Cronenberg's films. After all, Max is the owner of a TV channel and television is one of the most popular media that are used for ideological reasons in capitalism. So, if Max tries to do something that the system does not approve, he would lose his channel, money, reputation –shortly, everything the system has allowed him to gain up to now, and thereby be eliminated from the system.

One of the main themes in Cronenberg films is that he has some problems concerning reality. He always carries his characters from one reality to the other (like Seth Brundle living as a human, then as an animal; virtual reality in *Videodrome* and *eXistenZ*); Cronenberg does not believe that a single reality exists. I think he puts his characters in different existence states and different environments and tries to see which ones survive. Though this destruction is illustrated as physical in his films, it does not have to be so in real life. It could be psychological, social or economic destruction. So this kind of reality/environment transformation in his films is motivated by, as he, himself, explains, a little bit Darwinism and a little bit existentialism (Siegler 2012). In this context, let us briefly highlight what Darwinism means. Social Darwinists claim that Darwin's theory of 'survival of the fittest' can be applied to explain which individuals fail and which individuals succeed in society. In other words, they claim that the determinism in capitalism is similar to biological determinism.

Darwin explains the theory of survival of the fittest as follows in his book *On The Origin of Species*:

The preservation of favorable individual differences and variations, and the destruction of those that are injurious, I have called Natural Selection or the survival of the fittest.(Darwin 1872)

What are the favorable and injurious variations for Darwin? The favorable variations should be the ones that give an advantage in the struggle for life. Darwin explains these variations and the reason why we should keep them as ‘slight modifications which in any way favored the individuals of any species, by better adapting them to their altered conditions would tend to be preserved’.(Darwin 1872) I think for capitalism, as I have mentioned above, these modifications are mostly related to the level of greed and ambition since they are the leading features to adapt to the conditions of the system.<sup>8</sup> Darwin says that ‘so she (nature) can act on every internal organ on every shade of constitutional difference, on the whole machinery of life’ (Darwin 1872) So the ongoing system can act on every internal organ such as education and media, on every shade of constitutional difference like religion and judgment, on the whole machinery of life that, I think, refers to the social structure. So survival of the fittest does not necessarily mean the survival of the stronger. Rather I think it is the survival of the ones who can calculate what serves best to the reproduction of the system, shortly what is the best way to guarantee one’s place in the system, in Darwinian terms, survival. This can be the pursuit of profit as well as working in inhumane conditions just to survive in accordance with one’s position within the society. Basically the ‘survival of the fittest’ theory takes the argument that given limited resources, there is always a continuous struggle for survival among the members of a species. Within these conditions some individuals will have

---

<sup>8</sup> Prisoner's Dilemma can be given as a counterexample to this claim. Since cooperative behavior can also give an advantage in the struggle for survival, it is possible that one holds Darwinism but rejects Social Darwinism. What about Cronenberg? Since his main characters later become victims, it seems that he is not defending social Darwinism.

variations and these variations give them an advantage in this struggle. So these individuals tend to survive better (Lennox 2010).

In other words, the ones who have the capacity and capability to adapt the ones who are parallel to the interests of the system survive better. What I mean by survival is merely being alive, not living a decent life, since it cannot be the case of the mass people, who are desperate and poor. So the system only selects the ones who are in the same line with it and let them live a decent life (I am using the word *decent* here in terms of the conventions of the system). S/he needs to be one of the gears of the wheel. In this case the majority has the illusion that the good for them is to succeed by accepting the rules of the game, no matter what its emotional and psychological costs are. The main reason for this is the Darwinian argument, 'Man selects only for his own good, nature only for that of the being which she tends. Every selected character is fully exercised by her, as is implied by the fact of their selection.' (Darwin 1872) If we try to apply this formula to society, I think the concept of man equals to individuals, 'nature' equals to the system, namely capitalism, and 'natural laws' are the conventions/dynamics of capitalism that keep its sustainability.

That means the structure of the individuals is determined by the structure of the system, since otherwise the individual cannot keep up with it and cannot survive within it. I argue that this kind of a determinist structure necessitates the limitation of freedom of choice since the structure fully determines the choices of the inhabitants. Let me give an example of the notion of greed within capitalism. Fromm argues that relative appetites such as avarice and greed are linked with the social structure and conditions of production, and communication, and thus laid the foundation for a dynamic psychology which understands human appetites— and that means a large

part of human motivation— as being predetermined by the process of production (Fromm 1973). I think greed is the most notable of these appetites in capitalism. In Oliver Stone's film *Wall Street* (Stone 1987), super-trader Gordon Gekko (see Appendix) makes a speech about greed:

Greed, for lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right; greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms, greed for life, for money, for love, for knowledge— has marked the upward surge of mankind (Mathijs 2008).

## CHAPTER 3

### FREUD'S DETERMINISTIC ACCOUNT OF HUMAN NATURE

According to Freud's psychological determinism, there is a fixed human nature that primarily aims at one's own good, which is basically survival, and since the only way to survive is to keep up with the system, all one's choices are directed towards this goal. Freud thinks that free will does not exist, and he holds an incompatibilist position. Freud takes human nature as fixed, which includes basically the sex and aggression drives. We are all directed by the pleasure principle, which basically means that we all seek pleasure and escape from pain.

Freud argues that our early childhood experiences and mainly how we experience the Oedipus complex shape most of our actions and our character. He argues that if there were no control over the stimuli (the basic drives of sex and aggression), the consequences would be destructive. That is why civilization that makes us manipulate our nature by using certain defense mechanisms is inescapable. These defense mechanisms are all defined in Freudian theory, but we do not need to go into them one by one since they are not related with our issue. What is important here is that we develop these mechanisms that specify our behaviors as opposed to certain stimuli. Watson's structure<sup>9</sup> can be clearly applied in Freudian theory. Hence, civilization is the determined outcome of the stimulus in accordance with which we behave. It is true that the type of civilization can be a system other than capitalism. However, since it is a fact that the system we are living in now is capitalism, I would like to see its relation with Freudian theory. After that, in the next chapter, I will try

---

<sup>9</sup> Classical conditioning see (Hall 1998)

to see whether it is possible to find alternative civilization systems under which we do not have to use Freudian psychodynamics as he defines them.

As I have mentioned in the first chapter, the existence or non-existence of human nature is directly related to the issue of free will. In these terms, we have explained that in Sartre's existentialism, human nature does not exist, whereas free will exists. For Marx, again we have seen that both human nature and free will exist. In Freudian understanding, human nature exists, whereas free will does not exist, since we are all determined by our nature to have the same motives, namely sex and aggression. So Freud has a deterministic view of human nature. I think this view directly makes Freudian theory psychological determinism. The main reason for this is the fact that since we do not have free will, our nature is structured in the way that is dictated to us. This dictation may be human nature itself as well as the structure of the society, political or economic ideology or any other environmental cause. Moreover, it can be a mixture of various factors. I mean, human nature can be deterministic and all the other factors serve to free or limit it due to the structure of the society we live in. For Freud, this dictation results from the basic drives, which are common to all humans. However, Erich Fromm rightly adds another component to the causal determinants of human nature.

I would like to add that Freud's system was developed under the influence of 19th century mechanistic materialism, a philosophy that Marx had already overcome. As a result, Freud described man as an isolated mechanism driven by mere physiological needs. If we want to adjust psychoanalysis to the needs of social research, we need to break this narrow framework of mechanistic materialism and transport Freud into the framework of humanistic philosophy of history. Then, the primary focus is no longer only on man's drives, in which his development differs the least from the animal—but about man's relationship with the world. (Fromm 2011)

So Fromm thinks that the determinant we are talking about is not the basic drives but rather the relation of these basic drives with the reality of the world. That is why I

argue that there can be alternative systems in which we do not need to organize the dynamics of the mind (the id, ego and superego) as Freud did. Hence, in the last chapter, I will try to find a way to escape from this dictation and see whether it is possible to be free by organizing these dynamics differently. However, for the time being, I want to focus on the capitalist mode of production, since it is the reality of our world as the source of this dictation that is not only economic but also has its own social and political conventions.

For Freud, human nature consists of two main dynamics: sex and aggression (Freud 1962). In the early Freudian theory, only the conscious and the unconscious are used to explain the dynamics of the soul. Yet, in the late Freudian theory, these concepts are seen as insufficient and he introduces a new term, that is, a level of unconscious, namely the preconscious. While the unconscious deals with the things that are unrecognizable for us, the preconscious is much more connected to perceptions. This is the origin where the idea of the id, ego and superego, the dynamics of the soul, came from (Freud 1962).

What Freud beforehand calls the unconscious, he names afterwards as the id. What the id contains are Freudian basic instincts, sex and aggression, that are the main elements of human nature. The id always acts in accordance with the pleasure principle, which aims at pursuing pleasure and escaping pain. The id is by definition unconscious. So basically the id is the set of uncontrolled instinctual drives. For Freud, civilization is the inevitable fact of our lives (Freud 1962). The misery of humanity comes from the fact that civilization is founded upon the dissatisfaction of basic human instincts (Freud 1962). Thus, as we repress these basic instincts, the dominance of the civilization expands and this situation is seen as the development of humanity (Freud 1962). The main reason for the repression of basic instincts came

from the fact that if we set them all free, they will be destructive for us. That is why civilization is inevitable. Regarding the movie *The Fly*, Daniel Shaw argues that the theme of the film is the excessive repression of our instincts, which civilization requires for its continued existence (D. Shaw 2012). Seth Brundle's physical transformation depicts the return of the repressed things from the id. So the bodily transformation reflects what is in the id and we see that they are not compatible with the conventions of human civilization. It is more apparent when we see Seth and Veronica together, since Veronica is the representation of a civilized, educated, reasonable human being. Seth's desire for sex emerges and cannot be satisfied. His aggressive drive is also activated and he cannot control it. It is depicted as if Seth is under the control of an inner mechanism, whereas ordinary people are under the control of an outer mechanism (civilization, thus the ego through the superego). Seth cannot reverse the transformation that increasingly robs him of his humanity (D. Shaw).

For Freud, civilization is inevitable. The reason for this is that Freud clearly says that the instinct of aggression that we always feel inside is the main thing that breaks the relationship with our neighbors. So civilization tries to limit the instinct of aggression and keep the expression of it at the minimum level (Freud 1962). The question here is: Why do we need to maintain a relationship with others if it is possible for us to live as much as we fit the conditions? For Freud, there are two main reasons why human beings live together: the first one is the compulsion to work, created by external necessity, and the second one is the power of love, causing the male to wish to keep his sexual object, the female, near him, and the female to keep near her that part of herself which has become detached from her, her child.

Eros and Ananke were the parents of human culture, too (Freud 1962). So civilization is not just inevitable but also necessary. In Freud's terms:

Their interests in their common work would not hold them together; the passions of instinct are stronger than reasoned interests. Culture has to call up every possible reinforcement in order to erect barriers against the aggressive instincts of men and hold their manifestations in check by reaction-formations in men's minds. Hence its system of methods by which mankind is to be driven to identifications and aim-inhibited love-relationships; hence the restrictions on sexual life; and hence, too. Its ideal command to love one's neighbor as oneself, which is really justified by the fact that nothing is so completely at variance with original human nature as this. (Freud 1962)

As Shaw argues, Cronenberg's films largely highlight the unavoidable fates of persons who are acting on their natures and seem to have little choice in the matter (D. Shaw 2012). On the other hand, Freud accepts that it is not always possible to separate sex and aggression from each other, since most of the time these two merge and are encountered together. Since these two instincts merge in different proportions each time and in each case they look different from the other, they are not always recognizable (Freud 1962). In Freudian theory, the death drive functions as follows: 'It can be turned outwards, externalized as sadistic aggression, or it can be masochistically internalized, as aggression directed towards the ego' (Carel 2013). Similarly, the life instinct is externalized as sex. Freud thinks that we may see the polarity between the life instinct and the death instinct as the opposition between love and hate. But at the same time, this opposition makes us lose the limit between the two classes.

Not only that in human relationships is frequently a forerunner of love, but also that in a number of circumstances hate changes into love and love into hate. (Freud 1962)

For this kind of an argument, Freud has to suppose that there should be energy both in the id and in the ego that has an effect on both the life and death instincts in order

for the transformation mentioned above. Actually, Freud has that kind of a supposition and explains what it could be as follows.

This energy helps the transformation from the id to the ego through sublimation. For Freud, sublimation can take place through the mediation of the ego (Freud 1996). So we can assume that the ego is working as opposed to the id, since it transforms what is in the id through sublimation and makes it acceptable. This means if the ego gets weaker, the id gets stronger. I will use this argument for explaining the actions of Cronenberg's characters. This framework seems to be a way through which we can escape from the destruction instinct that comes from our nature, the id. But Freud takes Fechner's principle of constancy<sup>10</sup> as governing life, so he accepts that there is a constant descent towards death. Furthermore, this constant inclination originates from Eros, sexual instincts which though we can sublimate we cannot annihilate. So the id tries to save itself by trying to satisfy the sexual drives. (Freud 1996). The destructive feature of Eros is apparent at this point. Freud explains it as follows: 'After Eros has been eliminated through the process of satisfaction the death instinct has a free hand for accomplishing its purpose' (Freud 1996). So by pushing the id to be satisfied, Eros opens the way for the death instinct, that is the inescapable destruction of the individual. Thus for Freud, the total freedom of both the life instinct and the death instinct is destructive. For this situation, even the 'survival of the fittest' is impossible, since everyone individually has an inclination for destruction. That is why, again, civilization is inescapable and necessary, and the ones who adapt to civilization are the ones who succeed most in survival.

---

<sup>10</sup> The mechanism that controls overstimulation in the physical sphere and overdetermination in the psychical. It seeks stability for the organism, the psychical apparatus and the social organism all alike (Meisel 2007).

Among the concepts I have mentioned above, the ego is the one that has a relation with both the preconscious and the unconscious, though its relation with the unconscious is always the close one. The most important thing that separates the ego from the id is the fact that the ego has a contact with external reality. Freud made this analogy of the relation between the id and the ego: the id is a horse, while the ego is the rider. The ego is 'like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse' (Freud 1996). That means the ego should control the id, but it should also know how to be attuned to the id when necessary. The ego always tries to settle the reality principle instead of the pleasure principle, which the id always pursues. In the movie *Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, Žizek argues that our ego, our psychic agency, is an alien for distorting, controlling our body. I think the main reason Žizek uses this argument is the contrast between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. In Freudian terms, the id is motivated by the pleasure principle and the ego is motivated by the reality principle. The ego represents reason and common sense, whereas the id represents desires (Freud 1996). For Freud, these two are always antagonistic since for the sake of civilization (struggle for existence) we need to repress or modify what is in the id. This modification is made with the help of the superego in the ego and constitutes the reality principle. So I think that is why the ego is distorting and controlling our body since in our nature we are motivated by the id.

*The Fly* returns to the theme of the excessive repression of our instincts, which civilization requires for its continued existence. As Seth Brundle physically transforms, he slowly throws off all vestiges of human civilization as well. (D. Shaw 2012)

The ego has two parts: ego-itself and ego-ideal (superego). There is always a conflict between the id and the superego. The ego is the realistic part of the mind which should organize the conflict and mediate between the desires of the id and the

superego. For Freud, the superego is a differentiation within the ego, which is less firmly connected to consciousness (Freud 1996).

The superego is a consequence of the identification changes that happened during the experience of the Oedipus<sup>11</sup> complex in the ego. Freud says that the superego is not only a residue of the oldest object choices of the id but also it is an energetic reaction to these choices. The relationship of the superego with the ego consists of not only the warning 'you should be like this – like your father' but also the ban 'you cannot be like this – like your father'. That means you cannot do everything that your father does. Some things are special to him (Freud 1996). So the superego protects the character of the father. If the Oedipus complex is too strong and the things that are repressed, such as the authority, religion or education are repressed too fast then the superego will appear as conscience and guilt-feeling and dominate the ego harshly. The superego is the inheritor of the Oedipus complex since it is the representation of the first relationship with our parents. We met with it while we were children; we admire it and are afraid of it, then we accept it. That is why the superego is the representative of the strongest instincts of the id (Freud 1996). The reason for this is that our sexual and aggressive desires that we reflect towards our parents and that originate the Oedipus complex are in the id and they are the things that shape the superego.

According to Freud the formation of the superego is a corollary of the decline of the Oedipus complex. When the child stops trying to satisfy his Oedipal wishes, which have become prohibited, he transforms his cathexis of his

---

<sup>11</sup> The Oedipus complex, in psychoanalytic theory, is a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and a concomitant sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex; a crucial stage in the normal developmental process. Sigmund Freud introduced the concept in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899).

parents into an identification with them – he internalizes the prohibition.  
(Jean Laplace 1973)

With the directions of the superego, the ego dominates the Oedipus complex and is connected to the id. As the ego represents the outer world, the superego counters it as being the representative of the inner world, id. So all the conflicts between the ego and the superego represent the conflicts between the outer world and the inner world, between what is real and what is spiritual. So we can say that the superego is the critical and moral part of the mind.

This structure of Freudian psychological determinism is very visible in Cronenberg's films. Some parts of these films also give an idea of the society in which psychological determinism is necessary and common. Daniel Shaw sees Cronenberg's position as unmistakably deterministic (D. Shaw 2012). Cronenberg also personally believes in biological determination. In one of his interviews, he says, 'It's mysterious, but the implication of all this is that a huge amount of what we are is biologically predetermined' (D. Shaw 2012). His 1998 film *Dead Ringers* illustrates both biological determinism through twin characters and psychological determinism through the relationship between them and the people around them.

*Dead Ringers* tells the story of two gynecologist identical twins, shy and passive Beverly (see Appendix) and confident and cynical Elliot Mantle (see Appendix), who specialize in the treatment of female fertility problems. Elliot is the one who seduces women and then they are passed on to Beverly pretending to be Elliot. With the introduction of Claire Niveau (see Appendix), an actress who probably cannot have children due to trifurcated cervix, the relationship between the twins cracks since Beverly becomes emotionally attached to Claire. Claire notices that Elliot has been taking sexual advantage of her by behaving as Beverly she leaves

both. Beverly gets depressed and becomes a drug user. Then Claire decides to be with Beverly until she leaves for a film set. Beverly starts to have paranoid delusions about infertile women that he calls mutants due to the effects of the drugs he uses. He asks an artist to make weird gynecological instruments and then tries to use them on a patient, which ends with the suspension of Beverly and Elliot from practice. At the end of the film, Elliot asks to be killed by Beverly with the same instruments in order to separate Siamese twins (that is also a delusion). Then Beverly also dies in Elliot's dead arms.<sup>12</sup> Cronenberg noted the similarity of the film to tragedy in one of his interviews made by Anne Billson from *Monthly Film Bulletin*. He says, '*Dead Ringers*, to me, is as close to classical tragedy as I've come, in that it is inevitable right from the opening what the twins' destiny will be' (D. Shaw 2012). His fascination with twins derives, in part, from contemporary research that showed how remarkably similar twins who are raised in separate environments turn out to be. He says, 'It's very mysterious, but the implication of all this is a huge amount of what we are is biologically predetermined' (D. Shaw 2012).

In all of Cronenberg's films, the main drive of the characters, which we can relate with human nature, is to survive and succeed. In order to survive, as I have mentioned above, one needs to adopt the best features to fit the system. Since capitalism is a system that is founded upon values such as competition and profit, all the values such as wealth, respectability, popularity, greed and ambition are the best features to fit the system. People need to secure their position in order not to be eliminated. Mathijs argues:

Never are Cronenberg's scientists interested in progress or in bettering the world. They are in it for themselves, in the first instance to satisfy their own

---

<sup>12</sup> You can find the detailed story of the film from the following link:  
<http://www.davidcronenberg.de/psychoringers.html>

curiosity and appease their own fears. In *The Fly* Seth develops an experiment because he wants to cure his own motion sickness; in *Dead Ringers*, the specialist gynecologist twins Elliot and Beverly Mantle treat infertile women both because they are fascinated by women's physiognomy and to get laid. ....It also highlights their twisted morality: egocentrism and an inability to refuse to act on their greedy impulses cause willful and desperate wrongdoing. (Mathijs 2008)

Here the system specifies and necessitates what you should adopt in order to survive. Again Cronenberg's scientists, namely Seth (see Appendix) and Mantle Brothers (see Appendix), depict this situation very well. Mathijs argues that '...most scientists in Cronenberg's films they exempt themselves from regular morality to achieve immortality. Whenever they are cautious it is not for ethical reasons, but because it might not be safe' (Mathijs 2008). Still I argue that we cannot take people as morally responsible of their decisions since these are not their own values but rather the ones that are imposed on them by the system through the superego. Cronenberg depicts his characters in such a way that as the audience we cannot love or hate them. We feel sorry for them. The reason why we cannot hate them is that the system specifies their choices. So these choices are not out of free will. That is why though we get angry at some parts, we also have our heart go out to these characters. In a way, these characters are the victims of the system. They pursue holding on to values and attitudes that do not belong to them but are rather imposed on them.

Daniel Shaw tells that Cronenberg frequently refers to Freud in public interviews, especially to Freudian theses that civilization is based on repression, that dreams are the 'royal road' to the unconscious and that art can be a safe vicarious outlet for repressed instinctual desires (D. Shaw 2012). Here I would like to discuss two points. First of all, as I have mentioned above, the theses that 'civilization is based on repression' is related with the control of the id by the ego in order to prevent the id from destroying oneself. The main reason is the fact that the id

includes both the death and love instincts, which, Freud argues, in the end turns into a destructive force for existence. That is why in order to survive together civilization is not just necessary but also inevitable. Here I would like to discuss the question, taking what Freud argues for granted, what happens if we do not repress the id enough and our ego cannot find a balance between the id and the superego.

I would like to use Cronenberg's characters in the films *The Fly*, *eXistenZ* and *Videodrome* respectively as thought experiments to answer this question. The common feature of all these characters is that they are all very ambitious people in terms of what they do as a job. In *The Fly*, we watch Seth Brundle (see Appendix) in the role of a scientist/inventor who desperately tries to make the teleport he invents work properly. In *Videodrome*, Max Renn (see Appendix) is the character who tries to find the most attractive program in order to raise the rating of his TV and become the most popular TV owner in that time. Similarly, Allegra Galler (see Appendix) in *eXistenZ* is the most popular and talented game designer who sacrifices herself in order to keep her game working and then gets lost in it. So these are all passionate people with strong desires to feed and a high motivation to satisfy them.

All these passions and desires are related to the id for Freud, apparently. So we can consider these people as having a strong id. What does it mean to have a strong id and act in accordance with it in life? I argue that there are two options in this situation: one can have a stronger superego that represses the strong id or one can have a weak superego that cannot control the id's desires. If the superego as well as the id are strong, they would be in balance through the ego, so we do not have any problem with that case. I argue if the superego is weak whereas the id is strong, the result is antisocial characters. The origin of the superego comes from the strong demands of the id (with the aim of control). The ego of young children is too weak to

resist the id's strong demands; that is why for a long time the superego shapes the behavior.

One case could be that the superego of the character is too weak to control the desires of the id so all the destructive character of the id that we explained above dominates the ego. In this case, I argue the individual cannot adapt to the society, so antisocial individuals emerge. The reason why I call these people antisocial is that in Freudian theory, we do not have a free choice. If our psychodynamic units (the id, ego, and superego) are not structured properly, we need to be cured through psychotherapy. So for Freud, *antisocial* has a negative connotation as something that should be cured. On the contrary, I believe Marcuse would not take being antisocial as a negative aspect of human beings; rather, he would say that these people face their strong id and do not choose to conform to the traditional conventions of the society. So in this case, being antisocial can even be an emancipator process for Marcuse. We will see the reasons of this claim in the next chapter while dealing with Marcuse's arguments. So for Freud, the goal of the psychoanalysis is to adapt the individual to the existing society since the relation with the reality is under the control of a higher system (the superego, which is constituted by the social order starting with family) and our human nature (the id, which is destructive and has to be controlled anyway, from Freudian perspective). This is why there is such a concept as 'normal' in Freudian theory. In this case, where the id is not controlled properly, the ego cannot work properly, so the individual cannot find a place for him/herself in the society. Moreover, if the id is too strong and is not controllable by the superego, then moral choices of these characters should be in favor of the id rather than in line with social authorities.

The second case could be that the superego of the character grows stronger than the way it should be in order to repress the strong desires of the id. In this case, the superego does not let the ego satisfy even the basic and necessary needs of the id. So the individual comes under the control of the rules of the superego, which would be a very degenerate moralist and normative attitude. In this case, creativity could no longer exist, since the id and the ego are completely under the domination of the superego, which does not allow any thought or feeling. Sublimation cannot be a solution to this process, since it is a defense mechanism gone through in the ego and in our case, since the superego is too strong (even stronger than the id), the ego cannot find its balance.

This is a situation that in any case leads to the improper constitution of the ego, which is the representative of the reality principle and which is the medium that makes us function in that reality properly. As we have said, the superego is always connected to the id in a critical way. The superego criticizes the excesses of the id as a moral power and triggers the ego to control it and find a balance. If the id is too strong to be controlled, as in Cronenberg's characters, the person's psychological structure changes in favor of it. The ego, as the representative of the outer world, cannot be developed that much since the power is in the id's hands and the superego has little control of it. Also, a person with a strong id may lose his sense of reality, being unsure about what is real and what is a product of his imagination. Or in the opposite case, the ego cannot be developed properly since the superego dominates it. In any case, the superego is the bridge between the inner world (id) and outer world (ego). If it is weak or overly strong, then the relationship between the inner and outer world cannot be founded properly. The ego cannot take reality as it is; so it cannot adjust itself to it. Thus a weak ego is an isolated ego from reality.

The weak Ego doesn't easily face, take in, and cope with what is. Instead it fights reality, hates it, and wishes it otherwise. Expectations are unrealistic and based on inadequate understanding. Reality seems too big, too frightening, too overwhelming ... and so we avoid the encounter. We feel unresourceful, weak, fragile, unable to cope, etc. The weaker the ego-strength, the less we will engage reality and the more we will flee to superstition, wishing rather than acting, and to addictions. (Mitchell n.d.)

In my opinion, this may lead these characters to be antisocial, which we can clearly observe in the aforementioned discussion. So for the antisocial people, these dynamics of the soul should be redefined. We cannot consider these people as harmful or we cannot romanticize them as extraordinary. This difference in the dynamics of the soul does not make these people freak, insane or dangerous. They simply cannot form an ordinary ego since they do not participate in life adequately because of the conflict between the id and the superego. In Freudian terms, the bridge between the inner and outer world is not as strong as in ordinary people, since these people cannot be involved in the outer world that much. Durkheim's concept of *anomie* is very close to this view. For Durkheim, our social and emotional needs are unlimited compared to physical needs. The reason for this is the fact that our physical needs are limited with our body. He argues that our feelings are limitless, as Freud argues about the id's desires. As we cannot control our id and need another dynamic to control the id, Durkheim argues that we need an external mechanism to control our feelings (which is the ego in Freudian terms). This external mechanism should be based on morality both for Durkheim and Freud. It is the superego for Freud, whereas Durkheim considers it as the society. So the moral mechanism is external for Durkheim, whereas it is directly in relation with the inner world for Freud. So as in Cronenberg's characters, the combination of a strong id with a weak superego can only be structured in people who are not that much in society. Anomie (or normlessness) means the lack of the usual social or ethical standards in an individual or group (Emile Durkheim: Social Facts, Anomie, Consciousness Collectives 2012)

The contrast between a properly structured society and psychologically improperly structured individuals living in that society is clearly illustrated in Cronenberg's movies. The question is what happens to these characters if they attempt to be active in the society? The genre Cronenberg uses is the main metaphor of the answer to this question. In his early films, the genre he mostly uses is body horror, in which the body is destroyed in a hardcore, bloody way, whereas in a couple of his last films he uses psychological pressure to give the feeling of destruction. This order or development in his filmography gives a depiction of the effects of capitalism on people. If we consider the following films, we can easily follow the transformation: 1983 *Videodrome*, 1986 *The Fly*, 1988 *Dead Ringers*, 2012 *Cosmopolis*, and 2014 *Maps to the Stars*. With the development of capitalism, the effects are getting more and more psychological rather than merely physical, like poverty, starvation or physical exploitation. Cronenberg's characters destroy themselves either physically (like suicide or harming the body) or psychologically (depression, loneliness or unhappiness). I would like to give an example from the history of music starting from the 1970s up to today, though this is a very caricaturized way to explain this relation. Most of the musicians, especially the most popular and mainstream ones or rock stars, commit suicide. It was so common that it turned out to be a fashion. Especially the age 27 is associated as the age of suicide.<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, the ones who did not commit suicide deformed their bodies using different piercings, tattoos or changing the way they look. Gradually, these numbers of suicidal activities among musicians rose up to the 1990s. After that, the depression they have starts to be reflected on their music. That is why new music genres and musical icons emerged, such as emo musicians, who express their depression or

---

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.classicbands.com/heaven.html>

rebellion through lyrics, or trance musicians, through which they reflect the state of hypnotism or let us say the need to become numb.

Daniel Shaw argues that ‘art can be a safe vicarious outlet for repressed instinctual desires’ (D. Shaw 2012). I think this sentence gives us a clue about who these people with a strong id along with a weak superego are in our society. Are they common people in the society or can we identify them through certain talents or activities? I think yes, we can separate them from the common people in the society. The very first thing that came to my mind, and apparently Daniel Shaw agrees with this, is that these people are the ones who are creative, since art is a way to sublimate the repressed instinctual desires. By creative people, I not only refer to artists but also scientists, inventors, designers or even marketing experts who use their creativity to find new ways of selling, which is very crucial in the capitalist mode of production since competition is very strong. Sublimation is demanded by the superego, the superego cannot enforce it.

In Freudian psychology, sublimation is a defense mechanism by which the individual satisfies a socially prohibited instinctive drive (usually sexual or aggressive) through the substitution of socially acceptable behavior. Our desires and aggressions are deflected from their instinctual expression toward some other form of expression or satisfaction that is more appropriate, positive or socially acceptable. (Mitchell n.d.)

So sublimation is a process that deals with instincts. Then the more instincts we have to repress—that is the case for a strong id independent of the superego—the more sublimation we need to do. If the superego is strong enough to give the directions to the ego to dominate these instincts, the process of sublimation can be successful and we can satisfy our basic instincts (aggression and sex) in a socially

acceptable way. There is another option called desublimation<sup>14</sup> that is, I think, valid for the situations in which the superego is not well functioning (not well functioning in the sense that it is not strong).

Desublimation is done in such a way to loosen superego control by giving a person immediate gratification in one way, thus easily satisfying the person's need, whilst at the same time manipulating him into a purchase or desired behavior. (Mitchell n.d.)

So desublimation is a social manipulation of the natural and inner process of sublimation. Thus, the sublimated instincts are not transformed in accordance with the individual's own interest but rather transformed into motivations that are useful for social, political or economic forces. That means while sublimation's main drive is the ego, desublimation's main drive is the id through reducing the ego defenses. I mean the ego cannot choose the rational option or the one that is in accordance with its own interests but rather the id is satisfied through loosening the superego and at the same time the behavior that had to come out of the ego is manipulated. Marcuse gives the examples of advertising and propaganda in explaining desublimation (Mitchell n.d.). These are the two key means that are used in capitalism very often. That is why I argue antisocial people with a weak ego, since the relation between the id and the superego is manipulated by the social, political and economic system of capitalism, desublimates their basic instincts. Though they could have been very creative through the sublimation process and feel good about it, they turned their instincts into something in accordance with the system. This makes them feel alienated from what they do, since sublimation is a natural and inner-directed process and desublimation is a manipulated and system-directed process. I argue this is the main reason why Cronenberg depicts his characters as destroyed by the things they

---

<sup>14</sup> For further information on desublimation, see Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 1964, pp. 56-84.

create. It is not a depiction of sublimation, as we first think; rather, it is a depiction of the people who are exposed to the desublimation process. We can observe the most visible desublimation effect on Cronenberg's scientist characters. As a common view, one may expect the aim of a scientist to be serving for the good of the world or society. That is why mostly we do not see scientists as popular figures; rather, we hear their name along with their inventions. Mathijs explains Cronenberg's characters as follows: 'Scientists would move from playing supporting roles to becoming the protagonists in both *The Fly* and *Dead Ringers*, and besides their fanaticism and stubborn belief in "bettering the world" sometimes against their better judgment, they would display a topical characteristic: greed – they are in it for money and for themselves' (Mathijs 2008). As we have said throughout this discussion, the basic value of capitalism—greed—is the manipulated but adopted value of the scientist characters. Thus, their superego manipulates the instincts coming from their id. Through sublimation, they can still create, but the purpose of creation would be manipulated by the system.

First of all, since we have been discussing a capitalist society from the beginning as our main topic, I would like to make a parallelism between the structure of the capitalist society and Freudian dynamics of the soul. I think this parallelism would explain the reason why the desublimation process is so common in capitalism. Let me give a brief summary of the Freudian psychodynamic system and see whether in part it can refer to the structure of the society we are living in. As we have said, there is the id that constitutes our nature and includes our basic drives—aggression and sex, both of which are destructive when they are set free, and that is why civilization is inescapable. There is the superego that originates from our early childhood experience of the Oedipus complex; that is why it is very connected to the

id, but it also has a part that is connected to the ego. The ego is the realistic part of our mind that tries to find a balance between these two opposite forces so that we can transform our basic instincts in a socially acceptable way and live together. So the id represents our inner instincts; the superego is the moral and critical part of the mind and the ego is the one that balances these two and makes us suitable for living together.

I argue that the structure of the capitalist society matches the Freudian structure of the mind in the following way: We can think of the id as the metaphor of what individuals really are, want or desire without any societal, political or economic repression. Hence, the id is not necessarily destructive, in contrast to what Freud argues. On the other hand, the superego can be read as the metaphor of the values of the capitalist system that are imposed on the individual in one way or another; e.g., in Foucault's model of disciplinary society, it is national standards for educational programs, for medical practice, for industrial processes and products (Gutting 2014). Following these two, I argue that the depiction of the ego is the metaphor of individuals that are modified in accordance with the values of the system in order to survive. So, in a capitalist society, most of us modify our nature (our desires, values or needs) unconsciously in accordance with the system's values in order to be the individuals that can survive in the system. So, although our main motivations seem to belong to us, in fact they are causally determined by the system. That is why this process is very similar to the desublimation process.

Now I would like to give a brief account of what Freud thinks as a solution for the individuals who have problems in maintaining this psychodynamic structure in a balanced way. What I mean by *balance* is the following:

Goaded on by the id, hemmed in by the super-ego, and rebuffed by reality, the ego struggles to cope with its economic task of reducing the forces and influences which work in it and upon it to some kind of harmony. (Freud 1933)

So individuals who do not have this kind of a harmony within them have to be cured by psychotherapy. Then, as the director of the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis Franz Alexander puts it:

The goal of psychotherapy is to increase the ego's efficiency in fulfilling its task of finding such gratification for a person's subjective needs (the id) as is in harmony with the standards and ideals of the person (super-ego) and with existing conditions (reality). (Stiler 1946)

This gives me the idea that Freud considers every individual in a capitalist order and does not take any other alternative system into account. So I argue all of Freud's claims about the psychodynamics of the soul assume the order of capitalism in the background as the reality of now and future. That is why the individuals who cannot keep up with this order need to be cured by psychotherapy. I believe this has a hidden assumption that the problem is always in the individuals, not in the system, contrary to what Marx believes. This is an important assumption since if this is taken for granted, then we cannot imagine an alternative system, since the revolution which is solely based on the revolt of the individuals within a system becomes impossible (assuming the fact that the system is stable and every individual with the idea of a revolt should be cured). Paul Goodman describes the situation as follows:

...then that the goal of therapy is the smooth running of the social machine as it exists? What a fantastic proposal, when a society creates emotional tensions, to reorient not the society but the people! (Stiler 1946)

So it is clear that the political application of psychotherapy always keeps the existing order, namely capitalism, stable. The critical thing here is the fact that we expect from psychoanalysis to give the patient a free choice to either adapt to the system or struggle against it in accordance with his/her desire. It does not imply knowing

oneself, but rather knowing what the system requires and adapting to it. The Freudian theory exactly advises this:

If the patient is to fight the normal conflict that our analysis has revealed against the suppressions, he requires a tremendous impetus to influence the desirable decision which will lead him back to health. Otherwise he might decide for a repetition of the former issue and allow those factors which have been admitted to consciousness to slip back again into suppression. The deciding vote in this conflict is not given by his intellectual penetration—which is neither strong nor free enough for such an achievement—but only by his relation to the physician. Inasmuch as his transference carries a positive sign, it invests the physician with authority and is converted into faith for his communications and conceptions. (Freud 1920)

So the relation of psychoanalysis with capitalism is based on the fact that therapy aims to adapt individuals to the social order, which is already one of the main goals of capitalism. It tries to make all individuals serve the interest of the system; moreover, it aims to make individuals believe that this is based on their own free choices and that they are merely pursuing their self-interest, which is only natural, not ideological. Freudian belief that our natural instincts require control no matter the form of society has this principle secured. The main justification Freud has for this is the existence of the death instinct and his assumption of an eternal and inevitable conflict between the pleasure and reality principles.

What if the first assumption of Freud is wrong in that we do not necessarily have a death instinct in our nature but it is something that is imposed upon us by the capitalist order to keep us in control through forcing us to sublimate on behalf of the system?

For Freud culture is the result of sublimated repressed instincts. The primitive sex instinct meets with the opposition of the ever watchful super-ego, or the death instinct seeks gratification and is thwarted, the ego then sublimates these instinctual needs in the form of art or poetry as well as war or capitalist competition. (Stiler 1946)

But what if the repression of instincts is not a part of the capitalist culture but its cause? Then it would be impossible for Freud to defend that our instincts are a threat to every community. The possibility of what I ask above is stated by Marx as a conceptual framework. In the Marxist theory, the development of culture is based upon the mode of production within society, whereas Freud bases the development of culture upon the 'mode of production within the individual' (Stiler 1946). That is why Freud tries to adjust individuals to the social order through therapy. For him, even the Russian Revolution failed because human nature is immutable, and consequently any attempt to change the world is doomed to result in a system which, in the final analysis, resembles the present capitalist world (Stiler 1946). That means Freud envisions the psychic life as economic life within the capitalist system. First, he makes all these assumptions within the capitalist system, and then he envisions them in accordance with the values and principles of the capitalist system, and I do not know why he does not foresee any alternative system that can provide a way out of this cycle. So he not only accepts the system as everlasting, but also through helping the adjustment of the human psyche to this particular social system, he contributes to the reproduction and justification of capitalism.

In the next chapter, following Marcuse's synthesis of Marx and Freud, I will argue that we can find a way out of the system through gaining consciousness of this illusion and an increased awareness of our alienation. I also argue that since we can find a way out of this system by envisioning an alternative system, we do not necessarily have to structure our minds as Freud argues in order to survive. It is possible for us not to repress our own nature if we can conceptualize an alternative system in which the id and the superego overlap, i.e. in which what we really are and the values of the system correspond to each other.

## CHAPTER 4

### MARCUSE'S THEORY OF EMANCIPATION AS AN OPTIMISTIC ALTERNATIVE TO CRONENBERG'S PESSIMISM

When we consider the systems given by Freud and Marx, I think they have a common mistake in that they consider only one aspect of the issue. Freud takes the issue based only on individuals, whereas Marx does not take the psychological aspect into account. Herbert Marcuse turned to Freudian studies since he was aware of the lack of emphasis on individual liberation and the psychological dimension in Marxism.

He wanted to produce a theory that would explain why revolutionary consciousness had failed to develop and which could identify the subjective conditions which led individuals to conform to fascism, Stalinism and consumer capitalism. (Kellner 1984)

Marcuse is well aware of the fact that the transition from capitalism to socialism did not happen mainly because the proletariat had integrated into the status quo and capitalism had stabilized itself (Ocaý 2009). Marcuse tries to provide an anthropological basis to Marxism by using Freud's theory of instincts. So by reconstructing the pieces he gets from Marxist and Freudian literature, Marcuse tries to present a theory of emancipation and thereby introduce alternatives to our contemporary life styles. That is why in his book *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, he first tries to explain why repression is widespread in advanced industrial societies and finds the obstacles to liberation and then he gives his account on liberation and the structure of a non-repressive alternative society.

Marcuse first attempts to criticize Freud's theory of civilization given in the *Civilization and its Discontents*. Since he finds Freud too pessimistic on the issue of happiness within civilization, Marcuse tries to show the possibility of a non-repressive society. As we have discussed above, for Freud the progress in civilization necessitates imposed labor and instinctual repression.

Freud argues that unimpeded sexual gratification is incompatible with the renunciation and delay in satisfaction is a prerequisite for progress. Happiness and sexual pleasure, Freud claims, have no cultural value and are to be subordinated to work, monogamous reproduction, moral rectitude and social restraint. (Kellner 1984)

So for Freud we need to repress any instinct (either life or death) that comes from the id since it would be destructive and an obstacle to progress. That is why from a very early stage of our childhood we structure the superego based on our family values, social and cultural structure. Marcuse interprets this as follows: 'The methodical sacrifice of libido, its rigidly enforced deflection to socially useful activities and expression, is culture' (Marcuse 1955). As we have mentioned in the previous chapter, Freud thinks that a non-repressive civilization is impossible since we strongly have an aggressive tendency toward each other, as the metaphor of 'man is a wolf to man' suggests (Freud 1962). Moreover, there is the conflict between the pleasure principle and the reality principle that Freud thinks can never be reconciled, so the instincts that are directed by the pleasure principle should be repressed. As opposed to Freud, Marcuse argues that Freud's own theory shows that socialization and repression are historically specific and subject to social transformation (Kellner 1984). This is exactly what I have argued at the end of the previous chapter. I believe there is always a possibility to reach an alternative system. And I think, as Marcuse, it is not very hard to see the connection of the degree of repression in accordance with the technical and economic potential of the society. When we reveal that

repression is not inevitable, it becomes possible to imagine alternative societies with different technical and economic potentialities, leading to different psychodynamics within people's minds.

For Freud, the reality principle is represented by the ego, and the superego is the mediator between the id and the reality principle. Marcuse, in his interpretation of Freudian psychodynamics, thinks that the reality principle plays the role of both the ego and the superego.

But the reality which shapes the instincts as well as their needs and satisfaction is a socio-historical world. The animal man becomes a human being only through a fundamental transformation of his nature, affecting not only the instinctual aims but also the instinctual 'values'. (Marcuse 1955)

For Marcuse the reality principle, which is external to the individual, imposes society's requirements, values, norms and prohibitions. Hence, the society dominates the individual from the outside and shapes his/her thoughts, behaviors, needs and desires. Marcuse explains this as follows:

Neither his desires nor his alteration of reality are henceforth his own: they are now 'organized' by the society. And this 'organization' represses and ... his original instinctual needs. (Marcuse 1955)

From here, we can conclude that Freudian theory naturalizes social conformity, which is a historical product, rather than a natural starting point for all. Hence Freud's categories should be reinterpreted not as fixed but rather as historical and political, in parallel with Marx's historical account of human nature.

Now the question is how to escape from this internalized repression that seems to us as coming from our nature. For Marcuse, one of the tools that can help us in this process is memory. In Freudian theory, the suppression of memory is due to the repression of unpleasant or traumatic experiences that stem from our basic instincts of sexuality and aggression. As opposed to this pessimistic view, Marcuse

suggests that memory can play an important role in the process of liberation through the recollection of pleasurable or euphoric experiences (Kellner 1984). The reason why we repress these memories systematically can be due to the society, since otherwise such memories can make us question the painful process of everyday oppression, which of course can be used by the same individuals as a way to emancipation. So the unconscious, which is the deepest layer of the mind, includes all our memories, even the ones that are based on pleasurable experiences. So if we look at it from a different perspective, Freud's psychodynamics can also be interpreted as a way out of the repressive society. Marcuse thinks that Freud's analysis implies that the human being can only tolerate so much repression and unhappiness, and when this point is passed, the individual will rebel against the conditions of repression (Kellner 1984).

As opposed to many Neo-Freudian thinkers, Marcuse accepts both the life (Eros) and death (Thanatos) instincts and the conflict between them. For him, Eros is the great unifying force that preserves all life (Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* 1955). And because of this conflict, Marcuse thinks a non-repressed Eros should be maintained.

Civilization plunges into a destructive dialectic: the perpetual restrictions on Eros ultimately weaken the life instincts and thus strengthen and release the very forces against which they were 'called up' – those of destruction. (Marcuse 1955)

So totally against Freud, who argues that the life instinct of the id should be repressed for the survival of civilization, Marcuse thinks that the repression of the life instinct (directed by the pleasure principle) will bring destruction. Here we need to note that all these are reconstructions made by Marcuse on Freudian theory with which Freud would probably disagree. So Marcuse offers an alternative way out of

the advanced industrial society, in which Freud made all his claims on human nature, by using Freud's own conceptual framework in a new direction. Hence, the fundamental contradiction between the capitalist society and human nature (the former tries to repress the pleasure principle, whereas it is essential for our survival in Marcuse's interpretation) would bring the revolutionary action into the scene. With this theory Marcuse is able to explain how human beings are dominated by the society and how their social character becomes a second nature which will help him explain the failure of revolutions and criticize the present society (Kellner 1984). So though he accepts Freud's instinct theory, Marcuse restructures it and shows the implausibility of the repressive society.

Against Freud, Marcuse argues that the reality principle takes historically specific forms, and that repression is thus a historical product of a given society. (Kellner 1984)

How the system of the advanced industrial society and its reality principle work is another question we need to answer here. In order to find a way to emancipation, we need to understand what kind of order we are stuck with. Marcuse's two concepts that are introduced in *Eros and Civilization* will be helpful for us in this:

- (a) Surplus-repression: the restrictions necessitated by social domination. That is distinguished from (basic) repression: the 'modifications' of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization.
- (b) Performance principle: the prevailing historical form of the reality principle. (Marcuse 1955)

After introducing these concepts, Marcuse argues that these are 'extrapolations' from Freud's theory. However, Kellner introduces another relation with Marxian concepts. He says that the concept of surplus repression is inspired by, and functions analogously to, Marx's concept of 'surplus-value'<sup>15</sup> and the performance principle is connected with Marx's critique of capitalism and alienated labor (Kellner 1984).

---

<sup>15</sup> Surplus value is related with the social product which is over and above what is required for the producers to live.

Two other concepts of Marcuse have to be explained in order to answer the question I asked above. We have been talking about repression from the beginning of this chapter; that is why I would like to give Marcuse's understanding of repression in detail. And in order to understand it, we first need to explain what scarcity means for Marcuse.

Behind the reality principle lies the fundamental fact of Ananke or scarcity (Lebensnot), which means that the struggle for existence takes place in a world too poor for the satisfaction of human needs without constant restraint, renunciation, delay. In other words, whatever satisfaction is possible necessitates work, more or less painful arrangements and undertakings for the procurement of the means for satisfying needs. (Marcuse 1955)

There is an explicit assumption in this definition and that is the inevitability and the continuity of scarcity and the unending appetite of human beings to satisfy their needs. That is why the social situation is seen as a danger that may lead to chaos, which makes constraints necessary. Satisfaction is seen as the ultimate goal and human beings are assumed to be creatures that can bear anything in the way of this goal. Marcuse thinks that:

throughout the civilization scarcity has not been distributed collectively in accordance with individual needs, nor the procurement of goods for the satisfaction of needs been organized with the objective of best satisfying the developing needs of the individuals. Instead the distribution of scarcity as well as the effort of overcoming it, the mode of work, has been imposed upon individuals. (Marcuse 1955)

Instead of raising consciousness on the issue of scarcity (its level, conditions, precautions, consequences, etc.), it is presented to human beings as something very dangerous and impossible to overcome. Human beings are forced to work in a given way to overcome it or not to experience it without even questioning it. As Kellner thinks, this is very similar to Marxian concept of class consciousness, in which a ruling class has expropriated the wealth and has forced poverty and alienated labor upon the exploited working class (Kellner 1984).

Ocay gives a different point of view here on the issue of Ananke. He says:

The advancement of science and technology had already put an end to Ananke, that is, to the reality principle. Marcuse argues: 'The issue of scarcity which legitimizes the repression in previous civilizations seems to be untenable now. In the advanced industrial society, the procurement of basic needs is no longer a problem, but it is the manner in which these material needs are distributed and utilized'. (Ocay 2009)

So, Marcuse agrees with Marx that advancements in technology and science can be used to open up the way to liberation. As it is clear from this quote, the reality principle is not a fixed condition, as Freud suggests, but rather it changes throughout history. But if scarcity, repression and the reality principle have ended in late capitalism, then why is capitalism still so strong? Ocay argues that the reason is the fact that capitalism through overproduction and lavish, and seemingly unlimited consumption, has maintained the prevalence of the reality principle through creation and valorization of artificial needs (Ocay 2009).

As we have seen, domination is not merely imposed by an external economic and political structure, but also internalized by the people. What Freud refers to as the superego is the form of internalized domination. The values that are shaped first through the parents and then through the reality principle, which is the social, political and economic order, are internalized by the human being as a means to survival.

Kellner argues that in Marcuse's view, domination has its origins, and here he followed Marx and Weber in the organization of labor and technology. In 'Some Social Implications of Modern Technology' Marcuse says:

Technology as a mode of production, as the totality of instruments, devices and contrivances which characterize the machine age is thus at the same time a mode of organizing and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent thought and behavior patterns, an instrument for control and domination. (Marcuse 1941)

In accordance with this definition, we can argue that Marcuse and Cronenberg have similar concepts of technology. For both, human beings are an integral part of technology. Let me give an extreme example from *eXistenZ*. The film takes a simulation game as its focus that is an undeniable development in technology in the entertainment industry. We witness several realms in the movie and we cannot decide whether it is real or it is rather a simulation. So even game technology can easily change the perception of reality and construct social relations accordingly (as Ted Pikul and Allegra Galler are two people who do not know each other, but in the game they first become allies and then turn into enemies). Let us take *eXistenZ* not as a game that can also be in our world but as a film that is also another part of technology. Then from the audience's point of view, the film may break the reality perception and there may be the danger of expanding skepticism. Apparently such a technological advancement could change all our life through the social, political and economic dynamics that we are involved in. Of course, *eXistenZ* is a metaphor, so it is just an extreme case, but it should be accepted that if such an example can be given, then many similar examples can be experienced too. I will be discussing the possibility of using technology in an alternative way to construct a liberated society at the end of this chapter. For now, I would like to return to Marcuse and how the concept of domination will lead us into self-deception.

As I have argued in the previous chapter, self-deception is a widespread fact in our society since most of us believe that we have free will, whereas we live in a fully determined social, political and economic order that does not let us act as individuals. For Kellner, Marcuse tells us that

domination constitutes the very 'second nature' of human beings who assimilate prescribed thoughts, values and forms of behavior in which they desire, feel, and think what the social powers and institutions require.

Domination is thus related to psychological phenomena like self-deception, mystification and false consciousness, as well as to class oppression, exploitation and administrative control. (Marcuse 1941)

It seems to me that what Freud calls psychodynamic balance and the system of repression to keep the civilization going on might be the raising of false consciousness in which there are people who seem to make choices but actually are in self-deception and they are exposed to exploitation through administrative control. Moreover, there is a class discrimination, in which the ruling class oppresses the proletariat. Actually this schema illustrates very well what I call capitalism from the beginning. Now I find out that there is a possibility to make all these manipulations to a society through a systematic domination, as Marcuse argues.

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. Similarly repression will be different in scope and degree according to whether social production is oriented on individual consumption or on profit; whether a market economy prevails or a planned economy; whether private or collective property. (Marcuse 1955)

This is an important part of the book since this gives us a hint of the type of a possible society. And, as Kellner also claims, though Marcuse does not say it explicitly, he is comparing capitalism with socialism. Here we need to make a quick note that Marcuse does not talk about a society in which there is no repression. Yet, the repression that is needed to provide the necessities of life is very different from what he calls 'domination'. For him, every type of the reality principle introduces its own additional controls that are exactly what he calls 'surplus repression'. The specific reality principle that governs behavior and creates surplus repression in contemporary society is the performance principle (Kellner 1984). Marcuse argues that under the rule of the performance principle, the society is stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members (Marcuse 1955). In a society

as this, in which, Kellner argues, one performs according to pre-established norms and rules, there is conformation to social roles and behavior (Kellner 1984). So in such a society one does not have free will in his/her daily life. It resembles Marx's notion of alienation, in which the worker cannot control his/her productive activity.

After having analyzed Marcuse's critical account of capitalism, let us now move on to his suggestions about liberation. First of all, I would like to remark here that Marcuse sees many ways that may lead to an alternative system, such as through technology, phantasy, art and play. Among them, I would like to focus only on the aspects of technology and discuss whether it is possible for technology to be a means for emancipation or whether it would necessarily transform into another deterministic system. Marcuse thinks that technology by itself can promote authoritarianism as well as liberty, scarcity as well as abundance (Marcuse 1941). That is to say Marcuse thinks that technology is a double-edged dynamic that can go in either direction. And as we have discussed above, it is not a dynamic that affects people from the outside, but rather it transforms human beings. That is why along with technological progress a new kind of rationality and new dynamics of individuality are established in the society. On the other hand, technology also develops in accordance with these changes. Since technology affects both the mode of production and the organization of social relations, it can easily be used for control and domination. For Marcuse, if we use technology as it is, it cannot have any positive effect. In his article 'Some Social Implications of Modern Technology' he gives a quote from Veblen:

The share of the operative workman in the machine industry is (typically) that of an attendant, an assistant whose duty is to keep pace with the machine process and to help out with workmanlike manipulation at points where the machine process engaged is incomplete. His work supplements the machine process rather than make use of it. (Marcuse 1941)

This reminds me of the Marxist theory of alienation. Here, the worker is alienated from work because he cannot be included in the production process properly. For Marx, what Veblen gives as an example is a necessary process of alienation that should be undergone to overcome it. The proletariat should gain class consciousness on the issue that they are not needed as the guards of the machines but rather the machines are now so well-organized that they can handle all the production by themselves, rather than for the profit of capitalists. So the workmen, as Veblen calls them, may work less and have more free time for themselves, in which they can produce real things, and in the process of which they feel involved. This point, for Marx, will be achieved through the workers' revolt and since now they have more class consciousness, they would not want to be the new rulers in a hierarchic society. Hence, building an egalitarian society and overcoming alienation highly depends on advanced technology and its proper use. Winner explains the Marxist process as such:

Marx tries to show that increasing mechanization will render obsolete the hierarchical division of labor and the relationships of subordination that, in his view, were necessary during the early stages of modern manufacturing. ... the capitalistic form of that industry reproduces this same division of labor in a still more monstrous shape; in the factory proper, by converting the workman into a living appendage of the machine... ...that will eventually dissolve the capitalist division of labor and facilitate proletarian revolution are conditions latent in industrial technology itself. (Winner 1980)

Here I would also like to introduce Jacques Ellul, since he has another point of view regarding alienation. For him, technological growth brings harder and more exhausting work to most workers. Though we have the idea of automation and emancipation, it will not come for a long time and we will be wasted and alienated. For him, alienation is not capitalistic but rather technological, since for him in the technological society, the concept of property turns into the concept of 'technological capacity' that guarantees the status. So from now on the decision will be made not by

the ones who have capital but the ones who combined capital with the status relating to a decision (Ellul 1980).

What Ellul depicts as the hierarchy of the new technological society is very similar to Cronenberg's world and characters with one difference. Cronenberg uses characters that seem to hold the status relating to decision-making since these characters are the experts in their area (the areas we are talking about are mostly technological such as media, artificial design, invention or medicine) and also seem to have the capital. However, all of them in the end are defeated by their own desires such as fame, power, money, etc. So what Ellul has in mind can be an answer to the destruction of Cronenberg's characters since they are all living in technological society. It seems to me that the capitalist society along with its conventions and the technological society along with its conventions are so intertwined that for the people living in the technological society it is highly probable to still be dominated by the conventions of the capitalist society that does not work at all.

If we go back to Marcuse, as opposed to Marx, he does not think that we can use the same system of technology in the way of emancipation. For Marcuse, we cannot be liberated through modifying the system we are living in; rather, we need to change the whole system.

But there was a way out: to challenge the techno economic system as a whole. (Marcuse was explicit that this means challenging, not only capitalist techno economic system of the West, but also its imitator, the 'bureaucratic socialist' techno economic system of the Soviet Union and its satellites.) Only a wholesale revolutionary challenge to the political power of techno capitalists and quasi-capitalistic bureaucratic socialists could do the trick; it was (he thought) possible to deal with techno social problems, but all at once and not one at a time. (Durbin 2000)

What would it be like if we did not change the whole system? I would like to start with the answer to this question and then continue with how Marcuse's solution

works, if it really does work. Marcuse argues that the determinant character of a society may come from machinery.

The facts directing man's thought and actions are not those of nature which must be accepted in order to be mastered, or those of society, which must be changed because they no longer correspond to human needs and potentialities. Rather are they those of the machine process, which itself appears as the embodiment of rationality and expediency. (Marcuse 1941)

What is dangerous here lies within the last sentence. Since technology and machinery are justified by reason and expediency, it can easily organize the people within the system using these techniques in accordance to itself, thereby transforming the system into a deterministic one again. So as Marcuse says in the very same article, there is no personal escape from the apparatus that has mechanized and standardized the world. In order to get what they desire, people learn to obey the machine, so there is no room for autonomy (Marcuse 1941). For Marcuse, the rationality of the machinery process in our society is mass production. So the criterion for each need and desire within the system is directed to mass production. Following this, we can say that technological reasoning is directly related to profitability. Of course, this makes technology one of the biggest instruments of capitalism and turns the system into determinism again in the sense that every choice we make is directed towards profitability, since they are all manipulated in that way.

For a very different point of view to our discussion, I would like to introduce American feminist thinker Donna Haraway. For her, there is neither human nature, nor free will, nor determinism, since she starts by rejecting the dualities between the subject and object, human and animal, human and machine, which lie at the basis of the free will versus determinism issue. Haraway thinks that by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century 'we are all cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics' (Haraway 1991). Since the cyborg gives us the politics and we are dealing with the question

whether technology is one of the main drivers of the organization of a society, we need to understand what a cyborg means. For her:

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as creature of fiction. .... I am making an argument for the cyborg as a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings. (Haraway 1991)

So she basically means, as Marcuse did, that cyborgs specify our social and bodily reality. This new type of technological society for her is by no means technologically determined: the interaction is much more dynamic than that.

Rather than seeing our lives as determined and structured by technology that is beyond our control, she says that we need to see what sources of power we can find in that technology, and use it in a creative and political way. (Smith 2009)

According to Donna Haraway, the new technological society has dissolved both essentialist accounts of human nature and all deterministic accounts. The main reason for this is that the structure of a cyborg cannot be founded upon dichotomies but rather requires the blurring of them. What kind of dichotomies does she have in mind?

Chief among these dualisms are self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/ part, agent/resource, maker/ made, active/ passive, right/ wrong, truth/ illusion, total/partial, God/man. (Haraway 1991)

So, let us analyze Freud's account by using this perspective. In Freud, we can find the dualities between the id and the superego, the pleasure and reality principles, which stem from the civilized and primitive dualism that Haraway talks about.

Whereas Marcuse's ideal society involves overcoming the gap between the pleasure and reality principles, Haraway suggests the possibility that they have already been overcome in capitalism after the 1980s. Unlike the Protestant work ethic, which is based on the delay of gratification (forming the background of Freud's theory), in

modern consumer society, where ‘consumer is the king’, the reality principle does not control, but rather serves the pleasure principle.

In line with Marcuse’s concern for emancipation, we can further ask: What are the implications of the blurring of boundaries between humans and machines for the possibilities for emancipation?

It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine. It is not clear what is mind and what is body in machines that resolve into coding practices. In so far as we know ourselves in both formal discourse (for example, biology) and in daily practice (for example the homework economy in the integrated circuit), we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras. (Haraway 1991)

Haraway argues that in the age of quantum physics and neurons, our whole understanding of what is a subject and what is an object should change completely. The idea of free will presupposes that humans are qualitatively distinct and superior to both other animals and machines, which are externally determined. However, after technological innovations such as artificial intelligence, Haraway says that our machines are disturbingly lively and we ourselves frighteningly inert (Haraway 1991).

Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. The machine is not an id to be animated, worshipped and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, and an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are them. (Haraway 1991)

Haraway’s notion of humans as cyborgs seems similar to Cronenberg’s view that technology is a part of our body. Cronenberg says in one of his interviews with Elijah Siegler that we are always creating new extensions of the human body, from weapon such as clubs and knives to cell phones (Siegler 2012). Lia M. Hotchkiss’ analysis of *eXistenZ* clarifies this similarity.

Here again we must deconstruct the human\machine opposition and begin to ask a new question about ways in which we and our technologies 'interface' to produce what has become a mutual evolution. That is an evolution that long fascinated David Cronenberg, as *eXistenZ*'s opening superimposed on increasingly complex biological diagrams of tissue, cells vertebrae, and muscles suggest; it is the drive behind the film's call for a postmodern conception of the real as contingent upon its construction and a recognition of the cyborg as the increasing norm. With its fleshy biopods and bioports, like ear piercings, readily available at local malls, *eXistenZ* portrays the hybridization of human and machine as the wave of the future and the figure for the current degree to which surgery and electronic technologies have made machines 'lively,' to use Haraway's term, and made cyborgs, either literally or metaphorically, of significant numbers of the population. (Kuboszek 2007)

We can give further examples of how machines become a part of human bodies.

Google Glass is a new technology in which through a glass we will be able to control a whole network; we are dealing with our computers now through our eyes. So we first give up pushing the buttons and get used to touch-operated systems. Now we will stop touching all together and will do it through our eyes, by mere staring. So who can argue against the claim that machinery is not a part of our body nowadays? Moreover, such a blurring of boundaries opens up new ways of emancipation according to Haraway.

Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies our tools to ourselves. ... It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories. (Haraway 1991)

Whereas Haraway in her distinctively postmodern way tries to get rid of humanism, which is a distinctive kind of species, Oscar Wilde chooses the opposite path and tries to formulate a new version of humanism, to rescue the authentic self from alienation, by defending a genuine form of individualism, which at first sight looks very similar to Erich Fromm's humanist Marxism.

Oscar Wilde in his book *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* states:

For the recognition of private property has really harmed Individualism, and obscured it, by confusing a man with what he possesses. It has led Individualism entirely astray. It has made gain not growth its aim. So that man thought that the important thing was to have, and did not know that the important thing is to be. The true perfection of man lies, not in what man has, but in what man is. (Wilde 2006)

After having compared Haraway and Wilde, now let us try to compare Wilde with Marcuse. For Marcuse, since existing socialist countries fail to provide attractive emancipatory alternatives to capitalist societies, a new concept of socialism needs to be articulated (Marcuse 1970). In drawing the lines of new socialism, Marcuse thinks that we need to give up using the word 'utopian' for the elimination of certain concepts that are specified by Marx, such as poverty, alienation or long working hours. The main reason for Marcuse to maintain this is the fact that with the modern, advanced industrial society we already have the conditions to overcome these concepts.

I will not be deterred by one of the most vicious ideologies of today, namely, the ideology which derogates, denounces and ridicules the most decisive concepts and images of a free society as merely 'utopian' and 'only' speculative. It may well be that precisely in those aspects of socialism which are today ridiculed as utopian, lies the decisive difference, the contrast between an authentic socialist society and the established societies, even the most advanced industrial societies. (Marcuse 1969)

The question is that if we have the instruments to overcome all these concepts that have been the justification for domination and control throughout history, why can we not achieve the revolution yet? For Marcuse, the main reason for this is that the rational application is prevented by the existing organization of the forces of production (Marcuse 1969). This is an explanation of the optimism of Marcuse on the possibility of an alternative society. If the structure of the existing force of production, that is capitalism, and the capitalist society as a consequence, is radically restructured, a strong and permanent revolution becomes possible. For Marx, the realm of freedom should be separate from the realm of necessity, since in the realm

of necessity there is the possibility of alienated labor and one needs to get rid of alienation in order to be free. So for Marcuse, within this new society, the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity will converge (Marcuse 1970). What makes us able to be free in the realm of necessity is the radical transformation of the labor process and technical apparatus for Marcuse (Kellner 1984). And control over the technological apparatus is the development that will make this transformation possible. Of course, Marcuse is not a technocrat,<sup>16</sup> which is why he is aware of the fact that the increasing development of technology may be emancipatory as well as a mechanism for domination and control.

Fifty years before Marcuse, Oscar Wilde in his book *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* tries to show that genuine socialism is not a form of collectivism that represses individualism, but rather the main goal of socialism is to enable the individual to flourish. This claim reflects a similarity between Wilde and Marcuse. They also share the view that the reduction of work and increase in leisure with the help of advanced technology is the main precondition for individuals to achieve self-realization and thereby become unique individuals. Nevertheless, they have opposite views about how liberation can be achieved. While for Marcuse, liberation requires overcoming the opposition between the realm of necessity and realm of freedom, for Wilde these two realms should always be kept distinct. State should deal with the realm of necessity, by producing useful things, rather than commodities satisfying artificial needs. On the other hand, individuals should make beautiful things, rather than useful things (Wilde 2006). The basis of this difference is the following:

---

<sup>16</sup> A technocrat basically believes that increased automation and technological progress will automatically increase human freedom (Kellner 1984).

It is mentally and morally injurious to man to do anything in which he does not find pleasure, and many forms of labor are quite pleasureless activities, and should be regarded as such. (Wilde 2006)

For Wilde, all pleasureless activities should be done by machinery.<sup>17</sup>

Man is made for something better than disturbing dirt. All work of that kind should be done by a machine. And I have no doubt that it will be so. Up to the present, man has been, to a certain extent, the slave of machinery, and there is something tragic in the fact that as soon as man had invented a machine to do his work he began to starve. This, however, is, of course, the result of our property system and our system of competition. One man owns a machine which does the work of five hundred men. Five hundred men are, in consequence, thrown out of employment, and, having no work to do, become hungry and take to thieving. The one man secures the produce of the machine and keeps it, and has five hundred times as much as he should have, and probably, which is of much more importance, a great deal more than he really wants. Were that machine the property of all, everyone would benefit by it. It would be an immense advantage to the community. All unintellectual labor, all monotonous, dull labor, all labor that deals with dreadful things, and involves unpleasant conditions, must be done by machinery. Machinery must work for us in coal mines, and do all sanitary services, and be the stoker of steamers, and clean the streets, and run messages on wet days, and do anything that is tedious or distressing. At present machinery competes against man. Under proper conditions machinery will serve man. (Wilde 2006)

I agree with Wilde and Marcuse that in order to achieve human emancipation we have to control the apparatus of labor collectively. The main difference between Marcuse and Wilde is their attitude towards alienated labor. While Marcuse believes that common ownership of means of production would be sufficient to overcome alienation in work, Wilde finds this insufficient to end work as toil. Marcuse believes that work should be transformed so that the producers can produce objects that would fulfill their real needs and develop their potentialities. That means Marcuse's system is not like Wilde's, in which machinery deals only with the realm of necessity, whereas individuals do pleasurable things. Rather, Marcuse suggests that what is necessary and what is pleasurable should be merged through machinery.

---

<sup>17</sup> For contemporary debates on this issue, see Kathi Weeks, *Freedom From Works*.

Then, the 'realm of freedom' may perhaps appear in the work process itself, in the performance of socially necessary labor. The technical apparatus could then serve to create a new social and natural environment: human beings could then have their own cities, their own houses, their own spaces of tranquility and joy: they could become free and learn how to live in freedom with the other. Only with the creation of such an entirely different environment (which is very well within the capabilities of technology and well beyond the capabilities of the vested interests which control technology) would the words 'beauty', 'creativity', 'community' etc. designate meaningful goals; the creation of such an environment would indeed be non-alienated labor. (Kellner 1984)

Following Marx, in both Marcuse and Wilde, the introduction of time-saving machinery and new technology are essential preconditions for constructing a socialist society. However, Marcuse's ideal is freedom in work, but Wilde's ideal is freedom from work.

As for Marx, for Marcuse science and technology is necessary for social change. Kellner says that Marcuse's concept of liberation rests on the premise that technology contains tremendous potential that, if released, could create a free society (Kellner 1984). I believe also in the very same statement and add that all the potential now is used for strengthening capitalists' power and profit. The mechanism is structured as such; that is why I believe if we use the very same technology without changing our goals, which are now apparently power and profit, technology would bring nothing other than a different type of domination. To eliminate the evils of the current forms and uses of technology would require, as Marcuse claims, a reversal of both the ends of technological progress and the very forms of technology. In non-alienated labor, on the other hand, the productive imagination could enter the labor process and workers could experiment with new technical possibilities and uses of technology (Kellner 1984).

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

I have started this thesis with a strong inclination to believe that the structure of the system we live in totally determines the structure of the human soul and behavior. This belief takes me to the conclusion that it is not possible make choices outside of the system. Moreover, I believe that one way or another, all choices, including the ones we are aware of and the ones we are not aware of (the ones through which we are in self-deception), are determined by the system. The system is structured in such a way that it gives us the illusion that we are choosing based on our values, attitudes and past experiences. Yet, actually the structure of the system is so crafty that it does not prevent us from the act of choosing; rather, it manipulates our motivations in accordance with which we make our choices. That is why I decided to investigate these motivations and see how the system is able to manipulate them. This process takes me to Freud's theory of psychodynamics that I find to be the best cover that the system would like to use.

All this explains why I find David Cronenberg's films very realistic although their genre is mostly either body horror or science fiction. The despair of Cronenberg's characters is very similar to what I experience every day. Cronenberg's depictions explain a lot about our world. The idea of seeing all his characters, worlds, conditions, circumstances and situations as the metaphors of ourselves, our world, the system we live in or our psychology gives a better insight of what is going on within the system. That is why most parts of this thesis are supported with the examples from his various films such as *eXistenZ*, *Videodrome*, *The Fly* and *Dead*

*Ringers*. I have chosen these films since in all of them the characters are in self-deception and the system they are living in is apparently either capitalism or an alternative version of capitalism. At the end I have realized that the structure we live in is as manipulative as the one in which Cronenberg's characters live in. Moreover Cronenberg himself is as pessimistic as me in terms of a way out of this system. It is obvious for me that as in Cronenberg's filmography ( the early Cronenberg films we watch are mostly body-horror whereas the recent ones turn into psychological thrillers), the damage that the system gives us is becoming more and more psychological as the system evolves. The situation then gives rise to the question of 'why we insist on staying alive in this world if we know that we have no single effect on it, even on ourselves.' Actually there is nothing wrong with capitalism in short term if we take it specific to individual level since the system creates artificial needs that will be satisfied within the limits of the system. Since the needs are artificial they are controllable so that as they are created they are satisfied by the system that will give a temporary happiness that is enough for him/her to continue his/her life. That is why conformism instead of making an effort to change or restructure it is more common.

So I would like to give a brief but complete summary of the kinds of determinisms I was mentioning throughout the thesis in order to have a complete framework of the relations between them within capitalism. For Marx materialist conditions are the basis of historical change. So what are these materialist conditions? They are the economic arrangements and structure that form the base of any society as man must eat and thus produce, before he can have the leisure time for ideas (Ambiorix 2014). So the reasons for social change should be looked in economic structure of a society. That means society is something closely related to

the structure of economy (both in terms of the forces of production such as tools and technique and relations of production such as division of labor) but this relation is bilateral for Marx that is the reason why he should not be considered as an economic determinist. Still there are some texts of Marx that are considered as not only economic but also techno-economic determinist by many such as Capital I. Josep R. Llobera interprets the following passage as if the technology 'lays bare' the process of production and social relations, then it means that it actually determines them (Llobera 1979).

Darwin has directed attention to the history of natural technology, i.e. the formation of the organs of plants and animals, which serve as the instruments of production for sustaining their life. Does not the history of the productive organs of man in society, deserve equal attention? And would not such a history be easier to compile, since as Vico says, human history differs from natural history in that we have made the former, but not the latter? Technology reveals the active relations of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of the production of the social relation of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from those relations. Even a history of religion that is written in abstraction from this material basis is uncritical (Marx, Capital, vol.1 1961).

People are victims of material forces but material forces are also evolved by man (Ambiorix 2014). This reciprocal relation when understood as unilateral considered as deterministic that would basically argue people are victims of material forces. This kind of a theory would be called as economic determinism in social theory. E. Ferri thinks that economic determine the conditions of all other human or social manifestations, and consequently ethics, law and politics (Ellwood 1911). Furthermore I think as I have argued in whole thesis human psychology is also determined by the economic structure since ultimately human psychology is the responses an organism gives to external stimuli.

biological and psychological factors in human social life are all mediated and ultimately determined in their expression by economic processes (Ellwood 1911).

Technological determinism can be read as an interpretation of historical materialism since in accordance with it forces of production determine the relations of production but neither of them is above history. Since it is closely related with the system where economy determines the social structure, it is related to the formation of human psychology, of course this relation is a determinist one. Cohen expanded and defended it as such:

For him the forces of production were extra social technological factors, with the relations of production being purely the various relationships in the production process. Historical materialism is that “the nature of a set of productive relations is explained by the level of development of the productive forces embraced by it” (Ambiorix 2014).

So forces of production determine the relations of production that will eventually determine the base of society. Thus in historical materialism social phenomenon is explained in terms the productive thus material phenomenon. But also the forces of production always need human creativity and wisdom to improve technology. So it is bilateral. I think the most striking example of this relation is the rise of capitalism. The capitalist mode of production originated from feudal mode of production out of a need for new relations in order to be able to adapt the new technology. So we need to see how technology evolved and affect the social change in order to understand human psychology.

Machines make history by changing the material conditions of human existence. It is largely machines (here I use the term to denote both individual mechanisms and a general level of technological development) that define what it means to live in a certain epoch- at least, as an economic historian might define life (Heilbroner 2011).

But does it have to be so in every system or is it just specific to capitalism that technology has such an instigative effect? Here I believe it is only capitalism that turns technology into a servant. Heilbroner says that: “the triadic connection of technological determinism, economic determinism and capitalism does not mean that

technology has no effects on non-capitalist society. The difference is that pre-capitalist technological impingements do not affect their societies with the ‘logic’ that comes only with capitalism’s translation of use values into exchange value (Heilbroner 2011).” But technological determinism is closer to soft determinism since it does not necessitate human behavior to be lack of consciousness and responsibility since it offers a heuristic of investigation<sup>18</sup>, not a logic of decision making (Heilbroner 2011). So, technological determinism explains the relation between background forces of our civilization and foreground problem of social order that keeps evolving in which we are living. So, technology is a factor that can be effective both to be stuck within this system, capitalism, and to find a way out of this system.

I think this duality of technology gives me hope rather than despair, which turns out to be my main motivation in my search for alternatives. As you have read in the thesis even Cronenberg himself has a belief in fighting though he does not give the reason. There must be a way out of this system so that we can make our own choices to live our own lives. I know, as long as it is a system, it would have limits. Yet, the idea that those limits are not that strict and determining makes it worth following a compatibilist way. Marcuse is the one who turns my pessimistic attitude into optimism through his compatibilist arguments. Here I have realized the use of technology in Cronenberg’s films. It is always depicted as serving the degenerated motivations that are created artificially. There must be a reason behind this depiction in which the system does not let the producers/inventors/creators use technology as they wish. Then technology may include a power through which we can find a way out of this system. But first of all, we need to see the dynamics of the new system,

---

<sup>18</sup> Further information can be found in Determinism as Heuristic chapter in the article Technological Determinism Revisited by Robert Heilbroner.

which Marcuse calls 'new socialism', Haraway calls 'cyborgs', Marx and Wilde call 'socialism'. What is common in all these examples is that in all of them advanced technology as well as its proper use is needed for the existence of an alternative system. At the end, I have come to the conclusion that technology is a crucial factor that can either transform the system into a deterministic one, as Ellul argues, or can contribute to the emancipation of humans, as in the cases of Marcuse, Marx, Haraway and Wilde, though from different points of view.

APPENDIX  
THE MAIN CHARACTER LIST OF THE FILMS  
USED IN THE THESIS

*Dead Ringers*, David Cronenberg, 1988

Main Characters

Elliot Mantle: gynecologist, one of the twins, more confident and cynical

Beverly Mantle: gynecologist, the other twin, shy and passive

Claire Niveau: an actress but also the patient of the twins about infertility

*eXistenZ*, David Cronenberg, 1999

Main Characters

Allegra Geller: a simulation game designer in a simulation game.

Ted Pikul: security guard who later on is included in the game

*The Fly*, David Cronenberg, 1986

Main Characters

Seth Brundle: brilliant but eccentric scientist who tries to invent a teleportation system

Veronica Quaife: a journalist for Particle magazine

*Wall Street*, Oliver Stone, 1987

Main Characters

Gordon Gekko: a legendary Wall Street stockbroker

*Videodrome*, David Cronenberg, 1983

## Main Characters

Max Renn: the president of CIVIC-TV, a UHF television station that specializes in sensationalistic programming

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ambiorix. *Libcom*. 2014 йил 22-March. <http://libcom.org/library/introduction-historical-materialism> (accessed 2015 йил August).

Ayers, A. J. *Philosophical Essays*. London: MacMillan, 1954.

Bağ, Murat. "Causal Determinants, Reasons, and Substantive Autonomy: A Critical Approach to Agency." *Bogazici University Philosophy Department*. 2007. <http://www.phil.boun.edu.tr/files/bac/BAC-Problemos.pdf> (accessed 2015 йил 03).

Beard, William. *The Artist as Monster: The Cinema of David Cronenberg*. Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

Busack, Richard von. *A virtual-reality game turns reality inside out in David Cronenberg's 'eXistenZ'*. April 1999. <http://www.metroactive.com/papers/metro/04.22.99/existenz-9916.html> (accessed August 2015).

Carel, Havi. *Born to Be Bad: Is Freud's Death Drive the Source of Human Evilness?* 09 2013.

Darwin, Charles. *On The Origin of Species*. London, 1872.

Durbin, Paul T. "Philosophy of Technology: Retrospective and Prospective View." *Technology And The Good Life?*, 2000: 38-49.

Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological System*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Cooperation, 1980.

Ellwood, Charles A. "Marx's "Economic Determinism" in the Light of Modern Psychology." *American Journal of Sociology*, 1911: 35-46.

"Emile Durkheim: Social Facts, Anomie, Consciousness Collectives." *Cultural Apparatus*. 2012. <https://culturalapparatus.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/1-durkheim.pdf> (accessed 2015 01).

Engels, Frederick. "Morality and Law. Freedom and Necessity." *Marxist Internet Archive*. 1877. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch09.htm> (accessed 2015 5).

Ferraro, Joseph. *Freedom and Determination in History According to Marx and Engels*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1992.

Freud, Sigmund. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. New York: Pdf Books World, 1920.

—. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. New York: Norton Company, 1962.

- . *The Ego and The Id*. New York: Norton Company INC, 1962.
- . "The Structure of The Unconscious." *Anupamm Tripod*. 1933.  
<http://anupamm.tripod.com/freudst.html> (accessed 2015 йил 15-05).
- Fromm, Erich. "Marxism, Psychoanalysis and Reality." *Marxist Internet Archive*. 2011.  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/fromm/works/1966/psychoanalysis.htm> (accessed 2015 26-01).
- . *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis- Essays on Freud, Marx and Social Psychology*. US: Pelican Books, 1973.
- Greene, John C. "Debating Darwin." *New York Times*. 1999.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/books/first/g/greene-darwin.html>.
- Gutting, Gary. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Winter 2014.  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/foucault/> (accessed February 2015).
- Hall, Richard. *Psychology World*. 1998.  
[http://web.mst.edu/~psyworld/classical\\_conditioning.htm](http://web.mst.edu/~psyworld/classical_conditioning.htm) (accessed 2015).
- Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto." In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, by Donna Haraway, 149-183. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Heffner, Christopher L. *Chapter 3: Section 5: Freud's Structural and Topographical Model*. 2015. <http://allpsych.com/psychology101/ego/#.VcRtcTCqqko> (accessed August 2015).
- Heilbroner, Robert. "Technological Determinism Revisited." *The Open University Library*. 2011. <http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/sirg/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/2-Heilbroner-TechnologicalDeterminismRevisited2.pdf> (accessed 2015).
- Iglesias, Estelio. "Dialectical Materialism and Economic Determinism." *Athene Noctua*, 2014.
- Jean Laplace, Jean-Bertrand Pontalis. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. London: Hogarth Press, 1973.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1929.
- Kellner, Douglas. *Herbert Marcuse and The Crisis of Marxism*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.
- Kuboszek, Mateusz. "The Influence of Technology on Human Body and Mind in David Cronenberg's Films." *PTBK*. 2007. <http://www.ptbk.org.pl/userfiles/file/kuboszek.pdf> (accessed 2015).
- Lennox, James. "Darwinism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2010 21-09.  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/darwinism/#DarAndDar> (accessed 2015 26-01).
- Llobera, Josep R. "Techno-Economic Determinism and the Work of Marx on Pre-Capitalist Societies." *Man, New Series*, 1979: 249-270.

Marcuse, Herbert. *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

— . *Eros and Civilization*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.

— . *Five Lectures*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.

Marcuse, Herbert. "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology." *Studies in Philosophy and Social Sciences*, 1941: 138-161.

Marcuse, Herbert. "The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity. A Reconsideration." *Praxis* 5 (1969): 20.

Marx, Karl. "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy." *Marxist Internet Archive*. 1859. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm> (accessed 2014 йил 03).

— . *Capital, vol.1* . Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961.

— . "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." *Marxist Internet Archive*. 1843-44. [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_Critique\\_of\\_Hegels\\_Philosophy\\_of\\_Right.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Critique_of_Hegels_Philosophy_of_Right.pdf) (accessed 2015 йил 12-05).

— . "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844." *Marxist Internet Archive*. 1844. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf> (accessed 2015 йил 5).

— . "On The Jewish Question." *Marxist Internet Archive*. 1843. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/On%20The%20Jewish%20Question.pdf> (accessed 2015 10-05).

— . *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1954.

— . "The German Ideology." *Marxist Internet Archive*. 1845. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm> (accessed 2014 02).

Mathijs, Ernest. *The Cinema of David Cronenberg from Baron of Blood to Cultural Hero*. London: Wallflower Press, 2008.

McLeod, Saul. *Id, Ego and Superego*. 2008. <http://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html> (accessed 2015).

Meisel, Perry. *The Literary Freud*. Routledge, 2007.

Mitchell, Gregory. "Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory." *Mind Development* . <http://www.mind-development.eu/systems.html>.

— . "Ego, Autonomy and Overcoming the Superego." *Mind Development*. <http://www.mind-development.eu/ego-autonomy.html> (accessed 2015 30-01).

O'ay, Jeffrey V. "Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse's Psychoanalytic Turn." *Kritike*, 2009: 10-23.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Marxist Internet Archive*. 1945.  
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm> (accessed 01 2, 2014).

Sayers, Sean. *Marxism and Human Nature*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Shaw, Daniel. *David Cronenberg*. 1999.  
<http://www.davidcronenberg.de/psychoringers.html> (accessed 12 2013).

Shaw, Daniel. "Psychological Determinism in the Films of David Cronenberg." In *The Philosophy of David Cronenberg*, by Simon Riches, 113-124. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012.

Siegler, Elijah. "David Cronenberg: The Secular Auteur as Critic of Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 12 2012: 1-15.

Smith, Alana Brooks. "The Politics of Participation: Revisiting Donna Haraway's 'A Cyborg Manifesto' in a Social Networking Context." *New York University*. 2009 йил 9.  
[http://www.nyu.edu/pubs/anamesa/archive/fall\\_2009\\_intersections/the\\_politics\\_of\\_participation\\_revisiting\\_donna\\_haraway.pdf](http://www.nyu.edu/pubs/anamesa/archive/fall_2009_intersections/the_politics_of_participation_revisiting_donna_haraway.pdf) (accessed 2015 йил 26-5).

Stiler, Robert. "The Politics of Psychoanalysis." *New International*, 1946: 176-179.

Thompson, David L. "Freedom and Determinism." *Memorial University of Newfoundland*. 03 21, 1993. <http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~davidt/Freedom.html> (accessed 06 18, 2015).

Vihvelin, Kadri. *Arguments for Incompatibilism*. Fall 2015. <http://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=incompatibilism-arguments> (accessed August 2015).

Weatherford, Roy. *The Implications of Determinism*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Wilde, Oscar. *Sosyalizm ve İnsan Ruhu*. İstanbul: Re Yayıncılık, 2006.

Winner, Langdon. "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daedalus* (MIT Press) 109 (1980): 121-136.