

September 6, 1956

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

Your Eros and Civilization has broken down my adamant refusal lasting two decades "to have a position on sex". Because your work is of such an original character it of necessity invalidated the self-defensive gesture of an old politico who feels it necessary not to get embroiled in every question "intellectuals" feels called upon to thrust into a political argument, to deflect from the main point.

In the use of the word, original, to describe the character of your book I do not mean to limit it to the contribution of your own philosophic thought (though it is natural that my favorite chapter is the "Philosophical Interlude"). I mean that in the reinterpretation of Freud you rescued him not only from the epigones but from himself, so that anyone can see where he is genius and original and where lie the elements which gave rise to quackery. Although in no fundamental sense is Freud responsible for that, the ambivalence of his theory has of necessity obscured the great critical contribution. You know, I am sure, that there are radicals who consider a reinterpretation of an original doctrine as if it were mere repetition, a carbon copy of the original. I knew one radical who held that Lenin's State and Revolution was a "rewrite" of Marx's Paris Commune (Civil War in France)! Your original contribution lies in your extraction of "Eros" from being in a field by itself and placing it within the historical context of Western civilization without in any way deflecting from the specific field. Quite the contrary. You thereby illuminated the field of psychoanalysis. That is what I meant by the statement that you separated what was genius and original from that which became transformed into revisionism, if not outright quackery. Fromm's answer to you is a good example of the meaning here. Here is a man who dares speak in highly moral tones about "the gallousness towards moral qualities in political figures, which was so apparent in Lenin's attitude" while his own moral standards do not stop the man from dragging in Nazism in the hope that its stench will keep readers away from Freud and you. *Fromm 1951*

Belatedly I congratulate you and will see what I can do to get the book in the hands of friends, workers as well as intellectuals; I may try to quote some "easy" parts on alienation in News and Letters, which will reappear soon.

How was your European trip and are you back? I had only one month off for concentrated work but I worked like a Trojan (Did they work 7:30 a.m. to midnight daily?) and finished the draft of the book. I enclose the three chapters you have not yet seen and the new contents page. You will note that I also changed the Appendix, substituting for the section on Crises from the Theories of Surplus Value 2 of the early Essays, Private Property and Communism, and Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic. In a month I will get down to the final revision or writing of text. I have no publisher's signature on the dotted line, yet, but I do have a promise from Praeger that if no publisher will dare undertake this he will "though unwilling as it is a complex and worrisome book and will bring a lot of criticism down my head." If Praeger does publish the publication would be simultaneously American and English; I understand he also has a publishing house in Frankfurt but he said nothing of any German translation. Instead he asked me to keep submitting the outline to other publishers. I wondered whether you knew anyone at Harvard University Press (Russian Research Center) to whom I might submit it.

When do you think you will be ready to write your introduction? Would you require the completely retyped MSS before you do so? Do let me hear from you. Since I'm not sure you are back, I'll register this.

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Yours,