Marcuse's Legacy and Foucault's Challenge: A Critical Inquiry into the Relationship between Comedic Pleasure and the Popular Media

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Abstract. The primary goal of this paper is to investigate the theoretical and methodological applicability of the relevant theories of Marcuse and Foucault to analyzing the relationship between comedic pleasure and the popular media. The researchers investigate the similarities of and the differences between the respective positions of Marcuse and Foucault as they relate to power relations, subjectivity, and practice. Likewise, the methodological applicability of these theorists' work to a discourse analysis of how media content constructs comedic pleasure is considered. Overall, the present study explored the arrangement and deployment of discourses of comedic pleasure as exploited by the power/knowledge mechanism of the media and the entertainment industry. And, through this discussion, the current study argued that three key statements constitute a discursive framework for the analysis of comedic pleasure in the popular media.
Keywords: Comedic Pleasure, Popular Media, Discursive Framework, Marcuse, Foucault

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the theoretical and methodological applicability of the theories of both Marcuse and Foucault to an analysis of the comedic pleasure that arises from popular media texts. In this endeavor, it is necessary to understand that comedic pleasure has often been connected with the concept of instinct and even with that of madness. Though academic works that engage with influential theories developed by Foucault and Habermas are plentiful, few studies have compared the work of Marcuse with that of Foucault. This gap in the literature could be because the two theorists drew on distinctly different sources; that is,

Marcuse's theory relies to a great extent on Freud, whereas it is generally asserted that Foucault roundly rejected the psychoanalyst. But, we would argue that Marcuse and Foucault still have some important aspects in common and that it is worthwhile to review their similarities and differences in the context of investigating the relative applicability of their work to comedic media content. In considering the possible connections between Foucault and Marcuse, we begin by exploring the concept of surplus repression in Marcuse's work. Next, we review the concept of madness in Foucault's work. Finally, we offer a discussion of how the two complement and connect with each other and offer an account of the methodological applicability of Foucault's analytical strategy to a discourse analysis of how comedic pleasure is constructed in media content. In undertaking this task, we postulate that Foucault's analytical emphases are beneficial to understanding the discursive processes inhering in the construction of comedic pleasure.

It is important to briefly define surplus repression, a core concept in *Eros and Civilization*, which Marcuse distinguishes from individual (or basic) repression as follows: surplus repression constitutes "the restrictions necessitated by social domination, [and is] distinguished from basic repression, that is, the modifications of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization" (Marcuse, 1974: 35–37). In Marcuse's account, surplus repression constitutes "additional controls arising from the specific institution of domination" (1974: 37). It, therefore, arises from the dominant power. Further, through its part in creating *the industrial mind*, surplus repression leads to uncritical consciousness. Marcuse argues that a new instinctual structure can be achieved by distinguishing surplus repression from (basic) repression. That is, Marcuse extends Freudian theory to the social level by using the theory of repression, itself a construct of a construct, as a metaphor for social conditions. Foucault, though, seems to take a stand against any kind of repression hypothesis. In fact, we do not think Foucault rejects the notion that body/pleasure and civilization are in conflict with each other, as he considers the possibility of emancipating the body/pleasure (even if his means of achieving it is quite distinct from that proposed by Marcuse). Further, both emphasize the processes of Western rationalization wherein rationality excludes (represses) the irrational (madness or instinct). According to Marcuse, reason cannot lead us to freedom because in reality reason operates as a mechanism for repression, even if reason negates the

reality principle. Therefore, for Marcuse, as we read his argument, a new civilization cannot be built on the basis of reason alone. And, this position accords with Foucault's emphasis on the freedom that comes with unreason. However, that said, a major difference between the respective positions of Marcuse and Foucault is that Marcuse embraces the idea that it is possible to achieve enlightenment by negating the principles of the real world, whereas Foucault refuses the absolute goodness or correctness posited by enlightenment. Instead, for Foucault, enlightenment is no more than a singular form of discourse.

These different perspectives naturally lead to different perspectives on power and, therefore, different strategies for struggling with power. We posit that Marcuse's concept of surplus repression is applicable to an analysis of the current media environment, although it is necessary to extrapolate from the concept in order to consider its applicability. On the other hand, Foucault's discursive practice is also critical to understanding media content analysis. However, it is also necessary to address the foundational question of where power comes from. In doing so, we will discuss the applicability of the respective works of Marcuse and Foucault to addressing the relationship between contemporary comedic content and the popular media.

WHY COMEDIC PLEASURE?

Though comedy is generally considered a source of pleasure, and there are a number of attempts to define what comedy is, there are not many studies on the social aspect of comedy. In this vein, Bergson claims that laughter could not be understood without taking sociality into consideration, stating that "our laughter is always the laughter of a group…. Laughter must have a social signification" (Bergson, 1956*:* 64). Also, Bergson provocatively argues that the comedy of popular culture does not bring about pleasure, rather, the comedic pleasure that an audience gains from the popular media is based on social ragging. The reason for the present study's emphasis on comedic pleasure is that comedy is alienated from the bounds of reason, and simultaneously, comedy has been divided into high-brow and low-brow or good and bad in the simliar way as madness is divided in *The History of Madness*. This division of comedic pleasure is pertaining to the ideas of social value. Thus, it is necessary to discuss at least two aspects of comedic pleasure. The first aspect focuses on the

dissident character of comedic pleasure, i.e., how this characteristic is easily transformed into a disciplinary one. As noted, comedic pleasure is conducive to liberation. However, as comedic pleasure is incorporated into the bound of reason so far, its resistant character is transformed into the bound of reason, too. Thus, it proves illuminating to use a psychoanalytic approach to understanding comedic pleasure.

The second aspect of comedic pleasure focuses on whether its character is essentially interpretative or sensual. Comedic pleasure is to facilitate sensual liberation. But, at the same time, comedic pleasure can be promoted by the interpretation of the comedic text. That is, comedic pleasure has dual process of being produced. This dual process of comedic pleasure makes a conflict between interpretation and sensual liberation, and thus it is possible that comedic pleasure suppress comedic pleasure per se. This kind of irony can be found in the *History of Madness*, such that the moment at which *oeuvre* demonstrates madness as madness, madness becomes no longer madness.[1]

Thus, primarily reviewed here is the problem of dominance and resistance and possible ways of understanding these terms. First of all, it is necessary to briefly distinguish between the practice of reading a text in accordance with social and cultural norms and the practice of reading a text against dominant social and cultural mores. In the former practice, social norms determine the reader's interpretation of the text; in the latter the reader approaches the text as if it were coded and resists producing an unproblematically normalized reading. Billig divides approaches to the text into disciplinary humor and dissident humor (2005: 200). In his view, critical theorists prefer dissident comedy, because rebellion is by definition a challenge to the social order. For example, in Bakhtin's account, in the Middle Ages pleasure was kicked out of nearly all official events and ceremonies such that it attained a position outside the official realm. That outside was the Carnival[2], wherein people were afforded a limited freedom from the central social order. In the limited period of the Carnival, all relationships characterized by hierarchy, all privileges, norms, and taboos were put aside. In Bakhtin's view, the Carnival constituted a true festival for a limited time, one that signified creation, change, and innovation. The critical theorists (e.g. Horkheimer and Adorno, 2006), see the audience's pleasure as inhering in a mass deception taking place in the context of cultural capitalism. That is, according to this view, as culture becomes

commercialized, pleasure can arise only from and consists only in a kind of false consciousness.

Barthes and Fiske theorize the pleasure of the text, and Barthes divides (1975) pleasure into *jouissance* and *plaisir*. In brief, *plaisir* refers to interpretative, critical pleasure, rather than to instinctive pleasure, because social regulation and the logic of meaning are premises for interpreting texts. *Jouissance* is strong enough to throw the audience into an ecstasy and to disturb the reader's cultural and psychological bases for interpretation. Fiske refers to *jouissance*, based on Barthes's account, as "a physical pleasure like sexual orgasm in the senses of the body rather than in the workings of the subconscious" (1993: 239). He argues for pleasure as a symbolic strategy and asserts the necessity of reevaluating the possibility of pleasure as a way of resisting dominant ideologies. In Fiske's conceptualization, popular pleasure can be summarized as physical pleasure and meaning, which is produced on the basis of symbolic democracy. Physical pleasure is interpreted as a way of resisting all suppressive authorities trying to control and manipulate audiences. This meaning-producing pleasure is a hegemonic means of fighting against dominant power structures. It is the *plaisir* of Barthes's account. In Fiske's view, *plaisir* can be formed resistively by the spontaneous formation of an audience's power.

Though hard to define and often considered the opposite of reason, comedic pleasure has also been discussed within the bounds of the interpretable. In other words, comedic pleasure is within the bounds of the sensual, but at the same time it is continuously challenged by interpretative attempts that are similar to "the vision of madness as an experience within the domain of language" (Foucault, 2006: 23). Therefore, it can be said that comedic pleasure is situated somewhere between what is reasonable and what is unreasonable, that is, between the interpretative and the sensual. This character of comedic pleasure gives rise to the necessity of first reviewing a psychoanalytic approach before proceeding to a discussion of the connection and disconnection between Marcuse and Foucault as discussed in the next section.

MARCUSE'S LEGACY AND FOUCAULT'S CHALLENGE

In comparing the respective positions of Marcuse and Foucault, we first raise issues in regard to subjectivity, power, and practice. According to

the critical theorists, Freud and other psychoanalysts produced scientific knowledge that ultimately justified suppression by the dominant power. For example, Adorno criticizes psychoanalysis as "subjugat[ing] him totally to the mechanism of rationalization, of adaptation" (2005: 64). In his view, psychoanalysis supports mechanisms that subordinate and exploit the powerless masses in a Fascist way. Such a criticism of psychoanalysis is similar to Foucault's view, although Foucault's and Adorno's accounts differ in regard to rationale. Foucault's critique of psychoanalysis can be found in part in *The History of Madness*, though a more fully worked-out version is offered in *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*. The reason for Foucault's rejection of the repressive hypothesis is that, according to Whitebook, his "real target is the Left Freudian tradition" (2002: 52). That is, it appears that for Foucault, the achievement of Left Freudian psychoanalysis lies only in contributing to the scientific knowledge brought about by the entrapment of discourse by the apparatus of power.

In this regard, Foucault's opposition to psychoanalysis is identical to that of Marcuse inasmuch as Marcuse also criticizes the Left Freudian's clinical and therapeutic viewpoint. In an attempt to extend Freud's theory to the social level, Marcuse criticizes the individual and clinical perspectives of Left Freudians as in a strict sense ideological (1974: 5-7). Arguing that Freud's theory is in its very substance "sociological," Marcuse seeks the philosophical and sociological implications of Freud's concepts. [3] More specifically, Marcuse explains these implications of psychoanalysis with reference to his concept of surplus repression. For Marcuse, "the reality principle supersedes the pleasure principle" (1974: 13).

Based on this view, we infer that entertainment media suppress comedic pleasure via "the additional controls arising from the specific institutions of domination" (Marcuse, 1974: 37). The result is the homogenized pleasure so characteristic of commercial media. Thus, in applying the concepts developed by Marcuse, we view original comedic pleasure as existing and that audiences as inherently capable of achieving it, though the memory of such pleasure has been lost, and the resistant quality of comedic pleasure lost likewise. Undoubtedly, for Marcuse, this loss of memory leads to "a critical standard [being] tabooed by the present" (Marcuse, 1974: 19). And, such is the case with the modern entertainment industry.

Foucault also pays attention to the subjugation of pleasure. Thus, he does not disregard the role of power in entrapping pleasure. However,

he rejects the idea that universal power subjugates pleasure. Rather, he focuses on the dynamics of power relations that lead to the production and articulation of heterogeneous discourses. That is, for Foucault, the ways in which power relations are discursively constructed is more important than power itself. To be more specific, it is necessary to review the extent to which comedic pleasure constitutes a kind of madness.

FOUCAULT'S NOTION OF COMEDY AND ITS DIVISION

In *The History of Madness*, Foucault considers comedy to be a type of madness: "As in the theme so long familiar in popular satire, madness appears here as the comic punishment of knowledge and its ignorant presumption" (2006: 23). Further, he considers madness in the medieval era and its inclusion of comedic characters. As Foucault observes, Rameau's Nephew was seen as a madman because he had a "clownish form, and [engaged in] buffoonery that recalls the Middle Ages" (2006: 344-346).[4] Therefore, Rameau's Nephew can be understood as standing in "the ancient lineage of fools and clowns" because he has "the power of irony with which those figures had been entrusted." That is, according to Foucault, the madman shares in the characteristics of clowns and buffoons, which accounts that "the error" in madness can "bring the light of truth." Similarly, Foucault offers madness as a possible way of reaching the truth: comedy/madness breaks down "fastidious conformity," and in so doing can discover and change reality by deriding the power relations that produces its logic. That is to say, comedic pleasure can be derived from sensual error; yet, comedic power is adjusted, as reason intervenes in defining and categorizing it. Therefore, Foucault's version of comedy can be considered a category of madness and its division is contingent on the extent to which comedy is appropriated by reason (and interpretative power). As to the division of humor that produces comedic pleasure, Billig (2005) divides comedy into ideological positivism and ideological negativism.[5]

A related argument that focuses on the idea of bourgeois madness as good madness and other kinds of madness as vicious can be associated with the convention of defining good comedy and bad comedy. As to the division between madness that is bourgeois in regard to values and other kinds of madness, Foucault notes that

> On the one hand was madness abandoned to the madness of its perversion, which no determinism could ever hope to excuse, on the other was a form of madness that was heroic in nature, the inverse yet complementary image of bourgeois values. That one, and that one alone, would slowly be allowed the right to belong to reason, or rather to the intermittences of reason; it was in that form of reason that responsibility could be diminished, and crime became more human and less punishable. (Foucault, 2006: 457)

As with the division of good and bad madness just cited, comedic pleasure is divided into valuable and worthless kinds. Put briefly, comedic pleasure is appropriated by reason in the same way as madness is (see Foucault, 2006: 28). Moreover, comedic pleasure is divided into disciplinary pleasure and dissident pleasure in a way that mirrors Billig's division of humor into disciplinary and dissident. Certainly, the popular media play a critical role in such a process of division. For example, just as the function of confinement has "had to leave madness a certain leeway rather than to seek to entirely control it," the popular media seemingly offer free rein to dissident pleasure, but in reality only permit "moderate satire" (Foucault, 2006: 435). In doing so, comedy can exist as comedy in a way that accords with the notion that "madness could be itself." Furthermore, the confinement systematically brought about the division of "confined madness and medically treated madness, when madness seen as unreason confronted madness seen as disease" (Foucault, 2006: 431). Likewise, the popular media, as an apparatus of confinement, systematically distinguish acceptable comedic pleasure from tabooed pleasure and medically healthy comedic pleasure from dissident, harmful comedic pleasure.

Evidently, both Marcuse and Foucault see the ascendancy of reason as manipulating even thwarting our ability to experience pleasure. In his analysis of the historical process of Western rationalization, Marcuse defined Logos since the canonization of Aristotelian logic as merging with the idea of "ordering, classifying, mastering reason" (1974: 111). He further states that,

> The idea of reason becomes increasingly antagonistic to those faculties and attitudes which are receptive rather than productive, which tend toward gratification rather than transcendence – which remain strongly committed to the pleasure principle. They appear as the unreasonable and irrational that must be conquered and contained in order to serve the progress of reason…. the Logos shows forth as the logic of domination. (Marcuse, 1974: 457)

Marcuse stresses the dominant power, whereas Foucault's critique of reason is more complicated. According to Foucault, reason produces the logic of exclusion and categorization of others. But reason has a different roles in every age. That is, the process of rationalization is segmented based on the epistemology of the age. For example, classical reason in its experience of unreason could confine subjects "by noting not that they were ill or criminal," whereas modern reason, that is after the Renaissance, takes unreason as pertaining to the "organization of sickness of the mind" (Foucault, 2006: 106, 198).[6]

Thus, Foucault's negation of the role of universal reason is important to his concept of subjectivity. In traditional philosophy, reason is generally conceptualized as unitary, universal, and self-grounded, whereas in postmodern thought, it is conceptualized as corporeal, decentralized, and fractured. Critical theorists, including Marcuse, argue for "the historical and social construction of the individual" (Kellner, 2001: 85), which suggests, in turn, the discursive social construction of subjectivity. That is, for Marcuse, subjectivity, though he eventually seeks ways to reconstruct it, is historically fraught with contradictions and ambiguities. Or, at least it can be said that Marcuse does not oppose the postmodern concept of subjectivity (Kellner, 2001). Foucault and Marcuse have the same perspective on disclosing the false constitution of the subject and rejecting the notion of the universal subject. In spite of these similarities, though, the core difference pertains to the possibility of constructing an alternative subjectivity. Foucault rejects or at least abstains from positing such a reconstruction.

THE NOTION OF POWER

In Foucault's work, the notion of power comes with apparatus (*dispositif*) such as a prison, a hospital, or a government. Foucault defines an apparatus as "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses,[7] institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid" (Rajchman, 1985: 7). Foucault's apparatus is flexible and dynamic like a stage setting that can easily be set up and modified. And, the apparatus yields visuality in that the subjects, i.e., the audience, watch whatever is occurring on stage. Further, an outcome of apparatus is discourse; i.e.,

the apparatus of sex produces the discourse of sexuality, and so emerge the psychoanalyst, the psychiatrist, the criminal, the pervert, the judge, the family member, the teacher, and so forth – all of whom enter into power relations with each other. In this way, power relations become an axis for constructing the apparatus. Likewise, in the apparatus of comedy there appear critics, people who laugh too much and people who refrain from laughter, family members, psychological therapists, and comedic actors, who form their own connections. For Marcuse and the critical theorists, the power relation is brought about the suppression of pleasure implemented by a dominant power embedded in the entertainment media industry, thereby leading to the loss of the critical mind, although critical theorists consider the dynamics of power relations within a socio-historical context. Rather, as Pereira observes, in a consideration of "multidirectional and boundary-blurred media production, distribution and consumption" (2009: 328-329), Foucault's notion of power such as "discursive forms of meaning construction, the productive relationship between knowledge and power, and the concept of the omnipresence of power" can yield substantial theoretical implications particularly for the study of comedic pleasure associated with the current media.

Foucault, though, takes normality/abnormality to be relative. In his view, no norm can rightly be considered natural. Instead, all norms indicate the expressive value of a relatively powerful socio-political institution. In Foucault's view, the criteria according to which a person was defined as mad in the Classical Age were based on the social norms of that age. Certainly, Foucault does not overlook the significance of political economic power. He attends to political economic conditions, arguing that policies designed to assist the poor and the unemployed are significantly associated with the condition of confinement. In *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*, he asks, "Is it not motivated by one basic question: to ensure population, to reproduce labor capacity, to perpetuate the form of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative?" (2006: 37). However, he focuses more on the idea of the relative, stating that "power-being is determined within relations between forces which are themselves based on particular features that vary according to the particular historical status" (Deleuze, 2006: 114). Furthermore, highlighting the notion of "bio-power," Foucault puts it clearly thus: "With regard to discipline, bio-power was embodied in institutions such as the army and the schools, and in

reflections on tactics, apprenticeship, education, and the nature of societies," and "As for population controls, one notes the emergence of demography, the evaluation of the relationship between resources and inhabitants, the constructing of tables analyzing wealth and its circulation," and additionally, "they [discipline and population control] were not to be joined at the level of a speculative discourse, but in the form of concrete arrangements that would go to make up the great technology of power in the nineteenth century" (Foucault, 1978: 140). He emphasizes that societal norms are not representative of an unchangeable morality. All norms are political in the end. They are arranged and deployed in a concrete form of discourse consisting in a technology of power. Here, a key similarity between Marcuse and Foucault is apparent: Marcuse also presupposes that norms are only properly interpreted as arising from a socio-historical, ideological, and political context.

THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

For Marcuse, the practice of art transforms culture "from spheres of opposition to modes of domination" (Beverly, 2006: 19).[8] In his view, art is a "form of reality, which means the construction of an entirely different and opposed reality" (Marcuse, 1972: 58). His suggestion for constructing an alternative reality has much in common with the work of avant-garde writers and artists such as Kafka, Joyce, and Picasso. In constructing such an alternative reality, Marcuse anticipates to create a political force by "constructing the universe of a free society, that is, the sensuous appropriation of the world" (1972: 57). According to Marcuse, the sensual rediscovery of past memory can both stand against the industrial mind manipulated by the dominant media industry and spur the imagination. Marcuse's position in this regard is very close to Benjamin's notion of the politicization of aesthetics. The only difference is that for Benjamin, the condition of artistic practice came from media per se, particularly film; i.e., the "mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art" (Benjamin, 1985: 234).

Unlike Marcuse, who clearly posits a way to achieve (libidinal) liberation, Foucault offers no such agenda. As noted, Foucault refutes the notion of universal repression such as that expressed by the notion of surplus repression. Unlike Marcuse who argues that repression is

constructed according to historical and social context, Foucault only demonstrates the particular form of discourse in each historical condition stating that the "conditions are never more general than the conditioned element, and gain their value from their particular historical status" (2006: 114). That is to say, Foucault's work is not "historical," but "with history."

Specifically, Foucault suggests in *The History of Sexuality* that pleasure (*plaisir*)[9] and the body – instead of sex as desire – can constitute a way to resist the apparatus of sexuality. It may be that Foucault does not insist that sex-desire be liberated because he does not necessarily accept that they are repressed. To require this liberation is to accept the repression hypothesis, which offers what could be construed as the illusion that all will be well once repressive mechanisms have been dismantled. Therefore, Foucault does not endorse the value-oriented term repression, and he does not simply identify repressive power as dominant power. Instead, he emphasizes power as omnipresent at both the macro and micro levels. It is in this regard that Foucault's analysis of comedic pleasure is most useful to a consideration of media content. Specifically, the usefulness of Foucault's strategy to analyzing comedic pleasure can be described with reference to three concepts: "(1) meaning exists alongside discursive practices, (2) knowledge and power are reciprocally implicated, and (3) value and power relations are productive and circular" (Pereira, 2009: 328).

CONCLUSION

In considering that power (relations) dominates comedic pleasure, we argue that power intervenes in defining comedy, endows comedy with positive (or negative) value, and entraps comedic pleasure on popular media based on three core issues: form of liberation, structure of protection, and contradiction. Suppression of comedic pleasure occurs through the power relation(s) regulating the meaning system such that the basic idea for understanding comedic pleasure is identical to Marcuse's thought. If so, then how can we understand the discursive operation of omnipresent power in regard to a comedic text? Here, we would bridge Marcuse's thought with Foucault's analytical strategy in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of comedic pleasure, specifically paying attention to central concepts intrinsic to Foucault's

arguments in *The History of Madness*. According to Foucault, there is a great division between one experience of madness and another: madness is the condition of either an inexplicable error, or an explicable error. The characteristics of madness in any specific era are expressed by this division in every historical age. According to Foucault, a definitive change took place in the conditions of the classical experience of madness, which can be explained by referring to the "double movement of liberation and enslavement" (2006: 459). More concretely, he posits five forms of liberation and five corresponding structures of protection and "four antinomies" that accompany thinking on madness repeated throughout the nineteenth century (Foucault, 2006: 519–521) (see Table 1).

By drawing on these four antinomies, we suggest three key themes for understanding the condition of comedic pleasure, i.e., form of liberation, structure of protection, and contradiction. Fundamentally, paradigmatic comedic pleasure exists in each historical age. Particularly in the modern era, the discourse of comedic pleasure is closely associated with the dynamics of power relations inhering in the popular media. That is, although enjoyment of comedic pleasure is potentially unlimited, its expression may be confined, currently at least, to certain accessible spheres. Thus, comedic pleasure is restricted by what is generally accepted through the popular media.

Next, as Foucault points out, the deployment of sexuality as a concrete arrangement partakes in the technology of power. And, likewise the deployment of comedy might be an arrangement in the same vein. Comedic pleasure per se might be sensual pleasure, which means there is no need to explicate a meaning, though it can be achieved through interpretation. Comedic pleasure, viewed in this light, becomes both something that interprets and something to be interpreted. Overall, the present study explored the arrangement and deployment of discourses of comedic pleasure as exploited by the power/knowledge mechanism of the media and the entertainment industry. Comedic pleasure is divided according to the dichotomous requirements of ideological judgment. This is so inasmuch as comedic pleasure becomes interpretative in any interpretation based on the current meaning system – and particularly in regard to the popular media, which may operate as the dominant power in reality (the characteristics of the frame are described in Table 1).

Table 1. *Key statements on the arrangement and deployment of discourses of comedic pleasure*

Form of liberation	Structure of protection	Contradiction
1. Sensual pleasure itself without any explication	1. Confers on sensual pleasure the value of the sublime	1. Comedic pleasure can be obtained when expressed
2. Interpretative freedom of comedic pleasure	2. Refers to the division of comedic pleasure according to the dichotomous requirements of ideological judgment	2. Interpretation depends on the current meaning system, which in reality is operated by the dominant power
3. Freedom to possess oneself of comedic pleasure	3. Offers an accessible sphere of the expressible	3. Comedic pleasure becomes coded in order to be generally accepted

In sum, the present study explored the similarities of and the differences between the respective positions of Marcuse and Foucault in regard to power, pleasure, and subjectivity, and then we applied the implications of this comparison to a study of comedic pleasure. In our analysis, we found some similarities between the two in terms of recognizing basic problems associated with comedic pleasure and repression, whereas their strategies for addressing the power structures determining this relationship differ. As noted, Foucault disregarded the idea of repression, and this is perhaps partly responsible for the fact that he did not set out a clear agenda for addressing power, which is in sharp contrast to Marcuse's expression of a clear if not very detailed strategy in this regard. However, it is important not to overemphasize the difference, as it was possible to connect their ideas in some important ways even though their strategies for moving toward liberation were quite different.

Further, we suggested a framework for analyzing comedic pleasure by drawing on the categories offered in *The History of Madness*. In this way, we posited three core issues, i.e., form of liberation, structure of protection, and contradiction as key to the arrangement and deployment of discourses of comedic pleasure related to the mechanism of

power/knowledge around media and the entertainment industry. We anticipate that this schema offers a way to understand the conditions in which discourses of comedic pleasure are produced.

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Notes

[1] As to this statement, Foucault notes that "Unreason becomes the reason of reason – to the exact extent that reason only recognizes it as a possession" (2006: 345).

[2] But, this is somewhat arguable in that the Carnival is sanctioned and thus still official.

[3] Marcuse's goal is "to contribute to the philosophy of psychoanalysis, not to psychoanalysis itself" (Marcuse, 1974: 7). And, he adds "our concern is not with a corrected or improved interpretation of Freudian concepts but with their philosophical and sociological implications."

[4] "He is not at all like the others, but still integrated in that he is there as a thing, at the disposal of reasonable people, a possession to be shown off and shunted around" (Foucault, 2006: 345).

[5] According to Billig, some elements are necessary to understand the negative aspects of comedy that "tend to get lost in the loose assumption of ideological positivism" (2005: 175). Those who attempt to explain the relationship between comedy and ideology often claim that popular media play a critical role as a systemic equipment of dominant authority.

[6] He states, "The idea that the age formed of madness was built up not from the multiple experiences of the mad, but from the logical and natural domain of illness, a field of rationality" (Foucault, 2006: 185).

[7] For Foucault, discourse implies the production of knowledge and power through historically situated social practices (Hall, 1997).

[8] Marcuse notes that "literature and art were essentially alienation, sustaining and protecting the contradiction between what is and what could be – the unhappy consciousness of the divided world, the defeated possibilities, the hopes unfulfilled, and the promises betrayed" (1974: 61).

[9] As discussed, *Plaisir* can be regarded as contrary to *Jouissance*. Foucault's notion of *Plaisir* in *The History of Sexuality* does bear some resemblance to Barthes's version in that both paid attention to discursive practice.