



# Herbert Marcuse

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Theory of Society

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## INTRODUCTION

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### Herbert Marcuse and the Vicissitudes of Critical Theory

*Douglas Kellner*

Herbert Marcuse was inextricably connected through his historical situation, his theoretical interests and undertakings, and the vicissitudes of personal life with the Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*).<sup>1</sup> The Institute was founded at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1923 as the first Marxist-oriented research institute in Germany. In 1930, Max Horkheimer was appointed director and under his leadership the Institute became renowned for its interdisciplinary research methodology and its project of developing a critical theory of contemporary society. Horkheimer assembled a remarkable group of theorists including T. W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, Leo Löwenthal, Franz Neumann, Marcuse, Frederick Pollock, and others who theorized the new forms of monopoly state capitalism, the culture industries, the authoritarian personality, and the modes of social control that emerged in the era of fascism, communism, and state capitalism.

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1 On the history and projects of the Institute for Social Research, also known as the "Frankfurt school," see Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973 (new edition, University of California Press, 1996); Helmut Dubiel, *Theory and Politics*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985; Douglas

In 1933, Marcuse joined the Institute and became one of the most active participants during its exile period in the United States from 1934 into the 1940s. Marcuse deeply identified with the work of the Institute and his fundamental project from the time that he joined it was developing a critical theory of society. This volume collects some later key texts of Marcuse's development of critical theory during the period of his greatest productivity and influence in the 1960s and 1970s. To set the stage for the essays that follow – many unknown and published here for the first time – I will sketch out Marcuse's work with the Institute for Social Research, his separation from the Institute when Horkheimer and Adorno returned to Germany in the late 1940s, and his own distinctive brand of critical theory which he developed from the 1940s until his death in 1979.

### MARCUSE JOINS THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

Herbert Marcuse was born July 19, 1898 in Berlin, Germany. The son of Carl Marcuse, a prosperous Jewish merchant and Gertrud Kreslawsky, daughter of a wealthy German factory owner, Marcuse had a typical upper-middle class Jewish life during the first two decades of the twentieth century, in which anti-Semitism was not overt in Germany. Marcuse studied in the Mommsen Gymnasium in Berlin prior to World War I and served with the German army in the war. Transferred to Berlin early in 1918, he participated in the German revolution that drove Kaiser Wilhelm II out of Germany and established a Social Democratic government.<sup>2</sup>

After demobilization, Marcuse went to Freiburg to pursue his studies and received a doctorate in literature in 1922 for a dissertation on *The German Artist-Novel*. After a short career as a bookseller in Berlin, he returned to Freiburg and in 1928 began studying philosophy with Martin Heidegger, then one of the most significant thinkers in Germany.

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Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*, Cambridge and Baltimore: Polity Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989; and Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, Cambridge and Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press and MIT Press, 1995. For collections of basic texts, see Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, New York: Continuum, 1982, and Douglas Kellner and Stephen Eric Bronner, editors, *Critical Theory and Society. A Reader*, New York and London: Routledge, 1989.

2. For documentation, see Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, Berkeley and London: University of California Press and Macmillan Press, 1984.

In his first published articles, written from 1928 to 1933 while he was working with Heidegger in Freiburg, Marcuse developed a synthesis of phenomenology, existentialism, and Marxism, anticipating a project which decades later would be carried out by various "existential" and "phenomenological" Marxists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as others in Eastern Europe and the United States in the postwar period. Marcuse contended that Marxist thought had deteriorated into a rigid orthodoxy and needed concrete "phenomenological" experience of contemporary social conditions to update and enliven the Marxian theory, which had downplayed social, cultural, and psychological analysis in favor of focus on economic and political conditions. He also believed that Marxism neglected the problem of the individual and throughout his life was concerned with personal liberation and happiness, in addition to social transformation.

Marcuse published the first major review in 1932 of Marx's recently printed *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, anticipating the later tendency to revise interpretations of Marxism from the standpoint of the works of the early Marx.<sup>3</sup> One of the first to see the importance of the philosophical dimension of the early Marx on labor, human nature, and alienation, Marcuse believed that critical philosophical perspectives were necessary to give concrete substance to Marxism. At the same time that he was writing essays synthesizing Marxism and phenomenology, Marcuse completed a study of *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* (1932) which he intended as a "Habilitation" dissertation that would gain him university employment.<sup>4</sup> The text stressed the importance of the categories of life and history in Hegel and contributed to the revival of interest in Hegel that was taking place in Europe.

In 1932, as the Nazis came to power, the situation in Freiburg became precarious for Marcuse. As he remembers it: "Because of the political situation I desperately wanted to join the Institute. At the end of 1932 it was perfectly clear that I would never be able to qualify for a professorship (*zweck habilitieren können*) under the Nazi regime."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Marcuse

3. Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism," in *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.

4. Herbert Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, translated by Seyla Benhabib, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987.

5. Herbert Marcuse, "Theory and Politics: A Discussion," *Telos* 38 (Winter 1978-1979), p. 126. For detailed documentation of the story of Marcuse's attempt to use his first Hegel book as a Habilitations-dissertation with Heidegger, see Peter-Erwin Jansen, "Marcuses Habilitationsverfahren - eine Odyssee," in Peter-Erwin Jansen, editor, *Befreiung denken - Ein politischer Imperativ*, Offenbach/Main: 2000 Verlag, 1990.



corresponded with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, asking if he could work with them. They invited him for an interview, and as Leo Löwenthal recounts in a letter published in this volume, the Institute appointed him to a position (see p. 210). This was fortunate, for in 1933 Heidegger joined the Nazi party and began making speeches for them.<sup>6</sup> Husserl had sent the Kurator of Frankfurt University, Kurt Riezler, a letter of support, and the Institute considered petitioning the University to accept Marcuse's "Habilitation Dissertation" on Hegel, which was already published as a book, so that he could be appointed a university professor. In fact, however, Marcuse never actually worked with the Institute in Frankfurt, since they, anticipating fascist suppression, had set up a branch office in Geneva, to which Marcuse was assigned. Henceforth, despite later philosophical and political differences, Marcuse would strongly identify with what is now often called the "Frankfurt School", and would make important contributions to their projects.<sup>7</sup>

Marcuse's move in 1932 from the provincial philosophy department of Freiburg, dominated by Husserl and Heidegger, to association with the neo-Marxist Institute for Social Research played a crucial role in his development. Although Heideggerian influences are discernible in many of his later works, Marcuse abandoned the project of producing a synthesis of phenomenological existentialism and Marxism. Both Heidegger's "political turn" in support of Nazism, and the relentless opposition of the Institute to Heidegger's philosophy, drove Marcuse to break with Heidegger and to commit himself to a version of Hegelian Marxism which the Institute was in the process of producing. The Director of the Institute, Max Horkheimer, loathed Heidegger's oracular ontology, while his colleague Theodor Adorno, who had just finished a critical study of Kierkegaard, was writing a critique of Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology. For the next decade, Marcuse involved himself in the Institute's work and became one of its most important members.

Marcuse's previous studies of the Hegelian and Marxian dialectic had prepared him for work on the Institute's project of developing a dialectical social theory. However, in his collaboration with the Institute, there are important changes from his earlier writings. Methodologically, he no longer

6 See Martin Heidegger, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität*, Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Korn, 1933.

7 Strictly speaking, the term "Frankfurt School" was applied to the work of the Institute for Social Research upon their return to Germany, when once again they were active in the Johann Goethe University in Frankfurt. The term stuck and has been applied to those active with the Institute both in the US exile and upon their return to Germany.

interprets Hegel and Marx as producers of an ontology of society and history, but uses their method and ideas for developing a critical theory of society. Marcuse accepts the Institute's position that the Marxian critique of political economy is the centre and foundation for critical social theory. Accordingly, he switches his focus from "concrete philosophy" and ontological analysis of such themes as "historicity" to the development of a radical social theory rooted in the Marxian critique of political economy and historical materialism oriented towards the crucial social problems of the day. There is also a political change: Marcuse abandons concepts of the "radical act" and a "catastrophic total revolution" for the milder terms "liberation" and "transformation." Part of this toning down of his revolutionary language was dictated by the decision made by the Institute that while in exile they would adopt "Aesopian language" to disguise their politics. Marcuse's shift in his political language, however, can also be attributed to the growing influence on him of Horkheimer and his associates. In view of the triumph of fascism, Stalinist tyranny and the concomitant failure of the proletariat in the West to emerge as a revolutionary agent, the Institute began to question central features of the Marxian theory of socialism and revolution.

Marcuse joined the Institute not long after Max Horkheimer took over its directorship and they began shifting their focus from empirical research and historical studies to development of an interdisciplinary social theory. Horkheimer's capacity in the Institute's affairs during the 1930s was crucial, as he was in charge of its research projects, journal, political-theoretical orientation, and overall direction. Moreover, he assumed the role of philosophical and institutional leader for the Institute during the troubled period when German fascism forced the emigration of its members throughout Western Europe and to the United States. Horkheimer was trained as a philosopher and had broad intellectual interests. He pursued a Hegelian-Marxian direction in the attempt to develop a "critical theory of society." Alfred Schmidt argues that "Horkheimer was one of the most important founders of a 'philosophically' directed interpretation of Marx, that was indeed quite different from the currently dominant tendencies" (i.e. in Marx-interpretation).<sup>8</sup> He rejected the orthodoxy of both the Second International and Soviet Marxism, as well as current attempts to bind

8 Alfred Schmidt, *Zur Idee der kritischen Theorie*, Munich: Hanser, 1974, pp. 37ff. For an excellent selection of Horkheimer's writings of the 1930s, see Max Horkheimer, *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993); see also Seyla Benhabib, Wolfgang Bonss, and John McCole, editors, *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).

Marxism with neo-Kantian, positivist, humanist or existentialist philosophical currents. In Schmidt's words: "for him a truly productive, progressive appropriation of dialectical materialism was necessarily bound up with a precise analysis of the historical as well as the substantive importance of Hegel and Marx."<sup>9</sup> Horkheimer took as fundamental Marx's statement that "Dialectic is unquestionably the last word in philosophy," and he believed that one had to liberate the dialectic from the "mystical shell" it had assumed in Hegel.<sup>10</sup>

During Horkheimer's directorship, the Institute developed "the critical theory of society." Their work combined theoretical construction and social criticism with empirical and theoretical research. In addition to their focus on social psychology and mass culture, the major difference in the Institute's orientation under Horkheimer was a rehabilitation of the function of philosophy in social theory. As Karl Korsch pointed out in *Marxism and Philosophy*, the ruling Marxian orthodoxies tended towards positivistic materialism and oriented theory and practice towards politics and economics, thus suppressing the philosophical components in the Marxian theory.<sup>11</sup> Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, however, were all professional philosophers who argued for the importance of philosophy in social theory. This approach was, of course, congenial to Marcuse, who, in his pre-Institute work, had just finished a study of Hegel's ontology and had been working on a synthesis of philosophy and social theory in the service of radical social change.

Horkheimer and his colleagues published their studies in a remarkable journal, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. In a foreword to the first issue, Horkheimer indicates that the Institute's investigations would strive to develop a "theory of the contemporary society as a whole."<sup>12</sup> They intended to engage in historical investigations, to deal with current problems, to develop a general and comprehensive theory of contemporary society, to inquire into the "future development of the historical process," and to provide instruments for social transformation.<sup>13</sup> In later articles, Horkheimer and Marcuse developed the program of social research in terms of a "critical theory of society" (see the discussion in the next section).

9 Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

10 Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

11 Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1970.

12 Max Horkheimer, "Vortwort," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1932), p. 1.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-11.

The Frankfurt Institute's work was interrupted in 1933 by the rise of fascism. They had anticipated the fascist takeover by depositing their endowment in Holland and by establishing a branch office in Geneva. Jews and radicals, the Institute members saw that they had no future in Germany and sought institutional and existential moorings elsewhere. In the following years, the Institute suffered the uncertainties of exile, trying to set up research centers in Paris, London and New York. Marcuse went first to Geneva in 1933, then to Paris, and finally arrived in New York in July 1934, where he remained for some years in the Institute's branch located at Columbia University.

One can hardly exaggerate the importance of the Institute for Social Research in Marcuse's development. Under its influence, he broke with Heidegger and worked collectively with the members of the Institute on its projects. During Marcuse's first years of collaboration, the Institute was concerned with providing a theoretical explanation of the roots and causes of fascism. In this context, Marcuse wrote a series of essays in the 1930s which analyzed the cultural forces and tendencies that contributed to the triumph of fascism in Germany. He and his associates were certain that "the fascist state was the fascist society, and that totalitarian violence and totalitarian reason came from the structure of the existing society."<sup>14</sup> They accepted the orthodox Marxian theory that fascism was a product of capitalist society: its economic system, institutions, ideology and culture. The Institute assumed "the task of identifying the tendencies that linked the liberal past with its totalitarian abolition" (N, p. xii). They perceived the roots of fascism in: (a) socioeconomic crises that were given a totalitarian solution in order to protect the capitalist relations of production and to secure the control of the ruling class; (b) institutions such as the bourgeois family and repressive socialization processes which created authoritarian personalities who conformed to and accepted socially imposed domination; (c) culture and ideologies that defended, or transfigured, the existing society while mystifying social relations of domination; and (d) a totalitarian state which imposed its rule on the entire economic, social, political, and cultural system.

Marcuse's 1934 essay "The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State" is the first Institute critique of fascism and explicates several defining positions that would characterize their distinctive analysis.<sup>15</sup> As Marcuse later recalls, his essay was a response to "a speech

14 Herbert Marcuse, "Foreword," *Negations*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1968 (hereafter N), p. xiii.

15 It is collected in *Negations*, op. cit. For more detailed explorations of Marcuse's analysis of German fascism, see *Technology, War and Fascism*, op. cit.

by Hitler, the speech at the industrial club in Düsseldorf; it became known, and Horkheimer called the colleagues together, pointed to a newspaper article and asked what was so significant about this speech that we should make it the object of a more or less independent study. We discussed it and made the decision."<sup>16</sup> Marcuse's argument is that the totalitarian state and its ideology respond to a new era of monopoly capitalism and provide a defense of capitalism against crises engendered by its market system and protection against opposition to the system (i.e. the working-class parties). Fascism was not seen, in this interpretation, as a monstrous rupture with the liberal past; rather, Marcuse demonstrates the continuities between liberalism and fascism and shows how liberalism's unquestioned allegiance to the capitalist economic system prepared the way for the fascist-totalitarian order and with it the abolition of liberalism itself.

Marcuse and his colleagues also engaged in empirical and theoretical studies of authoritarianism and how and why individuals submitted to totalitarian domination. The submission of the German people to fascism and their complacent acceptance of totalitarian society raised the question of what factors were responsible for developing a personality which would accept and obey even the most irrational, destructive authorities. The members of the Institute for Social Research concluded that the bourgeois family and its patriarchal structure played an important role in preparing the individual for the frightful submission to authority in fascist society. In a group project on "Authority and the Family," they studied the historical function of the family in reproducing the institutions, social practices and ideology of bourgeois society. The Institute also investigated the psychological factors involved in submission to societal domination and produced studies of authority and the family in different countries, which included a critical evaluation of the various literature on the family in these countries. The results were published in *Studien Über Autorität und Familie*.<sup>17</sup>

Marcuse contributed as well a long study on "Freedom and Authority" that traced the ideas of freedom and authority through the reformation, Kant, Hegel, the counterrevolution and Marx, to recent totalitarian theories of authority.<sup>18</sup> In the essay he is concerned to show the dichotomy in the bourgeois concept of freedom which split the individual into two spheres:

16 Herbert Marcuse, "Theory and Politics," op. cit., p. 128. For Hitler's speech, see *My New Order*, New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941, pp. 93ff.

17 Institute of Social Research, *Studien Über Autorität und Familie*, Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, two volumes.

18 Herbert Marcuse, "A Study on Authority," translated in *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1973, pp. 49-156.

an inner realm of freedom (autonomy) and an external realm of submission and bondage (authority). The inner freedom of Protestantism and Kant, Hegel's deification of the State, and the irrational and traditionalistic doctrine of authority of the counterrevolution (Burke, de Maistre, F. J. Stahl) all contribute, Marcuse argues, to preparing the way for the totalitarian theory of authority. Marcuse's critique of the ideas that promoted the acceptance of the totalitarian theory and practice of authority is acute, and shows his ability to demonstrate connections and consequences of ideas that are often overlooked or ignored in standard intellectual history.

## TOWARDS A CRITICAL THEORY OF SOCIETY

The term "critical theory of society" was adopted by the Institute for Social Research in 1937 to describe their distinctive version of Hegelian Marxism.<sup>19</sup> Although the various members of the "inner circle," especially Adorno and Horkheimer, would significantly alter their 1930s conception of "critical theory," they nonetheless used the term to identify their work throughout the next several decades. In the 1930s, critical theory refers to the shared, interdisciplinary program, projects and orientation of the Institute, which advocates the primacy of an interdisciplinary social theory over individual social sciences or philosophy. Critical theory refers to the synthesis of philosophy and the social sciences in the Institute's work and the project of social critique with an orientation towards radical social change. In effect, critical theory is a code for the Institute's Marxism during its exile period, although later it would describe the distinctive brand of social theory developed by the Institute's core members, and covers a variety of types of theory from the 1930s and 1940s to the 1950s and 1960s, after the key members of the inner circle split from the Institute and pursued their own interests and projects.

In a series of essays published in the 1930s, Marcuse and Horkheimer define the program and philosophical presuppositions of the Institute's critical theory of society, while distinguishing their enterprise from other social theories and philosophies.<sup>20</sup> Marcuse focuses on the relation between

19 As Helmut Dubiel points out, in the early 1930s the Institute of Social Research used the code words "materialism" and "materialistic," or "economic theory of society," to describe their Marxian program, while only around 1936-1937 did they adopt the term "critical theory." *Theory and Politics*, op. cit.

20 See, especially, Max Horkheimer, "Critical and Traditional Theory," in *Critical Theory*, New York: Continuum, 1972, pp. 188-252, and Herbert Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," in *Negations*, op. cit., pp. 134-58.

philosophy and critical theory, and although he criticizes bourgeois philosophy, he also defends its progressive elements: "reason, mind, morality, knowledge and happiness are not only categories of bourgeois philosophy, but concerns of humanity. As such they must be preserved, if not derived anew" (N, p. 147). Marcuse's position is that philosophy can play a progressive role in social theory by developing concepts that are subversive of the prevailing ideologies and can provide weapons of critique in the struggle for a better society.

In his 1930s essays, Marcuse is concerned at once to preserve what he regards as emancipatory elements in the bourgeois tradition, while criticizing tendencies which he concludes serve the interests of repression and domination. Often the progressive and conservative elements cannot be separated, and Marcuse's essays move from analysis of ideological and repressive features of aspects of bourgeois philosophy and culture, to depiction of their emancipatory moments. In general, he suggests that the early revolutionary ideals of the rising bourgeoisie contain aspects of a liberated society, and that their theories of freedom, rationalism, critical idealism, human rights, democracy, and materialist theories of human needs and potentialities continue to be of importance to critical social theory. Often he suggests that the bourgeoisie has failed to realize its ideals and that therefore earlier philosophies of, for example, democracy and freedom can be used to criticize their present neglect, distortion or suppression. In his view, many of the earlier bourgeois ideals could be used to criticize the current fascist suppression of liberal rights and liberties.

This is, of course, an expression of the Frankfurt School method of "immanent critique" which criticizes existing social conditions or theories from the standpoint of historically constructed ideals, principles, and institutions such as enlightenment, freedom, democracy, and human rights. Marcuse is, however, also quite critical of those tendencies in the bourgeois tradition which he claims contribute to the triumph of fascism. Hence, his essays contain ideology-critiques of liberalism, existentialism, idealism, rationalism and bourgeois culture, as well as valorization of their progressive aspects. Marcuse thinks that bourgeois philosophies and ideals tend to become ever more abstract, formal ideologies which the bourgeoisie uses to legitimate and mystify social conditions. In fact, Marcuse believes that there are conservative-conciliatory tendencies in bourgeois philosophy from the beginning which primarily function to conserve the bourgeois order of private property, possessive individualism, the unrestricted market, and the right to accumulate unlimited capital. But – and Marcuse's essays are full of these dialectical twists and turns – even some of the most ideological

concepts of equality, freedom, happiness, and so on provide a “refuge” which preserves certain rational and human ideals of an emancipated humanity. Thus, the conservative and emancipatory motives are often tightly interconnected, requiring careful analysis and critique.

In this conception – shared by Marcuse and the Institute “inner circle” – there are two traditions in bourgeois culture: a progressive heritage of humanist-emancipatory elements, and a reactionary heritage of conservative, mystifying, and repressive features. In their view, the later phase of bourgeois culture is more irrational and regressive than the earlier, more progressive phase. For instance, in his 1936 essay, “The Concept of Essence,” Marcuse writes:

According to the view characteristic of the dawning bourgeois era, the critical autonomy of rational subjectivity is to establish and justify the ultimate essential truths on which all theoretical and practical truth depends. The essence of man and of things is contained in the freedom of the thinking individual, the *ego cogito*. At the close of this era, knowledge of essence has the function primarily of binding the critical freedom of the individual to pre-given, unconditionally valid necessities. It is no longer the spontaneity of the concept but the receptivity of intuition that serves as the organon of the doctrine of essence. Cognition culminates in recognition, where it remains fixated.

In evaluating art and ideas – their origins, nature, and social functions – Marcuse always relates cultural forms to their concrete historical situation. Moreover, in analyzing social and cultural forms, he relates his subject matter to political economy, arguing that the crucial problems of the individual and society are “to be approached from the standpoint of economics” (N, p. 134). Since critical theory “recognizes the responsibility of economic conditions for the totality of the established world,” and comprehends the “social framework in which reality is organized” from the standpoint of political economy, the notion that philosophy is a special, superior discipline is rejected, as is the notion that social theory constitutes an autonomous mode of discourse on society and social life. Yet philosophy is not to be abandoned or denigrated, for critical theory is to operate with a synthesis of philosophy and the sciences, utilizing philosophical construction in conjunction with empirical research. Although Marcuse and his colleagues would accept the Marxian position that the economy is the crucial determining factor for all social life, they reject all forms of economic reductionism and attempt to describe the complex set of mediations connecting the economy, social and political institutions, culture, everyday life, and individual consciousness as parts of a reciprocally interacting social system.



Critical theory's claim "to explain the totality of human existence and its world in terms of social being" (N, pp. 134–5) contains a theory and program of social research. Critical theory argues that specific phenomena can only be comprehended as parts of a whole; hence a crucial task of social theory is to describe the structures and dynamics of the social system. Following the tenets of the Marxian theory, Marcuse stressed the importance of recognition that social and human existence are constituted by "the totality of the relations of production" (N, p. 82). As Marcuse argues in "The Concept of Essence," since the economy is the "essence" of the society, critical theory must describe the workings of the economy and how it is interconnected with and affects other forms of social life.

The critical theory of society is, Marcuse states, "linked with materialism" in accord with the "conviction of its founders" (N, p. 135). Following the Institute's strategy of not calling attention to their Marxism, Marcuse does not mention Marx once in "Philosophy and Critical Theory," although it is clear that Marx is the founder of the critical theory referred to and that the positions enunciated in the essay are the basic positions of Marxism. Marcuse does, however, propose his own interpretation of Marxian materialism: "There are two basic elements linking materialism to correct social theory: concern with human happiness and the conviction that it can be obtained only through a transformation of the material conditions of existence" (N, p. 135). Consequently, for Marcuse, "materialism" refers to a social practice and concern with human needs and happiness and not to a philosophical thesis which claims that "matter" is the primary ontological reality.

Marcuse elucidates the commitment of critical theory to human needs and their satisfaction in his essay "On Hedonism," the first detailed statement of his concern with needs, sensuality and happiness, which was to be a major focus of his later philosophy. He defends the claims of the individual to pleasure and sensuous gratification against those ascetic philosophies and systems that would repress needs and passion as being dangerous or immoral. But he also attacks those subjectivist hedonists who claim that pleasure is a purely internal affair and has no objective conditions or criteria of higher and lower, true and false pleasures. Here Marcuse shows how happiness is intimately connected with social conditions which make human happiness either possible or impossible and define its sphere and content. For example, he shows how both for the Greeks and under capitalism the labor system is essentially antagonistic to human happiness and creates two classes, one of which, the privileged class, has many more possibilities for gratification than the exploited working class, whose production makes possible the gratification of the former (N, p. 183). Under capitalism, happiness is a class phenomenon and is for the most part restricted to the

sphere of consumption (N, p. 173). It is limited by the requirements of a labor system where work is for the most part boring and painful. The requirements for submission to the labor system have produced a work ethic that devalues pleasure and produces objective conditions that render happiness transitory or impossible.

Crucial to Marcuse's conception is his connection of freedom with happiness: "Happiness, as the fulfillment of all potentialities of the individual, presupposes freedom: at root, it is freedom" (N, p. 180). In Marcuse's view, without the freedom to satisfy one's needs and to act in self-fulfilling ways, true happiness is impossible. If freedom does not prevail in the material conditions of the existing system, then new social conditions must be created to make possible increased happiness and freedom. Marcuse argues that only in an association of free producers in which the economy is geared towards the satisfaction of human needs (and not profit) can individuals be truly free and happy: "Here reappears the old hedonistic definition that seeks happiness in the comprehensive gratification of needs and wants. The needs and wants to be gratified should become the regulating principle of the labour process" (N, p. 182).

The potentialities for making a fuller gratification of needs possible reside in modern technology, which could reduce alienated labor through automation and could produce the goods necessary to satisfy one's basic needs (N, p. 184). Here, for the first time, Marcuse suggests that technology could produce an environment that could provide aesthetic pleasure and sensual gratification. The fact that technology is not geared towards the satisfaction of human needs is the fault of a social system geared to profit-maximization, which is the source of untold unhappiness and suffering. This theme, adumbrated in his essay on hedonism, will increasingly concern Marcuse and will be a major focus of his later work.

In Marcuse's view, it is impossible for most people to be truly happy in the present society, not only because of the obstacles to freedom and happiness in the labor system, but because the system's dominant pleasures are false and restrictive of true happiness and freedom. From the 1930s until his death, Marcuse was convinced that reason can judge between true and false needs, pseudo and real happiness. Hence, for him, "happiness is linked to knowledge and taken out of the dimension of mere feeling" (N, p. 181). He believes that reason is "the fundamental category of human thought, the only one by means of which it has bound itself to the fate of humanity" (N, p. 135). Reason is the "critical tribunal" which puts into question the entirety of existence; it has the task of criticizing the irrationality of the social order and defining the highest human potentialities. In the materialist concept, reason is supposed to create a rational society that would liberate

the individual from irrational fetters and bonds which restrict freedom, happiness and the development of individual potentialities. Reason must define true needs and the real interests of the individual and society, and must attack the prevailing false needs and repressive interests that should be abolished in the interests of the individual's happiness.

Happiness and unhappiness are thus in part social affairs that can be influenced by social practice. The enforced prolongation of the working day, the maintenance of inhuman working conditions, class division and exploitation, repressive morality, and a crisis-ridden economy: all of these social conditions are objective fetters on freedom and happiness and can only be removed

through an economic and political process encompassing the disposal of the means of production by the community, the reorientation of the productive process towards the needs and wants of the whole society, the shortening of the working day, and the active participation of the individuals in the administration of the whole (N, p. 193).

Hence, in Marcuse's conception, individual freedom and happiness can only be secured in a project of radical social reconstruction (N, pp. 192–200). Marcuse makes clear his commitment here, albeit in muted language, to the Marxian concept of social revolution. But he does not subscribe to the restricted orthodox concept of socialism which equates socialization with nationalization of the means of production regulated by a central plan:

Not that the labor process is regulated in accordance with a plan, but the interest determining the regulation becomes important: it is rational only if this interest is the freedom and happiness of the masses. Neglect of this element despoils the theory of one of its essential characteristics. It eradicates from the image of liberated mankind the idea of happiness that was to distinguish it from all previous mankind. Without freedom and happiness in the social relations of human beings, even the greatest increase in production and the abolition of private property in the means of production remain infected with the old injustice (N, pp. 144–5).

Marcuse here links his concept of socialism with the potentialities for freedom and happiness that are being repressed or restricted in the existing societies. He believes that this concern with the condition of human beings and their potentialities links critical theory with the great philosophies which elucidate the conditions and characteristics of human freedom, happiness and individuality. The critical theory is to define the highest human potentialities and to criticize society in terms of whether it furthers the development and realization of these potentialities, or their constriction and repression. The ultimate goal and fundamental interest of critical theory

is a free and happy humanity in a rational society. What is at stake is the liberation of human beings and the development of their potentialities (N, pp. 143ff.).

This project requires radical social change; consequently all of critical theory's concepts are geared towards social practice. From a methodological point of view, critical theory is at once to comprehend the given society, criticize its contradictions and failures, and to construct alternatives. Its concepts are thus both descriptive and normative and aim at a new society. They are "constructive concepts, which comprehend not only the given reality, but simultaneously its abolition and the new reality that is to follow" (N, p. 145). The concepts of critical theory describe the structure of the given society and "already contain their own negation and transcendence: the image of a social organization without surplus value. All materialist concepts contain an accusation and an imperative" (N, p. 86). The concepts are thus multidimensional in simultaneously describing, criticizing and projecting an alternative to the given state of affairs. The paradigm of critical theory for Marcuse is Marx's project, which at once describes the alienation, exploitation, appropriation of surplus value, and capital accumulation in capitalist society, criticizes that society in sharp critical concepts, and projects the image of a society free from the oppressive features of capitalism. Since critical theory is to speak "against the facts and confront bad facticity with its better potentialities" (N, p. 143), it rejects sharp distinctions between fact and value, or descriptive and normative statements, while providing a theory which is at once descriptive, critical and geared towards social change.

In appraising the rationality or irrationality of a social order, the existing society is to be compared with its higher and better potentialities. In Marcuse's view, contradictions between "what is" and "what could be" provide an impetus for social change. For example, Marcuse continually compares the potentialities in modern technology and the accumulated social wealth with its current restrictive use, and condemns the society for its failure to use technology in more emancipatory and human ways. Critical theory is thus future-oriented (N, pp. 145, 153) and has a utopian quality. Its future projections are not to be idle daydreams, but an imaginative program of social reconstruction based on an analysis of tendencies in the present society which could be developed to construct a rational society that would increase human freedom and happiness. This project requires fantasy to bridge "the abyss between rational thought and present reality" (N, p. 154). This emphasis on the place of imagination in social theory is a constant theme of Marcuse's later works and purports to reinstate the importance of imagination that was present in such philosophers as Aristotle and Kant,

but which has fallen into neglect or disrepute in modern philosophy (N, pp. 154–5). For Marcuse believes that “Without fantasy, all philosophical knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future, which is the only link between philosophy and the real history of mankind” (N, p. 155).

Further, critical theory is self-reflexive and critical of the practice to which it connects itself. Marcuse writes: “Critical theory is, last but not least, critical of itself and of the social forces that make up its own basis. The philosophical element in the theory is a form of protest against the new ‘Economism’, which would isolate the economic struggle and separate the economic from the political sphere” (N, pp. 156–7). Here Marcuse is stating in a coded expression that critical theory should be critical of orthodox Marxism, rejecting economic reductionism (the “new Economism”) and should be critical of the limitations of the working-class movement as well. Within Marxism, critical theory defends the political sphere against a narrowly conceived economic reductionism, and urges that political decisions and relations be geared to social and human goals: “the organization of the administration of social wealth in the interest of a liberated humanity” (N, p. 157). Critical theory wants to be free of illusions, and is not afraid to put its own theory and Marxism into radical question: “What . . . if the development outlined by the theory does not occur? What if the forces that were to bring about the transformation are suppressed and appear to be defeated?” (N, p. 142). Here Marcuse raises the haunting possibility that if the social forces in the working-class movement are defeated, critical theory is without a social base to realize the theory. It was precisely this predicament that would animate much of Marcuse’s later writings, especially *One-Dimensional Man*, and Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s later work. But in the 1930s Marcuse argues that critical theory should remain faithful to its truths, despite the historical circumstances, for “critical theory preserves obstinacy as a genuine quality of philosophical thought” (N, p. 143).

In Marcuse’s conception, critical theory is both to preserve philosophy’s critical and emancipatory dimension and to unfold a social practice that will make possible its realization. Marx’s stress on the unity of theory and practice is thus the guiding-concept of Marcuse’s critical theory. He would follow this project and attempt to develop critical theory throughout his life, as the texts collected in this volume attest.

## TEN YEARS ON MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS

Within the Institute, Marcuse became one of its most productive members. He was, in my view, a more original and sophisticated philosopher than Horkheimer and had a more solid and detailed knowledge of Hegel and Marx. Marcuse participated in the Institute's collective projects, helped formulate the concept of critical theory, produced powerful critiques of bourgeois ideology, and wrote many book reviews for the Institute's journal on topics in philosophy, sociology, history and psychology.<sup>21</sup> During the mid- to late 1930s, Marcuse worked especially closely with Horkheimer and their conception of critical theory at the time could be differentiated from that of Adorno and Benjamin.<sup>22</sup> Neither Horkheimer nor Marcuse followed Adorno's desire for the "liquidation of idealism," and both shared a version of Hegelian Marxism at odds with Adorno's early (and later!) works.<sup>23</sup> But with the entrance of Adorno into the group's "inner circle" in the late 1930s, Horkheimer tended to work ever more closely with Adorno, and in the 1940s their version of critical theory began to distance itself from the 1930s' program.

A text found in the Marcuse archive, "Ten Years on Morningside Heights: A Report on the Institute's History 1934–1944," provides a succinct overview of Institute activities and positions during the ten years of exile during which Marcuse was most involved with their projects. It illuminates the combination of critical social theory and philosophy that characterized the Institute approach – and Marcuse's own perspectives.

Each study, while conforming to the highest scientific standards, should at the same time have a philosophical orientation. It should be intended as a contribution to the ultimate motives of social activity. In this sense philosophy is not separated from science by a definite line of demarcation. Science itself becomes philosophy while philosophy itself consists of more than scientific studies. It is this concept of science as philosophy, and of philosophy as science, that in our opinion has characterized the great humanistic schools of thought in Europe since the Renaissance.

21 See the bibliography in Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse*, op. cit.

22 On the difference between Horkheimer–Marcuse's and Adorno–Benjamin's versions of critical theory in the 1930s, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, New York: The Free Press, 1977.

23 On Adorno's program of the "liquidation of idealism," see Buck-Morss, op. cit., pp. 111ff; on the differences between Horkheimer and Adorno, see Stefan Breuer, "The Long Friendship: On Theoretical Differences between Adorno and Horkheimer," in *On Max Horkheimer*, op. cit., pp. 257–80.

In its studies the Institute has preserved something of this attitude. In its specifically philosophical monographs it has tried to explain this state of mind to American science and to bring it to bear on present-day issues. . . . Logical, moral and artistic problems are discussed in a critical spirit that aims to preserve the motifs of humanistic thought amidst the very decay of humanistic culture.<sup>24</sup>

The report stresses that: "Particular attention has been given to the fate of the individual in modern mass society, his atomization and frustration on the one hand, and the readiness of reason to surrender to methods of mass domination on the other." The summary of their "Research on Authoritarian Systems and Trends" notes how totalitarian systems are attacking the "individual in its very roots and foundation." Institute research into authority and family, fascism, and totalitarian trends suggest that "a definite consciousness of and a general belief in authority have been characteristic of modern society from the beginning." Hence, the love of freedom and reason in the Enlightenment is "from the outset a contradiction" to the main trends of bourgeois civilization.<sup>25</sup>

National Socialism is interpreted as "an authoritarian system in action," which is "a particularly virulent expression of tendencies and drives which can be observed all over the modern world." It is a new social order, "essentially different from all other forms of Western society." It has replaced the market economy with "a closely knit social structure based on command and obedience in a leader-follower way." In addition, National Socialism exemplifies shifts in the social function of family, private property, courts of law, and culture. In this order, parental authority is replaced by the state; authority has more objective political and social moorings; and there is a marked decline of pillars of bourgeois society such as the individual, the market, the family, religion, and traditional culture. The result is social atomization, new forms of domination, and the dissolution of all traditional societal bonds. Moreover, the fascist order exhibits features of a gangster state: the apparatus can shift at will from pseudo-legality to outright terror, autonomous groups are smashed, individuals are deprived of the means of organized resistance, reduced to monads and helplessly exposed to the combined onslaught of propaganda, corruption, and terror.<sup>26</sup>

"Ten Years" indicates that the Institute philosophical, political, and social studies are grounded in economic studies of "those processes which in all

24 Institute of Social Research, "Ten Years on Morningside Heights: A Report on the Institute's History 1934-1944," p. 11 (Herbert Marcuse archives).

25 "Ten Years," *op. cit.*, pp. 136f.

26 "Ten Years," *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15. For Marcuse's own analyses of German fascism, see the papers collected in *Technology, War and Fascism*, *op. cit.*

highly developed countries have contributed toward a concentration of economic power." This shift from market to monopoly and state capitalism has "facilitated and partly conditioned authoritarian tendencies in other domains," transforming the role of the market and bringing about the "increased intrusion of elements of centralized control and planning into an allegedly free economy." Instead, National Socialism exhibits a "governmentally controlled economy," and a planned economy.<sup>27</sup>

The report also summarizes their studies in the sociology of art, prejudice and anti-Semitism, and makes clear the wide range of interdisciplinary activities which Marcuse participated in. In his postwar activity, Marcuse persisted in identifying with the project of developing a critical theory of society and throughout his life sought to integrate philosophy, political economy, social theory, and radical politics. During World War II when Horkheimer and Adorno were engaged in the philosophical studies that would become *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and were distancing themselves from Marxism and concrete politics, Marcuse was involved in both historical and political research and concrete political activity in the struggle against fascism. Moreover, Franz Neumann and Marcuse had begun developing a "theory of social change" from the present era, filling a gap in the Institute of Social Research's work<sup>28</sup> – a project that Marcuse would carry out in different contexts throughout his life.

Deeply influenced by the synthesis of philosophy and political economy in the early Marx, Marcuse enthusiastically devoted himself to the critical theory project of combining philosophy, social theory, and political economy, adding to classical Marxism's focus on economics and politics, the dimension of critical social theory and addressing phenomena not theorized adequately by Marx, such as the sociological, cultural and aesthetic, and psychological dimensions of human life. The result was the typically Marcusean synthesis that is on display in the studies collected in this volume.

Hence, Marcuse was not a traditional philosopher or social theorist, but a genuinely interdisciplinary and dialectical thinker for whom philosophical categories are always mediated by political economy and social theory, while philosophy provides critical perspectives on all aspects of social life. Hence, Marcuse defends the categories of philosophy, even metaphysics, for critical social theory and presents an *Aufhebung*, or sublation, of philosophy into social theory while developing a philosophical social theory with practical intent. The project involved a reconstruction and rethinking of Marxism to

27 "Ten Years," *op. cit.*, pp. 15–16.

28 See Herbert Marcuse, *Technology, War and Fascism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 93–138.



fill its lacunae and to make it more relevant to contemporary reality. This discussion sets the stage for an introduction to Marcuse's own postwar work on critical theory and the development of his distinctive version.

### MARCUSE'S CRITICAL THEORY: MARX, FREUD, AND BEYOND

Letters from Horkheimer to Marcuse in the late 1940s discuss Horkheimer's plans to return to Germany to re-establish the Institute of Social Research after several encouraging letters and invitations to return from Frankfurt University. Horkheimer, Adorno, and Horkheimer's close personal friend Friedrich Pollock did indeed return to Frankfurt in 1948, Horkheimer was elected Dean and named Rector of Frankfurt University, and what became known as the Frankfurt School was re-established in Germany. Marcuse, however, remained in the US, although he stayed in close contact with the Institute and frequently indicated interest in rejoining his former colleagues.

On October 18, 1951, Marcuse wrote to Horkheimer, whom he had recently visited in Frankfurt: "You asked me for the plan of the Freud book. As I am venturing into an area that is very risky, both privately and objectively, I have decided to write down everything that occurs to me first, and then rewrite it. So I have no plan – apart from the ideas I mentioned to you in Frankfurt."<sup>29</sup> Marcuse mentions here to Horkheimer the project that became *Eros and Civilization* in its earliest stages and he kept him informed of its progress and showed him the manuscript at various stages. In a September 1, 1954 letter to Adorno, Horkheimer says that it is "quite decent" and "there are so many splendid things in the book that we should accept it completely," thus recommending the study to Adorno for inclusion in a series of publications sponsored by the Institute of Social Research. Shortly thereafter, Marcuse wrote to Horkheimer: "It would be wonderful if the German edition could appear as an Institute text – it belongs to the Institute and its director."<sup>30</sup>

In a volume titled *Sociologica*, dedicated to Horkheimer on his sixtieth birthday, Marcuse's abridged translation of the final chapter of *Eros and*

<sup>29</sup> Marcuse to Horkheimer, October 18, 1951. In Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 18, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996, pp. 221–2.

<sup>30</sup> Marcuse to Horkheimer, December 11, 1954 (letter in the Frankfurt Max Horkheimer archive).

*Civilization* appeared in the second place, immediately after Adorno's contribution,<sup>31</sup> but Adorno – always jealous of Marcuse and protective of his own favored relation to Horkheimer – wrote Horkheimer on August 30, 1955:

In *Dissent* there is a long article by Herbert against the psychoanalytic revisionists, which basically contains the ideas we hold on the matter, although we are not mentioned in so much as a single word, which I find very strange. I am decisively against one-sided solidarity, and in connection with his book, of which this article forms a chapter, I should very much like to advocate that we do *absolutely nothing*.<sup>32</sup>

In effect, Adorno got his way, *Eros and Civilization* was not published in the Institute book series, despite a series of letters between Marcuse, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Pollock over the issue.<sup>33</sup> In a letter to Marcuse, Adorno claimed that Marcuse's interpretation of Freud was too "immediate," that this was a problem of English, that German lent itself better to mediation (*Vermittlung*), and that therefore the book would be improved in German if Marcuse translated it himself so that it could take what Adorno considered an appropriate form.<sup>34</sup>

Marcuse was probably insulted by this response and in any case did not want to spend time on translating his own book to please Adorno; he was working on the project that became *Soviet Marxism* and allowed another German publisher to translate *Eros and Civilization* after the Institute waffling. Many critics and readers find *Eros and Civilization* to be Marcuse's

31 See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Sociologica I. Aufsätze zum achtzigsten Geburtstag gewidmet*. Frankfurt: Europäische Verlags-Anstalt, 1955.

32 Adorno to Horkheimer, August 30, 1955 (letter in the Max Horkheimer archive Frankfurt).

33 Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, pp. 496ff, interprets the history of the German edition of *Eros and Civilization* as a sign of distance and objective alienation between Marcuse and the Institute of Social Research. The episode also shows Adorno continuing to undermine Marcuse within the Institute of Social Research; see the letter from Adorno to Horkheimer against Marcuse that I cite in *Technology, War and Fascism*, p. 16; letters from Adorno to Horkheimer, cited above, also find him blocking a German translation of *Eros and Civilization* in the Institute series; other letters find Adorno sharply criticizing Marcuse to Horkheimer, although Adorno and Marcuse maintained a friendly correspondence with, however, some pointed criticisms by Marcuse of Horkheimer and Adorno's political attitudes and behavior in the 1960s, some of which are contained in this volume. It is fair to say that Adorno and Marcuse had a highly complex relationship, mediated by their association with Horkheimer and Adorno's desire to keep Marcuse at a distance from the man who controlled Institute purse-strings and patronage.

34 Adorno to Marcuse, July 16, 1957 (letter in the Herbert Marcuse archives, Frankfurt).

best work and one of the most important developments of critical theory.<sup>35</sup> The book contains an audacious synthesis of Marx and Freud and sketches the outlines of a non-repressive society. Although Freud argued in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that civilization inevitably involved repression and suffering, Marcuse maintained that other elements in Freud's theory suggested that the unconscious contained evidence of an instinctual drive toward happiness and freedom. This material is articulated, Marcuse suggests, in daydreams, works of art, philosophy, and other cultural products. Based on this reading of Freud and study of an emancipatory tradition of philosophy and culture, Marcuse sketched the outlines of a non-repressive civilization which would involve libidinal and non-alienated labor, play, free and open sexuality, and production of a society and culture which would further freedom and happiness. His vision of liberation anticipated many of the values of the 1960s counterculture and helped Marcuse to become a major intellectual and political figure during that decade.

Marcuse contended that the then current organization of society generated "surplus repression" by imposing socially unnecessary labor, excessive restrictions on sexuality, and a social system organized around profit and exploitation. In light of the diminution of scarcity and prospects for increased abundance, Marcuse called for the end of repression and creation of a new society. His radical critique of existing society and its values, his call for a non-repressive civilization, and his critique of neo-Freudian revisionism elicited a dispute with his former colleague Erich Fromm, who accused him of "nihilism" (toward existing values and society) and irresponsible hedonism. Marcuse had criticized Fromm in *Eros and Civilization* for excessive "conformity" and "idealism" and repeated these charges in the polemical debates over his work following the publication of *Eros and Civilization* which heatedly discussed Marcuse's use of Freud, his critique of existing civilization, and his proposals for an alternative organization of society and culture.<sup>36</sup>

In 1956, Marcuse went to the Freud Centennial in Frankfurt cosponsored by the Institute of Social Research, where Jürgen Habermas and other young

35 For my own positive evaluation, see Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse*, Chapter Six and my Preface to the 1998 Routledge edition of *Eros and Civilization* (London and New York), pp. xi–xix.

36 See Erich Fromm, "The Political Implications of Instinctual Radicalism," *Dissent*, II, 4 (Fall 1955), pp. 342–9 and Marcuse's response "A Reply to Erich Fromm," *Dissent*, III, 1 (Winter 1956), pp. 79–81. I will discuss the Fromm–Marcuse relationship and their varying interpretations of Freud in more detail in the forthcoming Routledge Volume Five of Marcuse's *Collected Papers*, *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Emancipation*.

members and students in the Institute met him for the first time and were highly impressed with an individual who seemed to embody the earlier radical currents of critical theory with a contemporary political edge missing in Horkheimer and Adorno.<sup>37</sup> At the conference, Marcuse presented a lecture "Progress in the Light of Psychoanalysis,"<sup>38</sup> which Habermas described:

Marcuse's dialectics of progress showed that a non-repressive culture is technically possible, that the instruments of progress – science, industry, and technology – have made possible a world without poverty, repression, and material deprivation – but the current organization of society prevents this. Against Freud, Marcuse defends the possibility of a non-repressive civilization.<sup>39</sup>

Such a clear utopian alternative had not been articulated within the Institute and this impressed Habermas and some of his colleagues. In addition, Marcuse continued to analyze the forms of advanced industrial societies, capitalist and communist, publishing his studies of *Soviet Marxism* in 1958.<sup>40</sup> The distinctive Marcusean perspective of combining analyses of domination with those of liberation, stressing both the most oppressive aspects of contemporary society as well as the most utopian possibilities, was thus developing in the postwar period and his subsequent writings would stress one pole or the other – or in some cases attempt to provide a balance.

37 Conversation with Jürgen Habermas, Frankfurt, August 1988. Habermas told Wiggershaus that he and others did not know at the time how closely associated with Horkheimer and the Institute Marcuse had been and did not know his full background; *The Frankfurt School*, pp. 544ff. Habermas stressed to me how impressive he found Marcuse, whose progressive political attitudes, in contrast to the increasing conservatism of Horkheimer, he found appealing (discussion in Frankfurt, October 1990). A September 27, 1958 letter from Horkheimer to Adorno – over Habermas's essay in *Philosophical Rundschau* on Marx and Marxism – discloses intense hostility toward Habermas. Horkheimer claims that Habermas mentions revolution continuously, transforms critical theory into revolution theory, sublates philosophy into praxis, thus betraying (Horkheimer's and Adorno's) philosophy and critical theory. In addition, Horkheimer complains that Habermas has no sense of empirical reality, and may be a hardworking, active researcher and writer, but will bring shame to the Institute (see Horkheimer to Adorno, published in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 18, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996, pp. 437–48). Horkheimer initially blocked Habermas's promotion in the Institute of Social Research, but after he retired Adorno brought him back (see Wiggershaus, *op. cit.*).

38 Herbert Marcuse, "Progress and Freud's Theory of the Instincts," *Five Lectures*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1970, pp. 28–43.

39 Jürgen Habermas, "Triebchicksal als politische Schicksal," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 14, 1956.

40 For my evaluation of *Soviet Marxism*, see Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse*, Chapter Seven and my Introduction to the 1985 Columbia University Press edition (New York), pp. vii–xiii.

Marcuse's version of critical theory is thus characterized by both radical critique of forces of domination and the search for forces of opposition and liberation. Moreover, while Horkheimer and Adorno were distancing themselves from political practice, Marcuse continually sought the union of theory and practice and to make critical theory an instrument of social change. His political differences with Horkheimer and Adorno emerged clearly in the 1960s in an exchange of letters, published in this collection (see pp. 212 ff.), over what Marcuse envisaged as the increasing tendencies of Horkheimer and Adorno to engage in "cold-war ideology," to promote anti-communism while failing to adequately criticize the West. The exchange reveals Marcuse's intransigent political radicalism that would make him one of the most important critical theorists of the 1960s.

### CRITICAL THEORY AND THE FORTUNES OF HISTORY: FROM THE 1960s INTO THE 1970s

Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, Marcuse sought to develop his critical theory in a series of studies that formed the background and substance of *One-Dimensional Man* (1964).<sup>41</sup> While *Eros* contains the most detailed depiction of his vision of liberation, *One-Dimensional Man* yields Marcuse's most systematic presentation of forces of domination. In this book, he analyzed the development of new forms of social control which were producing a "one-dimensional man" and "society without opposition." Citing trends toward conformity, Marcuse described the forms of culture and society which created "false" consumer needs that integrated individuals into the existing system of production and consumption via mass media, advertising, industrial management, and uncritical modes of thought. To "one-dimensional" thought and society, Marcuse counterpoised critical and dialectical thinking which perceived a freer and happier form of culture and society, and advocated a "great refusal" of all modes of repression and domination.

*One-Dimensional Man* theorized the decline of revolutionary potential in capitalist societies and the development of new forms of social control. Marcuse claimed that "advanced industrial society" created false needs which integrated individuals into the existing system of production and

<sup>41</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1964; for my evaluation of this text, see Herbert Marcuse, Chapter Eight and my introduction to the second Beacon Press and Routledge editions, 1991 and 1999.

consumption. Mass media and culture, advertising, industrial management, and contemporary modes of thought all reproduced the existing system and attempted to eliminate negativity, critique, and opposition. The result was a “one-dimensional” universe of thought and behavior in which the very aptitude and ability for critical thinking and oppositional behavior was withering away.

Not only had capitalism integrated the working class, the source of potential revolutionary opposition, but they had developed new techniques of stabilization through state policies and the development of new forms of social control. Thus Marcuse questioned two of the fundamental postulates of orthodox Marxism: the revolutionary proletariat and the inevitability of capitalist crisis. In contrast with the emphasis on the working class as the primary source of social change in orthodox Marxism, Marcuse championed the non-integrated forces of minorities, outsiders, and the radical intelligentsia, while attempting to nourish oppositional thought and behavior through promoting critical thinking and what he called the “great refusal.”

For Marcuse, domination combined economics, politics, technology, social organization, and culture. Whereas for orthodox Marxists, domination is inscribed in capitalist relations of production and the logic of commodification, for Heideggerians, Weberians and others it is technology, technological rationality, and/or political institutions that are the major forces of societal domination. Marcuse, by contrast, synthesizes these approaches and develops a multidimensional analysis that ferrets out aspects of domination and resistance throughout the social order. Moreover, Marcuse insisted that contradictions of the system, theorized by classical Marxism as the antagonism of capital and labor, remained, albeit in altered form. Marcuse constantly cited the unity of production and destruction, the ways that creation of wealth produced systematic poverty, war, and violence. Hence, for Marcuse there was an “objective ambiguity” to even the seeming achievements of advanced industrial society which had the wealth, science, technology, and industry to alleviate poverty and suffering, but used the instruments of production to enhance domination, violence, and injustice.

Texts such as “The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society” (1962) and “The Containment of Social Change in Industrial Society” (1965) – both collected in this volume – provide excellent analyses of what Marcuse calls “advanced industrial society.” The focus in the titles of these works discloses Marcuse’s abiding interest in social change – an emphasis that distinguished his work from that of Horkheimer and Adorno, who were becoming increasingly uninterested in promoting social change or political practice and transformation.

In addition to developing his general theoretical perspectives, Marcuse persistently engaged in concrete sociopolitical analysis. His text "The Individual in the Great Society" (1966), collected in this volume, provides an astute critique of the ideological pretensions of US President Lyndon Johnson's conception of a "great society" and sharp analysis of the fate of the individual in the contemporary world. Johnson called for development of a "great society" at the same time that he accelerated US involvement in Vietnam; Marcuse in turn provided a penetrating appraisal of Johnson's program, while positively evaluating its progressive elements, the realization of which Marcuse claimed would require radical change beyond the existing organization of society.

While *One-Dimensional Man* and most of Marcuse's texts of the early to mid-1960s provide often sobering and pessimistic critiques of the tendencies toward domination and increased social control, producing the containment of social change, he continued to seek agents and possibilities of social transformation which he indeed discovered in the mid-1960s in the student and anti-war movement, the emerging counterculture, and Third World liberation movements. In a "1966 Political Preface" to *Eros and Civilization* and a 1968 lecture "Beyond One-Dimensional Man," both published in this volume, Marcuse valorizes forces of opposition and revolt and the importance of aesthetic and erotic components of social rebellion. In a sense, Marcuse anticipated the counterculture and many 1960s liberation movements in *Eros and Civilization*, and when forces appeared that embodied his values of eros, love, play, and the aesthetic dimension, Marcuse defended and promoted these forces.

A previously unknown text found in the Marcuse archives that we have titled "Cultural Revolution" (n.d., around 1970), and which is included in this volume, provides Marcuse's most detailed analysis of the importance of cultural revolution for radical social transformation. The origins, genesis, and history of "Cultural Revolution" is something of a mystery. The text is highly polished and appears ready for publication, but Marcuse apparently abandoned it in favor of the project that became his 1972 book *Counterrevolution and Revolt*.<sup>42</sup> Continuing the revolutionary optimism of *An Essay on Liberation*, but with more qualifications, "Cultural Revolution" is in retrospect one of his best balanced works between

<sup>42</sup> Some of the ideas in "Cultural Revolution" are more developed in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, but others are more fully explicated in the former text; a few pages of text overlap and some similar themes are treated, but the valence of the concept of "cultural revolution" is different in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*. In the latter, references to "cultural revolution" are more muted, even negative, than in the more optimistic and affirmative text published here.

optimism and pessimism. It contains some of his most nuanced appraisals of the New Left, counterculture, and forces of radical opposition. He stresses the "objective ambivalence" of the forces of both the system and the opposition which combine positive and negative features, and sketches out his conception of a "new sensibility" which combines reason and the senses in an oppositional subjectivity.

We are also including in this volume another important unpublished text found in the Marcuse archive that we are calling "The Historical Fate of Bourgeois Democracy". The manuscript clearly follows *Counter-revolution and Revolt* chronologically and deepens its pessimism. Written just after Nixon's re-election in 1972 and the decisive defeat of anti-war candidate George McGovern, Marcuse carries out one of his most detailed analyses of a specific historical juncture and most sustained critiques of the contradictions of bourgeois democracy. The manuscript is polished, ready for publication and it is not clear why Marcuse did not publish this text.<sup>43</sup> Drawing on Erich Fromm's *Escape From Freedom* and a text co-authored by Adorno and the Institute of Social Research, *The Authoritarian Personality*, Marcuse points to what he considers "sadomasochistic" tendencies in both the underlying population and counterculture. Although the political analysis of bourgeois democracy is orthodox Marxian in places, Marcuse also valorizes the emerging women's liberation movement and ecology movement as progressive forces of change.

Marcuse's pessimism regarding the ascendancy of neo-fascist forces seemed to be put in question with the Watergate affair and the assault on Richard Nixon in both the political system and media which led to his resignation. But in a letter to the *New York Times*, published on the op-ed page as "Watergate: When Law and Morality Stand in the Way" (June 27, 1973), Marcuse claimed that the affair is being treated as an anomaly in an otherwise fair, rational, just, and functional political system. In the text, which we are including in this volume, Marcuse insists that the Watergate affair is symptomatic of a corrupt social system as a whole. Written during the period of growing revelations and media discussion of crimes in the

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Marcuse must have become somewhat skeptical of this concept as the 1960s passed into the 1970s and he came to privilege the concept of "counterrevolution" over revolutionary forces as hegemonic around 1972. *Counterrevolution and Revolt* actually contains a sharp critique of forces of "revolt" and the "cultural revolution" as I will argue in Volume Three of the Routledge *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Foundations of the New Left*.

43 As with "Cultural Revolution," there are no references to the "Historical Fate of Bourgeois Democracy" in the Marcuse archives, or in letters to friends, and no one so far has been able to shed light on the origins, genesis, and history of this text.



Nixon White House in the aftermath of the Watergate burglary, it shows Marcuse resisting facile liberal optimism and continuing the sort of radical critique that is characteristic of his version of critical theory.

A distinct shift takes place between the revolutionary optimism of "Beyond One-Dimensional Man" and *An Essay on Liberation*, the more balanced positions in "Cultural Revolution," and the rather negative and pessimistic positions in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* and "Historical Fate of Bourgeois Democracy." Whereas in his writings from 1968 to the early 1970s, Marcuse focused on the forces of struggle and liberation, in his writings from around 1972 to the mid-1970s, he returns to focus on forces of domination and repression. Marcuse's critical theory was closely attuned to the political situation of the moment and his mood and analytical focus seemed to swing from optimism to pessimism depending on the prospects for the New Left and radical opposition in the current historical situation.

Throughout the 1970s, Marcuse sought to update his social and political critique and to seek new agents of social transformation – as we shall see in the next Routledge volume which treats Marcuse's interaction with the New Left. A lecture, "A Revolution in Values" (1973), included in this volume, shows how Marcuse persevered in combining philosophical with political analysis in his project of social critique and social transformation. It is significant that Marcuse continues calling for cultural revolution, in this case a revolution of values, into the 1970s. The argument presents an orthodox Marxist account of relations between values and social change and then offers a dialectical argument in which change of values anticipates social change, as, for example, the Enlightenment preceded the French revolution and the nineteenth century ideas of socialism preceded the Russian and other socialist revolutions.

While in his later years Marcuse turned from his highly political work on developing a critical theory of society and radical politics to his final work on aesthetics,<sup>44</sup> he also engaged feminism, ecology, and the social movements of the era, constantly updating his theoretical analysis and seeking new agents of social transformation. Hence, from the 1930s until his death in 1979, Herbert Marcuse's work can be seen as an attempt to develop a critical theory of society and radical politics for the contemporary era.

<sup>44</sup> See Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1978. A forthcoming volume of this series will engage Marcuse's work in aesthetics.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS: MARCUSE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The texts collected in this volume are of great importance for understanding Marcuse and the Frankfurt School. They make clear the unique synthesis of philosophy, social theory, aesthetics, and radical politics that distinguish Marcuse's critical theory and his constant updating and revision of his theory in response to political and historical change. They disclose Marcuse at his most radical, making clear his differences from Horkheimer and Adorno, and showing Marcuse to be a sharp analyst and critic of contemporary social conditions.

In conclusion, I would suggest that these texts are of more than historical interest as we need today the same sort of dialectical social theory developed by Marcuse. Although much of the controversy around Marcuse involved his critiques of contemporary capitalist societies and defense of radical social change, in retrospect, Marcuse left behind a complex and many-sided body of work comparable to the legacies of Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukacs, T. W. Adorno, and Walter Benjamin. His social theory is characterized by broad critical perspectives that attempt to capture the major sociohistorical, political and cultural features of the day. Such attempts to get at the Big Picture, to theorize the fundamental changes, developments, contradictions, and struggles of the day are more necessary than ever in an era of globalization in which the restructuring of capital and technological revolution are changing all aspects of life. Marcuse's thought thus remains pertinent because he provides a mode of global theoretical analysis and addresses issues that continue to be significant for contemporary theory and politics. His unpublished manuscripts contain much material pertinent to concerns of the present era which could provide the basis for a rebirth of interest in Marcuse's thought as we enter a new millennium and meet new theoretical and political challenges.<sup>45</sup>

In sum, Marcuse provides comprehensive philosophical perspectives on domination and liberation, a powerful method and framework for analyzing contemporary society, and a vision of liberation that is richer than classical Marxism, other versions of critical theory, and current forms of postmodern theory. Indeed, Marcuse presents critical philosophical perspectives on

45 For examples of the contemporary relevance of Marcuse, see the studies in John Bokina and Timothy J. Lukes, editors, *Marcuse: From the New Left to the New Left*, Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1994; the series of Marcuse's uncollected and unpublished writings edited by Peter-Erwin Jansen for Campus Verlag and zu klampen Verlag; and the recent books published in Brazil by Jorge Coelho, *Marcuse. Uma Trajetória* (Londrina: Editora UEL, 1999) and Isabel Loureiro, *Herbert Marcuse, A grande recusa hoje* (Petropolis: Editora Vozes, 1999).

human beings and their relationship to nature and society, as well as substantive social theory and radical politics. In retrospect, Marcuse's vision of liberation – of the full development of the individual in a non-repressive society – distinguishes his work, along with sharp critique of existing forms of domination and oppression, and he emerges in this narrative as a theorist of forces of domination and liberation. Deeply rooted in philosophy and the conception of social theory developed by the Institute for Social Research, Marcuse's work lacked the sustained empirical analysis in some versions of Marxist theory and the detailed conceptual analysis found in many versions of political theory. Yet he constantly showed how science, technology, and theory itself had a political dimension and produced a solid body of ideological and historical analysis of many of the dominant forms of society, culture, and thought during the turbulent era in which he lived and struggled for a better world.

Thus, I believe that Marcuse overcomes the limitations of many current varieties of philosophy and social theory and that his writings provide a viable starting-point for theoretical and political concerns of the present age. In particular, his articulations of philosophy with social theory, cultural criticism, and radical politics constitute an enduring legacy. Whereas mainstream academic divisions of labor isolate social theory from philosophy and other disciplines, Marcuse provides a robust philosophical dimension and cultural criticism to social theory, while developing his theoretical perspectives in interaction with concrete analyses of society, politics, and culture in the present age. This dialectical approach thus assigns philosophy an important position within social theory, providing critical theory with strong normative and philosophical perspectives.

In addition, Marcuse emerges as a sharp, even prescient, sociopolitical theorist. He was one of the first on the left who both developed a cogent critique of Soviet Marxism and yet foresaw the liberalizing trends in the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup> After the uprisings in Poland and Hungary in 1956 were ruthlessly suppressed, many speculated that Khrushchev would have to roll back his program of de-Stalinization and crack down further. Marcuse, however, differed, writing in 1958: "The Eastern European events were likely to slow down and perhaps even reverse de-Stalinization in some fields; particularly in international strategy, a considerable 'hardening' has been apparent. However, if our analysis is correct, the fundamental trend will continue and reassert itself throughout such reversals. With respect to internal Soviet developments, this means at present continuation of 'collective leadership,' decline in the power of the secret

46 See Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*, *op. cit.*

police, decentralization, legal reforms, relaxation in censorship, liberalization in cultural life."<sup>47</sup>

In part as a response to the collapse of Communism and in part as a result of new technological and economic conditions, the capitalist system has been undergoing disorganization and reorganization in a process of global restructuring. Marcuse's loyalty to Marxism always led him to analyze new conditions within capitalist societies that had emerged since Marx. Social theory today can thus build on this Marcusean tradition in developing critical theories of contemporary society grounded in analyses of the transformations of capitalism, technology, and the emergence of a new global world economic system. For Marcuse, social theory was integrally historical and must conceptualize the salient phenomena of the present age and changes from previous social formations. While the post-modern perspectives of theorists like Baudrillard and Lyotard claim to postulate a rupture in history, they fail to analyze the key constituents of the changes going on, with Baudrillard even declaring the "end of political economy."<sup>48</sup> Marcuse, by contrast, always attempted to analyze the changing configurations of capitalism and to relate social and cultural changes to transformations in the economy.

Moreover, Marcuse always paid special attention to the decisive position of technology in organizing contemporary societies, and with the emergence of new technologies in our time the Marcusean emphasis on the relationship between technology, the economy, culture, and everyday life is especially important. Marcuse also engaged new forms of culture and the ways that culture provided both instruments of manipulation and liberation. The proliferation of new media technologies and cultural forms in recent years also demands a Marcusean perspective to capture both their potentialities for progressive social change and the possibilities of more streamlined forms of social domination. Whereas postmodern theories also describe new technologies, Marcuse always related the economy to culture and technology, seeing both emancipatory and dominating potentials, while theorists like Baudrillard are one-dimensional, often falling prey to technological determinism and views of society and culture that fail to see positive and emancipatory potentials.

I would also argue that we are to some extent in the situation of Marcuse in the 1960s and 1970s, a highly ambiguous and fluid situation with

47 See Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*, op. cit., p. 174.

48 See Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, London and New York: Macmillan and Guilford Press, 1991, and *The Postmodern Turn*, London and New York: Routledge and Guilford Press, 1998.

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HERBERT MARCUSE (1898–1979) is an internationally renowned philosopher, social activist and theorist and member of the Frankfurt School. He has been remembered as one of the most influential social critical theorists inspiring the radical political movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Author of numerous books including *One-Dimensional Man*, *Eros and Civilization* and *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse taught at Columbia, Harvard, Brandeis University and the University of California before his death in 1979.

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