



The book tackles in two parts the Orwellian quality of advanced technology, one part looking at the kind of society technology brings forth, and the other explaining the kind of thinking this society engenders. As a philosophy work, it requires a rudimentary knowledge of that subject.

The nature of one-dimensional society I vaguely suspected, and Marcuse filled in the details. Modern society has gutted Enlightenment ideas, such as the right to dissent, and hollowed out concepts such as "democracy," leaving the terms intact while eviscerating the meanings.

One example is that the pre-industrial "battle for existence" humans once faced has long been obviated by technology, so the misery and distress found in modern societies is in fact artificially contrived. Why? Because modern economics needs the threat of destitution and insecurity to function.

The section on "one-dimensional thinking" contained even greater surprises. With the media entrapping society in a permanent present, people cannot achieve the historical perspective necessary to make judgments critical of the *status quo*.

Marcuse takes issue with a great deal of linguistic reality in advanced industrial society--he warns that prevailing conceptions of x and y in this society are shaped largely by dominant interests, and the result, he finds, is a betrayal of aspirations for human liberation.

Marcuse thinks that in order to preserve your genuine character in such a repressive society, you will have to practice a strategy he calls 'The Great Refusal'. You must refuse everything the society produces.

Production, for Marcuse, is no longer a means to serve real needs. It becomes an end-in-itself. Or, rather, production creates artificial needs – the products of boredom, really – to feed the wealth of the few. Through its education-media propaganda machinery, production creates a culture of fake needs.

Reason has been reified, not as a Marcusean Truth, but as the applied tool of technology that serves production.

Marcuse's obtuse writing style is difficult to follow in its particulars, but his central argument seems clear enough. His critique of the modern-day world, though dated with Marxist-Freudian terminology and concepts, are relevant still and a good dusting off is due.

That freedom, though, is met in two fundamentally, divergent ways. Domination that ensures the freedom of some at the expense of others is one way.

Pacification in Marcuse's sense plays right into their hands. Sociopathic behavior is not only fueled by culture. It's in the genes and it is perpetual. There is no single human nature. Some are good, some are not. Most are in between, with behavioral expression dependent on situation and circumstance.

*"This society turns everything it touches into a potential source of progress and of exploitation, of drudgery and satisfaction, of freedom and of oppression."*

*"The power over man which this society has acquired is daily absolved by its efficacy and productiveness. If it assimilates everything it touches, if it absorbs the opposition, if it plays with contradiction, it demonstrates its cultural superiority. And in the same way the destruction of resources and the proliferation of waste demonstrate its opulence and the 'high levels of well-being'; the Community is too well off to care!"*

I think the logical thrust of this work is irrefutable. Simply to disagree would not mark you as suspect, but I get the sense that the people who most need to read something like this will avoid it like the plague and disagree with it on ideological grounds. Marcuse is not prescient at all, but his critique is still perfectly applicable to the plight of humanity.

*"In the totalitarian society, the human attitudes tend to become escapist attitudes, to follow Samuel Beckett's advice: 'Don't wait to be hunted to hide...'"*

The book argues how in an advanced industrial society, which has already reached a level of common welfare and productivity, one can truly not think of alternatives, or how any alternative seems to be looked down upon.

Post-industrial technological society is so rational only an irrational person would find anything significant worth altering.

Analytical philosophy loses its ability to "transcend" or "negate" the historical reality. Instead, it appropriates a technic ideology lacking an ethical or moral project.

An overcoming of capitalism would probably also entail some form of transformation or revolution in technology. At the same time, the text is severely lacking when it comes to a more general understanding of capitalism.

Man's struggles with other humans stem from the irrational desire to believe humans have the capacity to be objectively rational.

Re-reading *One Dimensional Man* half a century on immediately identifies it as part of the beginning of what was later labelled post-modernism. Marcuse, indeed, quotes freely from the French theoretician, Roland Barthes, so the family tree leading to Derrida and Althusser seems quite intact. Pedigree, however, is rarely a reason for re-reading works of philosophy, relevance being the necessary criterion.

The focus of interest from our current position is surely the book's analysis of the potentially pacifying role of consumerism. This driver of false consciousness demands constant reinvigoration via what is effectively an

uninterrupted flow of coloured beads.

Consumerism, of course, is not limited to pop culture. There remains the illusion of "fashion" and the social herding of repeated attempts to define what is "cool". There is also undeniably the drive of technological change, invention that creates innovatory and often life-extending and experience-enhancing products. In such an arena, being new or merely novel is not enough.

Now when religion is transformed into a product to be consumed, by whatever ideological or theological interest, we have both the consumerism discussed by Marcuse and the false consciousness that prompted his analysis entering territory that requires not only the denial of one's own interests, but perhaps even the sacrifice of one's own life.

He labelled industrial society then as totalitarian. A term that mainly associated with communist countries. By totalitarian he means 1. the manipulation of the needs 2. manipulation of the communication 3. criticism is being blocked not by power but by banality.

Logic of manipulation p. 108 is using language (of Orwell) war is peace or schone bom. So language is medium of control p. 123 by reducing the opposition or using image instead of concepts.

The role of tv and ads, the language of the politicians is similar to ads.

He discusses the differences or similarities between board /management and control/ domination of the labour. The domination is possible via construction of (own) reality. He discussed the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato.

Creation of the false needs and false consciousness is known criticism of Marx on capitalism. Marcuse referred to the unnecessary products and the effects (alienation).

Chances for the alternatives is via critical philosophy to challenge the discourse/ rhetoric. For example universalia p 222. Nation is empty word (the entity differs from its sum of parts). Building institutions and the critical thinking, the role and use of language and awareness.

Marcuse hopes are on those who are not part of the system. I think this is why he assisted the case of Angela Davis (she was his student though).

Marcuse talks of the functionalist trend of 'opening up', whether it be the opening up of the image of the body, exposing its sexual features in order to sell products, or the opening up of shops and offices, their transparent facades revealing their personnel.

Marcuse pushes against the positivists by saying that even if we cannot come up with a distinct definition of what beauty is, we all recognize it in the same way - by its contrast with non-beautiful things. We don't need to necessarily describe what beauty is to say it's real, but rather, show that it is "not-not-beauty".

For Marcuse, industrial society is a totally administered society, which makes it totalitarian. The fact (as claimed by Marcuse) that capitalist societies use pleasure and propaganda rather than fear and intimidation to administer their populations doesn't make capitalist societies any less totalitarian than communist ones.

The "society without opposition" Marcuse described was mobilized against the enemy to the point of threatening all-out nuclear destruction. It was based on the "supreme promise" of "an ever-more-comfortable life for an ever-growing number of people who, in a strict sense, cannot imagine a qualitatively different universe of discourse and action."

As we read *One-Dimensional Man* today, do we not again and again seem to be encountering the society in which we live?

The distinguishing feature of advanced industrial society is its effective suffocation of those needs which demand liberation—liberation also from that which is tolerable and rewarding and comfortable—while it sustains and absolves the destructive power and repressive function of the affluent society. Here, the social controls exact the overwhelming need for the production and consumption of waste; the need for stupefying work where it is no longer a real necessity; the need for modes of relaxation which soothe and prolong this stupefaction; the need for maintaining such deceptive liberties as free competition at administered prices, a free press which censors itself, free

choice between brands and gadgets.

Unlike his equally alienated colleagues Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Marcuse never lost his revolutionary outlook. He insisted on the technical and historical prospect of human liberation, even if no movement was demanding it. He believed even Marx's eschatological vision was not radical enough: the society's actual capacities far exceed any emancipation Marx might have imagined. In spite of the book's negativity, it is not hard to find the utopianism underlying *One-Dimensional Man*.

In the early 1960s Marcuse could not see any political force demanding that the society use its capacities for what he called "the pacification of existence"—a life free from domination, scarcity, and unnecessary toil. But this would change shortly after the publication of *One-Dimensional Man*, as the New Left exploded onto the scene with its deeper demands for liberation as well as black-white equality and an end to the war in Vietnam. Marcuse embraced us.

And we embraced him in return. Marcuse was not only a striking analyst of politics and culture but also a writer of towering intellectual authority. How remarkable that the great philosophical work of the American New Left was penned by a German Marxist born in 1898 who had participated in the revolutionary events of 1918–19. The demanding pages of *One-Dimensional Man*, which sold more than 300,000 copies in its first edition, are steeped in Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel, Marx and Freud, as well as the avant-garde classics of modern culture. Marcuse's perspective integrates them all: the deepest hopes of humankind form a single civilizational thread. From Plato and Marx to Marcuse: in the classroom he self-consciously saw himself as keeping alive the great tradition of Western rationalism, referring to each predecessor as "the old man."