Marcuse’s philosophical reflections on Fascism is grounded by his analysis of rationality in the late twentieth century and makes the hope for revolutionary change seem bleaker still. Developing a theme that becomes central in One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse argues that there is no way to rebel in Western society, since everything has come to be measured in terms of technical efficiency. Reason is now in service of technology, rather than the critical force that was envisioned during the Enlightenment. Marcuse uses the term ‘technical rationality’ to convey a rationality that has become a form of domination, a term that is very important in the work of Habermas as well as Marcuse.

Marcuse holds out for a very utopian ideal of individual human freedom. Claiming that individuality has changed in mass society, Marcuse sees art and sexuality as the two areas that can (hopefully) remain private individual expressions and transcend society, another theme that he will develop in his later writings. It seems clear in these early works that Marcuse’s ideal society is one based on individual freedom and that socialism is only a stepping stone towards this goal. Even technology could help free human beings from the drudgery of work, if it were not used as a means of social control, as it was under Fascism (63-4).

While those new to Marcuse certainly should not skip One-Dimensional Man and other works to read the collected works first, there is much material here of interest to the general reader, especially those interested in modernity or philosophy of technology, as well as to specialists on Marcuse, the Frankfurt School, the German Left and the Nazis, and the American New Left. For many, the brief exchange of letters between Marcuse and Heidegger (his former teacher) on Heidegger’s role in the Third Reich will amply justify seeking out this volume. The book is handsomely and accurately typeset, the items chosen for publication are interesting and appropriate, and the Foreword by Peter Marcuse and the Introduction by Douglas Kellner are clear and provide very valuable information about the historical and social context of Marcuse’s writings. Brief editorial notes in individual articles provide further guidance.

David J. Stump
University of San Francisco