

Herbert Marcuse

Technology, War and Fascism: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume One.

Ed. Douglas Kellner.

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The first of six projected volumes of the collected works of Herbert Marcuse, introduced and edited by Douglas Kellner, and published by Routledge, this volume consists of material written in the 1940s when Marcuse, having just fled Nazi Germany and arrived in the United States, first received support from the Institute for Social Research, then held various government positions in military intelligence and the State Department. Except for two previously published articles, the material is unpublished and unavailable until now outside the Marcuse archives in Frankfurt.

The main topics of Marcuse's work in this volume are (1) an analysis of Fascism and the potential for revolutionary response to it, (2) an analysis of rationality and the new role that it plays in later modernity, and (3) an analysis of how the Enlightenment promise of individual freedom can be sustained. Marcuse developed a left-wing response to the social and political situation of the late twentieth century, strongly influencing the New Left, a post-Marxist response to contemporary society given that classical Marxist theory seemed to be disproven by the fact that Capitalism did not collapse as predicted. In the 1940s, despite his claiming to uphold orthodox Marxist theory (217), Marcuse was already recognizing new social and political conditions and considering new modes of critical analysis.

Marcuse's analysis of fascism is at once political and philosophical. On the practical political side, he was involved in the development of anti-Nazi propaganda at the Office of Strategic Services during the war. The central claims of his analysis are that the German people really did not so much believe in the rhetoric of the Nazis, but rather had chosen a higher standard of living over freedom since Democracy had been terribly discredited in the minds of Germans by the failures of the Weimar Republic. National Socialism achieved its full employment and higher material production by instituting a technological society, so much so that Marcuse claims that the Third Reich was not a state at all since there was no longer any separation between politics and society. In this sense, Fascism is no longer modern, that is, it no longer fits the model of the liberal democratic nation state set out in the Enlightenment. Both under National Socialism and in the Democratic west, surplus capital allows a portion of the working class to have a bourgeois standard of living, and this 'labor aristocracy' is well enough off to be co-opted into the system, thereby posing problems for classical Marxist theory. Worse yet, the Soviet Union offered no hope for real revolution since Marcuse was already arguing by 1947 that planned economies are technological societies as well. Planned economies become dictatorships, not free societies.

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.

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