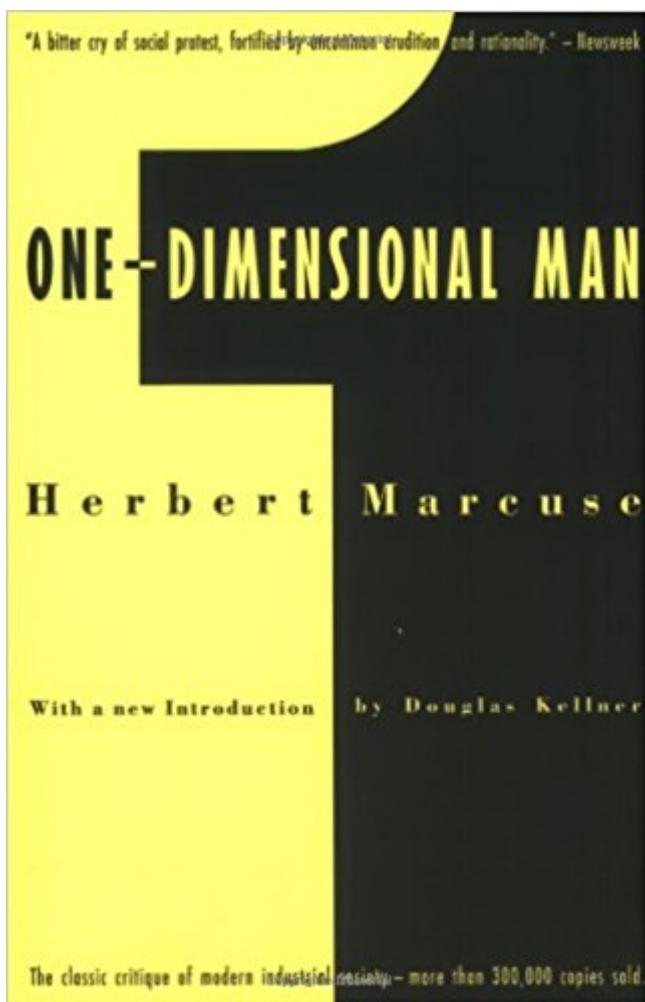


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One-Dimensional Man: Studies In The Ideology Of Advanced Industrial Society, 2nd Edition



Synopsis

Originally published in 1964, One-Dimensional Man quickly became one of the most important texts in the ensuing decade of radical political change. This second edition, newly introduced by Marcuse scholar Douglas Kellner, presents Marcuse's best-selling work to another generation of readers in the context of contemporary events.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Marcuse shows himself to be one of the most radical and forceful thinkers of this time. --The Nation

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) was born in Berlin and educated at the universities of Berlin and Freiburg. He fled Germany in 1933 and arrived in the United States in 1934. Marcuse taught at Columbia, Harvard, Brandeis, and the University of California, San Diego, where he met Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss as graduate students. He is the author of numerous books, including One-Dimensional Man and Eros and Civilization.

Bought this for a friend, and it was just what she expected.

Very heady and dynamic. Could lead to action, like a physical training book might motivate to start an advanced regimen superseding the former. Echelons.

I received my order on time and it was in good shape as expected. Overall, it was an excellent buying experience.

While some Frankfurt School critical texts failed to accurately model the experience of our times (Habermas' Transformation of the Public Sphere, for instance, predicted a decreased role of the public sphere in political decision making - a prediction ultimately undermined by the advent of the internet), Marcuse One-Dimensional Man remains a compelling and frighteningly accurate analysis, especially in the wake of the Trump election. Indeed, as many bemoan that the public sphere seems to be ignoring reported facts in voting, Marcuse already wrote up an explanation for how the reality of the system replaces objective reality, and how individuals indoctrinate themselves without their knowing it. Although the fear of mutually assured destruction has been replaced with the fear of terrorism and the "Eastern" Marxist dictatorships that Marcuse gives equal criticism to (alongside the Western capitalist society that still remains much as it was) no longer exist, or have at least adopted many of the hallmarks of capitalist society, the core of Marcuse's argument remains compelling and instantly recognizable in our own times. He also recognizes the issues of increased technological development and reliance on disposable consumer goods that have only become more noticeable since the book was written. Furthermore, because these fundamental issues are so recognizable in our society, the work remains compelling and fascinating, especially compared to most critical theory works, which can lose the reader's interest in abstract details.

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) was a German philosopher, sociologist, and political theorist, associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory, until he moved to the United States in 1934. (He was even briefly one of the "darlings" of the Student Movement of the 1960s.) He wrote other books, such as *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. He explains in the Introduction to this 1964 book, "One-Dimensional Man will vacillate throughout between two contradictory hypotheses: (1) that advanced industrial society is capable of containing qualitative change for the foreseeable future; (2) that forces and tendencies exist which may break this containment and explode the society. I do not think that a clear answer can be given. Both tendencies are there, side by side---and even the one in the other. The first tendency is dominant, and whatever preconditions for a reversal may exist are being used to prevent it. Perhaps an accident may alter the situation, but unless the recognition of what is being done and what is being prevented subverts the consciousness and the behavior of man, not even a catastrophe will bring about the change." (Pg. xv) He argues, "in a specific sense advanced industrial culture is MORE

ideological than its predecessor, inasmuch as today the ideology is in the process of production itself...The productive apparatus and the goods and services which it produces 'sell' or impose the social system as a whole... the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life... Thus emerges a pattern of ONE-DIMENSIONAL THOUGHT and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its quantitative extension." (Pg. 11-12)He states, "Indeed, society must first create the material prerequisites of freedom for all its members before it can be a free society; it must first CREATE the wealth before being able to DISTRIBUTE it according to the freely developing needs of the individual; it must first enable its slaves to learn and see and think before they know what is going on and what they themselves can to do change it. And, to the degree to which the slaves have been preconditioned to exist as slaves and be content in that role, their liberation necessarily appears to come from without and from above. They must be 'forced to be free,' to 'see objects as they are, and sometimes as they ought to appear,' they must be shown the 'good road' they are in search of. But with all its truth, the argument cannot answer the time-honored question: who educates the educators, and where is the proof that they are in possession of 'the good'?" (Pg. 40)He observes, "Inasmuch as the struggle for truth 'saves' reality from destruction, truth commits and engages human existence. It is the essentially human project. If man has learned to see and know what really IS, he will act in accordance with truth. Epistemology is itself ethics, and ethics is epistemology. This conception reflects the experience of a world antagonistic in itself---a world afflicted with want and negativity, constantly threatened with destruction, but also a world which is a COSMOS, structured in accordance with final causes. To the extent to which the experience of an antagonistic world guides the development of the philosophical categories, philosophy moves in a universe which is broken in itself... two-dimensional. Appearance and reality, untruth and truth, (and, as we shall see, unfreedom and freedom) are ontological conditions." (Pg. 125) He adds, "There are modes of existence which can never be 'true' because they can never REST in the realization of their potentialities, in the JOY of being. In the human reality, all existence that spends itself in procuring the prerequisites of existence is thus an 'untrue' and unfree existence." (Pg. 127-128)He

says, "The point which I am trying to make is that science, by virtue of its own method and concepts, has projected and promoted a universe in which the domination of man---a link which tends to be fatal to this universe as a whole. Nature, scientifically comprehended and mastered, reappears in the technical apparatus of production and destruction which sustains and improves the life of the individuals which subordinating them to the masters of the apparatus. Thus the rational hierarchy merges with the social one. If this is the case, then the change in the direction of progress... would also affect the very structure of science---the scientific project. Its hypotheses ... would develop in an essentially different experimental context (that of a pacified world); consequently, science would arrive at an essentially different concepts of nature and establish essentially different facts. The rational society subverts the idea of Reason." (Pg. 166-167) He contends, "In the totalitarian era, the therapeutic task of philosophy would be a political task, since the established universe of ordinary language tends to coagulate into a totally manipulated and indoctrinated universe. Then politics would appear in philosophy, not as a special discipline or object of analysis, nor as a special political philosophy, but as the intent of its concepts to comprehend the unmutilated reality. If linguistic analysis does not contribute to such understanding; if, instead, it contributes to enclosing thought in the circle of the mutilated universe of ordinary discourse, it is at its best entirely inconsequential. And, at worst, it is an escape into the non-controversial, the unreal, into that which is only academically controversial." (Pg. 199) The political rhetoric and tone of Marcuse seem seriously "dated," fifty years later. But his emphasis on freedom, and escaping the "one-dimensionality" of mass consumer existence, are subjects that are still very much of relevance today.

While I didn't really find this as engaging as some of the other work from Frankfurt School writers, this is both a powerful condemnation of the weird 'emptiness' of our societies general language and also probably the most powerful case made for why philosophical language can and in fact needs to be challenging and abstract. Marcuse is a rigorous, if dry writer and this seems much more exacting than a lot of subsequent philosophy and theory, which clearly owe work like this a big debt. Pointing out how language itself can be coercive and oppressive in 2016 isn't going to raise any eyebrows, but this is one of the books that helped bring that idea to life. 'One-Dimensional Man' can seem a bit bland until you realize that it helped create a critical perspective that you take for granted every day.

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