

CHARLES REITZ  
ART, ALIENATION,



and the HUMANITIES  
A CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT  
WITH HERBERT MARCUSE







ART,  
ALIENATION,  
and the  
HUMANITIES

**SUNY series in the Philosophy  
of the Social Sciences  
Lenore Langsdorf, editor**

**and**

**SUNY series, The Philosophy of Education  
Philip L. Smith, editor**

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HUMANITIES

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Charles Reitz

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**To talk about education is to talk about politics;  
to criticize education is to criticize society.**

**—Michael L. Simmons Jr.,  
to whom this volume is respectfully dedicated.**



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"Liberating the Critical in Critical Theory," *Researcher*, Vol. 11, No. 2, December 1996. (Also at [www.lib.wmc.edu/pub/researcher/issueXI-2/reitz.html](http://www.lib.wmc.edu/pub/researcher/issueXI-2/reitz.html)).

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"Presentation of the Enemy" (1942) in the Frankfurt Marcuse Archive, manuscript number 0129.01.

"Education and Social Change," outline to a 1968 lecture, in the Frankfurt Marcuse Archive, manuscript number 0343.01

Untitled lecture with a note in Marcuse's hand "Berkeley, Oct 18 '75"; logged under the title "Students, University and Education" in the Frankfurt Marcuse Archive, manuscript number 0503.02.

Supplementary material from previously unpublished works of Herbert Marcuse, much now in the Archives of the Goethe University in Frankfurt/Main, has been and will be published in a six-volume series by Routledge Publishers, England, edited by Douglas Kellner. All rights to further publication are retained by the Estate.

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"On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics," *Telos*, No. 16, Summer 1973.

"On the Problem of the Dialectic," *Telos*, No. 27, Spring 1976.

"Theory and Politics: A Discussion with Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, Heinz Lubasz, and Tilman Spengler," *Telos*, No. 38, Winter 1978-79.

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## Author's Note

Citations from Marcuse's works are to the specific editions designated in the following list of his titles and abbreviations. Exact source and page references are included in parentheses at the conclusion of each particular Marcuse quotation. English translations from German sources are mine, unless otherwise indicated. A glossary of selected foreign words and phrases is included in the back of this book. Please note that throughout this study, citations referring to the word *esthetic* have been rendered *aesthetic* in the interest of standardization to Marcuse's spellings. So too *eros* is rendered *Eros*, *fantasy* as *phantasy*, and *marxism* as *Marxism*. I avoid using masculine grammatical forms; nonetheless I reproduce occasionally Marcuse's use of the terms *man* or *he* as generic designations of humanity.

### MARCUSE'S TEXTS

#### Abbreviations to Selected Primary References in Chronological Order

("g" indicates German language text)

- |      |     |  |
|------|-----|--|
| 1922 | KRg | <i>Schriften I: Der deutsche Künstlerroman; frühe Aufsätze</i> [ <i>Writings Vol. 1: The German Artist Novel; Early Essays</i> ] (Frankfurt /M: Suhrkamp, 1978). |
| 1928 | PH  | "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," <i>Telos</i> , No. 4, Fall 1969.   |
| 1928 | PHg | "Beiträge zur Phänomenologie des Historischen Materialismus," <i>Philosophische Hefte</i> , No. 1, 1928.   |

- 1930 PD "On the Problem of the Dialectic," *Telos*, No. 27, Spring 1976.
- 1930 PDga "Zum Problem der Dialektik I," *Die Gesellschaft*, Vol. 7, Part 1, 1930.
- 1930 TMg "Transzendentaler Marxismus?" *Die Gesellschaft*, Vol. 7, Part 2, 1930.
- 1931 PDgb "Zum Problem der Dialektik II," *Die Gesellschaft*, Vol. 8, Part 2, 1931.
- 1931 GWg "Das Problem der geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit: Wilhelm Dilthey," *Die Gesellschaft*, Vol. 7, 1931.
- 1932 HM "The Foundation of Historical Materialism," in *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon, 1973).
- 1932 HMg "Neue Quellen zur Grundlegung des Historischen Materialismus," *Die Gesellschaft*, Vol. 9, 1932.
- 1932 HOg *Hegels Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit* (Frankfurt/M: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 1968).
- 1933 CL "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics," *Telos*, No. 16, Summer 1973.
- 1934 LT "The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State," *Negations, Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon, 1968).
- 1936 CE "The Concept of Essence," in *Negations, Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon, 1968).
- 1937 AC "The Affirmative Character of Culture," in *Negations, Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon, 1968).
- 1937 ACg "Über die affirmative Charakter der Kultur," in Herbert Marcuse, *Kultur und Gesellschaft I* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1965).
- 1937 CT "Philosophy and Critical Theory," in *Negations, Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon, 1968).
- 1941 RR *Reason and Revolution, Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Boston: Beacon, 1960).
- 1948 SE "Sartre's Existentialism," in *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon, 1973).
- 1955 EC *Eros and Civilization, A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon, 1966).
- 1958 SM *Soviet Marxism, A Critical Analysis* (New York: Vintage, 1961).
- 1960 ND "A Note on Dialectic," preface to 1960 edition of *Reason and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon, 1960).

- 1964 OD *One-Dimensional Man, Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1964).
- 1964 MW "Industrialization and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber," *Negations, Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon, 1968).
- 1965 RC "Remarks on a Redefinition of Culture," *Daedalus*, Vol. 94, No. 1, Winter 1965.
- 1965 RT "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore Jr., and Herbert Marcuse (eds.) *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon, 1969).
- 1966 SH "Socialist Humanism?" in Erich Fromm (ed.) *Socialist Humanism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966).
- 1966 PP "Political Preface 1966" to *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon, 1966).
- 1967 AO "Art in the One-Dimensional Society," Lee Baxandall (ed.) *Radical Perspectives in the Arts* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1973).
- 1968 ES "Education and Social Change" outline to a lecture in the Frankfurt Marcuse Archive (*Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek*), manuscript number 0343.01
- 1969 EL *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1969).
- 1970 FL *Five Lectures—Psychoanalysis, Politics, Utopia* (Boston: Beacon, 1970).
- 1970 CN "The Concept of Negation in the Dialectic," *Telos*, No. 8, Summer 1971.
- 1972 AF "Art as Form of Reality," *New Left Review*, No. 74, July–August 1972.
- 1972 CR *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon, 1972).
- 1974 HP "Heidegger's Politics: An Interview," by Herbert Marcuse and Frederick Olafson, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Winter 1977.
- 1975 BK Untitled lecture with a note in Marcuse's hand "Berkeley, Oct 18 '75"; logged under the title "Students, University and Education" in the Frankfurt Marcuse Archive (*Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek*), manuscript number 0503.02
- 1978 AD *The Aesthetic Dimension, Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon, 1978).
- 1978 TP "Theory and Politics: A Discussion with Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, Heinz Lubasz, and Tilman Spengler," *Telos*, No. 38, Winter 1978-79.

- 1978 TPg "Theorie und Politik," in *Gespräche mit Herbert Marcuse* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1996).
- 1978 PB "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis Based on Bahro's Analysis," *International Journal of Politics*, Vol. 10, Nos. 2-3, 1978.
- 1979 RP "The Reification of the Proletariat," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Winter 1979.
- 1979 EM "Ecology and the Critique of Modern Society," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1992.
- 1998 WF *Technology, War and Fascism: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, edited by Douglas Kellner (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).
- 1998 FAg *Feindanalysen: Über die Deutschen*, edited by Peter-Erwin Jansen (Lüneburg, Germany: Verlag Dietrich zu Klampen, 1998).

## CHAPTER ONE



### *Recalling* Marcuse: Art, Alienation, and the Humanities

Truth is ugly. We possess *art* lest *we perish of the truth*.

—Friedrich Nietzsche,  
*Will to Power*, number 822

What are the intellectual, moral, and political qualities of life and thought that can make theory *critical*, society *democratic*, and education *liberating*? These questions continue as the central philosophical issues of our time. They challenge every one of us concerned with the increasing dehumanization of the civic, occupational, and personal spheres of our lives. If our own efforts in these areas are to be genuinely transformative, we will need an analysis that can critically disclose the roots of crisis pending in the economic, social, and political conditions of our existence. Without critical theorizing there will be no genuine cultural transformation. We must be able to envision from the conditions of the present intelligent choices about real possibilities for our future.

Philosophers from Confucius and Aristotle to John Dewey and Paulo Freire have investigated, as the axial human problem, how education is to help us in accomplishing our own humanization. What *is* the relationship of learning to beauty, truth to art, and political education to human flourishing? Herbert Marcuse would ask if it is even possible to have an informed public discussion about such matters today. We *have* had the recent highly

publicized commentaries by Allan Bloom, William Bennett, E. D. Hirsch Jr., Dinesh D'Souza, and others, in the culture wars against "political correctness" in the humanities and against multicultural education reform. The field is rather fully occupied by conservative spokespersons; serious theorists and philosophers of education are read by professionals in the field, but get very little exposure to a mass audience.<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Kozol, bell hooks, Cornel West, and Noam Chomsky are struggling successfully to revive the Deweyian role of the progressive public intellectual. They have serious insights to communicate about education and miseducation, social inequality, and democratization. But in recent years few have done as much as Herbert Marcuse to challenge the conventional wisdom about educational and cultural matters in the United States. This book is dedicated to exploring just how Marcuse philosophized about education under conditions of oppression and alienation. Though it is not yet generally acknowledged, this concern and activity were central to his entire intellectual project: I wish to introduce a *new* Marcuse.

Even as late as 1999, an adequate understanding of the intellectual and political sources of Marcuse's philosophy and that of the Frankfurt School still requires new analytical effort. Douglas Kellner (1984, 1989), Rolf Wiggershaus (1988), and Martin Jay (1973, 1984) have made the most significant contributions to date in this regard. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School—especially as this is exemplified in the ideas of Herbert Marcuse as its foremost proponent—needs to be revisited on matters of our alienation and liberation. The core of this philosophy warrants invigorated critique for its fullest appreciation. We will find in Marcuse's work sources of immense insight into philosophical traditions largely eclipsed in the usual forms of U.S. higher education. Familiarity with these intellectual traditions is indispensable for the breadth and depth of theoretical development that is needed in philosophy and in the social sciences.

Today *we* must still inquire, as he did, into conditions for a humanistic cultural transformation. With the globalization of production activities over the past decade, we have seen the social distribution of income and wealth become increasingly polarized. Simultaneously, a destabilization has occurred in established forms of governance worldwide. In Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union "New Democracy" movements recently seemed to represent some of the most significant efforts against alienation that our epoch has yet seen. Mass protests that were to a large degree peaceful and motivated by the idea of a fairer social system free of repression brought "hard-line dictatorships" to relinquish state power. The massive changes

that ensued soon intensified social and economic inequalities. Revitalized retail and residential districts sustain a definite sense of euphoria, while new conditions of employment have also given rise to widespread disillusionment with social change. For an examination of these consequences Peter Marcuse (1994) has recently highlighted the continuing relevance of his father's analysis in *Soviet Marxism, A Critical Analysis* (SM) and in "Protosocialism and Late Capitalism: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis Based on Bahro's Analysis" (PB). It was in PB (1978) that Herbert Marcuse extended the aesthetically motivated analysis of Rudolf Bahro (of social life in the German Democratic Republic) to a critique of the consumption model of society represented by the Federal Republic of Germany and by Western late capitalism in general. For Herbert Marcuse, the real criterion of emancipation (that which the freedom to vote for the Christian Democratic Union or Social Democratic Party and the monetary union a decade later could never actualize) was the progressive reduction of socially necessary labor time (PB, 27–28) and an end to the cultural logic of corporate power.

While the global economy has (until quite recently) generated tremendous paper wealth, it has also been systematically producing vast insecurity and want for the majority of the world's population. Major economic crises in the future may well lead vested interests to war over the world's resources and markets and to police state stabilization strategies, even as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment is on its way to becoming a global constitution that establishes the sovereignty of the world's largest corporations in economic affairs worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Today economically pressured elements in European societies, responding to racist bias and reactionary leaders, are displaying an exceedingly regrettable anti-immigrant backlash to economic hardship. Yet there is fortunately a very vital antifascist and multicultural youth movement astir across Europe today.

In the United States, militias and freemen are the extreme representatives of more mainstream forces working for a reactionary reconstruction of this country's lived political culture. At the fringes this program represents a violent resurgence of racism and sexism that scapegoats not just the directly targeted groups but also law-governed liberal politics in general (as in the Weimar era). This is where right-wing extremism meets mainstream neoconservatism privileging a protofascist idealized freedom of the individual and corporate power from effective forms of liberal-democratic governmental oversight. Significantly, the militias, the reactionary Republicans, and

the conservative Democrats are not the only new forces that have emerged. Rejuvenated progressive political formations have also been appearing in the past few years. Some of the key signs of this rather radical democratic stirring in the nation's grass roots are the growth of independent, third-party political organizations like the Alliance for Democracy, the New Party, the Labor party, the Independent Progressive Politics Network, and the Greens, which have rather decisively broken with two-party politics-as-usual, rejecting Democrats and Republicans as two wings of a single party controlled by the interests of the most massive corporations in the United States. The new progressives bring a vital element to current debates in the public sphere because they question the legitimacy of the concentrated wealth and global exercise of power (both military and political) of corporate capitalism. They also bring a key new strategy for the left: coalition-building that can forge an activist-minded populist force to go on the offensive to end the control of large-scale corporations over U.S. culture, politics, and the economy. The widespread support for, and the dramatic success of, the August 1997 UPS strike, as well as the militant resistance to union busting by the A. E. Staley workers in Decatur, Illinois, and the newspaper workers in Detroit have forced even the leadership of the AFL-CIO to become more militant. A major regional mobilization was staged in Decatur June 25, 1994 by mid-western unions, clergy, and community groups in support of 800 protesting employees of corn syrup producer A. E. Stanley. These employees had been locked out since June 1993 for confronting management over health and safety issues and harsh labor practices. Decatur police in SWAT gear and gas masks maced the demonstrators engaging in civil disobedience (a sit-down in the driveway) at the plant gate. While this struggle ended in a stalemate, its militance energized the AFL-CIO, which has subsequently undertaken a nationwide organizing campaign. Striking journalists from the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* have put out their own labor newspaper from 1996 to the present, the *Detroit Journal*. Numerous new progressive newspapers, presses, and web sites are also appearing, reviving a spirit of resistance that is antiracist and antisexist as well as anticorporate. The culture wars waged during the last decade by the reactionary right against progressive policies in education, the arts, and social-needs-oriented programs, testify to the latent power of contemporary progressive movements and their critical ideas. The dialectic of social and educational change today is not without emancipatory potential.

My work in the following pages is intended to support these radically democratic civic efforts, especially those involving education, as forms of



cultural action for freedom. It will do so with particular attention to the principles of liberation in the social and educational philosophy of Herbert Marcuse. Marxist critical theory must also reexamine its traditional treatment of the theories of Karl Marx if it is to advance the development of educational philosophy and cultural transformation theory. What follows is based on the premise that with the real threat of social-political tumult to come, we will need to have not only optimism and energy, but also a very strong sense of direction. The future of critical social theorizing hinges on knowing its own history and on understanding the development of its analytical foundations and the political context in which it emerged.

Marcuse's work communicates the vibrancy of his German intellectual sources and an appreciation for much of the real conflict in our lives, which, as he finds, are unduly stressed and torn. The essential connection of education to the resolution of these tensions and the attainment of the social potential of the human race is an integral part of his general theoretical discourse. Marcuse's final book, *The Aesthetic Dimension, Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (AD, 1978), deals with the aesthetic sources of our wisdom and learning and with the theory of literary art. His relatively recently (1978) published doctoral dissertation, "*The German Artist Novel*" (originally completed in 1922) is concerned with the education (*Bildung*) of the artist as this is depicted in modern German fiction. Current scholarship on Marcuse displays a new emphasis on his aesthetic philosophy (Reitz, 1996; Lukes, 1985, 1994; Nicholson, 1994; Becker, 1994; Koppe, 1992; Menke, 1992; Geyer-Ryan, 1992; Raulet, 1992). As right-wing commentators carry out their culture wars with regard to the literary canon, the place of values in schooling, and the role and function and future of the arts and humanities in higher education, Marcuse's philosophical insights into art and education become more relevant than ever.

Allan Bloom recently sought to "rescue" the humanities from the perils of political protest and value relativism in *The Closing of the American Mind*.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Alan Charles Kors and Harvey A. Silverglate (1998) seem to think that Marcuse was the single most important philosopher of the 1960s counterculture, whose social theories have led to "the betrayal of liberty on America's campuses."<sup>4</sup> While higher education in the humanities is traditionally thought of as pursuing universally human aims and goals, these conservative writers are unwilling to admit that a cultural politics of class, a cultural politics of race, and a cultural politics of gender have set very definite historical constraints upon the actualization of the humane concerns of a liberal arts education. Bloom attributes a decline of the humanities

and U.S. culture in general to the supposedly inane popularization of German philosophy in the United States since the 1960s, especially the ideas of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Marcuse, which are regarded as nihilistic and demoralizing. Bloom argues that we have imported "... a clothing of German fabrication for our souls, which ... cast doubt upon the Americanization of the world on which we had embarked. . . ." In a typically facile remark, Bloom says of Marcuse: "He ended up here writing trashy culture criticism with a heavy sex interest. . . ." No hint from him that one of Marcuse's prime contributions (in *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*) to the critical analysis of American popular culture is his notion of "repressive desublimation"—how the unrestrained use of sex and violence by the corporate mass media and by other large-scale commercial interests accomplishes social manipulation and control in the interest of capital accumulation. Or that Marcuse (in some ways very much like Bloom) valued high art and the humanities precisely because they teach the *sublimation* of the powerful urge for pleasure that in other contexts threatens destruction. For Kors and Silverglate, as well as for Bloom, Marcuse's pursuit of an authentic social equality (consistent with a critical analysis of societal mechanisms already privileging wealth, race, patriarchy, and power) becomes the pursuit of injustice. Marcuse's pursuit of liberation (consistent with arguments exposing the ironies of undemocratic freedoms/democratic unfreedom in the United States today) becomes the practice of repression. Any *opening* of the American mind that involves a trenchant critique of the conventional political wisdom is to them a *closing* of the American mind. The unremitting conservative backlash to the progressive and radically democratic educational reform efforts of the 1960s and 1970s is now in full swing. We shall see, however, that Marcuse knows the *conservative* tradition more critically than it knows itself. Conservative intellectual and cultural traditions, including a conviction about rationally defensible standards of value, are in fact pivotal to the development of his own theories of art and the humanities against alienation.

Marcuse's thought is usually viewed as an extension of the perspectives of Marx, Hegel, and Freud. I find that Marcuse is an immensely complex and sometimes contradictory thinker whose interpretation of these authors is undergirded by an even deeper appreciation of the cultural philosophy of German idealism. According to Marcuse, Hegel, Marx, and Freud each utilize a language more fundamental than that of Hegel's philosophy of history, Marx's political economy, or Freud's clinical psychology. They operate in the *literary-aesthetic idiom* associated with nineteenth-century

German philosophy and with its view of the high culture of Periclean Greece. Marcuse's writing thus has a *classical* dimension above and beyond the radical tone for which it is renowned. Wilhelm Dilthey, Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger were crucial in building Marcuse's formulation of critical theory. There is much to be learned from Marcuse's deep acquaintance with the Western intellectual tradition and classical German philosophy. This is to be appreciated and upheld. There is also much to raise to a higher level and much to overcome.

Marcuse's continuing merit and appeal stems precisely from his work on the problems of knowledge and on the political impact of education. I find his critique of the prevailing mode of enculturation in the United States as education *to alienation* and to single-dimensionality to be immensely relevant today. So too, his emphasis on the emancipatory and *disalienating potential of art and the humanities*. These topics are closely connected to the concerns articulated by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, who together with Marcuse, began in the 1930s and 1940s to delineate the social, historical, and political difficulties and contradictions of the era around World War II. They viewed that period as a time of incredible scientific-technological achievement, but also as an epoch indelibly marked by militarist oppression and genocide. In their subsequent critical writing they saw the entire century (from World War I to Hiroshima, and later to Vietnam) as exhibiting the simultaneous culmination and twilight of civilization. Human dignity and barbarism were inextricably interlocked. This was a repellent circumstance that they nonetheless came to accept as an inevitable condition of human life that tragic art could help us understand. Their increasingly pessimistic vision of our culture and history held science and technology to be largely responsible for the troubles of our time. "The educated made it easy for the barbarians everywhere," Horkheimer and Adorno wrote in 1944, "by being so stupid."<sup>7</sup> Already utilizing what were to become central tenets of postmodern theory (especially what are taken to be the illusions of progress, reason, and scientific objectivity), they rejected the political-economic categories of the Enlightenment, positivist social science, and traditional Marxist thought as they sought to understand fascism, world war, repression, and alienation more genuinely. Marcuse's writing on these themes remains fascinating and influential.

In spite of this, I find myself troubled, in particular, by the way in which *Marcuse's* theories of art, alienation, and the humanities displace *Marx's* structural analysis of social life to such an extent that the former's

work also takes on ironically conservative political overtones. I want to underscore not only the gains to be made from a familiarity with Marcuse's philosophy of culture, but also the theoretical limitations of his approach. I hold that the philosophical difficulties of Marcuse's theories of art and education hinge upon his reformulation of the analysis of alienation veering attention toward a concept of reification (as *Verdinglichung*) that is ultimately detached from the materialist context of the Marxist economic analysis. As this book develops I will show why I feel that Marcuse's non-Marxist and even anti-Marxist philosophical abstractions debilitate our efforts to understand ourselves and to extricate ourselves from the oppressive conditions of our social existence.

When I say that we need to *recall* Marcuse's ideas today, I use this word primarily as German philosophy uses the concept *aufheben*. This may variously mean to lift up, raise up, hold up, take up, pick up, elevate, preserve, protect, exalt, criticize, suspend, abolish, repeal, annul, cancel, invalidate, counteract, supersede, refine, purify, and transcend. The concept signals the multidimensional movement of the mind involved in the theoretical analysis of Hegel and Marx in their description of the dialectical learning process. In addition to the positive connotations of remembrance and memorialization, I also want to play quite consciously on two further meanings of this word: the recall of a representative from parliament, and the recall of an item that has come into circulation with hidden defects and dangers. The central objective of this book is to reflect upon the cultural critique developed by Marcuse: its philosophical foundations, political prospects, and implications for the future. My effort here will be to examine, compare, criticize, counteract, extend, invalidate, refine, advance, and supersede Marcuse's work. It is a tribute to Marcuse that in the process of reading his texts one can learn much about genuinely worthwhile elements in European traditions in higher education, about ourselves and our world, and about the limitations and promise of our own political lives and our political future. Recalling Marcuse certainly does *not* mean merely reminiscing about the 1960s or about the conventional wisdom with regard to Marcuse's philosophy. It means becoming critically conscious of the fullness of his theory, including major segments that remain unfamiliar today even to those who have systematically studied other aspects of his work. The future of critical theorizing requires us to *build beyond* the philosophy of Herbert Marcuse and to liberate *the critical* in the legacy of critical theory. My work, therefore, seeks to be a critical engagement with his thought.

For the purposes of this study I use the term *critical theory* in a technical sense to refer to the theories of Marcuse, the Frankfurt School, Western Marxism, and their deconstructionist and postmodernist philosophical progeny.<sup>8</sup> When speaking more generically, I use the terms *critical thinking* or *critical theorizing*. Much of what is called critical theory today is rooted specifically in Marcuse's thought. Marcuse has formulated a particular approach to *aesthetic education* and a unique version of a *philosophical humanism* that he then presents as *critical theory* against the debilitating paradoxes that he sees at the core of our single-dimensional culture: alienation in the midst of affluence, repression through gratification, and the overstimulation and paralysis of mind. Marcuse's efforts at building an emancipatory theory of education are at times immensely insightful and at others they risk being elitist and unhelpful. Most importantly, he has posed a critical theory of education to us as *a problem*. The task confronting us is that of assuming sufficient philosophical perspective to enable creative synthesis to enhance our powers of learning and transformation.

I am attempting to break new ground in the study of Marcuse and critical theory by attempting to do what few academic philosophers to date have thought worthwhile: to take very seriously what Marcuse has to say about the theory and conduct of education. I contend in this investigation that Marcuse's contributions to a critical theory of art and critical theory of alienation only become fully intelligible on the basis of what he has to say about a critical theory of education. My point is that *educational* insights are the major purpose of his extensive analyses of art and alienation. By comprehensively reviewing materials from the primary sources, and by permitting him to speak for himself a good deal of the time, I hope to delineate the inner logic of his philosophical work. The body of this study will disclose the structure and movement of his thought. It will raise up (*heh auf*) some of the untranslated and relatively inaccessible materials that have rarely been critically appreciated. It will demonstrate why these are indispensable aspects of Marcuse's overall approach, and even more importantly, it will attempt to build beyond both his theoretical accomplishments and failures.

I see the philosophy of education, as my specific analytical focus, offering particular advantages that can aid in the identification of the meta-theoretical basis of Marcuse's cultural and social theory. These advantages stem from the fact that Marcuse's aesthetic and social-philosophical links to educational issues are indissoluble. Marcuse stresses the *educational* value of the arts because of the qualitative difference he finds between the

multidimensional kind of knowledge thought to be produced by the aesthetic imagination and the unidimensional kind of knowledge attributed to what he describes as the controlled and repressive rationalities of achievement, performance, and domination. During his most optimistic phases, Marcuse views aesthetic education as essential for the actualization of a utopian form of society, where art is also to become a material force for the revitalization of all aspects of social life. His intention is to liberate the original meaning of art from its narrow and repressive association with high culture. A theory of art must become a theory of sensuousness, pleasure, and gratification, capable of reshaping society *for life*, rather than persist as the traditional study of the beauty and form of accomplished works. Most uniquely, Marcuse formulates a dialectic of love and death that he believes is grounded in the conflicted essence of human nature. This dialectic, he contends, is preserved as paradox and tragedy in high art and in the humanities. Ultimately, Marcuse will advocate an educational and cultural philosophy that maintains a critical distance from direct forms of social intervention, stressing instead education as affective and intellectual preparation for a redefinition of need and for a restructuring of consciousness, in some ways quite consistent with the classically conservative liberal arts approach.

The thematic interconnections among Marcuse's theories of art, alienation, and the humanities constitute the decisive structural and philosophical unity of his work. Alienation, in his estimation, is thought to be the result of *training people to forget* their authentic human nature—its essential internal turmoil and social potential—*by educationally eradicating* the realm where this knowledge is considered to be best preserved, that is, *the humanities*. Marcuse was appalled at what he saw as the displacement of the humanities in the 1970s by a form of higher education that had become mainly scientific and technical and that primarily stood in service to the needs of commerce, industry, and the military. Marcuse's theory contends that our society is obsessed with efficiency, standardization, mechanization, and specialization, and that this fetish involves aspects of repression, fragmentation, and domination that impede real education and that preclude the development of a real awareness of ourselves and of our world. Alienation is seen as the result of a mis-education or half-education that leads people to accept sensual anesthetization and social amnesia as normal. Conditioned to a repressive pursuit of affluence, making a living becomes more important than making a life. This aspect of Marcuse's approach to alienation is explicitly drawn from Schiller's arguments in favor of art and against crass utilitarianism in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (1793).

During his militant “middle period,” Marcuse, like Schiller, urges education and art as *countermovements to alienation*: an *aesthetic rationality* is thought to transcend the prevailing logic of performance and achievement in the one-dimensional society and to teach radical action toward justice and human fulfillment. He even sees a possible reconciliation of the humanistic and technological perspectives via the hypothesis that *art may become a social and productive force* for material improvement, reconstructing the economy in accordance with aesthetic goals and thus reducing alienation in the future. But there is also a “turn” in Marcuse’s theorizing, almost a reversal. He finds that even the best education (to art through the humanities) can be itself alienating, if also in some continuing sense emancipatory. The artistic and cultured individual remains rather permanently separated from the broader social community and is stigmatized as an outsider in a way that precludes close identification with any group. Art, then, is held to be ultimately *unable* to respond to alienation except with a more extreme, yet higher, form of alienation. Marcuse finds himself enmeshed in oscillating, *oppositional* relationships and tensions that are projected by his analysis of the social phenomena of alienation, art, and the humanities.

My work here is based upon a rethinking of Marcuse’s writing as a whole. I begin the documentation with the materials from his earliest project, the 1922 dissertation, *The German Artist Novel*, and from his important first published book, *Hegel’s Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* (1932). Readers will be more familiar with Marcuse’s middle period however, which extends roughly from 1932 to 1970 and encompasses those texts that articulate Marcuse’s “*Art-against-Alienation*” program: *Reason and Revolution, Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (1941); *Eros and Civilization, A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955); *One-Dimensional Man, Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1964); and *An Essay on Liberation* (1969). The turn in Marcuse’s theorizing to his “*Art-as-Alienation*” position is most evident after publication of *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972) and *The Aesthetic Dimension, Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (1978). This turn is a return to philosophical tendencies latent during the middle period but explicitly present in his early period. By investigating the dual themes of art-against-alienation and art-as-alienation, the scope of the following undertaking is intended to embrace the doubled structural framework that I see undergirding Marcuse’s lifetime of writings on sociocultural philosophy and education.

I intend to demonstrate that Marcuse’s changing disposition as a philosopher of education not only correlates with, but also defines, his changing disposition as a social and political philosopher. Following Dilthey and

Heidegger, he finds that the very world of philosophy is external to the world of science and is constructed only in the humanities, as such. He sees aesthetic education as the basis of all genuinely philosophical (and political) education. Yet the persistence of a *duality* and tension between the ideas of art and the exigencies of everyday life in Marcuse's overall conception accounts for the enduring pessimism that stands in sharp contrast to the more utopian and radical tenor of his middle-period aspirations. In the end Marcuse retreats from the realm of struggle and advocates a kind of inner immigration.<sup>9</sup> I emphasize that, at both the beginning and end of his career, Marcuse relegates educational philosophy to a quietist rather than an activist function in our life and world. The educational activism of his middle period is reduced during his later phase to the movement he imputes to the aesthetic form, in and of itself, toward maturity, peace, and understanding. Marcuse ultimately articulates a concept of literary-aesthetic education in this regard standing in disjunction from the philosophical categories generally associated with a historical and materialist dialectic, but related instead to Dilthey's concepts of the emotional and political potential of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (humanistic disciplines); a *Geistesgeschichte* (intellectual history); and a *Lebensphilosophie* (life-philosophy, a philosophical precursor to depth psychology). This crucial and hitherto insufficiently elaborated aspect of Marcuse's approach, drawn from Dilthey, as well as from the cultural radicalism of Nietzsche, asserts a logical and political-philosophical priority over his treatment of the thought of Hegel, Marx, and Freud, and comes to define Marcuse's characteristic understanding of *aesthetic education as the foundation of a critical theory*.

The future of critical theorizing demands that we avoid the traditional political dangers of aestheticism and cultural conservatism that follow from the reduction of *social* theory to *aesthetic* theory. In order to liberate *the critical* in critical theory, I believe we need to examine carefully the epistemological underpinnings of Marcuse's intellectual position. To do so we must come to understand more fully what I take to be the philosophical cornerstone of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and of Western Marxism, namely its central analysis of *alienation as reification*. This involves an analysis of Marcuse's particular theorization of the concept of reification, as involving a false consciousness of reality that is caused by a philosophical deficiency that may be *remediated* only through the deconstructive and reconstructive power of a critique grounded in the *aesthetic imagination*. This version of reification theory has also been a major influence on certain literary tenden-



cies within much postmodern and deconstructionist cultural commentary as opposed to the more sociological and historical postmodernist perspectives.

A critique of methodological reification (as the illegitimate erasure of the researching subject from the study of the object in question) can be traced back to the epistemology of neo-Kantianism. This surfaced in European philosophical discussions during the era around World War I in various ways within the related outlooks of existentialism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and Western Marxism (especially the early Georg Lukács). Aspects of each of these theoretical perspectives find eclectic expression in Marcuse's work, generally displacing a class-struggle analysis. Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution* perhaps most clearly furnishes us with his central elucidation of the idea of reification in terms consistent with his basic neo-Kantian concern. The concept becomes an insight of chiefly methodological significance that Marcuse claims can uniquely redeem Marxist social philosophy from the objectivistic, mechanistic, and deterministic modes he imputes to it. In Marcuse's estimation, the proper explication of the phenomenon of reification—as *Verdinglichung*—can achieve the indispensable intellectual precondition for liberation in which *economic theory* is transformed into *critical theory*.

The work of Mitchell Franklin, Eugen Fink, and Heinz Paetzold drew my attention to the problems in reification theory quite a few years ago, and I have independently investigated this philosophical terrain, especially where Marcuse's negation of reification leads to an aesthetic ontological "denial of things."<sup>10</sup> This is a theme that runs throughout his middle- and late-period works and will be examined carefully in chapter 3 on Marcuse's emergent critical theory of alienation.

Marcuse has addressed some of the most pressing social and cultural problems of our era, but he certainly has not done so in a fashion that is beyond question. He has much that is valuable to say about the theoretical and practical controversies that continue to confront social philosophy, critical pedagogy, and aesthetic theory. His work never deserved to be uncritically promoted or uncritically condemned. The study of Marcuse continues to be rewarding not only in those areas of his greatest strength. I want to work on the aspects of his thought that are most problematic theoretically, for it is upon this analysis that the very future of critical theorizing hinges. By stressing Marcuse's intellectual interconnections to Nietzsche, Heidegger, Lukács, and Dilthey as well as to Hegel, Marx, and Freud I hope to convey my appreciation of the complexity, ambiguity, and seeming inconsistency of

Marcuse's theoretical project in addition to what I shall disclose as its dynamic symmetry and essence.

Marcuse wrote in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, "The inner dynamic of capitalism . . . necessitates the revival of the radical rather than the minimal goals of socialism" (CR, 5). But the social philosophy of *The Aesthetic Dimension* turns away from this position. His more radical impulse was epitomized by *Eros and Civilization*, which centered on Schiller and aesthetic education, emphasizing beauty as the key to political emancipation. This occurred within the context of a blistering critique of the highly administered oppression characteristic of the contemporary social and economic order in the United States. By the time of his final book, though, Marcuse seems to be speaking as an aesthete in the most classical and abstract sense. *The Aesthetic Dimension* underscores the primacy of the aesthetic *form* and aesthetic *autonomy*, and favorably reevaluates such notions as "art as art" and the liberating potential of mental labor *separated from* manual labor. In so doing, Marcuse retreats from aesthetic and educational activism to a pat restatement of certain of the most well-established elements of the idealist aesthetic tradition. He develops a love/hate relationship with a materialist and historical approach to aesthetics. "In all its ideality art bears witness for the truth of historical materialism—the permanent non-identity of subject and object, individual and individual" (AD, 29). The long-standing utopian element in Marcuse's thought becomes an explicit philosophical idealism. Ideality is now the method by which to access and understand reality: "The truth of art lies in this: the world really is as it appears in the work of art" (AD, xii).

Marcuse's understanding of alienation and oppression is thus linked to art and to the aesthetic dimension in two basic ways: he has indicated that art may both act *against* alienation and oppression and to *preserve* them. In the former context, in *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse makes reference to the aesthetic dimension's power to counteract the alienation that comes from the bureaucratization and mechanization of one-dimensional society. It is thought that the standardization of competencies and performances in the economic milieu of advanced industrial society leads quite directly to regimentation and to unthinking and unfeeling forms of social interaction. Meaning and fulfillment are eradicated from a society that is so highly engineered that it stands beyond freedom and dignity. He utilizes the aesthetic categories of pleasure and beauty as criteria by which to condemn the existing order as well as to create an alternative one. Orpheus and Narcissus are offered as aesthetic symbols of a nonrepressive Eros and lived

culture that can pursue gratification and peace through artistry and beauty. These ideals are thought capable of effecting the reconciliation of humanity and nature in a sensuous totality. In *An Essay on Liberation* he advocates the development of an *aesthetic rationality* and an *aesthetic ethos* that can secure and consummate an *aesthetic world*. Alienation is understood as *anesthetization*—a deadening of the senses that makes repression and manipulation possible. Thus, art can act against alienation as a revitalizing, rehumanizing force.

Known during the 1960s as the philosopher of the student revolts, Marcuse's writings of that period were thought to embody a philosophy of protest within higher education itself. He considered higher education to be qualitatively *higher* only where the humanities fulfilled their potential to work *against alienation*: as a critique of positivism, conformity, and repression, and also as a means to political engagement. The educational goal Marcuse proposed was the restoration of *the aesthetic dimension* as a source of cultural critique, political activism, and the guiding principles for the social organization of the future. In his estimation, our technological mindlessness and social fragmentation have to be remediated philosophically through a broadened education to the human condition. He emphasized particularly the aesthetic roots of reason and the value of literary art and education in accomplishing our own mature sense of self and our liberation. While Marcuse interacted with members of the radical and international student movement of the 1960s (Angela Davis and German militant, Rudi Dutschke), these efforts were ultimately accompanied by a political distancing, an intensifying interest in art, and the emancipatory potential of a liberal education classically conceived. His attention turned to the essentially pedagogical dimensions of intellectual activity preparatory to revolution.

Marcuse ultimately comes to emphasize that art can also *contribute* to an alienated existence. Alienation is understood in this second sense as a freely chosen act of withdrawal. It represents a self-conscious bracketing of certain of the practical elements of everyday life for the sake of achieving a higher and more valuable philosophical distance and theoretical perspective. Marcuse contends that artists and intellectuals (especially) can utilize their own personal estrangement to serve a future emancipation. Art and philosophy (i.e., the humanities) can, by virtue of their admittedly elitist critical distance, oppose an oppressive status quo and furnish an intangible, yet concrete, *telos* (sense of purpose) by which to guide emancipatory social practice. Marcuse is attracted to the humanities because their subject matter and methodology are thought to focus upon questions of the meaning of

human experience, rather than on the sheer description of data (this latter procedure being rejected as the nonphilosophical approach of behaviorism and the physical sciences). He regards classical learning by means of discourse and reflection on philosophy, literature, drama, music, painting, sculpture, and so forth, as liberating insofar as it is thought to impel humanity beyond the "first dimension," the realm of mere fact, to the world of significance and meaning. As Marcuse sees it, the very form of beauty is dialectical. It unites the opposites of gratification and pain, death and love, and repression and need, and therefore can authentically represent what he takes to be the conflicted, tragic, and paradoxical substance of human life. In Marcuse's view, the insights provided by these liberal studies are "transhistorical" and are considered the precondition to any political transformation of alienated human existence into authentic human existence. The liberal arts and humanities are not seen simply as transmitting or preserving (or as he says, "affirming" or apologizing for) the dominant culture. They make possible the very development of critical thinking and human intelligence itself. Here the arts relate to higher education and to advanced forms of knowledge not merely in terms of "arts instruction," but as the very basis of a *general educational theory*.

When Herbert Marcuse speaks of art, he usually does so in terms of literature, rather than painting, music, sculpture, or any other aesthetic form. This stems from his own early experiences in higher education. He was trained at the graduate level, not primarily in philosophy, psychology, or economics, but in the modern literary theory and literary history of German culture. Promoted to "Dr. Phil." by the Albert-Ludwigs University (Freiburg i. B.) in October 1922, his dissertation, *Der deutsche Künstlerroman* (KRg),—*The German Artist Novel*—focused on the special problems repeatedly addressed in modern German fiction dealing with the artist's stress and frustration at the incompatibility of an aesthetic life and the painful exigencies of everyday existence. Marcuse perceived a harsh dissonance between the world of art and that of daily life and work. On the one hand, the ordinary realm of daily routine was thought to represent a flat and spiritless domain, subsequently described as "one-dimensional." On the other hand, this reality of social and economic habit was opposed and confronted by the infinite inner richness of the realm of human imagination and creativity (*Geist*). The tradition of German romanticism was no stranger to this aesthetic and social conflict. Marcuse's dissertation is profoundly critical, however, of the Romantic perception of the artist (as observed in the literature of the *Sturm und Drang* and involving a uniquely sensitive subjectivity caught up in an "inevitable" conflict with the social environment). Marcuse is quite cog-