

**BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

**Interpretation of Herbert Marcuse's book, *One-Dimensional Man***

**BACHELOR THESIS**

**Marina Avram**

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**Interpretation of Herbert Marcuse's book, *One-Dimensional Man*  
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## **Declaration of Originality**

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis is the work of my own and has not been published in part or whole elsewhere. All used literature and other sources are attributed and cited in bibliography.

Bratislava, December 15 , 2021

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## Abstract

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Herbert Marcuse was one of the most influential philosophers in the 1960s. Among his most influential works is his book, *One-Dimensional Man* in which he undertook an analysis of capitalism. The purpose of this thesis is to interpret this book in accordance with the following key areas: general characteristics of Frankfurter school and critical theory; Marcuse's philosophical position on capitalism; the relevancy of Marcuse's views today. The findings of this study encompassed an identification of six general characteristics of Frankfurter School. This paper also found that Marcuse had a pessimistic opinion of contemporary capitalism. He viewed capitalism as something that was there to oppress the working class while the richer people enjoyed the spoils of capitalism. The findings of the paper also include the lack of relevancy of Marcuse's views in today's world. Despite this, there are those who show support for this relevancy of Marcuse's views today.

*Keywords: Marcuse, Philosophy, Critical Theory, Contemporary Capitalism*

## Abstrakt

Autorka: Marina Avram

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Herbert Marcuse bol jedným z najvplyvnejších filozofov 60. rokov minulého storočia. Medzi jeho najvplyvnejšie diela patrí jeho kniha *Jednorozmerný človek*, v ktorej sa zaoberal analýzou kapitalizmu. Cieľom tejto práce je interpretovať túto knihu v súlade s nasledujúcimi kľúčovými oblasťami: všeobecná charakteristika Frankfurterskej školy a kritickej teórie; Marcusov filozofický postoj ku kapitalizmu; relevantnosť Marcusových názorov dnes. Zistenia tejto štúdie zahŕňali identifikáciu šiestich všeobecných charakteristík Frankfurtskej školy. Tiež môžeme vidieť, že Marcuse mal pesimistický názor na súčasný kapitalizmus. Pozeral sa na kapitalizmus ako na niečo, čo má utláčať robotnícku triedu, zatiaľ čo bohatší ľudia si užívajú koristi kapitalizmu. Zistenia práce zahŕňajú aj nedostatočnú relevantnosť Marcusových názorov v dnešnom svete. Napriek tomu existujú ľudia, ktorí dnes podporujú túto relevantnosť Marcusových názorov.

*Kľúčové slová: Marcuse, Filozofia, Kritická teória, Súčasný kapitalizmus*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Conducting a contemporary relevance of any theory is a difficult task. This is even more so when the theory has attained intellectual notoriety (Kirsch & Surak, 2016, p. 455). The work of Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man* and his contribution towards critical theory is a good example of this challenge. Marcuse's work is an essential component of the Frankfurt school of thought. Contemporary capitalism represents one of the significant principles of organizing society within the twenty-first century. It was following the Second World War that the capitalist system took up a global position (Kellner, 2011, p. 32). Because of capitalism, the standards of living in the advanced industrial societies became outstandingly high (Maar, 2017, p. 173). This took place in tandem with the growth of the ability of these societies to use their intellectual and material resources. Within this context, the organizational format of the established society at the time was largely rational.

On the other hand, contemporary capitalism consists of several downsides. For instance, capitalism today has a return on investment (ROI) much greater in comparison to the growth of the economy. This has been a contributing factor to the rise in economic injustice. For instance: a large percentage of the world's resources and wealth are in the hands of a very few. That is, 80% of the global resources are in the control of only 737 top members of the global society (Vitali et al., 2011, p. 6). Additionally, contemporary capitalism is problematic because it diverts the capital of nations utilizing a nationally organized tax system to retain this in the country.

Herbert Marcuse was a philosopher and advocate of critical theory. He is also among the philosophers who focused on capitalism (Pahnke, 2021, p. 183). For him, capitalism existed with a considerable number of destructive components that prevent social change from taking place. The changes mentioned by Marcuse include the formulation of a new



direction of the productive process and new models of the human existence (Marcuse, 1964, p. 12). Some of these are alienation, sustained exploitation, dehumanization, and even instances of unfair wage and compensation. This has led to capitalism becoming nothing more than the development and total control of all resources of the world by a dictatorial regime (Marcuse, 2002, p. 43). There is no freedom on how the average person can benefit from the resources.

The significance of this thesis is to thematize Marcuse's definition of the status and functions of philosophy in accordance with his book, *One-dimensional Man*. Marcuse rejects analytical philosophy. He asserts that the representation of abstractness within a concrete reality results in analytical dissolution. This is because within the given social and historical context the function is concrete ultimately leading to the reduction of the existence of its possibilities (Marcuse, 1964, p. 211). Therefore, Marcuse in his work believes that it is best to go beyond the limits imposed by the philosophic analysis to prevent a restriction in experience.

Therefore, these parts in philosophic analysis may appear interesting, but only from a historical perspective. Today, this type of philosophic analysis lacks relevance. Marcuse's thinking and perspective has lost relevance today. Therefore, while Marcuse's perspective was among the most influential in the 1960s and was even becoming a point of inspiration for the development of the New Left movement leading to several uprisings, this is not the case today (Kirsch & Surak, 2016, p. 455). Within the current world, Marcuse receives a considerable amount of criticism and become subjected to various treatments from both, the political left and right.

## Chapter 2: General characteristics of Frankfurter school

### Introduction

The Frankfurt School of thought is also known as critical theory. This mode of critical thinking and analysis that Marcuse adopted, alongside other scholars like Horkheimer and Adorno, is characterized by its rejection of the notion of objectivity. Rather than subscribing to the conception of knowledge-impartiality, the view that intellectuals can observe phenomena from “god’s” point of view, as disembodied entities, critical theorists claim that knowledge is itself embedded into a historical and social process. This shift in thinking enabled the Frankfurt school to criticize the established social and political order of the time, and to envision an alternative to it. Accordingly, this school of thought as supported by Marcuse was significant in addressing the economic and social order brought about by industrialism including the ideas established in place leading to the defense of the disparities of class and status (Berry, 2013, p. 54). In this chapter, there is the identification of the general characteristics of the Frankfurter school and their analysis in terms of Marcuse’s perception.

### General Characteristics of The Frankfurter School

The rise of the Frankfurter school of thought took place at a time when there was a cultural crisis because of the rapid growth of capitalism in Germany. The school has six fundamental key characteristics. The first general characteristic of the Frankfurter school is utilizing Marxism as not a basic norm. Instead, Marxism should serve as the starting point and support for conducting analysis and cultural criticism (Fatah, 2012, p. 96). But while critical theorist draws heavily from Marx’s insights, they do not limit themselves to them.

For that reason, other concepts, like Freud psychoanalysis, have had an impact on critical analysis as well.

The second general characteristic of the Frankfurter school is its structure-programs, which are expressions of critical characteristics. These are programs that are not party to any form of political movement (Fatah, 2012, p. 96). The third general characteristic of the Frankfurter school entails a major influence of the interpretation of Marxism by Karl Korsch and Georg Lukács. This took place in tandem with the problems experienced in

society at the time (Fatah, 2012, p. 96). The fourth key general characteristic of the Frankfurter school of thought entails showing empathy on autonomous theories and objects that are directly involved in practical political movements. This demonstrates that the criticism regarding society is limited only within the academic movement. This is an attempt towards the transformation of society into a social reality using science. Regarding the fifth general characteristic of the Frankfurter school of thought: it is about accepting some of Marx's theory (Abromeit, 2011, p. 134). For instance, the acceptance of the theory on the exploitation and alienation of labor. However, there is a rejection of some views concerning this way of thinking (Fatah, 2012, p. 96). An example of such views includes class consciousness and revolution. Additionally, this includes the application of the concept of class division to all levels within the Marx's class division resulting in the formulation of the bourgeois and proletarian classes. As for the final general characteristics of the Frankfurter school of thought, the basis of this is the Revisionist movement of orthodox Marxism and revolutionary intellectuals (Fatah, 2012, p. 96). This asserts that material development which can take place via technological development is a key role of change within society. This serves as a vehicle for changes taking place through society including the development of new economic systems.

In further understanding the Frankfurter school of thought, this entails analyzing the objectives of the critical theory based on the work of Marcuse. According to Marcuse the aim of critical theory within a contemporary society is to examine the causes behind its development and to identify the historical alternatives (Marcuse, 1964, 10). Therefore, achieving this may entail comparing the established way of organizing society with other possible ways that will be better for humanity. In this case, the key standards by which the decision of superiority takes place is alternatives whose basis is two key value judgments (Gordon, Hammer, & Honneth, 2018, p. 58). The first value judgement is concerned with the emphasis that human life is worth living and for this reason it should be made worth living. The second value judgment is that society must improve the conditions of human existence based on specified capabilities.

### Critical Theory

Critical theory is among the most significant theories. This is a theory that is based on the work of the Frankfurt School with one of its vital advancers being Marcuse. Critical theories are vital in bridging the mentality of modern society reassured through several technological advances taking place in capitalism (Croatia, 2019, p. 660). In his contribution to the critical theory, Marcuse analyzed several social inequalities brought about by industrialization of technology capitalism (Khasanah et al., 2020, p. 6566). In this regard, capitalism has resulted in an abundant society. However, this is a society in which people become heavily alienated. From this, Marcuse recognizes the problem associated with including value judgments in a theory aiming at presenting itself as historically objective (Marcuse, 1991, p. XXIX). The work of the philosopher Radbruch comes into play within this context in his assertion that value and worthlessness emerge from the viewer and not

from which it is viewed. This means that for the critical theory to have a claim in historical objectivity it must prove the objective validity of the value judgment that makes its foundation (Marcuse, 1991, p. XV). It is vital for this type of foundation to be empirical. In case that the critical value is successful in providing the objective validity of its value judgment. In this regard, the established society encompasses an ascertainable quality and quantity of both the intellectual and material resources (Marcuse, 11). Thus, if the critical theory is successful in providing validity, then it must strive to address the question of how a person can organize and utilize resources for the achievement of optimal development.

In today's world, the industrial society is encompassed of incomparably large numbers of resources in comparison to the past societies. However, because of the technical development taking place there is the potential of depletion of these resources soon. Evidence of this begins with the rise in the standards of living in a high population. Therefore, this makes it difficult to meet the needs of people. It is vital to mention that it is not only the biologically predetermined needs that are difficult to meet, but also those conditioned for humans (Marcuse, 6). It is interesting that there is a large part of society that does not find anything wrong with this and in fact goes on to accept the conditions as they are. This has become a prevailing way of life in society.

In his exploration of critical theory, Marcuse developed a critical philosophy of technology. As per Marcuse has asserted that the essence of technology is nothing technological. Therefore, Marcuse's point of departure is the philosophical aspect. The argument by Marcuse is that the world exists in a society that is so wealthy and affluent that the goals and objectives of persons becomes difficult to differentiate from those of the capitalist society. The resultant effect of this is a one-dimensional thought (Farr, 2018, p. 36). This is a thought that looks at the world as it is and not as it could be. This led to strong criticism by Marcuse who asserted that the capitalist society dominating society with

technology has led to a technocratic society that dominates the repressive desublimation and loss of critical functions of society (Khasanah et al., 2020, 6571). A good example of this is provided by how persons from different backgrounds of professions may all desire a smartphone. Consequently, all these people despite their socio-economic differences will identify with a single system provider for this need (Cressman, 2014, 31). However, the reality of the situation is that this need is not their own, but that of an advanced system of capitalism and industrial society. This demonstrates the false needs of capitalism. That is with the material abundance this causes the people to feel empty and poor despair and even restlessness (Khasanah, et al., 2020, 6566). This can take place even at the peak of a person's life.

This is examined in a scenario in which no person desires a luxury item. Therefore, if there was no person with a desire to consume beyond their basic needs then the issue to investigate is whether this is something that will be detrimental to the individual or the system of industrial capitalism. This further brings about something else, the high cost of industrial capitalism. The key characteristics of this include unnecessary competition for the dreary and unsatisfying jobs essential for providing for resources to purchase things. This also includes the rise of the throwaway culture premised on planned obsolescence and waste, and an attitude towards environmental degradation (Cressman, 2014, 31). Despite this it is difficult to imagine a world where there is technical infrastructure and social organization of labor fail to include the mass production and consumption of unnecessary consumer goods and services (Koechlin, 2015, p. 187). This mass production and the resultant suppression takes place because of the effectiveness of advertising. That is, capitalizing results in the production of mass goods creates pseudo needs through advertising for people to make purchases.

To counter the one-dimensional thought that Marcuse tackles in his book is dialectical thought. This was instrumental in influencing Marcuse adoption of the Marxist thinking (Bartonek, 81). Marcuse jokingly refers to this as the power of negative thinking. The negative aspects of dialectical thought are it negates the given world in relation to the real potential for the pacification of existence (Cressman, 2014, 32). This thought process has existed as a way of knowing, However, there is a challenge to dialectic thought because of the modern scientific knowledge and the materialization of this knowledge within industrial technology.

### Summary

This chapter has proven insightful in demonstrating and analyzing Marcuse's contribution to the Frankfurter school. The general characteristics of this school show the linkage to Marxism and how to conduct an analysis of cultural criticism. Therefore, it is evident from the discussion that took place that there is a lot of integration of Marxism ideology in the basics of the Frankfurter school. These general characteristics further demonstrate society and how this impacts the various movements that have emerged over the years. Additionally, this chapter has also included an analysis of the critical theory. This is further beneficial in enabling the exploration of the representation of society. As per the discussion the industrial society is too demanding as per the required resources and other necessities which make it difficult to successfully meet the needs of people. This is a factor that creates the existing socio-economic differences demonstrated in society.

## Chapter 3: Position of Marcuse

### Introduction

Marcuse in his *One-Dimensional Man* explores the nature of capitalism. Therefore, this is about establishing the position of Marcuse by analyzing his understanding of capitalism. Therefore, this discussion will provide some understanding behind the One-Dimensional Man. The discussion will begin on the philosophical position of Marcuse on capitalism. This also entails assessing the key features of contemporary capitalism based on the understanding of Marcuse revealing several interesting facts. For each of the features revealed, this highlights Marcuse's position on the philosophy on capitalism.

### Philosophical Position on Capitalism

An analysis of the work of Marcuse reveals that his position on philosophy is it projects the historical negation (Marcuse, 2014, p. 226). A good understanding of this is Chapter 8 of Marcuse's book where he issues the criteria for undertaking the judgment between varying philosophical projects which then results in the quest for criteria needed to determine the different historical projects and potential alternatives (Marcus, 2014, p. 22).

Marcuse's position on capitalism was instrumental in inspiring a wave of radicals in the US and beyond. This took place through the shallowing effects of capitalist consumer society. The argument by Marcuse is that the planned predictability of the Fordist way that promoted the logic of mass production for society was resulting in new forms of social control (Hassan, 2015, p. 101). This is control through totalizing instrumental-rational productive mode expressed via one- dimensionization of ontology, society, and the very modes of thought.



Marcuse cultivated a peculiar understanding of philosophy. His ideas of the status and role of philosophy was it projected historical negation (Marcuse, 1964, p. 226). Therefore, this changed the origins of philosophic thought into the opposite. That is, changed the critique of philosophic thought into repression. Therefore, this led to the evolution and acceptance of all the irrationalities put in place by an imposed system. This made society to become tolerant against atrocities by people against humanity.

In further understanding Marcuse philosophic position, this includes the criteria for determining philosophic projects and how this results in the quest for a criterion for determining between different historical projects and alternatives (Marcuse, 1964, p. 226).

Marcuse goes on and makes the argument that universal terms are not fixed and instead they undergo consistent change which have a foundation in philosophic thought. For this reason, the interpretation of the terms take place in according to the circumstances they are utilized including the way users pay attention to their immediate experiences. Thus, Marcuse asserts that the consolidation of the universals is they adopt themselves through a process of historical continuum.

The work of Marcuse was essential in facilitating the development of key features of contemporary capitalism. One of these characteristics is technological rationality and the logic of domination. According to Marcuse, the capacity of the system for the delivery of goods acts as the proof for the conformity of people onto the system. Hence, social behavior as per Marcuse is a representation of the technological rationality. This means that a society that under technological control has a reduced sense of rationality. This takes place through a language of total administration.

The key features of contemporary capitalism further include the closing of the universe of discourse. This acts as a political, psychological, and sociological factor. In exploring this feature, Marcuse goes to conduct an analysis of the history of philosophical

thought. The significance of doing this is to identify the tendencies that have been playing a role towards the weakening of the power of thought (Bichler, Nitzan, & Dutkiewicz, 2013, p. 15). The power of thought has been losing its sense of consistency. The reason this has been taking place is the reduction between reality and thought.

In contemporary capitalism, Marcuse argues that speech and language tend to become a form of authoritarian tool. In this case, speech and language are produced as an intervention to the debate and they can change the way that the mind works (Marcuse, 2014, p. 87). This means that establishing any type of new model of thoughts will likely weaken the perception and the type of thinking. This takes place via a process of systematic promotion. Thus, this leads Marcuse to make two key observations of habits of thoughts. The first habit of thoughts is the contrast that is seen between two-dimensional dialectic models of thought with that of technological behavior (Bartonek, 2018, p. 104). Regarding the second one referred to as the habit of thinking, this is essential because it allows for the disappearance of the tension existing between reality and appearance and substance and attribute (Marcuse, 2014, p. 88). Therefore, this makes the concept to lose its linguistic representation. Nonetheless, Marcuse maintains that the attribution of a thing to its function takes place via a precise identification. Because of this it becomes possible to switch in the way the mind works including how thinking takes place. The resultant effects is the development of a completely new way of thinking which in most cases will show alignment with that which was initially rejected (Marcuse, 2014, p. 89). This is the reason it becomes easy for people to be influenced by the media. Within this context, the analytical structure of the mind will close paving way for the promotion of discourse by the media which cannot easily be contradicted.

Marcuse compares the power of thought with material representation and opines, this can represent the same thing while also representing something entirely different the

moment that this is a concept that comes from a reflection. The key assumption by Marcuse is that any cognitive process that takes place functions as a transmitter (Marcuse, 1991, p. 123). For this reason, the moment that cognitive concepts begin to transcend all the operational contexts then this becomes a limiting process. The reason this takes place is because the cognitive concept is usually attributed to a single thing therefore becoming an immediate concept. However, should the mental categorization taking place be an abstraction then the meaning of this concept becomes lost by the condition and universal link of reconstruction of a thing using the nature of reality (Marcuse, 2014, p. 111). This leads to Marcuse developing the idea that the moment that facts are from society then the cognitive concepts will be beyond any given context.

The key features of contemporary capitalism also encompass moving from negative thinking through a process of defeating the logic of protest. The argument in support of this by Marcuse is that in the past both language and exposition have been used as a representation of a general statement. However, this sense of generality has been dispersed when it comes to the study of the relationship of people with economic, political, and social factors. This is a development that has resulted in a rapid move to reality. This is a move whose foundation is in utilitarianism and the need for satisfying immediate desire and establishing convenience. Such action takes place in line with the repression of pleasure (Kellner, 2011, p. 30). The advanced industry encompasses society impacting every aspect of the mind and body including preventing pleasure. Therefore, this creates some form of tension between the harsh and brutal demands of work and the need for establish a fulfilling sensual life. This shows that the competition for scarce resources within a society can have adverse economic effects to workers and capitalists.

In further exploring the above feature, it is noted that people tend to assimilate everything taking this with a personal concern. This makes the validity of the expression to

become included into conditions that are regarded as the right thing. This demonstrates the notion of the attachment of the ego. Hence, this makes the managerial way of thinking to become inseparable from the scientific validity according to Marcuse (Marcus, 2014, p. 114). He explains this by providing the example of workers who are attached to their employers. In this case, the moment that the employees perceive that they have low wages and their employer offers a healthcare insurance policy then the mind of these workers becomes hypnotized. This causes them to go ahead and excuse the state of injustice that is taking place because of their employers.

In analyzing this characteristic, Marcuse forfeits from making any judgment. Instead, he goes to observe this changing reality. Thus, Marcuse affirms that material progress acts as a form of transition from intellectual to rationality. In this case, the repressed power goes on to have an impact on the needs of people which eventually become repressed. To further analyze this Marcuse provides an example of the democratic process. He makes the revelation that this is a process of political performance through what is known as elections (Marcuse, 2014, p. 118). This is a process that takes place via a considerable amount of consent and manipulation and for this reason this leads to additional manipulation within the structure (Marcus, 2014, p. 119). This makes democracy to be just a process of clear-cult control of the representation of the electorate.

It is further essential to include the transition from negative thinking to positive thinking as a key feature of contemporary capitalism. This entails taking into consideration technological rationality and the logic of domination. Therefore, Marcuse makes the argument that it is possible to proclaim social reality as a norm. There is a sense of incorporation of political domination in the daily performance of causing the disappearance of tension between what is reality and appearance. In this case, the world of reality is attempting to gain insight into the immediate experience. Marcuse posits that the two lives

usually exist conspirative and unified. This consists of a process of some considerable amount of understanding, living, and transforming the thought. In this regard the thought is vital because of its central role because it fosters a means of gaining understanding of the immediate experience while enabling the means of transforming into reality. This entails attempting to bring back feelings of immediate experience.

## Summary

The discussion in this chapter has provided an idea of Marcuse's position regarding capitalism. From the discussion Marcuse did not think of capitalism in a positive light. That is, he largely adopted a pessimistic attitude towards capitalism. He had a lot of negative ideas concerning contemporary capitalism. He mainly perceived this as a source of exploitation of many for the sake of enrichment of a few. Marcuse's position on capitalism was very thought-provoking cause many to realize that they are under exploitation. This is the reason that this facilitated a considerable number of radical waves in the US and beyond (Lamas, Wolfson, & Funke, 2017, p. 76). Marcuse has been essential in helping people understand that they were under social control. Thus, this demonstrates that Marcuse in his book seeks out the possibilities for revolutionary praxis (Croatia, 2019, p. 661). Marcuse's understanding of philosophy as per the discussion above is that it projected some sense of historical negation resulting in the change of philosophical thought into the opposite. It is interesting that Marcuse develops the argument that universal terms tend to vary and thus they become constantly exposed to change.

## Chapter 4: Relevance of Marcuse's views from today's perspective

### Introduction

The publication of *One-Dimensional Man* took place just about fifty years ago (Kirsch & Surak, 2016, p. 455). At the time of its publication, the book received a considerable amount of attention from both its supporters and critics. The impact of Herbert Marcuse's ideas had a considerable amount of impact on radical politics. Consequently, this made Marcuse to become a symbol of the political ethos in the 1960s. During this time, the views of Marcuse clicked and made a lot of sense given the situation at the time (Koechlin, 2015, p. 183). Nonetheless, the assertion in literature that the reason for Marcuse's iconic impact was not well known. At the time of publishing his book its intellectual appeal was because it proposed a dialectical philosophy that challenged the empiricism and positivists trends that were a large part of American philosophy at the time (Marcuse, 2014, p. 133). Further, Marcuse's book was instrumental in fostering the rescue of critical theory from the technocrats of the Soviet Union. He also undertook to conduct some scientific iterations of Marxism (Cressman, 2014, p. 29). The significance of this chapter is to demonstrate the reason that Marcuse's views lack relevance today. His views are not very interesting today and for this reason many other philosophers' works have gained prominence. A good example of this is the continued interest in the work of Walter Benjamin who dealt explicitly with cultural questions with very minimal interest into politics. Despite this his work has recently been a subject of massive biographies.

## Arguments for Lack of Relevancy

There are many questions raised regarding how Marcuse and his beliefs became essential for progressive movements today. Accordingly, there are several reasons that facilitated this reality. One of these reasons is that Marcuse's work was instrumental

towards enabling the formation of the union of growing sense of productivity and destruction (de Souza, 2020, p. 102). This includes the way that development today is taking place at the cost of the future. An example of this is human's continued use of non-renewable sources of energy and other resources to undergo growth in industries. However, this is something that is taking place at the cost of the future. For this reason, there is a need to establish some balance between the increasing growth with the increasing destruction. Within recent times, this has taken place via the signing of the Paris Agreement.

Another reason Marcuse and his work became such a significant component of the progressive movements today is it resulted in the development of new techniques that encompass more social control. In further reviewing the relevance of Marcuse's ideas today another essential area to investigate is the determination of whether the ethics of consumption are possible. Thus, Marcuse's ideas lack relevancy because within an established organized society the ethics of consumption are not possible.

For instance, Marcuse opines that it is possible for a person to be free enough to exert autonomy over their life. Therefore, if it was possible to organize and direct the productive apparatus towards meeting a person's needs, then this control should be centralized. In this case, this measure of control would not result in the prevention of individualized autonomy (de Souza, 2020, p. 113). Accordingly, this is a goal that takes place within the capabilities of advanced industrial civilization (Marcuse, 1964, 145) In this case, the perception of this is the end of technological rationality. The opposite trend is what takes place. That is, the apparatus will impose its economic and political requirements as a means of achieving

defense and expanding its labor and free time on several aspects such as intellectual and material culture.

In further exploring the beliefs of Marcuse and their relevancy today his belief concerning technological order is also essential. According to Marcuse technological order exists in the form of manipulation of the needs of people. Consequently, this is about a society ruled by a type of terrorist government. However, this can be understood in a different way. The use of technical-economic coordination which carries out the manipulation of needs, the development of new interest among people is something that cannot take place within a society of consumerism. This is a system in which people will be required to maintain standard of needs. Additionally, this is a system that continuously offers protection to repression of the people as opposed to allowing them some ethical existence. Therefore, Marcuse in his work adds that capitalistic lust causes excessive oppression that is distributed to the lusts of a handful of people who then master its distribution (Khasanah et al., 2020, p. 6572). Some of the ways that this suppression emerges include the market mechanisms that are foundation of the success of ads.

Thus, all this means that the existence of such a system of government means that society tends to impose false need which cannot be contained within its construction via ethical consumption as per Marcuse. Therefore, if there is imposition on the false needs of people, then this provides an illusion of happiness. Subsequently, this has led to the belief that it is possible for people to create happiness via consumerism. However, this may not be the reality since people just merely detach from their own being resulting in the integration of the false needs as their own causing them to identify with falsehood.

Further, the relevance of Marcuse's ideas have become weak in today's world because they assert for the elimination of capitalism. Marcuse largely asserted this as opposed to developing arguments towards it. This brings about limitations in the thinking of Marcuse.



This is because Marcuse ignored the power in political orientations. At the same time, Marcuse's thinking fails to show any form of empathy for those seeking to meet the objections of his ideas. Nonetheless, there are a few instances in which he tried approaching his arguments with some form of counter-arguments. This was the time that he engaged with Eric Fromm who also belonged within the Frankfurt school and equally withdrew his inspiration from the work of Marx and Freud.

Additionally, demonstrating the way that Marcuse's work fails to have relevancy today brings about the concept of technology. Technology in this case acts as a catalyst for the emancipation of humanity. According to Marcuse he imagined that play will eventually become more significant than work and that it will also become more fulfilling compared to economic performance. However, the reality of today demonstrates that work continues to have precedence. This means that the capacity of capitalism towards channeling energy into some form of psychologically satisfying expression that will disrupt power is not effective.

Despite the arguments against the relevance of Marcuse's work, there are those who continue to believe that this has relevancy in today's world. That is more than fifty years after publishing the key arguments that Marcuse presented in the *One-Dimensional Man* has some enduring relevance today. This relevance is in the critical philosophy of technology (Cressman, 2014, p. 30). Therefore, in his argument Marcuse went ahead and politicized the technological base of contemporary society. This is through his demystification of the presumed neutrality of industrial technology while conducting a transformation of Marxist critical theory. This is essential in providing a means of making sense of an industrial society that is capable of absorbing and deflecting the supposed inevitability of destruction.

The irony in Marcuse's relative obscurity today is a direct and proportional impact of the accuracy and profundity of his one-dimensional research. Today, the deepest logic regarding the capitalist industrial processes of social domination is entrenched beyond the

industrial age analyzed by Fordism and Marcuse himself (Hassan, 2015, p. 101). Additionally, this goes beyond the liberal-democratic West which for a long time has been the center of this thought-world. Thus, Marcuse's reference to closing the universe of discourse has emerged in a universal through neoliberal globalization and the network of information technologies present in today's world.

Marcuse's work further lacks relevance in today's world because of the difference in political context when he published his book and today. This is because it was in the first industrial revolution. Even at the advanced capitalism of the 1960s the organization of politics at the time remained around the traditional class polarities (Hassan, 2015, p. 101). This was a time when vibrant workers struggled. According to Marcuse, this was a circumscribing logic of rational administration in which the workers were fighting for a stake in a system that oppressed them. Consumerism made it difficult for the workers to realize their own collective interests (Hassan, 2015, p. 103). Because the source of liberation had become deeply integrated into the logic of capitalism, Marcuse only saw the closing of the political universe through the mass assimilationist mechanisms within an advanced industrial society.

The need to assess the relevancy of Marcuse's work brings to the fore the notion of time. To demonstrate the lifetime of his work, Marcuse only provides a marginal significance to his critical theory. Thus, he treats time as a wholly conventional way. In this case, the clock of functioning is treated as a backdrop to the active social and economic world (Hassan, 2015, p. 104). Therefore, this means that Marcuse integrates time only in those instances in which he needs to make a point of reference to its commodification using the standard Marxist critique. It is this time not reflected upon that provides the one-dimensional man a logic and power that is ultimately unwarranted. This has resulted on time shaping capitalism.

## Counter-Argument

To many it may be far-fetched that Marcuse's work still has some relevance today; this is not the case as demonstrated in his contemporary philosophy of technology.

Thus, one thing to note regarding the work of Marcuse is that it is not easy from the 21<sup>st</sup> perspective to gain an appreciation of its impact (Hassan, 2015, p. 101). Despite this, this is a book that has a lot of relevance in the current world.

This has been instrumental in resulting in Marcuse becoming continuing to be referred to as a classical philosopher of technology. For this reason, there is no need to dismiss Marcuse's work because just like many classical philosophers on technology his ideas were abstract since they failed to demonstrate the link with technological practice. Therefore, this resulted in no room for the development of any different types of descriptions concerning technology.

Additionally, those discrediting the work of Marcuse and its relevance today must remember that he did not perceive himself as a classical philosopher of technology. The development of research in this area began emerging in the 1980s through the development of several social theories (Cressman, 2014, p. 30). Thus, the theoretical insights that emerged from this encompassed the empirical turn that forcing social theorists of technology to find a way of carefully considering their approach regarding their thoughts and how they write about the relationship between technology and society.

## Summary

Marcuse's work has shrunk considerably over the years that other figures of the Frankfurt School have had much more influence in comparison to him and for this reason they have become much more considered. At the same time, this has led to the notion that Marcuse's work has lost any relevance in today's world. This chapter has shown some of

the ways that this has taken place in how Marcuse's work no longer fits in the world today because of the difference in the time periods. Despite this, there are those who assert that Marcuse's work can still be relevant in today's world. It will be interesting for an investigation into this issue to take place further and demonstrate with certainty the extent of relevance of Marcuse's work today.

## Conclusion

This thesis hoped to interpret Herbert Marcuse's book *One-Dimensional Man*. Marcuse's work was among the most significant following its publication in the 1960s. He was able to offer his own understanding concerning contemporary capitalism. The rise of capitalism took place together with several challenges such as a high ROI at the expense of economic growth. Overall, capitalism has resulted in a lot of economic justice as only a few people benefit. The interpretation took place by assessing three main aspects of discussion that Marcuse takes in his book: the general characteristics of Frankfurter school; the philosophical position of Marcuse regarding capitalism; relevance of Marcuse's views from today's perspective.

Beginning with the general characteristics of Frankfurter, this thesis identified six. Marcuse made use of many of these characteristics in developing his critical theory. These characteristics include: not utilizing Marxism as a basic norm; structure programs that express critical traits and are not part to any kind of political movement; influence of the interpretation of Marxism based on the work of Karl Korsch and Georg Lukács; exhibiting sympathy on autonomous theories and objects that are in direct involvement to political movements; accepting some elements of Marx theory such as that concerning the exploitation and alienation of labour; revisionist movement of orthodox Marxism.

The philosophical position of Marcuse on capitalism was highly influential as per the rise of radical waves that took place in the US and other regions (Lamas, Wolfson, & Funke, 2017, p. 72). The assertion by Marcuse was that capitalism encompassed a lot of negativities. For instance, the logic of mass production asserted in capitalism only led to a rise in social control (Cutts, 2019, p. 2). Thus, capitalism only resulted in the projection of

historical negation. Therefore, the work of Marcuse as per the *One-Dimensional Man* was vital in facilitating some essential features of contemporary capitalism.

Regarding the relevance of Marcuse's views from today's perspective the discussion in this paper, that there is no relevance. Accordingly, the Marcuse's view lacks relevance from today's perspective regards the uncertainty associated with the formation of the growing sense of productivity and destruction. That is, as human beings continue to grow their economy and development, they are doing so at the expense of their world (Cutts, 2019, p. 5). This demonstrates that the future is under threat. Accordingly, this demonstrates a lack of ethics in consumption. Additionally, the difficulty associated with establishment of autonomy further demonstrates the lack of relevance of Marcuse's views today. It is also essential to point that the belief associated with technology goes on to illustrate the lack of relevance of Marcuse's views in the current world.

Despite this, there are several counter-arguments raised asserting that Marcuse's views continue to have relevance today despite their development being decades ago. This paper has highlighted several reasons that demonstrate this relevancy that include: elements of the critical philosophy of technology which allows for the politicization of the technological base of the contemporary society; current status of the capitalist industrial processes becoming rooted in social domination; the fact that Marcuse never perceived himself as a classical philosopher of technology.

## Resumé

Táto práca mala za cieľ interpretovať knihu Herberta Marcusea *One-Dimensional Man*. Marcuseho dielo po jeho vydaní v 60. rokoch patrilo medzi tie najvýznamnejšie. Bol schopný ponúknuť svoje vlastné chápanie súčasného kapitalizmu. Vzostup kapitalizmu sa odohral spolu s niekoľkými výzvami, ako je vysoká návratnosť investícií na úkor ekonomického rastu. Celkovo možno povedať, že kapitalizmus viedol k veľkej ekonomickej spravodlivosti, z ktorej však má úžitok len málo ľudí. Interpretácia sa ustanovila na základe posúdenia troch hlavných aspektov diskusie, ktorú Marcuse vedie vo svojej knihe: všeobecná charakteristika frankfurtskej školy; filozofický postoj Marcuseho ohľadom kapitalizmu; relevantnosť Marcusových názorov z dnešného pohľadu.

Počnúc všeobecnými charakteristikami Frankfurtera, táto práca ich identifikovala šesť. Marcuse využil mnohé z týchto charakteristík pri rozvíjaní svojej kritickej teórie. Medzi tieto charakteristiky patrí: nepoužívanie marxizmu ako základnej normy; štruktúrovať programy, ktoré vyjadrujú kritické črty a nie sú súčasťou žiadneho politického hnutia; vplyv interpretácie marxizmu podľa diela Karla Korsch a Georga Lukácsa; prejavovať sympatie k autonómnym teóriám a objektom, ktoré sú priamo zapojené do politických hnutí; akceptovanie niektorých prvkov Marxovej teórie, napríklad tá, ktorá sa týka vykorisťovania a odcudzenia práce; revizionistické hnutie ortodoxného marxizmu.

Filozofický postoj Marcuseho ku kapitalizmu mal veľký vplyv na vzostup radikálnych vln, ktoré sa odohrali v USA a iných regiónoch (Lamas, Wolfson, & Funke, 2017, s. 72). Marcuse tvrdil, že kapitalizmus zahŕňa veľa negatív. Napríklad logika masovej výroby presadzovaná v kapitalizme viedla len k nárastu sociálnej kontroly (Cutts, 2019, s. 2). Kapitalizmus teda vyústil len do projekcie historická negácia. Preto bola práca

Marcuseho podľa Jednorozmerného človeka životne dôležitá pri uľahčovaní niektorých základných črt súčasného kapitalizmu.

Pokiaľ ide o relevantnosť názorov Marcuse z dnešnej perspektívy, diskusia v tomto dokumente nie je relevantná. V súlade s tým, Marcuseho názor nie je relevantný z dnešnej perspektívy, pokiaľ ide o neistotu spojenú s vytváraním rastúceho pocitu produktivity a deštrukcie. To znamená, že keď ľudské bytosti pokračujú v raste svojej ekonomiky a rozvoja, robia to na úkor svojho sveta (Cutts, 2019, s. 5). To dokazuje, že budúcnosť je ohrozená. Zároveň to dokazuje nedostatok etiky v spotrebe. Okrem toho, ťažkosti spojené so zavedením autonómie ďalej demonštrujú nedostatok relevantnosti názorov Marcuse dnes. Je tiež dôležité poukázať na to, že viera spojená s technológiou ďalej ilustruje nedostatok relevantnosti názorov Marcuse v súčasnom svete.

Napriek tomu existuje niekoľko protiargumentov, ktoré tvrdia, že Marcuseho názory sú aj dnes stále relevantné, napriek tomu, že sa vyvinuli pred desiatkami rokov. Tento dokument zdôraznil niekoľko dôvodov, ktoré demonštrujú túto relevantnosť, medzi ktoré patria: prvky kritickej filozofie technológie, ktorá umožňuje politizáciu technologickej základne súčasnej spoločnosti; súčasný stav kapitalistických priemyselných procesov zakorenených v sociálnej nadvláde; skutočnosť, že Marcuse sa nikdy nevnímal ako klasický filozof technológie.



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