Marcuse’s Challenge to Education, a collection of essays by scholars who have explicat
ted his theories accompanied by unpublished lecture notes by Marcuse himself,
examines his ground-breaking critique of education as well as his own pedagogi-
cal alternatives. This compilation provides an overview of the various themes of
Marcuse’s challenges to traditional education and connections with ideas of other
radical thinkers ranging from Bloch and Freire to Freud and Lacan.

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Marcuse’s Challenge to Education
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About the Editors and Contributors
Philosopher, social theorist, and political activist Herbert Marcuse gained world renown during the 1960s as a critic of the major transformations within both the structures of social reproduction and emergent forms of resistance to domination and repression. His theory of one-dimensional society provided critical perspectives on contemporary capitalist and state communist societies, while his notion of the Great Refusal won him renown as a theorist of revolutionary change and “liberation from the affluent society.” Consequently, he became one of the most influential intellectuals in the United States during the 1960s and into the 1970s. But what is Marcuse’s legacy today? While other critical theorists of the Frankfurt School have been affirmed as having continued relevance for contemporary theory, Marcuse seems to remain a historical figure locked within the dramas of the sixties.1 A return to Marcuse, as Angela Davis (2005) has pointed out, seems to veer dangerously close to nostalgia for a past age.2

To be sure, there have been traces of a Marcuse renaissance in recent years. Following a collective book commemorating Marcuse after his death in 1979 (Pippin, Feenberg, and Webel 1988), several readers have appeared, including Marcuse: From the New Left to the Next Left (Bokina and Lukes 1994) and Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader (Abromeit and Cobb 2004). Recently there have also been several books about Marcuse that reevaluate his philosophy within a variety of contexts, including Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History (Feenberg 2005), the collection Herbert Marcuse: Heideggerian Marxism (Abromeit and Wolin 2005), and

Introduction

Douglas Kellner, Tyson Lewis, and Clayton Pierce

Adding to this growing body of literature, this volume seeks to demonstrate the continued relevance and importance of Marcuse’s thought to the contemporary situation. In particular, our focus in this book is on Marcuse’s critical analysis of education in the current era of global capitalism and his potential for generating transformative pedagogical practices through a reconstruction of schooling. With the rise of standardization policies in the sphere of schooling, the steady growth of the “affluent society” within Western, postindustrialized economies, the waning of dialectical thinking in the field of philosophy and theory, the immediate degradation of the environment, a dispiriting era of war and militarism, and the rise of a militant ant CORPORATE globalism, Marcuse speaks with clarity to academics, teachers, and activists interested in understanding the complexities of “counterrevolution and revolt” occurring today in a variety of locations and across a variety of domains.

In order to meet these challenges, we present two never-before-published lectures by Marcuse that demonstrate his concern for education and theorizing schooling (chapters 1 and 2), a series of essays by emerging and established Marcuse scholars on his relevance for contemporary education, and two concluding chapters by noted Marcusian theorist Charles Reitz. While the essays collected in this volume speak directly to educational concerns, the implications are broad and concern the fate of critical theory and radical democracy. Overall, we hope this collection demonstrates not only Marcuse’s relevancy but also the urgency with which we must evaluate his writings in light of continuities and transformations within the present system of social relations and institutions from Marcuse’s time to our own.

**HERBERT MARCUSE: LIFE, TIMES, AND PHILOSOPHY**

Marcuse was born in Berlin, and after serving with the German army in World War I, he went to Freiburg to pursue his studies. After receiving his doctorate in literature in 1922, and following a short career as a bookseller in Berlin, he returned to Freiburg in 1928 to study philosophy with Martin Heidegger, then one of the most influential thinkers in Germany. In 1933, Marcuse joined the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research) in Frankfurt and soon became deeply involved in its interdisciplinary projects, which included working out a model for radical social theory, developing a theory of the new stage of state and monopoly capitalism, and providing a systematic analysis and critique of German fascism. Marcuse identified with the “critical theory”
of the Institute and throughout his life was close to Max Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno, and others in the Institute’s inner circle.

In 1934, Marcuse—a German Jew and radical—fled from Nazism and emigrated to the United States, where he lived for the rest of his life. The Institute for Social Research was granted offices at and an academic affiliation with Columbia University, where Marcuse worked during the 1930s and early 1940s. His first major work in English, *Reason and Revolution* (1941), traced the genesis of the ideas of Hegel, Marx, and modern social theory. It demonstrated the similarities between Hegel and Marx and introduced many English-speaking readers to the Hegelian-Marxian tradition of dialectical thinking. *Reason and Revolution* was a major contribution to the social sciences in the United States because it offered for the first time a coherent study of the history of a dialectical analysis of society and culture to a U.S. academic audience. This book was a departure from the positivistic approach common in most social science departments and was a major influence on scholars looking for alternative methods for understanding society and culture.

In 1941, Marcuse joined the Office of Strategic Services and then worked in the State Department, becoming the head of the Central European bureau by the end of World War II (Kellner 1998). Marcuse served in the U.S. government from 1941 through the early 1950s; he always claimed his work was motivated by a desire to struggle against fascism. He then focused once again on his work in philosophy and social theory, and in 1955 he published *Eros and Civilization*, which attempted an audacious synthesis of Marx and Freud and sketched the outlines of a nonrepressive society. In many ways this text is not so much a break with his earlier philosophical work found in *Reason and Revolution* as an investigation of revolution in relation to the body, sensuality, imagination, culture, and the unconscious. Thus we might read *Eros and Civilization* as an exploration and furtherance of Marcuse’s increasingly multidimensional theory of emancipation, through which intellectual and sensual existence should be conceptualized as two interdependent forces of resistance against what he would later describe as one-dimensional society. As we shall see below, his thoughts concerning education further develop this multidimensional theory, helping to link what Kant would refer to as pure, practical, and aesthetic forms of reason.

In 1958, Marcuse published *Soviet Marxism* and received a tenured position at Brandeis University, becoming one of the most popular and influential members of its faculty. Then in 1964, Marcuse published *One-Dimensional Man*, a wide-ranging critique of both advanced capitalist and communist societies that became one of his most widely known works. The text theorized the decline of revolutionary potential in capitalist societies and the development of new forms of social control. Though *One-Dimensional Man* pointed
to the further standardization of human culture and society, leading many to view it as Marcuse’s most pessimistic work, it nevertheless retains utopian tendencies found in *Eros and Civilization*. These tendencies can perhaps best be seen in one of the last sections of the text, on new science, technology, and the articulation of dialectical thought as a mode of critical resistance to one-dimensional thought and education. As such, even Marcuse’s most trenchant critique of advanced capitalist society is influenced by his hope for an alternative human culture and society.

*One-Dimensional Man* was followed by a series of books and articles that articulated New Left politics and critiques of capitalist societies, including “Repressive Tolerance” (1965), *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), and *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972). “Repressive Tolerance” attacked liberalism and those who refused to take a stand during the controversies of the 1960s. It won Marcuse the reputation of being an intransigent radical and voice for the Left and new student movements. *An Essay on Liberation* critically examined all of the existing liberation movements from the Viet Cong to the hippies; it exhilarated many radicals while further alienating establishment academics and those who opposed the movements of the 1960s. *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, by contrast, articulated the new realism that was setting in during the early 1960s, when it was becoming clear that the most extravagant hopes of the 1970s were being dashed by a turn to the right and counterrevolution against the 1960s. As we shall see below, these texts in particular have been major targets for rightwing attacks on Marcuse in the contemporary moment.

So what is Marcuse’s legacy beyond the nostalgia for the sixties? Joel Whitebook’s dismissive assessment (1995) of Marcuse’s utopian fantasy of “total satisfaction” beyond the transience of scarcity and death is one prevalent interpretation. In *The Intellectuals and the Flag*, Todd Gitlin dismisses Marcuse’s Great Refusal as a leftover from German romanticism and “a shout from an ivory tower” (2005, 3). Yet despite a conscious distancing from Marcuse’s work by some former members of the New Left, many of Marcuse’s central ideas remain starting points (or at least genealogical launching pads) for some of the most provocative theoretical projects of the later half of the twentieth century. For instance, Fredric Jameson’s theory of postmodern flattening of signification and waning of affect could be seen as furthering the analysis of one-dimensional society and radical desublimation (1996); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s theory (2001) of radical democratic struggle and new social movements—even if it is posed in opposition to part of Marcuse’s own analysis—could be read as a theoretical furtherance of Marcuse’s interest in conceptualizing the practices of the New Left and oppositional social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As a forerunner of
“radical democratic” theories, Marcuse was one of the first major male theorists to articulate Marxism with feminism, and several of his students were active in the feminist movement and gay and lesbian movements (see the section on “Psychoanalysis and Feminism” in Bokina and Lukes 1994). Marcuse also contributed articles and lectures to the environmental movement, where he has continued to be an influence (see Luke 1994; the section on “Marcuse and Contemporary Ecological Theory” in Abromeit and Cobb 2004; and Kahn, chapter 5 in this volume).

Marcuse’s championing of emancipation was important for many liberation movements. His emphasis on the psychoanalytic “depth-dimension” of domination and emancipation concerning the mind, body, and senses provided philosophical insights that continue to resonate today. For instance, although Slavoj Žižek dismisses Marcuse in another context as naive (Žižek, Santer, and Reinhard 2005), his account of the radical displacement of the Oedipal complex in the contemporary “risk society” (Žižek 2000) closely resembles Marcuse’s own attempts to historicize Freud. New trajectories that critically draw upon Marcuse’s work also demonstrate the relevance of his ideas as illuminating points of departures for powerful critiques of contemporary social, technological, and political phenomena (Abromeit and Cobb 2004; Pippen et al. 1988). In all cases, it would seem that while some specificities of Marcuse’s arguments have been dismissed or at least called into question, the theoretical problematic that he initiated remains timely and highly provocative.

Marcuse’s relation to critical pedagogy and educational philosophy in general is more indirect. Below, we will briefly summarize the literature on Marcuse and education, and then introduce some lectures and writings published for the first time in this volume, which greatly expand our understanding of Marcuse’s challenge to education today. Thus what follows is an attempt to realize a Marcusian renaissance in critical theory and more specifically in critical pedagogy.

**MARCUSE AND THE CRITIQUE OF SCHOOLING**

In general, there has been little serious engagement with the potential of Marcuse to present systematic critique and positive alternatives for education. An early attempt by Joseph DeVitis (1974) to engage the educational dimension of Marcuse’s writings was overly critical and generally unsympathetic to Marcuse, reducing his complex positions to pan-rationalism and Platonism, which DeVitis claimed was repressive with regard to education. Other works in the field of the philosophy of education (Brosio 1981) have presented a
broad introduction to Marcuse and other Frankfurt School theorists, but such introductions never specifically developed how Marcuse’s theoretical approach could be applied to education. And although Marcuse’s name appears in such canonical texts as Henry Giroux’s *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition* (2001), his name has often become little more than an index for the critical theory tradition. Consequently, there has been scant attention paid to what Marcuse actually said about education or how his central ideas (one-dimensional society, Eros, play, the Great Refusal, and the critique of pure tolerance) contain pedagogical ramifications. Marcuse has also been briefly cited in relation to aesthetic education (Greene 2000) and utopian studies in education (Peters and Freeman-Moir 2006), as well as in child studies (Kennedy 2006). Yet while these last texts are promising, the full scope of Marcuse’s educational challenge has not been articulated or developed.

The only serious and sustained analysis of Marcuse’s educational theory is found in Charles Reitz’s *Art, Alienation, and the Humanities* (2000). Reitz explicates the relevance of Marcuse’s thought for a radical philosophy of education that could be combined with critical pedagogy and existing progressive educational projects. He suggests that Marcuse’s work in the 1930s mediates dichotomies in education between humanities and the sciences, sublating the poles of idealism and scientific empiricism. Yet Reitz generally focuses on Marcuse’s notion of aesthetic education, and posits an overly dualistic theory in Marcuse’s work between Hegelian-Marxian critical theory and an aesthetic ontology grounded in Schiller, Freud, and a subjectivist aestheticism. While Reitz is correct that the latter dimension sometimes stands in an uneasy relation with Marcuse’s critical theory, at its best, Marcuse’s work combines critical philosophy, social theory, aesthetics, and radical politics. Overall, Marcuse’s educational project is to mediate aesthetic education, the humanities, and the sciences with a critical theory of the contemporary era and a radical politics aiming at emancipation and a nonrepressive society (see below).

Ironically, the right has provided more engagement with Marcuse’s impact on contemporary education than the left, but we want to dispose quickly of the specious rightwing critique of Marcuse. Allan Bloom, in his infamous *Closing of the American Mind* (1987), claimed Marcuse was the most important philosopher of the 1960s counterculture, and that the spread of his theories led to “the betrayal of liberty on America’s campuses.” Moreover, Bloom claimed that German thinkers like Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Marcuse have spread a corrosive nihilism and seduced the youth, writing that the United States imported “a clothing of German fabrication for our souls, which . . . cast doubt upon the Americanization of the world on which we had embarked” (1987, 152). In an era of aggressive militarism and neo-imperialism
from the Reagan administration through two Bush administrations, we might argue that any casting of doubt on U.S. imperial aspirations is a salutary contribution for which Marcuse should be thanked. Revealing his inability to grasp the philosophical dimension and challenges of Marcuse’s thought, Bloom also wrote of Marcuse: “He ended up here writing trashy culture criticism with a heavy sex interest” (1987, 226), a simply ludicrous claim.

Alan Kors and Harvey Silverglate (1998) make Marcuse responsible for speech codes in the university, so-called political correctness, intolerance toward conservatives, and other nightmares for the right such as Critical Race Theory, gay and lesbian studies, and militant feminism, because he argued for intolerance against sexism, racism, homophobia, militarism, and imperialism and argued for what we would now call critical multicultural education. Yet Kors and Silverglate are incorrect on several counts. First, probably more than almost any other professional philosopher of his era, Marcuse promoted classical philosophy—including Plato, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Freud. Marcuse’s point was not to abandon the “great books” of the Western tradition but rather to read them critically in light of pressing contemporary issues. And although Marcuse actively opposed racism, sexism, homophobia, and imperialism, it is an exaggeration to credit Marcuse with new academic programs that were largely developed by women, people of color, gays and lesbians, and others in oppositional social movements. In short, Marcuse’s conservative critics do not really engage his ideas and misunderstand his historical role in educational reform.

But before introducing Marcuse’s dialectical concept of education, we must first contextualize Marcuse’s philosophy in relation to both the German romantic and idealist traditions—from which his positive notion of education derives—as well as to his overall critique of “one-dimensional” society. First, an introduction to Marcuse’s philosophy of education should be situated in relation to Bildung, a concept embodying a notion of cultural development that is set within a rational, creative, and less repressive logos. Bildung concerns autonomous learning/self-formation, which incorporates the whole individual for the purpose of fully developing the self and society. This central ideal remains antithetical to any sense of formalism in education and instead embraces education of the body and mind against passive skill acquisition. Furthermore, education rooted in the Bildung tradition opposes notions of formalism and standardization in education and instead embraces education of the whole individual (body and mind, reason and sentiment) against both Kantian universalism and the redundant and empty conformism of the bourgeois philistine. This philosophic understanding of education is a common one held throughout Marcuse’s philosophy: “Once upon a time, it was the proclaimed principle of great bourgeois philosophy that the youth ‘ought to
be educated not for the present but for a better future condition of the human race, that is, for the idea of humanity.’ Now the council for Higher Education is called upon to study the ‘detailed needs’ of the established society so that the colleges know ‘what kinds of graduates to produce’” (1972, 27). Here Marcuse criticizes education that simply reproduces the status quo and defends a notion of Bildung associated with cultural and social transformation.

Marcuse’s critique of schooling in one-dimensional society thus can be seen as emerging from a critique of the distortion of the German concept of Bildung, in which education is meant to enrich the individual and culture, while transcending the present conditions of immediacy that inhibit and stifle human development. The Kantian teleology involved in the concept of Bildung points to the transcendental heritage influencing Marcuse’s notion of education as it is linked to the progression and growth of culture and realization of individual human beings. Yet this invocation of education’s mandate to realize the possibilities of a better future is subverted by an emergent instrumental form of schooling that reduces learning to the economic and administrative needs of the present.

Here we can see the dialectic of Marcuse’s educational theory emerge as a contradiction between Bildung and one-dimensional society. One-dimensional society is a social order that lacks negativity, critique, and transformative practice. For Marcuse, negativity is a positive concept in that it is only through negation that social contradictions can be overcome and real freedom realized. The traditional loci for negativity were found in anthropological, philosophical, and political levels, yet within one-dimensional society, these spaces of resistance are, for Marcuse, being eroded at an alarming rate.

In terms of the anthropological dimension, industrial society affects every aspect of mind and body, from our intellectual faculties to our libidinal drives. At its inception, factory production had a tendency to repress pleasure. This repression created a libidinal tension between the harsh and brutal demands of work and the need for a fulfilling sensual life, or to use Marcuse’s language, a tension between the performance principle and the pleasure principle. The performance principle is a historical manifestation of Freud’s reality principle, emphasizing competition for scarce resources within a society organized according to the economic performance of workers and capitalists (Marcuse 1955, 44).

In early industrial society, the need to perform labor in appalling factory conditions forced the pleasure principle to be repressed, resulting in a condition in which workers were alienated from their own sensual being (creating a working body over and above a body of pleasure). Child labor and unregulated workdays, for instance, were commonplace labor practices in industrial society. These everyday examples of life in industrial society re-
flect a repetitive, dulling, and mutilating mode of life that Marcuse saw being accelerated by the technological achievements of advanced industrial society. According to Marcuse, such a state of alienation and misery is to be lamented; nevertheless, it opened up a space for critique against repressive structures, which were overtly recognized as antagonistic to one’s instinctual gratification.

Now in one-dimensional society, the sensual needs of desire, pleasure, and play seem to coincide with a world of commodities that creates a new biological foundation in our sensual and instinctual structures supporting advanced capitalism. In other words, the pleasure principle is superficially satiated by the very society that is in fact responsible for the ongoing degradation of real, vital needs. Sensuality, according to Marcuse, thus begins to lose its oppositional and liberatory quality, and the “freedom” and “sexual liberty” unleashed within the affluent society are literally “transforming the earth into hell” under the guise of happiness and heaven (Marcuse 1955, xiii).

On the level of behavioral dispositions, the unhappy consciousness of negativity, alienation, and critique is replaced with a “happy consciousness” (Marcuse 1964, 79), which accepts the given as an absolute and undeniable good. Happy consciousness signifies the loss of critical thought, which is accomplished by a simultaneous liquidation of potential sources of opposition to established society that are available to individuals, such as the media, everyday language, and aesthetic representations (music, popular literature, film, etc.). Most popular music, for example, is not only a mode of entertainment and marketing but is also political in that it urges conformity to contemporary standards of beauty, reason, and social norms. Thus an inherent claim in Marcuse’s concept of the happy consciousness is that cultural activities and practices that cultivate the critical capacities of individuals and communities have been absorbed into the totality of the hyperconsumptive form of capitalism inherent in the notion of the affluent society. For Marcuse, then, it is not just that consumer culture has assimilated potentially oppositional realms of culture but also that these forms of negative and critical thought have been replaced with an operationalized way of thinking and attendant sets of values: consumer attitudes and behavior, increasing conformity to market logics, and a complacency to global militarization.

Marcuse further rewrites Freud’s psychoanalytic theory by historicizing the Oedipal complex. For Freud, our basic psychological disposition is formed through our early childhood experiences with our parents. For example, young boys enter into an ambivalent relationship with their fathers, who interrupt the sensual pleasures gained from the mother. The resulting Oedipal drama creates a certain critical perspective on the authority of the father, who is both loved and hated. On a personal and private level, the Oedipal drama
crystallizes the more general and public tensions between individual needs and the socially and economically driven performance principle.

As such, the Oedipal drama develops the forms of submissiveness and rebelliousness that characterize our struggles in later life, providing a “semi-autonomous” sphere to develop resistance to one-dimensional, administered society. Yet in advanced capitalism, the traditional role of the private Oedipal drama is replaced by direct socialization. As Marcuse writes, “The classical psychoanalytic model, in which the father and the father-dominated family was the agent of mental socialization, is being invalidated by society’s direct management of the nascent ego through the mass media, school and sport teams, gangs, etc.” (1969, 47). If one’s relationship to society was at one time mediated through the private sphere of the family, now the psychological development of the ego is immediately identified with the social order. The distinction between the individual and the masses becomes increasingly blurred as the ego identified directly with the administered reality principle. The ego no longer has the capacity to resist social messages imposed from the outside, resulting again in the evisceration of the negative (the critical) and the production of one-dimensional thinking. Marcuse worries that the triumph of the happy consciousness produces political nihilism, where “people cannot reject the system of domination without rejecting themselves, their own repressive instinctual needs and values” (1969, 17). Latchkey children raised through watching television and playing video games, the predominance of consumer culture in and through advertising (especially in school halls, cafeterias, and streamed-in television programming such as Channel One), all demonstrate the ongoing relevancy of Marcuse’s warnings.

This brief sketch demonstrates a new psychological importance of schooling in one-dimensional society, for if psychological development is largely conditioned by public social institutions rather than the private family unit, schools become increasingly responsible for fostering either (a) one-dimensional personalities or (b) critical, multidimensional human beings.

For Marcuse, dialectical thinking once allowed us to conceptualize oppositional concepts that could not be absorbed into the language of one-dimensional, normalized thought. Here the tension between is and ought, and particular and universal describes not so much logical flaws, but rather inherent contradictions within society as a whole. Now one-dimensional language incorporates into its very form its own opposition, again erasing the ability to think against the status quo. As Marcuse argues, thought “is purged from that ‘negative’ which loomed so large at the origins of logic and of philosophic thought—the experience of the denying, deceptive, falsifying power of the established reality. And with the elimination of this experience, the conceptual effort to sustain the tension between ‘is’ and ‘ought,’ and to subvert the
established universe of discourse in the name of its own truth is likewise eliminated from all thought which is to be objective, exact, and scientific” (Marcuse 1964, 140). Without negative thought, the latent yet suppressed potential within social reality is lost and the unreason of the present becomes the standard for measuring the reasonableness of philosophic argument.

Finally, on a political level, class struggle no longer appeared to Marcuse to be a guaranteed motor for securing a socialist future. Thus Marcuse questioned two of the fundamental postulates of orthodox Marxism: the revolutionary proletariat and the inevitability of capitalist crisis. The question became: Who are the social actors capable of embodying emancipatory social transformation? Marcuse’s endless search for alternatives to the revolutionary working class movement demanded engagement with a wide range of oppositional social movements. In contrast with the more extravagant demands of orthodox Marxism, Marcuse championed nonintegrated forces of minorities, outsiders, and radical intelligentsia and attempted to nourish oppositional thought and behavior by promoting critical thinking and a general refusal of the aggressive and destructive form of life promoted by advanced capitalist society.

MARCUSE AND EDUCATION: NEW CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Positioning schooling in relation to the cultural dominant of one-dimensional society, Marcuse resolutely opposed an educational practice in which the negative is replaced with the positive, and on the level of behavioral and psychological dispositions, the unhappy consciousness is replaced with a happy consciousness. Comparing one-dimensional schooling (as pure positivity and social reproduction) with Bildung (as the critical and reconstructive movement toward future possibility), we can more clearly outline Marcuse’s dialectical analysis of schooling.

In a 1968 lecture delivered at Brooklyn College collected in this volume (see chapter 1), Marcuse argues that in a one-dimensional society, schooling has become an increasingly contradictory institution. On one hand, the economy of advanced industrial societies is defined by unrestricted access and development of knowledge, thus a need for a more robust general education system. Here education promises equality and freedom of information access for all social classes. On the other hand, there is simultaneously the need to “contain” knowledge and reason within the conceptual and value universe of the established society,” thus limiting the democratic potentialities of general education. This tension is resolved in the expansion of professional education (as a form of class-based schooling seen today in corporate universities such
as DeVry, the University of Phoenix, and so on), but only at the expense of education’s more fundamental ethical mandate: the betterment of society in accordance with democratic values.

As such, “education in sickness” (see chapter 1 in this volume) is an anti-educative form of education concerned with market and military logic under the guise of democratic expansion. Here Marcuse’s theory of one-dimensional society can be articulated with that of Erich Fromm’s notion of a sane (or insane) society (1955). It is through education that one-dimensional thought becomes a sickness in the sense that it ceases to be simply a mode of reason and becomes indoctrination into a whole way of life incorporating the conscious, the unconscious, and the body into a totalizing system of administration. As education becomes increasingly important to the economy—which needs an educated class of doctors, lawyers, scientists, technicians—education’s critical and transformative side is increasingly put in check, leading to escalating forms of institutional conformity and repression. The extreme focus on the production of socially “useful” knowledge in schooling was, according to Marcuse, a result of the full adoption of a militaristic and corporate value framework as opposed to a more humanistic and ecologically healthy one. Such a value framework codifies the knowledge that produces the coordinates for carpet-bombing missions and laser-guided missiles with a “neutral” mode of rationality. For Marcuse, this hegemonic conception of rationality that valorized a one-dimensional, cool, calm, and neutral attitude toward reality needed to be overcome, since it imbued in the individual a tolerance toward the false needs of an aggressive, destructive, and competitive capitalist society.

The cultivation of one-dimensional society’s established values through education thus required a subjective component that turned education’s emancipatory potential into a process accelerating alienation and standardization within the individual’s learning environment (see Pierce, chapter 8, in this volume). This process begins for Marcuse with the bifurcation of the human sciences into the humanities, which retain transcendent and critical modes of reason, and empirical-positivistic social sciences that are oriented toward the rational and scientific organization and understanding of society. For Marcuse, the dominance of the latter within the university is attributable to a flattened and uncritical form of knowledge that promotes and requires greater specialization, professionalization, technocratic control, and a strong tendency to fetishize methodological models. This bifurcation of the disciplines leads to increasingly bifurcated thinking that no longer is able to conceptualize the totality of social relations, and as such remains purely instrumental. The result: a sickness of one-dimensional being that vitiates the multidimensional concept of Bildung.
Such a state of affairs was for Marcuse becoming more pronounced in the push and pull between the welfare and the warfare state in the sixties and seventies; it can be seen today in such policies as A Nation at Risk and No Child Left Behind, both of which subsume the call for “equal educational opportunities” under the logic of capitalist competition and instrumental state bureaucracy. Bureaucratic federal policies such as these conflate the language of equality with a cold war language of social domination through educational standards. In fact, we could argue that the tension that Marcuse felt in the late sixties and early seventies has been increasingly overcome by the rapid evisceration of the welfare state and the preeminent rise of an aggressive warfare state in which educational repression is even more acute than in Marcuse’s day (Giroux 2007). Thus, Marcuse becomes a starting point for theorizing trends in education that today have become intensified through one-dimensional standardization.

Out of this irreconcilable tension, Marcuse theorized a new notion of education. As opposed to other radical leftist thinkers of the time, Marcuse refused to abandon the notion of the university or of public schooling, and instead of “deschooling” (Illich 1970) he argued for “reschooling” (see chapter 2 in this volume; Kellner 2006). Indeed, for Marcuse, students and institutions of higher learning represented sites of growing refusal against one-dimensional society that promoted and enabled a standardizing function for the university. Ironically, the University of California at San Diego, Marcuse’s final institutional home, forced him into retirement largely by efforts spearheaded by the then-head of the UC Regents and governor, Ronald Reagan. Yet Marcuse’s sustained engagement with students and educational institutions is an underappreciated aspect of his corpus of work, and it was not until the recent archival discovery of his lectures and speeches given at universities across North America during the sixties and seventies that this trajectory in Marcuse’s praxis has been able to be more fully illuminated. His view of the university in advanced capitalist society is not an entirely negative one, as generally assumed; in fact, his treatment, as was his theoretical approach in his critical theory of society, is thoroughly dialectical, as evidenced by the lectures on education collected in this volume, his interaction with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and its proposed Radical Education Project, and his lifetime as a radical educator and activist involved with student movements.

Marcuse’s publications of the mid-1960s corresponded with the rise of the SDS, the antiwar movement, and groups known collectively as the New Left (see Kellner 1984; 2005). On January 14, 1965, Mike Davis, then affiliated with Los Angeles SDS and later a renowned author, sent Marcuse a long letter detailing problems with connecting the antiwar movement with other insurgent movements. Marcuse responded to Davis in an undated letter found
in the Herbert Marcuse archive. “I detect in your report a strong anti-intellectual sentiment,” Marcuse argues, “almost inferiority complex of being an intellectual and working as and with intellectuals.” Marcuse was skeptical that a “mass organization” could be built where “there is no basis for a mass organization.” For Marcuse, the task of radical intellectuals was, as he put it to Davis, a pedagogical one of “knowledge, of developing the consciousness of what is going on and of the possible ways of getting out of the whole.”

During this time, Marcuse was also sent a packet of literature on the emerging SDS Radical Education Project, which contained a twenty-eight-page position paper dated 1 May 1966, outlining goals and objectives, organization of study groups, “subject areas of project work” in the academic disciplines, professions, arts, international education, and social movements, as well as developing “political philosophy, ideology, and strategy” and analysis of “the American reality.” Marcuse’s own positive perspective of schooling in U.S. society can be demonstrated in an excerpt from a letter Marcuse wrote as a response to the proposed project, which SDS hoped Marcuse would support and contribute to. While Marcuse, in the undated response published below, indicated a willingness to work with the group, he noted the following criticism:

Much of your project seems to be based on the assumption that education in the American colleges and universities makes all but impossible the development of critical thought. You write that “The basic education of the universities avoids the issues of fundamental conflict and gives little attention to the seminal thinkers who speak to the politics of our times.” . . . Academic freedom is indeed one of the few liberties both established and effectively used in this country, even more by the Left than by the Right. (1966)

As the material we have collected in this book indicates, Marcuse was deeply interested in critique and reconstruction of education and in discovering how the university and schooling could be used as vehicles of progressive social change. These examples demonstrate not only Marcuse’s commitment to reschooling, but also his unwavering commitment to critique. While some, such as his friend Theodor Adorno, might argue that Marcuse uncritically endorsed student movements and thus sided with a naive hope in a better tomorrow (Adorno and Marcuse 1999), we can see from these exchanges that Marcuse never abandoned the project of critical theory even as he advocated activist interventions.

Marcuse’s engagement with universities was not limited to just a few large campuses and a few radical student groups. In yet another example of Marcuse’s unwavering commitment and hope in the university as a site of resistance and social change, he delivered a lecture to an audience at Kent State in 1976 that illuminates his sustained involvement with higher education. Mar-
Marcuse’s Kent State lecture, discovered in the Marcuse archive, is especially poignant given the deadly history of student protest and police violence that took place at this university in May 1970. In this particular lecture, given in a place where a high price was paid for student resistance to the U.S. troop escalation in Vietnam and the invasion of Cambodia, Marcuse reminded the audience that great gains had been made through student protest and resistance to establishment violence and irrationality. Invoking the student and worker general strike of 1968 in Paris and the massive anti–Vietnam War protest and civil rights movement here in the United States, Marcuse continued to insist that higher education could be instrumental in individual and widespread cultural transformation.

Marcuse’s focus in the Kent State lecture aimed at revolutionizing both the subjective and objective conditions of one-dimensional society. In a context of heightened repression and increasing state violence, Marcuse offered the following prescriptions for educational change:

Today, under the conditions of repressive integration, the change within individual emancipation may be the task of small education groups, political and psychological in one, practicing self-education, in and against the official education. As political education, the work would to a large extent aim at the demystification and defetishization of Marxism in theory and practice: developing the Marxian concepts in accordance with the conditions of the 20th century counterrevolution. As a psychological education, the work would be focused, not on a nice release of our Ego and Id, of our frustrations, our psyche, but on an autocritique of our psyche: learning to distinguish between needs and satisfactions which are liberating on a social scale, and those that are self-destructive, block liberation, learning to distinguish between behavior which reproduces in ourselves the Establishment (often in the guise of radicalism!), and behavior which is really emancipatory: striving for a morality of liberation which overcomes, in ourselves, the cynical and brutal morality of the Establishment. In short: internal transformation of psychological into political, of therapy into political education. (1976)

Marcuse’s point here is not that students should add therapy sessions to their education. What he is suggesting is for students to collectively develop practices of decolonizing the internalized objective reality of one-dimensional society. In other words, Marcuse is arguing that education is political at the psychological core of the individual. The repressive and irrational status quo of one-dimensional society has already politicized the subject, with educational institutions being a key actor in this process. As such, Marcuse reminds us that liberation must remain anchored in the critical capacity to understand the progressive and conservative tendencies within schools, universities, and student movements.
Marcuse’s overall dialectical analysis of schooling is itself locked within yet another higher order set of contradictions existing between revolution and education. As Marcuse argued in a speech from 1975 at Berkeley (see chapter 2 in this volume), “We cannot change the goals of education without changing the society which sets these goals,” yet at the same time “We cannot wait for the revolution.” As such, education is necessary but never in itself a complete answer to the problems of social inequality, racism, classism, imperialism, and sexism. Here Marcuse’s comments echo those of Marx, who once stated, “On the one hand, a change of social circumstances was required to establish a proper system of education; on the other hand, a proper system of education was required to bring about a change of social circumstances. . . .” (Marx 1975, 32). It is toward this location of education—between what is and what can be—that we must now turn, for Marcuse’s rehabilitation of education is more necessary than ever, especially in a postmodern age ruled by nihilism and cynicism (see Van Heertum, chapter 6 in this volume).

Perhaps an efficacious starting point for introducing this emancipatory notion of education is Marcuse’s short yet provocative defense of one of his most famous and influential students, Angela Davis. After she was put in prison for her connections with George Jackson, Marcuse defended her in a 1971 statement, affirming that Angela Davis was an extraordinary student not only because of her intelligence and her eagerness to learn, to know, but also because she had that sensitivity, that human warmth without which all learning and all knowledge remain “abstract,” merely “professional,” and eventually irrelevant. Angela learned what the great philosophers were constantly talking about: human freedom, the dignity of man, equality, justice—and how human relationships and human society ought to be based on these ideas. She grasped what every good student will grasp very soon: that great ideas are nothing unless they are more than mere “ideas,” mere “values” to be professed in classrooms, in the churches, by the politicians; that they are false and irrelevant unless they are being translated into reality. . . . Angela was an excellent teacher—even her critics admitted that she did not use the classroom for propaganda and indoctrination. She did not have to! For presenting the facts, analyzing the prevailing conditions was enough. She refused to treat the liberating ideas of Western civilization as mere textbook material, as stuff for examinations and degrees—for her, they were alive and had to become reality—here and now, not in some far away days, not eternal promises and expectations. So she could not confine herself to the classroom, to the relatively same formation and isolation of the campus: she took the truth (her truth, our truth) outside: she protested, she demonstrated, she organized, and she did not conceal her political affiliations. (Marcuse 1971)

From this particular example, we can learn a great deal concerning what Marcuse valued in students and in teachers in general. For instance, in Angela
Davis, Marcuse saw a student who was passionately connected with the subject matter in a deeply personal and political way. In a sense, Davis cultivated not only her intellectual capacities but also her affective capacities (see Shel, chapter 7 in this volume, for an analysis of Marcuse and the ethic of care in education). Second, as a teacher, Davis was not simply a propagandist for the left—a charge that has been leveled with increasing frequency against professors interested in race, class, and gender inequalities. Rather, it was through a dialectical analysis of the contradictions constitutive in society involving class, race, gender, sexuality, and the mode of production that her critique emerged. Thus, education was not about simply political indoctrination—which would amount to the loss of critical thinking—but rather about a concerted examination of how the formal freedoms of late capitalism produce irreconcilable tensions.

Third, as a teacher, Davis was active in the classroom but also outside the classroom, engaged in political rallies against oppression. Thus education as activism began to blur lines between the university and the street, expanding the notion of education beyond the constrictions of “schooling” as an institutional state apparatus. As opposed to Plato, who founded the university as a place of seclusion and isolation, Davis thus returned to the Socratic model in which the university was located in the streets of the polis and the educator was a public intellectual. Such a move is risky—Davis lost her job at UCLA and Marcuse, who likewise sided with students in acts of civil disobedience, was heavily criticized and under constant attack by the right (Kellner 2005).

Yet a central tenet of education for Marcuse was an ethical commitment to critical theory and transformative practice that linked theory and practice, education and social progress. Moving toward a discussion of Marcuse’s prescriptions for reschooling, we find particularly important his notion that the transformation of society is predicated on the “education of the whole man [sic]” (see chapter 1 in this volume) or the realization of a multidimensional individual (see Kellner 1984). As with other educational theorists, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to the German romantics to John Dewey, Marcuse saw the need to address the interactive development of all aspects of the human from cultivation of the senses and body to critical rationality—a development soundly rejected by one-dimensional society and schooling.

In one-dimensional society, human uniqueness is nothing more than a reflex of the culture industry, and as such, being is defined by exchange value rather than use value. Here perhaps the quintessential figure of one-dimensional society is—interestingly enough—Homer’s Odysseus. As Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno write, to cheat the Cyclops Polyphemus, Odysseus changes his name to “No-Body” (2002, 53). As a precursor to bourgeois cunning, Odysseus saves the self precisely by reducing the self to an
empty “no-body.” The signifier “no-body” becomes in one-dimensional society the exchangeability of all individuals (devoid of uniqueness) in relation to industrial and educational standardization. As such, Marcuse’s vision of a multidimensional human being is a direct attempt to subvert the logic of self-annihilation within a one-dimensional world. This “new sensibility,” cultivated through Bildung, is not simply an abstract utopian vision that is detached from the historical conditions of the present. Rather, in advanced industrial society, already the outlines of such a sensibility were increasingly prevalent in youth culture, African American civil rights resistance, environmental activism, student movements, and so on.

This new sensibility rejected the false needs constructed by one-dimensional society and instead promoted needs of love, community, health, peace, and ecological perspectives rooted for Marcuse in a historically mediated human nature. Thus Marcuse’s education for liberation, involving liberation from oppression on the instinctual, political, and philosophical levels, was a call to base education on real individual and social needs and to develop educational practices that resist the violence and aggression of the established society. For Marcuse, teachers and educational institutions have to “educate men and women who are incapable of tolerating what is going on, who have really learned what is going on, has always been going on, and why, and who are educated to resist and to fight for a new way of life” (see chapter 1 in this volume). As such, intolerance toward an intolerable system of violence, destruction, and exploitation must be the key motivating factor behind reschooling society.

This gesture is as controversial today as it was when Marcuse wrote it. For instance, Marcuse’s theory of education is particularly radical in that education must not simply cultivate either a new desire for freedom (and thus function on the level of the symbolic) or democratic habits (as in Dewey’s pragmatism), but rather a “new sensibility” and “libidinal rationality” grounded in “new biological needs.” Here Marcuse might be critiqued as falling prey to a Heideggerian notion of authenticity or exposed to a postmodern critique of essentialism (who decides which are considered “authentic needs,” anyway?). Even if Marcuse’s notion of an “educational dictatorship” (1965) might have been democratically oriented and thus opposed to a Platonic vision, he nevertheless did not adequately theorize authority, leaving him open to many critiques from the right and the left. Yet at the same time, Marcuse’s challenge remains highly provocative in the sense that education must function to uncover how it is that one-dimensional societal norms and values penetrate the most “natural” aspects of being: the human body and its needs. Such an emphasis enables us to rethink a classic philosophical war of positions between Michel Foucault and Marcuse. Although not seeing eye to eye on the feasi-
bility of a Great Refusal, Marcuse’s emphasis on the biological level of being could be seen as a new starting point for analyzing a particularly Freudian-Marxist conceptualization of what Foucault referred to as biopolitics, or politics concerned with the regulation and survival of life itself (see Lewis, chapter 3 in this volume). Thus the Great Refusal that Marcuse advocated truly deserves its name, for the grounds for constructing a multidimensional human are the grounds most resistive to educational transformation as Bildung.

Reschooling must work on all aspects of curriculum design, pedagogical enactment, and educational evaluation. To begin, the humanities should be valued as much as the sciences in order to develop a full notion of human experience. Art, for instance, cultivates the senses, the imagination, and the axiological aspect of reason—fostering a robust notion of Bildung. Aesthetic practice holds open the broken promise of a happiness beyond affirmative culture. As Marcuse repeatedly emphasized, aesthetic beauty is a Great Refusal of one-dimensional society, affirmative culture, and the commodified world of capitalism. In an interview with Richard Kearney, Marcuse succinctly summarizes his notion of aesthetic education: “(1) to negate our present society, (2) to anticipate the trends of future society, (3) to criticize destructive or alienating trends, and (4) to suggest ‘images’ of creative and unalienating ones” (Kellner 2006, 228). Art gives form to a new reality principle beyond the limits of the one-dimensional performance principle by anticipating a certain form of “poetic justice” (Marcuse 1969, 43), in which reality is both indicted for its crimes and redeemed through imaginative reconstruction. Beauty and the aesthetic dimension, in other words, have a radical if not revolutionary function, fostering the development of real, vital, and sensual needs and inspiring action that transcends the present condition.

A key to understanding Marcuse’s aesthetic theory is that the truth of art lies in its form not in its specific content. Thus art liberates the senses from the given by creating new aesthetic forms of representation, not through overtly political content. For Marcuse, a cubist painting of a still life is just as political as a photograph of a union strike, because it allows another way of seeing a fragmented and multifaceted world. In fact, it is the autonomy of the cubist still life that for Marcuse reveals art’s most political function, in that it radicalizes perception, promoting an alternative vision of reality rather than just conveying a political message. “In this sense,” Marcuse writes, “art is ‘art for art’s sake’ inasmuch as the aesthetic form reveals tabooed and repressed dimensions of reality: aspects of liberation” (1978, 19).

The withdrawal of art from taking ideological sides represents art’s ultimate refusal of the administered and affluent society, expressing a total form of emancipation that, in its political equivalent, would necessitate revolution. While we might be critical of Marcuse’s aesthetic formalism here, he does
provide an important reminder that art, even at its most abstract, does promote the cultivation of new aesthetic sensibilities that at their roots serve as political protest. Love of nature, for instance, can promote ecological vision and action; love for people and sympathy for the oppressed can promote political struggle; and revulsion against brutal repression in the name of beauty can promote hopes and struggles for a more just and peaceful world. In our current age of standardization in schools and the cutting of arts-based education programs and the humanities, Marcuse’s emphasis on the connections between aesthetics, critical thinking, and transformative practice is more pressing than ever.

Political history should be an important component to Marcuse’s reconstructed humanities curriculum. In Marcuse’s critical classroom, students would be encouraged to research the history of global struggles against exploitation. Rather than a history from above, this would be a history from below: a history of the struggles of the oppressed. Thus a counterhistory to imperial domination should be taught—a history that moves the margins to the center and in the process gives possible models for future forms of political dissent. This history should include not simply class struggle (as in a classical Marxian perspective) but also new and emergent forms of struggle including antipatriarchal and antiracist resistance. (For a further development of Marcuse’s theory of racism and race see Calderón, chapter 9 in this volume.) Furthermore, education as an analysis of the vast history of exploitation, domination, and oppression emerging from within the modernist project of enlightenment and industrialization have to be articulated together, their underlying similarities emphasized, in order to build a coherent counterhegemonic bloc united in the struggle for freedom.

Furthermore, science should be rethought in relation to human needs and the social good. Rather than simply commodifying science in the interests of corporations, technical education has to become politically oriented toward emancipation. A new science and technology for Marcuse would have to begin by “insist[ing] on the liberation of science from its abuse for exploitation, destruction, and domination” (see chapter 2 in this volume). Thus instead of denouncing science and its insights tout court, Marcuse emphasized the invaluable modality that science offered for understanding reality, one that should be at the forefront of any educational project working toward freedom. He explained in a speech on the university in advanced society given at Berkeley that “we are empiricists. . . . We want to learn the facts and how to interpret them. But we want to learn all the facts, especially those usually suppressed or obscured. In short, we want to learn more, not less. We don’t want to destroy the established institutions of learning but we want to rebuild them” (see chapter 2 in this volume).
This qualitative transformation of the facts and knowledge produced in universities is an important aspect of Marcuse’s philosophy of education and points to the high degree in which science and technology not only shape our social and cultural lives but also the objective historical environments from which they are born. Marcuse never wavered in his view that science and technology provide the potential to abolish human toil and scarcity. Indeed, in his One-Dimensional Man, widely considered his most pessimistic work, Marcuse suggests that an alternative society should begin with an emancipatory reconstruction of science and technology. In the last section of One-Dimensional Man, “The Chance of the Alternatives,” Marcuse in fact points to the need for a transformation of human values with science and technology, which was a theme that remained central to his work. Developing techniques of liberation with human technologies as opposed to techniques of destruction and domination thus was one of Marcuse’s salient concerns. As such, Marcuse’s particular reconfiguration of Bildung is not located solely through the humanities (nor are the humanities necessarily given priority), but instead contains within it a strong vision of a philosophy of liberation dialectically interconnected with aesthetics, politics, and history.

This aspect of Marcuse’s curricular design can perhaps be better understood when we set it in relation to that of another well-known philosopher of education who developed a similar critique of scientific knowledge: John Dewey. Although Dewey was dismissed by many members of the Frankfurt School for subordinating philosophy to pragmatic problem-solving (Horkheimer 1993, 195), his critique of industrialized scientific thought and practice and its relation to traditional educational practices is one that articulates with Marcuse’s and thus helps set his critique of one-dimensional education in relation to the history of U.S. educational reform. Moreover, by placing Marcuse’s educational theory of knowledge in relation to Dewey’s, the link between scientific knowledge and the development of individuals in environments of learning can be illuminated.

For Dewey (1915), standardized knowledge was largely attributable to industrial capitalism’s influence on the organization and content of education. Industrial models of education signaled to Dewey a strengthening of antidemocratic knowledge that was increasingly shaping the dominant educational model in the United States, further distorting the emancipatory potential of liberalism that he sought to rehabilitate. Industrial science’s effect on school curricula was extremely troubling for Dewey because it was contradictory to his holistic theory of knowledge, which required constant progressive engagement with society and culture leading to greater human freedom and a more educated citizenry.
Marcuse’s theory of one-dimensional education, with Dewey’s critique of industrial education in view, is one that critically assesses the growth and advancement of standardized models of education in technological society. Recent trends in education such as high-stakes testing can be understood as a new stage of one-dimensionality within the educational terrain of the United States. However, one-dimensional education also suggests a further erosion of what Dewey saw as liberalism’s dual crises in the twentieth century: an overemphasis on economic individualism and the failure to see how this structures the organization of social and cultural totality. Thus,

the meaning of their exercise in connection with the cultural resources of civilization, in such matters as companionship, science and art, is all but ignored. It is at this last point in particular that the crisis of liberalism and the need for reconsideration of it in terms of the genuine liberation of individuals are most evident. The enormous exaggeration of material and materialistic economics that now prevails at the expense of cultural values, is not itself the result of earlier liberalism. (1915, 46)

Marcuse’s theory of education and knowledge, in contrast to Dewey’s project to reconstruct liberalism through democratic education, offers a powerful theoretical framework in which to view the production of knowledge and the individual in an age of increased educational standardization. While not seeing liberalism as a desirable political position because of its intrinsic relation to the bourgeois individual and its role in legitimating capitalism and imperialism (Marcuse 1968a), Marcuse’s critical theory of education challenges us to rethink democratic education in a time when even fewer spaces for critical distance and alternatives exist. In remaining faithful to Marcuse’s dialectical analysis of society and culture and Dewey’s critique of industrialized schooling, we are challenged to assess the ways in which we can re-vision education with greater material and scientific gains potentially at its disposal.9

In sum, all academic subjects need to be restructured toward democratic ends: Science cannot be simply instrumental knowledge and action, but must incorporate into its conception and practice a notion of the public good; history should include history of oppression and resistance; sociology should produce knowledge useful to the oppressed; and economics in the Marcusian vision would include a political dimension beyond simple mathematical calculation of the markets. This orientation is not a rejection of the objectivity of education. Rather it is a rejection of the false neutrality supporting objectivity. Such neutrality merely masks the values of one-dimensional society underlying the objectivity of the academy (even the objectivity of the “hard sciences”). Here Marcuse would advocate a “strong objectivity” (Harding 1998) that is objective precisely because it recognizes the political nature of all
knowledge systems and that this political dimension is not so much a stumbling block as it is a source for new political and scientific discovery. Because Marcuse focused explicitly on academic subject matter, perhaps we could argue that in many ways he provides revolutionary content while Paulo Freire (1970) provides the particular educational form (dialogic and problem posing) for constructing a pedagogy that fights for freedom, transforms students into active participants in the production of knowledge, problematizes notions of educational neutrality, and emphasizes critical consciousness-raising and social transformation and activism.

The curriculum must also cultivate critical capacities to locate reactionary and fascist tendencies within current political trends—an educational ethic that links Marcuse closely with Adorno’s own anti-fascist model of education (Giroux 2004b). These tendencies include insurgent racism, nationalism, imperialism, militarism, and increases in societal violence and aggression. Thinking against escalating fascism and imperialism is a form of thinking critically and calling into question all seemingly “natural” or normative distinctions between what is considered good or bad by societal standards. In other words, the political economy of societal norms and their historical conditioning should be emphasized. This is for Marcuse more than simply peeling away layers of lies found in political propaganda (although this is certainly a major component). As he once wrote, “The Orwellian language is not only a blatant lying contradiction, it is also expressive of the facts. We terminate the war in Indo-China by extending it. We withdraw while invading... It seems to me that here we have, strange as it may seem, the linguistic expression of the real contradictions of capitalism today: it is simply correct that this society can have peace only by preparing for war or even by waging war” (Kellner 2005, 142). That is, the falseness of such statements is a true representation of the falseness of the whole of society, of its inherently contradictory and destructive reality.

Thus dialectical thinking as against fascist one-dimensionality includes both an analysis of political disinformation but also—at the higher level of systemic critique—an analysis of how these lies are themselves the truth of one-dimensional society. The political unconscious, in other words, is not hidden behind a false screen but rather is hidden in plain sight in a language that has absorbed into its very form its own opposition (Marcuse 1964, 90). As such, Marcuse’s educational mandate to combat fascism is also a search for a language of negation capable of articulating this critique in the first place. Such a language is not simply reducible to an academic language. Rather, Marcuse finds resources for this counterlanguage in youth culture and in the practices of his students (recall his relationship to Angela Davis and the New Left cited earlier).
Overall, Marcuse’s radicalized educational curriculum could be seen as a form of standards without the instrumental logic of standardization. Stated differently, Marcuse argues for a normative position based on enhancing political freedoms and democratic sensibilities rather than on military domination and capitalist profiteering. Consequently, Marcuse is not politicizing the curriculum, but rather demonstrating the inherently political nature of teaching and learning.

Education and teaching have to be infused with an existential component: the need to commit to social struggle. Marcuse moves from cognition and sensual development toward ethical development, and it is with this move that his theory is perhaps most controversial, considering the clear rejection of ethics in our instrumental and one-dimensional society. As Horkheimer and Adorno argue in Dialectic of Enlightenment (2002), enlightenment has become an instrumental form of reason detached from ethical questions concerning the ends of technological development. As such, Marcuse’s existential move toward the choice to fight for freedom against the false needs of one-dimensional society strikes at the very heart of the dialectic of enlightenment itself. The ability to think the negative has to become a form of action that moves toward a transformation of social relations through activism on multiple interconnected fronts.

Progressive and socially transformative education thus helps prepare students to confront and act against injustice. Civil disobedience demands that what society deems “good” be properly negated as what is in fact “bad” in relation to democracy and personal liberation. Marcuse warns, “True, this kind of education may well reduce the protective barriers which separate the classroom from the reality outside. It may promote civil disobedience. It may even be considered ‘undemocratic’ in terms of the established democracy” (see chapter 1 in this volume). Civil disobedience can include many forms. For instance, Marcuse continually emphasizes that students should take their education into their own hands and demand that the curriculum change to meet the needs of the “new sensibility.” Just as workers must take control of the means of production, so too for Marcuse must students and teachers take control of the means of intellectual production: the universities.

Yet in a speech given at the Immaculate Heart College in 1970, Marcuse was clear that his embrace of countereducation is not simply “learn when you want to learn” or “learn what you want to learn,” as in alternative educational experiments such as Summerhill. Rather, reschooling (or, as the case might be, student and teacher co-constructed countereducation) should be concentrated on political liberation, sensual development, and critical reason geared toward overcoming the contradictions of the present. Thus “anarchy” is not an educational virtue for Marcuse. In fact, with John Dewey (1938), Marcuse would argue that self-sublimating discipline is necessary for educational freedom.
Stated simply, Marcuse’s educational philosophy is one of health against sickness. Yet this health cannot be a form of therapy administered within the norms of one-dimensional society. Here a parallel between Marcuse’s critique of psychoanalytic therapy and his critique of one-dimensional schooling becomes clear. In his analysis of psychoanalytic therapy Marcuse argued, “Therapy aims at curing the individual so that he [sic] can continue to function as part of a sick civilization without surrendering to it altogether. . . . Therapy is a course in resignation” (1955, 245–46). In this quotation, “health” is conformity to the standards of a sick society and the rebellious claim to happiness is denuded of its transformative potentials. The theory of psychoanalysis, on the other hand, still contains within it a strong social critique through which the sickness of the individual is seen as an allegory for the sickness of society as a whole. In the realm of theory, psychoanalysis suggests that the only way to realize happiness or health is precisely to rebel against the status quo, which denies such potentials precisely by realizing them in distorted forms via the culture industry.

Returning now to the theme of education, we can see that for Marcuse schooling is precisely the tool for passing social sickness down through the generations. He equates education with indoctrination into a one-dimensional world that leaves no room for the revolutionary possibilities of negation. Here knowledge becomes simply “that which is,” and to be educated is to be reduced to conformity to standards of knowledge production and social adjustment. Thus just as health becomes a sickness in the sphere of therapy, so too knowledge becomes ignorance in the sphere of one-dimensional schooling; for instrumental knowledge production and consumption reduce reason to rationalization, thereby erasing the remainder of reason’s capacity to project an alternative to the current life-world of one-dimensionality. If the Enlightenment has turned into myth, as Horkheimer and Adorno once argued, then so too has Bildung under one-dimensional society turned into its opposite. In this context, a Marcusian educational philosophy would reclaim education from the contradictions of the welfare/warfare state and promote a pedagogy of health as opposed to a pedagogy of destruction and death, even if such health demands a certain form of social death (see Cho, chapter 4 in this volume).

**MARCUSE’S CHALLENGES TO EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE ESSAYS IN THIS COLLECTION**

The essays collected here are an attempt to further think through Marcuse’s educational challenge against a pathological one-dimensional system of schooling, and in turn to challenge Marcusian thought in light of new social conditions. Tyson Lewis opens with a study of the relevance of Marcuse to
contemporary debates concerning biopolitics. Arguing that Marcuse’s theory of play is an “anatomo-practice” counter to the dominance of state biopower, Lewis positions Marcuse as a necessary corollary to the biopolitical theory of Giorgio Agamben. The goal here is to read Agamben’s theory of play and experience alongside of Marcuse’s own reflections on play to understand the biopolitics of education in the present.

K. Daniel Cho (chapter 4) again starts with Marcuse’s emphasis on the politics of life, his rethinking of Freud, and the centrality of the Great Refusal. Reading Marcuse through the lens of Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis, Cho suggests that a radical practice of Marcuse’s Great Refusal in the arena of pedagogy and social action would involve a certain form of symbolic rupturing or social disidentification. Underlining the affinities between Marcuse’s and Lacan’s respective “return to Freud,” Cho demonstrates Marcuse’s continued influence and legacy through a surprising reversal wherein life can only be saved through a symbolic death.

Rounding out a series of papers concerning what we are calling Marcuse’s biopolitics, Richard Kahn applies Marcuse’s theories to develop radical critiques of environmental social movements that Kahn claims are a central pedagogical force in today’s society. Kahn concludes that Marcuse is a quintessential ecological theorist, whose utopian conception of nature extends far beyond more liberal and conservative versions offered by many mainstream environmentalists, that Marcuse himself is fundamentally linked to the more militant origins of U.S. environmentalism in the 1960s, and that he offers a version of pedagogy as politics that is useful for understanding the educational role currently being played by revolutionary groups such as the Earth Liberation Front.

Shifting from the question of life to that of imagination, Richard Van Heer­tum emphasizes Marcuse’s motif of utopia and hope, bringing his thought together in the orbit of Ernst Bloch and Paulo Freire. For Van Heertum, critical pedagogy needs to combine critique with hope; theorists like Marcuse and Bloch provide productive concepts of hope, linking the individual with community, desire with reconciliation, while recognizing the traces in everyday culture of deeper, utopian desire. He argues that Marcuse’s conception of aesthetic education can help enrich critical pedagogy, offering students tools to step outside the dominant discourse and rationality and contemplate a different world.

For Tammy Shel, Marcuse’s theory of utopia must be articulated through an ethical practice of caring for it to become a radical practice of freedom. Shel stresses how Marcuse’s thought can be used to critique the quantitative model of educational research and provides outlines of a pedagogy of caring, which she believes will help provide preconditions for a genuinely nonre-
pressive and loving civilization. In particular, Shel sees caring as the critical pedagogical ethic enabling us to move from a one-dimensional classroom toward a multidimensional classroom. Care is for Shel related to Marcuse’s theory of intolerance rather than tolerance, in that it critiques the status quo in relation to the real, sensual need for community. Thus the pedagogical literature on caring fills in the missing yet intimated educational ethic in Marcuse’s work, while at the same time Marcuse brings to the literature on caring a grounding in a critical theory of society.

Also drawing on Marcuse’s criticisms of technological fetishism and quantitative reason, Clayton Pierce develops a dialectical theory of technique and education. He then articulates Marcuse’s challenge with Bruno Latour’s recent work in the field of science studies. His argument is that both of these theorists’ attempts to democratize science and technology pivot on a transvaluation between humans, current manifestations of science and technology, and nonhumans. In the end, a synthetic approach that combines the strengths of Marcuse and Latour is needed to overcome one-sided technophilic or technophobic pedagogies for a more democratic education.

Also arguing for a synthetic approach that crosses disciplinary and theoretical boundaries, Dolores Calderón demonstrates how Marcuse’s concepts of one-dimensionality and the Great Refusal can be linked with an interrogation of whiteness in Critical Race Theory. Calderón argues that in the context of the United States, the one-dimensionality that Marcuse condemns in *One-Dimensional Man* is captured by the critical notion of whiteness, which posits that whiteness in the context of white supremacy is the ideological manifestation of capitalism in the United States. The values Marcuse wants to break with or “refuse” in *An Essay on Liberation* can be more concretely captured if it is made clear that the ideology of whiteness represents the normative order of advanced industrial society that should be refused. In addition, for Marcuse’s Great Refusal to take place, it follows that society must break and rupture the ideology of whiteness and white supremacy.

For a panel on critical theory presented at the American Educational Research Association, we coproduced a graduate seminar at UCLA on “Origins of Critical Pedagogy,” which inquired into the relevance of Marx, Lukács, Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, and Marcuse in transforming contemporary education and society. We have included here two papers from that seminar, which use Marcuse to provide critique of the disciplines of information science and the law school. Ajit Pyati shows how Marcuse can be utilized to present a radical critique of his discipline. Pyati notes that critical theory is generally ignored in discussions of library and information science, and that Marcuse’s critique of technological rationality can provide a more vigorous critical perspective on information studies and the information society than
many competing perspectives. In the same spirit, Saru Matambanadzo, a graduate student in women’s studies at UCLA, shows how Marcusian perspectives can provide a sharp critique of law school and legal studies. Reflecting on her experiences at Harvard Law School, Matambanadzo finds Marcuse’s concept of one-dimensionality appropriate in explicating the limitations of legal education in the United States.

We end the collection with two essays by noted Marcusian scholar Charles Reitz, whose first contribution is titled “Marcuse and the New Culture Wars: Campus Codes, Hate Speech, and the Critique of Pure Tolerance.” Here Reitz engages Marcuse’s most controversial proclamations on education in the 1960s and 1970s. As we noted above in this introduction, Marcuse was later accused by rightwing critics of instigating attacks on conservative views of race, sexuality, gender, and other hot-button issues of the day. Reitz sorts out Marcuse’s positions on these issues and provides a critique of conservative attacks, which often distort his views. Finally, we conclude with Reitz’s overview of Marcuse’s challenge to education, which breaks new ground on a number of theoretical and political fronts, including an analysis of the relationship between Marcuse’s educational philosophy and his early work as Martin Heidegger’s student.

Through these varied interventions, Marcuse’s challenge to education appears as a dialectical vision that combines radical critique of the existing system with projection of emancipatory alternatives. This follows the two poles of the Marcusian dialectic between domination and emancipation. Indeed, some of the papers collected here focus on critique, others on alternative educational praxis and pedagogy, with many combining these poles and in some cases proposing reconstruction of Marcuse’s thought. Together, they show how the work of Marcuse continues to challenge the institutions and practices of the contemporary education establishment while providing compelling alternatives.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Fredric Jameson’s 1996 defense of Theodor Adorno as a philosopher who anticipates postmodernism and provides important perspectives on global capitalism, or the renewed and invigorated interest in Walter Benjamin (Agamben 1998; Žižek 2000).


3. One could also argue that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s provocative and widely discussed theory of empire and its resistive corollary, multitude, share many of Marcuse’s ideas on revolutionary struggle in an era when the “revolutionary subject” has fallen into question. Perhaps Marcuse’s Essay on Liberation best illustrates this relation in its attempt to locate sites of resistance against a growing militaristic
form of global capitalism in the colonial margins, the global poor, communities of
color, and students in advanced industrialized nations. Though different from Hardt
and Negri’s autonomous Marxist orientation, Marcuse’s de-centering of the working
class for a broader notion of revolutionary actors can certainly be seen in Hardt and
Negri’s expansive notion of the revolutionary poor (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004).

4. For a critique of Kors and Silverglate, see Reitz (2006).

5. The German concept of Bildung is one that is also influenced by the ancient
Greek notion of paideia. Paideia as a concept and historical idea emphasizes the im-
portance of education as a general cultural spirit that strives to expand and enrich hu-
manity’s knowledge in a way that promotes growth and rational modes of life. See
Werner Jaeger’s three-volume work Paideia (1939).

6. The happy consciousness is a concept that Marcuse developed by recalibrating
Hegel’s famous notion of the unhappy consciousness. In Hegel’s Phenomenology of
Spirit, the unhappy consciousness is a distinct phase of thought that develops within
the odyssey of human consciousness in history where human identity is paralyzed
through its own growth and education. Despite achieving a new level of knowledge
of reality, the unhappy consciousness fails to achieve a greater, reconciliatory rela-
tionship with reality. Drawing on Hegel’s construct of the unhappy consciousness,
Marcuse’s happy consciousness retains the same symptom of paralysis of educational
striving yet with an important difference: Instead of a sense of incompleteness, the
happy consciousness is a pacified mode of thought that is content with its material and
historical situation.

7. For critical analyses of the Nation at Risk and No Child Left Behind programs,


10. For those who think that any discussion of fascism is antiquated or anachronis-
tic, it is important to note how critical theorists in education, especially Henry Giroux
(2004a), are returning to an analysis of fascism to describe current U.S. politics.

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Beiser, F. 2004. A romantic education: The concept of Bildung in early German ro-
Education is the teaching and learning of knowledge considered necessary for the protection and enhancement of human life. General education is a very recent concept. Previously, education was restricted to the ruling class because:

a) the underlying population could not and should not be freed from procuring the necessities of life, that is, time to get educated;

b) the ruled classes were supposed to be “protected” and consoled by the ruling classes.

Education is not general even today. And in fact it is still largely an upper class privilege because educational inequality is an expression of social inequality. The restrictions on education testify to the “subversive” element in education. Knowledge, intelligence, reason are catalysts of social change.
They lead to the projection of the possibilities of a “better” order and the violation of socially useful taboos and illusions.

Therefore, education is suspect, and, most interesting, this distrust, this fear of reason, intelligence, and education has been instilled into the underlying population. There is resentment against those “who know better” and therefore could change conditions which, however, don’t change. An identification is made with the masters, which protects their dominion. Intellectuals are considered dangerous. Anti-intellectualism serves as revenge against oppression and as instrument and acceptance of oppression: better not to know too much.

This dual campaign against the intelligentsia and (the spread of) its knowledge—from below and from above—has a long history: the New Testament, the medieval Church, Napoleon versus the “Ideologues,” the English gentry, the populist movements, and the Labor Movement against the students! In spite of this dual opposition, the tendency toward general education gains momentum on a very material basis: the need of industrial society to increase the supply of skilled workers and employees, especially the need for scientists, technicians, etc. for the efficient development of the productive forces and their apparatus, and, more recently, the need for psychologists and sociologists for analyzing and projecting and stimulating economic and political demand.

The dialectic of education in this society involved an increasing dependence on education, unrestricted knowledge in the competitive economic process, and in the steering of the political process; and, at the same time, an increasing need to “contain” knowledge and reason within the conceptual and value universe of the established society and its improvement and growth in order to protect this society against radical change. The result: an emphasis on professional, vocational training, and a decline of the “humanities,” of transcendent, critical thought.

This dialectic is reflected in the historical development of the social sciences. The birth of sociology in the period of the “democratic revolution,” was first as an intellectual weapon in the struggle against the Ancien Régime for the new bourgeoisie: Rousseau, Holbach, the Encyclopédie. After the consolidation of the bourgeois revolution, it took the program of a rational, scientific organization of the new society: Saint Simon. It began to conflict with the vested interests of the new ruling classes and its fight against the growing opposition from below—the turn to socialism: the School of Saint-Simon. Consequently, it split into two trends:

a) Radically transcendent: utopian and scientific socialism;
Now to the present situation. The purpose of the historical sketch is to point to the internal political factor in education, derived from the transcendent character of reason—not metaphysical but empirical transcendence to the real possibilities of protecting and enhancing life, human freedom, which meant, and still means, social, political transcendence beyond the established culture.

The established culture today seems geared to the distortion and destruction of life rather than the opposite, geared to the struggle against liberation rather than to freedom. For, and here is the novel situation, we have learned that there can be no freedom in a society permeated with oppression, brutality, hypocrisy, and aggression no matter how free the choices within this society, no matter how free the elections within this society, and no matter how far away the victims.

To create the subjective conditions for a free society, it is no longer sufficient to educate individuals to perform more or less happily the functions they are supposed to perform in this society, or, to extend this “vocational” education to the “masses.” Rather, a new type of man is necessary, to educate men and women who are incapable of tolerating what is going on, who have really learned what is going on, has always been going on, and why, and who are educated to resist and to fight for a new way of life.

By its own inner dynamic, education thus leads beyond the classroom, beyond the university, into the political dimension, and into the moral, instinctual dimension. Education of the whole man, changing his nature! And in both these extensions—into the political and the moral—the driving power is the same: the application of knowledge to the improvement of the human condition, and, the liberation of the mind, and of the body, from aggressive and repressive needs. This truism may turn out to be a dangerous truth if it is really translated into operational terms—terms that are not necessarily identical with those of the Establishment but may well define action and behavior patterns incompatible with those of the Establishment.

Education today takes place in a society which intensifies the social ambivalence of education to the breaking point. On the one hand, their mutual dependence: society depends on education, education on financial support from the government, Foundations, etc. Its value: education for the Establishment. On the other hand, the transcendent force of knowledge beyond the Establishment. Its value: education for a better, different society against the Establishment.

The two conflicting values are becoming irreconcilable to the degree to which the society develops into a Welfare-Warfare State with total mobilization of the people, standardization of thought, and intensified repression of the opposition which aims to break with the established system. The two parties are of very unequal strength. The danger is that the educational establishment...
will be absorbed by the larger Establishment, and a whole generation will be educated in the knowledge and goals of a sick society, permeated with aggression, violence, hypocrisy, and indifference.

This education in sickness takes place largely against the will and intent of the educators (and this is not a conspiracy!). It takes place in the clean, clear medium of objectivity, open-mindedness, discussion, and toleration. I believe that, at least in the social and political sciences, this objectivity and neutrality are spurious, deceptive. It is the objectivity of methods, terms, standards which remain within the framework of the established culture, which do not question this culture itself. But science must question this culture itself in as much as science is concerned with the history of man, and this history is still the struggle between master and slave, rich and poor, aggressor and defender. We cannot be “neutral,” value-free in this struggle, because there is no neutrality vis-à-vis liberation and repression, quality and exploitation, Eros and Thanatos. Learning and teaching must place themselves in the service of the former against the latter.

These are the limits of toleration—the objective, historical limits of toleration! Toleration must be, but is not enough! And the tolerance we practice is a false, deceptive tolerance which causes the illusion of equality and freedom, while operating within a structure of a priori discrimination, unequal treatment, and unequal effect. The voice of the Establishment is heard day and night over the media of mass communication—the program as well as commercials, information as well as advertisement—and is heard through the machine of each of the two parties. The voice of the radical opposition is sometimes heard [but] through no machine. It has no promising jobs to give, no money to buy adherents and friends.

Within this structure of basic inequality, the radical opposition can be tolerated up to the point where it tries to break through the limits of its weakness, through the illusion of democracy, and then it meets the reality of democracy, as the police, the National Guard, and the courts. It is institutionalized violence against civil disobedience. To be sure, violence must be punished, Law and Order must be, and Law and Order has the legitimate monopoly on violence, institutionalized violence. This legitimate violence confronts any action by the opposition which transcends the limits set by, and enforced by established Law and Order, i.e., any opposition which transcends the actual (though not ideological) universe of the existing society, that is, radical change.

Question: does this basic fact not make an established social system self-perpetuating? And does it not make radical change identical with civil disobedience illegal, illegitimate change? Not in a democracy, in which popular sovereignty, by majority vote, can legitimatize radical change, and this ma-
Majority can freely constitute and renew itself through discussion, education, persuasion, etc. Has such a democracy ever existed? And what are the preconditions for such a democracy?

[These preconditions would be:] Entirely free development of “public opinion,” on the basis of generally available full information and equal access to the means of communication, which, in turns, presupposes the absence of monopolistic controls in the society at large! Where these conditions do not prevail, the established majority tends to be self-perpetuating, though changeable and shifting within the Establishment. Then, the democratic process is blocked in democratic forms, and the objectivity, neutrality, and tolerance of the democratic society tend to perpetuate the status quo. To create the democratic basis, to restore the historical balance, means to lower the built-in barrier against social change.

And this involves partisanship for the movements of change for the opposition, which has the historical chance for preparing the ground for a better, more humane society. And this opposition will also affect the university. It will lead to a radicalization of education, to the opening of the closed, and protected, academic universe: a political education. It is a counter-political-ization, counter-attack, that is, defense against the oppressive power of an increasingly aggressive and brutal system, in which education for life tends to become education for death.

The meaning for the university is to struggle for the exclusion, from the campus, of all research and teaching financed by government agencies or Foundations that serve the war effort, including outer space programs; the exclusion of all recruitment for the armed forces and industries serving the war effort; the exclusion of speakers defending and propagandizing racist, imperialist, exploitative movements and policies. There should be no “panel discussions” with “the other side” holding forth: there is no “other side”! It should struggle for the radical reorientation of the curriculum: the strengthening of the Humanities as against the “hard” sciences, including the “hard” social sciences. There should be the intensive teaching and research of the critical, radical movements and theories in history, literature, philosophy, including heretic and other persecuted movements, Marxism and the history of socialism, “utopian” theories (Fourier!), anarchism, and surrealism. And in contrast, there should be the critical analysis of fascism, imperialism, and the like. In one word: education for discriminating tolerance, that is, the non-toleration of demonstrable aggressive and destructive movements.

In the age of technological mass domination, the traditional distinction between speech and action becomes inadequate to the degree to which speech is effective propaganda, playing on the aggressive and destructive impulses of man, and anesthetizing him against brutality and deception. The transition
from propaganda to action, word to behavior, is immediate and constant. Thus, the threat to our life must be met not only at the stage of action, but already at the stage of speech, of propaganda, of thought!

The main objections to these ideas are that 1) an “objective” distinction between, regressive and progressive, destructive and constructive, good and bad in terms of human progress is impossible; and that 2) therefore, discrimination would be administered by the establishment of a new authoritarian and totalitarian power structure, dominating the entire society. Regarding the first objection, in every given historical situation, the basic tendencies are discernable which operate in the society. Their analysis would show what would happen in the society if any one of the contesting tendencies would become predominant, that is, what would happen in terms of economic, political, and cultural development. Consequently—and this leads to the second objection—what would be involved would be the replacement of one administration by another one. Hopefully, one that is more intelligent, more open, and more willing to subordinate particular vested interests to the global interest of humanity.

“Objective distinction” means that the radical decision is not a matter of “politics of conscience,” not the personal individual conscience. Since Freud, we know conscience as super-ego is a special force and factor. In order to meet the threat, education must become partisan, that is, against oppression, militarization, and brutalization.

True, this kind of education may well reduce the protective barriers which separate the classroom from the reality outside. It may promote civil disobedience. It may even be considered “undemocratic” in terms of the established democracy if it goes beyond the self-perpetuating limits of persuasion and discussion. But democracy is not merely a system of established institutions and constitutions, which becomes an end-in-itself even if it no longer fulfills its end. Democracy is a form of government and society which is supposed to institutionalize the actual freedom and equality of man as man, and that means, not only “before the law,” but the abolition of domination and exploitation. In this sense, democracy is only to be created, and if its established form militates against the radical changes which would lead to such democracy, we must not be afraid of such changes.
How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer: that he cannot, without disgrace, be associated with it.

—Henry Thoreau

We can’t have education without revolution. We have tried peace education for one thousand nine hundred years. . . . Let us try revolution and see what it will do now.

—Helen Keller

It is true that we cannot change the goals of education without changing the society which sets these goals. But it is also true that we cannot wait for the revolution in order to become human beings, to eradicate sexism and racism in ourselves, to learn solidarity with the victims, to free ourselves from the cynicism and hypocrisy of the Established morality. In other words, the radical consciousness, and the vital need for radical change must emerge within the existing society and its institutions—there is no without!
The objective conditions are maturing. The economic and political base of US capitalism is progressively weakening. The productive forces are wasted and turned into forces of destruction. The society reproduces itself increasingly through unproductive labor. However, are the subjective conditions [for revolution maturing]? Revolutions are still made by human beings. Men and women who can no longer tolerate what this society is doing to them, whose minds and bodies rebel. And today, radical social change presupposes men and women who not only want production relations without exploitation—that is, a planned economy, the equal distribution of the social wealth—but also, a life that is no longer spent in making a living—that is, an end-in-itself, to be enjoyed in solidarity with other free human beings, and nature. This would be a total transformation, subverting not only the political economic institutions, but also the established hierarchy of values and needs, striving for a qualitatively different life in all dimensions, a different life-environment, a different Reality Principle. In other words, radical social change today would also presuppose radical change in the mental structure of the individuals, in their drives, needs, and values.

Now I suggest that such changes are actually going on, not only among the youth, intellectuals, etc., but among the dependent population as a whole. People are becoming aware of the fact that they don’t have to spend their life in deadly dehumanizing, machine-like performances in factories, offices, etc., that they don’t have to lie in a polluted environment, that society is rich enough to do away with the pressures and repressions imposed during the previous periods of scarcity. In short, faith in the necessity, in the basic values of capitalism is crumbling.

This weakening of social cohesion and integration, the emergence of a new consciousness, and of new needs incompatible with the system, emerged as a threatening political force on a global scale in the sixties. The rulers recognized the danger better than the rebels, and answered with the streamlining and scientification of repression (the period of counterrevolution). In this reactionary reorganization of monopoly capitalism, violent suppression is only the last resort. Otherwise, one relies on economic pressure and electronic controls. Great emphasis is given to education. Intellectual labor plays an increasing role in the social process of reproduction. The mind, which gains increasing use value, must be taken in hand. Even in its unconscious dimension, it must be deflected from the possibilities of liberation.

Briefly, some aspects of the management of the mind through education are: the liberal sublimation, that is, the “translation,” the conversion of real gut problems, gut actions into problems of method, research, and statistics. For example, the neutralized language and syntax of false consensus, the search for exact definitions, and research in what you already know. The in-
sistence on spurious objectivity, obscuring of the difference between true and false, right and wrong, by insisting on the “other side” of everything. And “the bias against ethics”: moral terms and values must remain outside the universe of the scholar!

Warning! This is not the relaxing of scholarship, not the reduction of learning, not the abandonment of the scientific attitude, but their redirection, their emancipation. After having gone through this mill, you easily believe, and introject, the two basic propositions which you are supposed to believe and introject: 1) that your frustration, indignation, alienation, etc. are really your own personal fault and problems that you yourselves have to be “cured” or to cure yourselves; and 2) that you don’t have the power to radically change things anyway. Both propositions are wrong, but readily tend to become self-validating hypotheses!

The first idea that the failure of the sixties is our own fault is in a sense correct, but the fault cannot be corrected by “turning inward,” withdrawing into oneself or some non-existing other world of meditation! Perhaps the opposite must be done . . .

The sweep of psychology today has been made into a powerful means of de-politization. It wants us to become sane in a sick society, to look for fulfillment in a society which denies fulfillment, by escaping from this society. The concern with our subjectivity, which remains a private affair, private emancipation, remains also self-defeating. The “identity” searched for (and perhaps found) on this way would still be one of alienation. The identity thus found would be spurious. Emancipation would become one huge Ego trip, where the Ego is lost already at the point of departure.

Why? Because today, our Ego (and Id) is constituted by the interplay between our innermost personal desires, needs, pleasures, pains, and the society which shapes (and takes care of them) in its own way. The point is that in the age of monopoly capital, society is no more only an external dimension, an outside of ourselves. We introject the atmosphere of decay and destruction, waste and misery, brutality and deception with every merchandize we buy, every program we watch, every pleasure we have, every trip we make (including the Ego trip). Our Ego—even, our unconscious—is shaped by these features of our society. Consequently, it wouldn’t do just to release our Ego or Id, to wallow in togetherness, emotions, and disappointments. We cannot effectively repress the “external,” the horrors of our society without becoming even more repressed!

However, the inward movement is ambivalent. There is, in Marxian theory, a long-standing trend to neglect the individual subject (after all, the agent of all action). Class-consciousness is mediated by individual consciousness, and without strong roots of protest in the individuals, no revolutionary masses! To
be sure, subversion within, the subjective emancipation from repressive needs, attitudes, and behavior patterns is determined by the objective conditions. But it is up to the individual to find in these given conditions the external and the internal means to change them. The conditions prevailing under monopoly capitalism make for a “grass root” strategy of small political groups, with gradual coordination on a larger scale. Similarly, the strategy of the individual change, the subversion of the conformist subjectivity, seems to call for a strategy of small groups that are political and psychological in one. Their work focused, not on a nice release, but on an autocritique of our psyche: learning to distinguish between behavior which reproduces in ourselves the Establishment (often in the guise of radicalism!), and behavior which is really emancipatory, that is, the striving for a morality of liberation which overcomes, in ourselves, the cynical and brutal morality of the Establishment. In short, it is the internal transformation of the psychological into the political, of therapy into political education.

Now the second proposition: that you are politically powerless, that you can’t change anything. See 1968! First, 1968 has changed things. Our society is not the same. There is a dual trend: the organization of the counterrevolution, and the internal weakening of social integration. Moreover, students played a decisive role in the civil rights movement, in the ending of the bombings in Cambodia, and in ending the war in Vietnam. And students have been in the forefront of radical opposition the world over!

Now for a few remarks on the possibilities of action, and passion, within the university (and the community). (They cannot be anything very spectacular: work under the counterrevolution does not permit adventure and play with revolution!) The restructuring of the university, and the new concept of learning and teaching will be the reintroduction of ethics, passion, “existential commitment and involvement,” into learning and teaching. There are situations in history where we become aware that there are higher things than the “scientific attitude,” the neutrality toward reality, the objective pose, especially when this neutrality and objectivity is spurious, that is, it is displayed within a social framework of domination and political control. In things that really decide our fate and that of our society, we can be neutral, objective, only if we abstract from the power structure which determines what is real. Again, there are no “two sides” to torture and concentration camps, to the burning and poisoning of the Vietnamese people, to Franco’s murderous regime.

The alternative is not a free-wheeling emotionalism, intolerance, but another concept and another practice of objectivity, another interpretation of facts, namely, in terms of the given possibilities to build a better society through radically changing the established one. We insist on the objectivity of this goal. The common interest of all people, not only the proletariat! We in-
sist on a scientific attitude when we insist on the liberation of science from its abuse for exploitation, destruction, and domination. We are empiricists (not purveyors of utopias). We want to learn the facts and how to interpret them. But we want to learn all the facts, especially those usually suppressed or obscured. In short, we want to learn more, not less. We don’t want to destroy the established institutions of learning but we want to rebuild them. Not deschool society, but reschool it.

To attain our goal, we need knowledge. It is still true that theory is the guide of radical practice. We need history because we need to know how it came about that civilization is what it is today: where it went wrong. And we need the history not only of the victors, but also of the victims. We need a sociology which can show us where the real power is that shapes the social structure. We need economics which are not “sublimated” to mathematics. We need science in order to reduce toil, pain, disease, and to restore nature. It is still to a great extent up to you to get such teaching and learning, to insist on the “missing courses” and persons, on class discussion and criticism, and the like.

And outside the university? “Community work,” based on grass roots discontent is easily ridiculed by the super-radicals as “social work” for the Establishment. But under the counterrevolution, and in the present situation of monopoly capitalism, what was formerly harmless becomes increasingly intolerable for the power structure. The space for concessions increasingly narrows! And there is still room for political activity. A resumption of the tradition of the sixties: boycotts, pickets, demonstrations against the brutal support of fascist regimes, the policy of soaking the poor, racism and sexism, and the destruction of our life environment. Demonstrations at the right time and on concrete issues!

And one last remark. In your political work, You work in the don’t deny what you are, don’t mask what you are! intellectual process of social reproduction. You are the workers in the material process of production. If the liberation of the working class can only be the task of the working class, the liberation of the intellectual workers can likewise only be their own task! Both movements must converge and cooperate, but before you establish unity with the workers, establish unity among yourselves! Suspend the interminable debates on what is Marxist, or Marxist-Leninist, or Trotskyist, or Maoist strategy. These debates have no relation to our reality! They counteract the most vital need: the establishment of a united front, the quantitative growth of the movement, until quantity turns into quality! Demonstrations on one or a couple of campuses won’t do. Demonstrations on a national level may well change national policy!

IT CAN STILL BE DONE. If you feel only despair, hopelessness, apathy, then, you have given in to Establishment propaganda. It is still up to you to deny this propaganda!
In education today we are faced with two extremes. On one hand we have the ritual of standardization. If Peter McLaren once argued that schooling is a ritual performance (1999), then we have seen the ascension of its secularized, bureaucratized form at last. Here the eternal return of endless testing drains education of its meaning, creating an intolerable redundancy. The true measure of ritual testing in the contemporary era has been the elimination of recess as well as many play-based classroom activities in the name of educational efficiency (Olfman 2003). On the other hand, we have theories of play such as that represented by A. S. Neill’s notorious Summerhill School (Neill 1960) in which play is the only worthwhile educational activity, or, in higher education, we see the rise of the postmodern “ludic” classroom where meaning and action seem equally deferred (Zavarzadeh and Morton 1994). But is the radical turn toward play really a solution to the eternal return of ritual testing in public education? It is my contention here that the split between play and ritual in education results in the loss of experience entirely. Drawing on the works of Giorgio Agamben and Herbert Marcuse, I argue that experience is located in the zone of indistinction between the two. In conclusion, I suggest that the question of play, ritual, and experience is ultimately a biopolitical question concerning the nature of human life, and of educational life more specifically. Because of the biopolitical dimension to the question of play, ritual, and experience, I will read Agamben and Marcuse together in order to understand how experience emerges from the gap that separates and joins play and ritual in the classroom.

In Agamben’s genealogy of biopolitics (politics concerned with the question of life and death), he cites both Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt as key figures: Foucault for his analytics of power and Arendt for providing the
(unarticulated) political horizon for this power in the form of totalitarianism. There is a missing third figure here, a figure whose very absence speaks to a missing component of Agamben’s own biopolitical project. I am thinking of Herbert Marcuse and his revolutionary reading of Freud. Interestingly, both Marcuse and Agamben position play as a central political concern, yet we could also argue that Marcuse’s articulation of play at its relation to multidimensional being is superior to Agamben’s own purely linguistic analysis. If, as Agamben argues, Arendt was never able to articulate her biopolitical theory of the human condition with her work on totalitarianism, then we can also argue that Agamben was unsuccessful in articulating his early theory of play with his later work concerning biopower as a power over life. The reason for this missed articulation is precisely the gap in his linguistic theory that would enable him to bridge the two projects. This gap concerns the existence of the body in play—a dimension explored in full by Marcuse. But, at the same time, Agamben enables us to correct a tendency in Marcuse to overemphasize play as a new human ontology. For Agamben, the possibility of a collapse of human “anthropopolitics” into homo ludens would amount to the end of history in a bad sense, ultimately signaling the end of the human world. As such, we must mediate the two positions in order to come to a new understanding of play that (a) radicalizes its biopolitical dimensions and (b) limits its encroachment onto experience.

PLAYING, CHILDHOOD, AND THE REINVENTION OF TRASH

In a fascinating chapter in his classic 1978 text Infancy and History, Agamben (2007) argues that play and ritual are two forms of human activity defined in relation to time. According to Agamben, “Ritual fixes and structures the calendar; play, on the other hand . . . changes and destroys it” (2007, 77). Play concerns itself with the opening up of time outside of the cyclic nature of the ritual. Nowhere is the historical nature of play more apparent than in the figure of the toy. Quoting Agamben: “The toy is what belonged—once, no longer—to the realm of the sacred or of the practical-economic. . . . For in the toy, as in no other site, can we grasp the temporality of history in its pure differential and qualitative value” (2007, 80). The toy, once removed from use or exchange value embodies temporality liberated from sacred or economic determinants. Thus children who play with toys are in a philosophical sense playing with time. The prime example of the toy is actually trash. According to Agamben, children are “humanity’s little scrap dealers,” preserving “profane objects and behaviors that have ceased to exist” (2007, 79). While this observation might at first sound rather ridiculous, other philosophers and so-
cial theorists have likewise observed the unique connections between children and refuse. For instance, famed utopian dreamer Charles Fourier imagined a world in which adults would never have to take care of garbage control. Recognizing the unique love of trash that children express, Fourier fancifully speculated that children should manage trash collection as a way to transform personal interest into socially useful labor. Walter Benjamin likewise noted that children are “irresistibly drawn by the detritus generated by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry,” through which they “bring together, in the artifact produced in play, materials of widely differing kinds in a new, intuitive relationship” (1986, 68–69). As with Agamben, the work of play is a transformative one akin to the work of bricolage, which unleashes new signifiers from the socially discarded husk of trash. This transformation ruptures the continuity between the mythic past and the present (synchronic fixity of ritual) by opening up the experience of time to the possibilities of the event (diachronic difference).

Here it might be useful to underline Agamben’s point with reference to two contemporary adult usages of trash that are significantly different from childish play. First, to recycle means to enter back into the cycle of utility. Instead of decaying, these objects emerge as full of possible uses and can be plugged back into the life world of the consumer. As such it is Marx’s “use value” that is rescued in recycling. The other popular adult pastime involving detritus is that of reclamation. Reclamation is not so much recycling use values as recalculating exchange-values. Thus reclamation hunts down forgotten objects in order to return them to the market to be bought and sold. In both of these cases—recycling and reclamation—trash becomes a recognizable signified of either utility or the market.

The value produced by playing with toys is of a different nature entirely—generating new signifiers out of decayed signifieds. As Theodor Adorno once wrote, “The unreality of games gives notice that reality is not yet real. Unconsciously they rehearse the right life” (2005, 228). In other words, the value produced through play is not akin to the values produced by labor (which is necessary for survival) or work (as the production of the world of things). Here the value is not of the present reality but rather of the right life. It is a value that cannot be completely reclaimed or recycled by the world, for this value is a pure potential (a “whatever” signification that both is and is not part of the order of things). What is unleashed by play is something more precarious, more singular, and more nebulous: an untimely value. The diachronic event of play produces what I would call a “utopian-value,” which cannot stabilize into the synchronic rituals of use or exchange but rather gestures toward an inherent potentiality within the present that is also in excess of the present. In this state of play, ritual loses its original meaning and significance.
without necessarily being abandoned or neglected. As Agamben argues, play opens a “new dimension of use” (2007, 76) that “is not limited to abolishing the form of separation in order to regain an uncontaminated use that lies either beyond or before it,” but is rather a use that activates through deactivation (2007, 85). Thus for Agamben, utopian-value is not an abstract future or a nostalgic past but rather an opening to new uses within the deactivation of play. Through the concept of utopian-value we can being to understand the exact reason why children and trash are so intimately related to one another, for the natality of childhood and the social exclusion of trash locate each at the boundaries of community—places of demarcation as well as potential destabilization.

Yet it must be pointed out that the stain of ritual reenters play-life the moment the game is over. According to Agamben, the free signifier of play embodied in the toy must be put away in shame as the residue of synchrony. Trash is once again exemplary of this process, for when the child is finished playing with scraps, the trash must be quickly thrown away by the parents, now obsessed with “tidying up” after the “mess” of play. Everything must return to its proper place so that the ritual of daily life may once again resume through the repression of its underlying diachronic potentiality. As such, there is always a remnant which underlies the dichotomy of play and ritual which guarantees that one will dialectically fold into the other—that pure signifiers will enter into an exchange with the fixity of signifieds and thus cross the moat that separates the two.

Returning to Agamben’s argument, two extremes must be avoided. The first is a collapse of time into what Claude Levi-Strauss would refer to as “cold societies,” wherein ritual dominates over play. This leads to a truly static society, frozen in time, mummified in a perpetually claustrophobic relation to the past. In the world today, we see this strange cultural mummification in the rise of a series of religious fundamentalisms which want to return to a mythic golden age of traditional values. At the other extreme we have “hot societies” of endless play, which trump all rituals and submit them to the rush and excitement of constant invention. Fast capitalism and its promise of constant, if not utopian, productivity, change, and innovation approximates the hot society. As Agamben argues, “In both cases there would be a lack of that differential margin between diachrony and synchrony in which we have identified human time—in other words, history” (2007, 86). History emerges as the differential remnant between synchrony and diachrony, between ritual and event. Without holding the two in tension, human time—the time of history and of experience—evaporates. For Agamben, experience is located in the disjunction or break between play and ritual, as such the collapse of the two equals a significant loss. Thus new credence is given to critical theorists, such as Fredric
Jameson (1995), who argue that our current postmodern condition is characterized by its unique lack of historical thinking, by its amnesia.

On an educational level we can now return to my opening set of oppositions between the rituals of standardization and the unstructured playfulness of the ludic classroom. For the standardized or fully ritualized classroom, experience is smothered by the oppressive weight of a world that appears completed or fully determined/actualized (closed to the production of new signifiers). If one classroom collapses education into a return of the same, then the other releases utopian-value as a set of free-floating signifiers without the ability to translate these signifiers into projects, programs, and institutions that could progressively shape the world. In other words, in a purely diachronic classroom of play, there would be no trace of activity inscribed in the world after the play of signifiers has begun. The stain of synchrony would not enter into the equation, and the “toys” would never be “put away.”

In sum, for Agamben, history deals with the exchange of signifiers and signifieds. Thus the “basic rule of play of history is that the signifiers of continuity accept an exchange with those of discontinuity” (2007, 95). Without this exchange of play and of ritual, history ceases and experience dies. This exchange between the two extremes is precisely what, for Agamben, enables children to become adults. In other words, when the resonance between play and ritual ceases, maturity becomes impossible—maturity here being defined as “an achieved totality of experience” (2007, 26). As such, human time is educational transformation. Yet this educational transformation is waning in our postmodern society. For instance, we are witnessing a strange inversion of childhood and adulthood. In the economy, we find that the ludic nature of play has been fully embraced by “hot,” transnational capitalism wherein adult playgrounds on corporate campuses and playful work cultures have become “trendy” management strategies, especially at high-tech firms such as Google. Such inversions have equally unusual consequences for children. As Agamben warns, if an exchange between play and ritual were not to happen, then the movement of signifiers into signifieds would be lost and, as Agamben points out, children would come to be seen as threats and “bearers of subversion and disorder” (2007, 94–95) rather than important agents in the process of historical change and transformation. Such a warning is most useful for diagnosing the current, paranoid view of young adults in schools today as violent school-shooters, criminals, lazy dropouts, or deadbeats leeching off their parents. In short, these inversions of adulthood and childhood speak to a problem with the exchange of signification, and thus an erasure of the remnant of experience that allows for passage across the dichotomy of play and ritual.
There are several problems with Agamben’s analysis. First, as Nicholas Chare recently argued (2006), Agamben’s theory of language is missing a key insight from psychoanalytic theory: the existence of Eros (life instinct) within language. Throughout Agamben’s work, “language is an out-of-body experience” in which the “living being (the breathing, feeling, pulsing being of the body) and the subject (the speaking, thinking, writing being) never coincide” (Chare 2006, 59). Perhaps Chare has overstated his case somewhat. Agamben does in fact argue that his theory of language forms an arc between nature and culture: “Structured thus on the difference between endosomatic and esosomatic, between nature and culture [genetic predispositions and social nurture], language gives resonance to the two systems and enables their communication” (Agamben 2007, 67). For Agamben, language is not purely one or the other but rather positioned on a boundary that articulates both the difference and resonance of nature and culture. If this analysis complicates Chare’s reading, Chare is nevertheless correct in that the nature/culture exchanged highlighted by Agamben does not fully encompass the particular relation of nature and culture which the human body demands. Repositioning Chare’s essay less as a critique and more as a furtherance of Agamben’s nature/culture theory, we can then support his central thesis as well as his turn to psychoanalysis. Eros as a libidinal bridge between the body (as prelinguistic) and the symbolic order (as a linguistic field of potentiality) demonstrates the biopolitical nature of symbolization. For it must be remembered that Freud’s great insight into drive theory is that Eros exists between mental symbolism and pleasure, between the body and the word, between nature and culture. Eros is in other words a remnant that undercuts the dichotomy of language and living being. Appropriating Agamben’s Greek terminology, we can then argue that zoë (nutritive life of the biological body) enters into bios (political, symbolic life of the subject) through Eros as a bridge, thus breaking with the paradox of biopower as a power of exclusion. The free signifiers of play are thus libidinally invested with the stain of the drive that exists in the indeterminate zone of contact between the corporeal body and the incorporeal signifying chain guaranteeing passage between the two without necessarily confusing them. In short, if Agamben enables us to understand the relationship between ritual, play, and experience, he fails to fully provide an analysis of the biopolitical nature underlying these three modes of human activity.

Second, Agamben does not adequately historicize his own analysis of play and ritual in relation to experience. It is certainly true that Agamben’s theory is an attempt to provide a theoretical ground for experience and thus for history. Yet this theory is a historico-transcendental philosophy which founds the potential of history in terms of the break between the diachronic and synchronic inherent in language as such. According to Agamben, “It is infancy, it
is the transcendental experience of the difference between language and speech, which first opens the space of history” (2007, 60). In this quotation, infancy is reconceptualized less as a biological stage of human development and more as an experience of the origins of history within the continuities and discontinuities that constitutes the human as a split subject. Infancy is in other words a relationship between experience and language (Agamben 2007, 4). If Agamben founded a transcendental ground for history within infancy, then we must nevertheless examine how this ground is translated into particular historical contexts. Here a critical theory of the mode of production (in all its social, economic, and political overdetermination) is necessary in order to better understand the problem of signification pinpointed by Agamben within the affluent society. Without this contextualization, Agamben’s theory lacks the periodization necessary to become a political force. In order to fully situate Agamben’s theory within late capitalism, I will now turn to Marcuse’s project. It is in Marcuse’s work that we can begin to see Agamben’s biopolitical theory of play and ritual enter into a political project for educational reconstruction.

FREEDOM OF PLAY AND THE PLAY OF FREEDOM

Here it is important to turn to Marcuse’s own biopolitical project in order to enrich our model. At this point in the essay, my turn to Marcuse might need a slight justification. One could argue that Marcuse is more vital now than ever. Douglas Kellner has called for a “Marcuse Renaissance” in political philosophy (1994). If Fredric Jameson has famously turned to Adorno’s negative dialectic as the tool to resist postmodernism (1990), then Kellner has argued for a turn to Marcuse’s dialectical and utopian project as a counterfoil to the nihilism and directionless apathy of the present (2004).

In many ways I agree with Kellner’s assessment, but let me be provocative for a moment and grant the critics of Marcuse their position. Yes, he seems dated. Yes, our interest in him is nostalgic. Yes, his theory has become one more antiquated theory dripping with the sentimentalism and naive longings of the sixties’ counterculture. Even if this assessment is true, even if Marcuse now holds only a purely historical meaning for those of us in the postmodern world (or post-postmodern world), then let us play with Marcuse as children play with trash. Let us invent a utopian-value that exists within the detritus of critical theory’s long and somewhat tangled history. Let us not simply throw Marcuse out, but rather take him up into our play world and there find a use not prefigured in either a timely and utilitarian critique of postmodernism or an exchange-value on the theory circuit of the academy. Instead, let us play with Marcuse in a truly untimely fashion in order to understand play itself.
In *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse presented his own Marxian-Freudian biopolitics. Key to understanding this position is Marcuse’s provocative claim that “counterrevolution” is “anchored in the instinctual structure” (1969, 11). In other words, revolt must penetrate to the innermost region of human needs. According to Marcuse, the ontology of the human is at stake in revolution, for capitalism now anchors itself within the unconscious and within the very biological dimension of need. “The so-called consumer economy and the politics of corporate capitalism have created a second nature of man that ties him libidinally and aggressively to the commodity form. The need for possessing, consuming, handling, and constantly renewing the gadgets, devices, instruments, engines, offered to and imposed upon the people, for using these wares even at the danger of one’s own destruction, has become a ‘biological’ need” (1969, 11). Consequently, a “vested interest in the existing system is thus fostered in the instinctual structure of the exploited” (1969, 16). No longer is labor-power the prime source for producing surplus-value. Rather biological power (life itself) has been capitalized transforming mere survival (consuming/reproducing) into a motor for capitalist expansion.

But if capitalism has “capitalized” human need, then where is the seed of revolution? Marcuse offers us a speculative solution: that the commodified life is not simply the sum of instilled “false” needs (greed, war, anger, destruction, etc.) manufactured by a militarized, commercialized world bent on its own social reproduction and hegemonic power. Instead, Marcuse sees the seeds of a new libidinal economy arising from within the dynamics of the prevalent system, a new form of sensual reason that demands a rethinking of *bios* in relation to *zoë* not as an exception (included only as an exclusion) but as a productive motor for the expansion of political life. But where does Marcuse see this new and revolutionary sensibility, this orientation toward “authentic” biological needs (love, community, health, etc.)? Black Panther movements, student movements, and feminist movements all in their own ways speak to the arrival of a new sensibility (Marcuse 1969, 1972).

The new sensibility manifested itself through a specific activity: *education* against the normalization of social injustice, violence, and war (Marcuse 1969, 53). Guiding this education is an aesthetic sensibility that remains antithetical to the prevailing reality. As Marcuse writes, the market has raised the standard of living in first-world countries, thereby producing new needs, yet “it is now fostering transcending needs which cannot be satisfied without abolishing the capitalist mode of production” (1972, 16). These needs represent a surplus production that is a “qualitative leap” beyond the false, administered needs of the mass society. Thus the productivity of the new sensibility is not the essence of the human but is rather the result of the historical
moment; the external productivity of capitalism is mirrored in the instinctual structure of the human, producing transcendent needs.

The underlying model for a sensual qualitative leap is of course Friedrich Schiller’s theory of the play-drive (Jameson 1974). In On the Aesthetic Education of Man (1982), Schiller contrasts the alienation and the perversity of Enlightenment high society to the natural and spontaneous capacities of the play drive. As a necessary mediation between the formal-drive (universal, necessary, active, and timeless) and the sensual-drive (individual, particular, passive, and ontic), play establishes an aesthetic field of self-expression where humanity is, hypothetically, able to perfect itself. Schiller writes, “Both drives, therefore, exert constraint upon the psyche; the former [sensual-drive] through the laws of nature, the latter [form-drive] through the laws of reason. The play-drive, in consequence, as the one in which both the others act in concert, will exert upon the psyche at once a moral and physical constraint; it will therefore, since it annuls all contingency, annul all constraint too, and set man free both physically and morally” (1982, 97). As an imaginative praxis, play is not so much a Hegelian synthesis of the formal and the sensual but rather a zone of indistinction between the two that recognizes the need for the individual and the universal without collapsing the latter into the former. Thus it is a praxis antithetical to Enlightenment compartmentalization, fragmentation, and the capitalist division of labor—all of which impoverish form and sense by dechotomizing them.

Against fragmentation, play is harmony and freedom. The “living form” of such freedom is in fact beauty (Schiller 1982, 101). Within the experience of play, the individual witnesses the oscillation between form and sense, working toward an equilibrium captured in the concept of the beautiful. In terms of the beautiful, aesthetic education in Schiller’s conceptualization becomes the means through which individuals become moral beings working in concert with one another without forgoing their unique individuality. Given Fourier’s utopian speculations cited earlier, playing with trash emerges as the perfect aesthetic education for children, where trash becomes the beautiful object par excellence. In Marcuse’s language we can argue that play offers a new notion of “sensuous reason” that unites the logic of the dialectic with the individual sensuousness of the body, producing a biopolitics antithetical to the biopower of capitalist production, which includes life only as an exclusion (in a psychological sense [which includes needs only in the alienated form of commodification], an economic sense [which includes the erogenous body only as a negation in the form of the instrumentalized body], or a biological-political sense [as the prisoner of the concentration camp whose life becomes a political issue precisely because it has lost its political rights]).
Certainly this ethos of play is what informed Marcuse’s attraction to the New Left in all its various manifestations. Play, as a form of nonviolent, non-domineering activity of self-expression and imaginative creation, was central to the ethos of the counterculture and its spontaneous organization. This relation by no means trivialized the New Left, nor does it suggest an uncritical endorsement of hedonistic, antiintellectual experiments in the “free love” counterculture (Marcuse 1972). Rather, play is for Marcuse absolutely serious in that it emancipates the senses, consciousness, and in turn the totality of the human through an educative moment. Thus Marcuse argues that in “a genuinely humane civilization, the human existence will be play rather than toil” (1966, 188). We can now see how play allows us to give a name to the activity through which we can stage bios as its own zoe. Play is not simply free signifiers but is also and perhaps more importantly free Eros, or rather sexual libido sublimated into new forms of social interaction beyond the Oedipal complex.

On the positive side, Marcuse’s multidimensional human being as homo ludens is a boldly imaginative reconstruction of one-dimensional life not even imagined in Marx’s most utopian of speculations. In Marx’s fleeting comments on utopian bliss, human behavior remains a sequence of distinct activities, each following the other: hunting in the morning, fishing in the afternoon, raising cattle in the evening, and finally criticizing (or philosophizing) after dinner. While these activities might lose their alienated status as “professions” within a labor market, the sequence nevertheless remains divided into work, labor, action, etc. The moment of multidimensional indistinction that characterizes playful activity (Lewis 2007) is lost in this utopian cataloging, serializing, and compartmentalizing of activities. Marx maintains the divisions that characterize the biopolitical relations of late capitalism, revealing a latent anxiety that human nature might not in the end have at its ontological base labor—or that such an ontology might itself be fully historical. Any other depiction might force Marx to shift his utopian vision of homo laborans to homo ludens. As opposed to Marx’s limitations, Marcuse turns to the aesthetic realm to resist the biopolitical separations, compartmentalizations, and reifications of capitalist culture, inaugurating a new multidimensional way of being.

But above and beyond the praise, we must bear in mind Agamben’s warning concerning the collapse of society into either a model of play or of ritual. Drawing on Schiller’s famous notion that play annihilates time within time, Marcuse likewise speculates that the unleashed Eros unique to play is an overcoming of time (Whitebook 1996, 73). For Marcuse, part of a libidinal Great Refusal is “the conquest of time in so far as time is destructive of lasting gratification” (1966, 193). In fact, Marcuse’s imaginary allegory of the Great Refusal is the sensuous play of Narcissus, who represents “the re-
demption of pleasure, the halt of time, the absorption of death; silence, night, paradise—the Nirvana principle not as death but as life” (1966, 164). Seeing the major advances of industry toward an automated world, Marcuse argues that Narcissus could become a reality, for “alienated labor would be transformed into the free play of human faculties and forces. Time would not seem linear, as a perpetual line or rising curve, but cyclical. . . . Incentives to work [would] no longer [be] necessary. For if work itself becomes the free play of human abilities, then no suffering is needed to compel men to work” (1970, 40–41). In other words, it is through certain technological transformations that it might become possible to “defeat time in a world dominated by time” (1966, 233) and thus produce freedom as a state of perpetual play, which will retain only the minimum amount of repression necessary to sustain life.

Given these utopian descriptions of the transformation of the world of one-dimensional ritual into the world of play, it is uncertain how time will remain historical—how humans will retain a sense of experience outside of the timeless eternity of the Nirvana principle (now conceptualized as apex of creative life rather than the fixity of death). The differential between the synchronic and diachronic necessary for signification to happen and for society to renew itself seems to collapse in the moment when life merges with the Nirvana principle and time is overcome in the name of endless gratification. In other words, the potentiality of history ceases to exist, for it is only in the margin between life and death or play and ritual that we can have experiences. If Marcuse’s dialectical transformation of death into a new, playful life demonstrates the existence of the synchronic within the diachronic, his utopian vision equally erases the minimal difference that this remnant both undermines and maintains. Thus while we might in fact agree with Schiller’s analysis of the play-drive, which bears a striking similarity to Agamben’s own analysis of infancy, the valorization of play as a utopian solution to the human condition over experience nevertheless produces an intolerable consequence: The world becomes an a-historical playland that further impoverishes the very capacity which capitalism’s own play-drive negated, the capacity for experiencing history.

PLAY IT AGAIN . . .

In the end, both theories are flawed and as such a higher order synthesis between the two is necessary. For Agamben, play must be reconfigured as a biopolitical activity through which the body and the signifying chain of language are bridged by the drives. And for Marcuse, play cannot become a new anthropopolitical foundation for the human. If it does, then the time of experience, the time of history, will be lost. This result is ironic at best considering that it is
Marcuse who enabled us to position Agamben’s theory within the historical context of the affluent society and of late capitalism. Marcuse’s ultimate mistake is that he only sees time as the linear chronology of capitalist production. As such, he misses Agamben’s notion of time as a revolutionary “cairology” (2007, 165) existing in the tension between play and ritual as the potential of history. To play is vital, both on the level of meaning and on the level of sensation, but play cannot absorb experience into itself. To play with play is to enter into its transformative dimension without conquering time but in order to reenergize human time and thus to make experience possible once again. Thus educational philosophers cannot turn to play as the romantic model for human experience (reconceptualizing the child as the paradigmatic case of homo ludens). Such a turn would amount to the exhaustion of experience. Rather, play must be given its place alongside of ritual within education. It is only in the tension between the two that the time of history opens.

While this might sound rather abstract, the analysis nevertheless articulates the underlying philosophical problematic faced by teachers in their concrete experiences. Karen Wohlwend (2007) has argued, “The problem of balancing work [or for our purposes, the ritual of testing] and play was identified by the teachers [in her ethnographic study] as a central tension in their classroom practices as they juggled their beliefs about educational best practice with institutional expectations for increased academic achievement.” What Wohlwend’s teachers describe as “plurk” (a mediation between work and play that characterizes what children do in classroom settings) is not so much a synthesis as it is the location of experience emerging from between rituals of standardization and play. Plurk is the location through which the translation of free signifiers can enter into exchange with signifieds and thus diachronic and synchronic structures communicate via the gap that defines experience. To plurk is thus to avoid the collapse of education into either pure ritual (a cold society) or play (a hot society), and instead recognize the resonance between education and the bridge both separating and uniting these dichotomous activities. Plurk is thus an experience of difference and continuity between independent systems, becoming a measure of maturity only in the moment of touching our collective infancy. It is here that education finds its core, and it is here that the struggle to define human time is enacted in the biopolitical classroom.

REFERENCES


During the 1950s and 1960s two thinkers, Herbert Marcuse and Jacques Lacan, were conducting a “return to Freud” for very similar reasons. If the differences between them are often advertised, their affinities are less so. In this chapter, I examine how their return to Freud and fidelity to psychoanalysis serves as a common ground to read each in conjunction with the other. Specifically, the Freudian figure of the death drive marks a deep homology within Marcuse and his ethic of the Great Refusal, with Lacan’s notion of living in between “two deaths.”

Herbert Marcuse was perhaps the most significant and important Marxist philosopher to come out in support of not only the New Left and countercultural movements but of the entire turbulent period of the 1960s. His One-Dimensional Man (1964) was undoubtedly central to the student movements, and Marcuse’s pedagogy and mentorship fully encouraged his students’ radical social and political commitments.1 Setting the stage for Marcuse’s relationship to the New Left was his invaluable text Eros and Civilization (1966), in which he issued the challenge for a return to Freud in order to better grasp the stakes of contemporary society as well as the historical manifestations of capitalism.2

Through an in-depth inquiry into Freudian psychoanalytic theory (to be sure, Marcuse was interested in Freud in so far as philosophical inquiry was concerned and not at all as a clinical model), Marcuse set out to defend Freudian concepts, but only after fully framing them within a historical context. Marcuse’s conclusion was that the fight for Eros—the fight for life—is the political fight par excellence. Marcuse’s conclusion might be stated thus: All parts of society must fight for Eros by refusing to allow its resources to
be used in such campaigns of death as war, concentration camps, and capitalist exploitation. Marcuse’s conclusion in *Eros and Civilization* was certainly in the environment of the 1960s. But to understand its origin properly, one must take into account the particular biography of Marcuse (as well as the entire collective of theorists known as the Frankfurt School) as an emigrant to the United States in order to escape the Holocaust. The Frankfurt School had seen the rising tide of fascism, the Nazi death camps, as well as the overall death and destruction of World War II. That Marcuse saw the signature of Thanatos (that is, the death drive) everywhere had more to do with his biography than with the decade of the sixties itself.

It is not surprising that students would be the ones to take up Marcuse’s challenge with the greatest fidelity and seriousness, for they were the ones being conscripted to fight in the Vietnam War. From the pages of *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse’s mandate to struggle for life must have moved and inspired the protestors, and it would make sense that Marcuse became something of a guru to these movements. But several years later, in a truly self-reflective move, Marcuse would revisit and reconsider his conclusions in *Eros and Civilization*, in the “Political Preface” to the 1966 edition. In this move, Marcuse began investigating how death, or Thanatos, no longer serves as society’s tendency. In a dialectical reversal, Eros becomes capitalist society’s theme. Or, more precisely put, the problem now is that capitalist society develops its own Eros. The late capitalist society that emerged in the post–World War II era projects an Eros that manifests concretely in a burgeoning consumerist and advertising culture. With the rise of this late capitalist society, the historical grounds of the Eros/Thanatos dyad had effectively shifted since the original writing of *Eros and Civilization*, thus robbing the “fight for Eros” of its critical and political efficacy.

What Marcuse was attempting to do by self-reflectively reconsidering his conclusions was to reconstitute the subjective grounds for struggle within this new affluent terrain. Was the fight for life an effective strategy against late capitalism? And if not, then, what new strategy can be suggested? Necessary, in the face of late capitalism, however, is not an abandonment of Marcuse’s original mandate to fight for life but, more to the point, to recognize that the historical terms on which that fight takes place have now shifted significantly. Keeping with Marcuse’s original insight that Freudian psychoanalysis provides intellectual resources for theorizing late modernity—if anything, we have yet to fully catch up with its insights—I want to suggest that a return to Freud will be necessary to this restrategization effort, and we will recruit another of Freud’s disciples—namely, Jacques Lacan—for this purpose.

Marcuse concluded the “Political Preface” with this motto, which, in many ways, could be seen as a retraction from his deepest insight that late capital-
ism had co-opted Eros: “Today the fight for life, the fight for Eros, is the political fight” (Marcuse 1966, xxv, original emphasis). In this historical moment of late capitalism—a moment that projects its own Eros—it seems, however, that Marcuse’s concluding motto must be reversed. Thus, in contrast, I want to suggest the following: Today the fight for life, which is the political fight, is the fight for Thanatos.

**WHO’S AFRAID OF CIVILIZATION?**

*Eros and Civilization* represents, perhaps, the most sustained effort by the Frankfurt School to engage with Freudian psychoanalysis. Indeed, Horkheimer and Adorno had already made the “psychoanalytic turn” in their seminal *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), but even in that work, psychoanalysis is secondary only to the critique of Enlightenment. In *Eros and Civilization*—what Rolf Wiggershaus (1994) has described as Marcuse’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—psychoanalysis is drawn into the center and made into the primary object of inquiry. What Marcuse sets out to do in this work is to confront and wrestle with Freud’s contentious claim that civilization co-extends with and requires man’s self-renunciation—hence, the state of discontentedness inherent within civilization.

Let us turn for a moment to what is perhaps Freud’s most famous “socio-logical” work, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1961a), in which he lays out his contentious theory of civilization. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud tells us, really arises from a reaction his friend had to his earlier book *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud’s devastating critique of religion. “He answered,” Freud writes, “that he entirely agreed with my judgment upon religion, but that he was sorry I had not properly appreciated the true course of religious sentiments” (1961a, 10).

What, then, did Freud, according to this anonymous friend, misdiagnose? Freud continues, “It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, ‘oceanic’” (1961a, 11). Freud insists right away that his friend’s criticism is unfair, insofar as feelings are, for Freud, incomprehensible. How could one give an account for another’s feelings, since those feelings are entirely subjective in origin? Nevertheless, Freud honors this criticism and tries his hand at accounting for this oceanic feeling, which is supposed to be a universal experience. What Freud argues is that this ambiguous oceanic feeling can be described, from the psychoanalytic perspective, more concretely, as a longing for primary narcissism—in other words, a state of primary wholeness: “The ideational contents appropriate to it would be precisely those of limitlessness
and of a bond with the universe—the same ideas with which my friend elucidated the ‘oceanic’ feeling” (Freud 1961a, 15).

From this, the longing for primary narcissism—what for Freud is the original and actual upshot of religion—he argues that the only “purpose” in life is to seek after pleasure, or, put more precisely, to restore one’s lost pleasure. “Purpose” appears in quotation marks because the phrase “life’s purpose,” for Freud, still reeks of religious illusion. If Freud must speak in these terms to be understood, then he does so reluctantly, all the while trying to lay bare the reality it encodes. “As we see,” Freud writes, “what decides the purpose of life is simply the programme of the pleasure principle” (1961a, 25). The primacy placed on the “pleasure principle”—that is, the rule according to which we seek to recover our lost wholeness or pleasure—stems directly from Freud’s interpretation of the oceanic feeling. To be sure, Freud is unclear whether the state of primary narcissism actually ever existed or whether it exists as a construction of the psyche. However, Freud is clear that people obey their oceanic feeling and seek the best possible life for themselves. Yet if things are indeed the way Freud tells us they are—that life’s purpose is to obey the pleasure principle—then why is unhappiness much more common than happiness? And why does civilized society—with all of its technological innovations and niceties—seem to bring greater unhappiness while simultaneously bringing greater comfort? Freud considers these questions to be the true riddle of civilization, and as such, they serve as his point of departure.

Before bringing civilization into the picture, let us first take a closer look at the drive of life according to the pleasure principle. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud describes further the pleasure principle itself: “We believe, that is to say, that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension—that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure” (1961b, 3). Pleasure, in other words, is attained from releasing tension by expending energy. According to this construction, the most articulated expression of life would be the absolute expenditure of energy with its concomitant obliteration of tension. This articulation, however, reaches a paradox as it would amount to nothing more than the inability to repeat pleasure—that is, such a state is death. Appropriately, Freud gives this drive—the drive to the zero-point of tension and energetic store—the name “death drive,” or Thanatos. For this reason Freud, quoting Schopenhauer, states, “The aim of all life is death” (1961b, 46).

If complete obedience to the pleasure principle results in one’s own death, then how does life continue to go on? One thing is for sure, life does not, on Freud’s account, continue by simply progressing forward against the grain of
the death drive. He writes unequivocally, “There is unquestionably no uni-
versal instinct towards higher development observable in the animal or plant
world” (1961b, 49). Positing such a “progressive instinct” would be too easy.
Instead, Freud theorizes the development of a different drive: “For a long
time, perhaps, living substance was thus being constantly created afresh and
easily dying, till decisive external influences altered in such a way as to
oblige the still surviving substance to diverge ever more widely from its orig-
inal course of life and to make ever more complicated detours before reach-
ing its aim of death. These circuitous paths to death, faithfully kept to by the
conservative instincts, would thus present us to-day with the picture of the
phenomena of life” (1961b, 46, original emphasis).

This drive rebuilds the tension, which the death drive seeks to undo, by
“conjugating” with an external object. Because this drive achieves its purpose
by unifying, or cathecting, with external objects, Freud gives it the name
“sexual drive,” or Eros. What is important to keep in mind is that Eros does
not combat Thanatos, but rather extends the latter’s direct path to absolute ex-
penditure. Taken together, then, life—insofar as it is made up of both Eros
and Thanatos—is a constant dance of tension’s building up and eventual re-
lease: “The emergence of life would thus be the cause of the continuance of
life and also at the same time of the striving towards death; and life itself
would be a conflict and compromise between these two trends” (1960, 38).

In the state of nature, the pleasure principle could exercise itself without inhi-
bition. The upshot would be the most direct and aggressive path to the acquisi-
tion of pleasure—that is, the store and expenditure of tension. In a world of oth-
ers, absolute obedience to the pleasure principle can be nothing but dangerous,
even suicidal. The result of complete obedience would be anarchy: Eros would
demand that everyone acquire all objects to placate Thanatos. Thus, instead, we
enter into a pact called civilization in which, of course, we agree to renounce part
of our drives to preserve some security: “Civilization is build up upon a renun-
ciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by
suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts” (Freud
1961b, 52). No wonder Freud’s thesis is that civilization is coterminous with
man’s unhappiness, for civilization is nothing but the requirement to sacrifice
one’s freedom. “The liberty,” Freud writes, “of the individual is no gift of civi-
lization. It was greatest before there was any civilization, though then, it is true,
it had for the most part no value, since the individual was scarcely in a position
to defend it” (1961b, 49). Elsewhere in Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud
writes, “If civilization imposes such great sacrifices not only on man’s sexuality
but on his aggressivity, we can understand better why it is hard for him to be
happy in that civilization. . . . Civilized man has exchanged a portion of his pos-
sibilities of happiness for a portion of security” (1961a, 73).
Civilization, to be sure, does not eradicate the Eros/Thanatos dialectic. Rather, it recruits it for its own purposes. The renunciation of direct access to instinct is compensated for by the extension of Eros in a tamer manner. Eros, the drive to object cathexsis, is used to bind its population. But now, Eros cannot manifest in the explosive form of direct and uninhibited sexual union. Instead, it is weakened by its dispersion onto a multitude of peoples in the form of friendship, thus making the concept of friendship simply a more diluted form of sexual union itself. This is why, on Freud’s account, civilization imposes such lofty social injunctions to love one’s neighbor, and so forth: These forms of ethics are nothing more than a subduing of its population. The name Freud gives to this toned-down version of the pleasure principle is the “reality principle.” In the face of reality, the drives strike a compromise in which they do not directly attain their aim, in return for at least some release.

**HISTORICIZING FREUD**

Marcuse’s contention in *Eros and Civilization* is with Freud’s belief that civilization is coterminous with the repression of the drives: “The notion that a non-repressive civilization is impossible is a cornerstone of Freudian theory” (1966, 17). However, Marcuse goes about his argument not by disagreeing with Freud’s construction of civilization and the dynamic of Eros and Thanatos. Marcuse’s strategy, rather, is to insist upon the historicization of Freud’s argument, such that the repression of the drives only occurs within certain historical limits, therefore leaving open the future possibility of a nonrepressive civilization. Even more subtle is that, seen in more detail, Marcuse’s precise argument is that Freud’s theory of civilization already contains historical elements of which Freud himself is unaware. Thus the task Marcuse sets out for himself is to recover and underline Freud’s historical unconscious, if you will, rather than impose upon it from the outside: “The ‘unhistorical’ character of the Freudian concepts thus contains the elements of its opposite: their historical substance must be recaptured, not by adding some sociological factors (as do the ‘cultural’ Neo-Freudian schools), but by unfolding their own content” (Marcuse 1966, 35).

The first point of contention Marcuse raises with Freud is the very presumption that absolute obedience to the pleasure principle becomes untenable in a space filled with others. Freud, in other words, posits in advance that the resources through which we attain pleasure are, by nature, scarce—a scarcity that makes impossible the unlimited satisfaction of the drives.

According to Freud, the repressive modification of the instincts under the reality principle is enforced and sustained by the “eternal primordial struggle for existence . . . persisting to the present day.”
Scarcity (Lebensnot, Ananke) teaches men that they cannot freely gratify their instinctual impulses, that they cannot live under the pleasure principle. This conception is as old as civilization and has always provided the most effective rationalization for repression. (Marcuse 1966, 16–17)

Scarcity for Marcuse, then, is an assumption, a rationalization, and not at all an eternal state.

Extrapolating Marcuse’s contention from Freud is not by any means difficult. From the above discussion we can see that according to Freud, Eros, in obedience to the pleasure principle, will come in conflict with others—that is to say, conflict is thought to be inevitable. But a few quotations will nonetheless suffice. In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud writes on the sources of suffering and unhappiness: “We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to other men” (1961a, 26). While reflecting on the injunction “Love thy neighbor as thyself,” Freud writes, “My love is something valuable to me which I ought not to throw away without reflection” (1961a, 66). And in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Freud evokes Schopenhauer’s community of porcupines to illustrate the intolerability of others: “According to Schopenhauer’s famous simile of the freezing porcupines no one can tolerate a too intimate approach to his neighbor” (1959, 41). On Marcuse’s read, scarcity is writ large in Freud, as the value of pleasure is predicated upon the difficulty with which it is attained.3

With scarcity firmly entrenched, Freud is free to go on and lay out the conflict of Eros and Thanatos as the struggle to maintain the constancy of life, neither going beyond the pleasure principle nor completely denying it. Indeed, if scarcity prevents the absolute gratification of all members of society, then civilization must involve the renunciation of instinct—for there would be no other compromise available. For Marcuse, this argument already smells something rotten as it possesses the potential to ideologically explain away the destitute socioeconomic situation of some parts of society. Alternatively, Marcuse’s position is this: Scarcity exists only within the specific historical epoch of capitalism and its distribution of wealth into the hands of a few while building that wealth on the backs of the many. “However,” Marcuse argues, “this argument, which looms large in Freud’s metapsychology, is fallacious in so far as it applies to the brute fact of scarcity what actually is the consequence of a specific organization of scarcity, and of a specific existential attitude enforced by this organization” (Marcuse 1966, 36, original emphasis). Having uncovered the historical frame assumed in Freud’s construction of civilization, Marcuse offers the corrective that the renunciation of
instinct discovered by Freud to be at work in civilization is actually the logic of domination: “If he justifies the repressive organization of the instincts by the irreconcilability between the primary pleasure principle and the reality principle, he expresses the historical fact that civilization has progressed as organized domination” (Marcuse 1966, 34, original emphasis). It is indeed the historical reality of domination that enabled its projection as a natural fact, deceiving even Freud himself: “Precisely because all civilization has been organized domination, the historical development assumes the dignity and necessity of a universal biological development” (Marcuse 1966, 34).

At this point, Marcuse introduces his two terms “surplus-repression” and “performance principle,” which are supposed to be the historical concomitants of Freud’s concepts “repression” and “reality principle.” Thus the appearance of Eros within civilization as its driving force of libidinally binding the entire population within the link of friendship is, according to Marcuse, strictly historical. Within very different historical conditions, Eros could actualize its full potential for creating human social relations outside domination’s demands of surplus-repression: “This idea would imply that the free Eros does not preclude the lasting civilized societal relationships—that it repels only the suprarepressive organization of societal relationships under a principle which is the negation of the pleasure principle” (Marcuse 1966, 43, original emphasis). The dialectic of Eros/Thanatos, in which Eros only functions as a way of momentarily forestalling the downward plunge of Thanatos in order to prolong life, is for Marcuse only a tamed and weakened version of Eros, resulting from particular historical conditions. In its weakened state, civilization, under the capitalist mode of production and governed by the performance principle, makes Eros manifest itself in searching out only certain kinds of outlets that are presumed to be socially useful for the furtherance of capitalist competition and the prolongation of alienated labor.

For this reason also, Marcuse finds in Eros the basis for a political program that runs up against capitalist society and its performance principle—for, if Eros, at a fundamental level, constructs new outlets for fulfillment, and if it must be tamed by civilization, then surely Eros at its most complete and uninhibited would be able to break free from the constraints of civilization, which is precisely why it must be held under shackle in the first place. Marcuse writes, “In a world of alienation, the liberation of Eros would necessarily operate as a destructive, fatal force—as the total negation of the principle which governs the repressive reality” (1966, 95). The basic impulse of Eros is the fulfillment of man’s happiness, and as such, it wants to overthrow the domination of surplus-repression. For that reason Eros, for Marcuse, represents the model of his political stance of the Great Refusal—an uncompromising political stance that refuses to accept the terms of an oppressive society: “This Great
Refusal is the protest against unnecessary repression, the struggle for the ultimate form of freedom—‘to live without anxiety’” (1966, 149–50).

**PERIODIZING EROS**

If Marcuse’s gesture was not to abandon or discredit Freud’s thesis on civilization but rather to draw it within a historical framework, then Marcuse’s own thesis on Eros must be held to the same standard. This time, however, we will want to investigate what happens to the dialectic of Eros/Thanatos within our contemporary moment of late capitalism. Does late capitalism, which is usually marked by an increase in aesthetic forms and commodities, continue to morph and shape Eros for its own purposes? Can Eros still be the basis for a radical political program in the time of late capitalism?

One of the themes that interested not only Marcuse but the entire Frankfurt School was an analysis of “affluent society”—or to use a more contemporary term, late capitalism, which, as Ernest Mandel (1983) has argued, is the third mutation in capitalism’s historical trajectory. In *Eros and Civilization*, this theme had yet to fully gestate. Instead, Marcuse was combating another foe—namely, Thanatos, to which he attributed the overwhelming presence of death. Sometime after the writing of *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse recognized that with the advent of affluent capitalism, the fundamental social problematic had changed to a radical extent. What Marcuse came to realize was this: In late capitalism, the problematic shifts focus away from the overwhelming presence of death to a pervasive affluence and an intoxicating enjoyment.

Contemporary theorist Fredric Jameson has captured the shifting stakes of late capitalism best: “What has happened” in late capitalism “is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally,” so that “the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from clothing to airplanes), at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation” (1995, 4–5). To accommodate this explosion of commodities is the concomitant subjective adjustment in which the late capitalist individual, no longer held to puritanical ideals of abstinence and self-renunciation, is mandated to consume and enjoy. If anything, in late capitalism, we are commanded to ignore the overwhelming presence of death and made, instead, to Enjoy! Or, put differently: Eros—hence, enjoyment—becomes the psychic dominant of late capitalism.

Though the idea that capital’s cultural logic could ever incorporate Eros into itself did not appear in the original *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse begins
to address this idea in the “Political Preface” written for the 1966 edition. A model of exemplary critical self-reflectiveness, Marcuse writes,

I neglected or minimized the fact that this obsolescent rationale had been vastly strengthened (if not replaced) by even more efficient forms of social control. . . . In the affluent society, the authorities are hardly forced to justify their domination. They deliver the goods; they satisfy the sexual and the aggressive energy of their subjects. Like the unconscious, the destructive power of which they so successfully represent, they are this side of good and evil, and the principle of contradiction has no place in their logic. (1966, xi–xii)

Enjoyment: This is the logic that affluent society projects in order to plug its population into the system. What we must remember, however, is that for Marcuse capitalism—though framed as the affluent society—is predicated on the death, destruction, and domination of a great majority of people. Therefore, the enjoyment that it propagates is always only available to a select few: “The inferno is still concentrated in certain far away places: Vietnam, the Congo, South Africa, and in the ghettos of the ‘affluent society’” (Marcuse 1966, xiii).

Out of this concern for the affluent society came some of Marcuse’s most famous and influential works: One-Dimensional Man, An Essay on Liberation, and Counterrevolution and Revolt. The problem becomes that in a society where people are freely encouraged to simply enjoy, how do we convince them to fight for freedom? “The people, efficiently manipulated and organized, are free; ignorance and impotence, introjected heteronomy is the price of their freedom. It makes no sense to talk about liberation to free men—and we are free if we do not belong to the oppressed minority” (Marcuse 1966, xiii). One can sense the tongue-in-cheek tone in Marcuse’s scathing words for late capitalism’s supposed freedom. To enthrall people to fight for Eros no longer seemed to be a likely strategy. No wonder, then, that Marcuse’s attitude completely changes by One-Dimensional Man, as he attempts in that work to show how freedom has become only single-faceted and thus unfreedom. Eros, now thoroughly discredited, no longer serves as the platform from which to launch a political program; thus Marcuse’s challenge becomes this: finding a base for political struggle against late capitalism’s enjoyment machine.

Strangely enough, Marcuse concludes the “Political Preface” by returning to and reaffirming the original argument of Eros and Civilization, namely, that a fight for life remains a fight for Eros: “Today the fight for life, the fight for Eros, is the political fight” (Marcuse, 1966, xxv, original emphasis). Our concern is that the development of late capitalism confronts our conception of political struggle with its own ethos of enjoyment so that we must rethink on what terms the fight for life will take place. In other words, we do not take
issue with Marcuse’s important and correct insight that the political fight in the coming decades is the very fight for life; rather, the issue is whether or not Eros constitutes the grounds for this struggle.

We might thus restate the challenge that Marcuse leaves for us in this way: What form will the fight for life take in affluent capitalist culture? Yet Marcuse is the one who offers the key to searching out the answer—he does so, namely, with the Great Refusal. For Marcuse, as we will recall, necessary for the political struggle against the institutions of capitalism is first and foremost to refuse to allow one’s intellectual and material skills to be used by capital in its thinly veiled march toward death. In the original *Eros and Civilization*, affirming Eros was supposed to be just such a Refusal. But, in light of late capitalism, it seems we must revisit this thesis and affirm just the opposite: As the death drive and the capitalist mode of production do not essentially go hand in hand, their unholy union is a historical one. Thus, in a late capitalist consumer society and culture of enjoyment, political struggle must be a fight predicated on Thanatos, the death drive. The death drive, to put it another way, becomes, in late capitalism, the figure of Marcuse’s Great Refusal. To make this argument, we will read the death drive through a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework. This will be our motto: Today the fight for life, which is the political fight, is the fight for Thanatos.

**ENTER LACAN**

While Marcuse was making his return to Freud, halfway around the globe in Paris, still in the 1960s, the spirit of Marcuse could still be felt. Again, it was the students. It was the student revolutions of Paris that came to be known simply as May ’68. And when the faculty in the universities of Paris were conflicted and divided, Marcuse did not hesitate to throw his lot in with the students. The students did not actually read Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man* at that time, but this did not hinder them from considering Marcuse as their mentor; in the wake of May ’68, the text was translated into French and widely read. In fact, Marcuse’s reflection on liberation—*An Essay on Liberation*—is dedicated to these “young militants,” as he calls them, who “know or sense that what is at stake is simply their life, the life of human beings which has become a plaything in the hands of politicians and managers and generals” (1969, x).

In France there was another psychoanalyst conducting his own return to Freud who would associate with the students, though his relationship would be much more ambivalent—he, of course, is Jacques Lacan. At the start, Lacan did throw his lot in with the students, but as the movement progressed and
as the universities reacted to contain and absorb the radicality of the students, Lacan would become much more cautious and, in the end, warn the students that all they wanted was another Master.\textsuperscript{5} If Marcuse wholeheartedly supported the Paris students because he was in tune with their political consciousness, Lacan’s caution stemmed from his being in tune with their unconscious. During this time, Lacan’s position on May ’68 could not be reduced to either total support for the students or outright dismissal of them; rather, his rebuke of the students was that they were not radical enough, and as such, their so-called radicalism was already caught within the university’s discourse. To be sure, the students had made a radical shift in engaging in revolt, but Lacan’s proposition was that they make yet another radical shift—this time, to what he called “the analytic discourse” (Lacan 1988, 1991).\textsuperscript{5} What he meant by this challenge was that the students give up their position as hysterics and, as the saying goes, “put their money where their mouths were”—that is to say, his challenge was that if they were truly serious, then, rather than demand change from the authorities, the students themselves should get to work.

But if the students felt frustrated that Lacan was leaving them as revolutionary orphans and without any direction, then they could only blame their frustration on themselves, for a few years prior to May ’68, in his seminar \textit{The Ethics of Psychoanalysis}, Lacan had already laid out several suggestions for action (Lacan 1992). The complaints of Lacan’s tendency toward flamboyance and obtuse discourse are symptomatic of the fact that the students were not paying close enough attention to Lacan’s literal word.

Of the important interventions Lacan gives in the \textit{Ethics} seminar, perhaps the most radical is his reading of Freud’s theory of the death drive. What Lacan tells the attendees of his seminar is that the death drive actually \textit{is} an ethical stance, and one that \textit{must} be accepted in order to disrupt the superego bond that keeps the individual at bay in the community.\textsuperscript{6} To underline his point, Lacan turns to Sophocles’ \textit{Antigone}: Confronted with the fact that her uncle, Creon, refuses to give her brother, Polynices, a proper burial on the charges that he is a traitor, Antigone goes against the Theban community and sprinkles dust over the dead body of Polynices, thus giving him a makeshift burial. This act of Antigone’s is not, for Lacan, any kind of hysterical transgression of the law; rather, it is \textit{the} ethical act par excellence inasmuch as it causes the dismantling of the Theban community as well as Creon’s law—the very bases of her existence. This act of Antigone’s, Lacan tells us, is the embodiment of the death drive at its purest.\textsuperscript{7} To be a true revolutionary, Lacan’s challenge goes, the students of the Parisian universities must commit the Act in the footsteps of Antigone—an Act that would cause the dismantling of the
very conditions of subjective being. And, if not, then “hysteria” is the name they must bear.

What, then, is the connection between Antigone’s Act and the death drive? And how precisely can it be thought of as a political stance? We will answer these questions in what follows, but suffice it here to say, embracing the Act not only means to give up the enjoyment of a meaningful existence in the established order, but it also means to mark the point from which a new order is thought possible. Or, to put it in more Marcusian terms: Antigone’s Act was her Great Refusal to Creon’s order: Enjoy!

The gesture of *Eros and Civilization* is to return to Freud’s theory of the drives, and in so doing to make out how Eros, the life drive, can become the basis of a political stance. Let us for the moment make this return to Freud’s drive theory with Marcuse. The place Freud spells out the logic of the drive most clearly is in his essay “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” (Freud, 1915). Let us quote Freud at length:

> The aim of an instinct is in every instance satisfaction, which can only be obtained by removing the state of stimulation at the source of the instinct. But although the ultimate aim of each instinct remains unchangeable, there may yet be different paths leading to the same ultimate aim; so that an instinct may be found to have various nearer or intermediate aims, which are combined or interchanged with one another. Experience permits us also to speak of instincts which are “inhibited in their aim,” in the case of processes which are allowed to make some advance towards instinctual satisfaction but are then inhibited or deflected. We may suppose that even processes of this kind involve a partial satisfaction. (122)

Thus, for Freud, the structure of the drive is such that it is “aim inhibited,” and it is precisely due to this paradoxical structure that “partial satisfaction” can be attained.

Since it is in this paradox that all the stakes are located, let us take a closer look at it. The drive has the aim of satisfaction, Freud tells us, but this satisfaction is derived from removing the state of stimulation at the source of the drive and *not* necessarily to take satisfaction from an object per se. Lacan (1981) quickly picks up on the drive’s paradox—namely, it seems Freud is theorizing the presence of not one but two aims of the drive while at the same time maintaining that the ultimate aim of the drive, in every instance, is satisfaction. In other words, Freud appears to be stating that the drive has the (first) aim of satisfaction of removing the stimulation at its source and the (second) aim of attaining satisfaction from objects that might serve as intermediate aim.
Lacan’s answer to this apparent confusion is that Freud is correct in both instances. Yes, the drive’s ultimate aim in every instance is satisfaction, and yes, the drive attains this ultimate aim by paradoxically aiming at intermediary objects. Here, Lacan uses the analogy of goal versus aim in archery to explicate the dual aims of the drive: In archery one has the goal of hitting the bull’s eye, but, at the same time, one does not aim the arrow directly at the bull’s eye; rather, one must account for wind, gravity, etc. Thus the archer’s aim must be different from the archer’s goal; furthermore, the archer hits the goal only insofar as the aim and goal are different from one another. Similarly, the drive has the goal of removing the source stimulation and it achieves this goal by aiming at intermediary objects: “If the drive may be satisfied without attaining what . . . would be the satisfaction of its end of reproduction, it is because it is a partial drive, and its aim is simply to return to its circuit” (179).

But, we have been contending, the problematic is the problematic of affluent late capitalist society. How, then, does the drive structure help elucidate what is at stake in its cultural logic? First, it is clear that in order to attain its goal of satisfaction the drive must maintain a certain ethical difference between its goal and its aim—that is to say, the drive must not aim directly at satisfaction or else risk losing it all together. But Lacan’s point is that this unethical head dive into the abyss of satisfaction is entirely possible. The name he gives to the logic that conflates aim and drive is the superego. Of the superego, Lacan states, “Nothing forces anyone to enjoy except the superego. The superego is the imperative of jouissance—Enjoy!” (1988, 3). In the superego logic, enjoyment is not simply an aim, nor a goal; rather, it is an imperative—an imperative that commands: Enjoy! Because the superego aims directly at enjoyment, it compels the subject to pursue it directly. In this way, objects no longer have any dignity of their own—that is, objects are no longer the bearers of enjoyments, the things from which to attain one’s enjoyment—rather, they become insignificant in light of the ultimate object of enjoyment.

Lacanian theorist Alenka Zupancic (2003) illustrates the stakes with the literary figure of Don Juan: Don Juan pursues his enjoyment directly, and as such, to him, the numerous women he copulates with are not dignified in themselves but are merely apparatuses for his enjoyment. Zupancic writes: “Don Juan can fuck as much as he likes, but, finally, it is he who is being fucked by the signifier, that is, by the famous list that he has to fill up with as many names as possible” (84–85). In other words, because he must use women precisely as enjoyment—that is, he directly aims at his enjoyment—enjoyment itself becomes his Master and he must obey it by forever pursuing more and more women.

Likewise, today’s affluent society faces the same conflict: though for some of us, sex may not be the issue (certainly, today, Don Juan is a kind of para-
digm for the late capitalist subject), we are compelled by advertisements, commercials, and other aspects of culture to Consume! and to Enjoy! Today, even something seemingly as innocent as knowledge has been commodified. Guy Debord, in his seminal text *The Society of the Spectacle* (another text influential to May ’68), recognized how in late capitalism—his term is, of course, “the society of the spectacle”—knowledge has become a commodity: “A culture now wholly commodity was bound to become the star commodity of the society of the spectacle. . . . The whole complex system of production, distribution and consumption of knowledge is already equivalent to 29 percent of the annual gross national product of the United States” (1995, 137–38, original emphasis). The pursuit of greater, more innovative amounts of knowledge can, in late capitalism, become a tireless pursuit of enjoyment—this, of course, apparent in how the academic must commodify himself or herself by etching out a niche, thereby turning himself or herself into a rare commodity. Thus today, objects are not bearers of enjoyment but mere bumps on the road to enjoyment (a necessary evil if you will), which in the end enables enjoyment to become the Master that demands that we accumulate a never-ending list of objects.

**NOT ONE BUT TWO DEATHS**

Lacan’s reading of the superego as an imperative to Enjoy! must not be read against but with Freud. That is to say, Freud himself constructed the theoretical framework that could be adapted to our current historical moment of late capitalism. In *Totem and Taboo* (Freud 1989), he gives his famous historical construction of the primal father and the horde; here, in this original society, the primal father bars his sons from the women, leaving only himself, the father, to have unlimited access to enjoyment. As Freud’s construction goes, the sons plot against the father and murder him in order to access enjoyment. To their dismay, their parricide does not open the door to the women but, quite the contrary, puts the women, and therefore their enjoyment, further out of reach. How so?—because with the father gone the brothers come to realize that they are of equal status and fear risking a struggle with each other. Thus the sons erect the primal father once again in the form of the totem animal in order to institute the father’s ban on the women, thereby circumventing any struggle between them.

We should take notice of two points in Freud’s construction: first, after their parricide, the brothers are barred from the women not by a father’s No! but precisely because the dead father now enables them to enjoy, and, in fact, incites them to enjoy; and second, the father’s law to Enjoy! is what constitutes the brothers’ social structure. Of course, Freud does not mean for us to
accept his construction as the original form of society in our historical trajectory. But this does not mean he intends his construction to be a myth. Rather, Freud’s construction remains unthinkable from our historical social juncture precisely because it occurs at the moment of inauguration of our historical trajectory. That is to say, with this construction, Freud locates the structural cause for our social order, and as its cause, it remains unthinkable as such within the social order itself. We can now see that Lacan’s reading of the superego imperative is already at work in Freud’s primal father construction: namely, the dead father’s law is not a directly prohibitive one—it is not No!—but rather, a permissive one: Enjoy! And the superego binds the community through its command to enjoyment.

Through a close reading of Marquis de Sade, in Ethics, Lacan suggests that there exist not one but two deaths: the first is the real bodily death, but the second is a symbolic death (for example, burial).9 The ethical Act of Antigone is located in her willingness to accept the second death, or put differently, to become symbolically dead, or unrecognizable, to the community in which she lives. This second death of Antigone’s constitutes her relation to the community as an included exclusion. She goes through this second death by renouncing Creon’s edict and burying her brother’s body. Creon’s edict does not deprive the community of the enjoyment of burying Polynices and perhaps celebrating him as a hero, but rather, his edict compensates for this loss of enjoyment with the demand that we redeploy our enjoyment within the community itself—thereby investing the community with a libidinal charge that binds it together. That is to say, Creon’s edict, while consciously and overtly demanding the prohibition on burying Polynices, has within it a secondary and unconscious, but no less forceful, demand that the citizens of Thebes enjoy by participating in the resultant community. So when Antigone refuses to be held under Creon’s law—that is, she undergoes the second death—she not only refuses the law but refuses the very terms that hold together the community itself. Her appearing dead to the law, then, excludes her not only from the very community that is formed by the law but from the paradoxical position within it: included exclusion. In this way, we may read Creon’s edict as a form of the superego, as it libidinally binds Thebes together, and Antigone’s ethical Act is precisely her appearing as dead to this superego edict.

The ethical Act today does not differ in structure from that of Antigone’s. Thus, for us, the ethical Act must be to fall into a second death by renouncing the superego edict to Enjoy! This refusal to pursue enjoyment at the cost of reducing all objects to abject refuse is the Act par excellence. Indeed, such an Act would appear absurd to affluent late capitalist society. But we must at once take into account that Antigone’s Great Refusal of Creon’s edict is not
simply a transgression, because a transgression can only be accomplished against the background of a law that can be transgressed in the first place. In this way, Antigone’s refusal is of a more radical type precisely because it seeks to dislodge the law itself and to make the law disappear. But at the same time, we must keep in mind that Antigone’s refusal is no act of willpower, which assumes a type of endurance against the odds that the law creates. Rather, it is more proper to conceive of Antigone’s refusal as “beyond good and evil,” insofar as it cannot be registered against the measure of the law; it is precisely outside the law.

LACAN WITH MARCUSE, OR:
THE GREAT REFUSAL AS THE DEATH DRIVE

Lacan calls Antigone’s Act the embodiment of the death drive at its purest: “When Antigone depicts herself . . . what is she identifying herself with, if it isn’t that inanimate condition in which Freud taught us to recognize the form in which the death instinct is manifest” (Lacan 1992, 281), and “yet she pushes to the limit the realization of something that might be called the pure and simple desire of death as such” (282). Why does Lacan make this argument? Let us return to the drive structure that we explained a moment ago. Because the drive structure has as its ultimate goal the elimination of its own stimulus, it can be said that the drive’s ultimate aim—i.e., satisfaction—is its own elimination, a zero state of rest—or to put it another way, every drive has death within it. Using a Heraclitean fragment as an illustration of the drive, Lacan says: “To the bow is given the name of life and its work is death” (1981, 177). Here, Lacan is playing on the oscillation of the Greek word bios, from which meanings of “the bow” and “political life” are derived. Dual in its meaning, the bow is (political) life and its work is death. In other words, in Lacan’s reading, the drive is the motor-force of life and its work is death—i.e., elimination of its own stimulus. Thus the drive is split insofar as it always already has death as part of its structure.

Far from reinterpreting Freud, Lacan’s Heraclitean digression is a direct reference to him—that is, Heraclitus is to Lacan as Schopenhauer is to Freud. For Freud, external conditions in the forms of pleasure and reality caused the drive to temporarily divert from its ultimate goal by finding a circuitous route to it. Pinpointing that reality itself is what derails the drive, Freud suggests that the installation of the reality and its logic of enjoyment is precisely what distracts the subject from death. But, of course, this “gift” of reality’s is not without its trappings, for the subject must now obey a new law, the law to Enjoy! if it wants to persist in its life. It is at this moment that Lacan asserts the
necessity to conceptualize not one but two deaths: the death that would be to eliminate the drive altogether, as distinct from the death to the symbolic law of enjoyment in order to return to the track that puts it on the course toward the ultimate goal. To choose the second death, then, is to choose to embrace the death drive in a pure Act, and it is this move that is accomplished by Antigone. In a way, to embrace the death drive is to paradoxically die symbolically in order to return to living—or, borrowing Lacan’s own formula: to the drive is given the name of death and its work is life!

So, far from a solipsistic acceptance of death, the Lacanian death drive is immortality as such—that is, a literal life beyond death. To put it in a slightly different way: The Lacanian death drive assures us that there is something beyond the current symbolic order (which, of course, might be a truth that is paralyzing in its own way). Or to use Freud’s own phrasing: The death drive is what enables us to posit a life that exists “beyond the pleasure principle.”

Could we not rewrite Marcuse’s ethical stance of the Great Refusal in terms of Lacan’s own reading of the Freudian death drive? In this rewriting, does the Great Refusal not become a form of Lacan’s ethical Act? When Marcuse calls upon the intellectual and material institutions to refuse to cooperate with advanced capitalism and its military complex, is he not calling on them to fall into a kind of second death, insofar as a capitalist logic is what determines the social symbolic realm itself? It is my contention that at the impasse of his former advocacy of Eros in an era when the cultural logic of capitalism is precisely that (to Enjoy!), Marcuse reformulated his stance by calling for the Great Refusal to abide in that realm, and in so doing, he opened the possibility for Thantos to serve as the new basis for radical politics.

Thus we should read Lacan with Marcuse in their respective notions of the death drive qua Act and the death drive qua Great Refusal as mutual attempts to think up a political and ethical stance to be taken in our current era of affluent capitalist society (i.e., a society dominated by the superego’s imperative to Enjoy!). I claimed earlier that today the political fight is the fight for death, and now we are in a place to fully flesh out this thesis: Marcuse’s initial challenge for life still holds, though today it has taken on new terms such that rather than directly embracing Eros what is now necessary is to embrace Thanatos—such an embrace is a political stance—and by an Act to embrace the death drive we recover the terms necessary to fight once again for life. Thus we recognize that in a paradox the fight for life is the fight for death, but it is the political fight.

So we are left with this challenge from Marcuse: All you who wish to be revolutionaries must embrace the Great Refusal against the capitalist logic that tempts you. We are also left with this challenge from Lacan: All you who wish to be revolutionaries must embrace the second death in a true Act. To-
gether, it is clear, they are issuing this joint challenge: The revolutionary stance, today, is that of Thanatos, the death drive. The only question that remains is: Will we accept this challenge?

NOTES

1. See chapters 1 and 2 in this volume. Also, see Kellner (2005).
2. For an excellent critical account of *Eros and Civilization* that differs from mine, see Kellner (1984).
3. I must emphasize that it is Marcuse who claims that Freud relies upon scarcity as a foil. For, it seems to me, Freud is concerned more with necessity (Ananke), which makes for very different grounds. Though I lament that I cannot go further into the implications of exchanging scarcity with necessity, I must state my difference here with Marcuse.
4. For more on May ’68 and for Marcuse’s relationship to it, see Ross (2004).
5. See, for example, Lacan (1987). His *Seminar XVII: L’envers de la psychanalyse* (Lacan 1991) was given at this time.
6. For more on Lacanian ethics, see Zupancic (2000).
7. For other readings of Lacan and Antigone, see Copjec (2002) and Zupancic 2000.
8. Slavoj Žižek has done much in developing the notion of the Act (see Žižek 1989, 2000).

REFERENCES


For a Marcusian Ecopedagogy

Richard Kahn

By saying no to the devastating empire of greed, whose center lies in North America, we are saying yes to another possible America. . . . In saying no to a peace without dignity, we are saying yes to the sacred right of rebellion against injustice.

—Eduardo Galeano, quoted in Espada (2000)

In many respects, the twenty-first century has opened to the politics of the “no.” The Bush administration’s neoliberal and imperialist hegemons, as well as other key figures involved in expanding the U.S. market economy and military, have sought to erode or supersede any and all limits to their behavior. Thus they have said no to legal protocols of war by abandoning the Geneva Convention; no to civil liberties and rights by rejecting the World Court internationally and domestically instituting (and then expanding in the face of widespread protest) the USA PATRIOT Act; and no to the regulation of capitalist greed by amending or repealing laws and other measures that were enacted to variously prevent corporate monopoly, profiteering, industrial development beyond reason, and “natural resource” extraction beyond sustainability. Indeed, as this chapter will argue, the ruling class today promotes a ubiquitous sociocultural attitude that can best be described as the capitalist system’s extinction of life generally in the form of a growing global ecological catastrophe.¹

In response, the populist grassroots have mobilized as decidedly antiglobalization and antiwar, and their street slogans evince the negative character of the new social movements: “No blood for oil,” “Not in our name,” “No more years!” However, while the antiglobalization movement has incorporated Greens into its membership and been associated with important ecological
battles such as Cochabamba, Bolivia’s “water war” (Olivera 2004), its aim has been more anticorporate than proecology thus far. Likewise, though U.S.-led war has evoked ecological issues of crucial importance, such as the environmental effects of an oil economy and the widespread environmental toxicity produced through the American use of depleted uranium–enhanced weapons and vehicles, the antiwar movement has largely evaded ecological critique in favor of anti-imperialist, antiracist, and prodemocracy discourses. The result has been an unfortunate failure to deeply integrate the environmental movement into contemporary progressive causes, and vice versa, such that the socially educative potentials of what I have referred to as “a critical dialogue between social and eco-justice” (Kahn 2003) have not materialized in the large.

Yet such dialogues have begun to emerge in the radical margins of militant ecological politics, with affiliated organizations such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and Animal Liberation Front (ALF) attempting to produce a revolutionary society based on critiques of the multiple fronts of systemic oppression (Pickering 2002; Rosebraugh 2004) as they move toward creating “interspecies alliance politics” (Best 2003).3 Having caused damage totaling more than $100 million over the last decade by most accounts, these groups have been labeled by the government as ecoterrorists and are promoted as one of today’s “most serious domestic terrorism threats” in the United States (Lewis 2005). While the charge of terrorism here is patently wrong and politically motivated (Best and Nocella 2004, 361–78), the government is correct that ecomilitancy appears to be on the rise in the face of widespread environmental crisis and the utter failure of the mainstream environmental movement to offer successful opposition to the most rapacious aspects of capitalist development. Indeed, a 2005 RAND report even posits the greater convergence of the antiglobalization movement with ecological militancy over the next five years and predicts the potential “emergence of a new radical left-wing fringe across American society that is jointly directed against ‘big business,’ ‘big money,’ corporate power, and uncaring government” (Chalk et al. 2005, 51).

All of this makes me think of the great contemporary philosopher of radical negation, Herbert Marcuse—the so-called father of the New Left—who theorized the radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s and saw in them the revolutionary potential to act as educational catalysts in the transformation of society. In fact, as the recent critical reader on Marcuse asserts (Abromeit and Cobb, 2004), as well as Douglas Kellner (1992), Timothy Luke (1994), Carolyn Merchant (1994), Roger Gottlieb (1994), and Henry Blanke (1996) in the last decade, ecological politics were an important aspect of Marcuse’s revolutionary critique, and he should be considered a central theorist of the relationship between advanced capitalist society and the manifestation of ecolog-
ical crisis, as well as of how to overcome this crisis through the creation of revolutionary struggle and the search for new life sensibilities that would overcome the nature/culture dichotomy that the Frankfurt School saw as a driving force behind Western civilization.  

Yet Marcuse’s philosophy seems mostly unnoticed by current ecological militants, as the movement is dominated on the one hand by the sort of pervading anti-intellectualism that Marcuse found in the New Left (Kellner 2005, 152) and on the other hand by a linkage with questionable readings and uses of the philosophy of anarcho-primitivism. Though groups like the ELF and ALF have been key in educating the public about the dangers and horrors of crucial ecological issues of the moment—like genetic engineering, urban sprawl, deforestation, automobile pollution and the effects of the oil economy, wildlife preservation, factory farms, and biomedical animal tests (Best and Nocella 2004; Rosebraugh 2004)—they arguably lack a coherent theory of education and social revolution that could bolster and legitimate their advocacy.

This chapter, then, seeks to make (in however introductory a fashion) a Marcusian intervention into the radical ecological politics of the present moment and thereby “educate the educators” (i.e., activists). As an explication of Marcuse’s thought makes clear, groups like the ELF and ALF are undoubtedly social educators in that they hold key knowledge about the world that few possess; they have accordingly organized a politics (and to some degree a culture) that seeks to build upon and inform that knowledge. However, without a stronger theoretical basis, their politics run the risk of devolving into both a sort of vanguard elitism and despondent nihilism. Marcuse not only offers this theoretical basis but perhaps more than any other social theorist of recent memory combines the radical critique of society with a “positive utopianism” that can transcend pervading pessimism (Gur-Ze’ev 1998).

The chapter itself seeks to embody a sort of Marcusianism that moves beyond a straight explication that could run the risk of divorcing Marcuse’s thought—itself always changing to meet the requirements of the present moment—from its sociohistorical context. In this way, Marcuse is hailed as an inspiration and is in a way both a subject and object of the chapter. Correspondingly, I will at times move beyond the conceptual language that Marcuse himself used in order to better intervene in present issues, all the while keeping the overall spirit of Marcuse’s thought as a perpetual guide. I begin by tracing the conjunction between the birth of radical ecological politics and the New Left, then move to a reconsideration of whether a Marcusian politics and culture of social intolerance is legitimate under contemporary circumstances. Following, I outline a call for the reconstruction of a Marcusian “pro-life” politics, and then close with a discussion of how Marcuse provides an
underutilized theory of politics as education and a revolutionary conception of *humanitas*, through which Marcuse sought to overcome the historical struggle and dichotomy between culture and nature, as well as the human and nonhuman animal. The conclusion offered is that Marcuse is a founding figure of a revolutionary ecopedagogy that says “No!” to the violent destruction of the earth, as it works to manifest a critical posthumanism based upon new life sensibilities that amounts to a utopian “Yes!” that will come to displace and end domination and repression broadly conceived.

**THE MODERN BIRTH OF RADICAL ECOLOGICAL POLITICS**

I don’t like to call it a disaster. . . . I am amazed at the publicity for the loss of a few birds.

—Fred L. Hartley, then-president of Union Oil Company quoted in Clarke and Hemphill (2001)

In 1970, Earth Day largely marked the beginning of the modern environmental movement in the United States. Yet a good case can be made that Earth Day itself, along with the sort of radical ecological politics now associated with groups like the Earth Liberation Front, erupted out of an event that took place the prior year (Corwin 1989). While drilling for oil six miles off the coast of Santa Barbara on the afternoon of January 28, 1969, Union Oil Company’s equipment failures resulted in a natural-gas blowout from the new deep-sea hole they were excavating. Though the gas leak was quickly capped, the resulting pressure buildup produced five additional breaks along a nearby underwater fault line (it is California, after all), sending oil and gas billowing into the surrounding ocean. Ultimately, it took the better part of twelve days to stop the main leaks, and some three million gallons of crude oil were released into an eight-hundred-square-mile slick that contaminated the coastal waters, ruined thirty-five miles of shoreline, and damaged island ecologies. Amounting to a sort of Union Carbide disaster for nonhuman animals, over ten thousand birds, seals, dolphins, and other species were soon covered with tar, poisoned, or otherwise killed by chemical detergents used to break up the slick. Many more animals that did not die outright were adversely affected through destruction of their habitat, as the region became seriously polluted and took on the smell of the worst-regulated oil refinery plant.

Santa Barbara’s ecological catastrophe became a national media spectacle beamed into every American’s television on the nightly news and, drawing on the nascent environmental consciousness sparked during the 1950s by Aldo Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac* and the 1960s by Rachel Carson’s bestseller
Silent Spring, public outrage erupted at the sort of governmental decision making that allowed Big Oil to cavalierly despoil the country for profit. It was revealed that oil companies had corrupted the U.S. Geological Survey, whose job it was to oversee the granting of offshore land leases, and that such leases were routinely granted with little investigation as to their salience, save for that conducted by petroleum corporations themselves (whose data was private and could not be made a matter of public record). Further, corruption flowed from President Johnson’s administration on down, as the Vietnam War was proving overly costly and so a policy of producing additional federal revenues from selling off natural resources was enacted in order to manufacture the illusion of budgetary economic soundness on the part of the country. As a result, the Santa Barbara channel had been auctioned off at the nice price of $602 million, providing the green light for oil companies to do with it as they willed, as the former proposal to turn the area into a wildlife sanctuary was quietly dropped from the agenda (Pacific Research Institute 1999, 1).

Clearly, no one in power had ever stopped to question what the political effects of a giant slick in the Santa Barbara channel would be. A place of natural beauty that had been fighting as a community since the nineteenth century against the battleship-sized drill platforms stationed obtrusively on the horizon line, Santa Barbara was already mobilized on the issue. In the days following the spill, GOO (standing for Get Oil Out!) was created; it served as an organization to lead activist campaigns for reducing driving time, staging gas station boycotts, and burning oil company credit cards. Further, Santa Barbara was a city of wealth and intelligence. A home to many people with insider connections to alter the usual workings of the status quo, their pressure led to two major national policy changes: the enacting of a federal moratorium on leases for new offshore drilling (except in huge swaths of the Gulf of Mexico) and the passage in 1970 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Magna Carta of environmental legislation in the United States. Finally, Santa Barbara was also a university town that was a hotbed of 1960s youth activism and counterculture.

The New Left–friendly community of Isla Vista, in particular, was known for its radicalism in opposing police repression, staging war resistance, and defending leftist University of California, Santa Barbara professors who were being denied tenure and removed from their posts (Gault-Williams 1987). In 1970, Isla Vista militants responded with their own reply to the corporate energy cum military state by breaking into and razing the local branch of the Bank of America. The bank made a perfect target for many reasons. On the one hand, the bank was the community representative of capitalist business and, whether in its opposition to Cesar Chavez’s grape boycott or in its support for American imperialism (and hence the Vietnam War) through its opening of
branches in Saigon and Bangkok, Bank of America was seen as corrosive to the community’s social justice values. But there is a less well-known, though equally important, reason that the bank was targeted. Bank of America directors were also known to sit on the board of Union Oil and so were themselves seen as responsible for the terrible oil spill of 1969 (Cleaver 1970, 4).

In this context, though the Earth Liberation Front’s first American arson campaigns are dated only to 1997 (Rosebraugh 2004), the torching of Isla Vista’s Bank of America stands as one of the very first acts of uncompromising direct action to be found in U.S. environmentalism and thereby shows that radical ecological approaches to politics co-originated with the mainstream movement. However, unlike the mainstream, Isla Vista New Left radicals tethered their ecological sensibility to an anticapitalist and anti-imperialist stance that demanded a qualitative change in social relations. It was political moves such as this that served as an impetus for Marcuse in his end period to more straightforwardly announce the importance of ecological struggle as a central revolutionary theme. Thus groups like the ELF have a direct historical ally in Marcuse, and so today’s ecoradicals would benefit from a deeper investigation of Marcusian philosophy and its educational, political, and cultural implications.

RETURNING TO THE QUESTION OF RESISTING REPRESSIVE TOLERANCE

Civil disobedience has many permutations.
   You can block the streets in front of the United Nations.
   You can lay down on the tracks, keep the nuke trains out of town,
   Or you can pour gas on the condo and you can burn it down.

   —“Song for the Earth Liberation Front,”
   David Rovics (2004)

While there are dramatic differences between the political and cultural scene of the 1960s and the present, in many ways it seems like old times. Oil is again the center of political discussions as the Bush administration is hunkered down in a costly and apparently unwinnable Vietnam of its own making in Iraq. While Bush has promised to honor his father’s extension of the federal moratorium on offshore drilling until 2012, Big Oil has been working vigorously to gain access to the continental shelf, among other potential exploration sites such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in Alaska. In 2005, utilizing high domestic gas prices and the threat of blocked oil supplies due to war or natural disaster, oil lobbyists grafted an inclusion
onto Bush’s 2006 energy plan that will end the twenty-five-year bipartisan congressional moratorium on Outer Continental Shelf leasing (Dinesh 2005), and legislation to this effect passed the House in July 2006. Further, NEPA itself—the law created to make sure federal agencies properly account for potential environmental impacts prior to developing federal lands—has come under an all-out assault as the Bush administration seeks to free industries from what it deems to be a time-consuming and expensive legislative regulatory procedure (Reiterman 2005). This 2005 “mystery spill,” expectedly unclaimed by any oil company, once again painted Santa Barbara beaches black and killed some five thousand birds and other animals, making it one of the worst oil disasters of recent memory (Covarrubias and Weiss 2005). Less than a year later, Hurricane Katrina’s destruction of offshore refineries produced fifty large slicks along the Gulf Coast, rivaling the giant Exxon Valdez disaster in terms of oil spilled, as it became perhaps the greatest environmental catastrophe in the history of the United States.10

Yet three and a half decades have also brought startling changes. Whereas 1969’s spill both radicalized students into taking direct action against anti-environmental capitalism and galvanized a national environmental movement in the mainstream, 2005’s oil slick passed by relatively unnoticed. One might argue that in the present age, nothing short of the global warming megaspectacle of movies such as the scientifically absurd The Day After Tomorrow or Al Gore’s lecture-cum-political advertisement, An Inconvenient Truth, has enough emotional punch to break through the anaesthetized sensibilities of the seemingly oblivious masses.11 In this sense, the relatively rare devastation wrought by a killer tsunami rouses widespread attention today, as the public passes by news about the toxic burdens brought to bear upon life by corporate and state malfeasance with little more than a bored shrug and, perhaps, a blog post.12 For sure, since 1999’s Battle of Seattle the United States has seen a reinvention of public protest (Kellner and Kahn 2007), and while people continue to link images of the sixties with notions of social discontent, the recent global antiwar protest of February 15, 2003, and the mass protests at the 2004 Republican Convention in New York City (Kahn and Kellner 2005) demonstrated dissent on a scale far beyond that ever mustered by the flower-power youth. Still, why then did the counterculture of the 1960s seemingly accomplish so much while the contemporary left has appeared to suffer being overrun, consolidated, and ostensibly ignored despite its large numbers?

The answer requires a reconsideration of the past. Post-9/11, the United States has been engaged in a McCarthyesque crackdown on activists by branding them as terrorists, as corporations and the government intone treasured words like “freedom” and “democracy” (Best and Nocella 2004). The state portrays itself as a security apparatus in charge of preserving the liberal
ideal of tolerance, while it uses the extremism of groups like Al-Qaeda to smear all of its enemies with charges of tyrannical fundamentalism. Thus animal liberation activists like the SHAC7 are described as antidemocratic enemies of the state because of their willingness to directly challenge and attempt to shut down the self-imposed rights of corporations to cavalierly murder animals in the name of science and business, while SHAC7’s opponents regularly promote themselves as good citizens who recognize the right to voice even the most unpopular opinions as long as those opinions do not step beyond the bounds of free speech into “intimidation” (Best and Kahn 2005).

Herbert Marcuse wrote an important essay, “Repressive Tolerance” (1965), in which he examined the process by which the liberal state and its corporate members assert that they are fit models of democratic tolerance, as they insist that radical activists are subversive of the very ideals on which our society is based. In this essay, Marcuse notes that the claim that democratic tolerance requires activists to restrict their protests to legal street demonstrations and intragovernmental attempts to change policy is highly spurious. Tolerance, he says, arose as a political concept to protect the oppressed and minority viewpoints from being met with repressive violence from the ruling classes. However, when the call for tolerance is used by the ruling classes to protect themselves from interventions that seek to limit global violence and suppression, fear, and misery, it amounts to a perversion of tolerance that works to repress instead of liberate. Thus, Marcuse thought such tolerance deserves to be met, without compromise, by acts of revolutionary resistance, because capitalistic societies such as the United States manage to distort the very meanings of peace and truth by claiming that tolerance must be extended throughout the society by the weak to the violence and falsity produced by the strong.

Many have criticized Marcuse for advocating violence against the system in order to quash the system’s inherent violence (Kellner 1984, 283); however, the critique of repressive tolerance is key to understanding why revolutionary violence would remain, if not ethical, a noncontradictory and legitimate mode of political challenge toward effecting “qualitative change” (Marcuse 1968, 177). For a tolerance that defends life must be committed to opposing the overwhelming violence wrought by the military, corporations, and the state as the manifestation of their power, and it is, by definition, to fail to work for their overthrow when one actively or passively tolerates them. Therefore, Marcuse felt that revolutionary violence may in fact be necessary to move beyond political acts that side with, either consciously or unconsciously, and thereby strengthen the social agenda of the ruling classes. Further, he noted that the tremendous amount of concern (even among the left) evoked as to whether revolutionary violence is a just tactic fails to correlate to how often it is actually applied and practiced. Meanwhile, systemic
violence constantly goes on everywhere, either unnoticed and unchecked or celebrated outright. This goes to show, Marcuse felt, how hard it is to even think beyond the parameters set by repressive tolerance in a society such as our own, and this serves as yet another reason why such tolerance must, by any means necessary, be met with social intolerance.

Yet Marcuse also recognized a wide range of tactics, such as marching long-term through the institutions,14 grabbing positions of power wherever possible, and—in terms of ecological politics—“working within the capitalist framework” in order to stop “the physical pollution practiced by the system . . . here and now” (Marcuse 1972a, 61), if they were undertaken with a revolutionary thrust toward a more ecologically sound, peaceful, and free planet.15 On the other hand, Marcuse’s key tactic has to be his concept of the Great Refusal, which designated “a political practice of methodical disengagement from and refusal of the Establishment, aiming at a radical transvaluation of values” (Marcuse 1968, 6). By rejecting death-principle culture and imagining an alternative reality principle based on reconciliatory life instincts capable of integrating humanity with its animal nature, Marcuse saw the Great Refusal from the first in ecological terms.16 This idea gripped the counterculture of the 1960s, who set out to create a plethora of new cultural forms and institutions (such as the environmental movement) across the whole spectrum of society.

Certainly, there are also bold new cultural forays in today’s radical ecological politics. Increasingly, individuals and countercultural collectives are attempting to reject the mega-war-machine of the mainstream, as they take up veganism, permaculture, and other alternative lifestyles such as the Straight-Edge movement, which mixes urban punk stylings with a commitment to self-control, clean living, and political expressions like animal rights. Additionally, radical gathering events such as the Total Liberation Tour travel the country, and a variety of infoshops are actively investigating green political philosophies like social ecology and primitivism. Further, the last few years have seen a broad array of oppositional technopolitics (Kahn and Kellner 2005, 2007). Blogs and websites are mushrooming everywhere to organize affinity groups, cover crucial issues dropped from the mainstream media, and practice hactivism, which jams corporate and state networks, gathers otherwise secret information, and attempts to generate anti-capitalist culture. Indeed, as to the latter, hardly an urban setting can be found that is free of some form of regular culture jam.

But as today’s popular culture seems dominated by media spectacle and all manner of mass-commodified technological gadgetry as never before, eco-radicals must work harder still to distinguish the ways in which their culture represents a positive realization of antioppressive norms based on ideals of
peace, beauty, and the subjectification of nature and is not just a nihilistic disapproval of a society that they may rightly deem unredeemable. That is, from a Marcusian perspective: A politics of burning down that lacks a correlative social, cultural, and educational reconstructive focus should not itself be tolerated.

REIMAGINING A PRO-LIFE POLITICS

Be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless.
Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds.

—Chief Seattle, quoted in Clark (1985)

George W. Bush has been characterized as a pro-life leader for his desire to overturn Roe v. Wade, ban stem cell research, and stop funding for international aid organizations that offer counsel on abortions and provide contraceptives. Of course, in his role as outright war maker in Afghanistan and Iraq, indirect war maker through his global neoliberal structural adjustment policies, and ecological war maker as the worst environmental president in U.S. history (Brechin and Freeman 2004, 10), Bush is anything but pro-life. Rather, as the sort of über-representative of the affluent society, its forces, and its values, Bush is a fitting figurehead for a politics of mass extinction, global poverty, and ecological catastrophe. But let us make no mistake about it, death-dealing politics such as Bush’s extend far beyond the ideological confines of his neoliberal and neoconservative administration and so, from a perspective of radical ecology, strategies such as the “Anybody but Bush” that liberals, left liberals, and other progressives attempted to use during the 2004 election cycle are highly misguided.

Marcuse himself referred to the sort of systemic disregard for life evinced by corporate states such as the United States as “ecocide” (Kellner 2005, 173)—the attempt to annihilate natural places by turning them into capitalist cultural spaces, a process that works hand in hand with the genocide and dehumanization of people as an expression of the market economy’s perpetual expansion. More recently, others speak of ecocide as the destruction of the higher-order relations that govern ecosystems generally (Broswimmer 2002), as when economies of need take areas characterized by complexity and diversity like the Amazonian rain forest and reduce them to the deforested and unstable monoculture of soybeans for cattle feed. However, while it is no doubt possible to disable an ecosystem from sustaining much life, it is not clear that one can actually kill it. Instead, we are witnessing a process by which bioregions are being transformed pathologically from natural ecologies of scale that
support life to capitalist ecologies that function beyond limit and threaten death. In this way, the current globalization of capitalism that institutes classist, racist, sexist, and speciesist oppression is a sort of biocidal agent.

It is biocidal, also, in a more philosophical sense. The term *bios* is a Greek word that has come to designate natural life as studied by the science of *biology*. Originally, though, *bios* meant a sort of characterized life (Kerenyi 1976, xxxii)—as in a *biography*—that is demonstrated by the active subjectivity of sentient beings. In this manner, organizations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have as their ultimate goal the social recognition of animals’ *bios* (Guillermo 2005) and, accordingly, want them to be afforded the status of being considered subjects of a life that are therefore deserving of rights. When compared with the larger sociopolitical context against which PETA struggles, however, the McDonaldization of the planet is obviously moving in the opposite direction. Most beings today, including the great Earth and the sustaining cosmos beyond, are instead increasingly reduced to one-dimensional objects for exploitation, and should they provide too much resistance to the schemes of profit and power in the process, they are tagged for systematic removal.

In stark contrast to the objectification of life that typifies mainstream culture in the United States, as well as to the sense of life as “characterized” that is represented by the idea of *bios*, the Greeks (in a manner similar to many indigenous cultures) held that life was fundamentally *zoë*—a multidimensional and multiplicitous realm of indestructible being (Kerenyi 1976). Thus in Greek culture primeval and natural places were consecrated to the pagan deity Pan (whose name means “all”), and these were held to be sacred groves where *zoë* was especially concentrated in its power. The final point, then, is that ruling class politics are also zoöcidal, though not in the sense that it kills *zoë* (which cannot be killed by definition). Rather, in instituting a transnational network of murderous profanity over the sacred, in paving paradise in order to put up a parking lot, capitalist life is zoöcidal in that it seeks to colonize any and all spaces in which cultures based on understandings and reverence for *zoë* can thrive.\(^\text{17}\)

The call, therefore, to future radicals is clear. They must, if they are not doing so already, integrate the ecological critique into their politics and culture and so become ecological radicals.\(^\text{18}\) Further, ecological radicals themselves must increasingly move to develop cultural relationships to nature that exhibit the sort of positive liberatory values that have emerged out of a long history of social struggle and which Marcuse felt could be accessed through the subordination of “destructive energy to erotic energy” (Marcuse 1992, 36) in the present age. Of course, ecoradicals will also have to learn, grow, and ultimately teach, the values and practices that unfold a new sensibility toward life
that emerges from the attempt to liberate and reconcile with the Earth proper. In this respect, perhaps, the reimagination of a pro-life politics in which human and nonhuman beings are understood as both *bios* and *zoë* represents for us the great anticapitalist challenge of the current historical moment. In the face of expanding zoöcide, to think that this could occur without widespread rebellion and, ultimately, revolution, seems extremely doubtful. As Marcuse remarked: “In defense of life: the phrase has explosive meaning in the affluent society” (1966, 20). Today, radical ecological politics such as practiced by the ELF seem determined to prove Marcuse right.

**ECOPEDAGOGY AS POLITICAL EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL POLITICS**

The real change which would free men and things, remains the task of political action.

—Herbert Marcuse (1972b)

To my mind, Marcuse is one of the preeminent philosophers of education in modern times, not only because he lived as well as propounded a radical theory of education as a centerpiece of his social critique and political plan of action, but because his educational theory was essentially linked to the ecological problem of human and nonhuman relations due to his understanding that education is a cultural activity, and that in Western history such culture has systematically defined itself against nature in both a hierarchically dominating and repressive manner. As a result, Marcuse conceived education in both an intra- and extra-institutional scope, and ultimately saw it as incorporating all of social life and the total existential development of humanity toward achievement of new life sensibilities and consciousness capable of “dispelling the false and mutilated consciousness of the people so that they themselves experience their condition, and its abolition, as vital need, and apprehend the ways and means of their liberation” (Marcuse 1972a, 28). For Marcuse, then, education and revolution were largely synonymous forces, which struggled against their reified forms as one-dimensionalizing political apparati, corrupting professions, and dehumanizing cultural forms.

Recently, in a number of books and essays, Peter McLaren has become a leading voice in the call for and development of a “revolutionary pedagogy” that can heretically challenge market-logic and reformist ideology in favor of whole-scale social transformation. In fact, in an essay written with Donna Houston (McLaren and Houston 2005), McLaren has even charted a sort of “eco-socialist pedagogy” that stands in defense of convicted ELF activists.
such as Jeffrey Luers, as it militates against what he terms the “Hummer” educational machinations of the mainstream and capitalist status quo. However, where Marcusian erotic archetypes could deeply inform and bolster such a pedagogy, McLaren has instead pointed to the symbolic (and other) influence of Che Guevara and Paulo Freire (McLaren 2000) and, most recently, to purveyors of the Bolivarian revolution such as Hugo Chavez (see McLaren and Jaramillo 2007). Indeed, while Freire himself finally recognized the importance of ecological struggle at the end of his life, writing that “it must be present in any educational practice of a radical, critical, and liberating nature” (Freire 2004, 47), it can be argued that the U.S. educational left’s reliance upon Freire over the last thirty years significantly hampered the pedagogical developments vis-à-vis nature and nonhuman animals (Kahn 2003; Bowers and Appfel-Marglin 2005) that Marcuse himself had reached as early as the 1950s and 1960s.

Interestingly, both Freire and Marcuse sought through their pedagogy and politics to promote the goal of humanization, and as Henry Giroux notes in his introduction to Freire’s *Politics of Education*, Freire himself developed a partisan view of education and praxis that “in its origins and intentions was for ‘choosing life’” (Giroux 1985, xxiv–xxv). Yet Marcuse differs from Freire in a key respect in that he, like Antonio Gramsci, began with the primacy of the political sphere through which he derived the necessity of education—politics as education—whereas Freire’s work starts with education and works toward the goal of political action, thereby producing a politics of education or theory of education as politics (Cohen 1998). Thus while Freire’s work is more easily tailored to education professionals and teachers, as the critical pedagogy movement that has centered on schools as a primary site of struggle and tethers notions of literacy to political literacy demonstrates, Marcuse offers a theory of education as a political methodology that is “more than discussion, more than teaching and learning and writing” (Kellner 2005, 85). He feels that unless and until education “goes beyond the classroom, until and unless it goes beyond the college, the school, the university, it will remain powerless. Education today must involve the mind and the body, reason and imagination, intellectual and the instinctual needs, because our entire existence has become the subject/object of politics, of social engineering” (Kellner 2005, 85).

Ilan Gur-Ze’ev (2002) has pointed out how Marcuse promoted a form of German Bildung, or the cultural learning and practices that intend the shaping and formation of more fully realized human beings (Kellner 2003), as counter-education. Marcuse himself was more prone to speak of the goal of “humanity” (Kellner 2001, 140), the classical ideal of humanitas (Kellner 2001, 77, 132) or even the universal sense of human dignity connoted by
Menschlichkeit (Marcuse 1977, 16), but always in a manner akin to Bildung. Hence, Marcuse extols an ideal of human potential and freedom that can emerge only through political action as education. Historically, educational projects of humanitas and Bildung, while serving progressive purposes, also promoted self-contradictions of class privilege and other forms of oppression, yet Marcuse hardly utilized these conceptions in an idealistic manner and instead sought to use them as critical challenges to the educational and political status quo of the current day. Marcuse also enlisted them as utopian thrusts to explore and expand the Marxist conception of “human needs”—the full development of which is necessary for the appropriation of nature that would afford the realization of humanity as a “species being”—as being something more than an epiphenomenon of coming socialist institutions by rooting them in the universally instinctual (i.e., natural) needs of individuals (Marcuse 1972a, 62; Kellner 2001, 136). In this, species being itself ultimately opens up to other species in a common heritage, and Marcuse’s revolutionary humanism came to take the form of a critical posthumanism that advanced the hope for an end to anthropocentric oppression and exploitation of the nonhuman (Marcuse 1972a, 68–69).

Against those like Blanke (1996, 190) who find evidence of a mystical consciousness in Marcuse’s attempt to reconcile human culture with nature by liberating the latter as a subject in its own right, the correlative of the new sensibilities afforded by a qualitative change in society, Marcuse’s thinking is nothing of the sort. As with Horkheimer and Adorno (1979), Marcuse recognized the “domination of man through the domination of nature” (Marcuse 1972a, 62)—that nature was the primordial object whose subjection distinguished and founded human control—and thus, in the end, the “realization of nature through the realization of man as ‘species being’” (Kellner 2001, 132) must logically represent the historical end goal of the movement toward liberation. His point is, first, that education must seek to forge a new nature, which must be envisioned and aesthetically materialized because such would be the dialectical condition for the emergence of socialism and a new culture of human relations. Secondly, beyond what he sees as base Marxist accounts that leave even this form of nature as but a sphere of productive force for non-class-based social relations, Marcuse posits an ecology of freedom that finds that as people start to live freely for their own sake and generate instinctual autonomy, this must be mirrored externally by the increasing relation to all that surrounds them in the spirit and form of freedom. Dialectically speaking, the liberation of the external environment and the production of peace and freedom also entail the potential realization of the subjective conditions that could be the basis of a “new science” capable of manifesting a free society.
It seems clear to me that if Marcuse were alive today, he would not hail New Age transcendentalism as a solution to the gross globalization of capital, the external human plight of over three billion, and the internal psychical plight of billions more still. Based on his ecological writings, I am led to conclude that he would be deeply alarmed by the unprecedented mass extinction of species, the waylaying of planetary ecosystems, and the mass production of zoöcide at levels that can soon no longer even profit the ruling classes, as they too are threatened. Finally, I would like to imagine that Marcuse would have built on his ecological philosophy and politics to become a tireless promoter and organizer of a sort of ecopedagogy that is not a simple addendum to standard curricula, but rather an attempt to raze education under capitalism in favor of a pedagogy of the repressed that seeks to wage revolutionary political struggle toward a future culture based on radical notions of sustainability and a humanized nature that can represent values of tolerance, beauty, subjectivity, and freedom on a cosmic scale. With the scale of suffering so nearly unimaginable and the politics of counterrevolution so fully in effect at the present, Marcuse might well highlight the marginal political and cultural actors, such as the Earth Liberation Front, who work to educate society as to the gravity of the consequences of their political economy and provide the hope of alternative relationships in and with the world. Without a doubt, in turning earth warriors into leading pedagogues (who though, as this essay has declared, nevertheless stand in need of their own education as educators), the Marcusian spirit has moved far afield from most contemporary educational discourse, even in ecological and environmental education. However, this may well be, not because of the naivety or insufficiency of the educational projects and political goals mounted by the earth or animal liberation movements, but rather because present versions of academic ecoliteracy are themselves seriously, and perhaps gravely, depoliticized.

NOTES

1. According to the recent United Nations Environment Programme *Global Environmental Outlook 3* report, a vision of global capitalist development is consonant only with earthly extinction. It claimed that either great changes will be made in our societies and cultural lifestyles now or an irrevocable ecological crisis will descend upon the planet by 2032 (UNEP 2002, 13–15). For a more detailed engagement of ecological crisis, see Broswimmer (2002) and Kovel (2002).

2. Many people speak instead of the “alter-globalization movement” in order to highlight that the movement is not simply negative in its outlook. However, “antiglobalization” remains the most popular moniker, and its negative character is arguably its most central feature to date. See Kellner and Kahn (2007).
3. The Earth Liberation Front “is an international underground organization that uses direct action in the form of economic sabotage to stop the exploitation and destruction of the natural environment” (Pickering 2002, 58). Its guidelines are (1) to cause as much economic damage as possible to a given entity that is profiting off the destruction of the natural environment and life for selfish greed and profit; (2) to educate the public on the atrocities committed against the environment and life; and (3) to take all necessary precautions against harming life.

4. An article by Andrew Light (in Abromeit and Cobb 2004, 227–35) importantly argues that Marcuse was a key, but often uncited, figure in advancing nonanthropocentric theory. However, Light also questionably connects his own reformist environmentalism, which is based in bettering policy and achieving mainstream consensus, to Marcuse’s militant and radical ecological politics.

5. Jürgen Habermas also briefly notes Marcuse’s importance as an ecological theorist when he writes in his afterword to *Herbert Marcuse: Towards a Critical Theory of Society*, “Long before the Club of Rome, Marcuse fought against ‘the hideous concept of progressive productivity according to which nature is there gratis in order to be exploited’” (Kellner 2001, 236). Interestingly, Kevin DeLuca (2002) has written how the Frankfurt School offers a theoretical base for radical environmentalism, but overlooks Marcuse’s work in favor of an analysis of Horkheimer and Adorno, as well as Marcuse’s student William Leiss.

6. On anarcho-primitivism see Jensen (2006, 2007), Perlman (1983), Zerzan (2002), and journals like *Green Anarchy* and *Fifth Estate*. I should note here that in many respects I think that no better critique of industrial society, from an ecological perspective, has been made than by these chief theorists who compose the anarcho-primitivist movement. Even the Unabomber Manifesto revealed trenchant insights into the manifest problems in contemporary technological society, despite other theoretical failures contained therein. However, despite making the strongest statement of ethical rage over the contemporary destruction of the planet by civilized, capitalist society, I feel that they fail to deal adequately and honestly with the existential situation faced by opponents of that society who stand in a dialectical, if not directly substantive, relationship to that same society. Hence, I believe Marcuse’s theory provides a more fertile and consistent ground from which to produce ecopedagogical resistance, as it is thoroughly dialectical and reconstructive without being altogether accommodating or reformist merely of our technological/ecological planetary relationship.

7. On the Isla Vista incident, see the 1970 documentary film, *Don’t Bank on Amerika*, by Peter Biskind, Stephen Hornick, and John C. Manning (Cinecong Films).

8. Others (Chalk et al. 2005, 47; Jarboe 2002) date the ELF as originating earlier in the 1990s, as an outcropping of Earth First!, the environmental group that counseled “monkeywrenching” as “resistance to the destruction of natural diversity and wilderness” (Foreman, in Foreman and Haywood 2002, 9). However, monkeywrenching was specifically defined as “not revolutionary,” in that such acts “do not aim to overthrow any social, political, or economic system” (10). Likewise, while the FBI connects the ELF to the birth of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society in 1977, under the rubric of “special interest extremism” (Jarboe 2002), Sea Shepherd’s mis-
sion to conserve and protect the oceans and its commitment to international law and the UN World Charter for Nature disclose it as a nonrevolutionary group different in kind than the ELF.

9. As proof of Marcuse’s support of militant (over mainstream) environmentalism, one should note the beginning to Marcuse’s 1972 talk “Ecology and Revolution” (Kellner 2005)—a piece essentially dating, as we have seen, to the beginning of the U.S. environmental movement. In that talk, Marcuse begins by declaring, “Coming from the United States, I am a little uneasy discussing the ecological movement, which has already by and large been co-opted [there]” (173). In the context of the title referencing “revolution,” Marcuse can only be deplored that American environmentalism was proving in its infancy to be a largely white and bourgeois politics that had as its goal governmental regulations that would afford some measure of humane reform while leaving the system basically unchallenged. Of course, Marcuse was not against meliorating policies that arose out of a revolutionary struggle, but his later point was that these should be considered one means toward a larger end, and not an end in themselves.

10. The Exxon Valdez oil spill occurred on March 24, 1989, when an Exxon-owned oil tanker struck a reef in Prince William Sound, spilling tens of million of gallons of crude oil. It is estimated that the deaths of birds, seals, whales, otters, and fish ran to the hundreds of thousands at a minimum as a result of this accident.

11. Marcuse called for a revolutionary aesthetic sensibility because he felt that capitalist culture served to anaesthetize people to the history of real needs (Reitz 2000). Building upon Reitz, it can be suggested that media spectacles are required to generate feeling and enthusiasm in advanced capitalist nations like the United States much in the same way that substance abusers require larger and larger doses of pharmaceuticals in order to unlock the “high” that they crave. In other words, the addict’s senses are reduced to low levels of affect as part of a process of ever-diminishing returns. In the case of Gore’s film, ironically, a media spectacle was produced that tethered vehicular gas mileage and unclean energy to global warming as its primary causes, but it is in fact the meat addictions of the standard American diet that underwrite the global livestock industry that ultimately contribute far and away the most global warming emissions and should be considered the greatest environmental harm. On the livestock industry’s role in global warming see Steinfeld et al. (2006).

12. This is not to say that blogging cannot be an effective and interesting form of technopolitics, even as regards ecological concerns (see Kahn and Kellner 2007).

13. The concept of qualitative change is crucial in this respect, as Marcuse recognized that many political revolutions have sustained the “continuum of repression” and simply “replaced one system of domination by another” (Marcuse 1968, 177). The revolution for qualitative change, however, has as its means and end the elimination of systemic violence in its myriad forms and the augmentation of beauty and happiness in the name of liberty and justice.

14. The “long march through the institutions” originated with the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, but Marcuse integrated this concept/strategy by way of the radical Rudi Dutschke (who went on to help establish the Green party in Germany). For Marcuse, this did not mean merely engaging in parliamentary democratic governmental
processes, but it also required staging organized demonstrations for clearly identified issues, creating radical caucuses and counter-institutions, and—most importantly of all—in moving into the institutions of society, becoming educated in the work to be done, and educating others so that everyone will be prepared to manage these positions in a nonoppressive manner should the revolutionary moment arise on the world’s stage.

15. Readers of Marcuse will no doubt know that in the early to mid-1970s he strategically modified his revolutionary position from the mid-1960s in order to deal with the apparent fracturing and staggering repression of radical groups that had begun to occur. Previously, he had uncompromisingly attacked repressive tolerance and called for examinations of how third- and first-world revolts might ignite a revolution ary subject(s) capable of overthrowing the capitalist status quo (Marcuse 1968), but Marcuse’s end-period publications and talks often saw him advising that liberal society would have to be utilized from within (Marcuse 1972a) through a sort of double-agency of insider/outsider status. In a lecture of this period entitled “The Radical Movement,” for instance, he notes that “we are in a very bad situation” that means “there is a lesser evil” in which “even certain compromises with liberals are on the agenda” (The audio of this lecture is available online at www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/media/marcuse2.ram.) Yet Marcuse never abandoned his belief that violence against capitalist aggression was legitimate under the right conditions, and while he did not fetishize revolutionary violence, he did believe that in certain situations (at least) such as the advance of the revolutionary movements during the 1960s, such violence could be justified (Marcuse 1965, 1968).

16. Kellner (1984, 174) points out that in Eros and Civilization, Marcuse’s “archetypal images of liberation” vis-à-vis the new reality principle are the figures of Orpheus and Narcissus and that they serve as a contradistinction to the Freudian and Marxian figure of Prometheus. Notably, Orpheus was a sort of shamanic figure who is often pictured as singing in nature, surrounded by pacified animals, and Narcissus portrays the dialectic of humanity gazing into nature and seeing the beautiful reflection of itself. Marcuse’s Great Refusal, then, must be thought of as intending a post-anthropocentric form of work in which nature and the nonhuman are radically humanized, meaning that they are revealed as subjects in their own right. Thus Marcuse writes that “the Orphic-Narcissistic images are those of the Great Refusal: refusal to accept separation from the libidinous object (or subject)” (1966, 170) and that through this dialectical reengagement with nature, “flowers and springs and animals appear as what they are—beautiful, not only for those who regard them, but for themselves” (1966, 166).

17. Note that by employing the concept of zoë I do not seek to romanticize ancient Greece’s ecological well-being. On the contrary, it is often cited that Plato himself appears to speak in The Republic of the environmental devastation wrought by the clear-cutting of the Athenian forests—one of the earlier historical accounts of such behavior on the part of people. Thus, my point is not that the Greeks were ecologically sound and the current age is not, but rather that Greek society, in spite of its environmental destruction, also developed rituals and practices (as well as articulated philosophies) related to a rich ecological sense of being as zoë, and that such could be
resurrected today in opposition to the one-dimensionalized life of alienated toil and purposeless overconsumption and production.

18. For recent examples of how these alliance politics are materializing in radical communities, see Best and Nocella (2004; 2006).

19. For a genealogy of *humanitas*, in this respect, see Kahn (2007).

20. See also Steve Vogel’s “Marcuse and the ‘New Science’” in Abromeit and Cobb (2004, 240–46) for an attack on Marcuse’s thinking in this respect, which I am arguing here is based on a fundamental misreading of Marcuse’s theoretical and political project. For additional critiques of Marcuse’s ideas of “new science” and “new sensibilities,” including those infamously made by Jürgen Habermas himself, see Kellner (1984).

21. The phrase “ecology of freedom” was famously coined by the founder of the social ecology movement, Murray Bookchin (2005). Bookchin was undoubtedly an influence on Marcuse’s critical ecological theory of the 1960s and 1970s, just as Marcuse and the Frankfurt School were an important influence on much of Bookchin’s work. But whereas the Frankfurt School theorists dialectically related the domination of humanity to the domination of nature, and Marcuse spoke of the need for the liberation of both, Bookchin’s position evolved away from domination of nature concerns and he instead posited that natural destruction can be solved only through the achievement of nonoppressive social relations between people. While Marcuse, I believe, would agree that such social relations are necessary preconditions for real peace, he also gestured to the agency of nature itself and in this manner more deeply anticipated the radical ecological political vision of the present moment with its connection to animal and earth liberation ideas and values. Thus, I suggest Marcuse presents an alternative version of the theory of the ecology of freedom, albeit in snippets of books and essays only.

22. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine what a contemporary version of such new science might look like, I would argue that one form it could take is as an inclusive institutional approach to alternative epistemological systems, such as indigenous knowledge practices, affording them the power to radically reconstruct the dominant materialistic, reductionistic, and positivistic paradigm of modern Newtonian/Cartesian science proper. Such a radical reconstruction of modern science directly accords with the critical theory of Best and Kellner (2001, 143).

23. More than being alarmed, there is his own textual evidence to support the notion that he would condone the growth of vegetarianism and veganism as sociopolitical movements. Marcuse was a great lover of animals, with a particular fondness for the hippopotamus. While it is true that he declared the “campaign for universal vegetarianism” to be “premature” in the context of so much human suffering (Marcuse 1972a, 68)—a sort of ranking of oppressions on his part—Marcuse felt that any society would seek to reduce animal suffering in direct proportion to its production of freedom generally. Today, when the political reality of animal suffering is so extreme, even defenders of more liberal views of animal welfare have moved to vegetarian and vegan lifestyles to protest the cruel realities inherent in practices such as factory farming. Further, that recent ecological studies have revealed that a move to a global vegetarian diet would also be key in reducing the suffering of human hunger, narrowing
the economic inequities between nations, and lessening dangerous planetary phenomena like global warming would have been interpreted by Marcuse, I believe, as meaning that meat-based diets should be increasingly relegated to the past and that universal vegetarianism has begun to come of age.

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Critique has been at the forefront of projects for radical social change from their earliest incarnations. From the Cynics, Plato, and Rousseau to Hegel and Marx, there has been a long tradition of starting the call for social change with a critique of the current order of things. This seems appropriate, as it would be hard to imagine convincing people that a better alternative exists if we do not first highlight the limitations of present circumstances. Education has generally played a key role in these projects, opening the mind to the world around us and ways to creatively reconceptualize it. And yet today it appears that critique has come to dominate radical pedagogies without the accouterment of an alternative vision.

Critical race theory, critical media literacy, and critical pedagogy all tend to share too firm a commitment to the first half of their sobriquets, forgetting that critique alone has never led any social movement. These theoretical paradigms often share the notion of false consciousness or consciousness raising as the starting point for change, appearing to argue in many cases that when people become aware of their situation they will automatically work to change it. But as Fromm (1941) and Freire (1970) among many recognized, people are often complicit in their own oppression, even when they are fully aware of its repressive nature.

Critical pedagogy started as a movement that capitalized on Freire’s strong commitment to hope and empowerment, but in its contemporary form it too often falls prey to absolute critique without offering avenues or inspiration for
change. Some, like Antonia Darder (2002), bell hooks (1994), and Ira Shor (1994), have focused substantial attention on issues like caring, love, and hope, but in much critical pedagogy today, ideology critique and raising consciousness predominate. In seeking to reconstitute a pedagogy that incorporates hope into its core rather than as a peripheral issue, I will argue for returning to the original Freirian spirit together with insights from Ernst Bloch, the famed utopian theorist, and Herbert Marcuse.

Freire (1970, 1998a) always stressed the centrality of hope to his pedagogy of the oppressed, particularly in his latter writings, which seek to combat the fatalism at the heart of neoliberalism. By returning to his work, we can recoup the necessity to look beyond the here and now to the possibility that galvanizes students to dream and act. Bloch largely concurred, stressing the need for an affirmative politics and pedagogy that moved beyond critique to embrace the utopian traces that exist in most cultural artifacts and activities. To him, ideology was never separated from utopia, with utopian longing embodied in every ideological text. Marcuse complements these ideas by offering one of the most trenchant and compelling critiques of instrumental and technological rationality, together with insights on how to overcome their increasingly totalizing power to create and reinforce needs and wants in line with contemporary capitalist society. And he provides an exemplar of embodied hope that can be a useful model for progressive teachers working toward becoming effective public intellectuals.

I begin the chapter with a brief analysis of Freire and Bloch and then offer three main areas where Marcuse can strengthen critical pedagogy: his analysis of capitalism and desire, his aesthetic education, and his dedication to utopia and hope. I then use these insights to explore the role of the educator as public intellectual. I conclude by arguing that we need to find ways to empower students through directive action, moving toward a discourse and sensibility that can capitalize on repressed desires and provide a provisional alternative vision that can galvanize them to struggle toward its realization. Throughout, I focus on the centrality of hope as a necessary complement to critique in combating the endemic cynicism infecting youth and adults across the political spectrum today.

**FREIRE AND BLOCH: THE CENTRALITY OF HOPE**

Paulo Freire’s theories on education have emboldened generations of progressive educators across the globe, from South America to Africa to Asia and even to the United States. He centered his project for radical social change on the foundation of critical theory and Marxism, believing critique of the cur-
rent order of things is an essential starting point toward critical consciousness and the will to action. But he always highlighted the necessity of hope and love to a pedagogy that could overcome the injustices and inequalities of the past and present. His pedagogy thus starts from the position that we must help people recognize not only their oppressed situation, but their position as subjects in history with the power to change it.

In his final book, *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998a), Freire argued that hope was essential if students were to overcome the cynical and ahistorical fatalism at the heart of neoliberal ideology. Teachers need to do more than awaken students to the surrounding world; they need to simultaneously give them the faith and strength to work to transform that world. Freire thus believed we must embrace our “unfinishedness” in the world and recognize that change is the only constant in history. To him the future is never preordained, unless we accept it as such. He thus argued that the “global tendency to accept the crucial implications of the New World Order as natural and inevitable” (1998a, 23) simply revealed the power of hegemony to spread, through education, the media, and civil society, the precepts of the dominant class, transforming them from modes of repression to unchallenged conventional wisdom. But like Jean Paul Sartre before him, Freire (1998b) believed that while we are conditioned, we are not determined, and are thus free to revolt against that conditioning:

> Our being in the world is much more than just “being.” [It is] a “presence” that can reflect upon itself, that knows itself as presence, that can intervene, can transform, can speak of what it does, but that can also take stock of, compare, evaluate, give value to, decide, break with, and dream. (25–26)

By taking this position, he eviscerates the deterministic and monological philosophy of neoliberalism, founded on a solipsistic vision of reality dominated by extreme individualism, instrumental rationality, and civic passivity. Freire’s intersubjective ontology instead argues for a reality founded on dialogue, where individuals work in fellowship and solidarity to first envision their surrounding reality and then work collectively to change it. In this move, he builds the foundations for a communal vision of humanity, where reality is constructed and negotiated in collective action, rather than through an individual subject looking out at an objective world. Thus hope is built into Freire’s ontological philosophy.

In actualizing these insights in the classroom, Freire argues for great vigilance in recognizing that teaching is not simply transmission of knowledge—whether it be hegemonic or counterhegemonic in nature. Teachers must respect the knowledge that students bring into the classroom, constantly question their own assumptions and techniques, and work to embrace cultural
and ideological differences toward opening rather than closing the student’s mind. The progressive teacher must build on our collective “unfinishedness,” showing students the profound power of social conditioning while respecting their autonomy and creative impulse to look at the world from a radical perspective. This ontological unfinishedness is fortified by the power of hope and joy to embolden students to become excited about education, knowledge, and political action. Progressive educators then can spread hope by embodying it themselves, ensuring that their practice is self-confident, competent, generous, committed, humble, dialogical, two-sided, caring, full of love, and able to effectively balance freedom and authority. This last aspect is among the most crucial, as Freire does not believe in a classroom absent of authority or in one based solely on informing students of the “truth,” but instead one where freedom is tempered by responsibility, growth, and recognition of the interconnectivity of all life:

If in fact the dream that inspires us is democratic and grounded in solidarity, it will not be by talking to others from on high as if we were inventors of the truth that we will learn to speak with them. Only the person who listens patiently and critically is able to speak with the other, even if at times it should be necessary to speak to him or her. Even when, of necessity, she/he must speak against ideas and convictions of the other person, it is still possible to speak as if the other were a subject who is being invited to listen critically and not an object submerged by an avalanche of unfeeling, abstract words. (1998b, 110–11)

Not only does hope adhere to the ontological and epistemological dimensions, but Freire’s theory of history is also grounded in hope. Freire always believed that history was problematic but not determined. As he argued in 1992, “For me, history is a time of possibilities, not predeterminations. . . . History is a possibility that we create throughout time, in order to liberate and therefore save ourselves” (1998b, 38). Our ability to hope is what separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom, and what makes possible the utopian vision of a better future: a future of solidarity in diversity where we confront and overcome our limit situations. For hope really is the leitmotif of Freire’s work and the key constituent to rebuilding a progressive movement that can break through its own cynicism and doubt to inspire students and adults anew to struggle for collective emancipation. Here hope connects explicitly to utopia as the embodiment of the open possibilities of history.

The work of Bloch and Marcuse can help enrich this key aspect of the project by offering tools toward its realization. Bloch offers two key insights that can be instrumental in transcending critique and reigniting hope. In his magnum opus The Principle of Hope (1986), he argued that one reason the fascists won in Weimar Germany was the negativity of socialists, who cen-
tered their project on critique alone. He believed we must move beyond a condemnation of the present to offer an alternative vision of the future, or utopia, that captured the imagination and deeper desires of the people. With the collapse of communism and the entrenchment of post-structuralist epistemologies, many progressive educators have abandoned efforts to name an alternative to the present order of things. Freire and Bloch, however, believed that it was essential, as we must move beyond describing the world as it is to imagining an alternative that both highlights the shortcomings of the present and offers a provisional roadmap for action toward its realization.

A second key insight Bloch offers relates to the presence of utopian dreams within everyday life. Bloch believed that all cultural artifacts hold some trace of deeper societal desire. From magazine ads to movies to television programming and window displays, underlying aspirations and dreams peak out from behind the cracks and crevices of the commodified form they take in contemporary society. He believed we must locate and capitalize on these traces in offering a compelling alternative. Although sharing Bloch’s political emphasis on hope, Marcuse held a different view of utopia, arguing in *Eros and Civilization* (1966) that dreams and some high culture texts hold traces of happiness and freedom outside the technological rationality that he believed dominates our thoughts, senses, desires, and even needs. Both, however, stress the necessity for embracing these utopian traces to counteract the power of capitalism to redefine wants, needs and desires. And while I agree with Bloch that vestiges of utopia exist across the cultural landscape, the key point is to find ways to rearticulate those hints in a project that overcomes the commodification of human desire and the resultant domination and control Marcuse so effectively describes. Critical pedagogues should heed these insights in moving beyond ideology critique alone to recognize the deeper desires cloaked in the bejeweled façade of consumer culture and the spectacle society. If we can connect critique with desire in new ways, we might be more effective at pushing students to rebel against the very system that promises, and in some cases delivers, sensual fulfillment.

The remainder of the chapter will focus specifically on Marcuse and the contributions his thoughts can offer to a more hopeful and empowering critical pedagogy that can fight through the rampant cynicism, political disengagement, and embrace of consumer and technological culture that currently predominate among the young. The next section offers Marcuse’s analysis of the increasingly fortified and complex mechanisms for social control and domination. The subsequent two explore his educational project for overcoming these repressive dynamics and the importance of embodied hope to a truly radical public intellectual.
Marcuse and his Frankfurt School compatriots were among the first to recognize the power of capitalism to create a desiring system that manipulates people into capitulating their most basic desires to those dictated by the culture industry and underlying capitalist structure. In *Eros and Civilization* and then *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), we see the full realization of this shift, where technological rationality comes to dominate and the ability to see beyond the strictures of market imperatives becomes increasingly difficult.

Marcuse (1966) argued that contemporary society has established a system of repression more complex than that described by Freud. There is the necessary repression that accompanies any social contract and a *surplus repression*, which has become the source of social domination. Forms of surplus repression include the monogamous, patriarchal family; the hierarchical division of labor; and public control of an individual’s private existence.

With the advent of surplus repression, individuals become encased within an overarching technological and instrumental rationality that seriously circumscribes thought, dreams, and even needs. Today, advertising executives attempt to indoctrinate children into this system from their earliest days, ensuring lifetime “brand loyalty” to capitalism and its excesses before they have time to contemplate any alternatives to the present order of things. The resulting organization of desire alters the very nature of the pleasure principle, orienting it toward the perpetuation of the system of domination and control. A phenomenon that emerges in response is *repressive desublimation*, where the promise of immediate gratification and small measures of freedom lead people to embrace the system and work to sustain it. Two examples are Internet pornography, where direct libidinal satisfaction is abandoned for its approximation (often at the expense of the very person one lives with), and SUVs that offer the façade of freedom, security, and a return to nature without ever really providing any of the three.

Simulation and simulacra then become the mechanisms for social control, as the commodified object stands in for the unattainable deeper libidinal desires. The system then establishes an internal process of self-perpetuation, where want and desire that can never be filled but ephemerally become the basis of a repression that is internalized. Fast food, cars, consumer electronics, movies, television, pharmaceuticals, junk food, and the like become the sources of want and need even as they never deliver the promised result. Since we cannot see outside the imposed rationality and sensibility, we are trapped in a system that never offers the happiness and satisfaction available outside it.
In this way, one can argue, we become estranged from our own deeper li-
bidinal desires and a new form of alienation emerges, where we cannot find 
satisfaction in the system that we see as a natural extension of our psyche. In-
stead of looking for ways to transcend this reality, we instead seek only to 
consume more, to work harder, and to strive for more material satisfaction, 
assuming this is the sole route to happiness. And as Bloch argues, encased 
within these commodities are traces of utopian longing that only fortify the 
system from within. Yet in the failure this effort continues to sustain, we be-
come further and further alienated from ourselves and our desiring systems 
and become victims of a vicious circle of internal dissatisfaction and confu-
sion that could easily result in cynicism and disengagement. Symptoms of 
this alienation abound in drug and alcohol abuse, the growing pharmaceutical 
culture (including dramatic numbers on antidepressants), renewed fundamen-
talism and spirituality, and addiction to voyeurism and living vicariously 
through fictitious or branded characters.

The problem for social transformation then becomes more than reaching 
critical consciousness through ideology critique. It must be accompanied by 
a new way to view the world and, as Kellner (2000) has argued, a more rad-
ical subjectivity that breaks with the failed essentialism, idealism, and vari-
ous prejudices of the past and opens identity up to its indeterminate potential. 
In this movement, the Great Refusal is one key component, finding ways to 
awaken a sense that an alternative worldview is possible. Desire and its em-
bodyment in a more ecumenical Eros can then become a revolutionary force, 
rather than one of the main sources of oppression. This is a necessary but not 
easy precondition to any radical project for change not destined for ultimate 
failure, as people are unlikely to leave a system that appears to satisfy deep 
desires for one founded purely on negation. With children a greater opening 
may exist in this realm, but only if the burgeoning attachment to the status 
quo can be ruptured early enough.

If the left wants to move beyond critique to mobilize a real resistance, it must 
also work to offer an alternative vehicle for sensual satisfaction. For it is not 
state intervention and ideological hegemony alone that fortify the capitalist be-
emoth, but its ability to harness and redirect energy and desire. The Great Re-
fuscation does appear like an appropriate starting point for a revolution against cap-
italism, and in the sixties the sexual revolution and the opening of the 
imagination worked with the Great Refusal to awaken a revolutionary ferment. 
Effective social movements today must heed the advice Marcuse offered in 
Eros and Civilization, finding ways to channel sexual and social desire into a 
communal sense of Eros, where the striving for lasting satisfaction replaces the 
need for instant individual gratification—a milieu where reason and happiness 
can converge and the needs of the many overcome the repressive instincts of
the few. Within education, this entails breaking the abiding faith in the market’s ability to mediate needs and wants and the conformist meme among the young.

But what are the desires the left and educators can capitalize on in working to challenge the juggernaut that consumer culture has wrought? The hints lie in the very system of desires that capitalism pretends to meet. Here I agree with Bloch who argued that every cultural artifact that has the power to persuade holds the vestiges of some deeper, more primordial desires. In consumer culture there appears to be a desire for community (fashion, music, sports), for recognition (reality television, desire for fame, exploding blogosphere), for sensual satisfaction (pharmaceutical culture and commodified emotions), and for the realization of love and freedom. As Marcuse then argued, there are ways to make these seemingly individual desires into collective struggles toward true liberation from the commodities that ail us. With students, it starts with challenging those commodified desires and finding ways to offer pleasure outside the sphere of manufactured needs and wants.

**EROS, REASON, AND THE SENSES**

Beyond a more complex and multidimensional analysis of capitalism and its power to channel desire, Marcuse offers specific pedagogical strategies to work toward a more just, equitable, and humane society. In *Eros and Civilization*, he offers mechanisms to approach a new sensibility where rationality and the senses come together, allowing reason and happiness to converge rather than working at odds as is often the case in contemporary society. Toward this end, he calls for an aesthetic education that can help break the firm hold of instrumental and technological rationality.

His pedagogical tools can work in concert with the ideology critique of critical pedagogy, serving as catalysts to reigniting hope and the belief that change is possible.

The first aspect in this pedagogy is arts education, where production and appreciation are incorporated as key components of learning. Marcuse (1972) argued that art offers an opportunity to step outside the dominant discourse and rationality. Art is one form of the Great Refusal, in its rejection of the discourse and rationality of its epoch—superseding them even as they are co-opted from within. Yet, as Bloch noted, we can move beyond high culture and, by gaining appreciation for art and a more critical view of popular media, can aid youth in beginning to discern the traces of deeper libidinal desires that contemporary society fails to satisfy. Art offers an opportunity to awaken and foster the imagination, which has become increasingly verboten in contemporary schools and society. Maxine Greene (1986) has advocated poetry and art for this very reason, seeing them as conduits for students to contem-
plate a different future. There is no reason not to go even further to incorporate music, media production, street art, and theater. Today arts classes are among the first to be cut as schools struggle to meet state and federal standardized testing mandates, and one role of the progressive educator could be to both advocate their continued importance and incorporate arts education across the curriculum.

Sensual education is a second facet of Marcuse’s aesthetic education that can be useful to critical pedagogy. Like Dewey (1916) before him, Marcuse believed all the senses are key in the learning process. He thus argued in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972) and other works that we should incorporate the body more fully into learning, allowing students to explore the world in new ways. This will help shatter the false Cartesian logic of a separation between mind and body and open the door to a more immanent perspective on existence that escapes the dangers of transcendental thinking, where the present is sacrificed for an unknown future. Visual culture dominates in America today, with passive reception of ideologically saturated texts. In the past, music served as a powerful counterhegemonic force, and studying protest music from the past and present (like more radical hip-hop) at a more analytical level could introduce students to alternative ways of seeing the world and escaping the mainstream music and visual culture so closely aligned with consumer culture rationality. Using other senses like smell and touch could also be useful in challenging the strong proclivity toward sight domination, expanding the mind and allowing other ways to experience the world that surrounds us. And as McLaren (1999) and Shapiro (1998) among many have argued, teachers need to find ways to make the body present in the classroom, expanding on the overly emphasized connections between desire, seeing, and cognition so prevalent today.

A third element of the pedagogy is a return to nature. Unlike Freire, Marcuse (1972) rejects humanism in extremis, instead arguing for a symbiotic relationship with nature where we overcome a rationality that subordinates nature to human domination. This can be instrumental in overcoming the logic of human-to-human domination, by challenging its roots in the social and scientific domination of nature. If we can imbue children with an appreciation of nature as something we are part of, they may start to see the symbiotic relationship of all life. In this shift we reconnect with ecological and environmental movements and their belief that we are part of a world that offers us pleasure outside commodification (see Kahn, chapter 5 in this volume). In some sense this is a movement toward Rousseau, although I believe Marcuse would reject the nostalgia and atavism at the core of some of his thinking. In education, this means getting students out into natural settings where they can explore their sensual relationships with nature outside the colonizing logic of
science and classification. Poetry could be a good accompaniment here, providing an opportunity to explore the more spiritual relationship between children and the surrounding natural world.

A final aspect of an aesthetic education worth noting is Marcuse’s efforts to follow some contemporary feminist theorists in arguing for a pedagogy that escapes the patriarchal, andocentric, and aggressive system of reason through an ethics of caring (see Shel, chapter 7 in this volume). This would involve a movement toward empathy, sensitivity, peace, caring, and nonexploitative practices—challenging the conservative, masculine skew of mainstream media. In this movement, another key idea from *Eros and Civilization* comes to the fore—which is the rechanneling of libidinal desires into an intersubjective, communitarian system of beliefs where a nonrepressive reality principle can come more into line with the pleasure principle. Many programs have already been created by groups like the Anti-Defamation League and the ACLU, and it is just a question of incorporating them into the core curriculum while ensuring that the themes fit within some state or federal standards to allay administrative pressure and ensure that progressive teachers stay in the classroom.

**UTOPIAN DREAMING AND EMBODIED HOPE**

Marcuse offers two other insights into critical pedagogy that can be instrumental in moving beyond the current historic moment: his vision of utopia and the idea of embodied hope. As Lyotard (1974) argued, critique is always encased within the discourse one is trying to overcome, and thus cannot really transcend that reality. Although utopian visions also never fully escape ideological limits, their affirmative rather than merely critical character emboldens people to act—for individuals are arguably more apt to struggle for a positive vision than one founded solely on negation. This notion of utopia is provisional and can vary from community to community, but there must be some movement toward solidarity in diversity that allows a broader movement for change. This involves embracing the different projects across the diverse groups that make up the “left” while searching assiduously for points of convergence where we can work collectively.

In education, this means offering youth the tools and time to contemplate a different future and their role in actualizing it. Creative writing assignments, art, and even history can be places where youth learn about effective struggles against oppression from the past and where they are given the time and space to contemplate and create their own ideal worlds outside the logic of consumer culture and the spectacle society. These activities, of course, in-
volve teaching tolerance and offering opportunities for cultural sharing, critical exchange, and solidarity building.

A second insight involves the importance of embodied hope. Many educational theorists today, from Giroux (1995, 2001) to Pinar (2001), are debating the role of the teacher as a public intellectual. They recognize that while some hold on to the outdated idea of the teacher as a neutral and objective transmitter of knowledge, insights from poststructuralism, postcolonialism, critical theory, and critical pedagogy from Freire forward seriously challenge this claim. Teachers take a position even if they refuse to, and their role as public intellectuals is thus to serve as public advocates for social justice, even as they respect the critical autonomy and cultural particularity of their students. Marcuse’s emblematic role as the embodiment of hope can be quite useful in offering an exemplar for the truly engaged progressive educator as public intellectual, who not only speaks but performs as a public intellectual that can model political engagement to students. Even in recognizing the increasing effectiveness of technological rationality and social control, Marcuse knew that hope was essential in planting the seeds for change. So while there were moments in his intellectual career when he was among the most negative and pessimistic of thinkers, he always embraced all efforts at transforming society. From Marxism to feminism to queer politics to the civil rights movement, the student movement, and anti-colonialist insurrections, he offered his support to a cornucopia of progressive social movements, even while remaining critical of some of their actions and ideas. He became a guru of the New Left based on his hopeful embrace of resistance and his unflappable faith in the power of people to overcome the domination and oppression that surrounded them—a key aspect of an effective public intellectual today that wants to break through the cynicism of the mainstream media.

Like Gandhi, Marx, and Martin Luther King, Marcuse lived the change he wanted to see in the world, rather than sequestering himself in the comfort of the academy. Critical teachers and researchers must also embody the change they are advocating, showing students an alternative through their actions and words. This requires more than critique, activism, and alluding to the Great Refusal; it also must include a positive dream that can inspire others to follow, embracing their creativity and beliefs. It involves actively engaging (and hopefully living) in the communities where we work, showing not telling, and remaining optimistic even in the midst of great despair. And it involves serious engagement with utopian dreaming that allows both a diagnosis of contemporary discontent and a provisional roadmap to where we want to go. For as Oscar Wilde so aptly put it, “A map of the world that does not include utopia is not worth even glancing at.”
CONCLUSION

If we are to empower people to hope and dream of a different reality, we must engage the important question of convincing them that real freedom is not an individualistic pursuit but one predicated on the fostering of a community where the reality principle is a boon rather than the source of our repression. In this move, the intersubjective ontology of Freire together with Marcuse’s affirmation of a communal rather than individual Eros appears key.

To accomplish this, three things must coexist with the requisite critique of the order of things. The first is empowerment, where we follow Freire in fostering a belief in the power that people have to become subjects in history toward changing it. This will help to fight cynicism and the fear of freedom that is endemic throughout most of our history, by reigniting hope. The second is to build a discursive and performative program for rechanneling desire. The left must again engage the centrality of affect, as did Marcuse and the sixties radicals in the United States and France, working to overcome the various forms of repression and sublimation engendered in capitalism, Oedipus, religion, and language. Teachers may be in the best position to help children see desire and happiness outside the prevailing system of needs and wants, even if fulfillment comes outside their purview. Finally, there must be a normative ideal to work toward. Freire argued that we are always struggling against something and for something. The latter is critical in seeing what is on the other side of critique that can mobilize the masses toward action. Here the aesthetic dimension Marcuse highlighted can be powerful in awakening the mind to the power of imagination.

In looking forward, it is always helpful to look backward for exemplars and mistakes that can be avoided in the future. A perfect example is Martin Luther King, who had a powerful critique of American society, combining questions of race with those of class and war. But he also had a dream. And it was that dream that galvanized the masses to follow—a dream the leftist and progressive educators must find a way to reawaken. The dream should be founded in an affirmative ethic rather than one of absolute negativity, tied to the hope that has always driven humanity forward against the riptide of inertia. Educators have a key role to play in this formidable task.

NOTES

1. Marcuse’s aesthetic education takes much of its inspiration from Schiller’s aesthetic education (see Schiller 1983). An Essay on Liberation and Counterrevolution and Revolt give further articulation of these ideas.
2. The techniques of Augusto Boal’s theatre of the oppressed can be quite useful in this sense, giving children a voice and the tools to struggle against their subordination (see Boal 1985).

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In his 1965 essay “Repressive Tolerance,” Herbert Marcuse (1969) warns against apathy toward classism, racism, and I add sexism within our “tolerant” society. Current society legitimates these forms of violence in terms of an ideology of tolerance. Thus tolerance, far from a utopian vision of mutual understanding, has turned into a repressive ideology of the state. A peaceful society, on the other hand, should not be indifferent to human misery in any aspect of life. Marcuse argued that each person needs to bear in mind that he or she is part of a larger whole, a social totality in which private concerns cannot be detached from public displays of violence—even if that violence manifests itself thousands of miles away. If individuals remain indifferent to this violence, thus “tolerating” distant social and ecological atrocities, it might return to them as a boomerang. Linking the public and private in terms of a dialectical analysis, Marcuse calls for societal and political intolerance against the toleration of hatred, exploitation, and violence in all forms. In fact, he even advocated under extreme cases that the suspension of the freedom of speech might be necessary. “True pacification,” Marcuse wrote, “requires the withdrawal of tolerance in word before the deed, at the stage of communication in word, print, and picture. Such extreme suspension of the right of free speech and free assembly is indeed justified only if the whole of society is in extreme danger” (Marcuse 1969, 109–10). Therefore, against a form of repressive tolerance that legitimates violent domination, Marcuse perceived intolerance as essential in a democratic society for the advancement of a humanistic civilization.

As such, Marcuse unravels a tension within industrialized society. Tolerance, as in any noble ideal, has unintended consequences. If tolerance can induce intolerance, then intolerance against tolerance is a paradoxical necessity.
But what is the specific ethical practice guiding this intolerance toward tolerance? Following Marcuse, I would argue that any attempt in the present moment to promote pure tolerance is ultimately susceptible to replicate violence against the other.

However, in this chapter I move beyond Marcuse in order to support his theory of intolerance under certain conditions with an ethics of caring. On the one hand, the literature on caring provides education today with a much-needed model for interpersonal relations that realize a form of intolerance that diminishes violence against human beings. On the other hand, Marcuse helps to ground caring in relation to a critical theory of society, including both a critique of social relations in advanced capitalism and a utopian vision for a humanistic civilization. In particular, I will theorize a form of benevolent intolerance toward violence and discrimination that stems from an inclusive ethics of caring, thus synthesizing feminist ethics of caring and Marcuse’s critical theory. This new theory of benevolent intolerance will, in the end, allow me to critically evaluate current trends in quantitative assessment and standardization that have become commonplace in education. The goal is to demonstrate how these reforms miss their mark precisely because they lack a philosophy of caring and thus replicate the dialectic of enlightenment toward domination and oppression.

**WHAT IS CARING?**

The notion of caring has received attention in education, though scant and marginalized, in the past few decades. Caring in its most generalizable form means that we come to see ourselves in relation with other people, such as our families (Gilligan 1982; Noddings 1984, 1992, 2002), communities, fellow citizens, country, and so on. However, like many terms, various possible conceptions of caring depend on human experience and values system. Two of the most challenging and important categories, which I will focus on, include inclusive caring and selective caring. The former I consider most essential to diminishing violence in any society—democratic or otherwise—and in any arena of life, domestically (e.g., at home), locally (e.g., in communities), nationally, and universally (Noddings 1992; Shel 2007).

The two scholars who have been most associated with the concept of caring for more than two decades are Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings. While Gilligan focuses on gender socialization and attributes caring to the manner in which girls are socialized, Noddings focuses on gender socialization but also links caring to education more broadly. Because of the link established between gender and caring, Noddings has been accused of attributing caring to femininity and more so to maternity as natural and innate. In later years,
Noddings (2002) argued against this charge, stating that she was misconstrued because she was, in fact, referring to women’s experiences in many parts of the world and that she did not intend to essentialize caring. Overall both Gilligan and Noddings claimed that caring should be emphasized, recognized, and empowered in both sexes, in both the private and public spheres. In agreement with this insight, I also approach caring as a unisex endeavor and believe that people should be inclusive in their perceptions of what it means to exhibit caring. Although different people exhibit caring in different ways, I approach caring in an inclusive, as opposed to a gender-specific, manner. Moreover, I advocate teaching through the ethics of caring by and to both sexes in order to advance humanistic goals.

Noddings’ elaboration of caring is mostly based on Martin Buber’s philosophy of I and Thou (Buber 1923). Buber discusses two central conceptions of relationships among human beings. The first is I and Thou, and the second is I and It. “The basic word I–You,” Buber wrote, “can only be spoken with one’s whole being. The basic word I–It can never be spoken with one’s whole being” (1923, 54). In I and Thou, we humanize (Freire’s term; see Freire 1970) the other as a person, a Thou. Building on this concept, in caring we see ourselves in relations with others. The other is not an object (as in I-It relations) but rather a subject. Thinking in terms of I and Thou is fundamental to the reduction of violence against the other, for it recognizes the other as a thinking, feeling, and reasoning agent.

In that sense, in I-Thou, human beings see themselves in relation with others by acknowledging the other as equal in his or her humanity, as an individual, and as a vulnerable human being. In I-Thou we humanize each other. This relational concept emanates, I would add, from the love and respect that we have of life in its most general sense. As Marcuse would argue, such love is a vital need, predicated on Eros, as opposed to I-It relationships, which are based largely on false needs constituted by the culture industry for its own selfish perpetuation against human flourishing. I-Thou also emanates from the desire to live peacefully in this world at home and in public. In I-It, on the other hand, we diminish the recognition of others as individual human beings. They become objects or quantities potentially to be manipulated and/or dominated. For example, we like and/or dislike others based on general stereotypical patterns unless we make sufficient attempts to remove the wall that alienates us from them.

CARING AS AN EDUCATIONAL PEDAGOGY

In a pedagogy of caring, especially in formal educational institutions such as schools and universities, we learn to humanize the other even if we do not know the other personally, and thus each subject becomes a human being with
rights to peace and to happiness. We unveil the masks of stereotypes and biases from people and see them as human beings. In selective caring, I-Thou is restricted to those we learn and/or select to care for, but we do not necessarily care for humanity per se. It is of paramount significance to note here that selective caring is not necessarily deliberately “selfish” or “narrow minded” in principle, but rather often a condition of life circumstances. Many people in many parts of the world do not have the luxury to worry about universal welfare, especially those whose survival is a day-to-day struggle. Therefore, given economic and social conditions, sometimes it is more pragmatic to care for what is near to us. In inclusive caring, though, it turns from an object to a subject. We humanize distant others, even those we think of as our enemies or those we consider a threat to our personal safety and happiness. In inclusive caring, we let patience and understanding guide us in how we socialize with others by removing the shell from the nut to taste the fruit inside.

Adding to the literature on caring and education, Angela Valenzuela (1999) examines the concept and value of caring through an ethnographic study of Mexican-born and Mexican American low-income high school students in Houston, Texas. Two additional concepts of caring unique to educational literature have emerged from her conclusions: authentic caring and aesthetic caring.

In authentic caring, Valenzuela argues, the teacher considers a personal relationship with his or her students as essential to students’ moral, emotional, social, and intellectual growth. In aesthetic caring the teacher is predominantly committed “to ideas or practices that purportedly lead to achievement” (Valenzuela 1999, 61). She argues that authentic caring is most essential for the academic progress of Mexican students (including Mexican-American students). Learning, thus, involves social and emotional cognitions, and a caring teacher will incorporate these cognitions in his or her pedagogy. As such, we might argue that authentic caring resembles I-Thou relationships between teachers and students, and aesthetic caring is somewhat related to I-It. Yet the question is whether in the teacher’s perception, authentic caring expands beyond the private—whether it is also inclusive caring. Without answering this question, Valenzuela’s terminology remains problematic, especially for a dialectical concept of caring which emphasizes both private and public spheres.

It is this theory of inclusive caring that should inform Marcuse’s theory of intolerance toward repressive tolerance, for it is through caring that we remain open to the otherness of even our enemies while at the same time remaining aligned with the virtues of peace, hope, and love that are opposite to oppression and exploitation. Hence a particular form of intolerance is called for—a critical approach to caring that respects otherness and also learns from
this otherness, while remaining within the claims of democratic and humanistic society that is open to constructive criticism, rethinking, and reflecting upon its particular location in history.

Therefore, to further develop Marcuse’s philosophy, I suggest two concepts of intolerance that are relevant to a pedagogy of caring: benevolent intolerance and malicious intolerance. Benevolent intolerance is implicit in Marcuse’s theory yet undertheorized. It emanates from the ethics of inclusive caring, from a sense of care and respect to all living beings, who have the right to live peacefully and in prosperity. In this sense, caring becomes an ethical practice for realizing what Marcuse refers to as the “new sensibility” geared toward peace and love against war and exploitation. The second emanates from aggression and repression, and it intends to increase violence toward a certain group of people and to even annihilate others. At this point I want to add that such intolerance can also be disguised under deceitfully benevolent intentions (in a formal educational setting through, for example, the “hidden curriculum”). Because of this problem, we must look more toward actions and less toward rhetoric or words for understanding how malicious intolerance can and does mask itself within the language and discourse of tolerance (for example, by using historical events as a reason for vengeance). Benevolent intolerance as part of inclusive caring is required in order to meet the urgent educational needs of the present moment. This ethic of caring will then act as leverage toward humanizing civilization. Therefore, the very category of inclusive caring must itself be further modified with the help of Marcuse’s theory of intolerance and vice versa.

The question is whether as a society we create and cultivate a humanistic educational space for benevolent intolerance to emerge in our daily lives, as private people and as public members of society, or we accept the oppression and exploitation of a global economy. Do we have ample leeway to spread love and caring extensively in the private and public spheres and thus to bridge gaps in an amiable and democratic manner? A critical analysis of Marcuse’s work will enable us to further work toward this goal, and, in particular, adamantly and relentlessly challenge the one-dimensional assessment that has come to dominate school reform.

**Caring in Marcuse’s Philosophy**

In Marcuse’s philosophy, caring, compassion, and self-growth are prime components for any individual and society in order to reach a more humanistic civilization. “Tolerance is an end in itself. The elimination of violence, and the reduction of suppression to the extent required for protecting man [sic]
and animals from cruelty and aggression are preconditions for the creation of a humane society” (Marcuse 1969, 82). Developing technology is not an adequate indicator for a civilized and liberated society. In a fully humanized civilization, there must be radical social transformation that diminishes forms of what Marcuse calls surplus repression, domination, and poverty. There must be conditions for the full development of human beings and satisfaction of their basic needs as individuals, as women and men. This can ideally occur through caring for an explorative, creative, and critical education, and less through emphasis on the performance ideology of one-dimensional society and compliance with standardized testing.

Marcuse argued that to achieve (or at least to aim at) a humanistic civilization, a democratic society needs to be intolerant of those actions, individuals, and institutions that threaten to shake the foundations of a humanistic society. However, humanistic as opposed to repressive tolerance, Marcuse argued, can be achieved only when it is universal. In that sense, Marcuse’s assertion can be associated with inclusive caring, while at the same time articulating inclusive caring with a critical theory of intolerance toward social injustices produced and sustained by advanced capitalism.

Nonetheless, I find that it is essential to at least specify, to some extent, what Marcuse meant by universal. He uses a language of combat that is masculinized (at least in some societies, including Western societies) to articulate his notion of intolerance, whereas to be truly universal (and thus avoid the return of malicious intolerance in the guise of radical, leftist and rightist politics) a more inclusive language is necessary that does not alienate women and children. It must be emphasized time and time again that the public, universal dimension of Marcuse’s philosophical thought must be concretely articulated with his sociological and local examination of social movements and human interactions—hence the need for a theory of the interpersonal practice of caring as a mediation point between public and private and local and cosmopolitan dimensions of educational activism.

Marcuse contended that a democratic and humanistic society must denounced any repressive regime and people who call for aggression (i.e., malicious intolerance) against innocent people (and animals) even if the democratic society is not directly affected by such practices. Yet this general clarion call is only actualizable through caring as benevolent intolerance, which provides the necessary practice to complement Marcuse’s overall vision of a liberated, democratic society. For Marcuse, tolerance is an end that can be influential and dominant when it is inclusive, that is, ultimately and absolutely universal. This caring practice is inclusive in that it takes into consideration forms of oppression that might not directly be related to the welfare of the caring subject yet nevertheless represent a moral outrage that puts into question
the possibility of realizing justice anywhere. And this practice is benevolently intolerant in that it refuses to tolerate forms of violence under the guise of “cultural relativism” or “pluralism.” Here cultural relativism reveals its ambivalent nature as a form of repressive tolerance that legitimizes, whether covertly or overtly, consciously or unconsciously, acts of violence against, for example, women, children, and animals. The normative claim of benevolent intolerance thus lives within a paradox in order to ward against two positions: relativism or colonization. While seeing the other as a Thou, and thus recognizing and respecting in the other agency and autonomy, caring acts as a measure against which particular acts can or cannot be tolerated, thus distancing itself from a purely relativistic claim. Benevolent intolerance in other words acknowledges a plurality of human interactions without necessarily accepting all forms as morally valid. Furthermore, because inclusive caring does not deny embodied and embedded lives (the situated nature of all caring), it saves universality from becoming another form of cultural colonialism (and thus malicious intolerance). It attempts to bridge the particular and the general.

**SCIENCE, QUANTITY, INTOLERANCE, AND CARING**

What Marcuse and many other scholars suggest is a revolution in education, in our mode of thinking, that emphasizes first and foremost humanism. Although humanism might be critiqued for its Eurocentrism, I am using the term here to simply indicate a belief in human kindness and generosity. The question is whether under the current agenda in formal education, which emphasizes quantity over quality through testing, scores, and grades, such a revolution can gain substantial and ostensible practical recognition. Can humanism be realized within standardized education?

Under the current trend in education, the notion of “mainstream” standards becomes an obstacle because it is based on a limited interpretation of students’ academic capabilities and skills. Quantitative assessments do not sufficiently and appropriately recognize and/or acknowledge student diversity or the need for pedagogical creative autonomy. As a result, formal education does not sufficiently promote genuinely creative, explorative, and critical learning, or openness to the other. “Increasingly educationally worthwhile ‘knowledge,’” Burbules writes, “is being defined in terms of what standardized tests can measure. If tests cannot measure something, then it is not regarded as an essential part of the curriculum” (Burbules 2004, 8). The student-teacher relation is thus reduced to one of efficiency rather than an open, intersubjective, and dialogic space of mutual caring and humanization. The focus on quantitative statistics, poles, and the like, turns society and human
life into a lucrative business in order to maximize profits. In higher education, the result of instrumental reason is that faculties in the humanities and the social studies decrease because they have no financial merit. This is one of Marcuse’s main contributions to understanding the link between caring and education: He criticizes society (including and in particular, democratic societies) for shaping its civilians to be mechanical “one-dimensional” human beings that lack sufficient critical or ethical capabilities to live in a multidimensional, complex, and free society. The peril lies in a quantitative agenda that reduces the complexity and multidimensionality of human interactions to I-It relations. As long as testing remains the focus of school reform, education will not allow for the development of the emotional and cognitive resources we need to battle against violence and injustice within one-dimensional society.

Lemann argues that the system of mainstream standardization becomes a strainer that creates social and/or economic stratification (Lemann 1997). However, the goal of formal education should not be “to select and sort the population, but to equip everyone with as many skills and as much learning as possible. The meritocratic race ought to begin, not end, on graduation day. The main purpose of the education system ought to be opportunity provision, not elite selection” (Lemann 1997, 35). And this is one of the main problems. Those who are not equipped with the appropriate resources and “fail” to meet standard expectations are being left behind, even if the stated ideological goal of school reform is precisely the opposite: that no child should be left behind. The myth of meritocracy inherent in school reform only promotes a form of malicious tolerance toward such disparities by blaming the victims rather than critiquing the qualitative measures that lead to such inequalities in the first place. Policy makers should ask themselves every day and every minute whether or not society can sustain a democratic and just civic vision without humanism and without ample critical thinking and self-examination through the ethics of caring.

**FROM INTELLECTUAL CARING SCIENCE TO LUCRATIVE POLITICAL SCIENCE**

To explain the dialectic of quantitative analysis we must return to Marcuse’s critique of science. “Science,” Marcuse wrote, “by virtue of its own method and concepts, has projected and promoted a universe in which the domination of nature has remained linked to the domination of man—a link which tends to be fatal to this universe as a whole. Hence, the rational hierarchy merges with the social one” (1964, 166). Marcuse discussed the social dangers that lie in the misuse of science. In particular, he criticized the link between science and social studies. Such a link results in rationalization of theories that help to perpetuate social
and economic hierarchy based on class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and so forth. Repressive tolerance could be seen as one such form of rationalization.

In the absence of the ethics of caring, the link of science to social studies generates a rationalist mechanism that helps to classify human beings hierarchically. A dominant method today is the excessive use of quantitative methods and evaluation to determine human intelligence and skills. The main critique here is not of science in educational policy reform, because science has its tremendous merits as well, but rather of the manipulation of science in the name of progress. One of the core issues is the perception of science as the sole method and arbiter of truth. This helps to rationalize discrimination and to increase violence in both the personal and the public spheres. Overall, current scientific instrumentality produces the preconditions for a one-dimensional society that confuses repressive tolerance with a critical and inclusive form of caring. Likewise, some zero-tolerance policies do not necessarily stem from the ethic of inclusive caring and as such transform benevolent intolerance into malicious intolerance in the form of abusive force. Thus, caring loses its transformative possibilities. The resulting paradoxical situation can only be solved by a form of caring that is both benevolently intolerant and at the same time inclusive.

The focus on standardized testing prioritizes quantitative profit in education over quality, as in a capitalist system. Capitalism, Weber asserted, emphasizes, prioritizes, and rationalizes quantitative profit.

The Occidental has developed capitalism both to a quantitative extent, and [carrying this quantitative development] in types, forms, and directions which have never existed elsewhere. . . . In modern times, the Occidental has developed . . . a very different form of capitalism which has appeared nowhere else: the rational capitalistic organizations of formerly free labour. (Weber 1950, 20–21)

Such a mode of thinking penetrates formal education systems as well. Scholars have developed quantitative theories and rationalized them in a very convincing manner on behalf of science, to the extent that other alternatives have been marginalized. The problem is, Lemann writes, that “we are all so deeply socialized into the system by now that it’s initially hard to imagine how you’d select people for key roles in the society if not through educational competition” (Lemann 1997, 35). This is the problem also with standardized testing. It is so deeply inculcated in the system of instrumental reason that it is hard for many people to think of education differently. Freud phrased the moral impact of quantity on humanity eloquently:

It is impossible to escape the impression that people commonly use false standards of measurement—that they seek power, success and wealth for themselves
and admire them in others, and that they underestimate what is of true value in life. (Freud 1929, 10)

The focus in education on numbers quantifies education and thus human beings. According to Dewey, one of the main obstacles to the exercise of inclusive caring is the excessive use of quantitative data based on supposedly scientific, accurate, substantial evidence. He argues that scholars “welcome a procedure which under the title of science sinks the individual in a numerical class; judges him with reference to capacity to fit into a limited number of vocations ranked according to present business standards” (Dewey 1923, 297). In the absence of the ethics of caring, such an agenda promotes competition and frustrations in the personal and public spheres, among individuals, men and women, societies, nations, and religions. Instead of using quantity as a supplement to quality, quantity increasingly becomes a goal. Hence, human society cannot advance toward a realization of the ideal of humanistic civilization as defined by Marcuse.

Marcuse also criticizes these two components in science—quantitative measurement and conventional standards. The focus on quantity can repress the innate talents in each individual—talents that may be essential for society’s welfare physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Horkheimer and Adorno phrased it eloquently: “The individual,” they wrote, “is reduced to the nodal point of the conventional responses and modes of operation expected of him” (1976, 28). Marginalizing the individual is repressive and eventually can lead to violence through the frustrations of individuals. The irony is that in standards, scholars and not primarily politicians focus on quantity as a means to determine the inclusion and/or exclusion of human beings. It is learning to think in terms of I-It rather than of I-Thou. As such, standards, when developed solely within the framework of a mechanical and narrow-minded organized mode of thinking, cannot embody an ethic of caring. From the perspective of caring as benevolent intolerance toward violence and oppression, we can thus see the dialectic of contemporary schooling (No Child Left Behind or standardization in general) unfold: The attempt at “caring” for the needs of each child becomes its opposite when it is articulated through the language of instrumental science and a form of reason detached from an inclusive ethic of caring.

Marcuse argued that subordination of one human being to another occurs in civilization on behalf of the notion of a “free” world. Science (in which I include psychology and psychiatry), acting as a landmark of an enlightened society, is a concrete example of how on the one hand technological advancement helps to improve humanity’s welfare while at the same time produces weapons of mass destruction. Marcuse wrote, “The ‘nature of things,’
including that of society, was so defined as to justify repression and even suppression as perfectly rational” (Marcuse 1964, 147). In order to change this hierarchical and selective approach, science, just as any other discipline, needs to be taught from a tender age, philosophically from the ethics of inclusive caring, in which there is awareness of benevolent intolerance to emancipate women, men, children, and ultimately nature from the infection of enlightenment domination, patriarchal subjugation, and capitalist exploitation. An ethics of caring is fundamental in any aspect of education for a more humanistic civilization.

There is an illusion and deception that scientific progress and technological development are testimonies to human progress. The Enlightenment considered moral development as a symbol of human growth, but this progress was aimed selectively to increase the power of certain groups of people and to leave behind many others. Such progress did not emanate from the ethics of inclusive caring and thus led to a master plan of extermination of innocent human beings. The focus of the Nazis on science without any shred of human compassion, the development of weapons of mass destruction and ammunition by Western societies, along with all other forms of violence, including slavery and trafficking, in the micro and macro domains, should remain a red flag warning to any society that aspires and claims to be humanistic and democratic. Without education for inclusive and critical caring, humanity will not be able to move toward a caring and nurturing society.

CONCLUSION

“For everyone is guided by their own pleasure,” Spinoza wrote, “and the mind is very often so preoccupied with greed, glory, jealousy, anger, etc., that there is no room for reason. . . . For everyone can act with deceit by the right of nature and is not obliged to stand by promises except where there is hope of greater good or fear of a greater evil” (1670, 199). Greed is a powerful force influencing human action, according to Spinoza. Greediness brings people in power to collaborate covertly and/or overtly with systems of oppression and exploitation. However, the purpose of this chapter is not to describe a pessimistic view of society or education but to see that there is hope. There is kindness and generosity that needs to become the dominant reality principle in the micro and macro domains. In an era where more and more people are aware of their right to freedom and more people have the means to raise their voices and oppose oppression and violence, we must constantly aspire to resolve conflicts and reach compromises by cultivating an affinity for peace, love, and benevolent intolerance toward violence and exploitation in young people’s minds.
This is an era of fast communication, mobility, and migration among countries; therefore, there is more exposure to other cultures and ways of being and more awareness of human misery in different parts of the world. This gives hope that each generation will strive for collective freedom by crossing barriers erected symbolically by stereotypes and materially by economic inequalities. At the same time, the cosmopolitan world in which we live is infected with forms of human and drug trafficking, slavery, weapons trading, religious intolerance, and the rampant exploitation of third-world labor by first-world capitalists. Because of an emphasis on instrumental reason, quantitative assessment, and efficiency protocols, education in one-dimensional society is unable to address the dialectic of hope and despair that characterizes many societies and individuals in many parts of the world. The challenge for the international community, comprised of scholars, policy makers, and politicians, is to think inclusively: How can we bridge the existing gap despite personal and cultural differences; how can we constitute an international human rights law (that is getting more and more essential) that on the one hand allows ample leeway to sustain individual, cultural, and societal differences, and at the same time abolishes patterns and laws that increase violence and social injustice (including poverty) in many aspects of life? One way to diminish violence is by cultivating in each individual an ethic of inclusive caring and a benevolent intolerance toward injustice; to teach for love and caring in every aspect of life so that there will be less demand to violate human rights—that is, to raise generations that focus on caring for others rather than on one-dimensional, greedy self-interest.

Aspiring for a genuinely humanistic society is therefore not a dream. It is an ideal that fuels our political and pedagogical activism. Each human being needs to reflect first and foremost upon his or her conduct and become personally accountable for malicious intolerance around the world. Marcuse wrote: “The only authentic alternative and negation of dictatorship . . . would be a society in which ‘the people’ have become autonomous individuals, freed from the repressive requirements of a struggle for existence in the interest of domination” (1969, 105). While an ideal remains an ideal, it nevertheless influences the direction of our actions and as such has material consequences. Without recognition of this ideal we would lose our political orientation and as such our claims of “freedom,” “equality,” and “caring.” Here standards no longer speak the language of instrumental reason. Rather, the starting point is the humanistic goal of a genuinely caring and tolerant society. At the end of The One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse quoted Walter Benjamin, who said: “It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us” (Marcuse 1964, 257). In a world of violence, we must do our utmost to diminish violence. As educators, it is our moral duty to promote learning and to give hope to those who have lost it. Inclusive caring that promotes benevolent intolerance—recognizing all its para-
doxes—should thus be the foundation for education. We must think, as the Iroquois thought, seven generations ahead and perhaps even more.

NOTE

I have great respect for the group of scholars who are part of this book. In particular I wish to thank Tyson Lewis for being so caring and supportive of my work. Your input was invaluable.

REFERENCES

Can we, in any sense, rationally speculate on a change, not only in the application of science but also in its direction and method? A change perhaps generated by an entirely new experience of nature, a new relation to nature and to man?

—Herbert Marcuse

Historically, technology within the sphere of education has always been a means by which to shape and enhance the transmission of knowledge and information. From the first educational technologies, such as the printed text, to correspondence schools’ dependence on the postal system, to contemporary multimedia and information technologies that have accompanied the rise of the “information society,” educational institutions have always had to respond to evolving technologies that have altered the ways humans work, understand, and interact within society and culture. Yet this relationship between education and technology has in official policies also been one of passivity and adaptation. New technologies enter the sphere of education as modes of information transfer and as cultural artifacts, and as such they co-construct the experience of education as well as its outcomes. This dominant model is embodied in the National Education Technology Plan of 2004, released in January 2005 by the U.S. Department of Education:

With one notable exception, No Child Left Behind, these changes are being driven by forces in the field. They are being driven by the new realities of the digital market place, the rapid development of “virtual” schools, and the enthusiasm of an amazing generation of students weaned on the marvels of technology who are literally forcing our schools to adapt and change in ways never before imagined. (USDOE 2004)
Indeed, information and communication technologies constitute the most dramatic relationship between technology and education today. And while these seductive and powerful technologies may offer progressive potential for the way education engages technology, possibly providing a space of resistance where information technologies can be appropriated and reconfigured for democratic ends, there is little discussion of how education has also been complicit in denying a demand for qualitatively new forms of technology. In this chapter I will begin to examine the reasons for this complicity. In so doing, I ask what role education should play in generating a demand for qualitatively new forms of technology that promotes the democratization of science and technology by challenging values that are attached to existing technologies, ways of learning science, and conceptions of nature and society that are attendant to these sensibilities. I begin to work toward an answer to this question through an engagement with Herbert Marcuse’s critical theory of technology. His critique of science and technology in advanced industrial society, as I argue, is one that is highly relevant for understanding current educational policy and practices concerning science and technology education. More precisely, in an effort to sketch out what an educational project that would expand democratic values to science and technology education would look like, I concentrate on Marcuse’s concept of technique. The reason I focus on Marcuse’s concept of technique is because this concept best illuminates the multidimensional life of science and technology, which not only shapes the content of education but also how students come to know and interact with each in their daily lives.

The concept of technique has a rather long history within the field of philosophy of technology and is treated differently by individual theorists. Yet unifying these views is the idea that technique represents a way of understanding the less visible aspects of technology, a concept that reflects the cloaked social and political life of science and technology. Technique therefore is understood in this study as an epistemological and ontological mode of interaction and relations with technology and science as they are constructed in learning environments of schools. Thus technique is also more than ways of knowing in relation to technological artifacts; it is also an ontological concept in that it produces distinct modes of being in technological society. As such, technique as I am employing it differs from other studies of technique, such as Jacques Ellul’s The Technological Society, because technique is treated here as a dialectical concept as opposed to a totalizing one. In other words, technique, as I treat the concept, should be understood dialectically as a force for domination or liberation, resisting a solely negative characterization of the concept found in Ellul’s articulation. In opposition to such views, I emphasize technique as a multidimensional concept that can be
reconstructed as a toehold for extending democratic and socially transforma-
tive practices in education. Thus as technique is most frequently expressed in
education oppressively, at the same time it presents the possibility to cultivate
alternative expressions of technology and science through reconstructed dem-
ocratic techniques, an example of which I suggest in the conclusion. But first
it will be useful to elucidate how technique is related to technology more
clearly by briefly sketching how a democratic relationship can emerge. This
requires taking a look at its anatomy a bit more closely.

Technique as a concept reflects the objective organization of technology as
a process of production and as a mode of social life set within the context of
“technocapitalist” society. Particular technologies, such as a bar of soap or a
nuclear reactor, for example, are both linked to technique in that they produce
sets of practices, relations, and ways of being at the level of the individual and
society. Technique’s role in technocapitalist society, therefore, is a constitut-
ive one because it is the conjuncture where technology, society and culture,
and the political coalesce. As such, it is in the concept of technique where not
only the ontological expression of soap and nuclear energy are determined
and legitimized, but also where the negative consequences of these technolo-
gies (ranging from the minimal displeasure of bad odor to the destruction of
life at the cellular level) escape the democratic process. Technique, more-
over, is where the multidimensionality of technology is revealed—its positive
and utopian potential as well as its negative and destructive quality. It is for
these reasons that I argue that technique should be interrogated if we are se-
rious about developing democratic practices through education that are ade-
quate for dealing with social environments where the lines between human
and nonhuman, technology and biology are not so clear and are, in fact, be-
coming blurred. Producing counter-techniques in education that aim at the so-
cial reconstruction of technology and science, I argue, can extend democracy
into the realm of technique by helping initiate a necessary transvaluation with
existing forms of science and technology by enlarging what currently is un-
derstood as democratic agency in science and technology education.

I begin by fleshing out how technique operates as a muted organizational
structure and anti-democratic practice in the sphere of education by focusing
on three expressions of technique in Marcuse’s work in One-Dimensional
Man and other essays on technology and society. The first expression of tech-
nique in Marcuse’s critical theory of technology I examine is the concept of
mimesis. In this analysis I concentrate on how mimesis acts as an accelerato-
and strengthening force of anti-democratic expressions of technique within
technological society, or, in other words, how technique is subjectified within
the individual in an uncritical fashion. The second expression of technique I
examine in Marcuse’s work illuminates how, through technology, labor is
qualitatively effected within technological society, focusing on how technological society’s anti-democratic expression of technique situates technology as something against liberating and healthy uses. Lastly, I articulate how, for Marcuse, technological society shrinks alternative spaces of resistance by extending technique into the deepest recesses of human subjectivity and culture, what he termed the aesthetic dimension.

From my analysis of technique in Marcuse’s critical theory of technology, I argue that a rigorous critique of technique within education is necessary in order to transform anti-democratic practices currently in place within education into more democratic and open ones. I suggest that such a transformation entails the linking of technology and science to a broader project of democracy. These projects begin with the ability of students and citizens to generate a demand for new relationships with technology and science from the standpoint of real-world problems and crises. To put it another way, by questioning the role of technique within the sphere of education, and by drawing upon Marcuse’s concept of technique as the groundwork for this project, the importance of including technology and science in rethinking what democratic education should look like is unmistakable.

In conclusion, I offer a new framework for thinking about the democratic reconstruction of technique in education. I do so by turning to Bruno Latour’s recent work in science and technology studies, suggesting that he and Marcuse intersect on at least one mutual and highly relevant point: the need to develop ways for transforming existing human values with the project of modern science and technological applications. From this shared ground, I argue, we can see how expressions of technique extend beyond technologies such as computers, white boards, digital projectors, the No Child Left Behind (US-DOE 2002) Act, drinking fountains, portable classrooms, and so on, in a way that problematizes traditional understandings of objects, things, and even modern notions of human subjectivity. In my final section I suggest that both Marcuse’s and Latour’s theories call for a novel form of democratic arrangement that can take into account the larger and more determining role that technology and science have in contemporary society, suggesting a move toward what Latour has called an “object-oriented democracy.”

MARCUSE AND THREE EXPRESSIONS OF TECHNIQUE IN TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Of the first-generation Frankfurt School theorists, it was Herbert Marcuse who relentlessly studied the role of technology and its impact on civilization. For him, the historical moment of advanced industrial society was uniquely
marked by the harnessing and shaping of human technology through the cap-
italist apparatus of production, which extended an imprisoning and debilitat-
ing set of social and cultural relations through negative techniques of admin-
istration and political and aesthetic containment. Under the capitalist 
organization of society, technology and science, for Marcuse, are seen as cul-
tural forms that advance the growth of instrumental reason instead of human 
liberation. Science and technology are anything but neutral or apolitical activ-
ities for Marcuse, as they contribute to and accelerate the decline of the indi-
vidual’s potential for achieving a critical perspective concerning the existing 
conditions that substantiate advanced society. Dissent against the status quo in 
such a context fades into the background through the increased importance 
that science and technology play in the production process of technological so-
ciety. For Marcuse, one of the emerging qualities of technological society sig-
aling a dramatic change in the relationship between individuals and their in-
teraction with technology is expressed in the concept of mimesis.

Mimesis for Marcuse plays an enormously significant role for establishing 
an antidemocratic expression of technique at the level of subjectivity. In Mar-
cuse’s words, the process of mimesis begins where

mass production and mass distribution claim the entire individual, and industrial 
psychology has long since ceased to be confined to the factory. The manifold 
processes of introjection seem to be ossified in almost mechanical relations. The re-
result is, not adjustment but mimesis: an immediate identification of the individual 
with his society and, through it, with the society as a whole. (Marcuse 1964, 10)

The process of mimesis, internalized in the individual within technological
society, is alienation in its advanced form. That is, mimesis for Marcuse is 
alienation that has become objective through technological society’s unique 
capability of achieving a total administration of the labor process, which cou-
ples work to the normative ethic of consumer society within the subject. In-
deed, the effects of mimesis on the individual in advanced society for Mar-
cuse are tremendous and of great political consequence:

Reality constitutes a more progressive stage of alienation. The latter has become 
entirely objective; the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alien-
ated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all 
forms. The achievements of progress defy ideological indictment as well as jus-
tification; before their tribunal the “false consciousness” of their rationality be-
comes the true consciousness. (Marcuse 1964, 11)

Alienation in technological society, as indicated above, has indeed achieved a 
new level of penetration for Marcuse and is marked by a diminished capacity
for dissent and critical thought in the individual to the objective historical conditions in his or her interaction with technology and other products of science. But most important for this analysis is the role mimesis plays in obscuring the previous historical relationship in industrial society that individuals retained with their tools and relations of production—in other words, the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and proletariat is sublimated in the feats of technology and its transformation of the labor process.

The relationship that is established through mimesis between the individual and technology is one that emanates an unreflective and pacified nature, a “way of life” that accepts technologies as they are on their own terms. The individual’s capacity to attain critical consciousness concerning the objective contradictions of capitalist labor conditions, aggressive militarism, and rampant destruction of the natural world, for instance, is subsumed by an apparatus that produces both the needs and goods that consumer society requires. This destructive and oppressive quality of technology under capitalism’s control and the process of mimesis it creates mystify the complicity that technology and science have in establishing and maintaining an “open air prison” of advanced society.

Here we can begin to see that Marcuse’s problem is not only a material but a metaphysical one as well: Technological society, through the subjectification of objective reality (mimesis), dispenses with metaphysics, the realm of contemplative and reflective thought, which can potentially stand in contradiction to reality. Such a space collapses through Marcuse’s idea that mimesis in advanced society has the simultaneous ability to “deliver the goods” and define the terms of the good life. In this sense we can think of Hegel’s night “where all cows are black,” where human thought fails to enrich itself by freezing thinking with one mode of life. However, in the context of technological society, the implosion of the material and metaphysical worlds distorts enlightenment and replaces it with a false notion of progress. As such, Marcuse’s concept of mimesis offers a standpoint to better understand how human interactions with technology and science are more than simply utilitarian. Instead, what becomes clear is how technology is complicit in producing modes of life and ways of thinking through the subjective internalization of technique.

For Marcuse the mode of life produced through mimesis in advanced society promotes pacification to social and political contradiction. Subjectivity, defined under these terms, lacks the capacity to establish autonomous and critical relations with human technology—that is, creating and implementing technologies that are democratically responsible and produce healthy instead of destructive and violent ends. Mimesis thus gives technique a material expression in advanced society that is historically unique, conquering dissent
and critical consciousness in the individual while retaining and reproducing the necessary forms of labor relations, social needs, and political attitudes. In the context of contemporary education, mimesis as an expression of technique manifests in the NCLB era as an immediate relation between the student and society. Increasingly, a reflective distance from society and culture is denied through education and an immediate relationship to technocapitalist society is imposed. Yet, for Marcuse, mimesis does not signal the complete foreclosure of political alternatives to technological society’s historical expression. In fact, alternative modes of life reside in the very same technologies that contribute to civilization’s decline in advanced industrial society.

One of the grand paradoxes of advanced society never left Marcuse’s sight: Capitalism’s advanced technologies of production presented the material potential to simultaneously alleviate human toil and increase leisure but instead shifted toil and labor into a more efficient and standardized mode. This paradox, for Marcuse, was viewed as a negative aspect of the dialectic of modernity. Thus, building off Marx’s insight into industrial technology in the *Grundrisse*, Marcuse similarly saw the undelivered promise of enlightenment progress lying in the accelerated means of production that machines ushered into history in the industrial age. Yet Marcuse’s critical theory of technology, different from Marx, also recognized that in fascist and other forms of state-run capitalism, technology and science had taken on a unique and totalizing quality. Totalitarian organizational forms of the state, or what fellow Frankfurt School theorist Frederick Pollock called state capitalism, created the cultural and social conditions for technology and science to reach their oppressive apex (Pollock 1989). Technology in totalitarian systems such as the state capitalism of the United States, the United Kingdom, or that of the former Soviet Union and Nazi Germany thus were all bound to the imperatives of the capitalist system’s irrational demands: harnessing technology for state-controlled production process and the prevention of crisis in the capitalist mode of production. For Marcuse, technical progress took its direction from the capitalist paradigm that “evolves its own apparatus, and evolves it in accordance with the work to be done, and this work is not determined technologically: it is rather given from the outside, by the social needs to be fulfilled” (Marcuse 1973, 47).

With this aspect of totalitarian science and technology in view, technique’s second expression within advanced society is characterized in Marcuse’s theory by its involvement in “containment of social change,” one of the paramount features of one-dimensional society for Marcuse. This contribution to the shrinkage of forms of resistance to one-dimensionality is apparent for Marcuse in the shifting labor relationship between the worker and the highly technological production system of late capitalist society. This transformation
from the more traditional Marxist concept of labor develops within technological society for Marcuse in the automated, rationally calculated, and technologically mediated worker’s activity that on the one hand, “increasingly reduc[es] the quantity and intensity of physical energy expended in labor” (Marcuse 1964, 24), while on the other, assimilates and pacifies the innermost recesses of the individual’s consciousness to the objective reality produced by one-dimensional society. The concept of labor in its qualitatively new mode now takes its direction from the emergence of industrial science research models. As such, Marcuse’s theory of technique illuminates historically unique contradictions that have arisen in totalitarian societies and their reliance and development of science and technology. Through automation, for instance, the technologically streamlined production process itself takes on the traits of a subject—a reified process that conditions the worker’s consciousness and being through the meshing of instinctual drives and aspirations with the rhythms of mechanized and rationally planned labor. What is important to reflect on here, however, is the shift in the relationship between the subject (the worker) and technology (the object or artifact) in Marcuse’s theory of technique. That is, what we see in Marcuse’s study of technological society is that technology has taken on a reified and totalizing quality at the deepest levels of humanity. In other words, technology and technique merge into an indistinguishable unity where the worker is no longer able to distinguish technology from its organizational framework, or the role of technology in the capitalist production process. Even more pernicious in Marcuse’s analysis is that the organizational goals of technology in advanced society have become seamless with the goals and aspirations of the worker. This coupling of technique and technologies of capitalist forms of production dissolves the potential for alternative understandings of science and technology by imbuing in the individual a political consciousness of passive cooperation with the imperatives of global capital, which Marcuse characterizes as “a vicious circle . . . which is self-expanding and self-perpetuating in its own pre-established direction—driven by the growing needs which it generates and, at the same time, contains” (Marcuse 1964, 34).

Technology in advanced society, therefore, achieves a unique historical expression of technique as “the ‘mechanics of conformity’ spread from the technological to the social order; they govern performance not only in the factories and shops, but also in the offices, schools, assemblies and, finally, in the realm of relaxation and entertainment” (Marcuse 1964, 48). Standardization, conformity to consumer attitudes and culture, worker’s anesthetization to traditional categories of class contradiction, and most importantly, the sublimation of dissenting critical thought against this system, are aspects of technique in technological society. Technique in Marcuse’s critical theory of technology
illuminates how labor in technological society carries with it an epistemological seed for establishing this mode of human activity by increasingly shaping environments where work and learning occur.

Keeping this feature of technique in view, learning in an automated context promotes what Freire calls the “banking method,” making the classroom itself into a place where technique and technology implode into the same activity. The distinction between how we learn to use technologies in the classroom such as the Internet or doing science experiments is obscured, while the totality of relations in one-dimensional society remains unaccounted for. This epistemological transfer performed by the concept of technique for Marcuse does not only take place at the level of human labor, however, but also in the realm of leisure and art. Technique, in Marcuse’s critical theory of technology, thus not only extends into the sphere of work, but also to the aesthetic dimension.

The flattening out of society into an efficiently productive whole as I have argued above entails for Marcuse the striking out of all potential realms of critical reflection that could develop forms of resistance. The final antidemocratic feature of the concept of technique I examine is the colonization of spaces of art and leisure. This is an important aspect of life according to Marcuse’s theory, because it is where the worker is afforded a place to escape the miseries of alienated labor and life. Technique, in other words, is now able through technological society’s totalizing quality to transfigure the transcendent rationality of the aesthetic realm and subordinate the seductive and falsely fulfilling objects of a consumer culture. To be sure, the broadening scope of one-dimensional technique, for Marcuse, sets the conditions in which the individual is saturated with the values of consumerism and the fetishization of objects. Even outside of the factory individuals are confronted with an extremely narrow notion of technique that is fitted for an economic and cultural system that valorizes an aesthetic of overdevelopment and hyperconsumption. This shaping of creative and experimental space where individuals might have developed an oppositional aesthetic against one-dimensional life thus signals to Marcuse yet another dynamic of the concept of technique.11

The cultural production exhibited by one-dimensional society harnesses mass communication and information technologies in a way that generates its own aesthetic of oppression, extending technique’s influence beyond the factory or office in yet another medium:

If mass communications blend together harmoniously, and often unnoticeably, art, politics, religion, and philosophy with commercials, they bring these realms of culture to their common denominator—the commodity form. The music of the soul is also the music of salesmanship. Exchange value, not truth value counts. On it centers the rationality of the status quo, and all alien rationality is bent to it. (Marcuse 1964, 57)
In short, Marcuse’s theory of technique accentuates how technologies of communication and cultural production in one-dimensional society help provide the means for a colonization of a cultural dimension that is absolutely important for building movements that refuse one-dimensionality.

For Marcuse, this colonization of the realm of refusal inherent in art takes place through repressive desublimation, where “the protest against that which is” is reduced to the caprice of the leaders of the “culture industry.” Repressive desublimation expresses technique in technological society in a wholly unique manner. This is because, for Marcuse, repressive desublimation replaces “mediated with immediate gratification” at the instinctual level of the individual. In other words, technological society, through its unprecedented material strength, is able to liberate instinctual drives that were formerly suppressed through the toil of physical labor and projects this surplus libidinal energy into an illusory form. As Marcuse puts it, repressive desublimation plays out in subjectivity in this way:

[By] diminishing erotic and intensifying sexual energy, the technological reality limits the scope of sublimation. It also reduces the need for sublimation. In the mental apparatus, the tension between that which is desired and that which is permitted seems considerably lowered, and the Reality Principle no longer seems to require a sweeping and painful transformation of instinctual needs. The individual must adapt himself to a world which does not seem to demand the denial of his innermost needs—a world which is not essentially hostile. (Marcuse 1964, 73)

Technological society, in this sense, shapes the libidinal, innermost drives of human subjectivity, reducing them to a position that accepts an immediate form of eroticism that is dispensed through any number of mass-produced cultural artifacts and manufactured pleasure experiences. Alleviating the contradiction that arises from the socially established Reality Principle allows technique to affect primordial drives that resist the instrumental constraints that are embodied in the social institutions and cultural norms of advanced society. The redirection of the inner drives of subjectivity, for Marcuse, marks the depths to which technique in technological society has come to define human existence. Furthermore, the shrinking of opposition to these forces of technological society affects the ontological determination of the individual. His or her subjectivity springs forth into contemplative thought only to return to the individual in a self-affirming form. The negative realm of art and imagination is replaced with an administered aesthetic that ameliorates existence into a blissful complacence. The result of this third expression of technique is the emergence of what Marcuse famously calls the “happy consciousness” of technological society.
For Marcuse, the production of the happy consciousness and its operationalization through repressive desublimation is a distinct and widespread feature of technological society. The previous forms of technique examined thus far—labor in a highly technological context and the process of mimesis—also help establish and play a role in the complacent consciousness that, for Marcuse, is the cultural logic of one-dimensional society. This dominant mode of thought established in one-dimensional society reflects the belief that the real is rational, and that the established system, in spite of everything, delivers the goods. The people are led to find in the productive apparatus the effective agent of thought and action to which their personal thought and action can and must be surrendered. And in this transfer, the apparatus also assumes the role of a moral agent. Conscience is absolved by reification, by the general necessity of things. (Marcuse 1964, 79)

This totalizing picture for Marcuse is the product of advanced capitalist society’s highly technological form and its technique. Existence in this context is one that is constantly mediated by the immediate qualities of a highly technological reality. Whereas industrial society created the conditions for alienation to grow objectively, technological society’s objectivity completely engulfs the individual and gains subjective form through the happy consciousness. For Marcuse, the alternative to one-dimensional society and the happy consciousness thus requires a radical transformation in the way science and technology are practiced and thought of in the contemporary moment. Such a shift hinges for Marcuse on the establishment of cultural practices that promote a transvaluation to occur between humans and the way they approach science and technology, uprooting their intimate relationship to technocapitalism and replacing it with healthier and more rational forms.

DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATIONS: TECHNIQUES FOR AN “OBJECT-ORIENTED DEMOCRACY”?

For Marcuse, escape from the destructive and oppressive science and technology of advanced society requires that new techniques of liberation be developed. Indeed, Marcuse “envisages a science of liberation which would combine reflections on liberation with thought about how to reconstruct our technology, environment and human relations to increase dramatically human freedom and well being” (Kellner 1984, 333). Yet, this project never reached fruition in Marcuse’s lifetime, and he left it up to a new generation of critical theorists to break the iron grip that one-dimensional society holds over the material expression and conceptual understanding of human technology and
science. As I have argued above, and attempted to demonstrate through an engagement with Marcuse’s critical theory of technology, technique and science and technology have ceased to be distinct concepts. Instead, the implosion between the reflective realm and application creates a state of affairs that mirrors this very union. The effects of this marriage shape education in some very important ways, which I now want to explore. Yet accepting this fact means that educational theory needs to begin to articulate novel approaches within education to reverse the increasing advance of one-dimensionality through schooling.

In the rush to wire every classroom across the nation we should, with our analysis of technique in view, look to see how particular techniques are strengthened and extended in the fervor to construct the classroom of the next century. Given the provision in the NCLB act that requires every student to be technologically literate by eighth grade, the major push to get technologies into schools is currently led by a group called Partnership for 21st Century Skills Forum. To “support this requirement [NCLB], the Department [of Education] provided assistance to the 21st Century Skills Forum, a public-private partnership among government, business and education.” Not surprisingly, this group consists almost entirely of the following corporate interests: Apple, Cisco Systems, Dell, ETS (Educational Testing Centers, the company that administers and profits from tests such as the GRE, LSAT, and SAT), Ford, Intel, Microsoft, Texas Instruments, Time Warner, and Verizon. Such an exchange is an example of the blurred lines between political economy and education, where again the distinction between the whole (society) and education is null—critical space to mount resistance is filled with mimetic techniques that collapse private and public domains in the learning activity of the classroom.

In applying my analysis of technique, we can see how accompanying the NCLB policy to make all students “technologically literate” is an advanced form of alienation that subjectifies the objective corporate reality through use of the classroom as a cultural space. It is through such relationships that techniques of liberation must be generated in education to resist this mode of technology and instead demand technologies that enable and build new ways of viewing expressions of democracy. Locating a technique that could resist the condition that accepts one-dimensional manifestations of technology must begin with the recognition that technology in the contemporary educational context is also linked to forms of life and ways of being in one-dimensional society. The challenge for educational philosophy is to provide the means to alternative forms of life and ways of being that are deeply involved with antidemocratic techniques that mask the social and political agency exhibited by science and technology in technocapitalist society. The project for
techniques of liberation therefore must continue to develop novel approaches, if we are serious in our commitment for social transformation through the development of timely democratic practices.

In the sphere of education, however, my analysis also suggests that technique is not only concomitant with forms of media and information technologies. That is, technique is articulated in how we interact with our technologies, the ways in which our relationships with technology are often ones that encourage a sense of passivity, adaptation, and a limiting view of what should be included as part of the social and political realm. In extending my analysis of Marcuse’s theory of technique, we can view how educational spaces across the country are infused with one-dimensional techniques. Mobile classrooms, as educational technologies, exemplify how the second expression of technique (labor in a technologically reified form) is present in an environment where basic technologies of schooling such as books, paper, classroom facilities, and foundational infrastructure are absent. As a common phenomenon in the United States, the wealthiest nation in the world, portable classrooms have become an educational technology that is seldom looked at as being a part of the debate on technology and schooling; but as recent studies by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California EPA show, portable classrooms are indeed unhealthy environments and are also an educational technology.15

Yet portable classrooms, as an educational technology of space, have multiple effects on the educational experience of the student. The symbolic effect alone of a mobile classroom is troubling enough, as it potentially communicates to the student a sense of compulsory internment instead of an experience of empowerment, care, or a sense of how their agency is affected by such conditions. Indeed, spatial technologies such as portable classrooms are not addressed in policy such as the NCLB, yet they have as much of an effect on the outcome of education as does the “teaching to the test” curriculum that it promotes.16 In the example of portable classrooms, technique plays a highly determining role in schooling by adhering to principles of the most cost-effective use of space and resources. The techniques of cost efficiency and distributive inequality win out over access to quality educational spaces and basic educational technologies. As such, subjectivity formed through this relationship to technology is one that speaks to students in a way that dismisses and ignores many student realities. Thus by extending the concept of technique beyond its relationship to technologies per se within education, its function as a way of organizing relations with objects in the social world is made more visible and points to a new intersection between science and technology in schooling. Techniques of liberation, I am suggesting here, must also involve the inclusion of objects as spatial technologies that act as political and social mediators.
In light of Marcuse’s critique, which reveals the depth to which technique is involved in social and cultural life, we must consider how education can play a more active role in challenging status quo uses and practices of science and technology in education. I contend that this will require centering science and technology within the educational context in a way that illuminates its mediating role in society and everyday life. Education, in other words, needs to take on a more reflexive role in how technology and science are thought in the classroom in order to reverse the trend of passivity and adaptation to one that traces the networks of human and technological actors.

A project such as this, set within the educational context, can produce an account of different ontological relationships with technology that focus on how objects and technologies help construct and mediate our realities. Spatial technologies such as mobile classrooms could be perceived as a technology to be refused and recategorized as an undemocratic technology—extending traditional notions of what is traditionally understood as having political agency. In viewing mobile classrooms, for instance, as mediating technological objects, we can begin to erase the misleading boundary of what is to be considered democratically accountable in society. The invisible political quality of mobile classroom technology, its repressive technique, would cease to be neutral and acceptable and instead be viewed as having a mediating relationship with the lives of students. Developing educational content that makes the links between technologies and their broader social and political life more clear must be part of a comprehensive democratic education, something I now begin to preliminarily sketch by assessing what has been developed in my analysis of technique in Marcuse’s work alongside the recent work of Bruno Latour in the field of science and technology studies.

In beginning to outline a more comprehensive democratic relationship between technology and science in education, I argue that we need to turn to recent work in the field of science studies. The reason I am suggesting this move is because this field provides important perspectives that articulate with Marcuse and help flesh out what his hope for a democratic transvaluation between humans and their science and technology might entail in our contemporary moment—although the work of Latour and Marcuse, at first glance, looks like an unhappy union, given the facts that Latour labels himself a post-Marxist and that Marcuse throughout his life and work constantly applied and developed analyses of society that were influenced and built upon ideas and concepts of Marx. Despite this difference I suggest that their work intersects at an important point, which I argue is a valuable place to begin a project in educational theory that emphasizes reconstructing relationships with technology and science that begin from their connectedness to social and political life.17
In developing this intersection between Marcuse and Latour, however, let me first bring into the open their obvious theoretical incongruities—the first of which, and perhaps the most divergent, can be best viewed by looking at how each theorizes social and political agency. For Marcuse, social and political action is something that can only occur through the human individual; liberatory social change therefore rests on the development of revolutionary subjectivity. Thus for Marcuse, political agency and the potential for transforming society fall squarely on the shoulders of men and women who are actors in the world and are either actively creating the objective historical situation or are working against a particular expression of it. Democratically transforming the value framework of science and technology would involve a shift in the ways humans think about (from an instrumental to an emancipatory perspective) uses of science and technology in society and nature, as well as a radical change in the way science and technology are utilized in the capitalist mode of production of technology. Central to Marcuse’s critical theory of technology, then, are the concepts of emancipation, reification, oppression, commodification, alienation, and so on, which mark the register at which human agency is working on behalf of either a more free human condition or a less free one.

Latour’s theory of agency, in contrast to Marcuse’s, rejects this characterization and views it as an aberration of a modernity that we have never fully reached because it is incapable of accounting for all the mediators involved in social and political activity:

Modernity is defined in terms of humanism, either as a way of saluting the birth of “man” or as a way of announcing his death. But this habit itself is modern, because it remains asymmetrical. It overlooks the simultaneous birth of “non-humanity”—things, or objects, or beasts—and the equally strange beginning of a crossed-out God, relegated to the sidelines. Modernity arises first from the conjoined creation of those three entities, and then from the masking of the conjoined birth and the separate treatment of the three communities while, underneath, hybrids continue to multiply as an effect of this separate treatment. (Latour 1993, 13)

The application of concepts such as emancipation, reification, commodification, revolution, and the like to social assemblages for Latour only obscures the agency of other actors in society, because preexisting categories of social explanation fail to take into account the role of objects and as a result their part as actors in hybrid networks are bracketed off from what is deemed social and thus political. Humanism as a by-product of the critical project of the Enlightenment, as understood from Latour’s view, perpetuates a method of sorting out what belongs to the political and social realms and what be-
longs to the natural and nonsocial. To think of it another way, critical social theory for Latour registers only a partial account of the collective that contains both humans and nonhuman arrangements and activities in society. This state of affairs necessitates, Latour argues, the need to develop a social theory that can begin to articulate how collective environments mobilize the agency of both humans and nonhumans (technological artifacts, natural objects, laboratories, freeways and subway tunnels, etc.; Latour 2005a). In brief, what Latour argues for in his work is a new definition of the social that is able to take into account the varieties of assemblages that constitute the complex arrangements of humans and nonhumans. Where in modernist conceptions the categories of society and nature perform the role of sorting what is social and what is objective, Latour wants to move toward a democratic model for dealing with today’s sociology of science and technology that abandons traditional notions of the social and the natural (Latour 2005a).

The second clear incommensurability between Marcuse’s and Latour’s social theories of technology and science emerges from their divergent views on dialectics as a mode for explaining social contradiction. Dialectic analysis is the motor of Marcuse’s examination of science and technology in society, as was suggested above in my treatment of technique in Marcuse’s work. That is, in Marcuse’s dialectic framework, for instance, capitalist forms of technology and science that are operating under an irrational structure reflect and reproduce this reality but also an alternative one in the emancipatory potential they retain. Through a radical change in the social and political structure, a new expression of science and technology can be realized that focuses on human and planetary health, happiness, increased leisure, and technologies that promote life instead of destruction.

Different from Marcuse’s dialectical critical theory of technology, Latour argues that dialectical analyses convolute the whole business of making things clearer or a project that would better understand the mediations involved in constructing social collectives that are constituted through nonhuman objects and things as well as humans. In the social theory that Latour and other science studies theorists such as Michel Callon and John Law have developed, which has come to be known as actor network theory (ANT), dialectics is seen as an inadequate mode of analysis in which to study science and technology in society because it

link[s] the two poles of nature and society by as many arrows and feedback loops as one wishes . . . [and this] does not relocate the quasi-objects or quasi-subject that I want to take into account. On the contrary, dialectics makes the ignorance of that locus still deeper than in the dualist paradigm since it feigns to overcome it by loops and spirals and other complex acrobatic figures. Dialectics literally beats around the bush. (Latour 1993, 55)
Whereas dialectics pointed in Marcuse’s critical social theory to possibility and utopian potential in present technologies and science, for Latour and ANT theorists the method plays an obfuscating role that inhibits better explanations of varied and complex combinations of networks of humans and nonhumans in its attempt to merge the ontologies of the subject and object. Kant’s identification of the thing-in-itself and Hegel’s totalizing system of absolute knowledge as its remedy, according to Latour, only set the moderns off on the wrong path for understanding things in the world and their relation to humans.

Latour’s indictment of dialectics as a mode of social analysis thus centers on this contention: By focusing on the contradiction that arises from the crisis between the truth claims of the concept—the objective explanation of phenomena in the world on the one hand, and the developing identity of the subject on the other—dialectics creates a gaping hole in which the contradiction of how objects were becoming more and more social through their constant commingling through human actions and ways of organizing the social is lost.

So what are we to make of these seemingly insurmountable incongruities between Marcuse’s critical theory of technology and Latour’s ANT? What do they say to a project that wants to begin to articulate a new method for teaching and learning about science and technology in contemporary society? More specifically, what type of theory for understanding the social and political would they suggest? I do not intend here to attempt a synthesis of these two theorists’ positions, as I am not entirely sure one could be made. Instead I argue that, despite theoretical differences, the shared articulation of a transformation of scientific and technological values illuminates a common ground in which both theorists identify key challenges for developing a new political framework adequate for today’s sociology of science and technology and, as such, offer a point of departure for theorizing future projects in education and for the democratization of science and technology in society.

The clearest line of convergence that constitutes a meeting ground for Latour and Marcuse lies in their mutual call for a new anthropological conception of humans in technological society; this is where I suggest we need to begin theorizing a new model for democratic relations with science and technology within educational contexts. In the above analysis of technique in Marcuse’s work we can see what this might mean: The value framework of technological society that affects humans at the instinctual, sensual, cognitive, aesthetic, and political levels must be uprooted and transformed within humans in order to begin an alternative relationship with science and technology that is divorced from the capitalist system of production. The three negative expressions of technique articulated earlier represent each of these levels and, when taken together, reflect an image of humanity that has been subsumed by an increasingly invasive expression of technology and science.
Given this situation, Marcuse calls for a complete transvaluation with the established values produced through technological society. Reflecting on this task Marcuse asks,

Can we, in any sense, rationally speculate on a change, not only in the application of science but also in its direction and method? A change perhaps generated by an entirely new experience of nature, a new relation to nature and to man? The ascent of aesthetic values as non-violent, non-aggressive values suggest at least the possibility of a different formation of scientific concepts, a different direction of scientific abstraction; a more concrete, more sensuous, more qualitative science and technology, including a science of the imagination, as a creative faculty of human beings. (Marcuse 1973, 335)

As part of Marcuse’s legacy, the challenge to theorize and to put in practice “a more concrete, more sensuous, more qualitative science and technology, including a science of the imagination” lies in the hands of those who see as unacceptable the current degree to which scientific and technological decisions are opened up to democratic challenge and reconfiguration.

But how does educational theory begin to think about ways to initiate a transformation of values within current expressions and uses of science and technology? What sort of conception of democracy or collective political will would we turn to? These questions bring us back to our intersection between Latour and Marcuse: the establishment of new values between humans and their technological and scientific objects. We can see that in Marcuse’s concept of technique science and technology in advanced society plays an increasingly mediating role in human subjectivity, making the task of developing a resistance to this power ever more difficult in its administering of the different levels of human subjectivity discussed above. Latour would agree with Marcuse on this point and emphasize that it is for precisely this reason that we need to rethink the object in terms of these relationships. That is, if critical distance from the scientific and technological object has shrunk to such a degree that its agency is scarcely determinable, then we need to begin at the other end by not viewing the problem as object and object rather than subject and object. But one might argue that this reversal is a return to positivism, in fact a granting to positivism an even greater amount of power. On the contrary, Latour argues, it is only by viewing both humans and things in the world as objects that we can get a better account of how they are involved in the construction of an assembly of the social (Latour 2005a). But how would one conceive of democracy without subjects in the traditional sense of the term, and why would this be a desirable route to take?

Turning toward an “object-oriented” democracy seems like a contradiction in terms, but this is precisely what Latour and others in the field of science
and technology studies propose in order to move toward a different form of value relations between the human and the nonhuman world. One of the biggest challenges to this alternative way of conceiving the political and the public, however, is that it requires us to let go of traditional understandings of objects that carry with them a long-established set of values and modes of relations, which, as my analysis suggests, both Marcuse and Latour want to move beyond. In Latour’s mapping of this new political terrain the object or thing is reconceptualized:

It’s clear that each object—each issue—generates a different pattern of emotions and disruptions, of disagreements and agreements. There might be no continuity, no coherence in our opinions, but there is a hidden continuity and a hidden coherence in what we are attached to. Each object gathers around itself a different assembly of relevant parties. Each object triggers new occasions to passionately differ and dispute. Each object may also offer new ways of achieving closure without having to agree on much else. In other words, objects—taken as so many issues—bind all of us in ways that map out a public space profoundly different from what is usually recognized under the label of the “political.” (Latour 2005b, 15)

Here we can see what a different anthropological conception of humans for Latour entails and how this conceptualization of an “object-oriented democracy” overlaps with Marcuse’s subject/object dialectic, which calls for a “change perhaps generated by an entirely new experience of nature, a new relation to nature and to man.” The shift that Latour argues for is one that could lay the groundwork in which to advance how we theorize democracy through a refocused empiricism that investigates the object as an actor and mediator in society.20 Humans in this framework are similarly theorized as legislators, distributors, mediators, and mandators, cohabitants that constitute assemblies of the social with objects and things (Latour 1993).

How does this co-articulation in Marcuse’s and Latour’s thought, which argues for the need of a new anthropological value frame between humans and science and technology, translate into a project within education, one that seeks to transform traditional ways of teaching and learning about science and technology in society? My claim is that the articulation under examination helps us rethink standard methods of science education and applications and uses of technology in the classroom in a way that offers the potential for building concrete democratic practices. One way a new anthropological conception of humans and objects could be part of educational practices would be for science education to begin to produce a space for critical reflection concerning how science and technology increasingly create the experiences of our everyday lives. How we move, think, and communicate in society is intimately tied to either the mode in which we do science and think about the
world or its technological products; information and communication technologies are just one example of how technology increasingly defines how we come to know and relate in the world. This is precisely why we would need an epistemological model that replaces the bifurcated practice of separating the social from the natural, the objects from the subjects, with a simultaneous recognition of how this practice is reproduced in science education today. Beginning to sketch out how a reconceptualization of our traditional anthropological relationship to science and technology might appear in the classroom, I offer this set of postulates:

- Science education, as a mode of knowledge production, must recognize from its conceptual beginnings that it is a context-driven expression of culture and society, and as such it should be taught and learned from a standpoint that acknowledges and critically engages with this defining quality. Both the questioning of the means and ends of science and technology must be as important as the potential fruits they may indeed bear.
- We must develop students’ practice of critical thinking in a way that broadens the traditional notion of the concept. This will mean cultivating a democratic notion of technology and science within the framework of democracy and citizenship. Democracy, therefore, can no longer be thought of as simply a human-to-human endeavor. Instead the construction of a democratic education must include what we traditionally teach as belonging to nature, or an asocial space; it must focus on how objects both used and produced by science, and most importantly, technologies that shape social and cultural life are involved in actor networks.
- A democratic education, in this framework, will necessarily require the inclusion of the decisions made by scientists, social actors of industry, the state, and, most perhaps most importantly, the knowledge produced at educational sites. Mediation—in this model—will no longer be falsely absent from the scientific process; the chain of affectation that makes up the contemporary expression of science will have to be understood as organically connected to the process of separating out humans and nonhumans in the traditional categories of the social and natural. Similarly, separation will need to be resisted so that the perpetuation of the illusion of neutral objects and value-free technologies can be denied at the epistemological level.

Such a project requires a large amount of work and would likely meet with much resistance, making the application of ideas such as these difficult to achieve. But this does not mean that we should not try, considering current crises such as zoocide, energy shortages, proliferation and ubiquity of war
technologies, and perhaps most importantly, various technological and social crises in education. These situations may force us to move toward different paradigms that would eventually strengthen democracy in education as Latour and Marcuse envisaged.

NOTES

1. Even as this study is being written, Microsoft has just struck a deal with a public school district in Philadelphia to create the high school of the future. The goal is to not only create the most technologically advanced school in the United States, but also to attempt to implement a new bureaucratic form that mimics the model used by the Microsoft Corporation. This is only the latest example of many in the movement to privatize public schools in this country using corporate organizational models as the streamlined response to educational needs (see Smallwood 2005).

2. Different from other major studies on technological society and technique, such as Martin Heidegger’s essay “The Question Concerning Technology,” Jacques Ellul’s The Technological Society, and Lewis Mumford’s Technics and Human Development, Marcuse does not articulate a deterministic or autonomous framework for the logic of technology. The former two theorists of technology ultimately advance this position, while Mumford in contrast envisions the potential for different forms of technique and technology under alternative organizations of the state (Mumford 1964, 1–8). However, Mumford inadequately explains (as Marcuse does much better) the historical context of advanced capitalist society and its relationship to technique and technology. That is, Marcuse’s critical theory of technology is a systematic treatment of technology and technique within the framework of capitalism. For him, capitalist society shapes not only technology but also individual needs and desires, cultural expressions, and ways of relating to technology. As such, Marcuse’s dialectic of technology avoids technological or economic determinism by recognizing the potential for alternative expressions of technology and human relations that are set within the capitalist context. The dialectic analysis is unique to Marcuse’s study of technology and technique in capitalist society, which none of the aforementioned theorists adequately or even superficially demonstrate.

3. See Judy Wajcman and Donald MacKenzie’s essay (2002) “The Social Shaping of Technology,” for an excellent exposition of the social life of technology and how technology is not only those that we encounter as technological objects, but also the knowledge that accompanies their creation, implementation, and uses.

4. Ellul’s study of technique, written in 1964, is perhaps the best-known study of technique in the twentieth century. He characterizes technique in technological society as a closed world. It utilizes what the mass of men do not understand. It is even based on human ignorance. . . . The individual, in order to make use of technical instruments, no longer needs to know about his civilization. And no single technician dominates the whole complex any longer. The bond that unites the fragmentary actions and disjointedness of
individuals, co-ordinating and systematizing their work, is no longer a human one, but the internal laws of technique. . . . Technique reigns alone, a blind force and more clear-sighted than the best human intelligence. (Ellul 1964, 93)

The concept of technique I am using in this study does not give such a large degree of agency to technique — rather, technique as I am employing it accentuates the dialectical relationship between human activity, their tools, and society — one that is not immutable in the face of technique. Instead, I view technique as a potentially emancipatory concept that can, through a reconstructed education, lead to new ways of using and being with technology.

5. The concept of technocapitalism was first introduced by Douglas Kellner in *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity* (Kellner 1989) and further developed with Steven Best in their important study on contemporary society and culture, *The Postmodern Adventure: Science, Technology, and Cultural Studies at the Third Millennium*. Here they define the concept of technocapitalism as

a constellation in which technology and scientific knowledge, computerization and automation of labor, and interactive technology play a role in the process of production analogous to the function of human labor power and machines in an earlier era of capitalism. Technocapitalism also encompasses novel modes of societal organization, unique forms of culture and everyday life, and innovative types of contestation. (Best and Kellner 2001, 213)

Best and Kellner’s concept of technocapitalism reflects the dialectic of technology that was at the heart of Marcuse’s theory of technology and capital, which illuminates possibility in the present historical moment.

6. Ulrich Beck in his now-famous study on risk society offers a very persuasive argument and analysis of how the modern project of industrialization, which is still the dominant production model in contemporary society, continues to advance a non-reflective form of technoscience that directs and shapes social progress. Beck adds to this thesis (which can be found earlier in the work of Frankfurt School theorists such as Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer) that “in the course of the exponentially growing productive forces in the modernization process, hazards and potential threats have been unleashed to an extent previously unknown” (Beck 1992, 19). The dual production of risks and the responses to risk from the same scientific framework is an incredibly powerful insight that Beck provides in his study: The legitimization of risks and hazards through the processes of contemporary forms of technoscience are increasingly tangible effects of the continuation of the modern project. Beck thus reveals the politically “invisible” qualities of technoscience that have real life and death effects (such as cancer and global environmental destruction).

7. Andrew Feenberg’s work in critical theory of technology has done a great deal to situate Marcuse’s hope for a new form of science and technology within the contemporary moment by continuing to ask what we can learn from it. Feenberg concludes that Marcuse’s hope for the formation of a new form of rationality is untenable given the political climate, which has taken on distinctly scientific and technological attributes: “A new type of reason would generate new and more benign scientific discoveries and technologies. Marcuse is an eloquent advocate of this am-
bitious position, but today the notion of a political transformation of science has a vanishingly small audience and discredits his whole approach” (Feenberg 1999, 153). In contrast to Feenberg’s position, my response is that it is precisely in educational projects that a widespread challenge to dominant forms of rationality and ways of associating with technology can be developed. Although aware of Feenberg’s point, my argument is that forging democratic relations from instrumental forms of science and technology can begin by including science and technology in the discussion of democratic agency. This may involve a new understanding of the sociology of science and technology, a way of better involving products of science and technology, scientists, corporations, nations, and so on, with theories in education that promote the development of democratic practices that can take into account these actors.

8. Marcuse’s concept of mimesis further develops Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s articulation of the concept, which can be found in their essay “Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment.” For Horkheimer and Adorno, the concept of mimesis originated in human attempts to mimic nature through the practice of magic or religious ritual. According to their theory, through the process of modernity, science and industrialization appropriated mimesis as an act intended to represent a closeness or oneness with nature and transfigured it into one of control and domination over nature:

Science is repetition, refined to observed regularity and preserved in stereotypes. The mathematical formula is consciously manipulated regression, just as the magic ritual was; it is the most sublimated form of mimicry. In technology the adaptation to lifelessness in the service of self-preservation is no longer accomplished, as in magic, by bodily imitation of external nature, but by automating mental processes, turning them into blind sequences. (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 149)

9. Marx remarks in the Grundrisse, “What capital adds is that it increases the surplus labour time of the mass by all the means of art and science, because its wealth consists directly in the appropriation of surplus labour time; since value directly its purpose, not use value. It is thus, despite itself, instrumental in creating the means of social disposal time, in order to reduce labour time for the whole society to a diminishing minimum, and thus to free everyone’s time for their own development” (Marx 1941, 708). This passage reflects Marx’s dialectical position on technology, where at once technology is subsumed within the production forces of capitalist social relations while simultaneously presenting the opportunity for the emancipation of labor from the strictures of the capitalist paradigm.

10. I am of course referencing Paulo Freire’s famous formulation of the “banking concept” of education in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (2002). Here this method of pedagogical instruction is characterized by its uni-directional and anti-dialogical teaching style. The students, through the practice of banking education, are recognized as mere receptacles for information to be deposited, while the teacher remains as the only legitimized source of knowledge in the classroom. The “banking concept” of education is in contrast to Freire’s dialogical learning environment, where both the teacher and students generate the content of the learning dynamic.
11. Marcuse here is building off of and extending Horkheimer and Adorno’s famous essay on the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which brilliantly theorizes the assimilatory and administrating effects of mass media on culture in capitalist society.

12. Repressive desublimation is an advancement of Marcuse’s concept of repressive sublimation, which he previously formulated in *Eros and Civilization*. There, repressive sublimation

operates on a preconditioned instinctual structure, which includes the functional and temporal restraints of sexuality, its channeling into monogamic reproduction, and desexualization of most of the body. Sublimation works with the thus preconditioned libido and its possessive, exploitative, aggressive force. The repressive “modification” of the pleasure principle precedes the actual sublimation, and the latter carries the repressive elements over into the socially useful activities. (Marcuse 1974, 206)

13. 10 June 2006. www.21stcenturyskills.org
14. 8 June 2005. www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/technology/facts.html
15. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s website characterizes portable classrooms as follows:

Portable—or “relocatable”—classrooms have been a feature of many school districts for years. From a district’s perspective, the two advantages of portable classrooms are low initial cost and short time between specification and occupancy. They are intended to provide flexibility to school districts, enabling quick response to demographic changes and providing the ability to be moved from one school to another as demographics change. In reality, portable classrooms are seldom moved and become permanent fixtures of the school. (EPA 2006)

As recent studies conducted by the EPA and the California EPA have shown, the educational technology of portable classrooms sustain an environment that is unhealthy to students for multiple reasons beyond their potential internment-type quality. These include inadequate ventilation with outdoor air; classroom noise too high; poor thermal comfort; indoor formaldehyde levels; moisture problems; toxic residues in floor dust; and inadequate lighting (California EPA 2004).

16. One could argue that NCLB does not have such a totalizing logic as it clearly allows and promotes state and local autonomy for the development of policy that is sensitive to particular community needs. However, this argument falls apart once one looks at the stipulations that are attached and thus required from schools if they are to receive federal financial assistance. All of these stipulations require schools to fit the mold of the overall plan for standardization and assessment if they are to receive funds. See section 1111 for federal requirements for the states and section 1112 for local criteria. Also see chapter C, part D, for the NCLB policy for the integration of educational technologies into the curricula. This approach continues the relationship of imposition and adaptation that has been discussed throughout this study.

17. Latour should not be thought of as a postmodern theorist, even though his work is heavily influenced by such thinkers as Deleuze and Guattari, and Foucault. Despite this influence on his theory of society, his perspective carries with it a strong rebuke
of the so-called project of postmodernism, seeing its explanatory power at best as a symptomology that produces “hyper-incommensurability” with reality. In other words, for Latour, postmodernism explains social reality in the most abstract and unhelpful way, obscuring the actor networks that constitute sociality even worse than dialectic approaches (Latour 1993).

18. This claim is also made by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2000) in one of his latest studies on modernity. For him, key concepts such as emancipation, individuality, time/space, work, and community have become increasingly more difficult to define in the contemporary moment, which he argues, has become more liquid, and as a result modern concepts have increasingly become less adequate in explaining and describing social and political phenomena.

19. The concepts of human and nonhuman in Latour’s work signify his attempt to problematize modern philosophic characterizations of objects, which stem from a preoccupation with the subject-object dichotomy. In order to shift focus from this modern understanding of the object, Latour’s concept of nonhumans is theorized as associations of humans and nonhumans [that] refer to a different political regime from the war forced upon us by the distinction between subject and object. A nonhuman is thus the peacetime version of the object: what the object would look like if it were not engaged in the war to shortcut due political process. The pair human-nonhuman is not a way to “overcome” the subject-object distinction but a way to bypass it entirely. (Latour 1998, 308)

20. In a speech given at Berkeley in 1975 (see chapter 2 in this volume), Marcuse also suggested the employment of a renewed and more accurate empiricism that could better describe and explain the objective historical conditions. Thus instead of discounting empiricism as inherently positivistic, Marcuse was emphasizing a more “objective” empiricism freed from instrumental rationality:

We are empiricists (not purveyors of utopias). We want to learn the facts and how to interpret them. But we want to learn all the facts, especially those usually suppressed or obscured. In short, we want to learn more, not less. We don’t want to destroy the established institutions of learning but we want to rebuild them. Not deschool society, but reschool it.

REFERENCES


In this chapter, I link theoretical traditions that have been treated as mutually exclusive. While the tradition of critical theory provides powerful critiques of advanced industrial society, there are many who argue that its dominant class lens obfuscates a critique of the racialized mechanisms and institutions of contemporary society. Scholars have undertaken this challenge by attempting to interject a critique of whiteness into the diverse discourses of critical theory. Following in this tradition, I hope to accomplish the following:

1. Pair Herbert Marcuse’s critique of one-dimensional society with the concept of whiteness in order to provide a more expansive view of how racialization and whiteness are central components in the production and reproduction of one-dimensional society;
2. Extend this critique of one-dimensional society to educational practices;
3. Illustrate how Critical Race Theory and Marcusian critical theory do not have to be mutually exclusive;
4. Demonstrate that Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Multicultural Education (CME) represent best practices for participating in the Great Refusal conceived by Marcuse; and finally
5. Elaborate on concrete uses of CRT and CME that challenge and refuse one-dimensional education in the classroom.

I begin by elaborating upon Marcuse’s concept of one-dimensional society by coupling Marcuse’s analysis of advanced industrial society with the concept of whiteness. I argue that in the context of the United States, the one-dimensionality that Marcuse condemns in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) is illuminated by
the notion of whiteness, which posits that whiteness in the context of white supremacy is an ideological manifestation of capitalism in the United States. The values Marcuse wants to break with, or refuse, in *An Essay on Liberation* (1969) can be more concretely captured if it is made clear that the ideology of whiteness represents a key part of the normative order of advanced industrial society that must be refused. In addition, for Marcuse’s Great Refusal to take place, it follows that society must break and rupture the ideology of whiteness and white supremacy. Critical Race Theory and Critical Multicultural Education are key tools with which to begin this rupture in education.

Public education, I argue, in agreement with the large tradition of critical educators (Apple 2000; Darder 1991; Freire 1998, 2000; Giroux 2001; McLaren 1997, 2003), represents one of the most important sites in which such types of one-dimensional ideology are reproduced. In the context of education, elaborating upon the work of critical pedagogues, one must focus on the one-dimensional nature of schooling and how it serves to maintain the needs of advanced industrial society. Continuing in the work of critical pedagogy that examines race, I argue that the one-dimensional character of educational practices such as the standardization movement is a reproduction of the normative ideology of whiteness. The reproduction of whiteness serves to oppress raced, gendered, and classed individuals and communities who deviate from the norms established by the ideology of whiteness. Thus, in the context of education, I contend that the crucial theoretical tools we have to challenge one-dimensional education and refuse whiteness are Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Multicultural Education (CME). By pairing the work of Herbert Marcuse (1964, 1969) with the work of Critical Race theorists, I forefront how whiteness is overlooked by contemporary critical scholars of education in their works on education, which traditionally center class-based analyses, and instead follow in the footsteps of those scholars who bring race and racism to the forefront (R. L. Allen 2004; Ladson-Billings 1997; Leonardo 2004a, 2004b; Sleeter and Bernal 2003; Yosso 2002).

Sleeter and Bernal argue that “most of the literature in critical pedagogy does not directly address race, ethnicity, or gender, and as such it has a White bias.” Moreover, this centering of class has detrimental effects upon analyses of race and ethnicity and has “the effect of elevating the power of largely White radical theorists over theorists of color.” Even if unintended, the power that white critical theorists have to name and theorize sites of oppression “produce silences” upon the epistemological validity of the experiences of oppressed communities (Sleeter and Bernal 2003, 244). Thus CRT in education is an important tool to pierce the silence of singularly class-based analyses of schooling (Yosso 2002). Furthermore, it is through the lens of CRT that the important insights of Herbert Marcuse can be rescued from silencing dis-
courses that attempt to find the moments of liberation in spaces that are one-dimensional. This pairing of Marcuse’s work (1964, 1969) and CRT answers Devon W. Carbado’s call that “a robust notion of racecentricity would, in the context of discussions about education, make clear that educational discourses and institutions both reflect particular conceptions of, and produce, race” (2002, 181). Therefore, it is important to elaborate how distinctive theories can be brought together to provide a more robust analysis of advanced industrial society.

METHODOLOGY

I am utilizing a methodology I developed called Critical Interstitial Methodology (CIM) (Calderón 2006a, 2006b). CIM is briefly defined as a methodology, or way of examining, two or more theories/methodologies that are generally viewed as mutually exclusive or incompatible. In addition, CIM utilizes the concept of interstice, or space in between. CIM, as a method, first takes apart how theories contradict one another and locates the foundations of the contradictions. Then CIM rebuilds useful and strategic relationships between theories and methodologies. This rebuilding occurs in the interstice while centering the frameworks of non-Western epistemologies. Like feminist standpoint theory and Critical Race Theory, CIM explicitly reconstructs the resulting theoretical/methodological analysis to further the important worldviews of non-Western and marginalized epistemologies. Although similar to and indebted to methods such as the multiperspectival approach, CIM differs in important ways.2

First, CIM draws out the nuances and practices that arise when theoretical traditions derived from differing epistemologies confront each other in a non-Western space. Traditionally, exploration of non-Western epistemic systems has occurred in a unidirectional manner that has framed analysis from solely a Western colonizing position. By positioning the analytical dialogue in the interstice, epistemological models can meet in a sort of no-person’s territory (outside the conceptual space that frames issues in Western and non-Western binaries). The movement into this territory, though, means that theories cross borders to meet. Because this territory is outside the realm of Western spaces, theories that are more strongly derived from the West are more prone to critique because in the interstice, the West is confronted with the fact that it is not universal. Western theories are normally not aware of the spaces they cross, as their colonizing renders them indifferent to borders. Non-Western or oppositional epistemologies, however, occupy a more comfortable and expansive role in this in between space, and are better equipped to illuminate
Western thought’s limitations. Furthermore, non-Western or oppositional epistemologies are used to crossing borders, and these borders are many times central or important strategic constructs in the theory produced by non-Western epistemologies. Most important, in the interstitial space, non-Western epistemologies do not have to be labeled as marginal in relation to a dominant framework. They retain their own center and do not need the West to legitimate their structures, cultures, and stories.

CIM thus allows for a multidimensional and dialogical exploration of concepts and ideas, which does not privilege Western modes of analysis. In this chapter, specifically, I am linking Marcuse’s critical theory of society with Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Multicultural Education (CME). Although CRT can trace some of its origins to critical theory, its body of work has largely focused on areas of interest that are mostly absent from the work done by critical theory scholars (Mills 2003; Parker and Stovall 2004). CRT is centered in oppositional or raced epistemologies, and by linking critical theory and CRT I hope to explore and bring light to the moments of convergence between the two theories, and simultaneously use the moments of contradiction to illuminate points of possibility. Utilizing a CIM will illuminate how CRT can further Marcuse’s critique of one-dimensional society by layering the concept of whiteness and its flip side, racism, onto Marcuse’s work.

**WHITENESS IS ONE-DIMENSIONAL**

In order to understand whiteness one must understand racism, the flip side of whiteness. Bonilla-Silva elaborates:

Races in racialized societies receive substantially different rewards. This material reality is at the core of the phenomenon labeled as racism. Actors in subordinate positions (dominant race) develop a set of social practices (a racial praxis if you will) and an ideology to maintain the advantages they receive based on their racial classification, that is they develop a *structure* to reproduce their systemic advantages. Therefore, the foundation of racism is not the ideas that individuals may have about others, but the social edifice erected over racial inequality. (2001, 22)

The racial praxis that Bonilla-Silva names, is, I argue, the ideology and practice of whiteness. In other words, one-dimensional society is the social edifice developed to maintain the advantages of whiteness.

Whiteness represents what I call a flat epistemology, in which the organization of knowledge is hierarchical, unidirectional, and reductive. A flattened epistemology is totalizing, assuming a singular way of knowing that
precludes critical interventions, and it is not derived from an organic community. Rather, a flattened epistemology is one-dimensional because it is predetermined and disseminated in order to reproduce whiteness. Marcuse’s analysis in *One-Dimensional Man* provides a framework with which to further define this flat epistemology. The flat epistemic nature of whiteness is attributed to the unidirectional mode of capitalist relations, which always progresses toward the reproduction of capital and disallows critical engagement with the system. Marcuse explains that modern society’s technological rationalism operates as an apparatus that “imposes its economic and political requirements for defense and expansion on the labor time and free time, on the material and intellectual culture. By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian” (1991, 2–3). These increasing economic and political requirements demand a flattened culture, which flows singularly from the Establishment.

In essence the totalitarian, or flattened, rationalism is ideologically produced in the one-dimensional epistemology of whiteness. Individuals come to understand themselves, for the most part, only in relation to the universal or totalitarian notion of whiteness. Whiteness appears to be commonsensical, universal, and value-neutral. George Lipsitz points out that “whiteness is everywhere in U.S. culture, but it is very hard to see” (1998, 1). Whiteness represents the normative practices and discourses upon which everything is measured, but this measurement is not an explicit act. Rather it remains an unseen, or invisible, measure. Lipsitz explains, “As the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations” (1998, 1). Whiteness silently pervades all sectors of life, both public and private.

For Marcuse, one-dimensionality can be similarly found in all spheres of life, both public and private. For advanced industrial society,

> the extent to which this civilization transforms the object world into an extension of man’s mind and body makes the very notion of alienation questionable. The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced. (1991, 9)

The private space, according to Marcuse, “has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality. Mass production and mass distribution claim the entire individual. . . . The result is, not adjustment but mimesis: an immediate identification of the individual with his society and, through it, with the society as a whole” (1991, 10).
This *mimesis* is the silent process with which whiteness extends its ideology into all facets of life in advanced industrial society in the United States. Through *mimesis*, individuals thus establish a noncritical relationship with whiteness. Simultaneously, though, this *mimesis* of whiteness announces itself through a variety of institutional and narrative means. “Conscious and deliberate actions have institutionalized group identity in the United States, not just through the dissemination of cultural stories, but also through systematic efforts from colonial times to the present to create economic advantage through a possessive investment in whiteness for European Americans” (Lipsitz 1998, 2). This possessive investment understands the benefit the individual receives from whiteness and thus the “immediate identification of the individual with his society and . . . with society as a whole” (Marcuse 1991, 10). This investment in whiteness is thus intrinsically linked to the development of capitalism in the United States.

The possessive investment of whiteness is also found explicitly and implicitly in standard educational practices in the United States (Sleeter and Bernal 2003). An implicit way in which property relates to education is the way in which curriculum represents a form of “‘intellectual property’ that is interconnected to race” (15). Furthermore, the “quality and quantity of the curriculum” in schools “varies with the property values of the school so that intellectual property is directly connected to real property in the form of course offerings, classroom resources, science labs, technology, and certified and prepared teachers” (16).

Whiteness, as an ideology, has reproduced itself during the different historical periods of the United States. Lipsitz explains:

> Although reproduced in new form in every era, the possessive investment in whiteness has always been influenced by its origins in the racialized history of the United States—by its legacy of slavery and segregation, of “Indian” extermination and immigrant restriction, of conquest and colonialism. (1998, 3)

Similarly, Cheryl Harris describes this possessive investment in whiteness as linked to the origin of property rights in the United States, where “race and property . . . played a crucial role in establishing and maintaining racial and economic subordination” (1995, 277). Identification in the United States of the individual with his or her society, as Marcuse observes (in this case, the possessive investment in whiteness), has been concretely accomplished both historically and currently via the construction of citizenship.5

In the United States, the “legal definition of whiteness took shape in the context of immigration law, as courts decided who was to have the privilege of living in the United States” (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 77). Citizenship is a one-dimensional construction that requires a type of “false conscious-
ness” that constructs citizenship as a proxy for whiteness. Historically, citizenship in the United States was defined by an explicit socially and culturally homogenous view (de los Angeles Torres 1998, 170). For example, “judges defined the white race in opposition to blackness or some other form of otherness. Whiteness, thus, was defined in opposition to nonwhite, an opposition that also marked a boundary between privilege and its opposite” (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 77). Therefore, because inclusion to the benefits of citizenship is measured by whiteness, disenfranchised nonwhite communities can only access these benefits if they attempt to assimilate to the totality of whiteness. For example, the concept of “passing,” or becoming white, which is “well known among black people in the United States” is a “feature of race subordination in all societies structured on white supremacy” (Harris 1995, 277). Passing, according to Harris, in the context of the black experience in the United States “is related to the historical and continuing pattern of white racial domination and economic exploitation, which has invested passing with a certain economic logic” (1995, 277).

This assimilation, however, is also obfuscated for nonwhites because the concept of whiteness irrationally maintains the nonwhite citizen at a distance from the core of whiteness. This manifestation of whiteness reflects how the “‘cunning of Reason’ works, as it so often did, in the interest of the powers that be” (Marcuse 1964, 15–16). Simply identifying whiteness as the measure of citizenship is not enough. If the analysis were to stop at this point, it would preclude an analysis of the racism of whiteness. Maria de los Angeles Torres (1998) explains that because citizenship assumes loyalty to a state, “the identities of many immigrants are too complex to allow” for a singular oath of allegiance to the United States (de los Angeles Torres 1998, 170). This oath is emblematic of the normative and universalizing discourse whiteness has upon institutions. This is problematic for nonwhite communities, as diaspora communities often reside in multiple states or have traveled through them. Restricting loyalty to one state flattens immigrants’ experiences and limits their political options, particularly when they are affected by the decisions of many states. (1998; 170)

The construction of citizenship thus reflects the full ideological manifestations of whiteness. Thus ideology has very real and concrete manifestations that serve to promote advanced industrial society as a racially biased economic system.

Interestingly, the plight of immigrants in the United States is framed from an ideological position that claims that only through achieving the legal status of citizenship can individuals truly attain the American dream. As Marcuse (1964) adeptly points out,
[the] absorption of ideology into reality does not, however signify the “end of ideology.” On the contrary, in a specific sense advanced industrial culture is more ideological than its predecessor, inasmuch as today the ideology is in the process of production itself. . . . It is a good way of life—much better than before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. (11–12)

For this reason it is important to understand how whiteness has historically manifested and transformed itself, for it is in the contemporary moment that whiteness is most transparent and yet most difficult to perceive and articulate.

This transparency is not an accident of history; it is the living legacy of whiteness, which locates its heritage in the devastation of the colonized by the European colonizer. In order to extract whiteness from its invisibility, it is important to note, “every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation” (Fanon 1967, 18). Thus in the language of citizenship one can find the language of the reproduction of whiteness.

The ideological manifestations of whiteness are present in the actions of the Minutemen, racist vigilantes who patrol the United States–Mexico border in order to stop what they see as the overrunning of the United States by an undesirable people (Mexicans) that have values and practices contrary to U.S. culture. Similarly in the mid-nineties the anti-immigrant ideology in California found enough support for the people of the Golden State to pass Proposition 187, which denied education, health care, and other social services to people who were not in the United States legally. This proposition was overturned in the courts, but nevertheless, these two cases serve as examples of how the ideology of whiteness promotes an irrational “Cunning of Reason” that promotes the interests of those in power. The practical ideological manifestation of whiteness promotes the idea that Latino/Latina immigration diminishes the possessive investment in whiteness (Perez-Huber et al. 2008; Velez et al. forthcoming).

Similarly, the ideological production of whiteness presents itself today in the rampant consumer culture, which displaces a critical and engaged existence with “false needs.” For Marcuse (1964), mimesis represents a process in which the “inner” dimension of the mind in which opposition to the status quo can take root is whittled down. The loss of this dimension, in which the power of negative thinking—the critical power of Reason—is at home, is the ideological counterpart of the very material process in which advanced industrial society silences and reconciles opposition. (10–11)
This one-dimensionality, however, is challenged by oppositional epistemologies of communities of color in the United States. Thus Critical Race Theory represents the type of negative thinking that Marcuse calls for which can expose the entrenched ideology of whiteness.

**CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

Critical Race theorists argue that the U.S. system of whiteness cannot be truly dismantled by integrationists or colorblind ideologies—in the language of Marcuse, a liberalization process by the Establishment (Peller 1995). Rather, integrationist approaches to inclusion represent an ideological component of whiteness which promote the idea that equality for communities of color can be achieved by integrating communities of color into the same institutions as whites, and that by having people of color and whites interact, biases concerning people of color would be dispelled, and all involved could then equally interact in these institutions (Peller 1995). Critical Race scholar Peller argues that in the context of the United States and

at the level of practice, the integrationist cure for discrimination is equal treatment according to neutral norms; and at the institutional level, integrationism obviously means an end to the social system of racial segregation. In sum, the cure for racism would be equal treatment on an individual level and integration on an institutional level. . . . Once neutrality replaced discrimination, equal opportunity would lead to integrated institutions; experience in integrated institutions would, in turn, replace the ignorance of racism with the knowledge that actual contact provides. (1995, 129)

The integrationist perspective relies on the operationalization of equality as rational and neutral, and therefore a universal concept. In practice, this operationalization of equality is one-dimensional because it simply seeks to incorporate individuals into the already existing modes of being produced by advanced industrial society.

**EDUCATION AS A REFLECTION OF ONE-DIMENSIONAL WHITENESS**

“One-dimensional thought is systematically promoted by the makers of politics and their purveyors of mass information” (Marcuse 1964, 14). Schooling represents just such a purveyor of mass information. The flat epistemic framing of whiteness is most evident in K–12 education that centers its pedagogical practices in rote memorization and banking models of learning common
in the standardization movement, which serve to inculcate whiteness and the racism embedded in this ideology. Students are inculcated into mastering the flat epistemological process of public education. This mastery allows students to gain skills that will allow them to fulfill their perceived needs. Thus education reproduces “false needs.” Marcuse (1964) defines these “false needs” as those “which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice” (1964, 4–5).

Similarly, schooling reproduces racism, a central construct embedded in the ideology of whiteness. Carbado (2002) points out that “educational institutions (as sites of racial discourse) teach students not only about race (albeit rather poorly); they also—explicitly and implicitly—racialize students and teach them how to be raced” (181). The ideological manifestations of whiteness in schooling are masked by colorblindness. In short, schools produce both racial knowledge and racial subjects. Both productions are ideologically buttressed by, and help to sustain, the racial consciousness of colorblindness” (2002, 181).

Particularly, public education stresses individual merit and competition, which is exemplified by meritocracy movements attempting to restrict access to higher education under the guise of colorblind ideology. These colorblind practices “have a societal content and function which are determined by external powers over which the individual has no control” (Marcuse 1964, 5). Furthermore, “the ideology of color-blindness and ‘racial progress’ has also been reflective of an overarching trend in K–12 education for teachers and administrators to ignore race and racism in their schools, by assuming that if attention is not paid to racial implications of problems . . . then these issues will simply disappear” (Parker and Stovall 2004, 170–71).

Applying a critical understanding of the one-dimensional nature of whiteness in the context of the United States exposes just how the Establishment uses education to cement the hierarchies of power that maintain and propel advanced industrial society. CRT helps expose how curriculum in public education advances this possessive investment of whiteness. Yosso argues:

For white upper class boys and girls then, the school curriculum functions to maintain hierarchical social and economic power. . . . Public schools too often prepare students of color and low-income students to take direction without question, memorize without critical analysis, and focus on remedial, manual labor–focused curriculum rather than college bound curriculum. Indeed, the traditional curriculum prepares students of color to serve upper and middle class interests, which simultaneously upholds white privilege. (2002, 96)

In educational settings whiteness shapes a curriculum which utilizes one-dimensional colorblind language that, according to Yosso, “[while it] purports
to be objective, neutral, and meritocratic, it prepackages knowledge to serve economic, and social purposes” (2002, 96). These types of educational practices must be challenged in order to refuse one-dimensional society.

**MARCUSE, THE GREAT REFUSAL, AND EDUCATION**

In *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse looks for the new moments in human liberation that break “with the routine ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding things so that the organism may become receptive to the potential forms of a nonaggressive, nonexploitative world” (1969, 6). In the context of the United States, capitalist tendencies are reproduced through public education. Students are taught “routine ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, and understanding things” that preclude critical engagement with oppressive practices. These practices reinforce a majoritarian way of engaging the world which is premised on the ideology of whiteness. Marcuse looked toward the Great Refusal to disengage from one-dimensionality. Therefore, in the context of education, what type of practices can we engage in that lead toward a Great Refusal? I argue that a teacher who embraces Critical Multicultural Education and Critical Race Theory is best prepared to engage and deconstruct whiteness as it is reproduced in schooling.

**CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION**

Decentering whiteness in education is not merely an act of including different nonwhite cultures in educational curricula. bell hooks argues that the decentering of whiteness elicits a deep-seated fear for those who cling to the Western white male canon (1994, 32). This shift represents a dangerous act because it directly challenges the imposed hierarchies, which serve to protect the Establishment. CRT and CME center practices and analyses that decenter whiteness and are tools that can be articulated with Marcuse’s concept of the Great Refusal. In the context of education, CRT and CME represent a concrete step toward a critical engagement with whiteness that will allow for a process of conscientization integral to the Great Refusal.

Critical Multicultural Education (CME) departs from the typical multicultural programs and practices that have come to shape what we now understand to be multicultural education. Sleeter and Bernal elaborate that “many contemporary renderings of multicultural education examine difference without connecting it to power or a critical analysis of racism” (2003, 240). Furthermore,
the authors argue, “this is probably because the great majority of classroom teachers and school administrators are White and bring a worldview that tacitly condones existing race and class relations” (2003, 240). Sleeter and Bernal continue: “Although multicultural education emerged as a challenge to racism in schools, its writings tend to focus on classroom practices without necessarily contextualizing classrooms within an analysis of racism” (2003, 245). Writer and Chavez point out that it is “not enough to simply teach about Critical Multicultural Education. As People of Color, we must be within the milieu of what it means to live a life that moves towards diversity and plurality” (2001, 2). This movement toward diversity and plurality in education can be accomplished through Critical Race Theory. Writer and Chavez make the case that CRT is fundamental to this movement because it helps marginalized nonwhite students “center and authenticate who . . . [they] are as human beings” (2001, 2).

Moreover, Critical Race practices in multicultural education focus on an anti-racist curriculum. A multicultural and anti-racist curriculum first, “directs attention specifically to challenging racism in education;” second, “addresses racist school structures such as tracking which are often not addressed in multicultural education”; third, “situates culture within power relations”; fourth, “connects school with community”; and finally, “problematises Whiteness” (Sleeter and Bernal 2003, 250). Anti-racist CME “begins not with a description of changing demographics, which suggests a new problem stemming from immigration, but with an analysis of historic and contemporary imperialism and racism” (Sleeter and Bernal 2003, 27). Furthermore, this type of educational method analyzes how schooling perpetuates racism, and it offers spaces for students and teachers to co-construct ways to interrupt racism, first and foremost, as a one-dimensional ideology (Sleeter and Bernal 2003).

In concrete terms, a CME acknowledges that teacher expectations are important factors in student success. Teachers serve as gatekeepers for gifted and talented programs, which are the precursors to Advanced Placement courses in high school, and subsequently, admission to university (Solórzano and Ornelas 2002; Solórzano et al. 2003). With an antiracist CME, the flattened epistemology that dominates the learning function in schools can be exposed. In its place, educators and students can begin to incorporate alternative epistemologies that are multidimensional and complex and thus challenge the one-dimensional nature of learning.

Similarly, an antiracist CME must not shy away from interrogating traditional civil rights discourse and subsequent colorblind curriculums that reinforce flattened and uncritical meritocratic discourses. It is vital that teachers and students both come to an understanding that current notions of equality
and integration are in fact discourses that obfuscate the entrenched subordination of communities of color. Although this type of consciousness raising may seem too drastic and negative to be a part of curriculum and learning, it is nonetheless the type of critical understanding students must come to.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Derek Bell (1995), a Critical Race theorist, argues that the marginalization of Blacks in the United States is permanent, and that by acknowledging this reality, Blacks\(^{10}\) can move toward thinking and strategizing about how to shape their future as a community within these confines (Bell 1995). Bell argues that like the legal realists who saw the law as a mere function of those that practiced it, racial realists also see that the law is a reflection of a racist society that will not allow Blacks to escape from their subordinate position. Bell states: “Precedent, rights theory, and objectivity merely are formal rules that serve a covert purpose; even in the context of equality theory, they will never vindicate the legal rights of black Americans” (Bell 1995, 307). If we accept Bell’s assertion, one can ask what then? It is here that Marcuse’s (1969) notion of the Great Refusal should be linked up with Bell’s (1995) critical insights.

Marcuse’s concept of the Great Refusal acknowledges that we cannot overcome the oppressive nature of capitalism even if we attempt to adopt progressive and liberal approaches. He argues that indeed liberalization has been a tool that the Establishment uses to actually enhance loyalty to the system. For example, in the United States, there has been historically a broadening of moral compasses, but Marcuse argues that it must be understood that the “liberalization of the Establishment’s own morality takes place within the framework of effective controls; kept within this framework, the liberalization strengthens the cohesion of the whole” (1969, 9). Thus, in order to have true human liberation, society must break completely with the ideology and practices of the Establishment—engaging in a Great Refusal of the social totality.

Hence, law, education, and other institutions reproduce contemporary capitalism and what Marcuse called one-dimensionality. By articulating together Marcusian critical theory with CRT one gains a stronger critique of contemporary society and expands the scope of the Great Refusal to address whiteness and racism. In schooling we must therefore embrace a CME that can and should bring students to this level of consciousness, while offering competent alternatives to the ineffective education of advanced industrial society that centers whiteness. What exactly then are these alternatives?
As an educator I have had the opportunity to utilize what I call Critical Race classroom methodologies. These have developed from teaching in the classroom in a variety of settings, discussions in graduate school classes, informal conversations with peers, and a sustained engagement with the research and scholarship produced by Critical Race theorists in education. In developing a Critical Race classroom methodology for the purposes of this chapter, I am guided by Sandra Harding’s description of methodology as a “theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed; it includes accounts of how ‘the general structure of theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines’” (1997, 161). Further guidance is provided by Tara Yosso’s (2002) work that argues for a Critical Race Curriculum (CRC) in education. In the classroom, I consider how applications of theories, such as CRT, do or should proceed; how the framework of CRT can be translated and applied in the classroom; and finally, how a CRC can be advanced in the classroom. In particular, I am interested in utilizing tools that allow me to challenge the one-dimensional nature of schooling.

One Critical Race classroom methodology that has been particularly effective in challenging one-dimensionality is the CRT methodology of counter-storytelling. Solórzano and Yosso (2001) provide a brief definition of counterstorytelling as developed in CRT in the law:

Delgado (1989) uses a method called counter-storytelling and argues that it is both a method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society) and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is a natural part of the dominant discourse—the majoritarian story [citation omitted]. For instance, while a narrative can support the majoritarian story, a counter-narrative or counterstory, by its very nature, challenges the majoritarian story or that “bundle of presuppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant race bring to the discussion of race.” (475)

In addition, and important to Critical Race classroom methodologies, Solórzano and Yosso extend the method of counter-storytelling to education. Counter-stories in education, according to Solórzano and Yosso draw from four sources: “(1) the data gathered from the research process itself [in this case, the data is gathered by the interactive teaching process itself]; (2) the existing literature on the topic; (3) our own professional experience; and (4) our own experience” (2001, 476). Counterstories are extremely apt in addressing and challenging one-dimensionality, or whiteness, in the classroom as they
draw both from the teaching/learning experience of students marginalized by
current educational practices and curriculum and the breadth of research that
challenges one-dimensional education.

Another tool that is useful in developing classroom practices that challenge
one-dimensional education is Yosso’s Critical Race Curriculum. As Yosso
(2002) points out, a Critical Race Curriculum “is concerned with ensuring
that classroom curriculum is centered on the experiences of people of color,
but also challenging discourses that would discount students of color as cre-
ators and holders of knowledge” (102). Devon Carbado argues that Yosso’s
CRC, while strong, does not have a substantive content outlined and wonders
what a CRC “would ‘look like’ and how it would be implemented” (2002,
183). I hope that what I offer here can begin to address Carbado’s concerns,
and will continue to develop through future dialogues with critical educators,
students, scholars, and communities.

THE CASE METHOD:
FROM HARVARD TO THE CRITICAL RACE CLASSROOM

In the classroom I have utilized a version of the case method that has been
developed by the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard Business
School (HBS), and UC Santa Barbara’s sociology program. I do not advo-
cate an ad hoc adoption of the case method as developed by these institu-
tions, but instead utilize the resources and guidelines provided by these pro-
grams as springboards into what I am calling the Critical Race Case Method
(CRCM), which represents an aspect of critical race pedagogy (Solórzano
and Bernal 2001; Solórzano and Yosso, 2001, 2002; Yosso et al. 2004). The
case method has, ironically, a history of development in institutions that
center capitalist goals and values, but it has also been taken up in contem-
porary times to question and refuse these values, as Critical Race theorists
have used the law to interject counter-narratives that challenge majoritarian
stories (Allen and Solórzano 2001). Howard Husock provides a brief his-
tory of the case method:

The case method . . . [was] first developed at the Harvard Law School in the
19th century. It is predicated on the belief that discussion focused on real-world
situations and guided by skilled instructors will better prepare students for pro-
fessional life than would lecture and theory alone. . . . In other types of profes-
sional education the case method has taken other forms.

At both the Kennedy School of Government and Harvard Business School, the
“teaching case,” whether used in management or policy analysis, is a narrative
that describes a specific situation—whether a marketing decision in business, a
policy decision in government, or an operational decision in a nonprofit organization—and describes conflicts and decisions students must discuss. Cases, in other words, put students in the shoes of real-life decision-makers in order to prepare for them for their own lives of decision-making. (Husock 2006)

Originally “pioneered by HBS faculty in the 1920s, the case method began as a way of importing slices of business reality into the classroom in order to breathe life and instill greater meaning into the lessons of management education” (HBS 2006). John Foran describes how the case method has been utilized at UCSB:

Teaching with cases involves a model of facilitating a discussion in which the students develop analyses of the situation, often through collaborative work, role playing, and intensive discussion, debate, and dialogue. Case teaching is familiar to those who have worked or studied in professional schools such as law or business, but it is a relatively recent innovation in more standard social science disciplines, where a small but growing number of faculty across the U.S. have been working to popularize it as a pedagogical option. (Foran 2006)

These applications of the case method inject real life situations into the classroom, utilizing specific case scenarios in order to facilitate a collaborative learning process.

For example, the case method as used in the Harvard Business School depicts “a detailed account of a real-life business situation, describing the dilemma of the ‘protagonist’—a real person with a real job who is confronted with a real problem.” Similarly, Foran points out that the case method utilized at UCSB draws on real-life or realistic situations:

Namely, most of our cases take realistic situations (which we are typically doing research of our own on) and create composite characters and fictional dialogue to express the differing viewpoints that are essential for students to inhabit, analyze, and sometimes creatively extend and synthesize into new solutions. (Foran 2006)

Furthermore, in the Harvard Business school context, “cases cover every inch of the rich landscape of issues general managers confront.” Cases in the HBS setting “also draw on the full range of knowledge and analytical tools business students must know to confront these issues, providing a rich context for their application” (HBS 2006).

In the classroom, I have utilized the case method as a way of importing slices of counterstories into the classroom in order to “breathe life and instill greater meaning into the lessons” of a Critical Multicultural Education (HBS 2006). The Critical Race Case Method (CRCM) encourages students to think critically
about the very real problems of race, whiteness, and one-dimensional thinking. Students and teachers work together to analyze majoritarian and counterstories and unearth the narratives that have been subordinated in schooling. Ladson-Billings argues that majoritarian narratives, or master scripts, erase the stories of African Americans and other students of color, when these stories “challenge dominant culture authority and power” (1998, 18). For this reason, it is important that the cases utilized in the classroom center counterstories.

In the classroom a CRCM depicts a detailed account of the experiences of students of color in schooling, and it forefronts a variety of issues: how students experience racial microaggressions; how students are impacted by colorblind rhetoric; how students interact or react to one-dimensional standards; and other issues that confront students across the educational pipeline. The CRCM results in rigorous dialogue around racism and whiteness in the classroom, facilitating a Critical Multicultural Education. This dialogue helps students connect real-life issues they face to theoretical works such as CRT. It also empowers students by opening up spaces for them to articulate and make sense of the marginalization they face in the educational pipeline.

Similarly, Critical Race cases cover the vast landscape of how racism, whiteness, and one-dimensionality shape and inform educational practices, and this process is enriched by both teacher and student experiences and the work produced by scholars/activists/researchers in education. Similarly the CRCM draws from the rich practical and theoretical work produced in relevant fields, grassroots organizing, and most important, counterstories. This orientation maintains CRT’s goals to develop a “pedagogical strategy that accounts for the role of race and racism in US . . . [K–16] education and works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating other forms of subordination, such as gender, class, and sexual orientation” (Solórzano and Yosso 2001, 472).

Thus far, in the context of the classroom the CRCM attempts to provide an account of real-life racism, whiteness, and one-dimensionality in schooling; how students encounter it; and how the institution reproduces it. The CRCM is also shaped by data from relevant scholarship and practice that stresses the educational pipeline and how different students of color fare in this process. In essence the CRCM is a counterstory that challenges the majoritarian narrative of schooling. As Ladson-Billings explains, “Critical race theory sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script” (1998, 18). For this reason, it is important to stress that CRT, in combination with Marcusian notions of one-dimensional society, provides us with the best practices to Refuse one-dimensional society and engage in Critical Multicultural Education.
In conclusion, this chapter represents an initial discussion that I hope will flourish through dialogue and practice. The challenges we face in education are great and diverse. We cannot pretend that singular theoretical models will provide us with the best understandings of society and education in particular. We must remain open to challenging our own theoretical propensities in order to challenge issues of patriarchy, homophobia, and deeper metaphysical problems. The core of my own work focuses on the latter realm of metaphysics and is heavily informed by indigenous epistemologies, but I continue to be invested in Critical Race Theory and critical theory in general because I find that the insights these theories provide me are invaluable in my own commitment to social justice. As an educator, I am challenged by students whose lives cross and inhabit the intersections of class, race, gender, nationality, language, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. I myself traverse these multiple planes, and so I choose to arm myself with many tools to dismantle these isms.

NOTES

I would like to acknowledge my colleague Daniel Liou, who has engaged me in many conversations about the case method and has been a leader in the development of critical race case method in the classroom.

1. Whiteness, I argue, is the central and organizing ideological component of advanced industrial society in the United States. It is not a static ideology, as it has shifted and been historically redefined to maintain the economic, political, and cultural advantages that whiteness has provided in the United States and globally. Charles W. Mills argues: “White Supremacy as a concept thus registers a commitment to a radically different understanding of the political order, pointing us theoretically toward the centrality of racial domination and subordination. Within the discursive universe of white social theory on race, liberal or radical, it disrupts traditional framings, conceptualizations, and disciplinary divisions, effecting what is not less than a fundamental paradigm shift” (2003, 184).

2. Douglas Kellner (1995) has developed the notion of a multiperspectivism. Kellner explains: “Simply put, a multiperspectival cultural studies draws on a wide range of textual and critical strategies to interpret, criticize, and deconstruct the artifact under scrutiny. The concept draws on Nietzsche’s perspectivism, which holds that all interpretation is necessarily mediated by one’s perspectives and is thus inevitably laden with presuppositions, values, biases, and limitations. To avoid one-sidedness and partial vision one should learn ‘how to employ a variety of perspectives and interpretations in the service of knowledge’” (1995, 98).

3. For example, many argue that African American/Black philosophy be included “as a legitimate contributor to ontological and epistemological debates in the academy. This type of philosophy ‘develops out of the resistance to oppression, it is a prac-
tical and politically oriented philosophy that, long before Marx was born, sought to interpret the world correctly so as to better change it” (Parker and Stovall 2004, 172).

4. Epistemology is a “system of knowing that is linked to worldviews based on the conditions under which people live and learn” (Delgado-Bernal 2002, 106).

5. Harris states, “Whiteness defined the legal status of a person as slave or free. White identity conferred tangible and economically valuable benefits, and it was jealously guarded as a valued possession, allowed only to those who met a strict standard of proof. Whiteness—the right to white identity as embraced by the law—is property if by ‘property’ one means all of a person’s legal rights” (1995, 280).

6. Historically, Harris explains, “the concept of whiteness was carefully protected because so much was contingent upon it. Whiteness conferred on its owners aspects of citizenship which were all the more valued because they were denied to others. Indeed, the very fact of citizenship itself was linked to white racial identity” (1995, 285).

7. “When restrictions on voting rights, naturalization, and immigration are taken into account, it turns out that for over 80 percent of U.S. history, American laws declared most people in the world legally ineligible to become full U.S. citizens solely because of their race, original nationality, or gender. For at least two-thirds of American history, the majority of the domestic adult population was also ineligible for full citizenship for the same reasons. Those racial, ethnic, and gender restrictions were blatant, not ‘latent’” (Smith 1997, 15).

8. Bonilla-Silva argues that colorblind ideology or colorblind racism represents the new racial ideology. Historically “the racial practices typical of the Jim Crow era were overt and clearly racial, today they tend to be covert, institutional, and apparently nonracial” (Bonilla-Silva 2001, 138). Bonilla-Silva defines colorblind racism according to central themes: “(1)abstract liberalism (‘I am all for equal opportunity and that’s why I oppose affirmative action’), (2) ‘biologization’ of culture (‘Blacks are poor because they do not have the proper values’), (3) naturalization of matters that reflect the effects of white supremacy (‘Neighborhood segregation is a sad but natural thing since people want to live with people who are like them’), and (4) minimization of racism and discrimination (‘There are racists out there but they are few and hard to find’)” (2001, 141).

9. According to Parker and Stovall, “current racialized discourse in the U.S. has taken on a different form through the ideology of color-blind interpretations of law and political, social, and economic relations” (2004, 170)

10. I use the term Black instead of African American in order to remain consistent with the terminology used by the authors’ works I cite.

11. Racial microaggressions are defined as “subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously. . . . Though pervasive, [they] are seldom investigated” (Solórzano et al. 2000, 60).

12. For more work in educational pipeline studies, please see the work of Daniel G. Solórzano et al.

13. Solórzano and Villalpando explain that “within the framework of critical theory, marginality can be a useful construct in understanding the problem of underrepresentation for Students of Color.” The authors elaborate that “marginality is a complex
and contentious location and process whereby People of Color are subordinated because of their race, gender, and class. Moreover, those on society’s racial, gender, and class margins do not have the power to define who is at the center and who is at the margin; what is considered privileged or valuable cultural knowledge and experience and what is not; and who has social status and related privilege and who does not” (1998, 212).

REFERENCES


Critical Theory and Information Studies: 
A Marcusian Infusion

Ajit K. Pyati

In the field of library and information science (LIS), or information studies (IS, as it is sometimes called in its newer, “information age” incarnation), concerns abound about theoretical foundations. The field itself consists of a variety of disciplines—such as library studies, information science, archival studies, and informatics—and this diversity in subject areas does not lend itself to a unified theory, creating a fundamental anxiety concerning the lack of a proper theoretical framework in the field (Pettigrew and McKechnie 2001). Critical theory, in the tradition of Marx, Gramsci, Lukács, and Marcuse (to name a few), is nearly absent from any LIS debate about theoretical foundations, thus the resources for alleviating the foundational anxieties felt are not as diverse as would at first appear.

While no unifying theory exists in the field of IS, various theories are utilized, and research has shown that theory is playing a stronger role than previously observed in the information science literature, with over 100 distinct theories having been developed in information science (Pettigrew and McKechnie 2001). Many of the theories utilized, particularly in information science, however, are based on positivist epistemologies. For instance, a notable information science pioneer, B. C. Brookes, argued for a science of information, in which information science would deal primarily with Karl Popper’s World 3 of “objective knowledge” (Brookes 1980). While information science tends to be influenced by positivist epistemologies, the range of theoretical outlooks in information studies also includes historical and humanist epistemologies.

Despite the lack of critical theory and critical frameworks in IS, a few notable scholars in the field have provided some much-needed critical interventions. For
instance, with regard to LIS, Wayne Wiegand issued a call to address the “tun-
nel visions and blind spots” (1999, 1) that plague discourses and studies of
American librarianship. In response to Wiegand’s exhortation, a special issue of
Library Quarterly (vol. 73, no. 1) was published in January 2003, with various
authors addressing critical theoretical interventions into LIS. Scholars such as
Gary Radford (2003), Gerald Benoit (2002), and others have introduced various
critical frameworks into LIS and IS, drawing from scholars as diverse as Fou-
cault, Gramsci, Hall, and Habermas to question some of the fundamental as-
sumptions and blind spots of the field. Even before this more recent infusion of
critical theoretical frameworks, Michael Harris (1973, 1986) critically interro-
gated commonly held assumptions about the development of the American pub-
lic library, as well as the dominance of positivist epistemologies in LIS.

Thus it would be unfair to say that a critical tradition does not exist in LIS
and IS; however, it is not widespread in the discipline, and as will be dis-
cussed throughout this article, the work of Frankfurt School critical theory,
particularly the work of Herbert Marcuse, has not had a large impact in IS. I
argue here that Marcuse’s work, especially his critique of technological soci-
ey, can make an important contribution in the interrogation of professional
discourses in IS, as well as popular discourses of the “information society.”

CRITICAL THEORY IN THE CONTEXT OF IS

Critical theory is arguably not fully understood within the context of IS, as it
is often lumped together with other “critical” traditions such as postmodernism
and poststructuralism. Thus, in this case, critical theory, in its broadest sense,
refers to theory that can undertake a systematic and dialectical analysis of the
economy, the state, and the political realm and its linkages to culture, ideology,
and everyday life (Kellner 1989). Critical theory, in other words, consists of
dialectical analysis, which involves both making connections and demonstrat-
ing the contradictions that provide the opening for political intervention (Kell-
ner 1989). Defined as such, critical theory is highly relevant to a critique of
technocapitalism—as a technologically advanced mode of capitalist accumu-
lation—and its association with information society ideology. Critical theory’s
interrogation of technocapitalism is of growing importance, mainly because of
the increased importance of culture, technology, media, information, knowl-
dge, and ideology in more domains of social life (Kellner 1989). It can be ar-
gued that libraries are precisely the points where technocapitalist ideologies of
the information society are gaining more of a foothold, and thus critical ex-
aminations are needed in order for emancipatory alternatives to be formulated.
With this understanding of critical theory in mind, one of the few significant critical theorists in IS is Ronald Day whose book, *The Modern Invention of Information: Discourse, History, and Power*, argues that the “information revolution” is a modernist trope, related to dominant professional and technical interests. He sees the discourse of information as an uncritical, modernist trope, occurring together with notions of scientific modernism. Day argues that a historical sense of information is lost, as information, in its modern sense, is reified and commodified. More effective, process-oriented conceptions of information are lost in a rhetoric of progress and technological “boosterism” (Day 2001).

Day’s work is useful and significant, in that it is one of the few critical interventions from an IS perspective into the “information society” rhetoric of governmental policy and information professional sectors. He draws fundamentally upon the work of Martin Heidegger (from the standpoint of a metaphysical critique of information) and Walter Benjamin (for a Marxist critique of information). While Day provides a much-needed and useful framework for critiquing the underlying modernist and capitalist assumptions of information discourses, very few people within traditional LIS are taking up his example of using critical theory as a tool for analysis. Scholars in other disciplines as varied as communication studies and sociology (e.g., Kevin Robins and Frank Webster), have engaged in critiques of the technocapitalist and neoliberal assumptions of information discourses. But largely, IS scholars (except for the few mentioned earlier) remain strangely absent in engaging with this form of critique, especially so given the fact that IS scholars are primarily concerned with “information.”

Despite the work of Day, critical theory’s appearance in IS (when it is rarely invoked) usually takes the form of references to Habermas and his notions of the public sphere and theory of communicative action. Habermas’s work is certainly valuable and useful for IS, especially since his focus on communication issues resonates with many of the concerns of information studies. What remains puzzling, however, is the lack of reference to other Frankfurt School theorists, most notably Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse. In particular, the work of Herbert Marcuse is highly pertinent to the field of information studies. Marcuse’s focus, for instance, on “technological rationality” as a tool of domination in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) is a useful construct for understanding how discourses of information technology are being used to perpetuate modernist notions of information and capitalist logics of consumption. Information science, with its positivist,apolitical logic of processes such as “information retrieval” and “information access,” is itself a creation of a post–World War II information revolution that is part of a larger political process of scientific modernism (Day 2001). Much
of the information revolution rhetoric from which IS derives its current increased sense of importance is based on what Webster calls “technocapitalism” (Webster 2002).

The rest of this article will interrogate ways to incorporate Marcuse’s critical theory into the discipline of information studies, and provide a conceptual framework for library-based technology development based largely on Marcuse’s work. It is argued here that critical theory has a particular relevance and salience to the study of information, and that any discipline that claims to study the creation, use, classification, and access of information simply cannot ignore the larger sociopolitical critiques of modern, technological society that Marcuse proposes.

MARCUSE’S RELEVANCE TO IS

A recent trend in some schools of LIS is the focus on diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. Often, however, this focus on social justice is undertheorized and largely uncritical in nature. Social justice itself is a critical, radical concept, but in its usage in IS, social justice lacks critical foundations. Incorporating and building upon Marcuse’s ideas can help bring a much-needed critical perspective to bear on concepts like social justice, giving IS a foundation for radical critique into modern information discourses and practices. The bane of professional schools (Day 2000), of which IS is a prime example, is the reliance on uncritical frameworks that often rely on dominant political and economic interests. While this fact permeates professional schools, critical theory, if incorporated into IS, can perhaps help the field move away from conformist professional discourses.

Marcuse’s importance to IS is seen in his discussion of “technological rationality,” a creation related to “that of an advanced society which makes scientific and technical progress into an instrument of domination” (Marcuse 1964, 16). This sense of technological rationality is related to a notion of “purposive-rational action,” in which “the ‘rationalization’ of the conditions of life is synonymous with the institutionalization of a form of domination whose political character becomes unrecognizable” (Habermas 1989). In other words, the logic of instrumental rationality and technological rationality is politically, economically, and socially institutionalized. These forces of domination lead to conformity and indoctrination, in which “one-dimensional” men are created. The one-dimensional man takes part in one-dimensional thought and behavior, “in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe” (Marcuse 1964, 12).
Thus, the logic of instrumental rationality creates conditions where critical thought and emancipatory action are stifled.

The one-dimensional man, in a sense, suffers from a unique form of “false consciousness,” as Lukács (1971) discusses, misrecognizing objective social conditions of exploitation and oppression as necessary and ultimately favorable to socialist alternatives. Technological and instrumental rationalities are the logics of an “ideological state apparatus” (Althusser 2001), maintaining the status quo and perpetuating technological and technocapitalist ideologies. At the root of Marcuse’s argument is the critique of “positive thinking and its neopositivist philosophy” (Marcuse 1964, 225) and its associated, distorted logics of efficiency, rationality, and “progress.” As discussed earlier, these positivist tendencies, especially with regard to information science, continue to dominate LIS, and as such, LIS is part of an overall ideological state apparatus that does not challenge so much as help reproduce one-dimensional society.

Marcuse’s particular form of critical theory forces IS to critically assess its foundations and its construction of a modern notion of information. This modern construction of information is intimately tied with the growth and rise of science and the ideologies of technological and instrumental rationality that Marcuse criticizes. Information, which was often associated with the “process of informing,” became an increasingly commodified entity in a modern, post–World War II environment (Day 2001). Frankfurt School theorists, including Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, were also interested in this idea of how “‘knowledge’ became divorced from ‘information,’ norms from facts” (Bronner 2004). Information, in its modern sense, became disassociated from affective, contextual, and cultural processes, thus making it much easier to be reified and abstracted from history.

In addition to reclaiming and rethinking modern constructions of information, Marcuse’s work gives the field of IS an opportunity to influence discourses of technology. While IS as discipline is engaged with the role of technology in society, it arguably does not theorize technology to a sufficient degree. In response to this shortcoming, Marcuse provides substantive insight into the role of technology in contemporary societies and provides critical perspectives on society and technology that challenge us to distinguish between emancipatory and oppressive forces and tendencies (Kellner 1998). These insights help avoid simply seeing all technology and society as a vast apparatus of domination, or seeing all science, technology, and industry as progressive (Kellner 1998). Marcuse’s approach can thus help mediate between the often unproductive extremes of technophobia and technophilia that are present in the field of LIS/IS and in society at large.

A critical engagement with discourses of technology can have broad implications in the field, beyond the usual implementation of technology for enhancing
information access. For instance, Marcuse’s critical theory is useful in interro-
gating the notion of technocracy. Technocracy, for example, is what Marcuse
used to describe the Third Reich, a system of rule in which “the technical con-
siderations of imperialistic efficiency and rationality supersed the traditional
standards of profitability and general welfare” (1998, 41). Based on the idea of
technological rationality, the technocratic paradigm bundles together technolog-
ical efficiency and political rationality. What Marcuse calls the “terroristic tech-
nocracy” (1998, 42) is based on the ingenious manipulation of the power inher-
ent in technology, a power the Third Reich was able to harness through the
intensification of labor and propaganda along the lines of greatest technolog-
ical efficiency, all for the requirements of a war economy. In today’s age, with the
“war on terror” and its associated tactics of information control, the field and dis-
cipline of IS has an opportunity to critically examine the discourses of technol-
ogy and information embedded in this technocratic war without end.

MARCUSE AND CRITIQUES OF
LIBRARIES IN THE “INFORMATION SOCIETY”

Marcuse’s critiques of technological society are also highly appropriate to an
interrogation of the “information society” ideology dominating both interna-
tional information and communications technology (ICT) policy circles and
current discourses of international librarianship. In particular, Marcuse’s em-
phasis on the link between technological and political rationality is relevant
in discussing discourses of the information society. The idea of an informa-
tion society continues to be a source of debate and interest in academic, po-
litical, and popular circles. A term that gained in popularity with the rise of
computerization, it also began to be used in economic circles, most notably
with the work of Fritz Machlup in the United States, who defined “informa-
tion industries” (Machlup 1962). Webster (2002) talks about the multifaceted
dimensions of the information society concept, showing how it has variously
been defined in technological, economic, spatial, and cultural terms. Given
the different definitions surrounding the information society concept, it is not
always clear what the information society represents, and how it can be rec-
ognized and measured. For instance, it is not certain whether an information
society is distinguished by the increasing economic importance of informa-
tion, the increase in ICT-mediated cultural products, or increased access to
education and information (Webster 2004).

Webster also emphasizes the development of the information society in an
environment of neoliberalism and corporate globalization, where global cap-
italism has greatly extended its reach and is the “only game in town.” He is
of the opinion that the information society concept is tied in with corporate, technocapitalist interests. In addition, he locates the information society as having its roots in Taylorism and instrumental rationality.

Marcuse’s focus on technological and political rationality in his critique of technological society parallels much of Webster’s and others’ critiques of the information society. Much of this critique is related to a discourse of information that is rooted in the logic of neoliberalism and technocapitalist economic and political rationality. Little work has been done, however, in linking these critiques of the information society with LIS and IS. Marcuse’s dialectical analysis of technological society can provide a bridge to understanding how the technocapitalist and neoliberal information society discourse is related directly to LIS and IS concerns. For instance, a global discourse is emerging about the roles of libraries in developing an “information society.” The importance of ICTs is undeniable in today’s world, and the emergence of a global information society is of significance to a wide range of actors, including national governments, corporations, international development agencies, and civil society.

Information institutions such as libraries are joining in on this information society debate as well, arguing for the role of libraries in the development of an information society (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions [IFLA] 2005a). IFLA is taking center stage in the promotion of libraries as a fundamental part of a global information society. IFLA is the international representative of libraries, speaking largely on behalf of national library associations in the world. It is placing a great emphasis on its current efforts in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), with IFLA president Alex Byrne delivering an address to the WSIS plenary (IFLA 2005b) and through the development of the “Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries: The Information Society in Action,” in which libraries are envisioned as “builders” of an information society (IFLA 2005c). The WSIS is a two-part United Nations conference that seeks to build a “people-centered and inclusive” information society (WSIS 2003), but it is influenced to a large degree by European Union information society policies, which link access to ICTs with increasingly neoliberal free market ideologies.

As discussed earlier, the concept of an information society is a contested terrain, understood at various social, political, economic, and theoretical levels. Thus the role of libraries in “building” an information society needs to be critically examined. In addition, the discourse of “information” itself is important within libraries—while libraries are concerned with information, it could be argued that the library profession uncritically accepts and adopts dominant discourses of information. These dominant discourses of information are related to post–World War II technoscience modernist projects (Day
2001) and the logics of the political and technological rationality of advanced capitalism. This type of “information paradigm” (Apostle and Raymond 1997) is at the heart of a repositioning strategy to define the ethics, roles, and purposes of physical libraries in the so-called information society. While library professional associations such as IFLA and international organizations such as UNESCO have argued for the cultural, democratic, public service, and communitarian ethics of libraries, the discourse of libraries being constructed at the WSIS focuses mainly on libraries as access points to ICTs (Pyati 2005). Moreover, the information society concept, as it is used in policy circles and exemplified in the WSIS, is highly influenced by ideologies of privatization and deregulation (Webster 2002). The information society of the WSIS needs to be examined within the larger context of economic globalization, in which technocapitalist and neoliberal ideologies hold sway (Pyati 2005). Many have argued that within this context of advanced capitalism and economic globalization, information as commodity is a dominant logic (Schiller 1994). In addition, the context of economic globalization is dominated by entities such as the World Trade Organization, which contains treaties and provisions that may make it easier to privatize library services (Rikowski 2005). Thus, a central tension exists between the traditional public service ethic of libraries, and an information society framework linked to privatization strategies that can further commoditize information.

A CRITICAL THEORY OF LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY

As the WSIS documents mention, libraries can be ICT access points and also ICT learning centers. However, what is often missing in the discourse surrounding ICTs and libraries in the larger context of LIS is the role libraries could potentially play in shaping technology for more inclusive and radically democratic ends. Some of this technology shaping can take the form of more active library technology development for user communities.

With this idea in mind, Marcuse’s critique of technological society and his vision of “liberating potentialities,” as well as critical theory of technology (Feenberg 2002), can develop a theoretical framework that more fully envisions libraries as active participants and shapers of ICTs for progressive and democratic ends. In response to this need for alternative, counter-hegemonic action strategies in IS and LIS, I am proposing a critical theory of library technology, which draws particularly from Marcuse’s critique of technological society, as well as Andrew Feenberg’s critical theory of technology. Feenberg, using Marcuse as a foundation and starting point, argues against technological determinism, and the idea that technology is a “neutral tool.”
Technology in this construct is not neutral, but rather embodies the values of a particular industrial civilization and of technocratic elites that promote this technology (Feenberg, 2002). Technological rationality also often becomes political rationality, reinforcing technologically mediated solutions that reflect dominant political and economic interests (Feenberg 2002).

Feenberg’s critical theory of technology is a “radical philosophy of technology” (2002, vi) that seeks to reconstruct the idea of socialism based on a democratization of technology and technically mediated institutions of society (Feenberg 2002). While technology is value-mediated and not neutral, a certain “ambivalence” exists in technology, an indeterminacy that allows for it to be shaped by social forces (Feenberg 2002). Thus while technology reflects dominant political and economic interests, potential exists for technology to be shaped for democratic ends.

This type of technology shaping can take many forms. While libraries are frequently mentioned as important players in developing an information society, information infrastructures, and ICTs, there is a notable lack of critical theorizations of technology use by libraries. Libraries are one of the places where technocapitalist ideologies of the information society are gaining more of a foothold, and thus critical examinations are needed in order for emancipatory alternatives to be formulated.

The form of this critical/technological activism is yet to be determined in the context of libraries; however, this type of activism would reflect a shift in orientation that envisions libraries as more consciously active agents in shaping technology for radical democratic ends and contesting ideologies of commoditization, privatization, and technological determinism. A critical theory of technology orientation can help in separating the ideologies of the information society from the discourses of technology. While the dominant discourse of the information society “packages” together the ideologies of privatization and deregulation with ICTs, critical theory of technology posits that this does not have to be the case. The discourse of ICTs does not have to necessarily be part of a free market, capitalist ideology, but can serve more radical democratic aims, particularly in democratizing access to information and knowledge. Libraries, in becoming more consciously active developers and shapers of ICTs for democratic and progressive ends, may help to combat some of the hegemony of the dominant information society.

An information society that is associated with technocapitalism, neoliberalism, and ideologies of deregulation can ultimately undermine the basis of the public service mission of libraries. In a certain sense, libraries with public service mandates (particularly public and certain academic libraries) have the potential to reframe an information society in a more radically
democratic, culturally inclusive, and progressive vision. Thus the library can serve as a center where the dialectical tension between regressive and progressive visions of an information society takes place, exposing contradictions in the dominant technocapitalist vision of an information society and opening up library-centered emancipatory visions. These visions, however, require a critical theoretical framework to guide informed action, something that is sorely lacking. A critical theory of library technology inspired by Marcuse’s and Feenberg’s visions may help provide this type of framework.

CONCLUSION

This critical theory of library technology is one example of a strategy of action inspired from Marcuse’s critiques of technological society. These types of theorizations and frameworks to guide radical democratic action are needed, especially given the growing commercialization of the Internet and apolitical, “neutral” understandings of “information access” and “information retrieval.” Information studies, long holding to positivist notions of the “neutrality” of information, is stuck in a “one-dimensionalist” paradigm where “access to information” is linked to uncritical, centrist tropes such as “democracy” and “freedom of information.” Information access, moreover, is taken to be a universal good, without a critical understanding of this concept. Marcuse presents a challenge to information studies, helping to question its grounding in instrumental rationality. Freeing the concept of information from its roots in scientific modernism and technological rationality helps it capture its larger affective, process-oriented, critical meaning.

Having more information is not necessarily good, but being able to critically evaluate information and contextualize technorationalist discourses of information in processes of capitalist expansion and neoliberalism will make information studies a more “critical” discipline. Marcuse’s vision, though scathing in its critique of technological society, offers hope in the dialectical process, as it “involves consciousness: recognition and seizure of the liberating potentialities” (Marcuse 1964, 222). Thus, while Marcuse’s work predated the Internet, the Internet (despite an increasing commercial presence) still offers the possibility of enhancing democratic politics and serving as a liberatory, counter-hegemonic space. Much work has to be done, but Marcuse’s vision can help information studies embrace a critical theory framework in which “democracy” and “social justice” take on a more radical and meaningful character.
REFERENCES


“Was the Court correct, Ms. Matambanadzo? Did they get this decision right?” There I sat in Civil Procedure, seat 87, between the guy from Oxford and the doctor from Chicago, the featured object of a Socratic conversation. My intuition and anger had finally gotten the best of me: “No. They never get it right when it comes to the poor. The decision is wrong because it isn’t fair and it entrenches economic inequalities within the legal system. That’s not justice, that’s just crap.” The small but powerful professor smiled at me, his eyes swimming behind thick glasses: “Yes, yes . . . but was the decision efficient? Did it preserve the resources of the court and promote important social policies?” I sighed, praying silently to the ancestors for forgiveness, and replied in the “correct” way, conceding that the decision was indeed efficient; it maximized wealth, it preserved judicial resources, and it protected the free market from undue governmental interference.

It was my first year in law school, and I was reeling from culture shock.¹ This was the year I learned the “truth” about “correct” legal decisions, a “truth” that often shocks those who attend law school because they believe in the possibilities of justice, fairness, and equality. The truth is: Justice, fairness, and equality have no predictive power in law and cannot be used to determine whether a decision is “correct.” Concepts like justice, fairness, and equality are plastic, empty, and virtually useless for analyzing legal decisions because they have no substantive content, and they can be manipulated to sanction any legal outcome, even those that seem intuitively unjust, unfair, or unequal. Furthermore, justice, fairness, and equality are not neutral and objective but can be manipulated to sanction many different outcomes. Therefore, these concepts are virtually useless for analyzing legal decisions.²
In addition to these truths, I learned that my legal education would immerse me in a culture that was deeply invested in the preservation of the status quo and the promotion of free market values, competition, and the other trappings of capitalism. Through the imposition of incredibly high tuition bills and a career services office that was most interested in the lucrative and prestigious employment of its former students, the culture encouraged the majority of its graduates to seek high-paying jobs at large corporate defense firms immediately after graduation even though this was not the career objective most of the students sought in their application to law school. I became the product of a culture where a narrow conception of economic efficiency was fetishized as the scholastic endeavor to emulate and understand, where more progressive states in the union were either ignored or outright mocked as the “People’s Republic of New Jersey” or “Taxachussetts,” and where a watered-down version of the Black Nationalist “power fist” was used to urge African American students to attend the corporate defense firm diversity recruiting fair.

During this time, one learns that the rights of property “owners” to sell land they did not live on trumps the rights of trailer owners who rent the land in order to live in a trailer park. One also learns that the preservation of free market exchanges and the ability to contract seems to require the unconscionable enforcement of agreements between powerful lenders and economically marginalized individuals. I absorbed the unspoken rules that those committing crimes related to economic survival must be incarcerated and later denied the right to vote, while large-scale corporate criminals, whose perfectly legal cabals exploit child labor, engage in anti–free market monopolistic mergers, and defraud investors in the name of business judgment, are often considered law-abiding upstanding citizens and good neighbors. And even as these rules and rulings are articulated as correct doctrine or worthy policy, vigorous repetitive dissent is often allowed and even encouraged as representation of a “competing conception of the good.” Furthermore, the legal analyses and decisions favored as “correct” or “right” focus on the monetary gains of the powerful parties litigating them, privileging a worldview that centers specifically on market-based monetarily focused outcomes.3

Law has been criticized as the administrative institution that protects the property and power rights of the status quo, and as Caren Irr and others have argued, a critical theory of law is essential to cultural studies (Irr 2002). This institution of law, and its technology of legal reasoning, are shaped and perpetuated in the United States through a system of professional education that possesses historical and theoretical commitments which tend to privilege the interests of capital, the preservation of markets, and the values of laissez-faire liberalism. In this essay, I will examine the ways in which the current pedagogical practices of legal education can benefit from an engagement with crit-
ical theory, focusing particularly on the philosophical work of Herbert Mar- 
cuse in *One-Dimensional Man* and “Repressive Tolerance.” I will argue that 
Marcuse provides useful ways to critique the current practices of legal peda-
gogy and insightful tools to reform legal education in ways that would pro-
mote not only the welfare of law students and the legal profession but also the 
pursuit of social justice through legal means. As the history of legal education 
and its current practice reveals, the current model of legal education em-
ployed by most law schools in the United States fosters one-dimensional 
thinking and dehumanizes the individual student. These individual students, 
who are vested with the power and knowledge of the law and legal systems, 
perpetuate and protect the economic stakes held by the barons of global cap-
italism. Furthermore, I will argue that this one-dimensionality is enhanced 
by the ways in which repressive tolerance functions in the law school class-
room. Finally, in conclusion I will propose that Marcuse’s work can also pro-
vide guidelines for reform in legal education that may enhance the quality of 
law students and legal professionals and promote additional possibilities for 
the realization of social justice.

**LEGAL EDUCATION IN HISTORY AND PRACTICE**

Although scholars interested in legal studies have utilized and examined the 
work of members of the Frankfurt School through the lens of critical legal 
studies, in the United States Herbert Marcuse’s important philosophical con-
tributions are underutilized in discussions of legal education and law more 
generally. This essay represents an interdisciplinary experiment that mobi-
lizes the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse to illuminate and rehabilitate le-
gal education in the United States and can serve as a starting point for think-
ing more broadly about law in the United States through the lens of Marcuse’s 
thought. Herbert Marcuse’s philosophical project challenges totalitarianism 
and repression through an inquiry into the complex nature of reason, tech-
nology, freedom, tolerance, and desire. At the center of this inquiry lies Mar-
cuse’s influential book *One-Dimensional Man* and his essay “Repressive Tol-
erance.” However, before focusing on the ways in which Marcuse’s work can 
be used to critique legal education and enhance its possibilities and promises 
in the United States, it is necessary to examine the historical construction of 
legal education and the ways in which it is currently practiced.

The current construction of legal education in the United States is a rela-
tively recent endeavor that can be traced to the evolution of professionalism, 
the idealization of scientific methods, and the rise of industrial capitalism. 
Between 1870 and 1895 there was a revolution in the field of law and legal
education at a small law school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And although
this revolution was only a small part of the legal profession’s transformation
during this time, its effects were far reaching in legal education. It was dur-
ing this time period that Charles Langdell became the first dean at Harvard
Law School and began what would result in national reforms in the way in
which law was taught to future students (Sutherland 1967). When Langdell
became dean at Harvard Law School, he presided over a small law college
with less than 200 students, three full-time faculty members, and only the jan-
it and student librarian staffing the library. During his tenure as dean of this
small law school, Langdell made many changes that were later applied in law
schools across the country. Langdell required admissions examinations based
on post-secondary knowledge, increased the amount of time that students
spent on their law degree from eighteen months to three years, and required
rigorous examinations at the end of each year (Sutherland 1967). He also in-
stituted his famous case method as a means of learning law. According to
Langdell, law is a science, the mastery of which requires that students learn
its doctrines by distilling them from a series of precedential cases in a given
area (Sutherland 1967). So, for example, if one is studying the legal science
of contracts, then one learns the doctrines through the systematic study of
common law contracts cases in which students study, compare, and classify
various legal opinions to determine the positivistic law that lies beneath. This
method attempted to establish two things about legal education and law: first,
that law is a science, and second, that this science could be discovered
through the study of printed books.

Langdell also instituted a “chaotic” method of making these comparisons
and classifications in the legal classroom: the Socratic method. The Socratic
method, gleaned crudely from Plato’s dialogues, asks students to state the
facts of the case and the outcome and then for every case to distinguish
whether it is good law or bad law or something in between, given his or her
body of cultural, traditional, and social knowledge. The question of whether
there are “correct” legal decisions often lies at the center of questions in the
legal classroom discussion. Law professors sometimes pose the “Socratic”
question of whether a decision was decided correctly, often with the goal of
revealing that there is no correct decision and correctness and rightness re-
main elusive and unquantifiable. More frequently, however, questions about
the correct decision are utilized to highlight the important aspects of legal de-
cisions and rules that should render them correct from the professor’s per-
spective. And still today for almost all law schools in the United States, the
case method is the way in which law students are taught. Furthermore, while
some teachers are trying to experiment with other teaching styles and objec-
tives in law schools (generally after receiving the security of tenure and prov-
ing they are “hard enough”), the Socratic method is generally the way in which law professors engage their students in the classroom.9

This model of legal education employed in the United States, the case method combined with the Socratic method, is an apt example of what Paolo Freire calls the banking model of education (Freire 2004). Professors who utilize the Socratic method stand before the class in total control. They possess the knowledge and deposit it in the students in order for the students to reproduce it in the form of issue spotter examinations at the end of the term. These law professors often operate their lecture in a divide-and-conquer sort of fashion, quickly questioning their students in ways that seem arbitrary and irrelevant even with the grand promise of being and becoming a legal professional lurking in the background. The students, thrown off by various red herrings and often confused by the trajectory of the dialogue, often feel little to no solidarity with their classmates and hope only that they will not be humiliated or embarrassed in front of their peers.

This “divide and rule” form of pedagogy is deeply individualistic. Student performance and grades, even if they have engaged in group study or the sharing of knowledge, are completely individualistic in nature. This is how many teachers bestow the gift of legal education upon students. The treatment in these classrooms centers on individual performance (as perceived in the general community, since law students do not often share their grades with one another), on the ability to react individually and “on one’s feet” to the queries of the professor (Guinier, Fine, and Balin 1994). They are alienated not only from other students but often from the communities they come from, as they serve and pursue the objectives of capital.10 This process dehumanizes law students who were previously selected (often) for their human/humane qualities and commitments to social justice. In this environment, the most contradictory works and truths (to paraphrase Marcuse’s discussion of the new totalitarianism) coexist peacefully in indifference. Law students are taught that lawyers and judges produce and sanction convictions rather than knowledge, persuasion rather than truth (Macey 1993). The heady ideals of truth, justice, and liberation go out the window along with fairness and passion, as the objective of legal pedagogy teaches students to serve capitalist ideology by colonizing the legal profession with practices and values that run counter to the claims of truth, justice, and equality.

In many (but not all) law school classrooms, the values of free market individualism, liberal “autonomy,” private property, and the hegemony of global capitalism underpin the discussion without question or concern. Students learn “the law” and engage in the Socratic process of learning to “think like lawyers” without questioning the larger frameworks or teasing out the underlying ideologies and biases that are apparent in the precedent. Concerns
of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, economic and social justice, disability, and citizenship are often relegated to “special” discussion on rape or “special classes” that are not taught as part of the core topics. Multidimensional aspects of law and the students as persons are flattened and rendered more pliant for the purposes of practice. Furthermore, students are not rewarded for engaging their creative powers but are instead rewarded for articulating a series of issues from the topic based on an imaginary scenario. As such, legal education, in its current practice and its historical construction, often promotes the interests of large-scale corporate capital and pecuniary objectives at the expense of promoting social justice and fostering substantive notion of equality and fairness.

This experience of law school and legal education often has profound effects on law students’ perceptions of themselves and the world. In their examinations of the contours and conflicts of legal pedagogy and the profession, legal scholars have found significant ways in which the current practices of legal education negatively disrupt the worldviews of law students struggling to become full-blown legal professionals. As Duncan Kennedy notes, there seems to be a “crisis of faith” in justice, fairness and equality that permeates the legal profession and the legal academy. Kennedy describes such a loss of faith in legal arguments as “a loss, an absence, ‘Once I believed the materials and the procedure produced the outcome but now I experience the procedures as something I do to the materials to produce the outcome’” (Kennedy 2002). This loss of faith in justice, fairness, and equality in the legal academy is especially poignant among law students and may cause drastic changes in their personalities and proclivities. In an influential study of the effects of law school on law students at one Ivy League university law school, Harvard Professor Lani Guinier and her coauthors found that after three years of legal education, students reported that they had become less passionate, less emotional, more intolerant, more abrasive, and more “objective” (Guinier, Fine, and Balin 1994).

ONE-DIMENSIONAL LAWYERS: CRITIQUING THE TECHNOLOGY OF LEGAL THOUGHT

Having examined the historical evolution and current application of legal education in the United States and some of its effects on law students, it is necessary to examine Herbert Marcuse’s philosophical works that are the most relevant to a discussion on legal education. In this section, I will discuss the importance of Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man* for understanding and illuminating the problems of legal education.
In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse presents his critique of technology, one-dimensional thinking, and rationality. This critique, which Marcuse applies to totalitarian repressive regimes on the left and on the right, also addresses the efficient use of technology in ways that foster comfort and placate potential dissenters in a repressive regime. Concerning himself with the fate of the individual in industrial society, Marcuse argues that the technical apparatus of production and distribution engages in totalitarian domination by determining not only individual needs and aspirations but also the scope of intelligible possibilities that exist within the status quo (Marcuse 2002). This totalitarian domination is accomplished through the establishment of the technological society. Within the technological society, technology shapes the choices and possibilities of its members, and through its ability to increase efficiency and improve the standard of living, it obscures all possible alternatives that would undermine the status quo. For “in the medium of technology, culture, politics and the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows up or represses all alternatives” (Marcuse 2002, xlvii). As such, technology operates as a pleasant form of social control and cohesion that dominates individuals by shaping their social preferences and possibilities. This creates a complex repressive society where liberty and choice ultimately serve as instruments of domination. Because of the possibilities of choice and the illusion of liberty, and because technology creates the belief that life has “improved,” the “intellectual and emotional refusal ‘to go along’ appears neurotic and impotent” (Marcuse 2002, 12). This structure creates the limits of freedom and reason and fosters the emergence of one-dimensionality in the individual.

In this critique of the technological society and the ways in which it produces one-dimensional individuals, Marcuse also offers an analysis of reason and rationality. In the technological society there is no space for disruptive alternatives, and thus most individuals possess what Marcuse ironically calls the “happy consciousness.” According to Marcuse, the happy consciousness represents a belief system in which the real and the rational merge so that the rationality produced by this consciousness fosters social behavior that conforms to the requirements of the repressive technological society (Marcuse 2002, 87). This form of technological rationality thus effectively closes off not only possibilities for behavior but also potential meanings of discourse. For example, “‘freedom,’ ‘equality,’ ‘democracy,’ and ‘peace’ imply analytically a specific set of attributes which occur invariably . . . [and] transgression of the discourse beyond the closed analytic structure is incorrect or propaganda” (Marcuse 2002, 91). Thus for the one-dimensional happy consciousness, there is no ability to encompass contradictions or recognize conflicting historical aspects of social reality. This inability to contain contradictions in thought is the
defining feature of one-dimensional thinking, particularly since two-dimen-
sional thought requires a critical and dialectical conception of social totality. Two-dimensional dialectical thinking enables individuals to see that “the slave is capable of abolishing the masters and of cooperating with them [and] the masters are capable of improving the life of the slave and of improving his ex-
ploitation” (Marcuse 2002, 146). This capacity to engage contradictions in rea-
soning is the necessary center of dialectical and thus two-dimensional thought.

For an analysis of legal education, Marcuse’s critique of technology and one-dimensional thinking can be a productive lens with which to examine the current dominant practices in pedagogy. Legal education itself creates a sort of technological society centered on the technology of legal tools that students learn. Legal education in the United States is, at its core, instruction and training of the young (i.e., new) legal professional in the technologies of law—i.e., legal reasoning, legal researching (which has become heavily de-
pendent on the technologies not only of various printed digest systems but also of electronic legal databases for finding cases and statutes), legal writ-
ing, argumentation, and reading precedents and the law. As lawyer and legal scholar Douglas Litowitz notes, “legal education involves indoctrination into this new discourse, a process that ends when one awakens to find oneself writing in a manner that once seemed impossibly obscure” (1998, 709). Le-
gal writing, like legal thinking and reading cases and materials to determine the useful legal “rules” they yield, is a highly technical skill that differs greatly from other less formal modes of writing, thinking, and writing.

For Marcuse, technology in the repressive society has a special role to play in ensuring that the status quo—whether it be the status quo maintained by capitalist society or by communist society—remains in place. Technology presents and offers a new and better world than that which came before. People are led, through the channels of reason, to believe that technology has en-
sured a far more comfortable, efficient future free from the bonds of enslave-
ment that existed without its comforts before. Technology, as such, provides a better life. Through its deployment and production, it efficiently conquers social forces of resistance merely by increasing the standard of living (Marcuse 2002).

Law students engaged in learning the tools of legal technology may be even more likely to be invested in its promises of a better life and its meth-
ods of social control than individuals in the technological society. After all, law students make heavy investments—both pecuniary investments and in-
vestments in time, energy, and human capital—in legal education. They see that their future individual interest is tied up with the interest of the clients they serve (conceptualized inside the classroom often as corporations and businesses), the legal profession they belong to, and ultimately the capitalist
system that makes their particular brand of knowledge and specialization in protecting corporations and capitalists or in bringing suit against corporations and capitalists (allegedly on behalf of the people and functioning as a legitimating measure). These tools of legal technology not only improve life, in many ways they make the professional life possible for law students. This process, I believe, has the potential to create one-dimensional legal professionals designed to serve the mechanistic contraption that is law and ultimately the forces of capitalism. Students learn quickly that their performance as individuals is heavily dependent on the place of the law as an essential mechanism of social control. This mechanism of social control (i.e., law) acts by and for capitalism in the current regime, ensuring the sanctity of private property, enabling the conglomeration of large amounts of capital and many individuals (the corporation) in order to make a profit, and even acting as a safety-valve system that legitimates the pursuit of capital.

At the end of this journey of dehumanization, alienation, and banking education, law students emerge from law school products of the technology of legal education, a technology that provides them with a powerful credential that gives them access to membership in a professional class. After the dehumanizing and alienating ordeal that many call law school and armed with their newly minted objectivity and their knowledge of the law, they are admitted into the ranks of legal professionals. This admission accords them the status and powers of domination in a society governed by the tools of technology they are intimately acquainted with. Furthermore, it grants them access to a better life if they are willing to align themselves with this technology and engage in a one-dimensional practice of law.

In the next section, I will more closely examine Marcuse’s critique of reason and his notion of repressive tolerance as it relates to current practices of legal education.

**REASON, REPRESSIVE TOLERANCE, AND THE LAW SCHOOL CLASSROOM: ADDING INSIGHTS TO LEGAL INQUIRY**

Another way in which Marcuse’s philosophical work provides an illuminating lens for critiquing the structure of legal education is his discussion of reason and rationality. According to Marcuse, reason not only shapes reality as we understand it but also obscures any alternative possibilities that may truly threaten to change the ways in which the repressive society functions. Reason and rationality function to limit the scope of the possible and the range of the imaginary in ways that insulate the repressive social framework of the status quo and present the status quo as the ideal outcome of all possible outcomes.
Reason is essential to the maintenance of the status quo, particularly since reason also determines the nature of liberty and repression, establishing what freedoms render one free and what limitations place one in chains (Marcuse 1965). In a repressive society where fear and misery lead to repression and where reason and technology function to idealize the status quo while obscuring any revolutionary possibilities, values often held by lovers of liberalism and democracy become suspect. Under this scheme freedom, liberty, and tolerance become restrictive means of obscuring alternative possibilities that may have the potential to change the status quo.

In the essay “Repressive Tolerance,” Marcuse specifically examines the ways in which the liberal value of tolerance is deployed in a repressive capitalist regime by the state to obscure real possibilities for change and real alternatives to repression even as it permits the exercise of dissent that articulates these positions. In such a regime, tolerance is granted to all positions—those on the left and right, those of atheists and fundamentalists, those of doves and hawks (Marcuse 1965, 3). For Marcuse, tolerance as currently practiced in repressive capitalist societies actually functions as a tool of suppression and dominance because it undermines and de-legitimates any opposition to the status quo through the subtle process by which it equates and tolerates all opinions, policy recommendations, and arguments regardless of merit or possible outcome. This practice of tolerance leaves the status quo in place and idealizes it as the exclusive exemplification of freedom and liberty.

This practice of tolerance operates in a complex way that allows dissent to exist even as it reaffirms the hegemony of the status quo. As Marcuse argues, the tolerance of varying viewpoints, especially dissenting viewpoints, leads to the preservation and protection of the repressive social framework that represents the status quo (Marcuse 1965). The dominating productive apparatus (the state in his essay) permits dissent, putting it on an allegedly equal footing with the dominant wisdom and other competing viewpoints. In seeming to tolerate the exercise of the right to dissent in the repressive regime, the state can claim the existence of democratic rights and freedoms. As such, tolerance becomes repressive as the administrative government demonstrates that it not only allows all dissenting voices to freely dissent but that it can shelter these voices and ideas and include them within its current framework, even when they constitute an opposition to the nature and existence of the social framework. In manifesting its tolerance and administering the freedom to dissent, the repressive state earns the tolerance of the people within the repressive regime. The people tolerate the state’s claim to administer not only tolerance and freedom but also violence and suppression through the prison system and the criminal justice system. They also tolerate the government’s
administration and preservation of the power, privilege, and property rights of
the dominant class.

The law school classroom and legal education is governed by the sort of
“repressive tolerance” that Marcuse describes in his essay. Tolerance is prac-
ticed through the administration of the classroom. This tolerance, while it
seems to offer freedom of speech, thought, and academic inquiry, actually
serves to reaffirm the status quo of law’s hegemony as an ideal administrative
institution and foster deference to the demands of capital, markets, and lais-
sez-faire liberalism. Often, using the Socratic method, panels, or other volun-
teers, professors solicit a diverse swash of opinions and arguments that rep-
resent the possibilities of rational legal thought and the potential policy
considerations in question. Students are often asked to “perform” a position
or “make an argument” for a particular perspective. The critical legal theorist,
the feminist legal scholar, the critical race theorist, and the law and econom-
ics scholar compete with democrats and republicans, conservatives and liber-
als, communists and fascists, and totalitarians and libertarians in a seeming
marketplace of ideas where the law, as represented by the professor, produces
the best outcome to contain such contentious competing interests. Women
who may be survivors of sexual violence defend the rapist, while the descen-
dants of slaves argue for the property interests of slave owners in order to un-
derstand the Dred Scott decision. First-generation immigrants are asked to ar-
gue for closed military borders, while members of the working class argue for
cheap labor and against unionization and those whose sexual preferences
stray from heterosexual missionary-position sex must argue for sodomy laws
and the state’s intervention in regulating the bedroom practices of its citizens.

As in Marcuse’s version of the repressive society, all of these arguments,
all of these positions, “the stupid with the intelligent one—sense and non-
sense,” the just and unjust are relatively equal in that they can be voiced and
argued for in the current legal system using the tools and technologies of le-
gal education (Marcuse 1965, 6). And while these moments, one could argue,
may illustrate the dialectic potential of law to foster critical thought and en-
compass contradictions, the tolerance of all arguments and all opinions on a
seemingly level plane in the name of justice protects the machinery of legal
reasoning from question and reaffirms the value and superiority of the legal
system. If one can argue for all these coexisting contradictory possibilities
within this framework and if the current legal system and its particular cur-
rents of legal reasoning can contain these competing claims with tolerance
and respect, then the current legal system is not only good but may even be
the best of all possible legal systems.

In addition, further entrenching the hegemony of the current legal regime and
presenting an ideal picture of its tolerance, the framework of legal education
limits the background possibilities of law before they can occur to the students. Through the deployment of a tolerance that presents all possible opinions on equal footing and absorbs them while privileging the dominant framework of the status quo, legal education limits a student’s scope of what’s possible, probable, and desirable. Of course, despite the seeming existence of a level playing field, some legal arguments and opinions are better situated than others, insofar as they resemble narratives and precedents that have previously been successful and those that reflect the interests of capital and the status quo. This important detail, however, is not highlighted, as legal reasoning can formulate these arguments and law itself can absorb these arguments, even when they seem to undermine and threaten the status quo of law. As such, the fluent affluent framework of legal education and the form of legal reasoning it teaches prevails, further entrenching and valuing the current legal regime with its emphasis on the interests of capital and laissez-faire liberalism and limiting the background possibilities of what is intelligible and coherent under law.

For Marcuse, intolerance means that some things cannot be said, some ideas cannot be expressed, some politics cannot be proposed, and some behavior cannot be permitted (Marcuse 1965, 3). These prohibitions are designed to foster a more universal type of tolerance that is free from (and intolerant of) suppression, violence, cruelty, and aggression (Marcuse 1965). For tolerance to be provided in a universal and substantial way, there must be “no real or alleged enemy requir[ing] in the national interest the education and training of people in military violence and destruction.”

The “loaded” tolerance practiced by the government and its dominant institutions, in contrast to the type of tolerance Marcuse is proposing, is defined by inequality (Marcuse 1965, 2). It fosters not only tolerance of the entrenched and established attitudes and ideas but also an affirmation of these attitudes and ideas.

Repressive tolerance and the rationality that underpins it is an important aspect of legal education. As legal education presents the power of legal reasoning to formulate arguments, the power of law to tolerate and absorb even oppositional ideas, and the economic and social possibilities presented by membership in the professional class, law students may quickly realize (perhaps even by the end of their first semester) that “the rule of law [and law school] no matter how restricted is still infinitely safer than rule above or without the law” (Marcuse 2002, 4).

When students do engage more creatively, many professors use the opportunity to instill in them the realities of repressive tolerance. Highlighting the ability of law and legal discourse to encompass a diverse number of topics and to tolerate manifold dissenting opinions, even those that call for the elim-
ination or marginalization of law’s place and power in dominant society, legal education reinforces the prominent position of law. Law and methods of legal technology seem to foster multidimensional thinking and tolerance for all viewpoints. Law even provides the tools and technologies for deciding between various competing conceptions of the good.

Thus this system of law, which has been historically and professionally designed to serve the interests of large-scale corporate capitalism, positions and repositions itself as the ideal, as the system that is flexible enough and all-encompassing enough to contain varying dissenting opinions and decide between them for the good of all. Under such a regime, those that rebel by articulating opposing viewpoints or adopting seemingly radical readings of the arguments in question may even be engaging in a process of desublimation in which their personal private rebellion leaves the oppressive status quo in place.

To Marcuse, there is an alternative form of tolerance, an active robust tolerance that fosters the creation of a humane society and combats repression. The creation of a humane society requires an intolerance of inequality and the elimination of violence, a reduction of suppression and the protection of all people from cruelty and aggression (Marcuse 1965). The realization of tolerance would require intolerance for the policies, attitudes, and opinions of the repressive regime. In order to prevent repression, misery, and violence, it is necessary to be intolerant of the causes of oppression and intolerant of the tolerance of those causes of oppression (Marcuse 1965). This is a guiding project norm that would allow law students to shed one-dimensionality and reject the mechanisms of repressive tolerance and “reason” that obscure possibilities for using law creatively to foster more substantive equality and social justice in the broader context. In the next section, I will turn to ways in which Marcuse’s philosophical project can be used to reform legal education.

POSSIBILITIES OF RESISTANCE:
FOSTERING THE CRITICAL MOMENT IN LEGAL EDUCATION

Before concluding, I would like to briefly discuss some ways in which Marcuse’s philosophical project provides the potential to reform legal education for the good of law students and in the interest of social justice. This potential lies primarily in the possibilities presented by the critical moment and the ways in which reality can be disrupted by engaging with art and literature and the experiences of marginalized individuals. For Marcuse, one-dimensionality and the repressive technological society can be disrupted when one breaks from the illusions of “reality” and recognizes the ways in which one has been
estranged from the world. This process produces a critical moment and involves the possibility of “naming the things that are absent . . . [and] breaking the spell of the things that are” (Marcuse 2002, 71). For Marcuse this possibility is presented by two separate but important practices.

First, the critical moment can be fostered by an engagement with art and literature. High art and literature, in presenting through fiction a protest against what is, create possibilities for the disruption of the happy consciousness and the domination of legal technology by naming what is absent within one-dimensional reality. It is this concept that provides potential reforms for legal education that may benefit students and further the interests of social justice. In order to ensure that this process occurs, law professors concerned with fostering social justice should engage in more interdisciplinary methods of teaching law. In addition to focusing on cases and statutes in an effort to discover the common law, one could add brief engagements with art, music, and literature as a method to produce what is and what is not.

One of the most striking ways that this is being accomplished, although only in seminars and not generally in the core bar classes at most law schools, is through the law and literature movement. By examining novels and short stories that engage with the contours of law, through the works of many authors whose work has the potential to break the spell of what is, students are led to critical moments that may have the potential to undermine the dominance of legal technology and promote possibilities for social justice. For example, students may engage in a property law class with an excerpt from Toni Morrison’s account of bondage, motherhood, murder, and slavery in _Beloved_ and in their criminal law class with Tori Amos’s account of rape in “Me and a Gun.” Through interdisciplinary textual analysis to supplement the cases and laws presented to students, there is potential for a more multidimensional scheme of possibilities and thus for more multidimensional lawyers.

The critical moment can also be accomplished through the estrangement from the perspectives of privilege and power and the articulation of perspectives from the margins of law’s privilege. As Caren Irr claims, in discussing attempting to formulate cultural studies of law informed by Marcuse’s analysis of one-dimensional society, political action and critical theory should seek historically constituted subjects “at the margins, among those whose desires are organized by social engineering as necessarily unhappy” (Irr 2000, 178). This also means that political movements and coalitions that seek to find critical moments that present the potential for what could be beyond the seeming rationality and order of the dominant regime should privilege the positions of those individuals “on the margins” in order to enhance equality and ensure that the calls for justice do not merely replicate the values, valuations, and possibilities presented by the status quo.
Law school professors and the law school classroom must create space not only for the articulation of the experiences of marginalized individuals but for those individuals themselves. This can be accomplished by creating an environment that disrupts the Socratic method’s structural framework regarding the power of the professor to speak and to guide the class by encouraging contributions from those on the margins of law and power. These articulations oppose and undermine the status quo while disrupting the ways in which repressive tolerance reproduces the repressive framework. Critical moments that have the potential to undermine repressive tolerance, the technology of legal tools, and a rationality that affirms the status quo will be motivated by political coalitions formed with individuals who are not privy to the power and privilege of law and are not as willing to align themselves with the benefits of the technological society, in part because they have been excluded from its benefits and carry the bulk of its burdens. Through these means, it may be possible to reform legal education and reclaim it for the pursuit of social justice.

**CONCLUSION**

In Marcuse’s insightful essay on repressive tolerance, he writes, “Law and order are always and everywhere the law and order which protect the established hierarchy” (Marcuse 1965, 13). Law is generally considered the “unofficial” state religion in the United States; many scholars have noted the ways in which law functions as a national secular religion and, as Bradley Bobertz notes, law even has its own sacred texts and its own priesthood (1995, 747). This priesthood is bound by the tasks of interpreting the religion, often clad in sacred robes and garments (i.e., blue, black, and gray designer suits) to indicate their status. Given the cultural climate of legal education, the peculiar ways in which legal education and legal pedagogy are employed, and the importance of lawyers and law in the United States, it is useful to think through the ways in which Herbert Marcuse’s philosophical project can be used to engage legal education specifically and law more generally. Legal education, as affirmed by its history and practice, fosters one-dimensionality in students by training them in modes of legal reasoning and argument that affirm a repressive regime dominated by the interests of capital and tolerant of the inequality, repression, violence, and misery that Marcuse claims is the condition of modern repressive societies.

In this chapter I have shown the ways in which Marcuse’s philosophical insights provide a useful lens through which to read legal education and the potential tools to reform it as well, so that legal education and ultimately perhaps
the legal system can foster the robust potentials of morality, equality, and fairness in ways that promote social justice. Future engagements with Marcuse’s work in legal education may further elaborate on the ways in which interdisciplinary education and pedagogical methods can be utilized to promote critical moments.

NOTES

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1. Legal academia and law school specifically, like other professional and academic realms, can seem like a bizarre cultural realm for those who are not familiar with its normative framework and cultural currency. Robert Williams, a prominent professor of law specializing in Critical Race Theory and federal Indian law, describes the landscape of the legal academy from the perspective of an untenured minority law professor. In his account, he highlights the ways in which the legal academy favors the norms, interests, and perspectives of white upper-class men engaging with “legitimate” scholarship that focuses on “white man’s law” (Williams 1997). The ways in which the culture of the legal academy can be shocking to law students specifically has been documented in several autobiographical memoirs (e.g., Turow 1997).

2. I am not claiming that there is a universal cynicism about justice, fairness, and equality in legal consciousness or among law students; anecdotally, however, it is easy to believe that there is a pervasive skepticism about the usefulness of justice, fairness, and equality even among very young and inexperienced legal professionals. This is highly contested ground, however. Some legal scholars claim that equality has no substantive content and that it should not be used in moral and legal discussions as an explanatory norm (see Western 1982). Others have argued that equality is a powerful generative norm in the United States and thus serves an important and persuasive purpose in moral and legal discourse (see Karst 1983). The struggle for a more substantive notion of equality that can be utilized in legal decisions has been central to legal academic scholarship and has been especially important for legal scholars and educators from Critical Race Theory and radical feminist theory. See, for example, Littleton (1987).

3. Problems related to privileging the pursuit of pecuniary, bottom-line objectives instead of more intangible and elusive concerns have been acknowledged in various camps of the legal academy. Even Mary Ann Glendon, whose communitarian scholarship is hardly aligned with the more radical and progressive positions of professors in critical legal studies, Critical Race Theory, and radical feminist theory, has noted
ways in which monetary concerns dominate the landscape in our thoughts and policies. According to Glendon (1993), “[a] kind of blind spot seems to float across our political vision where the communal and social as distinct from individual or strictly economic dimensions of a problem are concerned.”

4. This brief chapter does not adequately or completely address the educational phenomenon that produces and maintains the complex classes of legal aid lawyers and other public interest lawyers (union side labor lawyers, plaintiff’s attorneys, government lawyers, judges, etc.); however, I would argue that the existence and possibilities presented by these lawyers purposely dedicated to “the people” could be viewed as parts of a “safety valve” mechanism that shores up the ways in which repressive tolerance is employed in the legal regime more broadly. Their work, including their victories in the civil rights movement and against large corporate capital foes like the asbestos companies or recently, big tobacco, may look like progress but actually functions to legitimate an unjust system and foster false consciousness among the general population.

5. Critical legal studies is a contested movement of “radical” left scholarship that examines law using the critical theoretical tools of various philosophical schools of thought (often termed “moves” by its founder Duncan Kennedy) to analyze inequality, hierarchy, and injustice in law. At its inception, Duncan Kennedy urged resistance against liberalism and the hierarchies of dominance and injustice that law in capitalist society creates. Critical legal studies attacks the notion that law is a neutral, objective, scientific endeavor, and it argues that all legal rules are indeterminate in their outcomes and can be “flipped” to reproduce the interests of the dominant group or those opposing it (Kennedy 2001). Although the roots of this movement are undeniably Marxist in nature, as some scholars note, critical legal studies has maintained a somewhat tense relationship with Marxism and its theoretical legacy. For example, E. Dana Neascu argues that critical legal studies must reclaim its Marxist roots in order to revitalize the movement (Neascu 2000). Some scholars of critical legal studies have seen the scholarship of the Frankfurt School as a key part of the theoretical underpinnings of the movement. See for example, Whitehead (1999).

6. This is not to discount the important work of scholars who have been greatly influenced by and continue to use Marcuse’s work in their praxis. For example, Angela Davis’s important work as a scholar/activist examining the military-industrial prison complex can be theoretically connected not only to Foucault’s work on prisons but also to Marcuse’s insights concerning technology and reason. My claim applies only to the fact that scholars within the legal academy who focus specifically on law in the United States have underutilized Marcuse.

7. During this time period legal practice also underwent a capitalist revolution in which solo practitioners, whose educations and individual private practices mirrored the artisanship of republican craftsmen in the nineteenth century, started forming large firms with specialists and generalists in law. These large firms were and are governed under a capitalist partnership model, in which the more experienced lawyers (partners) pay wages to younger lawyers (associates) generally recruited from the most elite law schools in the country. This “Cravath system” was developed by Paul D. Cravath in the late nineteenth century in New York in response to the
changing needs of business clients (during that time capitalists from fields of electricity and power, industrial manufacturing, and the railroads); it combines specialization in office practice (transactional work) with litigation (courtroom work). See Swain (1948). During this time there was a concurrent revolution occurring among large-scale corporate capitalists, who developed special needs in office work and litigation work. Given the developing needs of lucrative corporate capitalists, it is easy to see how legal education as we know it developed further in response to nineteenth-century capitalism.

8. During the progressive era of the early twentieth century, moves toward professionalization in the legal profession occurred through the regulation of education. De Ville (1997) discusses the evolution of the New York City Bar Association’s attack on “ambulance chaser” lawyers, often from working-class or immigrant communities, through the discrediting of legal night schools and limits on contingency fee arrangements.

9. Not all professors at law school utilize the case method and the Socratic method. Many have complex critical forms of transgressive pedagogy that require group work, interaction with other students, or verbal reports, skills that may actually be more useful in actual legal practice than those gleaned from the Socratic method, which allegedly replicates the environment of an appellate level argument with the student acting as the lawyer and the professor acting as the judge.

10. This is one of the perfect places to see the problem of co-opted intellectuals in play. Enthusiastic, bright-eyed young individuals from all classes are brought into law schools and then literally indoctrinated not only with the information about the ruling class but in a way of thinking that in many cases, ends up serving the needs of the ruling class.

11. As the United States moves toward a society in which fear and terror of the loss of privilege and increased standard of living at the hands of “terrorists” who control the resources that many believe make increased standards of living possible, Marcuse’s analysis of technology and fear may require a re-reformulation. However, as Marcuse points out in his discussions of repressive tolerance, the production and reproduction of the cold war, the war on drugs, and the constant imprisonment of minorities and the poor may make his critique of technology particularly apt.

12. As Marcuse notes, the real or imagined enemy can be at home or abroad.

13. Some scholars have found the potential for critical consciousness–raising in other places in legal education. For example, Professor Jane Harris Aiken finds what she calls the “disorienting moment” and its potential in engagements with clinical educational practice. According to Harris Aiken (1997), clinical education provides opportunities for clinical supervisors and professors to highlight moments of privilege and prejudice in order to foster transformative learning.

14. W. Tarver Rountree Jr. has noted that this American secular religion is specifically embodied in constitutionalism, a belief system that not only serves the purposes of a religion but also fits sociologist Emile Durkheim’s definition of a religion (Tarver Rountree 1990, 205).
REFERENCES


In recent years highly publicized educational commentators like David Horowitz (2000, 2006a, 2006b) and the team of Alan Charles Kors and Harvey Silverglate (1998), as also Allan Bloom (1987), have been promoting many of the major agenda items for the New Right with regard to higher education policy in the United States. Central among these is a resurgent racism and the reactionary claim in such books as Horowitz’s *Hating Whitey and Other Progressive Causes* (2000) that an ostensible racism against whites on the part of so-called leftwing and totalitarian academics is oppressing conservative student and faculty voices. They charge that freedom of speech has been betrayed in the American university system by campus codes attempting to regulate bigoted outbursts against ethnic minority groups in our society. One key premise undergirding the New Right’s contention is their coveted assumption that democratic institutions must maintain deference toward, and an absolute tolerance of, abusive and even assaultive speech—as protected forms of expression.

In sharp contrast to this approach, a strategy for the defense of minority civil rights and solidarity with subaltern victims of hate speech has been developed by authors like Dolores Calderón (see chapter 9 in this volume), Christine Sleeter and Dolores Delgado Bernal (2003), Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (1997), Mari Matsuda, Charles Lawrence, Richard Delgado, and Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1993), and John K. Wilson (1995). These authors, developing what has become known as Critical Race Theory, argue that freedom of speech must be viewed in the context of its real political consequences, and thus is not absolute.
ARE THERE ETHICAL LIMITS TO TOLERANCE?

How shall we best protect human rights in this era of acrid backlash to multicultural education amid rival redefinitions of freedom? One place to start is to recall Herbert Marcuse’s “critique of pure tolerance,” which is resoundingly derided by Kors and Silverglate, and to revisit the main ideas of Marcuse’s 1965 essay “Repressive Tolerance.” I do find it entirely predictable that rightwing writers like Kors and Silverglate feel the need to confront Marcuse as the culture wars continue into the new millennium. They assert that the philosophy of Herbert Marcuse is the intellectual progenitor of what they deplore as the contemporary tendency toward political correctness in higher education today. Their categorical condemnation of Marcuse is cantilevered by their fulsome praise for what they see as John Stuart Mill’s advocacy of totally unfettered rights of speech.3

Kors and Silverglate turn to Marcuse’s “Repressive Tolerance” essay to furnish evidence that Herbert Marcuse was not tolerant of all political views. It is certainly true that Marcuse was not a relativist or a pragmatist, and did not tolerate all views as equally valid or invalid. Far from it: “This pure tolerance of sense and nonsense” (Marcuse 1965, 94) practiced under the conditions prevailing in the United States today is contemptible and repressive inasmuch as it “cannot fulfill the civilizing function attributed to it by the liberal protagonists of democracy, namely protection of dissent” (Marcuse 1965, 117).

“To treat the great crusades against humanity . . . with the same impartiality as the desperate struggles for humanity means neutralizing their opposite historical function, reconciling the executioners with their victims, distorting the record” (Marcuse 1965, 113).

“When tolerance mainly serves the protection and preservation of a repressive society, when it serves to neutralize opposition . . . then tolerance has been perverted” (Marcuse 1965, 111). As Marcuse sees it “the conditions of ‘tolerance’ are loaded, . . . the active, official tolerance granted to the Right as well as to the Left, to movements of aggression as well as to movements of peace, to the party of hate as well as humanity. I call this non-partisan tolerance ‘abstract’ or ‘pure’ inasmuch as it refrains from taking sides—but in doing so it actually protects the already established machinery of discrimination” (Marcuse 1965, 84–85). His own partisanship is clear: “The small and powerless minorities which struggle against the false consciousness and its beneficiaries must be helped: their continued existence is more important than the preservation of abused rights and liberties which grant constitutional powers to those who oppress these minorities” (Marcuse 1965, 110).

Kors and Silverglate view John Stuart Mill as the classic intellectual spokesperson for freedom of thought and action, and present Marcuse as stark
antipode. “The struggle for liberty on American campuses is, in essence, the struggle between Herbert Marcuse and John Stuart Mill” (Kors and Silverglate 1998, 110). They read Mill according to their own libertarian lights, and romanticize Mill as advocating an abstract and indiscriminate defense of the (almost sacred) right of any person to express any opinion in any way, regardless of its content or meaning or repressive societal impact. Kors and Silverglate each thus epitomize what critical race theorists Matsuda et al. have termed the “free speech hardliner” (1993, 11)—a person who sees any regulation, even of assaultive speech, as too much.

My remarks in this chapter confront Kors and Silverglate with Marcuse’s more nuanced reading of Mill and will demonstrate that Kors and Silverglate have suppressed Mill’s progressive political emphasis on rationality, social utility, and the emancipatory function of dissent. Most importantly their attacks on Marcuse suppress Mill’s own acknowledgment that there are ethical limits to tolerance.

When conservative (and/or liberal) political commentators today deride multicultural reformers and antiracist educators as “barbarians at the gate,” at least they get right the general state of power relations in higher education. Proponents of multicultural institutional change are still very much at odds with established gatekeepers. Kors and Silverglate, like David Horowitz, see things topsy-turvy when they assert that multicultural reform has brought to higher education an oppressive intolerance of dissent that has become the “regnant political orthodoxy” (Kors and Silverglate 1998, 3) constraining expressions of subtle or overt racism and sexism.

Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw capture the historical and political distortion inherent in such a characterization: “The reality of ongoing racism and exclusion is erased and bigotry is redefined. . . . The powerful anti-racists have [purportedly] captured the state and will use it to oppress the powerless racists” (Matsuda et al. 1993, 135).

John K. Wilson has also demythologized the rightwing shibboleths of speech code censorship and political correctness: “Critics of speech codes declared that a massive wave of censorship codes had been imposed on college campuses in the past decade” (Wilson 1995, 91), but a study of campus codes undertaken by the Chronicle of Higher Education during the time period of concern to Kors and Silverglate found that “campus codes that ban hate speech are rarely used to penalize students” (Wilson 1995, 95).

Kors and Silverglate of course assert just the reverse, and in 1999 they organized the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, or FIRE, to help what they saw as a significant number of victims of liberal policies and violations of their free speech rights on college campuses. Similarly, David Horowitz has formulated an Academic Bill of Rights (ABOR). This stresses
a purported institutional and professional neutrality with regard to controversial issues, a principle which, he acknowledges, has been rejected (he says “distorted”) by the AAUP. The AAUP found that the ABOR “proclaims that all opinions are equally valid” and thus “negates an essential function of university education” (AAUP, quoted in Horowitz 2004; for an insightful critique of the covert function of ABOR, see Fish 2004).

When in February 2006 the American Historical Association (AHA) voted the ABOR down, Horowitz reported to the blogosphere that “the leftwingers who run the AHA of course support speech codes because they are totalitarians” (Horowitz 2006a).

Kors and Silverglate introduce a discussion of the *R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul, Minnesota* and applaud the Supreme Court’s ruling that found unconstitutional the anti–hate speech codes employed by the city of St. Paul to prosecute individuals who burned a cross on a black family’s lawn. Even though neither the Supreme Court majority in this case, nor Kors and Silverglate, would presumably condone racist violence, I take their political position to be twisted and racist. They thus articulate and maintain the absolute right of persons (on and off campus) to target minority group members directly with vitriolic racist and sexist verbal attacks, and acquiesce when confronted with evidence of the discriminatory effects of abusive speech. They do not seem to think that an absolute right to abusive speech is profoundly problematic in a culture like ours where there is no shortage of verbal vilification and acts of race and gender persecution. Nor are they apparently aware of John Stuart Mill’s condemnation of the use of speech to persecute:

> The wish to persecute [is] an example of that very frequent infirmity of English minds, which makes them take a preposterous pleasure in the assertion of a bad principle, when they are no longer bad enough to desire to carry it really into practice. . . . What is boasted of at the present time as a revival of religion, is always in narrow and uncultivated minds at least as much the revival of bigotry. . . . It needs but little to provoke them into actively persecuting those whom they have never ceased to think proper objects of persecution. . . . Ample warning may be drawn from the large infusion of the passions of a persecutor, which mingled with the general display of the worst parts of our national character on the occasion of the Sepoy insurrection. . . . Who, after this imbecile display, can indulge in the illusion that religious persecution has passed away never to return. (Mill 1963, 153–56, emphasis added)

Scalia’s defense of the abstract and pure tolerance of racist speech, and the persecution it expresses, thus runs completely counter to the liberal and democratic sensibilities of John Stuart Mill. Furthermore, according to Wilson, “Scalia’s extreme attack on all speech codes has been effectively overruled
There is no constitutional barrier to narrowly written university speech codes, even if not all forms of fighting words are punished equally” (1995, 101). Therefore, Kors and Silverglate’s categorical support for Scalia even after the *Wisconsin v. Mitchell* case discloses their illiberal obsession with this matter of a right to racial persecution.

Marcuse defends the idea of a harassment-free environment on campus and in the public sphere more generally. He believed that the doctrine of pure tolerance was systematically utilized by reactionary and liberal forces to abuse equality guarantees and derail or destroy the possibility of democratic egalitarianism. The assertion often heard today that racist and sexist views contribute necessary components of cultural diversity and belong within an inclusive pluralism is an utterly perverse example of vicious doublespeak. This is also but a cynical recourse to value relativism and content neutrality where these are thought to furnish ammunition against Marcuse’s radically democratic politics.

Marcuse’s essay on repressive tolerance refutes the assertion that Mill’s philosophy protects the abstract right of freedom of expression regardless of all content considerations. Marcuse’s critical theory of democracy and education looks at the concrete consequences of hate speech and is therefore not content neutral. In contradistinction, Kors and Silverglate deflect attention away from this aspect of Mill’s essay “On Liberty” and completely overlook Mill’s considerations on the subject of intimidation by dominant parties within a public dispute.

As we have indicated above, Mill recognized in his own day the problem of the privileged position of the conventional wisdom: “Unmeasured vituperation employed on the side of the prevailing opinion really does deter people from professing contrary opinions and from listening to those who profess them” (Mill 1963, 178). When the prevailing ideology becomes abusive and vicious, Mill insists “it is far more important to restrain this [hegemonic] employment of vituperative language” than to condemn the strident voices opposing it. “For example if it were necessary to choose, there would be much more need to discourage offensive attacks on infidelity than on religion” (178). Marcuse highlights this aspect of Mill: “John Stuart Mill speaks of the truth that is persecuted in history and which does not triumph over persecution by virtue of its ‘inherent power,’ which in fact has no inherent power. . . . Tolerance is first and foremost for the sake of the heretics—the historical road toward *humanitas* appears as heresy: target of persecution by the powers that be. Heresy by itself, however, is no token of truth” (Marcuse 1965, 90–91).

Mill found it morally appropriate to censure with vigor those forms of vituperative speech directed against persons already consigned to minority social status within the established structure of power. In the examples Mill furnished
above, minority social status is based on religious criteria, and his explicit defense and protection of minority dissent (nonbelief) and minority faith (as with the Sepoys) in this regard would logically also extend to the dissent of those subordinated according to racial and gender criteria in any given political system. Mill did not consider it proper to use law or authority to restrict even vituperative speech. Nonetheless, he clearly recognized that “the manner of asserting an opinion, even though it be a true one, may be very objectionable and may justly incur severe censure. . . . Whatever unfair advantage can be derived by any opinion from this mode of asserting it accrues almost exclusively to received opinions” (Mill 1963, 178).

Mill’s well-known defense of minority rights and dissent is augmented by his classic statement of utilitarian values in “On Liberty”:

It is proper to state that I forgo any advantage which could be derived to my argument from the idea of abstract right to a thing independent of utility. I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being. Those interests, I contend, authorize subjugation of individual spontaneity to external control only in respect to those actions of each, which concern the interest of other people. If anyone does an act hurtful to others, there is a prima facie case for punishing him by law, or where legal penalties are not safely applicable, by general disapprobation. (Mill 1963, 136, emphasis added)

This is exactly the Mill that Marcuse valorizes in “Repressive Tolerance”—the Mill who criticized the “tyranny by the majority” (Mill 1963, 130, quoted in Marcuse 1965, 123) and investigated the “nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual” (Mill 1963, 127). Where “individual spontaneity” harms others, Mill emphasized, legal penalties may appropriately be applied. Given the primacy of his criterion of social utility, how could Mill agree with Kors and Silverglate that “On Liberty” defends the abstract rights of expression regardless of the assaultive consequences and repressive political impact of such speech? “The distinction here pointed out between the part of a person’s life which concerns only himself, and that which concerns others, many persons will refuse to admit. . . . The evil consequences of his acts do not then fall on himself, but on others; and society, as the protector of all its members, must retaliate” (Mill 1963, 204). Like Mill, Marcuse probes the social consequences of words that wound and advocates a fuller, more concrete analysis than that of the repressive discourse absolutists, Kors and Silverglate.

Kors and Silverglate also go so far as to impugn Marcuse’s political motives for writing “Repressive Tolerance.” Their chapter 4 is called “Marcuse’s Revenge” (Kors and Silverglate 1998, 67), and since they make no attempt to
elucidate or explain this heading, I see it as an ad hominem attack. Having been forced to flee from German fascism in the 1930s, Marcuse exposed the repressive and destructive nature of indiscriminate tolerance of German anti-Semitism during the Weimar Republic. Writing of the ascendant organizers of fascist violence, Marcuse contends:

If democratic tolerance had been withdrawn when the future leaders started their campaign, mankind would have had a chance of avoiding Auschwitz and a World War. . . . It should be evident by now that the exercise of civil rights by those who don’t have them presupposes the withdrawal of civil rights from those who prevent their exercise, and that the liberation of the Damned of the Earth presupposes suppression not only of their old but also of their new masters. . . . The conditions under which tolerance can again become a liberating force have still to be created. (Marcuse 1965, 109–11)

Kors and Silverglate do give grudging acknowledgment to the honesty and coherence of Marcuse’s line of reasoning in “Repressive Tolerance.” Yet they dismiss Marcuse as a person “untroubled by his double standards” (Kors and Silverglate 1998, 69). What they deride as a double standard is Marcuse’s crucial analytical distinction between the emancipatory and the repressive use of tolerance, the revolutionary and the reactionary use of violence, and the dialectic of oppression and liberation in politics and education.

According to Marcuse, the truth about freedom of speech in the United States today is that we do not have it. What we do have in our advanced industrial society is a contest of ideas and a contest for control within cultures generally and within educational institutions in particular. Christopher M. Finan’s most comprehensive new study, From the Palmer Raids to the Patriot Act: A History of the Fight for Free Speech in America (2007) emphasizes that censorship is very American. From the destruction of the abolitionist presses during the pre–Civil War period of Bleeding Kansas and the suppression of socialists during World War I, to the Palmer Raids, the Cold War, and the Patriot Act, political activists, radicals, artists, lawyers, teachers, students, and librarians have had to fight for their rights to free speech.

If we all have a de jure right to express any opinion in public, the de facto condition is that leftwing opinions are usually marginalized and often suppressed, while rightwing ones, which benefit the ruling class, are given free play. The problem today is really one of which ideas are distributed and amplified by the mass media, so that through repetition and placement in powerful media sources they become dominant, legitimized, and authoritative. Marcuse emphasized that the formation of public opinion in the West (and now nearly everywhere) was largely controlled by oligopolistic media. Dissenters had but a slim chance of influencing the debate because the price was
generally out of reach of the radical opposition (Marcuse 1965, 118). Furthermore, any state doctrine that purported to be neutral served to reinforce the conventional pretense to freedom while obscuring its factual absence.

Within the current forms of unfreedom that are yet called democracies, the prevention-of-harm criterion used by Mill to legitimate government prohibitions has been and will continue to be utilized against the Left. Often this occurs by simply imputing some threat to democracy as in the case of anti–hate speech codes, while many real crimes by the Right will be tolerated in practice (such as systematic police brutality; supplying arms and training to governments and armed groups around the world that commit torture, political killings, and other human rights abuses; depriving millions of Americans from comprehensive health care; treating asylum seekers as criminals; implementing the death penalty in a racially biased manner, etc.; Amnesty International 1998).

In sharp contrast to Kors and Silverglate, Marcuse’s critique of pure tolerance displays an authentically conservative defense of standards of rationality in discourse. Marcuse emphasizes, for example, that “in Mill, every rational human being participates in discussion and decision—but only as a rational being” (Marcuse 1965, 106). Marcuse builds explicitly upon Mill in maintaining that cogency and intellectual legitimacy are “not a matter of value-preference but of rational criteria” (Marcuse 1965, 101). Mill stresses our obligation to know the grounds of our convictions, so that even true opinion might not abide “as a dead dogma, . . . as a prejudice, a belief independent of, and proof against, argument” (Mill 1965, 159–60). Both Marcuse and Mill conceive of authentic democracy as possessing a political culture that facilitates autonomous and rational discourse. But it is exactly this authentically rational educational and cultural context that is undermined given the new culture wars. Recall Allan Bloom’s full dress defense of prejudice in *The Closing of the American Mind*: “I personally tried to teach my students prejudices. . . . Prejudices, strong prejudices, are visions about the way things are. They are divinations of the order of the whole of things, and hence the road to knowledge of that whole is by way of erroneous opinions about it” (Bloom 1987, 42–43). Such unreconstructed reactionary utterances unintentionally contradict Bloom’s own rejection of relativism and supposed adherence to definitive standards of rational discourse.

On the defense of rational discourse, Marcuse was way ahead of Bloom, and more consistent.

In recalling John Stuart Mill’s passage, . . . I drew attention to the premise hidden in this assumption: free and equal discussion can fulfill the function attributed to it only if it is *rationa*—expression and development of independent
thinking, free from indoctrination, manipulation, extraneous authority. The notion of pluralism and countervailing powers is no substitute for this requirement. One might in theory construct a state in which a multitude of different pressures, interests, and authorities balance each other out. . . . However such a construct badly fits a society in which powers are and remain unequal and even increase their unequal weight when they run their own course. (Marcuse 1965, 92–93)

Tolerance cannot be indiscriminate and equal with respect to the contents of expression, neither in word, nor in deed; it cannot protect false words and wrong deeds which demonstrate that they contradict and counteract the possibilities of liberation. . . . Tolerance of free speech is the way of improvement, of progress in liberation, not because there is no objective truth, and progress must necessarily be a compromise between a variety of opinions, but because there is an objective truth which can be discovered, ascertained only in learning and comprehending that which is⁶ and that which can be and ought to be done for the sake of improving the lot of mankind. (Marcuse 1965, 89)

I find it quite paradoxical that those who promote a conservative reform approach to the humanities and a liberal arts education (Allan Bloom, Lynn Cheney, William Bennett, Dinesh D’Souza, and others) traditionally see the humanities as serving universal aims and goals (i.e., the better future condition of the human race) but fail to acknowledge that a discriminatory politics of race, a discriminatory politics of gender, and a discriminatory politics of class have distorted not only the curriculum within the humanities historically, but also patterns of faculty hiring and student recruitment and support. This is doubly ironic to me because I find that the liberation movements which resisted each of these forms of political oppression were inspired not primarily by a politics of difference and special interests, but rather a politics of solidarity and hope for human rights universally.

**INTERCULTURAL SOLIDARITY AND UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS**

The resurgent doctrine of pure tolerance seems to me to function today as sheer capitulation to ideologies of oppression and as a subversion of the authentic defense of human rights and liberty. I see the current use of the First Amendment to protect the speech and action of those intent upon destroying the liberty rights and civil rights of others to be a clear infringement of the criterion of universality embedded in human rights provisions.

Let me pose the problem once more: How shall we best protect human rights in this era of acrid backlash to multiculturalism amid rival redefinitions of freedom? A concrete argument with respect to universal human rights is a
first step in counteracting the inadequacy of the absolutist “anything-goes-in-
a-content-free-vacuum” approach. This implies legitimate limitations on any
romanticized and abstract idea of pure freedom, and can also suggest effec-
tive remedies against discrimination. The main progressive weapon here is a
specifically enumerated set of economic and social rights for all, which de-
fine general and enforceable conditions of justice in terms of parity, recipro-
city, anti-subordination, and equal dignity, such as found in the United Na-
tions Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Charter 2000: A
Comprehensive Political Platform (Brodsky 1998; Reitz 2000).

In the aftermath of World War II, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
clearly articulated an egalitarian and antiracist defense of all human rights for
all (see especially its preamble and Articles 1 and 2). The principles of parity
and anti-subordination are also infused into Article 26 (“Education shall be di-
rected to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthen-
ing of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”) and Article 30
(“Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State,
group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed
at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein”). In the
context of the United States, Charter 2000 likewise proclaims that “democratic
process and procedures must not be used to restrict civil and human rights, or
to enable or further undemocratic outcomes” (Brodsky 1998, 36).

“The tolerance which is the life element, the token of a free society will
never be the gift of the powers that be; it can under the prevailing conditions
of tyranny by the majority, only be won in the sustained effort of radical mi-
norities, willing to break this tyranny” (Marcuse 1965, 123).

Only this kind of struggle may serve as a moral and political foundation for
authentic intercultural freedom and solidarity. Marcuse’s critique of pure tol-
erance is thus grounded in this emancipatory political action for equality and
liberty rights—that is, human rights as a universal entitlement.

Marcuse’s arguments from 1965 are more relevant today than ever: A gen-
uinely democratic intellectual framework for educational philosophy in this
country is a task yet to be accomplished. It remains for us to craft such a so-
cial and educational foundation if we are to attain the emancipatory goals of
Marcuse’s critical theory of philosophy and politics.

NOTES

Note on the title: Christopher M. Finan’s From the Palmer Raids to the Patriot Act: A
History of the Fight for Free Speech in America (2007) documents the recurring
waves of cultural and political repression in the United States from the attacks on abo-
litionist speech prior to the Civil War right up to the present use of National Security
Letters to silence antiwar dissent. Marcuse was also attacked in one of the older surges of culture war in the United States. This was of course the McCarthyism of the 1950s, including then-California governor Ronald Reagan’s 1960s attacks on Marcuse while the latter was a professor at the University of California, San Diego. The new culture wars arose in the late 1980s, especially after the publication of Allan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987)—in an era of resurgent Reaganism that attempted to roll back the progressive political legacy of the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, the labor movement, and the student antiwar movement. McLaren and Jaramillo (2007, 52) document and examine the rising tide of reactionary media belligerence and its negative impacts on the political culture of U.S. democracy and education today. Likewise, themes of neoconservative media spectacle and the new authoritarianism are analyzed by Kellner (2003a, 2003b, 2005) and Giroux (2004, 2005, 2006). I am especially indebted to conversations with colleagues David Brodsky, Patricia Brodsky, Morteza Ardebili, James Lawler, and Douglas Kellner for several of the critical political insights presented here. An earlier version of this essay appeared in *New Political Science* vol. 25, no. 2 (June 2003): 273–80.

1. “Central to the idea of an ethnic and cultural war is the creation of an ideologically coded language [political correctness, thought police, etc.] that . . . veils the racism that characterizes U.S. society, and . . . insidiously perpetuates both ethnic and racial stereotypes that devalue identities of resistance and struggle. . . . Against the backdrop of the present ‘culture wars’ many progressive and liberal educators have embraced multicultural education as a means to respond both to the constant attack by conservative and reactionary educators and to develop a more inclusive pedagogy whereby issues of race, gender, ethnicity, language, and class cease to occupy a marginal position in the curriculum” (Macedo and Bartolomé 2001, 4, 94).

2. Kors and Silverglate are emphatic about the “scandal” sometimes caused by campus speech code enforcement, and they enter into a lengthy disquisition consistent with their wish to “bear witness for the victims of unbearable oppressions and intrusions and to name for public obloquy their unjust tormentors” (Kors and Silverglate 1998, ix). Using irony quotes, Kors and Silverglate explicitly object to code enforcement where this is held to protect minority students against offensive speech: “Speech codes, prohibiting speech that ‘offends,’ protect ideologically or politically favored groups, and, what is more important, insulate these groups’ self-appointed spokesmen and spokeswomen from criticism and even from the need to participate in debate” (5). In the case they choose to highlight at greatest length they acknowledge that “from all accounts, some few [white male] students had shouted apparently racial epithets, from ‘black asses’ to ‘black bitches’” (12) at a boisterous group of African American campus women. In spite of this fact, Kors and Silverglate are apparently aghast that “five of the fifteen women now believed themselves, as Penn encouraged through its orientations and diversity programming on racism, to be the victims of ‘racial harassment’”(12). In a vast evasion of the issue of campus racism and legitimate measures a campus might undertake to reduce and/or penalize it, Kors and Silverglate enter into an obsessive defense of one admittedly shouting white student.
(Eden Jacobowitz) who maintained (in a patently self-serving fashion) that he uttered no racial epithets, as such, only a general term of abuse, calling the women “water buffalo.” The basis of the defense of this student then built by Kors and Silverglate was freedom of speech. Kors and Silverglate admit that the other white male students involved attributed all the above remarks to Jacobowitz in their depositions to campus police, yet they deny he actually said anything except “water buffalo” (30). Kors himself, a professor of history on the Penn campus, intervenes in this case urging intense legal (ACLU supported) and extra-legal appeals—that is, prominent media appeals (Wall Street Journal, Washington Times, Rush Limbaugh, John Chancellor)—on behalf of the free speech rights of this student. The university president, Sheldon Hackney, brokers a deal in which the women drop the charges when Jacobowitz agrees to apologize for the rudeness of the water buffalo remark. In this convoluted manner, the student judiciary responsible for enforcing the anti–hate campus speech code was effectively circumvented. A campus investigation later admonished Jacobowitz and Kors for mobilizing the media and the Pennsylvania ACLU for becoming involved in this case (33).

On the role of the ACLU, let us recall here briefly the racially motivated killing in 1998 of James Byrd Jr., who was dragged to death in Texas by racists in a pickup truck. A New York City police officer was fired for mocking black people and reenacting this racist killing on a float in a parade. The New York Police Department operates with a code or policy against the association of any of its officers with organizations that advocate hatred, oppression, or prejudice toward racial or religious groups. The New York City Civil Liberties Union argues, however, that this officer, off duty at the time of the incident, was illegally fired for merely exercising his free speech rights. The ACLU in many areas has been captured by libertarians, and has become the handmaiden of the rightwing and corporations, betraying its historical constituents, for example by supporting the reactionary assertion that money is speech and that campaign spending may thus not be restricted. Essential to this libertarian defense of anti-democratic and predatory speech is the “pure” tolerance that Marcuse criticizes as being “extended to policies, conditions, and modes of behavior which should not be tolerated because they are impeding, if not destroying, the chances of creating an existence without fear and misery” (Marcuse 1965, 82).

3. Mill famously wrote: “This, then, is the appropriate region of human liberty. It comprises, first, the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological. The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions . . . is practically inseparable from it. . . . No society in which these liberties are not on the whole respected is free . . . and none is completely free in which they do not exist absolute and unqualified” (Mill 1963, 137–38). Despite Mill’s use of the phrase “absolute freedom” in this citation, he does introduce important qualifications in the section of “On Liberty” treating “Of the Freedom of Thought and Discussion” and elsewhere, which I shall introduce in the course of my argument.

4. Former Harvard President Larry Summers, for example, was staunchly supported by all but one member of his board of trustees for the racist bashing of the
scholarship and activism of Cornel West and male chauvinist slanders on women in engineering. The established power structure upheld Summers and his views even after the faculty no-confidence vote that challenged the legitimacy of his leadership. The concerted and unprecedented action of the faculty at Harvard was perhaps necessary, but not sufficient, to hold Summers accountable; only the massive public disapproval that ensued secured his resignation.

5. Kors and Silverglate valorize Justice Antonin Scalia’s ruling for the Supreme Court of the United States striking down as unconstitutional an anti–hate speech code in the case of *R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul, Minnesota* (Kors and Silverglate 1998, 47–49). The Supreme Court’s decision in this case protects an abstract right to freedom of expression regardless of all speech content considerations. The Supreme Court found the anti–hate speech code of St. Paul to be illegitimately one-sided or lopsided in its application. It purportedly “discriminated” against racist speech but not other types of fighting words, so that fair political discourse (or a fair boxing match, to use Justice Scalia’s metaphor) between racist and antiracist or sexist and antisexist parties would be impossible under the code. Justice Scalia formulated the Supreme Court’s thinking in the following statement: “In its practical operation, moreover, the ordinance goes beyond mere content discrimination, to actual viewpoint discrimination. Displays containing some words—odious racial epithets, for example,—would be prohibited to proponents of all views. But ‘fighting words’ that do not themselves invoke race, color, creed, religion, or gender—aspersions upon someone’s mother, for example—would seemingly be usable ad libitum in the placards of those in favor of racial, color, etc. tolerance, and equality but could not be used by that speaker’s opponents. . . . St. Paul has no such authority to license one side of a debate to fight freestyle, while requiring the other to follow the Marquis of Queensbury Rules” (Scalia 1999, 275–80).

But can speech be understood apart from its content, as Scalia, Kors, and Silverglate would have us believe? Supreme Court justices are chosen on the basis of the lens through which they interpret legal matters—i.e., politically, not in any sense because they are democratically representative of the interests of the governed. Nor is there any systematic way to ensure a balance of political perspectives, which tend to be center-right. Yet the deliberations of nine individuals settle the rules of the game in this political culture, and there is no tribunal beyond it (unless this would be the United Nations). Federal judges have recently come under nationwide criticism for not disclosing the fact that they have substantial investments in the very companies involved in cases over which they preside. The unstated assumption of this criticism is that federal judges are not able to detach themselves from their material interests, a consideration I would also extend to the material interests generally of justices sitting on the Supreme Court of the United States. The blatantly partisan and ideological action of the U.S. Supreme Court in halting the recount in Florida during the presidential election of 2000 is deftly analyzed by Douglas Kellner (2001).

6. The critical literary theorist and Marxist Georg Lukács defended a similar notion thirty years before Marcuse: “Authentic freedom, i.e. freedom from the reactionary prejudices of the imperialist era (not merely in the sphere of art) cannot possibly be attained through mere spontaneity or by persons unable to break through the confines of their own immediate experience. For as capitalism develops, the continuous production and
reproduction of these reactionary prejudices is intensified and accelerated. . . . If we are ever going to achieve a critical distance from such prejudices, this can only be accomplished by hard work, by abandoning and transcending the limits of immediacy, by scrutinizing all subjective experiences and measuring them against social reality. In short it can only be achieved by a deeper probing of the real world” (Lukács 1980, 37). This is where content and form combine and have concrete educational implications for critical political theory. Probing the real world means probing the dominator systems that characterize global cultures today and envisioning from the conditions of the present intelligent choices about real possibilities for our future.

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Herbert Marcuse and the New Culture Wars

Herbert Marcuse and the Humanities: Emancipatory Education vs. Predatory Capitalism

Charles Reitz

We submit to the peaceful production of the means of destruction, to the perfection of waste, to being educated for a defense which deforms the defenders and that which they defend.

—Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man

PART ONE: RECALLING MARCUSE

For the sake of the genuine political freedom that has yet to be achieved, in the United States especially, we need to listen again (and listen well) to Herbert Marcuse.1 As one of this nation’s most visionary social commentators, his critical social theory needs to be reclaimed—in particular on matters of the theory and the politics of education. We need to revisit his philosophy of the emancipatory power of education against alienation and for the cosmopolitan rehumanization of culture and society.

“A comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization, a token of technical progress,” Marcuse wrote in One-Dimensional Man (1964, 1) formulating one of his most vivid and synoptic statements about our contemporary mode of social existence. He warned against a form of “repressive desublimation” (1964, 56)—a type of contented, but false, consciousness—where the manipulated pleasures of popular entertainment enhance the economic system’s mechanisms of control. By the late sixties, Marcuse famously became a proponent of an activist politics against capitalist culture, war, and imperialism. What remains relatively unknown, and is arguably a core element of his overall theory and practice, is the
profound challenge he asserted against the systems of schooling and higher learning in the United States, specifically opposing “the overpowering machine of education and entertainment . . . [which unites us all] . . . in a state of anaesthesia” (1955, 104).

It should be recalled that, as Marcuse was publishing these and subsequent critical cultural observations, alternative forms of society and politics were being sought for, and fought for, by individuals and catalyst groups within larger oppositional social movements around the world. In student, worker, and guerilla movements around the globe, the goal of emancipation from alienation motivated a considerable quantum of resistance. In Paris 1968, for example, the workforce engaged in a general strike that united with the Great Refusal (Marcuse 1955, 149) of vast numbers of rebellious students—much as the sizable protests in Seattle, Genoa, and Paris are testimony to the resurgent uprisings of young worker/student/immigrant subsectors today. Radically democratic organizations emerged then as now, and a wide variety of people worked to challenge the institutional inequalities of race, gender, and class in order to end the fundamental injustices of, and dehumanization within, the global political economy.

Marcuse believed that there was a real possibility that education could act against this alienation and oppression. The general framework of his critical social theory dialectically transformed (through negation, preservation, and elevation) a central assumption of classical European philosophy: Higher education cultivates both the aesthetic sense and political will to help us accomplish our humanization. The continuing appeal of Marcuse’s writings stems especially from his work on the nature of learning and the political implications of different types of knowledge, particularly his critique of the alienating effects of the prevailing modes of education in the United States, Germany, France, and elsewhere, and from his theory of the dis-alienating power of the aesthetic imagination. We shall see that, in his view, aesthetic education stands at the very center of a rehumanizing critical theory.

Marcuse contends that artists and intellectuals (especially) can utilize their own personal estrangement to serve a future emancipation of self and society. 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, vision and telos by which to guide personal growth and 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 factual conditions (this latter procedure being rejected as the nonphilosophical approach of behaviorism and empiricism in the social and physical sciences). He regards classical learning by means of discourse and reflection on philos-
ophy, literature, drama, music, painting, sculpture, and so on, as liberating insofar as this is thought to impel humanity beyond the “first dimension” (the realm of conformity to what is) to the multidimensional world of significance and meaning that allows us to re-create life in accordance with the higher potentials of human beings. As Marcuse sees it, art offers the promise of liberation, and the experience of beauty furnishes the “promesse du bonheur” (1961, 115). This is the promise of bliss, good fortune, genuine civic satisfaction, and gratification in life. Yet art, understood most fully and concretely, is deeply dialectical. It unites the opposites of gratification and pain, death and love, freedom and repression. Only because of this can art honestly represent what Marcuse takes to be the conflicted, tragic, and paradoxical substance of human life. Addressing the promise of art for life, he notes in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, his final book:

If art were to promise that at the end good would triumph over evil, such a promise would be refuted by the historical truth. In reality it is evil which triumphs, and there are only islands of good where one can find refuge for a brief time. Authentic works of art are aware of this: they reject the promise made too easily; they refuse the unburdened happy end. (1978, 47)

Art alone cannot fulfill the promise of liberation, yet in Marcuse’s view, the insights provided by study of the humanities are the intellectual precondition to any political transformation of alienated human existence into authentic human existence. In *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse writes about what the aesthetic dimension does offer: a “new sensibility” (1969a, 23) and insight into an “aesthetic ethos” (1969a, 24) that could subvert the existing one-dimensional order. The aesthetic reality is a concrete reality that recovers a sense of the human species essence in its universal aspects. “The universal comprehends in one idea the possibilities which are realized, and at the same time arrested, in reality” (Marcuse 1964, 210). In Marcuse’s view, the concrete and critical dimension of art discloses the inevitably conflicted condition of human culture. At the same time, the aesthetic ethos restores humanity’s most rational enterprise: seeking the convergence of gratification and universal human need, society and human dignity, art and politics. “The development of the productive forces renders possible the material fulfillment of the promesse du bonheur expressed in art; political action—the revolution—is to translate this possibility into reality” (Marcuse 1961, 115).

Marcuse’s initial cultural impact in the United States was connected closely to the intellectual and political campus-based turmoil of the 1960s, and was related to his theoretical influence on the global radical student movement and to his addressing key educational issues involved. Marcuse examined, for example, the questions of science and research in service to the
“logic of domination” (1964, 144) of advanced industrial society. He also spoke to the almost infinite facets of alienation and domination in everyday life—that is, at school, on the job, and in recreational activities, where these were thought to be regulated by a “total administration” (1964, 7). He stressed the emancipatory potential of a renascent sensuality under the guidance of the most rational and legitimate goals of art. A new form of liberal arts education could act against one-dimensionality and cultural alienation, rehumanizing political life.

Marcuse’s philosophy of protest within higher education decades ago was prescient especially in its criticism of the multiversity vision of Clark Kerr. Kerr’s educational philosophical point of view represented a decisive departure from the traditional collegiate self-conception as an autonomous ivory tower or grove of academe one step removed from the practical realm, and stressed instead a logic of corporate and government involvement in higher education. Institutionalized during the sixties at Columbia, Harvard, Berkeley, and at the State Universities of Wisconsin and New York, among other places, this philosophy of the extended, service university has now been implemented almost everywhere in the U.S. system of higher education, as well as in Europe, where the U.S. model is displacing traditional higher education structures at an ever-accelerating pace since the events of 1989.

As far back as the post-Sputnik, early Vietnam era, critics of the U.S. multiversity pointed out that the phenomenal growth of these conglomerate higher education systems was heavily subsidized by grants from the federal government and corporations for research into areas such as aerospace, intelligence, and weapons. A massive expansion of Reserve Officer Training Corps programs also occurred. What today would be called neoliberal or market interests characteristically influenced higher educational policy, giving priority to many of the needs of the business and military establishments. Many objected also to the dehumanization displayed in the multiversity’s new and increasing commitment to behavioral objectives in teaching and learning and performance-based criteria for intellectual competence, as well as the growing predominance of managerial language and thinking in the organization of higher education.

As head of the University of California, Clark Kerr was a major liberal spokesperson who thereafter became chairperson of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. Kerr’s ideological and institutional innovations represented one of the most articulate and authoritative administrative points of view in the intense educational philosophical debates that occurred on this nation’s campuses during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Marcuse, on the other hand, of course acquired a reputation in the United States and in Europe as a spokesperson for radical university reform and for the militant New
Left’s analysis of (and resistance to) the foreign and domestic policies of the U.S. government and its allies in Europe and Southeast Asia.

Alienation, in Marcuse’s estimation, was thought to be the result of training people to forget their authentic human potentials—by educationally eradicating the realm where this knowledge was considered to be best preserved, that is, in the humanities. Marcuse was appalled at what he saw as the displacement of the humanities in the 1970s by Kerr’s vision of higher education, which had become mainly scientific and technical and primarily stood in service to the needs of commerce, industry, and the military. Marcuse’s theory contends that capitalism is obsessed with efficiency, standardization, mechanization, and specialization, and that this fetish involves aspects of repression, fragmentation, and domination that impede real education and preclude the development of real awareness of ourselves and our world. Alienation is seen as the result of a mis-education or half-education that leads people to accept sensual anaesthetization and social amnesia as normal. Conditioned to a repressive pursuit of affluence, making a living becomes more important than making a life.

Marcuse (in some ways very much like Allan 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. Marcuse was never a sheer advocate of a Bildungshumanismus, however. In a 1937 Zeitschrift piece, “On the Affirmative Character of Culture,” he had been more than dubious of the traditionally conservative quality of high-serious German art and education. Still, he did believe that the traditional liberal arts philosophy also had a critical dimension. The liberal arts and humanities are not seen simply to transmit or to preserve (or as he says, to “affirm” or apologize 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 advanced forms of knowledge not merely in terms of “arts instruction,” but as the very basis of a general educational theory. In both his earliest and latest writings Marcuse directs special attention to the emancipatory power of the intelligence gained through a study of the humanities. Marcuse’s understanding of the cognitive value of art and philosophy, particularly the great literatures of classical Greece and modern Europe, thus needs also to be more fully appreciated. It is within this context that we may perceive the overall unity of his philosophy—in its several interconnected attempts to extract reason from art and the aesthetic dimension.

Marcuse 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, merging with technology and reconstructing the economy in accordance with aesthetic goals and thus reducing alienation in the future. 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. Marcuse theorizes that art provides a deeper kind of cognition—not through mimesis or by replicating worldly objects, but by recalling the species-essence of the human race from philosophical oblivion (1955, 232). He contends that the reality of death and human suffering assert themselves as pivotal phenomena in the educative process of recollection, even where the artist and the work of art draw away from them in pursuit of an eternity of joy and gratification. The most militant and adversarial dimensions of Marcuse’s philosophy emerge especially in One-Dimensional Man and An Essay on Liberation. In the latter, the aesthetic ethos becomes also gesellschaftliche Produktivkraft, a social and productive force (1969a, 126).

Since the venerable liberal arts tradition has been historically (and inseparably) tied to a realistic and normative concept of eidos and essence (as per Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas, Hegel, and Husserl), we should not be surprised to find some modification of classical realism within Marcuse’s aesthetics and ontology. This stands in sharp contrast to the value relativism fallaciously posited by the current crop of conservative culture warriors (like Allan Bloom and others) when setting up Herbert Marcuse as their straw man. Indeed, chapter 8 of One-Dimensional Man argues the historical reality of universals, and chapter 3 highlights the importance of the aesthetic form as the dimension where both reality and truth are disclosed. Marcuse also generally shares with Plato and Schiller the philosophical conviction that the most meaningful and beautiful works of art are also the soundest foundation for an education to political justice.

Marcuse’s valuable philosophical excursion into a discussion of the nature of newer and older forms of liberal arts education has been largely ignored in U.S. academic circles. On those occasions where the humanities do become thematic the discussion is routinely swamped by nationalism, conservative moralism, and provincialism at the hands of William Bennett, E. D. Hirsch Jr., Allan Bloom, Dinesh D’Souza, and others. Marcuse does occasionally articulate a view of the world that seems primarily grounded in an aestheticism where political, social, and educational issues are considered best understood from the perspective of the aesthetic dimension (Reitz 2000a, 2000c). Nonetheless, in the larger context, Herbert Marcuse’s thought is permeated
with a multifaceted concern for the societal implications of art, especially its power as an educative force linked to radical action for our political future.

I contend that Marcuse has contributed substantially to a deprovincialization of what he saw as the unidimensional technocratic imperative in postwar U.S. culture (Reitz et al. 2005). “Deprovincialization” is a concept I borrow from Egon Schwarz (1992), who like Marcuse was also a German-Jewish refugee to the Americas during the Nazi period. As a literary artist, he used this term in his autobiography to describe the cultural impact of the German exile community in the United States. With regard to the life and theory of Herbert Marcuse, I take deprovincialization to mean the replacement of an essentially single-dimensional view of the world with an analysis of culture and philosophy that is profoundly multidimensional and multicultural. Marcuse theorized as single-dimensional those cultural or philosophical perspectives that are oblivious to the problematic nature of the social and economic relations that still prevail today. One-dimensionality is constituted, now as then, by the suffocation and repression of society’s internal conflicts and contradictions such that this culture simultaneously witnesses (a) the triumph of a happy consciousness and (b) a repressive tolerance of brutal forms of racial and other kinds of oppression (including crusading military invasions in order to “extend democracy”). Marcuse proposes that a philosophy is worthy of the name only if it is skeptical of simplistic visions of the good life or good society and also aware of questions of complex causality with regard to society’s deepest problems and prospects. Philosophy must confront “the power of positive thinking,” which Marcuse holds to be destructive of genuinely emancipatory theory, with “the power of negative thinking.” This illumines “the facts” in terms of the real possibilities that the facts deny. Philosophical reflection, as he sees it, is thus essentially always multidimensional, dialectical, and generative of expanded societal scope and cultural transformation.

In my estimation, Marcuse’s efforts to deprovincialize culture in the United States have actually led to a recovery of philosophy today, especially among a new generation of scholars in the humanities and social sciences who are more conscious than ever of issues arising from conflicts involved in the context of our political, moral, and academic culture. After World War II, logical positivism had attained a near-monopoly in U.S. graduate schools of philosophy and generally prevailed as the underlying scholarly methodology within the undergraduate curricula as well. European approaches such as phenomenology, existentialism, Marxism, and critical theory tended to be severely marginalized, especially at the most prestigious private and the largest state universities. I contend that the philosophical upheavals that developed throughout the eighties in the American Philosophical Association, for example, splitting “analysts” and “pluralists,” were substantially, if not directly,
due to the influence of his sharp critique of analytical philosophy (1964) and advocacy of alternative traditions, positions that gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s but were then attacked from the 1980s through the present in attempts by analytic philosophy to regain hegemony with American philosophy while marginalizing alternative traditions.

PART TWO: THE HUMANITIES AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

An extremely interesting document in which educational philosophy and politics are Marcuse’s primary focus is available at the Frankfurt Marcuse Archive and published in this volume for the first time (see chapter 1). This lecture on education and social change links theoretical learning explicitly to practical efforts at cultural transformation. This typescript was intended as a set of notes to shape a lecture Marcuse gave in 1968 at Brooklyn College.

The key ideas in this document constitute what might be termed a new liberal arts model for higher education, and this, in my opinion, has contemporary relevance to the practice of education right now worldwide. Marcuse’s immense respect for theoretical education and its power to enhance human life is reflected in the central tenet of his remarks in this lecture: the belief that our future and our freedom hinge on an expanded emphasis within general education on radically democratic political action. While he has elsewhere (in *Eros and Civilization*) pointed to the philosophies of Kant and Schiller with regard to the critical rationality of art in higher education, most educators in the United States have been abysmally unfamiliar with this pedagogical perspective. Of course, certain outstanding figures in the history of education in the United States, like John Dewey, Charles W. Eliot, and W. E. B. DuBois had studied in Germany or otherwise knew well the value of its high culture. Nonetheless, Marcuse is right about the regrettable fact that general education in the United States is really “a very recent concept” (see chapter 1 in this volume). Marcuse does not elaborate the historical detail in this regard, but a special effort toward a liberal arts foundation for general education was undertaken in the United States during the 1940s after the Second World War. This was rooted primarily in the Great Books movement and the work of Robert M. Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, as well as in the Report of the Harvard Committee on the Objectives of a General Education in a Free Society (1945). In this context it must be remembered that general education was a conservative, Cold War phenomenon hostile to social criticism and directed against progressive reform efforts in education.
Marcuse confronts the ideals of general education with its social reality. “General education . . .” is “education previously restricted to the ruling classes . . .” but education is “not general even today” (chapter 1 in this volume, original emphasis). Access to general education, he says, remains confined to the privileged few and is an upper-class phenomenon, not only because it is an expression of underlying structures of social inequality, but because it contains a potentially dangerous critical dimension. General education tends to be socially and institutionally restricted, he emphasizes, because of “the ‘subversive’ element” in this education. Theoretical education involves “knowledge, intelligence, reason as catalysts of social change—projection of the possibilities of a ‘better’ order; violation of socially useful taboos, illusions.” Opposition to this general theoretical education arises “from below and from above,” due to a deeply seated anti-intellectualism in U.S. history and culture. Still, Marcuse stressed in 1968 that reform efforts toward general education were now gaining momentum, and this was occurring on a very material basis: the need of industrial society to increase the supply of skilled workers and employees, especially the need for scientists, technicians, etc. for the efficient development of the productive forces and their apparatus and, more recently, the need for psychologists and sociologists for analyzing and projecting and stimulating economic and political demand. (chapter 1 in this volume, original emphasis)

In the intervening years since Marcuse addressed the material forces impelling U.S. education toward a new emphasis on the general and the theoretical, the world has witnessed the full-fledged coming of the information age and the ascendancy of the Internet and electronic technologies for information processing. We have also seen the resurgence of a culturally conservative general education movement in the United States with the advent of Reaganism’s culture wars in the mid-1980s and their continuation in the Bush administrations. Still, Marcuse stressed something in this 1968 manuscript that we tend to gloss over today, which is that the social dynamics at work here have a dialectical character: They require that education must permit (for some) unrestricted access to high-quality knowledge in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences in order to be competitive in the global economic market and to guide the political cultures of nations in a sophisticated manner. Yet education must also shield this information-based global society against radical change. Marcuse anticipated back then the now-raging tendencies to reinsinuate an elitist, Eurocentric program for the liberal arts in American general education against the critical impulses within it toward multiculturalism, social history, and critical social theory.
Marcuse also emphasized the potential of an internal political factor within general education to become emancipatory. This occurs when reason is permitted to pursue the real possibilities embedded within the established cultures that can enhance and protect universal human rights and socioeconomic equality. In his estimation, what the future needs most is higher education in the liberal arts and sciences with critical civic purpose that can politically transcend the established culture.

Critical education, for Marcuse, is education that by its own inner dynamic “leads beyond the classroom . . . and may define action and behavior patterns incompatible with those of the Establishment” (see chapter 1 in this volume).

The voice of the Establishment is heard day and night over the media of mass communication—program as well as commercials, information as well as advertisement—and it is heard through the machine of each of the two parties.

The voice of the radical opposition is also heard:—sometimes, and through no machine. It has no promising jobs to give, no money to buy adherents and friends. Within this structure of basic inequality the radical opposition can be tolerated up to the point where it tries to break through the limits of its weakness, through the illusion of democracy, and then it meets the reality of democracy, as the police, the National Guard, the courts.

Institutionalized violence . . . confronts any action by the opposition which transcends the limits set by, and enforced by established Law and Order. (chapter 1 in this volume)

Marcuse’s educational philosophy is radically democratic because it emphasizes that if democracy means the institutionalization of freedom and equality and the abolition of domination and exploitation, then in this sense democracy nearly everywhere still remains “to be created” (chapter 1 in this volume). Traditional liberal arts education must be renewed, must become actively engaged for social justice. Students and teachers must “become partisan against oppression, moronization, brutalization.” There needs to be a key unity in education of critical thought and radical action; the need for the movements of change must be made evident in systems of schooling “preparing the ground for a better, more humane society.” Critical educators and students need to continue to take risks and struggle to infuse the curriculum with analysis of the “critical, radical movements and theories in history, literature, philosophy.” The curriculum must afford a world-historical, international, and multicultural perspective that examines the pivotal social struggles that have led to the emergence of various standards of criticism in ethics, in logic, in the worlds of art, physical science, production, and technology. These standards constitute the criteria of judgment that intelligence requires, and critical education, thus grounded in the rational kernel of the Hegelian educa-
tional philosophy, emphasizing critical theorizing, must necessarily also have an emancipatory action component. I shall elaborate on the notion of education for activism below, but first another key document on educational philosophy and Marcuse should be brought to light.

Back in 1929, while Herbert Marcuse was a postdoctoral student working under Martin Heidegger in Freiburg, he was assigned to attend and transcribe one of Heidegger’s major lectures on education. Entitled “Introduction to Academic Study” (Heidegger, 1929), this presentation centered on Heidegger’s interpretation of the theory of learning and political empowerment in Plato’s myth of the cave. According to Marcuse’s German language notes (available at the Frankfurt archive), Heidegger stressed that academic study was increasingly becoming a cause for considerable consternation: “Die Universität hat immer mehr Warenhauscharakter” (1929, 1)—The university was becoming more and more like a department store, where students mindlessly pursued credentials (in law, medicine, and even the liberal arts) without ever examining philosophically weighty questions such as the nature of crime, guilt, death, sickness, or unfreedom. Such matters, Heidegger stressed, are not the prerogatives of any specific field of scientific study, but are rather of universal relevance. “Haben wir nicht alle die Gemeinschaft und Gemeinsamkeit verloren, die wir als Studierende haben sollten?” (1929, 1)—“Haven’t we all lost the community and the commonality that we should have as scholars?” And if education is preparation for political leadership and civic freedom, “today we do not even know what we are to be liberated from. Yet it is exactly this knowledge that is the condition of every genuine emancipation” (1929, 6).

Heidegger’s lecture emphasizes what he sees as the core intellectual and political deficiencies of modern academic study. Plato’s Republic was of course first and foremost a discussion of the polis and the nature of social justice. In 1962 Heidegger’s Being and Time had indicated that we must be liberated from our alienation in everyday, factical modes of being, by being redeemed through an authentic awareness of death as our own most particular possibility and by choosing authentic possibilities for a self-determined and authentic life—that is, by becoming philosophically and intellectually mature. Douglas Kellner (1973) has emphasized that Heidegger’s concept of authenticity involves both being-toward-death and resolute choice of self from traditional and contemporary possibilities.

In his 1929 lecture, Heidegger characterizes academic study (albeit in a preliminary fashion) as arising from our “need in common [den gemeinschaftlichen Drang] to get near to the world as a whole” (1929, 2). In his estimation, we need to free ourselves from the comfort and security afforded by prescientific forms of consciousness, illusions internal to the cave, like religion
(1929, 5), which offer protection by being socially accepted and conventional though they are also inauthentic/alienated frames of mind. In contrast to Weber’s strategy of demythologizing the world, however, Heidegger argues that Plato’s own cave myth discloses that, to accomplish one’s own freedom, a person must look inward and pose the question it took the Greeks four centuries to discover—not What are the gods? or What is the fundamental substance of the earth? but “Was bin ich selbst?” (1929, 6), What [authentically] am I? Self-examination, Heidegger contends, is the action of a mind determined to be free. This determination permeated the life of Socrates, and Plato understood that we must strive to see not merely with our eyes, but with the light of intelligence that brightens (1929, 7) comprehension, as the Republic’s myth of the cave teaches. Heidegger emphasizes that the Platonic myth of the cave is about both the essence of the human condition and about paideia (1929, 3) and/or the lack of paideia (Republic, Steph. VII 514a ) as an attribute of consciousness. Often translated as the quality of humanitas, Heidegger’s definition of paideia emphasizes being enlightened rather than unenlightened, educated rather than un(or mis)educated, with regard to the human condition. Building also on Aristotle, but breaking through his formal logic (1929, 8), Heidegger’s approach (as I understand it from this lecture) holds that though we were once imprisoned in a world of seeming things, we must ultimately learn that we (and the world) are not things: we are intellectual and political capacities or powers, social beings who can know the good life and the good society (i.e., learn the master art of politics), and who can thus decide to conduct ourselves morally. Liberated in this manner, we must continue to act to help others learn about the cave, and the chains, and to actualize our latent function and virtue (to become theoretically accomplished through science and philosophy and to dwell in the truth of a social life and social world whose authentic worth and meaning is no longer hidden). Only in this fashion do human beings act resolutely for their freedom (1929, 9). Heidegger devotes substantial subsequent work to these themes in Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit mit einem Brief über den “Humanismus” (1947). Marcuse’s subsequent writing, especially his discussion of Plato in One-Dimensional Man, clearly owes much to this 1929 Heidegger lecture on the nature of higher learning. “The original link between science, art, and philosophy . . . ,” he writes there, for example, “. . . is the consciousness of the discrepancy between the real and the possible, between the apparent and the authentic truth” (Marcuse 1964, 229).

Radically democratic political action is likewise indissoluble from emancipatory education, as Marcuse clearly emphasizes in chapter 1 of this volume. His new vision of the humanities—emphasizing a synthesis of philosophy, art, social theory, and radical politics—has been particularly emphasized by Douglas Kellner (2007). For Marcuse, emancipatory education thus involves
critical social theory, radical aesthetics, and a philosophy of liberation encompassing art, individual revolt, and collective political action. As Kellner sums up: “The common ground is the Great Refusal” (Kellner 1984, 349).

PART THREE: TRANSFORMATIONAL MULTICULTURALISM: ACTION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Catalyst groups within higher education institutions have quite remarkably moved educational theory and practice forward in recent decades, especially through the antiracist and antisexist multicultural education reform movement. Critical education, embodied in a new multicultural approach to the liberal arts and sciences, must in practice disclose the real need for and revolutionary possibility of rehumanized and egalitarian forms of productive relations, relations to nature, and interpersonal dynamics, such that these can cultivate the aesthetic and moral worth of civilized life.

At the same time, the crisis of educational theory today requires a transformation of the frayed academic credo of liberation through the arts into a more philosophically and sociologically advanced form of critical theory of the sort constructed by Marcuse. Educational philosophy must be set free from any tendency to reduce it to an ahistorical aesthetic enterprise. Both art and society must be understood historically, and our economic system liberated from the commodity fetish and the unequal distribution of life chances that ensues from it. What have been called the civilizing forces of our age, the organized social struggles against racism, sexism, poverty, war, and imperialism, have educated this nation about alienation, oppression, power, and empowerment. The professoriate, as such, certainly did not lead in this educational effort, although many individual college teachers, like Marcuse, played important and even key roles. Education cannot legitimately be considered merely an affair of inwardness or the supposedly unchanging nature of the human essence or condition, or adapting to the existing social order. Learning occurs in communities that help one another to apprehend the dialectic of the historical and material world and the changing social condition of humanity within it. Learning from real world struggles aims at an understanding of the principles of action required for human beings, as sensuous living labor, to grasp theoretically and possess politically, the productive processes that today divest us from our own creative work and communal power. It is precisely these processes that must be restructured to eliminate political inequality and alienation.

*Eros and Civilization* defended the key idea that “the reduction of the working day . . . is the first prerequisite for freedom” (Marcuse 1955, 152).
Reducing socially necessary labor-time and increasing time for education from youth through adulthood is an important mark of a free society. There is to be no evasion of the fact that the alienation and exploitation of labor is the material core that enables other forms of social oppression directed against culturally diverse sectors of the workforce. We have learned from the movements against racism and sexism that class relations do not wholly demarcate structures of dominator power, and the traditionally educated workforce cannot transform society alone. Racism, patriarchy, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination, disrespect, and inequality sorely inhibit our powers of community and actualization. To follow Marcuse’s lead— theorizing the origins and outcomes of each of these diverse forms of cultural oppression—and to be engaged politically (with the students and educators of the world as well as the global labor force) to end them—is the essential logic and manifesto of all future critical theory in education.

Marcuse’s political-philosophical vision and cultural critique make a powerful contribution to the emancipatory analysis of ongoing social circumstances of corporate control of the economy and U.S. global domination. His militant social theory continues to shed light on current debates in both education and society, especially where issues of alienation, war, racial oppression, critical media literacy, civic action, and critical thinking are involved. As U.S.-led corporate globalization intensifies social inequality, alienation, and cultural polarization today worldwide, Marcuse’s many caustic condemnations of U.S. military aggression and the irrationality of the U.S. economy deserve to be reiterated across this nation’s campuses as well as in higher education circles worldwide:

This society is obscene in producing and indecently exposing a stifling abundance of wares while depriving its victims abroad of the necessities of life; obscene in stuffing itself and its garbage cans while poisoning and burning the scarce foodstuffs in the fields of its aggression; obscene in the words and smiles of its politicians and entertainers; its prayers, in its ignorance, and in the wisdom of its kept intellectuals. (1969a, 176)

It is true that global polarization and growing immiseration (see Sernau 2001, 52–55) have brought to an end what Marcuse earlier described as the harmoniously integrated and totally administered political universe of the liberal welfare/warfare state. The political imperatives of neoliberalism are more openly vicious than the “comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom” he condemned in the sixties. Yet these developments do not render Marcuse’s educational and political insights by any means obsolete. I contend that Marcuse broke through the cold war paralysis of criticism in the United States, making it possible for many students to reframe social circumstances
theoretically and to really learn. At the same time he became the educators’
educator, paving the way decades ago for the critical insights of educational
theorists like Henry Giroux, Douglas Kellner, Michael Apple, Peter McLaren,
and others today.3

McLaren importantly emphasizes the contemporary shift to a more preda-
tory culture (1995, 1997). The news media bring us new disclosures almost
daily about the U.S. military’s use of torture and prisoner abuse (Abu Ghraib,
Guantánamo), civilian massacres and war crimes (Fallujah, Haditha), not to
mention loaded intelligence that the U.S. Defense Department desired as a
pretext for the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Thus, Douglas Kellner sees
the United States today as a rogue nation that has thrown its historically
flawed form of democracy into crisis: “Never before has a more vicious
bunch occupied the higher levels of government” (Kellner 2005, x). Henry
Giroux refers to these events as constituting a new dark age, with the “New
Authoritarianism” putting “America at the Edge” (Giroux 2004, 2005, 2006).
Even before the events of 9/11, Michael Apple likewise aptly described the
system as “capitalism with the gloves off” (Apple 2001, 18).4 David Korten
writes similarly of predatory finance: “The global economy is not, however,
a healthy economy. In all too many instances it rewards extractive
investors who do not create wealth, but simply extract and concentrate existing wealth.
The extractive investor’s gain is at the expense of other individuals or the soci-
ety at large” (1995, 195).

In this rapacious context, it would be unconscionable for critical theory to
equate its praxis with philosophical and literary criticism and the develop-
ment of an aesthetic taste for cosmic ironies. If it did (as much nonsociolog-
ical, literary theory, and postmodern philosophy does today), it would be oper-
ating fully within the conventional division of mental from physical labor
and the relations of power that these divisions represent in monopoly capital-
ist society. Critical theory must not be stripped in this manner of its crucial
dimension of defiance and its power of transformation. Peter McLaren rein-
forces this point against postmodernism’s ostensibly critical literary and aes-
thetic approach to education when he urges educators to “take the struggle
over the social division of labor as seriously as we do the struggle over mean-
ing and representation” (1997, 13).

Michael Apple concurs: “There are gritty realities out there, realities whose
power is often grounded in structural relations that are not simply social con-
structions created by the meanings given by an observer” (Apple 2001, 56).
Apple also comments scathingly that “For a rapidly growing segment of the
conservative population God’s message to all of us is to turn both to capital-
ism and tradition” (2001, 22). In their eyes “Capitalism is ‘God’s economy’”
Likewise, Douglas Kellner has written extensively on critical theory and its future. He argues that it is time that a new class analysis and a new class politics revitalize critical social theory (Best and Kellner 2001; Kellner 1989, 228–29; 2003b). This interest is central to his ongoing innovative work on the impacts on education of globalization, the restructuring of capital, media spectacle, and new technologies. Kellner emphasizes that when a critical pedagogy is tied to new critical theory, it can have a real emancipatory impact:

Critical social theories conceptualize the structures of domination and resistance. They point to forms of oppression and domination contrasted to forces of resistance that can serve as instruments of change. . . . Thus, critical social theories are weapons of critique and instruments of practice as well as cognitive maps. . . . If a theory illuminates a phenomenon . . . and produces altered reception of it (or perhaps rejection), or inspires the production of oppositional . . . practices, then the theory turns out to be valuable both in its theoretical and practical effects. (1995, 25–27)

Human intelligence, for Kellner, is emergent from the need to overcome material, historical, and cultural oppression. Hence his criticisms of the nation’s post-9/11 warmongering, patriotism, and media propaganda (2003a, 66–70; 2005). Each of these authors is focusing today on advanced capitalism’s incompatibility with democracy. They combine a critique of the logic of capital accumulation and global predation with a critique of education for social control and the replication of the unequal social division of labor. Giroux very correctly reproaches the reactionary culture warriors who claim multicultural reform in education has already gone “too far” with his studied assessment that it “hasn’t gone nearly far enough” (2004, 16). McLaren (1997, 2000) calls for the pedagogy of revolution and revolutionary multiculturalism—that is, teaching about more than diversity: about the structured social dynamics of class exploitation, racism, gender inequality, empire, and war. McLaren (1995) names the backlash to multicultural educational reform “white terror” (117). He urges radical education reform as a means of “unthinking” whiteness and “rethinking” democracy. As he sees it, we are compelled by the force of economic necessity as well as the ethics of equality to alter these reproductive processes and to pursue “the common goal of transforming the exploitative social relations of global capitalism” (McLaren 1995, 69; 2005; McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2005).

As it stands, the major purpose of education is to make the world safe for global capitalism. . . . Revolutionary educators refuse the role that global capitalism has assigned to them: to become the supplicants of corporate America and to work at the behest of the corporate bottom line. (McLaren 2000, 196–97)
Through many such acts of refusal, today’s critical educators are extending and deepening Marcuse’s philosophy. Certainly, a world economic system based on equality and multicultural democracy is essential to a future of sustainability and peace. Ultimately, to me, the inherently political process of multicultural education must also include important debate and struggle around the central problems of labor and the inequalities of wealth, particularly how these affect schooling and the social reproduction/social reconstruction of the political-economic order (Reitz 1976, 1981, 1984, 2002, 2003, 2004).

I have emphasized throughout this chapter that Marcuse’s critical theory is riveted in particular to social and educational issues. The educational philosophical tenor of this investigation (and of this volume overall) brings an essential and hitherto largely neglected perspective to bear on the study of critical theory. Marcuse’s voice shattered much of the silence structured into the conventional study of philosophy and educational issues in higher education in the United States. By introducing students in the social sciences and humanities to the Frankfurt School’s view of critical theory, Marxism, and classical German philosophy, he furnished his readers with a theoretical orientation otherwise largely untaught in the U.S. system of education. Multidimensionality functions as a restorative presence within Marcuse’s philosophizing, as it should for all educators, but often does not for those narrowly trained in the dominant patterns and habits of thought in today’s U.S. academic routines. This classical dimension in Marcuse’s thought enabled him to assess critically the behaviorism, empiricism, and logical positivism still prevalent in many areas of unreconstructed Anglo American higher education. Marcuse reclaimed elements of the classical philosophical traditions in order to confront the political economy and culture of corporate capital­ism with an immanent critique of its own philistinism and provincialism. The failure to address significant issues in educational theory until now is responsible for the inadequate status of scholarship on Marcuse’s general philosophical orientation. The vindication of Marcuse’s theory and the future of critical theorizing hinge upon this educational philosophical effort.

NOTES

1. A noticeable “Marcuse renaissance” has in fact been under way since at least the 1990s, as Douglas Kellner points out. I am much obliged to Professor Kellner for his insightful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this chapter.

2. Marcuse’s 1955 considerations in Eros and Civilization of Orpheus and Narcissus as models of male liberation were all clearly far in advance of his time. So too his treatment of (a) polymorphous sexuality, (b) the resexualizing and reactivating of all
of the erotogenic zones (Marcuse 1955, 201), (c) “perverse” pregenital and nongenital forms of eros, as well as (d) the “love of beautiful knowledge” (211).

3. Grioux, Kellner, and McLaren draw very explicitly on Marcuse as a critical theoretical resource in education. So too do Maxine Greene, Richard A. Brosio, and Lucio Privitello, in addition to the authors included in this volume. One must also mention the Marcuse-related work of Angela Davis, Kevin Anderson, Raya Dunayevskaya, and Andrew Feenberg.

4. Apple attributes the original use of this phrase to Robert McChesney.


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