Part IV

Ecofascists and Cyberpunks
Marcuse and Ecology

Why return to Marcuse, especially now in the 1990s? What can his writing possibly offer to those desperately seeking new alternatives to the prevailing social order? Since the collapse of the New Left in the 1970s, Marcuse has been largely forgotten as the theory community stampeded from craze to craze during its successive infatuations with Habermas, Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Derrida, and Heidegger. Marcuse perhaps had something to do with this fall from favor after he brooded over the demise of the various New Left movements in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* and then apparently turned away from direct political strategies toward the aesthetic alternatives promised by "a new sensibility" in *The Aesthetic Dimension.*

For new audiences caught up in the postmodernism debates of the 1980s, Marcuse's most mature theoretical formulas often seemed to lack cultural resonance or political closure. As a result, his project was largely shelved, if not forgotten, by the time of his death in 1979. Although up against the allure of French poststructuralists and deconstructionists, Habermas basically held on to his market share without slipping too much. In a world, however, that has heard everything Habermas has had to say about philosophical discourses of modernity and theories of communicative interaction throughout the 1980s, it seems increasingly strange that advanced industrial society remains totally bogged down in serious new crises associated with the end of nature and tribal wars of fascistic ethnic cleansing. The French poststructuralists and deconstructionists are not much help in this department either, but something else beyond Habermas's colorless and ineffectual "critical theory" definitely seems needed. With regard to the ecological crises embedded in the ending of nature, Marcuse can still be quite helpful.
Marcuse and the Ecological Issue

As this collection of essays reveals, however, Marcuse always has been problematic. His conceptualizations of social contradictions, historical forces, and political conflicts in broad categories drawn from Freudian metapsychology often lack any sense of subtle nuance or real complexity. Similarly, his commitment to a Marxian vision of class domination and his Hegelian notion of human needs also run against the grain of more recent postmodernist readings of these philosophical codes, which are rife with those allegedly suspicious metanarratives. Nonetheless, Marcuse's acute sense for providing an always challenging critique of advanced industrial society is sharp, thorough, and relentless. And it is this dimension of his project, particularly inasmuch as he frames the environmental crises of advanced capitalist society, that remains as vital today as it was three decades ago. Things on the environmental front have not changed much; and, if there has been change, it has been mainly for the worse.

Marcuse's influence on the New Left during the 1960s and 1970s was significant, and to the extent that elements of the New Left were concerned with issues of ecology and the environment, Marcuse has had some impact on today's ecological criticism. Hazel Henderson's *Politics of the Solar Age: Alternatives to Economics* marks this dimension of Marcuse's work, and Langdon Winner in *The Whale and the Reactor* notes how Marcuse, as an ecological thinker, "had begun building a bridge between Frankfurt School critical theory and the possibility of an alternative technology" in the 1960s and 1970s. This side of Marcuse is also noted in Koula Mellos's *Perspectives on Ecology*, which casts Marcuse as an important "theoretical inspiration" for the ecology movement through the New Left. Even so, Marcuse rarely ends up being cited or discussed as a decisive intellectual influence by radical ecologists. In contemporary terms, his project is read by most ecological activists as being either too anthropocentric or too socialistic to be taken seriously by most participants in the environmental politics of the 1990s. This neglect of Marcuse is unfortunate, because he initially raised in a very cogent and highly coherent fashion most of the central concerns preoccupying ecological activists today.

At the same time, it is clear that the themes of ecology and the environment, as they are understood, for example, by today's deep ecologists or...
bioregionalists, are not prominent features in Marcuse's theoretical project. Like Marx, Marcuse continually throws out many off-hand asides about nature in his writings. He basically affirms the general importance of respecting the environment's essential integrity and order, but he is also committed to rationalizing and humanizing nature. What this means concretely, however, is less obvious. The topic of ecological destruction per se is taken up by Marcuse only during and after 1970. Even then, his published considerations are relatively few and unsustained. *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, which was presented initially as lectures at Princeton and the New School for Social Research during 1970, includes as its second chapter some thought on ecology, entitled "Nature and Revolution." Yet this text was not published until 1972. During the same year, he made some short remarks at a Paris conference on ecology that were published in *Liberation* as "Ecology and Revolution" a few months later. Finally, a lecture that Marcuse presented in California to a group of students in 1979 was published recently by *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* as "Ecology and the Critique of Modern Society."

Beyond such scant attention in Marcuse's published oeuvre, ecological issues are mainly worked into the background of his writings. This curious ecological aporia in Marcuse's work can even be documented indirectly by returning to the two major, book-length analyses of Marcuse published in the United States during the 1980s by Schoolman and Kellner. Neither *The Imaginary Witness* (1980) nor *Herbert Marcuse and The Crisis of Marxism* (1984) specifically identifies the ecology question with Marcuse in their tables of contents. Likewise, neither study makes a concerted effort to think about or even document Marcuse's approach toward ecology, the environment, or nature with individual index entries. Of course, Marcuse's environmental concerns are raised occasionally by both Schoolman and Kellner, but neither one of them develops a truly focal concentration on Marcuse's complex approaches to environmental topics.

On the one hand, this silence is understandable. Despite his reputation for being the all-knowing guru of the New Left, Marcuse did not consider the ecology a distinct issue as such until other figures and forces associated with New Left movements popularized ecological questions during the months leading up to the first Earth Day in 1970. Even then, the envi-
ronmental question remained wrapped up in Marcuse's essentially Marxian reading of nature and his Freudian take on human subjectivity. On the other hand, however, much of Marcuse's theoretical project does focus on ecology and the environment. Much of his most important work ends up assessing the negative impact of excessively destructive social institutions on what he identifies as "human nature," or the primary impulses and experiences underlying anyone's rationality and emotions, and "external nature," or the existential environments of nature that frame everyone's survival. These preoccupations are central to his analysis of domination in *Eros and Civilization*, *One-Dimensional Man*, and *An Essay on Liberation*. In *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, for example, Marcuse asserts that "in the established society, nature itself, ever more effectively controlled, has in turn become another dimension for the control of man: the extended arm of society and its power." Consequently, the revolutionary task of the present era is quite clear: "The radical transformation of nature becomes an integral part of the radical transformation of society."

Like many of today's radical ecologists, Marcuse argues in *One-Dimensional Man* that "contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian." Totalitarian forms of rule include not only the political forms of terroristic, one-party dictatorships but also an ecological and psychosocial form tied to "a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests." Marcuse admits that the character, satisfaction, and intensity of human needs have always been historically preconditioned and that the question of what are true and false needs ultimately can only be answered by the individuals expressing these needs. In today's advanced industrial societies under late capitalism, Marcuse contends that the socio-historical definition of needs, the politico-economic demands that promote the repressive or liberatory development of individual needs, and the technical-administrative satisfaction of socially defined/personally accepted needs must all be "subject to overriding critical standards." Marcuse's criticisms of advanced industrial society essentially explore one of the more perplexing issues raised by this new totalitarianism in the guise of technological reason, namely, "how can civilization freely generate freedom, when unfreedom has become part and parcel of the mental apparatus."
Subjectivity and Productivity

The critical standards for Marcuse’s judgments are to be found in the promise of liberation from the deadening toil of unending labor. For Marcuse, everything in society must be gauged by the degree to which actual freedom from material want is turning into a real possibility. Under these conditions, Marcuse never ceased believing in the utopian hopes of Marx’s leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom:

The very structure of human existence would be altered; the individual would be liberated from the work world’s imposing on him alien needs and alien possibilities. The individual would be free to exert autonomy over a life that would be his own. If the productive apparatus could be organized and directed toward the satisfaction of the vital needs, its control might well be centralized; such control would not prevent individual autonomy, but render it possible. This is the goal within the capabilities of advanced industrial civilization, the “end” of technological rationality.¹⁶

All of these emancipatory promises are actually possible for Marcuse, but they are not being realized. The vested interests controlling the state, the productive apparatus, and the institutions of society manipulate psychosocial expectations in strategies of repressive normalization that impose false needs on individuals and collectivities. “Such needs,” Marcuse notes, “have a societal content and function which are determined by external powers over which the individual has no control; the development and satisfaction of these needs is heteronomous.”¹⁷ True needs, as opposed to such false needs, are those vital human needs for food, lodging, clothing, and meaning at some attainable level of culture.

In keeping with the critiques advanced by many radical ecologists, Marcuse attacks false needs, or “those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice.”¹⁸ Marcuse notes that “their satisfaction might be most gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others’) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of
curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness. Most of
the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in ac­
cordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and
hate, belong to this category of false needs.”

With these arguments about individual subjectivity and social produc­
tivity, Marcuse presents a comprehensive vision of how and why an ad­
vanced industrial society functions on deeply anti-ecological terms. By
exploiting nature, it produces a short-range, material surplus that allows
its vested controlling interests to coopt, buy off, or immobilize “those
needs which demand liberation—liberation also from that which is toler­
able and rewarding and comfortable—while it sustains and absolves the
destructive power and repressive function of the affluent society.”

Everyday material existence in contemporary society can be quite tolera­
able, rewarding, and comfortable, because it permits deep, long-run eco­
logical disaster to sustain its shallow, short-run institutional reproduction.
False needs become the cause of and excuse for continuing such
environmental destruction, as everyday life is presented as the vindication
of “the freedom to choose.” What is chosen, however, is the perpetuation
of a false repressive totality in which liberty is transformed to happily ac­
cept the mechanisms of domination. At that point, Marcuse observes,
“the social controls exact the overwhelming need for the production and
consumption of waste; the need for stupefying work where it is no longer
a real necessity; the need for modes of relaxation which soothe and pro­
long the stupefication; the need for maintaining such deceptive liberties
as free competition at administered prices, a free press which censors it­
self, free choice between brands and gadgets.”

This waste represents not
only the signs of serious social irrationality but also a complete environ­
mental disaster.

Marcuse's understanding of the ecological crisis is closely tied to his
reading of subjectivity, which parallels the basic scripts of Freudian meta­
psychology. For Marcuse, human beings are shaped by two primary
drives (also referred to as basic instincts or essential drives). One is Eros,
or erotic energy and the life instincts; the other is Thanatos, or destructive
energy and the death instincts. Unfortunately, the major reality principles
of advanced industrial society—that is, the sum total of those norms and
values that regulate moral behavior—are based upon the destructive ener­
gies of Thanatos. Following Freud, the death instincts of Thanatos ex-
press a human drive to live in a state of painlessness, the life existence in the womb before birth. Its force, as Marcuse argues, “is the destruction of other living things, of other living beings, and of nature.” These drives are at the heart of the repressive false needs of one-dimensional society; hence, they also anchor the performance principles of toil and sacrifice at the core of technological rationality. To oppose its workings, Marcuse looks to Eros, or to the life instincts, for the basis of resisting this entire social order. This drive, according to Marcuse, seeks to attain not the painlessness before the beginning of life but the full, flowering majority of life: “It would serve to protect and enhance life itself. The drive for painlessness, for the pacification of existence, would then seek fulfillment in protective care for living things. It would find fulfillment in the recapture and restoration of our life environment, and in the restoration of nature, both external and within human beings.”

The constellation of false needs presented to the inhabitants of advanced industrial society creates a conformist character structure and at the same time blocks the emergence of a radical character structure that might transform this order by reopening human subjectivity to nature. The radical character structure threatens this entire social order, because in looking to restore natural forces, it represents “a preponderance in the individual of life instincts over the death instinct, a preponderance of erotic energy over destructive drives.” Given this organic basis for radical subjectivity, Marcuse connects the liberatory agendas of the ecology movement to the expression of Eros as an organized political force: “This is the way in which I view today’s environmental movement, today’s ecology movement. . . . A successful environmentalism will, within individuals, subordinate destructive energy to erotic energy.” The various ecology movements embody the politicization of erotic energy, even though at present they may lack the institutional power to overthrow the ruling reality principle. With these observations, Marcuse sums up the current plight of most environmental movements during the 1980s and 1990s. Even though their rank-and-file membership may express a desire for radical change, the diverse and divided movements basically remain stuck in an ineffectual strategic mode of organizing nonconformist protest campaigns rather than striking out to totally reconstitute society from the ground up.
Marcuse's reading of science and technology in one-dimensional society echoes the Frankfurt School's general critique of the Enlightenment. Ultimately, Marcuse sees science, as it operates in contemporary advanced industrial society, in terms that underscore its intrinsic instrumentalism. The procedures of abstraction, calculation, formalization, and operationalization lead him to affirm "the internal instrumentalist character of this scientific rationality by virtue of which it is a priori technology, and the a priori of a specific technology—namely, technology as a form of social control and domination."

This inherent instrumentalism is a problem, because the value-free objectivism of science leaves it open to adopt and serve ends external to it. Emerging along with modern European entrepreneurial capitalism and nationalistic statism, the technological instrumentalism of science soon applied its operations to destructive social ends. As Marcuse suggests:

The principles of modern science were a priori structured in such a way that they could serve as conceptual instruments for a universe of self-propelling, productive control; theoretical operationalism came to correspond to practical operationalism. The scientific method which led to the ever-more-effective domination of nature thus came to provide the pure concepts as well as the instrumentalities for the ever-more-effective domination of man by man through the domination of nature. Theoretical reason, remaining pure and neutral, entered into the service of practical reason. The merger proved beneficial to both. Today, domination perpetuates and extends itself not only through technology but as technology, and the latter provides the great legitimization of the expanding political power, which absorbs all spheres of culture.

Caught up within these operational constraints and instrumental goals, science works so that "the liberating force of technology—the instrumentalization of things—turns into a fetter of liberation; the instrumentalization of man."

 Humanity's increasing control over the environments of nature through technological means necessarily results in a greatly increased ability to dominate human nature. The two spheres are intimately con-
nected inasmuch as the complex technical controls implicit in advanced technology demand that everyone exercise greater discipline over their own labor and patterns of consumption. By preconditioning the behavioral patterns of individuals, Marcuse sees technological reason introjecting its technical demands into each person’s somatic-psychoic constitution, which “becomes the psychological basis of a threefold domination: first, domination over one’s self, over one’s nature, over the sensual drives that want only pleasure and gratification; second, domination of the labor achieved by such disciplined and controlled individuals; and third, domination of outward nature, science, and technology.”

The key political point about science and technology, which Marcuse continually stressed, is that they have become an anti-environmental system of domination. He sees this recognition as critical: “Science, by virtue of its own method and concepts, has projected and promoted a universe in which the domination of nature has remained linked to domination of man—a link which tends to be fatal to this universe as a whole. Nature, scientifically comprehended and mastered, reappears in the technical apparatus of production and destruction which sustains and improves the life of individuals while subordinating them to the masters of the apparatus.” Consequently, the rationalizing technical hierarchy based on humans dominating nature merges with the disciplinary social hierarchy of humans dominating other humans.

However, Marcuse also sees the possibilities for changing the direction of progress for the scientific project. The reconciliation of Logos (science and technology as a global system) and Eros in a new metaphysics of liberation might assist science in developing essentially different concepts of nature, facts, and experimental context. Were it not for the reification of technology, which reduces humans and nature to merely fungible objects of organization, neither the worlds of nature nor the systems of society would be the stuff of total administration. Marcuse believes this break is possible, if a new idea of reason, attuned to a new sensibility capable of guiding its theoretical and practical workings, could be developed. This moment, which would reverse the relationship between existing science and the metaphysics of domination, would come with the completion of technological rationalization, or “the mechanization of all socially necessary but individually repressive labor.” This moment of technological liberation would also make possible the pacification of existence—a new
social condition marked by qualitatively different relations between hu-
mans and between humans and nature—if such newly freed individuals
effectively work to realize it.

The “New Sensibility” and Pacifying Nature

Marcuse's ecological engagements are totally intertwined with his advocacy of
both “a new science” and “a new sensibility” as paths for society to take out
of its current environmental crises. Since the old science of instrumental op-
erationalism is an essential factor behind the domination of nature and hu-
mans, new scientific practices, linked not to a metaphysics of domination but
rather to a metaphysics of liberation, might well alter everything. Here, a new
sensibility—aesthetic, life affirming, and liberatory in character—would play
a vital role. Most important, a new sensibility, based on the aesthetic dimen-
sion with its regard for beauty as a check against aggression and destruction,
would mark the ascendancy of life instincts/Eros over death instincts/Thanatos
in the pacification of existence.

Marcuse sees the powers of the imagination unifying the faculties of
sensibility and reason and so becoming productive and practical. A new
sensibility of emancipatory freedom would work as “a guiding force in
the reconstruction of reality—reconstruction with the help of a gaya
scienza, a science and technology released from their service to destruc-
tion and exploitation, and thus free for the liberating exigencies of the
imagination.”33 The new science, when combined with the sensuous aesthet-
ic awareness of the new sensibility, would reintegrate labor and leisure,
science and art, work and play so thoroughly that humanity and na-
ture would also become one: “Such a world could (in a literal sense)
embody, incorporate, the human faculties and desires to such an extent
that they appear as part of the objective determinism of nature.”34 By un-
chaining reason from domination and exalting Eros over Thanatos, hu-
mans with the new sensibility would mobilize the aesthetic to develop
freedom hand-in-hand with emancipation, as art merges with technology
and science serves liberation.

The aesthetic universe is the Lebenswelt on which the needs and facul-
ties of freedom depend for their liberation. They cannot develop in an
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environment shaped by and for aggressive impulses, nor can they be envisaged as the mere effect of a new set of social institutions. They can emerge only in the collective practice of creating an environment: level by level, step by step—in the material and intellectual production, an environment in which the nonaggressive, erotic, receptive faculties of man, in harmony with the consciousness of freedom, strive for the pacification of man and nature. In the reconstruction of society for the attainment of this goal, reality altogether would assume a Form expressive of the new goal. The essentially aesthetic quality of this Form would make it a work of art, but inasmuch as the Form is to emerge in the social process of production, art would have changed its traditional locus and function in society: it would have become a productive force in the material as well as cultural transformation.

Art, then, would cancel the positive facticity of technological domination with its negative visions of technological emancipation. In the development of society and the subject, Marcuse argues that human pacification of existence can be repressive or liberating. Nature is not seen as some benevolent, all-knowing fount of positive goodness; it is instead constructed by Marcuse as a combination of ferocious, inventive, blind, fertile, and destructive processes. A liberating pacification of nature would reduce the misery, violence, and cruelty of nature in the face of its scarcity, suffering, and want.

"Nature and Revolution" in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* brings Marcuse directly to the issues of ecology and the environment through his commitment to creating "a new sensibility." Trapped by psychosocial performance principles no longer needed to produce the material needs of civilization, individuals are seen by Marcuse as having new hope for attaining liberation by consciously and intentionally developing new sensibilities about the unlimited potentialities of all modern technology and the liberatory promise of collective action. On this count, Marcuse asks Freud only for some preliminary directions about metapsychology. He does not accept Freud unquestioningly as an omniscient guide into these murky realms of analysis. In advanced industrial society, Marcuse argues, "the performance principle enforces an integrated repressive organization of sexuality and of the destruction instinct." However, if the unintended consequences of technological rationalization have rendered the institu-
tions of the performance principle obsolete, then “it would also tend to make obsolete the organization of the instincts—that is to say, to release the instincts from the constraints and aversions required by the performance principle.”

On the one hand, this claim could imply the eventual elimination of such destructive surplus repression in new emancipatory forms of life; on the other hand, it might explain why ruling social forces generate false needs to be satisfied by adhering to the performance principle long after it has served its purpose in meeting true, vital needs. To transcend and destroy the performance principle of advanced capitalism, Marcuse believes, “individuals themselves must change in their very instincts and sensibilities if they are to build, in association, a qualitatively different society.” These changes require not only the emancipation of consciousness but also the emancipation of the senses to envelop the totality of human existence.

At the heart of this new sensibility, Marcuse affirms Marx’s vision of transforming society. However, the revolution he sees is to be made in accordance with “laws of beauty” by underscoring the importance of aesthetic needs and impulses. In reversing capitalism’s repressive containment of the aesthetic dimension and redirecting aesthetic awareness as a subversive force, Marcuse sees the active, aggressive destructiveness of capitalism being upended and overthrown by the passive, receptive productiveness of a new socialist community. This outcome would, in part, reflect the unleashing of more positive, but repressed and distorted, “female” qualities to recombine with the negative, but also oppressive and contorted, “male” qualities. Ultimately, what Marcuse wants to see come into realization is “the ascent of Eros over aggression, in men and women; and this means, in a male-dominated civilization, the ‘femalization’ of the male. It would express the decisive change in the instinctual structure; the weakening of primary aggressiveness which, by a combination of biological and social factors, has governed patriarchal culture.”

Nonetheless, Marcuse hopes that these fundamental alterations in consciousness and the senses would also, in part, reanimate the aesthetic adherence to the laws of beauty at the center of his new sensibility. These shifts would work toward emancipating nature from the exploitative domination of destructive technologies. With it would come, according to
Marcuse, “the ability to see things in their own right, to experience the joy enclosed in them, the erotic energy of nature—an energy which is there to be liberated; nature, too, awaits the revolution.” Human emancipation would also entail a historical transformation of nature; nature would become integrated into the human world and would in turn become expressive of human historical qualities. With the fusion of Eros with technē, Marcuse believes a new aesthetic realization should take place. This revolutionization by aesthetic means would bring with it a new ecological order. On the one hand, “cultivation of the soil is qualitatively different from destruction of the soil, extraction of natural resources from wasteful deforestation; and, on the other hand, poverty, disease, and cancerous growth are natural as well as human ills—their reduction and removal is liberation of life.” The pacification of existence, therefore, becomes the truly postmodern condition in which modern, aggressive, technological society no longer struggles to dominate and exploit nature. Instead, it should become fully humanized, civilized, pacified in the conquest of necessity; thus, “Nature ceases to be mere Nature to the degree to which the structure of blind forces is comprehended, and mastered in the light of freedom.”

Marcuse’s ecological sensitivities allow him to see how the technological means to conquer scarcity have also become the tools for forestalling liberation. The obscene levels of overproduction and the excessive consumption enjoyed in many advanced industrial areas cannot furnish an acceptable model for the pacification of existence, because they are accompanied “by moronization, the perpetuation of toil, and the promotion of frustration.” The environment is plundered to provide the materials needed for the one-dimensional society; and, as Marcuse claims, “it is the sheer quantity of goods, services, work, and recreation in the overdeveloped countries which effectuates this containment. Consequently, qualitative change seems to presuppose a quantitative change in the advanced standard of living, namely, reduction of overdevelopment.” Only the existing material base of overdeveloped advanced industrial society can provide the rational foundations for beginning the pacification of existence; but, at the same time, it is this material base that perpetuates the dehumanizing ravages of one-dimensional society.

This program for pacifying nature is neither ridiculous nor impossible. Marcuse’s vision of the process is fragmentary and incomplete, but he dis-
cusses it in plainly historical and political terms. In contrast to one-di­
dimensional society, marked by “the increasing irrationality of the whole;
waste and restriction of productivity; the need for aggressive expansion;
the constant threat of war; intensified exploitation; dehumanization,”
Marcuse chooses to pursue an alternative, rooted in “the planned utiliza­
tion of resources for the satisfaction of vital needs with a minimum of
toil, the transformation of leisure into free time, the pacification of the
struggle for existence.”

Unlike most of today’s ecofeminists or deep ecologists, who travel
around the world on jumbo jets burning tons of jet fuel in order to decry
the pollution of the atmosphere, the evils of modern technology, and cor­
ruptions of consumerism, Marcuse is much more honest about his vision
of pacifying nature. Since nature is a human construct in both theory and
practice, a truly nonanthropocentric society or posttechnological econ­
omy is pure fantasy. Hence, the pacification of nature presupposes the
mastery of nature, which is and remains the impassive objectivity op­
posed to the formation of liberating institutions. A new science would
need the guiding illusions of a new sensibility from art. At this juncture,
“the rationality of art, its ability to ‘project’ existence, to define yet unre­
alized possibilities could then be envisaged as validated by and function­
ing in the scientific-technological transformation of the world. Rather
than being the handmaiden of the established apparatus, beautifying its
business and its misery, art would become a technique for destroying this
business and this misery.”

Marcuse and Ecological Criticism Now

Today’s ecology and environmental movements are very complex, quite
diverse, and openly pluralistic. Ideas that influence one faction, such as
animal rights philosophy, ecological economics, deep ecology thinking,
or global energy accounting, often are completely disdained or wholly ig­
nored by other groups in what most outsiders would regard as the same
basic cause. Marcuse’s influence on any faction of the ecology and envi­
ronmental movements is difficult to document, even though his ideas
closely parallel many intellectual positions taken by various elements in
these movements.
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In the 1960s, neither Barry Commoner nor Murray Bookchin, for example, give any indication of being influenced directly by Marcuse in their work, although Bookchin's *Ecology of Freedom* mocks Marcuse's visions for realizing the pacification of nature.48 Somewhat more conventional readings of ecological crises developed by Rachel Carson, Herman Daly, and David Browder also do not acknowledge Marcuse.49 Likewise, in the 1970s and 1980s, new ecological thinkers—including Arne Naess, Bill Devall, George Sessions, E. F. Schumacher, David Foreman, Ivan Illich, Thomas Berry, Carolyn Merchant, Henryk Skolimowski, Wendell Berry, Bill McKibben, and Kirkpatrick Sale—give few signs of being affected by Marcuse.50 Of the three major histories of the ecology and environmental movement either published or revised in the 1980s—Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Hays's *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955–1985*, and Bramwell's *Ecology in the 20th Century*—only Bramwell even mentions Marcuse, and then it is mainly in passing when discussing the New Left of the 1960s.51 Regardless, Donald Edward Davis includes Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* in his 1989 overview of ecological thought, *Ecophilosophy: A Field Guide to the Literature*, calling it an important influence on ecological philosophers and environmentalist thinkers.52

Clearly, Marcuse's new political theories about technology, subjectivity, and nature are not without some serious problems. Marcuse's quest to discover new organic sources of social negativity and political resistance in late capitalism ultimately led him through classical Marxism to Heidegger and Freud. This search culminates, in turn, with his phenomenological critique of technological rationality and the psychoanalytic theory of history. Marcuse's adaptation of these heterogenous perspectives as his own style of immanent critique resulted in some problematic misrepresentations of present-day political realities and of their emancipatory possibilities. Marcuse perhaps proved insufficiently critical of technological rationality when he attributed its domination largely to its misuse by exploitative groups. Similarly, he ends his critique of modern technological society by grounding his emancipatory politics and his theory of negative collective subjectivity in the organic instinctual energies of each human individual. In his search to supplant the historical negativity of the identical subject-object of *labor*, or the emancipated proletariat, Marcuse turns to an equally unsatisfying solution, namely, a new
naturalistic, presocial, and prehistorical collective subjectivity—the identical subject-object of pleasure, or the individual’s and the human species’ erotic instincts.

Nonetheless, Marcuse cannot be easily dismissed or forgotten. He anticipates virtually every critique made by contemporary radical ecology groups. First, as in the discourses of deep ecology, he identifies the destruction of nature with instrumental reason, or “a concept of reason which contains the domineering features of the performance principle,” in order to ground all of his ecological arguments. Second, as in the narratives of ecofeminism, he connects the workings of the performance principle with the destructive drives of the death instinct and male needs for domination. Third, as in social ecology, he sees that the domination of nature flows out of the domination of human beings as ruling forces and vested interests in society, subjecting internal human nature and external environmental nature to the same instrumentalities of domination. Fourth, like many soft-path technologists, he suggests that modern technology possesses the power and productivity to overcome material scarcity, if only its techniques and instrumentalities were organized in more rational, emancipatory forms of application. Fifth, like advocates of voluntary simplicity, he ties waste, ruin, and despoliation of the environment to false needs imposed on individuals, not to meet true vital requirements but to perpetuate the powers and privileges of vested interests that benefit from such domination and destruction. And, finally, like the new nature poets and philosophers, Marcuse expects a new sensibility—one that is life affirming, aesthetic, female, erotic, and liberatory—to provide the conceptual categories and moral values needed to reintegrate humanity with nature in an environmentally rational society where technology is art, work can be play, and ecology provides freedom.

Despite all his many shortcomings, Marcuse continues to be a theoretical force to be reckoned with. Much of today’s debate within deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, and bioregionalism is addressing the issues of political conflict, cultural contradiction, and individual struggle that Marcuse first raised in *Eros and Civilization, One-Dimensional Man, An Essay on Liberation,* and *Counterrevolution and Revolt.* The question of a new science, a new technology, and a new aesthetics as the basis for realizing an ecological transformation of society has still never been addressed as sharply as Marcuse did, even if his critical and analyti-
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critical discourses about all these forces are flawed. For this reason alone, his work needs to be considered again. And, as these discussions continue, Marcuse’s vision of a pacified existence for an ecological society might begin to prevail socially and politically over the dour green visions presented by today’s more penitential ecoauthoritarians, ranging from Lester Brown’s disciplinary Worldwatchers to Garrett Hardin’s ecofascist rational-choice environmentalism.

Notes


5. See Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 59–78.


11. Ibid., 59.


13. Ibid.


17. Ibid., 5.

18. Ibid., 4–5.

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54. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 130.