Marcuse

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Published by University Press of Kansas

Bokina, John and Timothy J. Lukes. 
Marcuse: From the New Left to the Next Left. 

For additional information about this book 
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/83990
Part IV

Ecofascists and Cyberpunks
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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*.¹

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.
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-
enronmental question remained wrapped up in Marcuse's essentially Marx­
ian reading of nature and his Freudian take on human subjectivity. On
the other hand, however, much of Marcuse's theoretical project does fo­
cus on ecology and the environment. Much of his most important work
ends up assessing the negative impact of excessively destructive social in­
stitutions on what he identifies as "human nature," or the primary im­
pulses 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 Es­
say on Liberation. In Counterrevolution and Revolt, for example, Mar­
cuse asserts that "in the established society, nature itself, ever more effec­
tively 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 transfor­
mation of nature becomes an integral part of the radical transformation
of society."

Like many of today's radical ecologists, Marcuse argues in One-Di­
imensional Man that "contemporary industrial society tends to be totali­
tarian." Totalitarian forms of rule include not only the political forms
of terroristic, one-party dictatorships but also an ecological and psycho­
social 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 soci­
eties under late capitalism, Marcuse contends that the socio-historical
definition of needs, the politico-economic demands that promote the re­
pressive 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 criti­
cisms of advanced industrial society essentially explore one of the more
perplexing issues raised by this new totalitarianism in the guise of techno­
logical 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.\(^\text{16}\)

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."\(^\text{17}\) 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."\(^\text{18}\) 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 accordance 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 productivity, Marcuse presents a comprehensive vision of how and why an advanced 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 tolerable 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 tolerable, rewarding, and comfortable, because it permits deep, long-run ecological 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 accept 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 prolong the stupefaction; the need for maintaining such deceptive liberties as free competition at administered prices, a free press which censors itself, free choice between brands and gadgets." This waste represents not only the signs of serious social irrationality but also a complete environmental disaster.

Marcuse's understanding of the ecological crisis is closely tied to his reading of subjectivity, which parallels the basic scripts of Freudian metapsychology. 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 energies 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 so-
ciety; hence, they also anchor the performance principles of toil and sac-
rifice 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 restora-
tion of nature, both external and within human beings."23

The constellation of false needs presented to the inhabitants of ad-
vanced 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."24 Given this organic basis for rad-
cial 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 ecol-
ogy movement. . . . A successful environmentalism will, within individu-
als, subordinate destructive energy to erotic energy."25 The various ecol-
ogy movements embody the politicization of erotic energy, even though at
present they may lack the institutional power to overthrow the ruling real-
ity 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 rad-
ical change, the diverse and divided movements basically remain stuck in
an ineffectual strategic mode of organizing nonconformist protest cam-
paigns 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 legitimation 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-psychic 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 humans 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 operationalism is an essential factor behind the domination of nature and humans, 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 dimension 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 destruction and exploitation, and thus free for the liberating exigencies of the imagination.”33 The new science, when combined with the sensuous aesthetic awareness of the new sensibility, would reintegrate labor and leisure, science and art, work and play so thoroughly that humanity and nature 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 unchaining reason from domination and exalting Eros over Thanatos, humans 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 faculties of freedom depend for their liberation. They cannot develop in an
Marcuse and Ecology

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.35

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."36 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."37 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 perfor­

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 de­
stroy the performance principle of advanced capitalism, Marcuse be­
lieves, "individuals themselves must change in their very instincts and
sensibilities if they are to build, in association, a qualitatively different
society."

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 ac­
cordance with "laws of beauty" by underscoring the importance of aes­
thetic needs and impulses. In reversing capitalism's repressive contain­
ment 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 pro­
ductiveness of a new socialist community. This outcome would, in part,
reflect the unleashing of more positive, but repressed and distorted, "fe­
male" 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 'femaliza­
tion' of the male. It would express the decisive change in the instinctual
structure; the weakening of primary aggressiveness which, by a combina­
tion of biological and social factors, has governed patriarchal cul­

Nonetheless, Marcuse hopes that these fundamental alterations in con­
sciousness and the senses would also, in part, reanimate the aesthetic ad­
herence 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 techne, 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-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 utilization 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 cor­ruptions 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 econ­omy is pure fantasy. Hence, the pacification of nature presupposes the mastery of nature, which is and remains the impassive objectivity op­posed 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 unre­alized possibilities could then be envisaged as validated by and function­ing 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 ig­nored by other groups in what most outsiders would regard as the same basic cause. Marcuse’s influence on any faction of the ecology and envi­ronmental movements is difficult to document, even though his ideas closely parallel many intellectual positions taken by various elements in these movements.
Marcuse and Ecology

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.\(^4\) Somewhat more conventional readings of ecological crises developed by Rachel Carson, Herman Daly, and David Browder also do not acknowledge Marcuse.\(^5\) 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.\(^6\) 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.\(^7\) 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.\(^8\)

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-
Marcuse and Ecology

cal 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.55

Notes

4. For examples of these readings, see Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom (Palo Alto, Calif.: Cheshire Books, 1982), and Christopher Manes, Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990).
5. See Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, 59–78.
10. Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, 60.
11. Ibid., 59.
12. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, 3.
13. Ibid.
16. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, 2.
17. Ibid., 5.
18. Ibid., 4–5.
19. Ibid., 5.
20. Ibid., 7.
21. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 32.
25. Ibid., 36.
28. Ibid., 158.
29. Ibid., 159.
32. Ibid., 230.
34. Ibid. Also see Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 54–69.
38. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 75.
41. Ibid., 74.
42. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 240.
43. Ibid., 236.
44. Ibid., 242.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 252–53.
47. Ibid., 239.
Marcuse and Ecology


