

last one, is major; and more important, all are avoidable. The critic's business is not to prescribe or advise, yet one is greatly tempted to say: If only Harvey Swados will have the courage to be what he is, if only he will remain true to his own talent and not adulterate it with the ambitions and fashions of others, he can become an important social novelist, one who may help restore the link between the novel and the world.

#### UNITRUTH

ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN. By HERBERT MARCUSE. Beacon. 260 pp. \$6.00.

Reviewed by EDGAR Z. FRIEDENBERG

PROFESSOR MARCUSE'S new work is a considerable contribution to our already extensive literature on the alienation of Western man. There is, perhaps, no great reason to solicit further contributions to this rather oversubscribed fund. Yet when a book is as scholarly and searching as this one, and successfully synthesizes issues of subtle and profound relevance from the best materials provided by philosophy, economics, and the humanities, it must be gratefully received and respectfully treated.

Should it also be widely read? This is a harder question. The answer depends, crudely, on whether you are likely to read this rather difficult work more than once. My first reading left me feeling that the book was banal and rather pretentious, which, considering Professor Marcuse's place in the world of letters, seemed unlikely. The second convinced me that I had been mistaken and had overlooked or neglected points that really were novel and highly significant. But in any case, *One-Dimensional Man* is not a book to take to bed with you for any reason; it neither keeps you awake, puts you to sleep, nor arouses feelings of tenderness. To become familiar with it and come to love it, as one does de Tocqueville, for example, would seem presumptuous.

*One-Dimensional Man* is intended to increase insight into our existential plight and express that

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

THOMAS JEFFERSON

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Princeton University Press

PUBLISHERS OF THE PAPERS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON

insight in terms that will connect it up with categories of experience—especially aesthetic and linguistic—that have been less frequently used for this purpose than have, for example, psychological constructs and personality theory. It very largely succeeds; but books that accomplish this effectively also generally give the reader a sudden, heightened sense of order, a clear awareness of his place in the universe. *One-Dimensional Man*, though it does help make life more intelligible, does not provide any feeling of transcendent clarification. There is much truth in it; but there are no moments of truth; there are plenty of moments of inertia.

THE MAJOR difficulty with the work is, I believe, a rather curious consequence of the qualifications Professor Marcuse demands of his reader. The level of erudition he presupposes tends to limit his readership to people who are likely to have done on their own more or less what Professor Marcuse is trying to do for them. This is the kind of book that tempts a reader to say, "Well, Lippmann, or Fromm, or Daniel Boorstin said it all before." In fact, they haven't, but if you have read what they *did* say, and fitted it together into some sort of pattern, you will have had to attempt much the kind of synthesis Professor Marcuse has undertaken here.

Marcuse's most dominant forebear seems to me to be Karl Mannheim, whose distinctive contribution to social theory was his analysis of the way the economic institutions of a culture mold not only its ideology—as Marx had, of course, already maintained—but its very epistemology as well, its categories of thought and perception. In *Ideology and Utopia*, Mannheim established this as a general proposition and in other works applied it specifically to the conditions of life in modern capitalist society. Thus, Marcuse's central concept, from which he takes the title of his book, is almost perfectly Mannheimian:

Societal conditions existed [in the Age of Reason] which provoked and permitted real dissociation from the established state

of affairs; a private as well as political dimension was present in which dissociation could develop into effective opposition, testing its strength and the validity of its objectives.

With the gradual closing of this dimension by the society, the self-limitation of thought assumes a larger significance . . . The society bars a whole type of oppositional operations and behavior; consequently, the concepts pertaining to them are rendered illusory or meaningless. Historical transcendence appears as metaphysical transcendence, not acceptable to science and scientific thought. The operational and behavioral point of view, practised as a "habit of thought" at large, becomes the view of the established universe of discourse and action, needs and aspirations . . . The insistence on operational and behavioral concepts turns against the efforts to free thought and behavior from the given reality and for the suppressed alternatives.

Professor Marcuse devotes about the first third of his book to a concrete, sweeping, and occasionally brilliant analysis of the roots of this one-dimensional condition. He locates it in the need of highly administered economies to operate at very high levels of production and hence of affluence, and notes especially the loss of dialectical tone in societies so organized. If labor, for example, does not become a friend of management in societies of this kind, it nevertheless willingly becomes an accomplice:

Under such conditions, decline of freedom and opposition is not a matter of moral or intellectual deterioration or corruption. It is rather an objective societal process insofar as the production of an increasing quantity of goods and services make compliance a rational technological attitude. . . . As long as this constellation prevails, it reduces the use-value of freedom; there is no reason to insist on self-determination if the administered life is the comfortable and even the "good" life.

This seems a just enough analysis. If the circumstances to which it refers are not new, nonetheless Professor Marcuse adds to our

understanding of them. How much he adds becomes clear when one compares Marcuse's observation with one of de Tocqueville's of nearly a century and a half ago that is closely related. Many a social scientist has developed a hernia trying to produce an insight de Tocqueville never had; it isn't easy, but things have changed since 1835 and it isn't impossible, either.

I have attempted to show that the government of democracy may be reconciled with respect for property, with deference for rights, with safety to freedom, with reverence to religion; that, if democratic government is less favorable than another to some of the finer parts of human nature, it has also great and noble elements; and that perhaps, after all, it is the will of God to diffuse a mediocre prosperity among all mankind, not to confer a greater share of it on a smaller number, or to raise the few to the verge of perfection. I have undertaken to demonstrate . . . that it is too late to deliberate, that society is advancing and dragging them along with itself toward equality of conditions; that the question is . . . whether we are to live under a democratic society devoid indeed of poetry and greatness, but at least orderly and moral, or under a democratic society, lawless and depraved, abandoned to the frenzy of revolution, or subjected to a yoke heavier than any of those which have crushed mankind since the fall of the Roman Empire.

De Tocqueville's vision anticipates Marcuse and in its fulfillment it has become a nightmare that can only be accounted for in Marcuse's terms; de Tocqueville could not see this far ahead. The process de Tocqueville was describing was the rise of the bourgeoisie; and it is, to be sure, the continued dominance of this class that accounts for the conditions Marcuse discusses. Yet "the mediocre prosperity" is, contrary to Tocqueville, still far from having been "diffused among all mankind," and poverty remains tougher even than Sargent Shriver. Poetry and greatness have a hard enough time, but perhaps they always have; what is new about modern industrial society, however, is that it is at the same time both

orderly and immoral, legalistic and depraved. Yet though the yoke its members bear is certainly heavier at times than anything Caligula could have devised, the revolutionary outbreaks one might expect occur far less frequently than do organized violent demonstrations in support of the dominant local power. Whether or not this power is nominally democratic scarcely matters any longer, for the consent of the governed has been engineered. By and large, the governed have no objections; they like to see progress, especially in engineering.

ALL THESE urgent modern developments are accounted for in Marcuse's work and they are, indeed, his reason for writing it. In the last half of the book, however, his special scholarly interests run away with his analysis. Here he treats of the development of positivistic philosophy as a central cause for the subordination of questions of moral value to brute empirical concern for getting the job done. Though Marcuse doesn't (as *Dr. Strangelove*, for instance, makes clear) overstate the degree of this emphasis in our world, he does lay too much of the blame for it on the diabolical influence of Wittgenstein and Whitehead. Readers untrained in the techniques and language of contemporary philosophy are likely to find these sections quite unreadable; and even those who are able to follow may find them irrelevant to Marcuse's point. No doubt logical positivism, like advertising, has made matters worse, and in fact in the same way—by eliminating the categories of thought in which moral judgments may be recorded. Yet surely its present dominance is but a further manifestation of the social developments of which Marcuse has complained, not its cause. Indeed, if academic philosophy could have anywhere near the influence Marcuse attributes to it in a mass society, we wouldn't be nearly as far gone as Marcuse thinks we are.

The fundamental question of this work, however, is not so much how far gone we are, but rather whether or not we still have any way of getting back to a multi-dimensional, human mode of per-

ceiving reality and responding to it with our own intelligence. On this point, Marcuse is very pessimistic:

The conflict between streamlined, rewarding domination on the one hand and its achievements that make for self-determination and pacification on the other, may become blatant beyond any possible denial, but it may well continue to be a manageable and even productive conflict, for with the growth in the technological conquest of nature grows the conquest of man by man. And this conquest reduces the freedom which is a necessary *a priori* of liberation.

In the end, I find Marcuse's pessimism rather refreshing. There is currently quite a spate of pro-Establishment propaganda being published, examining the possibilities for self-fulfillment within the present organized system and finding them abundant. Maybe; but these diagnoses always seem to picture the condition of self-fulfillment as peculiarly similar to the one we now think of as alienation. Nobody—Marcuse least of all—questions that modern life promises contentment and security. In these respects, it is almost as good as death itself. Professor Marcuse's book, beneath its philosophical abstractions, is a *memento mori*; and, as such, a useful work to have around the house.

### CONSCIENCE & REVOLUTION

MEMOIRS OF A REVOLUTIONARY: 1901-1941. By VICTOR SERGE. Translated and edited, with an Introduction, by PETER SEDGWICK. Oxford University Press. 401 pp. \$10.00.

Reviewed by HILTON KRAMER

VICTOR SERGE spent his whole adult life at that crossroads of literature and revolution—in France, Spain, Germany, Russia, and Mexico—where so large a part of the intellectual consciousness of our century has been formed. He devoted his entire literary *oeuvre*—history and polemic, fiction and poetry and reminiscence—to reporting and exploring the human and po-

litical events of which he was a close and sensitive observer. Both in his life and in his work he embodied the hopes and sufferings of an epoch: the hopes of those radical intellectuals who, coming of age in the years immediately preceding the First World War, looked upon the Russian Revolution as the redemptive event of modern history and to whom the degeneration of the revolution brought the deepest spiritual anguish. Yet he remains, in this country at least, an oddly obscure figure. Liberals, particularly those under forty, who have the works of Koestler, Orwell, and Camus at their fingertips, are unlikely to have read him.

Serge differed from these writers in having himself played an active part in the first decade of Soviet history. He was an important functionary in the first Communist International. He was also an intimate of the anarchist dissenters who were among the first to attack the abuses of Soviet power (and among the first, too, to be punished for their dissent), and he was subsequently one of the leaders of the Left Opposition to Stalin in that period between the death of Lenin and the consolidation of power in Stalin's hands when the totalitarian character of the revolution was sealed and the bloody events of the 30's were being prepared. "My own experience was probably unique," Serge wrote in his *Memoirs*, "since in this period [1920] I maintained a staunch openness of approach, being in daily contact with official circles, ordinary folk and the Revolution's persecuted dissenters." His writings on the moral, social, and political consequences of the Soviet regime are likewise unique, being marked throughout by a personal eloquence, a libertarian fervor, and an historical precision unsurpassed among the writer-witnesses of his generation.

The figure whom Serge most closely resembles on the current world scene is probably Milovan Djilas, both in his first-hand knowledge of the workings of totalitarian power and in his horror of the human result—and in the need, moreover, to communicate that horror in a persuasive literary