# Marcuse K

## Framework

#### [ROB & Kellner] The Role of the Ballot is to Endorse the Rejection of One-Dimensional Thought. This means distancing ourselves from existing institutions.

**Kellner:** Kellner, Douglas. [George Kneller Chair in the Philosophy of Education in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles]. “One-Dimensional Man: Introduction to the Second Edition.” Beacon Press,1964. EM/CH

Thus, I would propose interpreting “one-dimensional” as conforming to existing thought and behavior and lacking a critical dimension and a dimension of potentialities that transcend the existing society. In Marcuse's usage the adjective **“one-dimensional” describes practices that conform to pre-existing structures, norms, and behavior, in contrast to multidimensional discourse, which focuses on possibilities that transcend the established state of** affairs. This epistemological distinction presupposes antagonism between subject and object so that the subject is free to perceive possibilities in the world that do not yet exist but which can be realized. In the one**-dimensional society, the subject is assimilated into the object and follows the dictates of external, objective norms and structures, thus losing the ability to discover more liberating possibilities and to engage in transformative practice to realize them.** Marcuse's theory presupposes the existence of a human subject with freedom, creativity, and self-determination who stands in opposition to an object-world, perceived as substance, which contains possibilities to be realized and secondary qualities like values, aesthetic traits, and aspirations, which can be cultivated to enhance human life.

He adds:

In his early works, Marcuse himself attempted to synthesize Heidegger's phenomenological existentialism with Marxism, and in One-Dimensional Man one recognizes Husserl and Heideggerian motifs in Marcuse's critiques of scientific civilization and modes of thought. In particular, Marcuse develops a conception of a technological world, similar in some respects to that developed by Heidegger, and, like Husserl and Heidegger, sees technological rationality colonizing everyday life, robbing individuals of freedom and individuality by imposing techno- logical imperatives, rules, and structures upon their thought and behavior. Marcuse thought that **dialectical philosophy could promote critical thinking.** One-Dimensional Man is perhaps Marcuse's most sustained attempt to present and develop the categories of the dialectical philosophy developed by Hegel and Marx. For Marcuse, **dialectical thinking involved the ability to abstract one's perception and thought from existing forms in order to form more general concepts.** This conception helps explain the difficulty of One-Dimensional Man and the demands that it imposes upon its reader. For Marcuse abstracts from the complexity and multiplicity of the existing society its fundamental tendencies and constituents, as well as those categories which constitute for him the forms of critical thinking. **This demands that the reader also abstract from existing ways of looking at society and modes of thinking and attempt to perceive and think in a new way. Uncritical thinking derives its beliefs, norms, and values from existing thought and social practices, while critical thought seeks alternative modes of thought and behavior from which it creates a standpoint of critique. Such a critical standpoint requires developing what Marcuse calls “negative thinking,” which “negates” existing forms of thought and reality from the perspective of higher possibilities.** This practice presupposes the ability to make a distinction between existence and essence, fact and potentiality, and appearance and reality. Mere existence would be negated in favor of realizing higher potentialities while norms discovered by reason would be used to criticize and overcome lower forms of thought and social organization. Thus grasping potentialities for freedom and happiness would make possible the negation of conditions that inhibited individuals' full development and realization. In other words, perceiving the possibility of self-determination and constructing one's own needs and values could enable individuals to break with the existing world of thought and behavior. Philosophy was thus to supply the norms for social criticism and the ideal of liberation which would guide social change and individual self- transformation.

### A. Link

#### [Eidlin] Strikes put a band-aid on a broken leg – they do nothing to transform the employer-employee relationship.

Eidlin – brackets in text: Eidlin, Barry. [Assistant professor of sociology at McGill University and the author of Labor and the Class Idea in the United States and Canada]. “Why Unions Are Good – But Not Good Enough,” *Jacobin,* January 6, 2020. EM <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/01/marxism-trade-unions-socialism-revolutionary-organizing>

Labor unions have long occupied a paradoxical position within Marxist theory. They are an essential expression of the working class taking shape as a collective actor and an essential vehicle for working-class action. When we speak of “the working class” or “working-class activity,” we are often analyzing the actions of workers either organized into unions or trying to organize themselves into unions. At the same time, unions are an imperfect and incomplete vehicle for the working class to achieve one of Marxist theory’s central goals: overthrowing capitalism. Unions by their very existence affirm and reinforce capitalist class society. As organizations which primarily negotiate wages, benefits, and working conditions with employers, unions only exist in relation to capitalists. This makes them almost by definition reformist institutions, designed to mitigate and manage the employment relationship, not transform it. Many unions have adapted to this conservative, managerial role. Others have played key roles in challenging capital’s power. Some have even played insurgent roles at one moment and managerial roles at others. When unions have organized workplace insurgencies, this has sometimes translated into political pressure that expanded democracy and led to large-scale policy reforms. In the few revolutionary historical moments that we can identify, worker organization, whether called unions or something else, has been essential. Thus, labor unions and movements have long been a central focus of Marxist debate. At its core, the debate centers around the role of unions in class formation, the creation of the revolutionary working-class agent. The debate focuses on four key questions. **First, to what degree do unions simply reflect existing relations of production and class struggle**, or actively shape those relations? Second, if unions actively shape class struggle, why and under what conditions do they enhance or inhibit it? Third, how do unions shape class identities, and how does this affect unions’ scope of action? Fourth, what is the relation between unions and politics? This question is comprised of two sub-questions: to what degree do unions help or hinder struggles in the workplace becoming broader political struggles? And how should unions relate to political parties, the more conventional vehicle for advancing political demands? The following is a chapter from [The Oxford Handbook of Karl Marx](https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190695545.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190695545) (Oxford University Press, 2019). It assesses Marxist debates surrounding trade unions, oriented by the four questions mentioned previously. It proceeds historically, first examining how Marx and Engels conceived of the roles and limitations of trade unions, then tracing how others within Marxism have pursued these debates as class relations and politics have changed over time. While the chapter includes some history of labor unions and movements themselves, the central focus is on how Marxist theorists thought of and related to those movements. Marx and Engels wrote extensively about the unions of their time, although never systematically. The majority of their writings on unions responded to concrete labor struggles of their time. From their earliest works, they grasped unions’ necessity and limitations in creating a working-class agent capable of advancing class struggle against the bourgeoisie. This [departed](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/wusa.12021) from previous variants of socialism, often based in idealized views of rebuilding a rapidly eroding community of artisanal producers, which did not emphasize class organization or class struggle. Writing in The Condition of the Working Class in England about emerging forms of unionism, Engels observed that even though workers’ primary struggles were over material issues such as wages, they pointed to a deeper social and political conflict: What gives these Unions and the strikes arising from them their real importance is this, that they are the first attempt of the workers to abolish competition. They im­ ply the recognition of the fact that the supremacy of the bourgeoisie is based wholly upon the competition of the workers among themselves; i.e., upon their want of cohesion. And precisely because the Unions direct themselves against the vital nerve of the present social order, however one-sidedly, in however narrow a way, are they so dangerous to this social order. At the same time, Engels saw that, even as union struggles “[kept alive] the opposition of the workers to the … omnipotence of the bourgeoisie,” so too did they “[compel] the admission that something more is needed than Trades Unions and strikes to break the power of the ruling class.” Here Engels articulates the crux of the problem. First, unions are essential for working-class formation, creating a collective actor both opposed to the bourgeoisie and capable of challenging it for power.

### B. Impacts

#### [Marcuse 1] THIS MAKES CAP STRONGER – people won’t fight against it if the conditions are better.

**Marcuse 1**:Marcuse, Herbert. [University of Berlin, University of Freiburg. Author of numerous books. Taught at Columbia, Harvard, and Brandeis universities.] “One – Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society”, *Beacon Press,* 1964. EM

Now it is precisely this new consciousness, this "space within," the space for the transcending historical practice, which is being barred by a society in which subjects as well as objects constitute instrumentalities in a whole that has its raison d'etre in the accomplishments of its overpowering productivity. **Its supreme promise is an ever-more-comfortable life for an ever-growing number of people who, in a strict sense, cannot imagine a qualitatively different universe** of discourse and action, for the capacity to contain and manipulate subversive imagination and effort is an integral part of the given society**.** Those whose life is the hell of the Affluent Society are kept in line by a brutality which revives medieval and early modern practices. For the other, less underprivileged people, **society takes care of the need for liberation by satisfying the needs which make servitude palatable and perhaps even unnoticeable**, and it accomplishes this fact in the process of production itself. Under its impact, the laboring classes in the advanced areas of industrial civilization are undergoing a decisive transformation, which has become the subject of a vast sociological research. I shall enumerate the main factors of this transformation:

**He adds:**

Such a qualitatively new mode of existence can never be envisaged as the mere by-product of economic and political changes, as the more or less spontaneous effect of the new institutions which constitute the necessary prerequisite. **Qualitative change also involves a change in the technical basis on which this society rests--one which sustains the economic and political institutions through which the "second nature" of man as an aggressive object of administration is stabilized. The techniques of industrialization are political techniques; as such, they prejudge the possibilities of Reason and Freedom.** To be sure, labor must precede the reduction of labor, and industrialization must precede the development of human needs and satisfactions. But as all freedom depends on the conquest of alien necessity, the realization of freedom depends on the techniques of this conquest. The highest productivity of labor can be used for the perpetuation of labor, and the most efficient industrialization can serve the restriction and manipulation of needs. When this point is reached, domination-in the guise of affluence and liberty--extends to all spheres of private and public existence, integrates all authentic opposition, absorbs all alternatives. Technological rationality reveals its political char- acter as it becomes the great vehicle of better domination, creating a truly totalitarian universe in which society and nature, mind and body are kept in a state of permanent mobilization for the defense of this universe.

#### [Marcuse 2] This is the construction of liberties under inequality and unfreedom.

**Marcuse 2**:Marcuse, Herbert. [University of Berlin, University of Freiburg. Author of numerous books. Taught at Columbia, Harvard, and Brandeis universities.] “One – Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society”, *Beacon Press,* 1964. EM

This kind of masterly enslavement is not essentially different from that of the typist, the bank teller, the high-pressure sales- man or saleswoman, and the television announcer. Standardization and the routine assimilate productive and non-productive jobs. **The proletarian of the previous stages of capitalism was indeed the beast of burden, by the labor of his body procuring the necessities and luxuries of life while living in filth and poverty. Thus he was the living denial of his society.** organized worker in the advanced areas of the technological society lives this denial less conspicuously and, like the other human objects of the social division of labor, he is being incorporated into the technological community of the administered population. Moreover, in the most successful areas of automation, some sort of technological community seems to integrate the human atoms at work. The machine seems to instill some drugging rhythm in the operators: "It is generally agreed that interdependent motions performed by a group of persons which follow a rhythmic pattern yield satisfaction-quite apart from what is being accomplished by the motions";

**He adds:**

**The new technological work-world thus enforces a weakening of the negative position of the working class: the latter no longer appears to be the living contradiction to the established society.** This trend is strengthened by the effect of the technological organization of production on the other side of the fence: on management and direction. Domination is transfigured into administration. The capitalist bosses and owners are losing their identity as responsible agents; they are assuming the function of bureaucrats in a corporate machine. Within the vast hierarchy of executive and managerial boards extending far beyond the individual establishment into the scientific laboratory and research institute, the national government and national purpose, the tangible source of exploitation disappears behind the fac;:ade of objective rational- ity. Hatred and frustration are deprived of their specific target, and **the technological veil conceals the reproduction of inequality and enslavement. With technical progress as its instrument, unfreedom-in the sense of man's subjection to his productive apparatus-is perpetuated and intensified in the form of many liberties and comforts.** The novel feature is the overwhelming rationality in this irrational enterprise, and the depth of the pre- conditioning which shapes the instinctual drives and aspirations of the individuals and obscures the difference between false and true consciousness. **For in reality, neither the utilization of other things the worker wants which the employer is not willing to give him.... We're searching. We're searching." Labor Looks At Labor.** A Conversation, (Santa Barbara: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1963) p. 16£ 21 Is it still necessary to denounce the ideology of the "managerial revolution?" Capitalist production proceeds through the investment of private capital for the private extraction and appropriation of surplus value, and capital is a social instrument for the domination of man by man. **The essential features of this process are in no way altered by** the spread of stock-holding, the separation of ownership from management, etc. administrative rather than physical controls (hunger, personal dependence, force), nor the change in the character of heavy work, nor the assimilation of occupational classes, nor **the equalization in the sphere of consumption** compensate for the fact that the decisions over life and death, over personal and national security are made at places over which the individuals have no control**.** The slaves of developed industrial civilization are sublimated slaves, but they are slaves, for slavery is determined’

### C. Alternative

#### [Marcuse 3] The alternative is to embrace indigenous modes of society pre colonization and capitalism.

**Marcuse 3**:Marcuse, Herbert. [University of Berlin, University of Freiburg. Author of numerous books. Taught at Columbia, Harvard, and Brandeis universities.] “One – Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society”, *Beacon Press,* 1964. EM

However, another alternative seems possible. **If industrialization and the introduction of technology in the backward countries encounter strong resistance from the indigenous and traditional modes of life and labor-a resistance which is not abandoned even at the very tangible prospect of a better and easier life- could this pre-technological tradition itself become the source of progress and industrialization?** Such indigenous progress would demand a planned policy which, **instead of superimposing technology on the traditional modes of life and labor, would extend and improve them on their own grounds, eliminating the oppressive and exploitative forces (material and religious) which made them incapable of assuring the development of a human existence.** Social revolu- tion, agrarian reform, and reduction of over-population would be prerequisites, but not industrialization after the pattern of the advanced societies. **Indigenous progress seems indeed possible in areas where the natural resources, if freed from suppressive encroachment, are still sufficient not only for subsistence but also for a human life.** And where they are not, could they not be made sufficient by the gradual and piecemeal aid of technology-within the framework of the traditional forms? If this is the case, then conditions would prevail which do not exist in the old and advanced industrial societies (and never existed there)-namely**, the "immediate producers" themselves would have the chance to create, by their own labor and leisure, their own progress and determine its rate and direction. Self- determination would proceed from the base, and work for the necessities could transcend itself toward work for gratification.** But even under these abstract assumptions, the brute limits of self-determination must be acknowledged. The initial revolution which, by abolishing mental and material exploitation, is to establish the prerequisites for the new development, is hardly conceivable as spontaneous action. Moreover, indigenous pro- gress would presuppose a change in the policy of the two great industrial power blocs which today shape the world- abandonment of neo-colonialism in all its forms. At present, there is no indication of such a change.