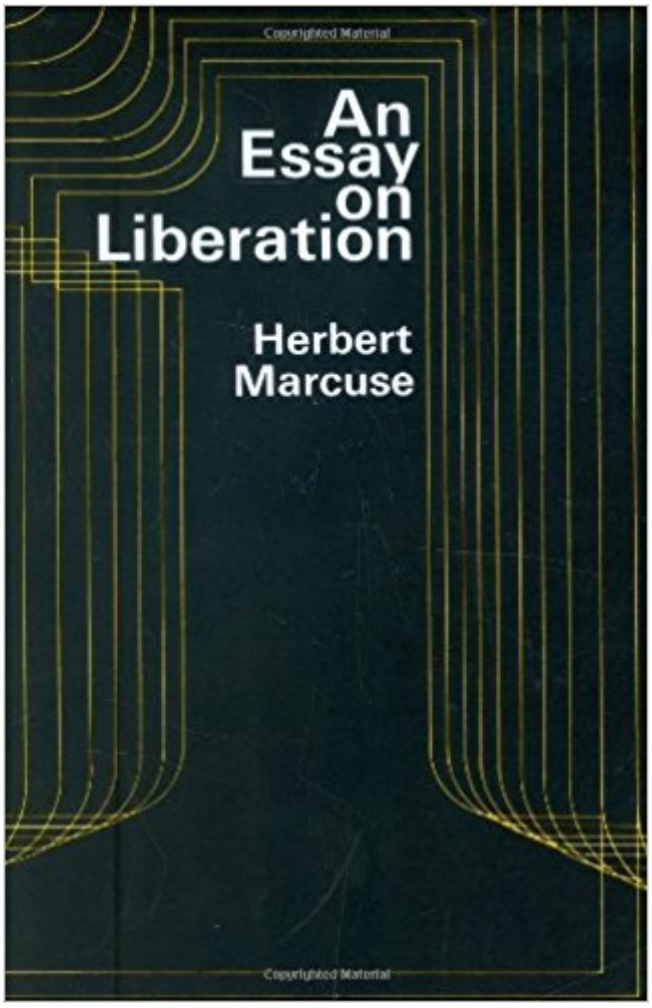
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An Essay On Liberation



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Synopsis

In this concise and startling book, the author of One-Dimensional Man argues that the time for utopian speculation has come. Marcuse argues that the traditional conceptions of human freedom have been rendered obsolete by the development of advanced industrial society. Social theory can no longer content itself with repeating the formula, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," but must now investigate the nature of human needs themselves. Marcuse’s claim is that even if production were controlled and determined by the workers, society would still be repressiveÃ¢â ¬â •unless the workers themselves had the needs and aspirations of free men. Ranging from philosophical anthropology to aesthetics An Essay on LiberationÃ Â attempts to outlineÃ¢â ¬â •in a highly speculative and tentative fashionÃ¢â ¬â •the new possibilities for human liberation. The EssayÃ Â contains the following chapters: A Biological Foundation for Socialism?, The New Sensibility, Subverting ForcesÃ¢â ¬â •in Transition, and Solidarity.

Book Information

Paperback: 108 pages

Publisher: Beacon Press; 1st edition (June 1, 1971)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807005959

ISBN-13: 978-0807005958

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.3 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #347,199 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #141 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Social Theory #563 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Political Ideologies #571 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Ideologies & Doctrines > Communism & Socialism

Customer Reviews

Herbert MarcuseÃ Â (1898-1979) was born in Berlin and educated at the universities of Berlin and Freiburg. He fled Germany in 1933 and arrived in the United States in 1934. Marcuse taught at Columbia, Harvard, Brandeis, and the University of California, San Diego, where he met Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss as graduate students. He is the author of numerous books, includingÃ Â One-Dimensional ManÃ Â andÃ Â Eros and Civilization.

Marcuse was a great thinker and challenged every aspect of modern contemporary thought and philosophy, should be regarded as required reading.

Wow, wow, and wow!! The more I read Marcuse, the more I fall in love. His command of language is a rare gem combined with an unequalled intellect that deconstructs western consumerism and slavery of the human spirit. One of the most arresting moments of the book: his thoughts on obscenity. "Obscenity is a moral concept in the verbal arsenal of the Establisment, which abuses the term by applying it, not to the expressions of its own morality but to those of another." He illustrates this by stating that obscenity is not a work of art or a woman’s genitalia, but a 4 star general or a clergyman espousing the virtues of war. The rest of the book is a beautiful treatise on how we have the power to truly liberate ourselves from the tyranny of consumerism and false consciousness.

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) was a German philosopher, sociologist, and political theorist, associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory, until he moved to the United States in 1934. (He was even briefly one of the "darlings" of the Student Movement of the 1960s.# He wrote other books, such asÃ Â One-Dimensional Man,Eros and Civilization,Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory,Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics and Utopia,Negations: Essays in Critical Theory,The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward A Critique of Marxist Aesthetics, etc.He wrote in the Preface to this 1969 essay, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The growing opposition to the global dominion of corporate capitalism is confronted by the sustained power of this dominion: Its economic and military holdÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| its neocolonial empire, andÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| its unshaken capacity to subject the majority of the underlying population to its overwhelming productivity and force. This global power keeps the socialist orbit on the defensiveÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| Now, however, this threatening homogeneity has been loosening up, and an alternative is beginning to break into the repressive continuumÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| in the men and women who resist and deny the massive exploitative power of corporate capitalismÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| The Great Refusal takes a variety of forms. In Vietnam, in Cuba, in China, a revolution ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| struggles to eschew the bureaucratic administration of socialism. The guerrilla forces in Latin America seem to be animated by the same subversive impulseÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| The ghetto populations may well become the first mass basis of revoltÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| The student opposition is spreadingÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| They confront the critical theory of society with the task of reexamining the prospects for the emergence

of a socialist society qualitatively different from existing societies, the task of redefining socialism and its preconditions.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•He points out, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Once a specific morality is firmly established as a norm of social behavior, it is not only introjected---it also operates as a norm of ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœorganic ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ behaviorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| In this way, a society constantly re-creates, this side of consciousness and ideology, patterns of behavior and aspiration as part of the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœnature ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ of its people, and unless the revolt reaches into this ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœsecond ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ nature, into these ingrown patterns, social change will remain ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœincomplete,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ even self-defeating.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 11)He states, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The development of a true consciousness is still the professional function of the universities. No wonder then that the student opposition meets the all but pathological hatred on the part of the so-called ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœcommunity,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ including large sections of organized labor. To the degree to which the university becomes dependent on the financial and political goodwill of the community and of the government, the struggle for a free and critical education becomes a vital part in the larger struggle for change.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 61)He acknowledges, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The absurd situation: the established democracy still provides the only legitimate framework for change and must therefore be defended against all attempts on the Right and the Center to restrict this framework, but at the same time, preservation of the established democracy preserves the status quo and the containment of change. Another aspect of the same ambiguity: radical change depends on a mass basis, but every step in the struggle for radical change isolates the opposition from the masses and provokes intensified oppression.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 68)He observes, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“our entire discussion was based on the proposition that the revolution would be liberating only if it were carried by the non-repressive forces stirring in the existing societyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| Prior to its realization, it is indeed only the individual, the individuals, who can judge, with no other legitimation than their consciousness and conscience. But these individuals are moreÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| than private persons with their particular contingent preferences and interests. Their judgment transcends their subjectivity to the degree to which it is based on independent thought and information, on a rational analysis and evaluation of their society. The existence of a majority of individuals capable of such rationality has been the assumption on which democratic theory has been based. If the established majority is not composed of such individuals, it does not think, will, and act as sovereign people.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 71)He admits, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“We are still confronted with the demand to state the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœconcrete alternative.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ The demand is meaningless if it asks for a blueprint of the specific

institutions and relationships which would be those of the new society: they cannot be determined a priori; they will develop, in trial and error, as the new society developsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| However, the question cannot be brushed aside by saying that what matters today is the destruction of the old, of the powers that be, making way for the emergence of the new. Such an answer neglects the essential fact that the old is not simply bad, that it delivers the goods, and that people have a real stake in it. There can be societies which are much worseÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| The system of corporate capitalism has the right to insist that those who work for its replacement justify their action.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 86)He concludes, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The construction of a free society would create new incentives for work. In the exploitative societies, the so-called work instinct is mainly the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| introjected necessity to perform productively in order to earn a living. But the life instincts themselves strive for the unification and enhancement of lifeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| they would provide the libidinal energy for work on the development of a reality which would no longer demands the exploitative repression of the Pleasure Principle. The ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœincentives ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ would then be built into the instinctual structure of menÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| The social expression of the liberated work instinct is COOPERATION, which, grounded in solidarity, directs the organization of the realm of necessity and the development of the realm of freedom.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Pg. 91)While much of this essay seems very ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Sixties,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• so to speak, its vision of a changed society may still appeal to those with somewhat of a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“revolutionaryÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• spirit.

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