

INTRODUCTION

Herbert Marcuse and the Vicissitudes of Critical Theory

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Herbert Marcuse was inextricably connected through his historical situation, his theoretical interests and undertakings, and the vicissitudes of personal life with the Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*).¹ The Institute was founded at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1923 as the first Marxist-oriented research institute in Germany. In 1930, Max Horkheimer was appointed director and under his leadership the Institute became renowned for its interdisciplinary research methodology and its project of developing a critical theory of contemporary society. Horkheimer assembled a remarkable group of theorists including T. W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, Leo Löwenthal, Franz Neumann, Marcuse, Frederick Pollock, and others who theorized the new forms of monopoly state capitalism, the culture industries, the authoritarian personality, and the modes of social control that emerged in the era of fascism, communism, and state capitalism.

¹ On the history and projects of the Institute for Social Research, also known as the "Frankfurt school," see Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973 (new edition, University of California Press, 1996); Helmut Dubiel, *Theory and Politics*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985; Douglas

In 1933, Marcuse joined the Institute and became one of the most active participants during its exile period in the United States from 1934 into the 1940s. Marcuse deeply identified with the work of the Institute and his fundamental project from the time that he joined it was developing a critical theory of society. This volume collects some later key texts of Marcuse's development of critical theory during the period of his greatest productivity and influence in the 1960s and 1970s. To set the stage for the essays that follow – many unknown and published here for the first time – I will sketch out Marcuse's work with the Institute for Social Research, his separation from the Institute when Horkheimer and Adorno returned to Germany in the late 1940s, and his own distinctive brand of critical theory which he developed from the 1940s until his death in 1979.

MARCUSE JOINS THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

Herbert Marcuse was born July 19, 1898 in Berlin, Germany. The son of Carl Marcuse, a prosperous Jewish merchant and Gertrud Kreslawsky, daughter of a wealthy German factory owner, Marcuse had a typical upper-middle class Jewish life during the first two decades of the twentieth century, in which anti-Semitism was not overt in Germany. Marcuse studied in the Mommsen Gymnasium in Berlin prior to World War I and served with the German army in the war. Transferred to Berlin early in 1918, he participated in the German revolution that drove Kaiser Wilhelm II out of Germany and established a Social Democratic government.²

After demobilization, Marcuse went to Freiburg to pursue his studies and received a doctorate in literature in 1922 for a dissertation on *The German Artist-Novel*. After a short career as a bookseller in Berlin, he returned to Freiburg and in 1928 began studying philosophy with Martin Heidegger, then one of the most significant thinkers in Germany.

Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*, Cambridge and Baltimore: Polity Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989; and Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, Cambridge and Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press and MIT Press, 1993. For collections of basic texts, see Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, New York: Continuum, 1982, and Douglas Kellner and Stephen Eric Bronner, editors, *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, New York and London: Routledge, 1989.

2. For documentation, see Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, Berkeley and London: University of California Press and Macmillan Press, 1984.