

THE HEGEMONIC LANGUAGE OF MODERNITY

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- **ABSTRACT:** The ideological crisis that closed the twentieth century suggests that “post-industrial” society has lost all modern references that set it in motion because the dialectical becoming of reality has become a literal commitment to the notion of “reason.” This reason is rooted in the modern totalitarian democratic capitalist system of post-industrial and consumer survival in which opposites end up expressing the senseless and reversionary character of Modernity.
- **KEY WORDS:** Reason. Modernity. One-dimensional man. Marcuse. Alienation.

Introduction

Modern science and technology have created material wealth, engendering a predetermined attitude in which the subject responds to preset expectations. The way to the truth is basically paved by the application of human reason understood as a growing faith in the capacity of man to reach a unique and true knowledge. This human being rooted in reason believes that human historical evolution is the result of a record of general progress as a transforming agent. This has meant that currently, there is a supranational culture that has resulted from a process of evolution of human societies and, simultaneously, a dissolution of the collective imaginary that conceals an impoverished subject clinging to a supposed autonomy. The background of this supposed autonomy is the absolute reason - unifying force - in which the collective identity reflects illusion and social nonsense. The increasing uniformity of progressive modern societies perceives human activity in a cumulative and unidirectional manner, denying the individual the possibility of becoming a subject that exercises its own freedom. This capitalist society based on pragmatic and totalitarian thought is the one that finally hegemonizes thought, language and, therefore, the individual. Faced with this predominant system, the individual responds by creating a false identification with individual and social needs and a false conscience that is immune to its own falsehood: a monopolistic capitalist society characterized by the rational nature of its irrationality. The work of the industrialized modern society delimits individual activity, leading man to his own self-alienation; the individual has worth and exists according to what he produces and consumes. This society with its promise of progress has led to the disintegration of individuality and

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the impossibility of the subject of self-realization as an autonomous agent because of the difficulty of questioning himself before the system of domination: an individual captive of his own development. This alienated man transforms his consciousness to the point of rendering it contradictory with regard to the condition expected of the same subject. The subject is mediated by a system that invalidates his creative capacity.

The Last Man. Man and History as Unidirectional Phenomena

The approach of the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel implicitly reaches modern society through Karl Marx and is reflected in the use of terms such as “primitive” or “advanced,” “traditional” or “modern” when discussing modern societies. Both thinkers considered that there is a coherent development of human societies beginning with the tribal societies, moving through monarchies and feudal aristocracies, and arriving at modern liberal democracy and capitalism with its technological foundation. Regarding the discussion of whether man was happier or could live better as a result of “historical progress,” Hegel and Marx believed that the evolution of societies was not infinite but would end at the moment when humanity had reached a form of society that fulfilled the most fundamental wishes of that society. Ultimately, each postulated the “end of history.” For Hegel, this end was the liberal state, whereas for Marx, it was a communist society. It was believed that there would be no further progress in terms of principles and institutions because the key issues would previously have been resolved.

In this same sense, the liberal principles in economics, particularly the free market, have spread and have created a high level of material prosperity both in developed countries and in countries that after World War II were part of the Third World. On many occasions, the liberal revolution in economics has been linked to political freedom throughout the world. The use of modern natural science has been a regulating mechanism of the coherent character of history. Modern natural science is the only important social activity because it is cumulative and guiding although its final effect on human happiness is ambiguous. The conquest of nature rooted in natural law is attributed to the scientific method and not to the rules established by man: the individuality of the human being is unknown when the foundation of everything is identified in nature. The development of modern natural science provides a uniform horizon of possibilities by praising the increasing uniformity of modern societies although the risk of eliminating individuality is unknown. This process of modernization produces a homogenization of all human societies without any connection to historical origins such as cultural heritage. Countries that are economically modernized over time must increasingly appear to be unified in a centralized state that replaces traditional forms of social organization with rational economic forms based on function and efficiency. This uniformity has been achieved through global markets and the creation of a universal culture of consumers in which there is a strong link between modern natural science and the universal evolution toward capitalism.

The unprecedented increase in material well-being is linked to the belief that modern science will improve life and diminish poverty and disease. However, Nature would be dominated by modern technology and end up serving human happiness. Furthermore, there was a belief that free and democratic government would spread gradually around the rest of the world. The ideals of the French Revolution would prevail; blind obedience would give way to rational self-government in which the individual would not have to serve any master but himself. Totalitarianism emerged in the modern politics of the power State, using technology and modern political organization to control the civilian population and to acquire economic resources. According to modern capitalist logic, the world has “improved” in specific ways: the unexpected collapse of Communism and the gradual dilution of both left-wing and right-wing dictatorships have led, in some cases, to the establishment of prosperous and stable democracies.

The concept of Totalitarianism emerged in the West after World War II to describe the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, tyrannies that were quite different from the traditional authoritarian regimes of the 19th century. Moreover, Hitler and Stalin attempted to redefine the concept of a strong state through social and political structures. The traditional despotisms in Spain and Latin America did not attempt to crush the private interests of civil society, but instead attempted to control them. These military dictatorships were not able to develop a systematic ideological project. The Soviet totalitarian state attempted to create a new man by modifying the structure of its beliefs and values. All of this was to be achieved by controlling the media, education and propaganda and even controlling intimate relationships. Take, for example, the case of the young Pavel Morozov, who denounced his parents to Stalin’s police and thus was considered a model child by the Stalinist system. This situation is fictionally portrayed in *1984* by George Orwell, in which children have a propensity to denounce anyone who is not within the established system. The main character, Winston, is fixing Mrs. Parsons’ sink:

“Up with your hands!” yelled a savage voice.

... Both of them were dressed in the blue shorts, grey shirts and red neckerchiefs which were the uniform of the Spies. Winston raised his hands above his head, both with an uneasy feeling, so vicious was the boy’s demeanor, that it was not altogether a game.

“You’re a traitor!” yelled the boy. “You’re a thought-criminal! You’re a Eurasian spy! I’ll shoot you, I’ll vaporize you, I’ll send you to the salt mines!” (ORWELL, 1983, p. 29-30).

The ultimate goal of Totalitarianism was “[...] not simply to deprive the new Soviet man of his freedom, but to make him fear freedom in favor of security, and to affirm the goodness of his chains even in the absence of coercion” (FUKUYAMA, 1992, p.56-57). For Fukuyama, man has managed to reach an evolutionary and historical apex:

[...] the universal historian finds traces of himself even in the utter depths of the sea, in the living slime. He stands astounded in the face of the enormous way that man has run, and his gaze quivers before the mightier wonder, the modern man who can see all the way! He stands proudly on the pyramid of the world-process; and while he lays the final stone of his knowledge, he seems to cry aloud to listening Nature: "We are at the top, we are at the top; we are the completion of Nature!" (FUKUYAMA, 1992, p. 93).

In his book *Animal Farm*, Orwell (2009) wrote a ruthless satire of Stalinism. The work's openness clearly reveals the corruption produced by totalitarian power in addition to the consequences and manipulation suffered by historical truth in times of political turmoil. The book demonstrates that such manipulation is evident even in such a key historical moment as the Bolshevik Revolution, whose primary objective was to create an egalitarian society. Instead, however, this premise was betrayed because to succeed in a revolution, outstanding individuals with a vision, such as the first Bolsheviks, are required (Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin). This revolution sought equality but began from the opposite principle - inequality:

No animal must ever live in a house, or sleep in a bed, or wear clothes, or drink alcohol, or smoke tobacco, or touch money, or engage in a trade. All the habits of Man are evil. And above all, no animal must tyrannise over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill another animal. All animals are equal (ORWELL, 2009, p. 57).

A strong individual who could lead such a revolution was required. In *Animal Farm*, the rebellion fails because it betrays its own identity and class interests.

The modern concept of progress arises from the continued success of modern natural science that finally allowed Francis Bacon to affirm the superiority of the modern over the ancient. Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle affirmed that the concept of progress relates to the cumulative and infinite acquisition of knowledge. The progress referred to by Fontenelle was linked to the scientific domain because it did not posit something similar in terms of social or political progress. Machiavelli was the first to contribute to the notion of social progress, proposing to liberate politics from the moral implications observed in classical philosophy, thus providing humanity with the means to overcome fortune. There were other proposals for progress such as those developed by the men of the Enlightenment, the economist Turgot and his biographer, Condorcet. One of the most serious attempts to describe a universal history was established by the German tradition led by Kant, affirming that history would at some time have an end point: human freedom. The creation of a just civil society and its subsequent universalization would be the point enabling an understanding of historical progress. Kant described the mechanism that would take humanity to the highest possible level, as represented by liberal institutions.

Hegel, Kant's successor and one of the forerunners of Modernity, stated that human freedom takes shape in the modern constitutional State: in liberal democracy. Hegel did

not believe that the historical process would continue indefinitely, but rather that it would come to an end with the establishment of free societies. Hegel posited the existence of higher levels of human rationality and freedom that would lead inevitably to absolute self-consciousness. To understand history as a unidirectional phenomenon, Bacon and Fontenelle maintained that knowledge is the key to understanding the directionality of history. This knowledge of the natural universe obtained through science demonstrates that human social activity is viewed as cumulative and directional.

Industrialization is not limited only to the application of technology to manufacturing or the creation of new machines but also serves to use human reason for social organization and for the establishment of a rational division of labor. An increase in productivity expands the internal market, creating new demands with larger requirements for the division of labor. The type of social organization required by industrial logic results in the rational organization of work, causing consistent changes in the social structure. Among these changes are the modern bureaucratic forms of organization that implement the rational organization of work by dividing the most complex tasks into a hierarchy of simpler tasks that can be routinely conducted. For Kafka, however, this reality was instead the ruin of modern man:

Through his work at the Workers Accident Insurance Institution (*Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt*), Kafka comes into contact with the social and labor problems of workers and is concerned with creating protective measures against workplace accidents. Repeatedly reflected in his works are the impotence of man against machines, the bureaucratic apparatus, the various representations of the State, in short - the whole world that Kafka encounters for the first time¹

One of the great difficulties that modernization theory faces is the accusation of ethnocentricity because it raises the experience of the West's development to a universal truth, thus neglecting its own "cultural limitations." This is the starting point for supporting the idea that Western political development is the only valid model. The destruction of modern civilization and its return to barbarism has been a recurring theme of science fiction. The current tendency to control nature with modern science has been attacked, and some suggest that it would be better not to manipulate nature and to return to a pre-industrial state. This criticism arises from the thinking of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was the first to question historical progress and the first to understand that the human experience had changed substantially over time. However, unlike Hegel, Rousseau believed that this historical change would lead humanity to ruin. All the needs created by modern consumerism come from human vanity or self-love (*amour propre*), as Rousseau called it. Rousseau's solution was to move away from modern technology and return to the natural state of man. However, this concern has been negatively contested by those who argue that the rejection of technology would lead developed countries from a *de facto* transformation to a condition of impoverishment similar to that of Third World countries:

¹ Camargo *in* Kafka (1985, p. 26).

Many countries have, of course, existed at the level of subsistence agriculture for generations, and the people living in them have doubtless achieved considerable happiness; but the likelihood that they could do so having once experienced the consumerism of a technological society is doubtful, and that they could be persuaded as a society to exchange one for the other even more so (FUKUYAMA, 1992, p. 135).

Economic liberalism, whose basis is to seek enrichment *ad infinitum* by the use of reason to fulfill the private desire for property, may be sufficient to explain the functioning of basic capitalist societies but not for the more developed ones. Hypercapitalist societies have an essentially irrational and premodern work ethic. This ethic has led its citizens to lead a type of ascetic life in which they risk dying prematurely because work is considered a redeeming virtue: “This suggests that even at the end of history, some form of irrational *thymos* is still necessary in order to keep our rational and liberal economic world going, at least if we want to be in the front row of the global economic powers” (FUKUYAMA, 1992, p. 314).

A systematic degenerative process is perceived in the work ethic that makes increasingly secular individuals reach a point of separation from their cultural roots. This logic has caused individual identity to be based on group identity (recognizing the loss of individuality, as does Orwell (1983, p. 281) when stating in *1984*, “The first thing you must realize is that power is collective. The individual only has power in so far as he ceases to be an individual”. The individual no longer seeks personal benefit, but rather seeks the well-being of the group to which he belongs: “Modern economics – the process of industrialization determined by modern economic science – is forcing the homogenization of mankind and is destroying a wide variety of traditional cultures in the process” (FUKUYAMA, 1992, p. 321). Domination strategies have varied over time. Control by military means is no longer necessary; control can be achieved through economic development or the struggle for democracy and freedom: “A state need not seek to maximize its power through traditional channels of military and territorial expansion: it can do so through economic growth, or by putting itself at the head of a struggle for freedom and democracy” (FUKUYAMA, 1992, p. 347).

The current modern problem recognized by Herbert Marcuse has been recorded throughout the course of history; however, he deemed it a normal consequence of the capitalist dynamic. There is an implicit recognition of modern man’s situation, although not sufficiently strong to recognize that a technology-based capitalist system has serious fractures that have led man to his own alienation. Even for Marcuse, the same concept of alienation reaches crisis levels in an advanced industrial society:

Again we are faced with one of the most annoying problems of advanced industrial civilization: the rational nature of its irrationality. Its productivity and efficiency, its ability to increase and spread comforts, to convert the superfluous into necessity and destruction to construction, the degree to which this civilization transforms the world of objects into the extension of the soul and body of man makes even the notion of alienation doubtful (MARCUSE, 2002, p. 31).

For the apologists of Modernity, compassion and the principles of equality and universal rights are more prominent today than at any other moment in history. According to these apologists, compassion embraces the lower classes, and liberal democracies do not seek to dominate their counterparts. In addition, liberal democracy curtails human instincts and, by doing so, has eliminated the very sources of imperialism. What is clear is that precisely the opposite occurs: the methods have become more acute. However, control, the loss of individuality and other evils of the modern era have not disappeared. Productivity in any capitalist country is based on the rational division of labor, which automatically implies that winners and losers exist because capital moves from one industry, region or country to another. Marcuse recognized the deceitful nature of the technology-based capitalist system that causes an individual to believe that he participates in the game of pursuing material things, thus placing him within the consumerist dynamic. This system works so well that it creates a false sense of belonging and satisfaction in people. This is perceived as an advantage of the system because there is a certain potential for participating in this game: "But the middle of that pyramid remains fairly capacious, and a high degree of social mobility permits nearly everyone to identify with the aspirations of the middle class and to think that they are, at least potentially, members of it" (FUKUYAMA, 1992, p. 391).

The One-Dimensional Man

The work of Herbert Marcuse includes both philosophical and political reasoning that allows us to understand the productivist logic and the different forms of consumption linked to postindustrial societies. Technological development has allowed both human relationships and cultural contexts to be identified at a single level. Marcuse's work enables the unveiling of the background of this capitalist society, which is nothing more than the existence of pragmatic and totalitarian thinking that hegemonizes all and, in turn, avoids determining its own existence. For Marcuse, one of the pillars of this totalitarian presence was the liberalism that entails a historical process of self-legitimization in a society pacified by the ideology of economic freedoms.

According to Marcuse (2002, p. 24), the concept of Totalitarianism is "[...] an all-embracing process of the history of the capitalist mode of production" and originates with the advent of the concept of the State and the birth of 18th century liberal society. Marcuse was able to define the different violent constructs arising from the origins of totalitarianism, such as the totalitarian-authoritarian State and its genocidal manifestations: fascism, National Socialism and totalitarian communism. The transformation of the liberal state into the totalitarian-authoritarian state occurs in the same social order. It is liberalism that ultimately generates the totalitarian-authoritarian state, which provides the foundation for the capitalist monopolistic State. Marcuse conceived of totalitarianism as a historical process with periods of economic and political instability arising from different forms of oppression that respond to this instability, such as violence, fascism and open terrorism. It is known that society's ruling classes have never hesitated to use violence in

times of political or economic fluctuation. Marcuse asserted that authoritarianism and the totalitarian-authoritarian State arise from a liberal society. This assertion resulted from an analysis of society's historical, social and political characteristics and revealed that both the totalitarian and monopolistic tendencies of liberal culture (economy) have become factors that manipulate political as well as social and cultural activities.

The various ideological constructs are determined by the material base of societies. A dialectical logic is generated between the ideological form and the base material, in which the first exerts a great influence on the second. In fact, according to Marcuse, politics is always at the service of bourgeois interests. "The vertical organization of a political construct that Marcuse correctly called the totalitarian-authoritarian State"² (DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 14, our translation) arises from free competition and concepts such as sole proprietorship, the accumulation of capital and centralization, such as the monopolistic economy (planned market and consumer control). Free competition, the seat of private enterprise, has not been able to contribute to the productive development of society and the individual because this production is determined by "solvent demand" and not by human needs, *per se*. Marcuse perceived the creation of its own ideological forms of domination in the origin of capitalism. The process of transformation from free enterprise to monopolistic enterprise implies the development of science, technology and totalitarian tendencies that belong to the monopolistic economy of production and the marketplace. This monopolistic economy of production leads to a taste for restraining controls and market manipulation, to competition itself and to the needs created by this same system, producing totalitarian tendencies in society that lead to the denial of public space and the invasion of the private sphere. Alexis de Tocqueville caught a glimpse of this tendency toward a capitalist economic society:

[...] I see an innumerable multitude of equal and similar men, who turn without ceasing on themselves to procure for themselves ruinous and vulgar pleasures with which they fill their soul. Each one withdrew from the others and lives as a stranger to the destiny of all the others. His children and personal friends constitute the entire human species for him. He is with his fellow citizens, but he does not see them; he touches them, and he does not feel them. He doesn't exist except within himself and himself alone. Even if he still has family, it can be said that he has no homeland³ (TOCQUEVILLE *apud* DIAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 16, our translation).

Despite de Tocqueville's description of the danger to democratic peoples, it was Marcuse who, by defining 20th century American democratic society as a "totalitarian

² "la forma política vertical de organización que Marcuse con toda propiedad llama Estado total-autoritario" (DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 14).

³ "[...] veo una multitud innumerable de hombres iguales y semejantes, que giran sin cesar sobre sí mismos para procurarse placeres ruines y vulgares con los que llenan su alma. Retirado cada uno aparte, vive como extraño al destino de todos los demás, y sólo sus hijos y sus amigos personales constituyen para él toda la especie humana; se halla junto a sus conciudadanos, pero no los ve; los toca y no los siente; no sólo existe si no en sí mismo y para él solo, y si bien le queda una familia; puede decirse que no tiene patria" (TOCQUEVILLE *apud* DIAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 16).

democracy,” concluded that contemporary industrial society is totalitarian because of its technological foundations. This is where the totalitarian term is linked not only to a society with terrorist-political coordination but also to “[...] a non-terrorist technical-economic coordination that operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests, thus preventing the emergence of an effective opposition against the whole” (MARCUSE, 2002, p. 25). Totalitarianism is not only linked to a specific form of government but can also be linked to a specific production and distribution system that coincides perfectly with a homogenizing dynamic that exerts control over economic logic and individual behavior and needs.

By exposing the transformation of a liberal to a totalitarian society, Marcuse revealed the transformation of a commercial and industrial capitalism to a modern monopolistic capitalism that seeks the presence of a strong State capable of mobilizing all authority. The monopolistic tendencies are the factors that determine the unification of a society with totalitarian control of both individual and social relationships. Society ends up responding to specific interests that have survived the historical process of competition. At the end of World War II, Marcuse (*apud* DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 23, our translation) warned that despite the end of fascism and National Socialism, the trend toward totalitarianism continued: “However, despite the end of the war, the underlying tendencies of totalitarianism intrinsic to the capitalist system since the age of the liberal State, continue to develop and even consolidate as a totalitarian democracy”⁴. Totalitarian tendencies develop alongside technical progress, opulence and pseudo-freedom.

As opposed to a totalitarian-authoritarian terror State, “totalitarian democracy” is the favorite form of government of an opulent society based on neoliberalism and globalization. The increasing productivity of this belated capitalist system is not used to eliminate unnecessary work or for the pursuit of welfare, but for the perpetration and intensification of the struggle for existence:

But what is decisive is that the total integration of individuals into society, and society’s negation of their own possibilities for liberation are not achieved by terror or dictatorship, but rather by democratic prosperity and the Welfare State. These constitute the cocoon of slavery that Max Weber foresaw as the last phase of a developed, industrialized society⁵ (DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 24, our translation).

Contemporary capitalism is characterized by a concealment of its true purposes behind a veil of freedom and progress. Starting with scientific technical development, material wealth, and increased consumption, the repressive phenomenon then lodges itself in the

⁴ “*Sin embargo, a pesar de la culminación de la guerra, las tendencias subyacentes del totalitarismo inmanente al sistema capitalista, desde la época del Estado liberal, continúan desarrollándose, hasta consolidarse como democracia totalitaria*” (MARCUSE *apud* DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 23).

⁵ “*Pero lo decisivo es que la integración total de los individuos a la sociedad, y la cancelación por la sociedad de sus propias posibilidades de liberación no se logran por el terror, por la dictadura, sino que son más bien la prosperidad democrática y el Estado de Bienestar los que constituyen el capullo de la esclavitud que Max Weber previó como la última fase de la sociedad industrial desarrollada*” (DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 24).

consciousness of a subject seeking a complete unification with the repressive logic of the system.

For Marcuse, introjection triumphed; it is the moment when people cannot reject the system of domination without denying themselves. Subverting the established values would be a revolt against prevailing thinking. Here is found a false identification of individual and social needs:

[...] triumph and end of introjection; the stage in which people cannot reject the system of domination without rejecting themselves, their own values and the instinctive needs that repress them. We would have to conclude that liberation would mean subversion against the will and against the prevailing interests of the vast majority of people. In this false identification of social and individual needs, in this deeply rooted “organic” adaptation of people to a terrible society, one that nevertheless works for profit, lie the limits of democratic persuasion and evolution⁶ (DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p.16, our translation).

At this time, our culture is experiencing a process of alienation through globalization and neoliberalism. These phenomena are causing a change in the essence of the human, which causes an inherent internalization of the neoliberal spirit in each individual. Globalization is a political and economic strategy of the power-holding groups, and it seeks to reduce all human cultural capital to a culture of marketplaces and consumption. In this manner, the process of globalization becomes a totalitarian ideology that limits any option of cultural development. For Marcuse, American capitalist society was a “closed society” because it normalizes and integrates all human existence into a single logic. Individuals reproduce the repression model and assimilate without open rejection.

In his most well-known work, *The One-Dimensional Man* 1964, Herbert Marcuse described advanced capitalist society as one in which man has lost the faculty of critical reasoning. Consumerism and the liberation of societal customs have transformed man into a being that is increasingly adapted and integrated into the system. Room for opposition and criticism is nonexistent. The one-dimensional society assimilates all genuine opposition and absorbs any alternatives. For Marcuse, capitalism not only determines the occupations, skills and socially required attitudes but also individual needs and aspirations. The establishment of a political discourse eliminates any resistance to the established system. This effect is achieved by the incessant creation of abundant material products that every day reach a greater number of people. This access to different goods and services allows us to internalize habits, attitudes and certain emotional and intellectual reactions that link the consumers with the producers and, in the end, to a totality. These products allow a process of indoctrination and manipulation to occur. A false conscience

⁶ “[...] triunfo y final de la introyección; la etapa en la que la gente no puede rechazar el sistema de dominación sin rechazarse a sí misma, a sus propios valores y necesidades instintivas que los reprimen. Tendríamos que concluir que la liberación significaría subversión contra la voluntad y contra los intereses prevaletentes de la gran mayoría de la gente. En esta falsa identificación de las necesidades sociales e individuales, en esta profundamente enraizada adaptación “orgánica” de la gente a una sociedad terrible, pero que funciona con provecho, yacen los límites de la persuasión y la evolución democráticas” (DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 16).

is created that has the peculiarity of being immune to its own falsehood. As these products become more accessible to the broader society, they cease to be a simple idea and become a way of life that reflects an indoctrination system that prevents an individual from imagining a qualitative life change from the pre-established one.

The ideas, aspirations or objectives that somehow transcend the established universe are not possible. These should conform instead to the pre-established system. In the logic of the one-dimensional man, there is a reduced gap between the given and the possible, between needs met and needs to be met. This is the point at which there is a leveling of classes that allows needs and satisfactions to be shared by the underlying population, thus strengthening the pre-established system. The pretense that the lower classes can access identical consumer goods as their counterparts reveals the degree of homogenization in Western capitalist culture that allows it to provide access to all. An excess of products is what creates market control and irrational consumption. The cult of the material is a primordial necessity before any type of spiritual or cultural need. This phenomenon is one of the most disturbing stages of Western culture: the rational nature of its irrationality. The essence of Western culture is based on contradiction: it turns superfluity into need and destruction into construction. The concept of individual alienation enters into crisis. There is no subject-object relation, only an object-object relation in which the human being is recognized in the products he acquires. The predominant forms of control of this society are technological. For today's individual, technological control has become the very reason for his being. Any type of contradiction is considered irrational, and opposition is non-existent. The individual suffers a subjugation that prevents him from being aware of his alienation. Advanced Western industrial culture is more ideological than cultures that preceded it because its essence is represented in the production process itself. What distinguishes contemporary society from its predecessors is the elimination of all contradiction. This culture suppresses and isolates any element that threatens its ideological existence.

For Marcuse, totalitarianism was linked to a political-terrorist and economic-technical uniformity that consolidates an individual's needs in the name of a common interest. The current political system has been established in a system of isolated discourses that with the passage of time are being incorporated into the dominant logic of the system: one-dimensionality. Marcuse's response to this situation is the presence of an individual capable of projecting his existence beyond the productive plane: the individual must be free. Consequently, the individual becomes a different being who breaks with the established system but who psychologically remains the same. This free subject is linked to a developed aesthetic sensuality. For Marcuse, there was a new development of an anthropology based on the awakening of a "biology" of the instincts. In a situation of material and symbolic alienation, the individual is able to initiate a new history in which "human beings are more aware of their ontological deployment"⁷ (DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 35, our translation).

⁷ "*seres humanos sean más conscientes de su despliegue ontológico*" (DÍAZ LABARCA, 2002, p. 35).

Huxley: The subjectivity of the individual as determined by scientific-economic parameters

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley (1989) develops the utopian requirements of a society whose capitalist system drives a uniformity that originates in the financial markets. This has been an unpostponable assumption that leads society to fit into a rigid economic model in which an individual's subjectivity is determined by scientific and economic parameters:

One egg, one embryo, one adult-normality. But a bokanovskified egg will bud, will proliferate, will divide. From eight to ninety-six buds, and every bud will grow into a perfectly formed embryo, and every embryo into a full-sized adult. Making ninety-six grow where only one grew before. Progress [...] (HUXLEY, 1989, p. 17).

In his work, Huxley's starting point was the appearance of automobile magnate Henry Ford. Huxley raised the question of science's role in modern societies: should man be the instrument of science or vice versa? The answer lies in the fact that science ceased to be an instrument of man and became the sole truth that has transformed humans into beings that are captive of their own development (self-alienation). The limitations of scientific knowledge that can only reveal an infinitesimal part of nature and its structure remain unknown. Whenever the disappearance of metaphysics is declared, science is revitalized because of its aspiration to the absolute. Huxley's *Brave New World* describes a life organized under technical parameters that ignore human ideals. However, the essence of the individual must be to aspire to a spiritual life: "The history of man reveals in his creations, the aspiration to a spiritual existence; only by the multiple and repeated expansion of the spirit does humanity elevate itself; there is no other way of authentic and indisputable progress"⁸ (FERIS OLMOS, 2002, p. 12, our translation).

Marcuse, conversely, postulated that new manners of self-realization are required that enable human beings to participate in their own historical process. These terms must be described negatively because they respond to the denial of the predominant modes:

Thus, economic freedom would mean the liberation of the economy: of being controlled by economic forces and relationships, of being at the mercy of the daily struggle for existence, of earning a living. Political freedom would mean the liberation of individuals from a policy over which they have no effective control. In the same way, intellectual freedom would mean the restoration of individual thought, which is currently absorbed by communication and mass indoctrination, the abolition of "public opinion" (MARCUSE, 2002, p. 24).

⁸ "La historia del hombre muestra, en sus creaciones, la promoción de la existencia a la vida espiritual; sólo por la múltiple y reiterada expansión del espíritu logra su elevación la humanidad; no hay otra vía de auténtico e indiscutible progreso" (FERIS OLMOS, 2002, p. 12).

Although science appears to be revolutionary and conquering, it must submit to the spiritual activity that provides meaning to human activity. Otherwise, man will continue living in a process of degradation. In *Brave New World*, Huxley reveals the philosophy that supports the entire text: an industrial epistemology linked to both systematized (automated) processes and specialized labor. Huxley's creative work provides an exhaustive description that immerses the reader in a world without concerns or questions and that builds a solid foundation for the development of industrialization that eliminates the human element. Facing these modern demands is: "[...] how the most sensitive consciences protest against the classifying men according to their productive functions and their volume of production"⁹ (FERIS OLMOS, 2002, p. 13, our translation).

Brave New World demonstrates how the intelligence and physical strength of each individual must adapt to society's needs. The various contemporary forms of change that come to mind in modern times, such as Marxism, eventually lead to "[...] the implementation of new and more rigid classes, of individuals conditioned *ab ovo*, without any possible variation, according to the needs of industry. And this must happen, fatally, when only the production and the producer and not the man are taken care of"¹⁰ (FERIS OLMOS, 2002, p.15, our translation).

According to Marcuse, the promoters of politics and the mass media have been systematically provoking one-dimensional thinking. Within this logic, reasoning constantly produces hypotheses that validate themselves and that, in turn, are repeated incessantly and monopolistically, becoming mandates:

For example, "free" are the institutions that operate (or are operated on) in the countries of the free world. Other transcendental modes of freedom are by definition anarchism, communism or propaganda. "Socialist" are all the intrusions in private companies that they don't carry out themselves (or by government contracts), such as universal and comprehensive health insurance, or the protection of natural resources against overly damaging commercialization, or the establishment of public services that could harm private profits. This totalitarian logic of real acts has its eastern component. There, freedom is the way of life instituted by a communist regime, and all other transcendent modes of freedom are either capitalist, or revisionist, or leftist sectarianism. In both fields the non-operational ideas are non-behavioral and subversive (MARCUSE, 2002, p. 36-37).

VELASCO GUERRERO, L. A. A linguagem hegemônica da modernidade. **Revista de Letras**, São Paulo, v.58, n.2, p.109-122, jul./dez. 2018.

⁹ "[...] cómo las conciencias más sensibles protestan contra la clasificación de los hombres según sus funciones productoras y según el volumen de producción de cada cual" (FERIS OLMOS, 2002, p. 13).

¹⁰ "[...] en la implantación de nuevas y más rígidas clases, de individuos acondicionados *ab ovo*, sin posible variación, según las necesidades industriales. Y ello debe ocurrir, fatalmente, cuando sólo se atiende a la producción y al productor, no al hombre". (FERIS OLMOS, 2002, p. 15).

- **RESUMO:** *A crise ideológica que encerrou o século XX sugere que a sociedade “pós-industrial” perdeu todas as referências modernas que a colocam em movimento, porque o fato dialético da realidade tornou-se um compromisso literal com a noção de “razão”. Essa razão está enraizada no moderno sistema capitalista democrático totalitário de sobrevivência pós-industrial e consumismo, no qual os opostos acabam expressando a natureza insensível e reversível da modernidade.*
- **PALAVRAS CHAVE:** *Razão. Modernidade. Homem unidimensional. Marcuse. Alienação.*

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