

# Marcuse & Critical Theory

Philosophy of Technology

Week 4

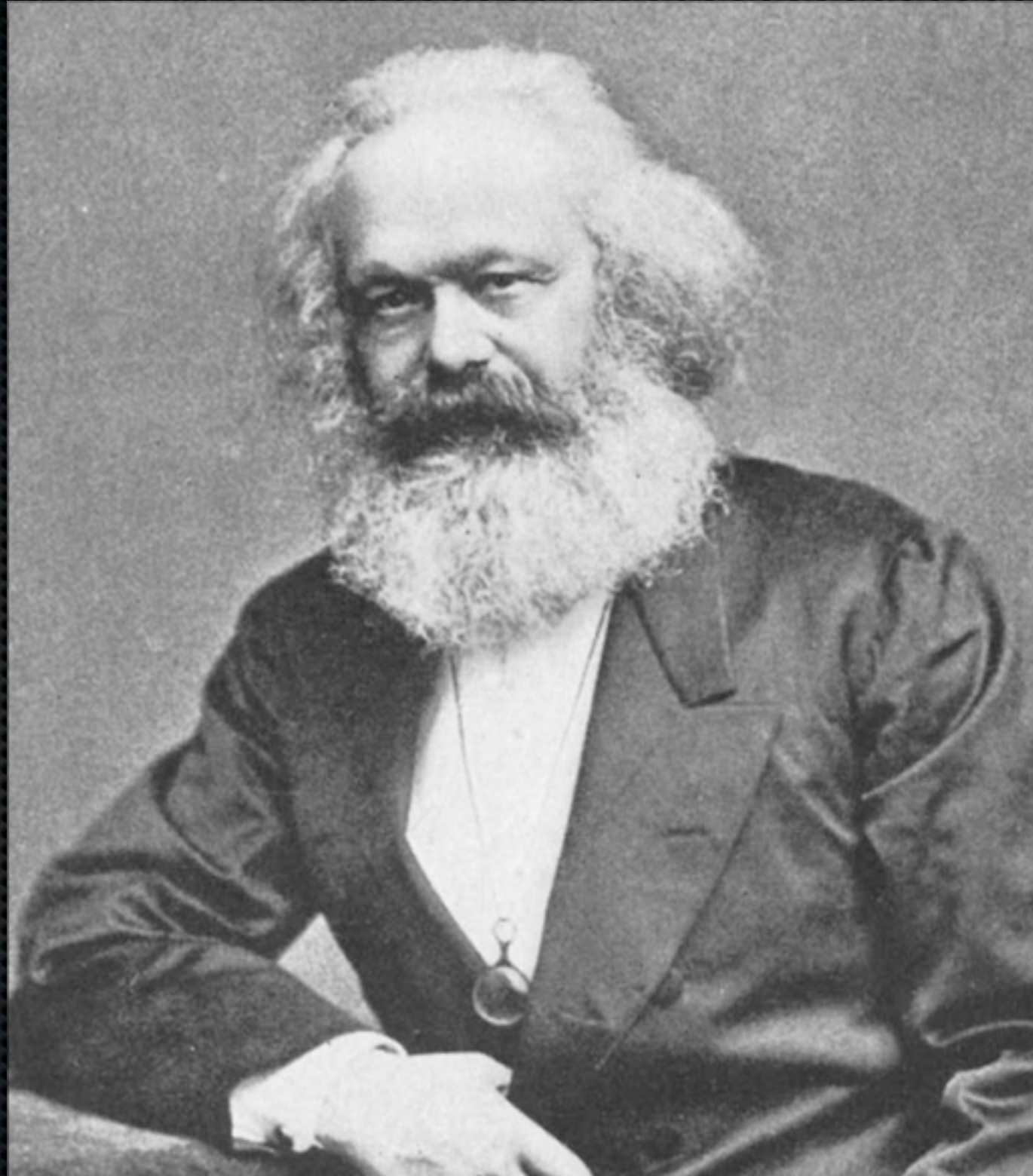


# This week...

- ✧ What is Critical Theory?
- ✧ Marcuse's Classical Critical Theory of Technology

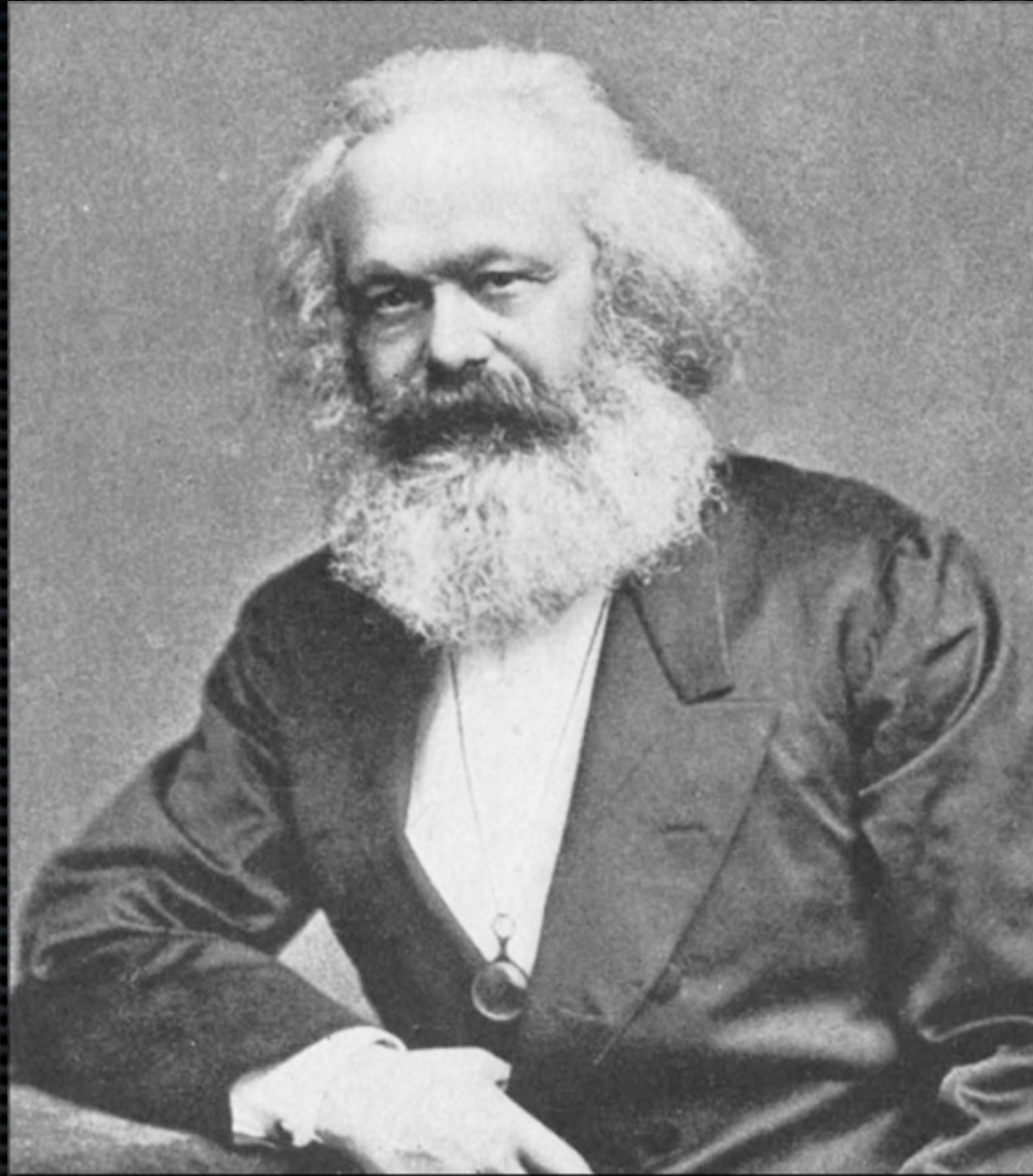


# Karl Marx



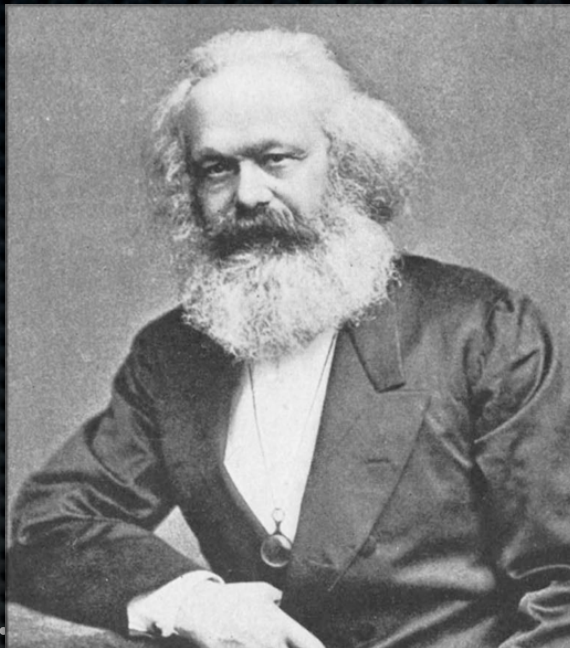


# Karl Marx

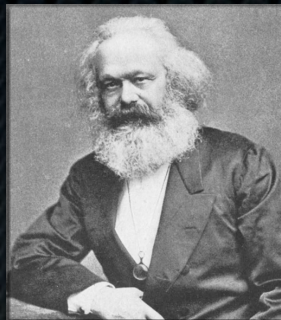


A critical theory is “the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age”











# Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979)



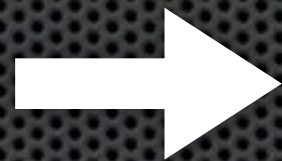


“The prevailing forms of social control are **technological** in a new sense... in the contemporary period, the technological controls appear to be the very embodiment of Reason for the benefit of all social groups and interests – to such an extent that all contradiction seems irrational and all counteraction impossible.” (38)





Being



economic forms  
political power  
social controls















“euphoria in unhappiness”



“repressive satisfaction”











“The intensity, the satisfaction, and even the character of human needs, beyond the biological level, have always been preconditioned... In this sense, human needs are historical needs and, to the extent to which society demands the repressive development of the individual, his needs themselves and their claim for satisfaction are subject to overriding critical standards.” (36)





“We may distinguish both true and false needs. ‘False’ are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice.” (36)





“Their satisfaction might be most gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability... to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease.” (36)





“The result then is euphoria in unhappiness. Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs.” (36)





“‘Truth’ and ‘falsehood’ of needs designate objective conditions to the extent to which the universal satisfaction of vital needs [nourishment, clothing, lodging] and, beyond it, the progressive alleviation of toil and poverty, are universally valid standards” (36)





“In the last analysis, the question of what are true and false needs must be answered by the individuals themselves, but only in the last analysis; that is, if and when they are free to give their own answer. As long as they are kept incapable of being autonomous, as long as they are indoctrinated and manipulated... their answer to this question cannot be taken as their own.” (36)





one-dimensional thinking



“We are again confronted with one of the most vexing aspects of advanced industrial civilization: the rational character of its irrationality. Its productivity and efficiency, its capacity to increase and spread comforts, to turn waste into need, and destruction into construction...”  
(37-8)





“...the extent to which this civilization transforms the object world into an extension of man’s mind and body makes the very notion of alienation questionable. The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split level home, kitchen equipment.” (38)









“[D]omination—in the guise of affluence and liberty—extends to all spheres of private and public existence, integrates all authentic opposition, absorbs all alternatives.” (42)





“Technological rationality reveals its political character 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.” (42)





what can be done?