

terms is a genuine defect, since repressive desublimation as the controlled releasing of libido energies into mass consumerism and away from radical change is one of the keys to the Marcusean theory of the one-dimensional society.

Basically, one-dimensional society is advanced industrial society which has become governed through the mass application of technology. What distinguishes Marcuse's concept of one-dimensionality from John Kenneth Galbraith's "new industrial state" with its "technostructure" is that such mass coordination of life is not benign but numbing and needlessly repressive. Jeremy Shapiro takes this condition as given, and with Marcuse sees as its consequence the collapse of traditional dichotomies such as subject and object, conscious and unconscious, art and science, as well as the end of the historical dialectic. Shapiro differs, however, from Marcuse's proposal for resolution. While Marcuse has urged the denial of free speech to "anti-life forces" like neo-Nazis in order to restart the dialectic, Shapiro suggests that we take one-dimensionality as "an historically irreversible stage, which we must regard as inevitable." Shapiro criticizes Marcuse for conceiving of "two-dimensionality" as historically normal and rooted in biological/material factors. He welcomes as a progressive step the degeneration of the dialectical orthogonality of traditional oppositions into the obliquity of ordinary life. The challenge today—that is, the nature of the dialectic today—is to formulate and analyze "everyday life" as the medium of experience. Unfortunately, Shapiro and, to an even greater extent, Jacoby, abstract too quickly on the meaning of contemporary existence as experienced by everybody.

In art, Shapiro notes the increasing technomorphization of both subject matter and approach, especially as developed in modern design. However, following the French structuralists, he moves to the rationalized "form as meaning," without acknowledging the mytho-poetic potentials of every day as expressed in Joyce's

Bloom in *Ulysses*. Similarly, Jacoby examines the nature of language and speech and finds that "now the people's language is the language of domination." He criticizes Marcuse for using a language too accessible to the public and media. Better for Marcuse to follow Horkheimer's wartime call "for a language not easily understood: to be understood is to be misunderstood; to be read is to be misread." This pessimism toward vernacular language not only underestimates the value of philosophical studies growing out of Ludwig Wittgenstein's school of ordinary language analysis, which virtually dominates present-day British philosophy, but also has dangerous implications for the relationship between truth and power. If to be protected from exploitation truth must be buried in an intellectual argot, then truth will speak only to itself. Power unchecked by even a whisper of truth will surely speak a language understood by all. These essays collected as "critical interruptions" do their jobs in a mixture of Marcusean jargon and standard American English. As such, they provide perspectives on each other and, aside from an occasional silliness, aid the cause of liberation central to the Marcusean theses.

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Anarchy and Order: Essays in Politics by Herbert Read

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Art and politics have never been comfortable in one another's company, which, if it explains why politicians are so often philistines, may also explain why artists are so often anarchists. Authority, order and law, even at their legitimate best, stifle spontaneity and fetter the imagination; as Howard Zinn complains (in his superfluous introduction to the book under review), "politics grates on our sensibilities. It violates the elementary requirements of aesthetics—it is devoid of beauty." But spontaneity and imagination are no less nefarious to social order and public welfare. Both indulge consciousness at the expense of action, disdaining the mundane in the name of aristocratic sensibility, spurning the worldly but critical needs of common men in the quest for the Essential Man.

The customary liberal response to this mutual incompatibility has been to cede to the artist an apolitical sanctuary where creativity can be pursued with reckless abandon, in return for his guarantee of non-intervention in the political arena—a kind of formal separation of Art and State in the interest of both parties. Not all artists have been willing to accommodate themselves to these conditions, however. Arguing that "the work of art is a product of the relationship between an individual and a society," some have rejected the schizophrenic functionalism of liberal pluralism and have insisted on the intrinsically social character of artistic creativity. To Marxists like Gorky and Sholokov, this has meant nothing less than putting art at the disposal of society—a variation with alarmingly infelicitous consequences for artistic autonomy. But one can also insist on putting society at the

disposal of art, thereby drowning the artist's loneliness in the waters of community without dampening in the slightest his creative individuality. The only social philosophy that can accommodate the eccentric proportions of this provocative variation on the theme is anarchism. The most ardent advocate of this style of anarchism in the present century has been Herbert Read, the English art critic and poet who is perhaps best known here for his raucously successful essay, *To Hell With Culture*. For Read, anarchism is rooted in art: "the poet is necessarily an anarchist," he proclaims in a passage that became his credo.

No one ought then to be surprised to discover that Read's *Essays in Politics* (published here for the first time under the title *Anarchy and Order*, seventeen years after the author's death), are really all about art—which is to say, are really about politics after all, which is to say, are finally about art. It may take the casual reader some time to arrive at the discovery, however; on first scanning, the essays appear to be narrowly political in the very worst sense—that is, strident, polemical and topical, and thus not merely dated but quite nearly quaint.

Read's insistent pacifism, for example, is argued from the perspective of World War I, a sad conflict of economic interests and national conceits with little relevance to the rabidly ideological total wars of more recent times. An argument advocating Jewish passive resistance against the Nazis or Vietnamese passive resistance against American B-52's can be made, but its tone and color will not be that of Read's civilized little piece on "The Perquisites of Peace." Likewise, Read's preoccupation with Spanish fascism and the potentialities of Spanish anarchism, while it may inspire a certain revolutionary nostalgia in those whom Tom Lehrer has called the "war buffs," can hardly seem to anyone to speak to man's current political condition. The consistently unhistorical character of his prophecy-prone optimism does nothing to render his point of view more

pertinent or even more plausible.

The archaic mood of Read's viewpoint is heightened by his periodic lapses into Luddite pique; in *To Hell With Culture* he called himself an "intellectual Luddite." Here, he cries, "I despise this foul industrial epoch," simultaneously invoking the name of Whitman and tipping his anarchist hat to the romantic primitivism of D. H. Lawrence. Nevertheless, the general tone of these essays is somewhat more accommodating to industrialism and technology: "I realize," he reluctantly concedes, "that industrialism must be endured; the poet must have bowels to digest its iron aliment. I am no yearning medievalist. . . ."

The significance of Read's book does not then lie in its political contemporaneity or in its polemics but in its philosophical treatment of the dilemmas of art and politics within an anarchist context. Read is occasionally incoherent, sometimes inconsistent, and almost always caustically abrasive (fascism and democracy are indistinguishable variations on a corrupt statist theme; the industrial proletariat is to be despised no less than the industrial plutocracy; Hobbes is a philosopher of totalitarian dictatorship—to cite only a few of his more pungently acrimonious slurs). But he is also eccentric, funny, thoughtful, persistent, trenchant and incorruptible: He is very clearly not for sale. Read's position can thus be taken to exemplify many of the strengths and not a few of the weaknesses of poetic anarchism, particularly in its mutualist variation.

To begin with, one perceives instantly in Read the fundamental affinities between anarchism and liberalism. Like liberalism, it is rooted in an identification of politics and power (sovereignty as legitimate coercion) that makes unavoidable the conclusion that politics is evil. If politics is synonymous with power, and if power is a "corroding essence," if—in the words of the nineteenth-century liberal, Lord Acton, whom this twentieth-century anarchist admiringly cites—"power tends to corrupt and absolute power cor-

rupts absolutely," then politics is not merely the enemy of art but the enemy of freedom, the enemy of man. The liberal may be content to express his distrust of power in the limits he places on politics (constitutions, rights, privacy, laissez-faire); the Marxist (in whom lurks the soul of an anarchist) may even anticipate the eventual withering away of politics; but the anarchist takes the bull by the horns—the Leviathan by its tail—and slays it outright. If politics means power and power means injustice, then to remedy injustice means to eradicate politics. Where the liberal sees in politics an evil made necessary by the inadequacies of man's nature and the stinginess of the earth, the anarchist can see only evil pure and simple—an unnecessary evil that alone obstructs man's road to cooperative abundance and true freedom.

Of course there are several alternative anarchist visions of apolitical life. Libertarian and individualist anarchists like Lysander Spooner and Max Stirner have envisioned a life that is not merely anarchistic but anomic and ego-centered as well. Read is a mutualist, however; anarchism attracts him precisely because he assumes that men are naturally communal, that coercive politics repress and pervert instinctual cooperativeness. His view of nature is not Darwin's but Prince Kropotkin's; Kropotkin had tried to justify his faith in anarchist mutualism by a scientific appeal to his own zoological findings. Cooperation, he argued, was the key to natural selection; the species most fit to survive were those that had discovered the art of collaboration. With Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* in hand, Read can argue—unlike the libertarian—that the abolition of politics will re-create the possibilities of communal life and thereby guarantee to the artist a safe haven for his creativity. The alternative to politics is not the Social Darwinist's jungle but the mutualist's natural community. Beauty and justice become facets of a single, precious gem.

The position Read so convincingly depicts has its difficulties: Like so many anarchist arguments it is fre-

quently elitist in tone (Nietzsche is admiringly cited), it neglects the problem of legitimacy that underlies most justifications of political coercion, and it takes a view of essential human nature so benign and promising as to make evil and suffering seem impossible except as products of accident or ignorance. But its most interesting and ironic flaw is its misperception of politics, its blind ahistoricity in attempting to marry politics to power in total disregard of the traditional intimacy that has existed between politics and community. Anarchism is here betrayed by its dependence on liberal notions of the state, on the neat but erroneous identification of the political with the coercive that anarchists and liberals have complacently shared.

The unsettling fact is that, if politics is understood in broader and more traditional terms as the art of community, Read's position falls short not only of persuasion but of anarchism! Though Read would have shuddered at the thought, his portrait of the common life, of man's natural gregariousness, of the need for participation and a sense of relatedness, is nothing less than a portrait of Political Man in his ideal form, of man the "political animal" (in Aristotle's phrase). Read's anarchism amounts not to a rejection of politics properly understood but a rejection of power (which he has confounded with politics): ". . . to escape the insanity of history," he pleads, "we must renounce power." Look carefully at his mutualist ideals—not Brook Farm or Walden or New Lanark, but Athens and Venice "in its Republican Glory," two of the most pervasively *political* communities the world has ever known, albeit two of the least coercive.

The wider understanding of politics this passage evinces does in fact find its way into Read's essays. He speaks in one place sympathetically of "real politics as local politics"—suggesting that local politics might make possible a "democracy of vital articulation and efficient force." Elsewhere, he seems concerned less with the abolition of power than with its

"federal devolution." In his first essay, he is content to argue that "freedom can only be preserved in small communities, free from a *central* and *impersonal* exercise of power" (emphasis added), suggesting a willingness to tolerate certain forms of coercion. One can persist in calling such arguments anarchistic, but they represent a challenge not to politics *an sich* but only to one parochial notion of politics which certain liberal social-contract theorists have tried to establish as The Notion of Politics. Conversely, the alternative vision of community propounded by Read, though he calls it mutualism, is in fact but the paragon polity, *par excellence*.

The confounding of power and politics derives in part, no doubt, from Read's preoccupation as an artist with the perilous coercive potentialities of social relationships and political structures. What he seeks is not freedom in the abstract but artistic freedom—a climate within which the artist can be autonomously productive yet related in his being and his work to a community of his fellow men. In Read's terms, the artist must escape the power and regimentation that can paralyze him from without by escaping out of politics; he must escape the alienation and meaninglessness that can cripple him from within by escaping into community, into politics properly understood.

Finally, though, one can doubt that the artist's dilemma is capable of such solution—call it politics, mutualism or anarchism. For there is at least one central aspect of the artist's alienation for which society, however inhospitable, cannot bear the blame: apartness is the price exacted by consciousness itself, whatever the context. As Read cannot avoid acknowledging, the man "who possesses a superior sensibility and insight . . . stands apart from the masses—not disdainfully but simply because he can exercise his faculties only from a distance and in solitude." There is, in Read's own regretful words, "a dialectic of the human personality" in which "imagination ren-

ders a man incapable of determinate action" while "determinate action inhibits imagination." In his artist's soul he knows this, but in his crusader's hopeful heart he cannot bring himself to draw the painful but necessary inferences: that the artist is forever a man apart, a man alone; that his alienation is a self-alienation reflecting the very structure of artistic consciousness; and that the attempt to integrate the artist and the community—even in its ideal form—can only lead to the perversion of both art and the community. For either the artist will be swallowed up, his craftsmanship appropriated, his creativity imprisoned and his freedom rendered imitative and inauthentic, or he will vanquish and then make over the community in his own image—producing a most awful tyranny. "There is no worse social misdeed than forcing the masses to holiness," writes Gustave Thibon in a passage which, although Read cites it for his own purposes, stands as a portentous warning to the proselytizing anarchist poet.

In another citation whose burden also appears to escape him, Read transcribes Paul Klee's insight, "*Uns trägt kein Volk*," taking it to mean "we [the artists] lack a people." But surely Klee intends to convey a more melancholy reality: that "no society, no people, can bear us," that we are condemned by consciousness to loneliness, and we can never anticipate being carried, being tolerated, by communities of the mundane.

In the end, one has the feeling that Read's ultimate struggle was less against injustice in the world than against the enforced solitude of his inner life; that, as an artist whose consciousness would not permit him to get out of himself into the world, he had to find a way to bring the world into himself. It seems unlikely that this struggle could have had any other personal outcome than futility; but it was a struggle in whose dark shadows Read found the inspiration to illuminate the dilemmas of art and politics in hues so vivid that the anarchist landscape will never look quite the same again.