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# Howells and Marcuse: A Forecast of the One-Dimensional Age

BOTH LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORIANS TEND TO AGREE THAT THE works of William Dean Howells demonstrate valuable insights into the social and political issues of his time. These same insights, however, also provide an important link between Howells and our own age and further prove, as many writers have claimed, that Howells was a modern consciousness.<sup>1</sup> A comparison of many of Howells' ideas with those of a contemporary writer such as Herbert Marcuse will show that Howells' social vision is relevant to modern problems and issues.

The obvious differences between Howells and Marcuse at first seem to outweigh any similarities in significance. In addition to their sharply contrasting backgrounds, careers and intellectual sources, an important historical gap exists between them. Howells wrote about the cultural and industrial process transforming the American character during its early stages while Marcuse describes its machinations during its full maturity.

In spite of these differences, however, both men fall within the purview of an American tradition of moral dissent against popular attitudes and values. Although a leader for several decades of the American arts and letters "establishment," Howells' political and economic ideas created considerable concern and consternation among some of his contemporaries. Soon after he published the "Letters of an Altrurian Traveller" in *The Cosmopolitan*, *The New York Herald* on September 23, 1894 ran "Poets Become Socialists Too: Howells Champions Socialism." The anonymous article called Howells "the foremost champion of socialism among literary

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth S. Lynn, *William Dean Howells: An American Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971) calls Howells a modern consciousness but concentrates on Howells as an artist. See also William M. Gibson rev. of *The Achievement of William Dean Howells: A Reinterpretation* by Kermit Vanderbilt, *American Literature*, 44 (May 1972), 327-28.

men of the present time."<sup>2</sup> Howells, it said, espoused the "unpopular doctrine" to the "surprise and mystification" of his friends.

Moreover, Howells' developing pessimism over American political and economic life also indicates his contemporaneity. He wrote to Henry James: "I should hardly like to trust pen and ink with all the audacity of my social ideals; but after fifty years of optimistic content with 'civilization' and its ability to come out all right in the end, I now abhor it, and feel that it is coming out all wrong in the end, unless it bases itself anew on real equality."<sup>3</sup> Howells, like many modern social critics, including Marcuse, believed that hostility to meaningful change helped make all segments of American society responsible for worsening conditions. Howells frequently shows how such conservatism and culpability operate in three areas of American life that receive considerable attention from Marcuse: the domination of materialistic values, the confusion of true and false needs and one-dimensional thought. I shall consider the similarity of their views on these three subjects of values, needs and thought, hoping to indicate in the process other areas in which worthwhile comparisons can be made.

The basis of Marcuse's program of social and cultural reorganization rests on his attempt in *Eros and Civilization* to merge the ideas of Freud and Marx. The idea is not totally new with Marcuse. As early as 1932 Wilhelm Reich's association of the death principle and psychoanalysis with capitalism and with Marx aroused Freud's criticism. Marcuse, however, believes that since then the new technology has given man the power to reconstruct his relationship with his environment and to redesign a culture based on true freedom and eros. His widely disseminated ideas on this subject have generated extensive discussion in both popular and academic publications.

Marcuse, however, does not rely solely upon Freud and Marx to explain the continuations of "surplus repression." In *One-Dimensional Man* Marcuse develops a dynamic metaphor to describe the nature and ideology of

<sup>2</sup>*New York Herald*, Sunday, Sept. 23, 1894, Sec. 6, p. 7. This anonymous article and a second one that appeared in the *New York Daily Tribune*, Sunday, Sept. 30, 1894 are discussed by Clara Marburg Kirk in *W. D. Howells, Traveler from Altruria 1889-1894* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 97-98. For a complete bibliography of articles discussing the sources and nature of Howells' political, social and economic thought see James L. Woodress and Stanley P. Anderson, "A Bibliography of Writing About William Dean Howells," *American Literary Realism*, Special Number, 1969 and Ulrich Halfmann and Don R. Smith, "William Dean Howells: A Revised and Annotated Bibliography of Secondary Comment in Periodicals and Newspapers, 1868-1919," *American Literary Realism*, 5 (Spring 1972), 91-121.

<sup>3</sup>Howells to Henry James, Oct. 10, 1888 in *Life in Letters of William Dean Howells*, ed. Mildred Howells (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1928), I, 417. Howells was capable of laughing at his own pessimism. In a later letter he said that both he and Mark Twain deserved the epithet "theoretical socialists and practical aristocrats." See Howells to William Cooper Howells, Feb. 2, 1890, *Life in Letters*, I, 417.

modern society. He argues that the new technology, which potentially could be the vehicle for man's liberation, now operates as a negative and debasing force by controlling man's everyday social, political and intellectual life through the subversion of his independence and autonomy. In *One-Dimensional Man* he argues that men have sold their souls—their potential for liberation and transcendence—to what Karl Jaspers called the “technical life-order.” Technocracy, according to Marcuse, confuses freedom with abundance and teaches that autonomy and independence are technical impossibilities. “The loss,” he writes, “of the economic and political liberties which were the real achievement of the preceding two centuries may seem slight damage in a state capable of making the administered life secure and comfortable. If the individuals are satisfied to the point of happiness with the goods and services handed down to them by the administration, why should they insist on different institutions for a different production of different goods and services?”<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, material wants lead only to perennial dissatisfaction and gluttony. “This society,” he writes, “is obscene in producing and indecently exposing a stifling abundance of wares while depriving its victims abroad of the necessities of life; obscene in stuffing itself and its garbage cans while poisoning and burning the scarce foodstuffs in the fields of its aggression; obscene in the words and smiles of its politicians and entertainers; in its prayers, in its ignorance, and in the wisdom of its kept intellectuals.”<sup>5</sup>

Howells presents a similar picture of American values in many of his writings, especially in *The Altrurian Romances*. Although, as Edward Wagenknecht says, the *Romances* are not “the full index of his mind,” they do encompass most of the ideas expressed in Howells' economic novels and essays.<sup>6</sup> A New Hampshire resort provides the setting for the most important romance, *A Traveller from Altruria*. Early in the story, Mr. Twelvemough, a popular writer, tells Mr. Homos, his Altrurian guest, “our hotel is a sort of microcosm of the American republic.”<sup>7</sup> The hotel with its working and serving class, its affluent middle- and upper-class guests and its domination of the surrounding countryside clearly symbolizes American class stratification and inequality. The hotel further dramatizes a view that Howells expresses in the essay “Are We A Plutocracy?” published the same year as the novel. “The tramps,” Howells wrote, “walk the land like

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), pp. 7–8.

<sup>6</sup> Wagenknecht, *William Dean Howells: The Friendly Eye* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 259.

<sup>7</sup> *A Traveller from Altruria* in *The Altrurian Romances*, eds. Clara and Rudolf Kirk (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1968), p. 28. All subsequent references to *The Altrurian Romances* will be from this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

the squalid spectres of the laborers who once tilled it. The miners have swarmed up out of their pits, to starve in the open air. . . . If there is much cold and hunger, the price of food and fuel is yet so high as to afford a margin to the operators in coal and grain and meat."<sup>8</sup>

The hotel as a symbol also suggests the perversion of the American Dream in a new society whose economic system demanded the waste and misuse of both natural and human resources. The strife during the years of Howells' radicalization indicated growing frustration over the seizure of traditional outlets for creative energy and individual choice by morally corrupt powers. Several times in *A Traveller from Altruria* Reuben Camp tells Homos that new land is unavailable at reasonable prices and that the old land will no longer sustain a family. In his essay on "Plutocracy" Howells wrote: "The public domain, where in some sort the poor might have provided for themselves, has been lavished on corporations, and its millions of acres have melted away as if they had been a like area of summer clouds."<sup>9</sup>

The problem, however, as Howells saw it rested on the fact that neither the lower nor the middle classes felt any sense of moral outrage over injustice great enough to diminish their desire to rise socially and economically in the world. Only Mrs. Camp and Reuben, who live outside of the hotel, challenge the system's morality. The workers and guests willingly subvert their moral inclinations before the opportunity to profit from the system. Twelvemough describes the situation when he says of Homos: "I felt it ought to have been self-evident to him that when a commonwealth of 60,000,000 Americans based itself upon the great principle of self-seeking, self-seeking was the best thing, and whatever hardship it seemed to work, it must carry with it unseen blessings in ten-fold measure" (p. 71). The manufacturer, after noting that "the real discontent is with the whole system, with the nature of things," goes on to say that any incentive for real equality among the working class dissipates when "they begin to rise. Then they get rid of it mighty soon. Let a man save something—enough to get a house of his own, and take a boarder or two, and perhaps have a little money at interest—and he sees the matter in another light" (pp. 44, 46).

The insatiable appetite of most Americans for material success Howells condemns in his essay on "Plutocracy." He writes that any wage earner "is ready at the first chance to become a wagegiver, and to prosper as far as he can" because "in his heart, he is as thoroughly a plutocrat as any present millionaire."<sup>10</sup> Howells, as already noted, is especially modern in this refusal to put excessive blame for the system upon one group of privileged people. They may be foolish and ugly like Mrs. Makely and Mrs. Munger,

<sup>8</sup>"Are We A Plutocracy?" *North American Review*, 158 (Feb. 1894), 194.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

spoiled like the Dryfoos girls or mean like Gerrish in *Annie Kilburn*, but they cannot be made to carry the responsibility for the society. "In fact," writes Howells in his essay, "if we have ceased to be a democracy and have become a plutocracy, it is because the immense majority of the American people have no god before Mammon. . . . If we have a plutocracy, it may be partly because the rich want it, but it is infinitely more because the poor choose it or allow it."<sup>11</sup> Americans, he writes in the essay, have it within their power to change the system through the vote. Similarly, in *A Traveller from Altruria* the banker says of the farmers and workers: "They can make any law they want, but they prefer to break such laws as we have" (p. 129). In contrast, the community in *Annie Kilburn* votes against Gerrish, but such behavior is exceptional.

It may be, as William F. Ekstrom says, that taken to its extreme Howells' view of equality becomes fatuous.<sup>12</sup> Howells, however, uses the term in an almost modern existential sense. True equality, he believes, stems from an inner spiritual source potent enough to counter predominating dehumanizing social forces. Partly from the Christian Socialists he developed the idea of the criminal nature of capitalistic society. But, as Louis Budd indicates, probably Tolstoy's ideas of spirituality affected Howells most powerfully.<sup>13</sup> Like Tolstoy's, Howells' idea of equality requires that man look within himself to develop his instincts for goodness and equality. "We shall not have fraternity, human brotherhood," Howells wrote in 1896, "without trying for it. From nature it did not come; it came from the heart of man, who in the midst of nature is above it."<sup>14</sup> Society, he believes, enervates man's naturally warm and brotherly instinct. "Social equality," Howells writes, "is the expression of an instinct implanted in us from the first, as we see in children, who, until they are deprived by their elders, have no conception of social differences."<sup>15</sup>

Agreeing on the baseness of dominant American values, Howells and Marcuse also concur on some of the techniques the society uses to perpetuate these values. The technocracy, Marcuse believes, uses its enormous capacity for production and communications to create false consumer needs. These false needs tend to arouse among consumers a false sense of dependence that engages their loyalty. Marcuse writes:

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

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 196.

<sup>12</sup> "The Equalitarian Principle of William Dean Howells," *American Literature*, 24 (Mar. 1952), 40.

<sup>13</sup> See Louis J. Budd, "William Dean Howells' Debt to Tolstoy," *American Slavic and East European Review*, 9 (Dec. 1950), 292-301.

<sup>14</sup> "Who Are Our Brethren?" *Century*, 60 (Apr. 1896), 935.

<sup>15</sup> "Equality As the Basis of Good Society," *Century*, 60 (Nov. 1895), 64.

needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery and injustice. 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 (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. 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.<sup>16</sup>

Howells in many ways anticipated this distinction made by Marcuse between real and false needs. An unqualified supporter of the work of Thorstein Veblen, Howells helped establish the sociologist's reputation by introducing and interpreting his ideas to wider, popular audiences.<sup>17</sup> This relationship indicates Howells' understanding of and sympathy for Veblen's epochal insights into American values. Moreover, as Jay Martin says, Howells examines the social and economic problems in his novels through the perspective of the anxious affluent, the group in which false needs most obviously operate. Howells, Martin writes, "is chiefly concerned with the degrading effects of competitive capitalism upon the upper and middle classes."<sup>18</sup> In his essays "Equality As the Basis of Good Society" and "Who Are Our Brethren?" Howells indicates that a confusion between human nature and social conditions creates false needs. "It seems to me," he writes, "that we are always mistaking our conditions for our natures, and saying that human nature is greedy and mean and false and cruel, when only its conditions are so."<sup>19</sup> As early as *The Rise of Silas Lapham* Howells demonstrated the difference between false and true needs. The strength of the Lapham girls derives from their ability to make such distinctions. In *A Hazard of New Fortunes* Beaton and the Dryfoos girls embody false needs, while Fulkerson consciously tries to manipulate public needs to market *Every Other Week*. In contrast, Lindau gets to the heart of essential needs when he returns to the slums because he "was beginning to forget the boor."<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, false needs so effectively alter the Dryfoos family that a return to a simple farm life proves unthinkable. March toward the end of the novel addresses himself directly to this problem of false needs and tastes: "But conditions *make* character; and people are greedy and foolish, and wish to have and to shine, because having and shining are held

<sup>16</sup> *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>17</sup> Edwin H. Cady, *The Realist At War: The Mature Years 1885-1920 of William Dean Howells* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1958), p. 153.

<sup>18</sup> Jay Martin, *Harvests of Change: American Literature 1865-1914* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 228.

<sup>19</sup> "Equality," p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, ed. Van Wyck Brooks (1890: rpt. New York: Bantam, 1960), p. 161.

up to them by civilization as the chief good of life."<sup>21</sup> *The Altrurian Romances* serve almost as a guidebook to making these kinds of distinctions between true and false needs.

For Howells and Marcuse the inculcation of false needs vitiates the boundary between the self and the society. Emotional dependence upon the satisfaction of these needs results finally in what Marcuse calls "one-dimensional thought." The "transplantation" of social values provides the process for the development of such thought. He writes:

Indeed, in the most highly developed areas of contemporary society, the transplantation of social into individual needs is so effective that the difference between them seems to be purely theoretical. Can one really distinguish between the mass media as instruments of information and entertainment, and as agents of manipulation and indoctrination? Between the automobile as nuisance and as convenience? Between the horrors and the comforts of functional architecture? Between the work for national defense and the work for corporate gain? Between the private pleasure and the commercial and political utility involved in increasing the birth rate?<sup>22</sup>

To Marcuse the confusion over "the private pleasure and the commercial and political utility" of that pleasure on the level of social, political and economic action operates on an intellectual level in the form of one-dimensional thought. Feeling totally dependent upon the society, the individual in both his private and public deliberations tends to think in terms conducive to the perpetuation of that society. Public language becomes, again in Jaspers' phrase, the "language of mystification," and thought exhibits the ambience of a false consciousness in which ideas and feelings lose their personal and autonomous authenticity. One-dimensional thought becomes the means for the rationalization of a society that transforms all negations and opposing reality into turbid affirmations. He says the omnipresent communications, production and transportation network of the society

... carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life—much better than before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behavior* in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 379.

<sup>22</sup> *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 8-9.

reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its quantitative extension.<sup>23</sup>

Howells' *A Traveller from Altruria* dramatizes such one-dimensional thought and behavior. At one point in the novel Mrs. Makely genuinely shocks Homos who asks her: " 'Do you really think Christ meant that you *ought* always to have the poor with you?' 'Why of course!' she answered triumphantly. 'How else are the sympathies of the rich to be cultivated? The poverty of some and the wealth of others, isn't that what forms the great ties of human brotherhood?' " (p. 88). Beneath the humor of this exchange is a clear example of the kind of one-dimensional thought that occurs throughout the book. Mrs. Makely's justification of poverty was only the most extreme indication of the way most Americans in the story rejected or reduced challenging ideas.

Other examples of this kind of thinking are: the belief that Americans do not legislate morality in spite of everyday examples to the reverse (p. 22); the pride in suicidal overwork (p. 29); the belief in the superior social position of the American working man (p. 37); the reduction of Emerson to a "prophet" of business (p. 34); the imposition upon nature of humanly contrived values about the survival of the fittest (p. 48); the justification of poverty as an incentive for self-improvement and work (p. 50); the justification of leisure as work (p. 63); the rationalization that slavery was harder on the masters than on the slaves (p. 68); the self-validating argument that whatever the most people are doing is right (p. 71); the belief that poverty results only from irresponsibility (p. 81); the idea that individuality is possible without the means to support it (p. 94); the double standard of justice (p. 101); the equation of the poor with the sick and the insane (p. 113); the self-serving argument that business is business (p. 116); the glorification of the wealthy solely because of their wealth (p. 120); the belief that money can even buy goodness (p. 136).

Among the clique of Twelvemough's friends these assumptions are discussed and examined in a way that conforms to the pattern of one-dimensional thought. The conversations are a form of entertainment in which none of the participants feel challenged. None seriously considers alternatives or envisions a new dimension of reality for himself. Suggestions for alternative life styles and more humane economic and political systems are reduced to either a joke, as when the manufacturer discusses his union problems, or to a fantasy, as when the banker discusses a working-class or Socialist victory at the polls (pp. 45-46, 128-29). Equally important, the life style and background of these characters and the setting for their conversations at a luxurious hotel provide almost a working model of the elements necessary for the growth of one-dimensionality.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 12.



It is interesting that in this novel Howells felt compelled to move out of conventional realism and into utopian fantasy in order to find a perspective free enough from contemporary prejudices to view and criticize modern society. In *A Hazard of New Fortunes* Conrad Dryfoos and Lindau each operates as a moral consciousness critical of putative values. But in *The Altrurian Romances*, as Edwin H. Cady writes, "the fantasy of Altruria is used here as a foil for the United States. Once again the issue most in question is the American Dream. Altruria glows in the distance as the standard of what America might become if she were truly and thoroughly democratic."<sup>24</sup> This use of Altruria by Howells becomes even more apparent in the "Letters of An Altrurian Traveller" in which "the old American life, the old American ideals, the old American principles" and "the old American instincts" are discussed (pp. 190, 191). The search for the old America and the true America serves the further purpose of dramatizing the vitiation by one-dimensional thought of a true historical consciousness. The historical naivete of most Americans continually confounds the Altrurian, while the banker's interpretation of the history of social equality and the Declaration of Independence effectively illustrates the perversion of the past for purposes of justifying the present (pp. 40, 118). On this subject Marcuse writes:

The functional language is a radically anti-historical language: operational rationality has little room and little use for historical reason. Is this fight against history part of the fight against a dimension of the mind in which centrifugal faculties and forces might develop—faculties and forces that might hinder the total coordination of the individual with the society? Remembrance of the past may give rise to dangerous insights, and the established society seems to be apprehensive of the subversive contents of memory. Remembrance is a mode of dissociation from the given facts, a mode of "mediation" which breaks for short moments, the omnipresent power of the given facts.<sup>25</sup>

For Marcuse tolerance, like history, is perverted to sustain one-dimensional thought. Marcuse argues that contemporary conditions have made the liberal rationale for "pure tolerance" irrelevant. In the one-dimensional society, he says, tolerance "serves the protection and preservation of a repressive society" while functioning as a safety valve for the release, dilution and eventual repression and rejection of ideas dangerous to itself.<sup>26</sup>

In *A Traveller from Altruria* Howells also demonstrates how tolerance becomes an instrument of self-serving, one-dimensional thought. The treatment Homos receives from the hotel guests presents an example of

<sup>24</sup> *The Realist At War*, p. 198.

<sup>25</sup> *One-Dimensional Man*, p. 98.

<sup>26</sup> "Repressive Tolerance" in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore Jr., Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), p. 111.

such behavior and thought. The comfortable patrons accept and tolerate him as an entertaining addition to the hotel. They welcome rather than ostracize him. He becomes part of the society because its members refuse to allow him or his ideas to represent a challenge to their way of life. At one point Twelvemough seems to penetrate the situation. "I glanced at the Altrurian sitting attentive and silent, and a sudden misgiving crossed my mind concerning him. Was he merely a sort of spiritual solvent, sent for the moment to precipitate whatever sincerity there was in us, and show us what the truth was concerning our relations to each other?" (p. 99). However, in characteristic one-dimensional mass media fashion, Twelvemough immediately turns such an imposing idea into something of use and entertainment. He presents us with a classic example of one-dimensional "co-optation" as he considers using his idea about Homos "in some sort of purely romantic design" for one of his own popular stories. "I was professionally grateful for it," Twelvemough adds (p. 99).

In the important speech scene at the end of the novel Howells presents an even stronger example of one-dimensional tolerance and "co-optation." He achieves a highly ironic effect when the audience manages to both accept and disregard Homos' ideas. The speech, which was sponsored, supported and attended by society, represents the Altrurian's most heroic effort to proffer a new dimension of reality to the Americans. Mrs. Makely even cheers the speech while depersonalizing its contents so completely as to make them impotent. Her cheers, the professor's skepticism and the workers' pessimism result in the same thing—rejection.

The reaction of the workers to Homos and the speech holds a special place of importance in the novel. They grow enthusiastic and their spokesman Reuben Camp says: "Have Altruria right here, and right now!" (p. 177). For a moment the sympathetic workers seem to overcome one-dimensional thought. But the anticlimactic ending of the novel denies Reuben the fulfillment of his expectations and denies the workers any chance for the satisfaction of their hopes. After his speech the Altrurian leaves and eventually disappears among the people in the country and factory towns. His dream for America disappears with him.

To counter what he considers to be the "repressive tolerance" of the majority, Marcuse has proposed a doctrine of "discriminatory tolerance" involving "intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left."<sup>27</sup> He sees this as the only solution to what he calls the "absurd situation" of democracy: "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

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

this framework, but at the same time, preservation of the established democracy preserves the *status quo* and the containment of change.”<sup>28</sup> This same dilemma appears in *A Traveller from Altruria*. Howells, of course, never found a satisfactory solution to the problem of encouraging change and mitigating injustice within the framework of one-dimensional democracy. When Howells elaborated upon his utopia in *Through the Eye of the Needle*, this tension remained in a manner that gives that work special relevance today. On the one hand, Howells, like other utopian writers, anticipated the possibility of reorganizing modern society along lines that would make men happy and free. His utopian vision receives new credence from Marcuse’s cogent insistence that the potential of modern technology dates Freud’s belief in the social need for extensive repression.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, however, Howells’ utopia also illustrates another side to the utopian dream that relates to Marcuse’s concern for intolerance. Howells found that the implementation of his utopian vision in Altruria still required some structure for the facilitation of order. Based upon legislated morality, Altruria included discomfiting dystopian elements of social control that placed limits upon freedom, diversity and individuality. Howells’ awareness of this failure to delineate a completely satisfactory alternative to the one-dimensional society caused him some anxiety. In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton, Howells noted that *Through the Eye of the Needle* contained “confessions of imperfections even in Utopia.”<sup>30</sup> He went on to tell Norton that “other dreamers of such dreams have had nothing but pleasure in them; I have had touches of nightmare.” Howells’ experience with his imaginary utopia might benefit Marcuse who could visit Altruria *Through the Eye of the Needle* to examine a society where the practice of “discriminatory tolerance” became almost a science.

<sup>28</sup> *An Essay on Liberation*, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> David Bleich, “Eros and Bellamy,” *American Quarterly*, 16 (Fall 1964), 448, compares Marcuse and Edward Bellamy and writes that Marcuse’s ideas have imbued Bellamy’s “*Looking Backward*, and perhaps many other utopian works, with an exciting and unprecedented relevance.”

<sup>30</sup> Howells to Charles Eliot Norton, Apr. 15, 1907, *Life in Letters*, II, 242.

