

## A REPLY TO HERBERT MARCUSE

Norman O. Brown

MY FRIEND MARCUSE\* and I: Romulus and Remus quarreling; which of them is the *real* "revolutionary."

He will not see the recurrence in revolution. Revolution is not a slate wiped clean, but a revolving cycle (*Love's Body*, p. 204). Even newness is renewal. As it was in the beginning. The idea of progress is in question; the reality of Marx cannot hide the reality of Nietzsche. The thing is to change the world; but it is also true that everything remains always the same. The assignment then is (to put it simply) the simultaneous affirmation and rejection of what is; not in a system, as in Hegel, but in an instant, as in poetry.

There is eternal recurrence; there are "eternal objects" (Whitehead); archetypes. This is a hard lesson. There is a sense in which war cannot be abolished (*Love's Body*, p. 182). Or, there is an eternal object of which literal war is a false image, or inadequate idea. The thing to be abolished is literalism; the worship of false images; idolatry. Allen Ginsberg saw it just the way it is: Moloch. A false idol fed with real victims. This is no joke. (Nor is fire; Heraclitean fire.)

Idolatry is fetishism, mystification; demystification would be an end to idolatry. But an end to idolatry is not so easy (*Love's Body*, p. 114). It is not the abolition of the temple, but the discovery of the true temple: Love's body. Karl Barth saw religion as idolatry; Karl Marx saw religion as the heart of a heartless world. The Sacred Heart. The thing is not to excise the heart but to put it where it belongs. The real atheism is to become divine. In a dialectical view, atheism becomes theurgy, god-making; demystification becomes the discovery of a new

\* Mr. Brown is here replying to Herbert Marcuse's essay, "Love Mystified: A Critique of Norman O. Brown," which appeared in our February issue—Ed.

mystery; and everything remains the same.

There is another sense in which mystification must be affirmed. We have to surpass the Enlightenment notion that in the life of the species or of the individual there is a definitive change-over from darkness to light. Light is always light in darkness; that is what the unconscious is all about (*Love's Body*, p. 216). Nor can the light become a current, always turned on, in ordinary prosaic language. Truth is always in poetic form; not literal but symbolic; hiding, or veiled; light in darkness. Yes, mysterious. Literalism is idolatry of words; the alternative to idolatry is mystery. And literalism reifies, makes out of everything *things*, these tables and chairs, commodities. The alternative to reification is mystification (*Love's Body*, p. 234). The world is actually not a collection of commodities;

*When silence  
Blooms in the house, all the paraphernalia  
of our existence  
Shed the twitterings of value and  
reappear as heraldic devices.*

—Robert Duncan

Heraldic devices: airplanes as penis symbols rather than "modern conveniences." One of the eternal verities is the human body as the measure of all things, including technology. The businessman does not have the last word; the real meaning of technology is its hidden relation to the human body; a symbolical or mystical relation.

WITH THE whole world still in the bourgeois stage of competitive development and war, the thing to remember about Marx is that he was able to look beyond this world to another possible world, of union, communion, communism. What needs to be reiterated is not reassurance to the bourgeois that he will be able to carry his little old Self, Person, and Property into that world, but that the kingdom of heaven on earth is possible; and that other world, the negation of this jungle, cannot possibly be any-

thing except *Communitas*. A higher form of chaos; instead of confusion, fusion (*Love's Body*, pp. 248, 253).

And, after Freud, we have to add that there is also a sexual revolution; which is not to be found in the bourgeois cycle of repression and promiscuity, but in a transformation of the human body, an abolition of genital organization. Indeed, *Love's Body* shows that genital organization is the same thing as Self, Person, Property; and, therefore, the abolition of genital organization, foretold by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization*, turns out to mean what Marcuse calls the impossible unity and union of everything.

Yes, indeed, there was a God that failed; that mortal God, the great Leviathan; or Moloch; discovered to be not only mortal but also dead, an idol. From literalism to symbolism; the lesson of my life. The next generation needs to be told that the real fight is not the political fight, but to put an end to politics. From politics to metapolitics.

From politics to poetry. Legislation is not politics, nor philosophy, but poetry. Poetry, art, is not an epiphenomenal reflection of some other (political, economic) realm which is the "real thing"; nor a still contemplation of something else which is the "real action"; nor a sublimation of something else which is the "real," carnal "act." Poetry, art, imagination, the creator spirit is life itself; the real revolutionary power to change the world; and to change the human body. To change the human body: here is the crisis, *hic Rhodus, hic salta*; which, as Hegel said, is to be translated "here is the Rose, here begin to dance." To begin to dance; who can tell the dancer from the dance; it is the impossible unity and union of everything.

From politics to life. And therefore revolution as creation; resurrection; renaissance instead of progress. To perceive in all human culture the hidden reality of the human body. This is to discover as

Freud did, the Holy Communion as the basis of community; the Eucharist; the cannibalism, the hidden *eating*; one of the forms of which is war—making children pass through the fire unto Moloch. Go to the end of the road and that is what you will find. And so the God is not Freud's God Logos, abstract or disembodied Reason, but the Human Form Divine. And the language is the language not of reason but of love. Reason is power; powerful arguments; power-politics; *Realpolitik*; reality-principle. Love comes emptyhanded (*Love's Body*, p. 237); the eternal proletariat; like Cordelia, bringing Nothing.

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## CAVEAT EMPTOR JUDAEUS

Cecil Roth

THE ANTIQUE MARKET is booming: and as one who purchased his collection long since, and in any case is in no position to purchase anything more now, I cannot but rejoice at the fact. The market in Jewish antiques on the other hand is not merely booming. It came into existence only a very short while ago, but it has already become affected by a runaway inflation. It is little more than a half century since a few eccentrics in France, Germany, England, one even in the United States, began to be interested in the artistic relics of the Jewish past—objects of Figotry and Virtue, as a friend of mine once paraphrased the French *bijouterie et vertu*: Chanukah lamps for use in the home, pewter or majolica dishes for the Passover, the hanging lamps formerly kindled for the Sabbath, the brocades which hung before the Ark in the synagogue, the silver adornments which decorated the Torah scrolls, the illuminated *megilloth* or Books of Esther, the beautiful marriage contracts formerly common in Italy and elsewhere. But everybody knew that these collectors were eccentrics, and pitied them somewhat for not investing their capital in objects of

more general interest or more profitable prospects. However, in a way such eccentricity was condonable, for the competition was so slight that the prices were negligible.

Now, however, the scene has changed. The universal collecting fever has spread to the field of Judaica. The economic well-being of Jews in some Western countries has made it possible for the circle of collectors to be immensely widened; and to some extent, doubtless, the abandonment of Jewish rituals has created a sort of guilt complex which results in an attempt to assemble the vehicles wherein these rituals were expressed in the past. As a result, apart from the newly-developed major Jewish Museums in New York, Cincinnati, London, and so on, there are smaller museums of Jewish ritual objects attached to synagogues and temples all over the United States, as well as overseas: and travelers to Europe or the East are anxious to bring back some object of interest to add to these collections and thus perpetuate their own names. Moreover, a very, very large number of private persons, including many enthusiastic young married couples, are now engaged in beginning to build up private collections of the same type, based in the first instance on the objects they may be able to use in their domestic rituals, but later extending more and more.

As a result of the growing demand, there is a growing supply, but unfortunately it is of frequently dubious origin. (Some sales by auction, for example, at renowned auction galleries, which purport to be of important collections and gain status thereby, turn out on investigation to be based on the recently and deliberately acquired stock-in-trade of professional dealers.) Since the supply of authentic antiques is limited (especially after the wholesale destruction of 1933-45, and the concentration of worthwhile specimens in the major museums), a lively manufacturing trade in Jewish antiques has sprung up in recent years, with its centers in Spain and (I regret to say) in Israel, both particularly suggestive centers for distribution: for what comes from Israel is even now imbued with some odor of sanctity, and what was purchased in Spain is ostensibly

of very great antiquity—a relic of the ancient communities expelled from that country in 1492.

So far as this latter area is concerned, one may be quite categorical. To my knowledge, there is only one single authentic piece (or rather pair of pieces) of synagogue silver now extant which goes back before the 16th century: a pair of *rimonim* (Torah bells) preserved in the Cathedral of Palma (Majorca), though in fact not Spanish but Sicilian in origin. Other pieces may be extant, but I do not know of them, and would want to have their date authenticated by expert opinion were I to spend any substantial sum on them. And objects of the sort dating from before the year 1600 are also very, very uncommon (and should be correspondingly costly). To the collector, I can give only one piece of advice: *Never buy a Jewish antique in Spain!* (That is, *qua* Spanish antique: for indeed, a few authentic fairly old German-Jewish pieces have found their way into the Peninsula also.) Some little time ago, a pair of *rimonim*, described as being 15th-century Spanish, turned up for sale in New York: to the best of my judgment, they are 19th-century Moroccan, and poor quality at that: and I do not think that if they were presented to me I would put them on display.

The most ostensibly appealing and remarkable of the Jewish *objets d'art* now being put into the market has a romantic story attached to it. It is said to emanate from the Marranos (or crypto-Jews) of Spain and Portugal, who manufactured it in this way in order to conceal their observance of the rites of their former faith from the prying eyes of the Inquisition. (Sometimes, as a further embellishment, the purchaser is informed that it was formerly owned by a Grand Rabbi of Istanbul: the relevance is not obvious.) This precious object consists of a silver chalice (sometimes authentically old, and even of some value), which purports to be a *kiddush* cup. Into this are fitted ingeniously (1) a pair of candlesticks for the Sabbath (2) a Chanukah lamp (3) a Scroll of Esther (4) a *mezuzah* or some similar object, or whatever else appeals to the curious mind of the craftsman. Oc-