

Marcuse on Art

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I

IT IS NOT necessary to tell the reader of *Modern Age* that Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* has become, since its publication in 1964, part of the holy writ of the New Left. And not merely in the United States; a 1967 bibliography of Marcuse announced that translations were on the way into five languages, and I have seen his books reviewed and his opinions quoted with respect in a magazine published in Franco's Madrid. I must confess that I am as baffled today as I was when I first read his *Eros and Civilization* in the fall of 1955, and read, shortly after its publication, *One Dimensional Man*. That revolutionists should read him is not at all baffling. That scholars, or men whose professional activities lead us to expect them to be scholars, should accept his views, is bewildering until one remembers the fact that the academic world is, today, in a shambles.

Whatever the reason for the high position he occupies at the moment as one of the guruvulu of the New Left, about one thing we can be reasonably certain, and that is

that his prestige is not grounded on the verifiable strength of his rejections of our world. For his indictment is selective, exaggerated, often factitious, and always ill-tempered. To validate this judgment would take a book-length essay. Here what I shall do is to examine the kind of argument he uses to advance his views on art. I shall examine the substance of his theses and the method by which he defends them.

About the function of art, Marcuse writes:

Prior to the advent of this cultural reconciliation, literature and art were essentially alienation, sustaining and protecting the contradiction—the unhappy consciousness of the divided world, the defeated possibilities, the hopes unfulfilled, and the promises betrayed. They were a rational, cognitive force, revealing a dimension of man and nature which was repressed and repelled in reality.

He concludes the following paragraph with these words:

But art has this magic power only as the

power of negation. It can speak its own language only as the images are alive which refuse and refute the established order. (*One Dimensional Man*, pp. 61-62. Unless otherwise indicated I shall hereafter give only the page).

The era of reconciliation is our era, a period in which men have been made happy in their enslaved condition.

Could this problem be settled by authority, I would urge the reader to read Nietzsche, for the mad German is undoubtedly a much better judge on questions of art than our atrabilious ex-Berliner. But the question is not one that can be settled in this way. Its solution calls for close analysis of complex facts and for decisions among possible normative choices that are not easy to make. What I propose to do is give an account of Marcuse's arbitrary solution of the problem.

We need not doubt that Marcuse means exactly what he says, for later on in the same book (238) he tells us that, "Like technology, art creates another universe of thought and practice against and within the existing one." Notice, against, never for it.

It seems desirable to begin comments on Marcuse's theory of the function of art by noting that he has long entertained the idea he advocates in *One Dimensional Man*. In an essay originally published in 1937, and translated and published in *Negations*, entitled "The Affirmative Character of Culture," he tells us that what later he decided was generally to be taken to be the function of art, was the function assigned to it by idealist philosophies. And in *Soviet Marxism* he employed the same theory of the function of art to criticize Soviet art. In the essay printed in *Negations* he writes:

In its idealist trend, philosophy became increasingly distrustful of happiness, and religion accorded it a place only in the

hereafter. Ideal beauty was the form in which yearning could be expressed and happiness enjoyed. Thus art became the presage of possible truth (117).

What Marcuse seems to be saying, in the earlier essay attributing the idea to the idealists and in the later book asserting it as his own view and applying it to art in general, is that until our own day—the age of cultural reconciliation—art was always subversive and destructive. He is saying the function of art is cognitive and that the knowledge it gives is knowledge of those aspects of man and his world that do not yet exist, but ought to exist, at the time the art is made. What art does, then, is to condemn by contrast. The artist shows men the ideal and by contrast men discover their actual plight. Isn't this a kind of Platonic aesthetics in reverse? For Plato's objection to the poets was that they did not represent the ideal and pictured the Gods as a scurrilous lot. Marcuse does not agree with Plato. He says the artist pictures the ideal, and by contrast he shows up the existing reality.

Let us look into Marcuse's theory. It would have made it easier for us to be fair to it if we had been told how far back to date the era of "cultural reconciliation." For many of the great ages of modern civilization, since the Elizabethan in England or the Golden Age in Spanish literature and art, makers have made art that celebrates and affirms "the matter of experience" that the maker was able to "in-form" into "the substance of art"; and art has often been taken—and justifiedly so—to celebrate life, to affirm life fully. In literature the art of the unhappy consciousness of the divided world, the defeated possibilities, the hopes unfulfilled, and the promises betrayed, did not begin until recently. In English, it followed the great achievement of Henry James. Since then, we have had a literature of renuncia-

tion, a bitter critique of the world we live in, from say, D. H. Lawrence to the dried-up yet fetid ordure that goes for literature today. But since even in our own society of cultural reconciliation some artists have made objects that are paens to the beauty of woman, to the lovely delicacy of a child, to the cheerful brilliance of a bouquet of flowers, Marcuse finds it necessary to put his conception of the function of art beyond the possibility of factual validation. The job is easy. He shifts the focus of attention without warning his reader about what he is doing. The artist may think he is celebrating reality and the listener or spectator may agree with the artist. But that is irrelevant. What matters is that the created object negates the repressive actuality.

The decisive distinction is not the psychological one between art created in joy and art created in sorrow, between sanity and neurosis, but between the artistic and the societal reality. The rupture with the latter, the magical or rational transgression, is an essential quality of even the most affirmative art.

Art contains the rationality of negation (63). Marcuse seems to mean that *all* art without exception carries within itself the rationality of negation. I guess that it is to be taken for granted that all negation is rational, even if it should negate Kant's famous proposition that five plus seven make twelve.

Thus Marcuse has put his assertion beyond the reach of criticism. It can't be touched. But can't it? Let me first note that no sophisticated critic today, whatever his views on the so-called "intentional fallacy," would fail to distinguish the intentions and resources of the artist from the product of his efforts. The psychological question is therefore not at issue. Marcuse's decisive distinction is a red herring. When we turn to his view of the function of art, we

find Marcuse making an assertion that would call for proof from a lesser man. The object—the novel or play, the canvas—may seem to celebrate the events about which it is: the nude, the dancing couple, the tender child. But what it actually does is to reveal a "dimension" of man, society, or the universe, that we have repressed: defeated possibilities, unfulfilled hopes, betrayed promises. How does Marcuse prove that this is true of all art throughout the ages until our own day? Does he need proof? Isn't it sufficient for him to assert it? But on what grounds does he assert it? The answer, I suggest, is that what he has done is to deduce his view of the function of art from his conviction that our society and all past societies have needed and still need change. Once in possession of his deduction, and without any regard for the facts whatever, he applies it to all art. But how did he arrive at his view of our society if he did not do so empirically? This is a double-barreled question that I can not stop to consider in this essay. It is enough here to note that throughout *One Dimensional Man* Marcuse manipulates the facts to feed his hatred. *One Dimensional Man* is not science, it is propaganda and self-expression.

Let us consider Marcuse's aesthetics further. We know that towards the end of his life, Renoir painted in actual physical pain and that the glorious period of Van Gogh's career, the pitiful five years or so that he lived after he arrived in Paris and moved south, was a period in which he lived in Hell. His letters and the accounts we have are a record of intense personal suffering. Both Renoir's arthritis and Van Gogh's mental illness and poverty were no doubt the malignant product of "societal" repression. I have no other evidence for this statement than Marcuse's basic thesis from which I have deduced it. But in spite of the fact that both men were the victims

of ruthless "societal" repression, to spectators generally their canvases seem fully affirmative. The Frenchman loved the sensuous beauty of anything his eyes rested on, and his eyes rested with particular delight on the lovely sensuality of woman, the joyfulness of the world around him, and the gaiety of nature. There are canvases in which his love of the world threatens almost to step beyond celebration and to become a sentimental or even a saccharine view of it. One thinks of many canvases where the threat makes itself felt but the mastery of the artist, his control of color, drawing, and composition, holds the threat up just in time. In any case, the great majority of Renoir's canvases seem to be a riot of color and affirmation; it was the bourgeois world into which Renoir climbed by the strength of his talent—although of course we must not lose sight of the fact that it was the world that repressed him. The canvases of the mad Dutchman celebrate the vibrant glory of flowers, of cypresses, of a flock of ravens flying low over a field of wheat ready for harvest, and even a singular attractiveness of a cheap chair—a chair that had to be creatively seen by Van Gogh to reveal its quality to us.

But we are wrong if that is what we see in the work of Renoir or Van Gogh. Neither painter celebrated the actual world. Renoir did not apprehend creatively the sensuous loveliness of living women, the tenderness of children, the glory of flowers. Van Gogh did not discern creatively the vibrant nervousness of cypresses, the dark, living radiance of ravens flying over wheatfields, nor the splendor that made men call the heliotropic blossom of *Helianthus annuus*, "the sunflower." What these two activists, fighting at the cultural front, against "societal" repression, actually did was to externalize on canvas their Platonic dreams of perfection, suggested to them by

the ugly, frigid, enervated humanity and arid world that surrounded them: the skinny, starved, young hags with pendulous breasts; the pot-bellied, skinny, starving children; the stunted, "societally" repressed flowers, needing water and a little manure that our "societal" domination denied them. But since society represses all of us, except Marcuse and his nihilistic shills, we ask how those two men, the Frenchman and the Dutchman, managed to join the thin red line, or more precisely put, the all-too-thick line of reds, that make up the elite corps he calls the Great Refusers? Marcuse did not consider it worthwhile to supply us with an explanation. But we have a right to ask for one, because if society is as repressive of men, women, children, cypresses, and sunflowers, as Marcuse says it is, it would be of the greatest and most imperative urgency to know how the "philosopher" of Nihilism and his shills escaped the crippling domination that damages the rest of us. Who knows? Some of us might try the tricks by which Marcuse and his nihilists escaped, and a few of those who try them might pull it off.

But it is possible that my remarks are totally irrelevant. Could it be that the sensual Frenchman and the mad Dutchman came before the age of cultural reconciliation? This is the reason that it is necessary to know when that age began. Did it begin after Maillol? Or after Matisse?

But this is not all. Sometimes it is convenient for Marcuse to further strengthen the impregnability of his irrefutable theory. It then turns out that the role of art is not only to present to us by contrast the evil of our world, but also to imitate the actual evil in its full unredeemable squalor, ugliness, and futility. At one such time he wrote: "The real face of our time shows in Samuel Beckett's novels" (249). One wonders. In Beckett's novels only, but

not in Céline? But Céline was a fascist. It may be hard on many critics to reconcile his anti-Semitism and his collaboration with the Germans, with the fact that he is a great writer, an artist of real stature—even though his vision of the world is just as acerbic, but in a different way, as Beckett's, or Marcuse's.

The introduction of Beckett's work can be interpreted as allowing cognizance of an important genre—if that is what it is—of literature and art. It allows us to include Hogarth, Daumier, and Swift: the satirists, in short, in literature or in graphic art. Unfortunately for Marcuse's argument, the introduction of this kind of art erases the either/or distinction between days prior to cultural reconciliation and our own age. But there is still another sense in which Marcuse's theory of art over-simplifies the data any such theory should take account of. What can we do with Rabelais? Here is a man well acquainted with the folly of mankind. But it did not outrage him: it amused him. And there is one more sense in which Marcuse's tendency towards simple disjunction leads him to overlook important data—which considered would have made his distinction between art of negation and art of cultural reconciliation more complex: I mean, a man like Goya.

We cannot simply say that Goya falls under what we may call—for convenience—Marcuse's first account of the function of art. As Marcuse would have it, Goya could be said to present ideal alternatives to the world in which he lived. The two *Majas* are sufficient evidence but considerably more could be brought forward if needed. And he seems "to present the real face of [his] time," in *Los Caprichos* and in *Los Desastres de la Guerra*. Marcuse's grand oversimplification about the function of art makes no allowance for the heterogeneity of the objects made, which is the result of an often changing response

of the artist to his world. The theory ignores the complex moods of the artist, his sometimes radical ambivalence, the attraction and repulsion with which the world, sometimes simultaneously and often in sequence, makes him shuttle back and forth between incompatible attitudes. In Goya's case, the artist began his career with great success, much in demand. It ended in exile, living in total silence, pain, rejection. The eighteenth century faith he had in reason was totally lost. A full life had eroded it. But Goya, both man and artist, shows how empty are the wholesale oversimplifications of Marcuse's notion of the function of art.

There is no need to argue further that Marcuse's theory of the function of art was not derived from a consideration of the heterogeneity of the phenomenon throughout Western history. What it gives evidence of is the readiness of our nihilist to press anything he can lay his hands on to his end. For him, all pegs, round or square, fit his all-purpose revolutionary hole. The world presented in the canvas of an artist may be a world of sensuous women, of lovely landscapes, of flaming sunflowers and cypresses pushing toward heaven with their energy. But Marcuse declares that the artist does not show what is but what ought to be. However, when the product of the artist's work moans with despair, pain, futility, emptiness, anguish, when it overpowers us with the stench of human beings living in garbage cans, then, but only then, does the artist show the true face of his time.

Marcuse is a very fortunate man. He has the felicity of having achieved what the rest of us cannot even aspire to reach. We are burdened with respect for facts and inhibited by a sense of fairness, and we feel hesitation and anxiety before complex problems. Marcuse is not burdened with any such handicaps. He is not baf-

fled by the world in which he lives. It is all very simple: our world is hell, nothing but hell; it is nothing but a totalitarian hell. In view of this fact, the artist cannot celebrate the world. All he can do is condemn it by contrast or paint it as it is. Marcuse is able to advance apodictic ideas, and since they are apodictic, criticism cannot reach them. If he suspects that there are facts that contradict his views he simply reverses the direction of his thought, asserts another undeniable fact, and shrugs his shoulders at the effect that this new assertion may have on his older views. He has it going and coming. Facts? Anyone who knows anything knows that facts must be interpreted to be facts—or rather that the data that offers itself to us must be interpreted into facts. Facts are congealed hypotheses. If the data must be interpreted, why not interpret it to reinforce *my* prejudices? Logic? Coherence? Not in what he has called “the hell of our Affluent Society.” Not if they interfere with our aim: to wreck it. All we have a right to expect in this hell is the domination of our masters and the negations of our savior. T. H. Huxley said that Herbert Spencer’s idea of a tragedy was a hypothesis slain by a fact. The hypotheses of the other Herbert, Marcuse, are so levitated with immobile wings in the blue yonder that they cannot be slain by facts. No facts can reach them. How could it be otherwise? Marcuse’s thoughts are the hypotheses of a man who plays the game of heads-I-win-tails-you-lose. Thus, it is not as difficult always to be right as we suppressed men think.

II

I CANNOT take up *au fond* the technical reasons that “vitate”—to use one of Marcuse’s favorite terms—his theory of the cognitive function of art. I have written on the problem several times, and those in-

terested in my views on the subject can easily find them. Here I shall have to be content with a summary of some of the reasons that seem to me to make Marcuse’s view inadmissible. Let me begin with the fact that in actuality art serves a multitude of heterogeneous functions, some of which are incompatible with others. Thus, according to the greatest of Greek philosophers, Homer and his kind did nothing but tell impious and scurrilous tales about the Gods; they chose to be liars when they should have given men glimpses of absolute beauty—the perfect circle—absolute truth—the idea of the Good, according to Plato’s philosophy, I guess—absolute holiness, and absolute goodness. To his pupil (whom many students of philosophy believe to have been a greater man than his teacher) art, if we can do what aestheticians and critics have been doing for close to twenty-three centuries, generalize from the *Politics* and the *Poetics*, had two functions: its first function was to imitate, because men like imitations; the second function was to drain the two humors, pity and fear, that collect in the soul as bile collects in Frenchmen’s livers. We must occasionally physic ourselves. Aristotle also held that poetry is more true than history. So art was cognitive, but not of the ideal, as Plato thought it should be, but, I guess, of actuality. For The Philosopher, it is clear, when a tragedy is well made—which is to say, when made according to his mechanical rules—it does what it is supposed to do: It pleases us, it physics us, and it tells the truth. For I. A. Richards—to jump from the peaks of antiquity to the sea level of the present—verse is a substitute for religion; a view which, if I remember correctly, was earlier held by Carlyle. Although Richards changed his mind since he propounded his scientific theory in *Principles of Literary Criticism*, I wouldn’t doubt that there are a number

of learned professors for whom poetry still serves the function Richards ascribed to verse and art in general. When *Principles* was first published, a large number of professors took to his theory as cows in pasture take to the man who brings them salt. But Richards is today, as Venezuelans say, "history." Learned professors today light candles before other altars. Timothy Dwight, on the other hand, told his undergraduates in Chapel that Shakespeare's plays were the language of vice and the theatre was gross and immoral. Dwight was saving souls at Yale in 1804. And Dwight's view of the function of art (generalizing what he said about Shakespeare) was once orthodox doctrine in New England and is still held by some academics in our day—one of whom told me once that pictures of nudes were for bedrooms: Asians, remember, prefer ground rhinoceros's horn. Of course people who have found the right location for nudes are not interested in art. Neither are the undergraduates one still runs across who tell you that the purpose of art is self-expression: on the assumption, natural to our participatory democracy, that undergraduates have very important emotions and ideas to express. Art dealers, producers and, of late, shrewd investors, know that art can be made to perform a totally different function. In Aristophanes, Aeschylus and Euripedes agree with the Russian Shoe-banger (USSR, Ret.) about the function of art. In *The Frogs*, the two Greeks agree that the function of the theatre is to improve civic virtue, and the Russian held, when he had the power to shoot off his mouth about things that he knew and that he did not, that the function of art was to create enthusiastic slaves for his system.

We must not forget that art is a three letter word that covers a vast territory. It includes the work of Giotto, Titian, Bosch, Grunewald, El Greco, Goya, Dau-

mier, and Pascin. It also includes Homer, Aeschylus and Sophocles, Dante, the Elizabethans, Calderón, Tirso, and Jane Austen, Céline and Beckett, and that "radical activist," Brecht, as Marcuse disingenuously calls him, and even works like *Justine*, *Tropic of Cancer*, and *Naked Lunch*. It includes the work of Bach and his glorious successors, also of Vivaldi, Boccherini, and the others. It includes Chartres and a little jewel of Gothic architecture with which Marcuse must be very well acquainted, the Freiburg Cathedral. One has to have seen it to appreciate in full how precisely its builders expressed, through one of its gargoyles, their impudent acceptance of life. It also includes Frank Lloyd Wright. It includes so much else that I could not, did I desire to do it, give an instance of each class. To decide what is the purpose of art we must not only look into the ways it has been used but into the heterogeneity of objects that have been called "art." In fact, art performs whatever purpose it happens to perform for those who have commerce with it—unless we show, by means of adequate and detailed analysis, and with an alert third ear to the nuances, that the picture the dealer sells and the investor buys is not art, although if someone else were to buy it for his aesthetic delight, it would then be art. It is not impossible to accomplish this feat by means of the properly nuanced distinctions. Let me be emphatic: it can be done. But no one who has read a few pages of the prophet of the new nihilists would accuse him of being moved by concern for nuances.

III

WHAT OUGHT the purpose of art to be? How should we use art in order to use it as art and not as something else? We are no better off when we leave description and move to prescription, when we pass from the merely empirical enumera-

tion of the multitude of usages to which art is actually put, to the enumeration of the usages to which it ought to be put, for there are as many views about its proper usage as there are aestheticians worth their salt.

In order to deal with this problem with the seriousness and adequacy it demands, I believe we must draw a fundamental distinction, in the absence of which our efforts to decide what the function of art ought to be are likely to go wrong; or if they go right, they will do so by a lucky guess, and no philosopher can rest content with such a guess and retain his self-respect. In order to deal properly with the normative function of art we must distinguish between the residential function of art and the nonresidential functions—in the singular and the plural respectively. Without this distinction we have no means of deciding whether anyone who wishes to call art any old thing that he happens to be interested in for any old reason that occurs to him, is right or wrong. But kindly note that I am discussing theoretical matters; I am arguing for what seems to me to be an important theoretical foundation on which our criticism and our conception of the relation of art to other modes of human activity must be grounded, if we are to avoid wallowing in confusion or hitting off the right answer by luck.

Critics usually ignore these theoretical exigencies. It is neither surprising nor astonishing to find that the greatest majority of them crave for, and actually indulge in, unfettered freedom from the rigorous limitations that theory imposes on criticism—or should impose on it. They hate the restrictiveness of theory. They want to say, for instance, that art purveys knowledge, or “is for” certain religious values, just as the Shoe-banger would have it that art “ought” to disclose the glories of socialist reality. Restrictions are not for the major-

ity of critics. These people are exempt from the limitations of logic; they have a better instrument to accomplish their tasks, eloquence. Critics would rather roam the unfenced prairies, like wild *manadas*, than live respectable lives in well-fenced corrals and do an honest day's work with a logically controlled, coherent system in the saddle. Ah, the freedom of the untamed stallion. Utter nonsense, of course, which they would be ashamed of if they abandoned their eloquence for a minute or two and stopped to think that it does not take a wild stallion long to produce a wild *manada* of runts useless for anything but canned dog meat.

I have not forgotten that the freedom for which our critics crave and in which they have all along indulged without benefit of apologetics, has been justified for them by a new evangel. Know the truth and the truth will make you free. The repressive limitations I am advocating are the result of my not having heard that the concept “art” is an open concept. But I had known it all along; I did not need to hear it from a Wittgensteinian. All that is new to the dictum is the moniker. Given the ethos of our day, the moniker is an honorific one. We do not need extensive knowledge of the history of art, to know that art is indeed and has always been what is now called an open concept. Until the new evangel brought the old knowledge back to us in a new language, we knew well enough that new art, when first presented, is often fought bitterly and declared to be not art. Once the new art gains acceptance, it becomes entrenched and denies still newer art the honorific title of art.

But it is the concept that is open. And critics do not write criticism of concepts; they write about this actual book, called a novel, but offering them problems of form and substance they had never had

to face before; they write about these paintings, these pieces of carved wood or welded railings, this strange "score" that produces only what to their trained ears sounds like shocking noises. In order to decide whether any of these new shocking objects are or are not art, the Wittgensteinian is of no help to them but rather a hindrance. If art is an open concept anything whatever that anyone wants to call art is indeed art. But to carry on their jobs—however conceived—critics must close their concepts. They have no alternative if they are to stay above the minimum degree of tolerable clarity. If they leave the concept open they have to face an unpleasant dilemma: either they have to examine anything thrown at them, or at least allow that anything thrown at them is worthy of examination, or they have to quit and go fishing. Too many critics refuse to face the dilemma.

I shall cite my favorite instance of a critic who has produced work of some distinction—in many respects of genuine distinction, but in others of merely specious distinction—with an open concept of the novel: F. R. Leavis. While he does not allow that C. P. Snow is a novelist—nor would anyone who distinguishes between reportage and art—he would have it, as I have pointed out before, that Lawrence, in his novels—or, more precisely, in his "novels"—is a great artist, a healer of his own wounded soul and the souls of others, a social historian, a great humorist, and I forget how many more great and wonderful things. But Leavis is able to produce work of distinction because first, the works that are the objects of his critical attention have already been selected for him by previous critical acclaim and second, because his critical insights about well recognized artistic objects are often penetrating. And this is the case in spite of the nonsense he may peddle about the health-

giving qualities and the historian's achievements of that sick idol of his who never was able to heal himself.

The residential function defines art; if the object does not perform the function it is not art—*under the definition*, of course. The nonresidential functions that art may perform and that it is often found performing, give rise to the question whether an object that performs some of them is art or is something else—again, *under the given definition*. This is not a question that can be taken up in this essay. But I cannot refrain from noting that the discordant babel of criticism in all the arts stems, not so much from the mutually incompatible notions of what art is, as from a much more radical source, from the critics' failure to stipulate explicitly their basic notions of what art is and how it functions.

Before taking up the important question about how Marcuse decided what was the function of art, let me note in passing that with different goals and a different scale of values, Marcuse's conception of the function of art is not different, formally, from the conceptions, implicit at least, that guide the work of satirists and cartoonists, as well as such distinguished aestheticians as the Shoe-banger, Timothy Dwight of Yale, and the Aeschylus and the Euripides of Aristophanes. There are between these and others of their school material differences as to the function of art. But formally they all agree. American Stalinists—if the expression be not a contradiction in terms—when their voices were heard in the land, during the thirties—would have had no difficulty agreeing with Marcuse, as much as they disliked him on political grounds. But while Stalinists outside the borders of the Sacred Motherland encourage satirists and cartoonists, so long as their work is directed against the world in which they live, within the sacred precincts of the Motherland they would deal as

promptly and efficiently with a Goya, or a Daumier, or a Swift, as they deal with any negative thinker or maker.

We are, at long last, ready for the important question: How did Marcuse decide what is the function of art? Although I believe that I have plodded through the whole of Marcuse's available bog of jargon relevant to this question, I do not remember where he has made the proper analysis to show how he can move from the multitude of actual functions that art performs to the function he believes art ought to perform. In the absence of a clarification from him, I shall permit myself, with diffidence, the luxury of a guess. But before I make it let me insist with some emphasis that my criticism is not that Marcuse has not made the identical analysis I have sketched here to arrive at the conclusion I would arrive at before he decides what ought to be the function of art. He could have—and has a

perfect right to have—reached his own conclusion in a way that seems the proper way. My point is that he has not seen the problem at all. He has simply asserted what he, according to his needs, demands from art and art has given to him according to its abundant capacity. We have seen that if we stay at the descriptive level, art's capacity to perform all sorts of disparate functions seems to be unlimited. The followers of Marcuse are not people concerned with close-woven thinking, with tight arguments, explicit definitions, and rigorous categorial schemes. They are quite happy with his asseverations. They do not stop to ask for the indispensably thorough analysis that would be required firmly to ground his negations in the bedrock of theory.*

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