

## REVIEWS

# *By and On Marcuse*

ELISEO VIVAS

**Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics and Utopia**, by Herbert Marcuse; translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro and Shierry M. Webet, *Boston: The Beacon Press, 1970. 109 pp. \$7.50, paper \$1.95.*

**Herbert Marcuse: An Exposition and a Critique**, by Alasdair MacIntyre, *New York: The Viking Press, 1970. 114 pp. \$4.95.*

**The Meaning of Marcuse**, by Robert W. Marks, *New York: Ballantine Books, 1970. 132 pp. \$1.25.*

### I

THE FIRST of Marcuse's five lectures presents, with a few superficial variations of formulation, doctrine put forth by him in earlier publications. We are first reminded that in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud argued that civilization demands sublimation. But today, Marcuse asserts, given our technological development, more pleasure and less labor for everybody the world over are genuine possibilities. Why then don't we work towards that end? Be-

cause "totalitarian democracy," as he calls our system, perpetuates the *status quo*. How? With the breakdown of the family, the role of the father has been taken over by society, and the child's ego, lacking an obstacle against which to exercise itself, shrinks, loses the capacity to revolt, becomes one-dimensional. However, in spite of our present plight, there is still a possibility of a better world. The forthcoming catastrophe—war and atomic destruction—may bring down with it the archaic forces that now repress us "and thus clear the way for a higher stage" of civilization. How will this higher stage be characterized? Marcuse gave us the answer in *Eros and Civilization* in 1955: the dystopia of *Brave New World* without Huxley's wit and devoid of the saving grace of the Shakespeare-declaining savage: an increase of pleasure and the reduction of unnecessary or surplus labor.

The second lecture begins with the assertion that the notion of progress, which claims to be value free, is indeed freighted with value assumptions. Progress, as we understand it, is production for its own sake, "transcendence without object." But while this may be necessary for the maintenance

of our society, for the individual it means the denial of fulfillment, gratification, and peace, which Marcuse asserts, are values towards which the organism is directed. This raises the question: is progress necessarily based on unhappiness? We know Freud's answer: Eros is transformed into sexuality and the surplus energy thus saved is turned into productivity. The reality principle overcomes the pleasure principle. The repressive transformation of Eros that begins with the inception of the incest taboo leads, even in early childhood, to the internalization of the father's domination. From a pleasure seeking animal the individual is changed into a productive human being and the change brings the devaluation of pleasure.

With the change, not only the pleasure principle but the death instinct is also modified. The modification produces a threefold result: the energy drawn from self-destruction is used for the annihilation of nature through domination, it is also used for the socially sanctioned destruction of internal and external enemies, but more importantly, it is used in the development of morality and the conscience. "The result," we are told, "of social transformation of instinct is thus destruction." Destruction, one asks aghast? Is our control of nature, assuming that it is achieved as Marcuse tells us that it is, unqualified destruction? And is the development of morality, accepting the same assumption, also destruction?

Freud accounts for the emergence of culture by means of a story told in *Totem and Taboo* that he repeats in *Civilization and Its Discontents* and more sketchily in *Moses and Monotheism*, about the primal horde. In *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse accepted the story "symbolically"—whatever that might mean; now he accepts it, "regardless of its possible empirical content" as a "hypothesis." We know that the anthropology out of which the story was made by Freud to account phylogenetically for the origin of morality cannot be accepted either symbolically, hypothetically, heuristically, or in any other manner, since it has no empirical

content whatever and does not even do what Plato's myths did for him. But what is more, it begs the problem. But first the story, although it is widely known. Once upon a time, it goes, the father used to monopolize all the women of the tribe, thus excluding all the males, the sons, from enjoying them. Somehow the sons got together and did the old tyrant in—Freud suggests that perhaps the use of a new weapon gave them the feeling that they could pull the feat off. "Of course, these cannibalistic savages ate the victim." But no sooner had they consumed the body than their suppressed tender feelings for the old man asserted themselves and found expression in a feeling of guilt, in remorse. The rest, giving an account of the beginning of totemism, is of no interest for our purposes.

## II

NOTE THAT what must be accounted for is the emergence of remorse, moral self-condemnation. This is expressed in the judgment: "I (or we) ought not to have killed X" or its equivalent, "It was wrong to kill X." What must be accounted for is the emergence out of the ambivalent attitude towards the father, of the "ought" or "ought not." Freud tells us that after the sons

had satisfied their hate by [the father's] removal and had carried out their wish for identification with him [by eating him] the suppressed tender impulses had to assert themselves. This took place in the form of remorse, a sense of guilt was formed which coincided here with the remorse generally felt.

Exactly what is this remorse that is generally felt, and how did it come about? And whose remorse coincided with the remorse generally felt? But let these difficulties go. What we cannot let go is the question, "How did the tender feelings turn into remorse?" It is this transubstantiating that needs be shown. But it looks as if remorse

has been introduced by executive decree. Tender feelings could easily turn into regret, which is formulated in the expression, "I (or we) wish we had not killed father." But what the sons felt, according to Freud, was moral reproach, remorse, self-blame. Note also that the internalization of the father's commands and prohibitions through which Freud explains ontogenetically the emergence of the conscience in the child, no more explains that emergence than the phylogenetic account does. For the question to be answered is this: How does the child, who has not yet experienced the "ought," come to respond to it, how does it come to recognize that some wishes and commands of his father's are to be accepted by him as inwardly binding, irrespective of the fact that they are the father's wishes. If a man says to his child, "Do that or else," and the child has as yet no capacity to distinguish between a non-moral and a moral command or prohibition, all he can do is to take his father to say "Do that, or I'll punish you." But when a child accepts a moral command, he accepts something in itself somehow binding on him. And it is the emergence of his capacity to recognize the difference that must be accounted for. I hesitate to say it of Freud, but it seems to me clear on reading *Totem and Taboo*, and even more clear on reading *Civilization and Its Discontents*, that he does not understand the meaning of remorse; for all he does it to posit the effect of a command whose origin he undertakes to account for.

Marcuse continues the story: The rebellion of the sons ends in repression that enables productivity to rise, and as it rises repression climbs with it. Repression recreates itself continuously throughout history, each recreation leading to its own Thermidor. But there is not only a psychic Thermidor but a social one. And both end in domination. We have thus both a psychic and social repression. But on this account, repression has not an immutable source but a historical one. This enables Marcuse to envisage the possibility of a society that is free from repression.

Here it is imperative to avoid a widespread misunderstanding of Marcuse's meaning. He is not thinking of an improvement by continuous development of present conditions. What he has in mind is the destruction, by violent means, of our present system and the creation of a qualitatively different system. He does not mean an increase of sexual activity, the institution of pan-sexualism, more genital gratification. He means, rather, less, since what will happen is the decrease of "the tyranny of the genital." But there will be more pleasure of a generalized, somatic, intellectual, and "spiritual" kind—whatever he may mean by the word "spirit." Note in passing that the misunderstanding is caused by Marcuse's use of pseudo-scientific lingo and his failure to make clear to his reader that when, using Freudian terminology, he speaks of Eros or of re-erotization, he means a return to the baby's capacity to enjoy pleasure through his whole body and not solely through his genitalia. In any case, the change that Marcuse envisions would lead, he assures us, to a radically new social (he would say "societal") system, utterly free from repression and domination of the majority by the few, who are themselves victims of domination. Men would "regress" (his word) to the condition from which they took off when they began to develop through Freud's well-known stages of maturation. This regression, he is certain would lead to an upsurge of "new forces of cultural creation."

At this point a number of questions obtrude themselves, two of which I shall ask. The first is whether a life spent in the pursuit of pleasure, generalized and not merely genital as it may be, intellectual and "spiritual" as well as physical as it may be, would be morally different from the life enjoyed by Don Giovanni or by Casanova while he was young—if we forget for our purposes that the latter was more than a mere voluptuary. A life of petting—with never a thought of a trip to a motel—of the food, the books and music that Marcuse would permit us to enjoy—can we approve

of such a life morally more readily than we can of the life of Don Giovanni or Casanova? And were we free to live it without the express disapproval of our conscience, would it not lead the majority of us, nevertheless, sooner or later, to ennui and finally to despair? What if Charles Morris is right and men's capacity for pleasure is correlated with their somatotypes? We shall have to know much more than we do about the need for meaning or worth in life before we smash a going civilization in the hope of realizing a vague promise of a chiliast who is so obviously moved by nothing but hatred.

The second question refers to the regression to the condition of the child before his trek towards maturity began. In the child's first stage his whole body, according to Freud, was capable of erotic, which is to say, pleasurable but not alone genital, enjoyment. But the child soon started on his trek towards his mature genital stage. First he went through the oral, then through the anal, then the phallic, and finally he arrived at the genital or mature stage. The story is more complicated and the stages have since been broken up into many subdivisions. But for our purpose these complexities may be overlooked. The question is this: In the process of regressing to the re-eroticized condition of the child, are we going to retain our maturity? Are we going to be grown up babies or childish grown-ups? On this critical subject Marcuse is entirely silent.

### III

IN THE THIRD lecture Marcuse expatiates on a thesis stated in the first and second. Freudian man, we are told, was individualistic, two-dimensional. But man today has lost his capacity to react negatively. The decrease of the role of the family has lessened the struggle between child and father and has led to the shrinking of the child's ego and his capacity to resist total administration by the reality principle. The process leads to several regressive developments:

a dwindling of the consciousness of the individual personality, the focusing of thoughts and feelings on a common target, and the emergence of a tendency to immediate action and thought. What evidence is given for this complex development? None, unless the assertion made by Marcuse that we find antennae in every house, transistor radios on every beach, and juke boxes in every bar and restaurant be taken as evidence. These odious gadgets, we are told, "are cries of desperation which engulf all of us." Worse, they testify to the fact that consciousness and a personal sense of responsibility are on the decline and that we tend to submit to the exigencies of total administration. "More fateful" still, because in most advanced sectors of modern society the citizen is no longer seriously haunted by father images, and men substitute for their own ego-ideals the externalized ideals of the National or Supra-national Purpose. But since societies are bound by libidinal ties, we still need leaders. Those available to us, however, are fungible and cannot play the role they ought to play. The upshot is mobilization of destructive energy, the increase of social control over the individual, the destruction of private autonomy and rationality.

What can we do? We can undertake, Marcuse advises us, an uncompromising denunciation of our repressive society. In other words we can imitate Marcuse—and thus achieve uniqueness, perhaps?

But what if Marcuse is in error about our condition? That is unthinkable. The Prophets of old spoke in the name of the Lord, and we know that what anyone said was self-certifying, even if it was contradicted by the self-certifying utterances of the prophet next door. Marcuse does not fall into such a trap. He speaks in the name of Reason, whose pronouncements are apodictic; and Reason is a commodity—one soon gets the message—on which he has a successful corner. However, obdurate irrationalists that we are, we demand empirical evidence for his pronouncements. What is called for is a detailed empirical contrast

between a society made up to two-dimensional, Freudian men, and ours. Would the former be found to be full of negative thinkers while ours is replete with one-dimensional "administered" sheep? But empiricism is something that Marcuse has never cottoned to. Marcuse once used to denounce empiricism because it was the instrument of the *status quo*. Of late he has ceased to do so. He now claims that his assertions rest on empirical grounds. But his appeal to empiricism is specious. He never advances concrete evidence for assertions of fact, unless we accept as concrete evidence his statement that there is an antenna in every house, transistor radios on every beach, and juke boxes in every bar and restaurant. I am saying that his methodology—if you can call it that—is preposterous.

Were anyone to undertake an empirical investigation of our human condition, I would ask him to examine the following hypothesis: Men of our advanced technological society are not much different from the men of Freudian or pre-Freudian ages in our civilized West. The masses follow the leaders today as they did yesterday and the day before. The leaders are men who have the ability to pull the masses by their noses. Among men we shall find today, as we shall find in the past, the same diversities and similarities. This of course does not deny the difference in value organizations and personality patterns favored by different cultures. But that the largest number of men of our West were once two-dimensional and that we are today one-dimensional calls for more evidence than Marcuse's mere assertion before it is to be taken seriously. Men are today, as they always were, capable of bursts of rebellion. But Trotsky's notion of permanent revolution does not seem possible to men in general. And when rebellious bursts are not triggered by leaders, they are soon taken over by them and managed for their own purposes. The majority of men, however, seem to have always wanted miracle, mystery, and authority, and probably all men to some extent

want them. If we didn't, the Grand Inquisitor's party would not have felt the need to repair the damage done by Jesus when he turned down the three temptations, nor would Jesus' return to Seville have meant a threat to the Grand Inquisitor's labor. What is more, Marcuse's assertion that what he wants for us is freedom and happiness is wholly false. What Marcuse clearly wants for us—and I am not the first to point this out—is slavery; he wants to replace the tolerant leadership of our freely elected governors for his own despotic, intolerant, bigoted domination—all in the name of that eighteenth century bitch, Sovereign Reason. If, dear reader, you do not believe me and you do not sense the absolutist temper in his writings, read that noisome essay of his, "Repressive Tolerance."

This is a topic on which it is desirable to dwell from a shifted standpoint. My comment takes us into the fifth lecture—apparently delivered to a group of German students in West Berlin—entitled "The Problem of Violence and The Radical Opposition." One of the points he makes in this lecture is that in the United States the radical opposition—of which he acknowledges himself to be a member—is against the majority of the American population, including the working class which is "integrated to the system and does not want *radical* transformation" (his italics). The opposition to the majority, he had already informed us, he is willing to carry to the point of "action"—which is to say, to the point of revolution. This willingness of his, he tells us, derives from "a right or law higher than positive law." But in the "Questions and Answers" following the fourth lecture, he had told his audience that as "regards . . . the concept of democracy," all he can offer as a momentary answer is that "no one could be more for democracy than [he] is." Here we have—need I point it out?—a beauty of a conception of democracy: Ordinary belief in democracy includes a commitment to abide by the decisions of the majority. But negative or re-

pressive democracy, or Marcusean democracy as we could more properly call it, is something that no one can be more in favor of than Marcuse, only it is something that Marcuse is eager to destroy by any means, including "action," which is to say, revolution. Note also in passing that Marcuse's appeal to the higher law does not in the least contradict his materialism. For while all materialisms, whether atomistic or dialectical, deny the possibility of values older than human culture—otherwise a telic universe is assumed with some sort of guidance involved—Marcuse's notion of dialectical-negative materialism enables him to attribute value to being prior to culture while denying that he has a notion of a telic world.

It would take more space than I could ask a kind editor for merely to list all the objections, some of a major nature, that must be raised against Marcuse's *outré* doctrines. For instance, I did not touch on the simplistic assumption that equates sublimation with repression, thus erasing the difference between the various degrees of frustration that various forms of sublimation bring about, and ignoring that it was Freud who wrote: "sublimation is . . . a way by which the claims of the ego can be met without involving repression." Nor did I point out that this is not his only misreading of Freud. Nor did I touch on the danger of inciting a reaction from the extreme right because of his advocacy of nihilist revolution. Nor did I dwell on his pre-Lyellian notion of history or on his habit of manufacturing facts to back his prejudices and of arguing by definition and asseveration. An exhaustive analysis of the unbuttoned, disingenuous incoherences and ukases of this energumen would take longer than the 108 pages of his own five lectures.

#### IV

THE IMPORTANCE—to me, the threat—of Marcuse is attested by the amount of critical interest of which he has been the object recently. Among articles that have come to

my attention, two deserve careful reading: "The Political Thought of Herbert Marcuse," by George Kateb, *Commentary*, January 1969, and "Herbert Marcuse," by Maurice Cranston, *Encounter*, March, 1969. A long essay taking up over one third of *The Freudian Left*, by Paul A. Robinson ought to be mentioned. The French have paid far more critical attention to Marcuse than have the Americans. An enthusiastic account by J. M. Palmier was published in Paris in 1967, *Sur Marcuse*, (and in Madrid in 1969). Another book in French with notice of books and essays on him, appeared not long ago: *Herbert Marcuse, out la quête d'univers trans-prométhéen*. Par André Nicolas, Paris 1970. MacIntyre's book appears in a series on "Modern Masters," about "men who have changed and are changing the life and thought of our age." The series originated in England and is edited by Frank Kermode, who tells us that the authors of these books "are themselves masters." In this case, we do not need to discount the partiality expected from an editor in an age of ballyhoo. The anonymous reviewer of this book for *The Times Literary Supplement* (London) said about Marcuse's work and MacIntyre's criticism:

For all the influence that he exerts over some of the younger generation of intellectuals, Marcuse is not a consistent thinker, a competent philosopher, or a serious scholar; and it will be very difficult for any impartial person to claim such distinctions for him after reading Alasdair MacIntyre's brilliantly incisive exposure of his intellectual faults.

There is no question that the exposure is incisive. But only as far as it goes, for the author gives fourteen of his ninety-seven small pages to a defense of "linguistic philosophy," but overlooks a number of faults, some of them of the greatest seriousness, one or two of which I shall notice succinctly below.

But first, MacIntyre's criticisms. Since it is not possible to give even a topical listing of the many points he makes, I shall

have to confine myself to important ones that interest me. MacIntyre points out that Marcuse does not state what his view of truth is. Since Marcuse sometimes writes as a socio-historical relativist for whom each age produces its own version of the truth, "the need for an impersonal, non-relative concept of truth is clear"—is, I would rather say, imperative. By means of a careful, well-documented analysis of Hegel and Marx, MacIntyre points out the serious defect of Marcuse's understanding of these thinkers, adding up to the fact that he resurrects a Young Hegelianism that turns out to be senile. MacIntyre's criticism of *Eros and Civilization* is on the whole well taken. A worldly, non-academic reader might point out that MacIntyre's treatment of Marcuse assumes him to be a regular academic thinker, of whom observance of the logical and empirical proprieties is to be expected. But if Marcuse ever was a proper academic man—and of course holding university posts does not make a man one—he long ago ceased to be one. His view of the role of philosophy is in harmony with what we know of his life. That he has often been caught off base on points of logic and matters of fact does not faze him. He has always been an activist; his goal has always been the destruction of society. It's Lenin's sour wine decanted into a Marcusean jug: truth is that which promotes his end, falsehood that which impedes it. For this reason, his ignorance of the history of culture, noted by MacIntyre, and of the history of philosophy noted by MacIntyre and others, his outrageous pseudo-methodology, his scorn for facts, his elitism, objected to by MacIntyre, the libels on the world that gave him refuge, his repulsive dream of a world in which we shall regress to childhood—all these faults and nightmare visions and the others that remain unmentioned, are good and true since they serve his purpose.

MacIntyre objects to Marcuse because he bases his idea of the future on Freud's metapsychology rather than on "the shrewd empirical observations" found in

the case histories. One wonders how he can raise such an objection. For MacIntyre is a man engaged professionally in philosophizing, who does not always have recourse to empirical data. His *Ridell Lectures* (1967) could be classed loosely as sociology. But his brilliant book on *The Unconscious* does not contain evidence of experimentation. How can he overlook the fact that Freud was a philosopher as well as a mental healer? Even if Freud himself had not told us about his passion for philosophy, we could have discovered it by reading his work. The whole silly kerfuffle about whether Freud was or was not a scientist in the narrow sense of the word would have been avoided had his followers acknowledged that Freud was a therapist and a philosopher, which is to say, a man claiming skill in the art of healing who was engaged also in bold speculative flights of a distinctly philosophical nature. As a healer, we have long known that neither he nor his followers have ever offered adequate evidence of the efficacy of his art. As a philosopher, his influence has been deep and wide. He has radically altered our thinking about man and has left his footprints on the arts and in all the humanistic disciplines, in pedagogy, in the social sciences, in penology, and even in jurisprudence. The student of philosophy remembers, above all, that he has contributed theories about the origins of cultural institutions. That these theories—as I have shown in print—are unacceptable, is far less important than the fact that he has advanced them, for the lack of accounts of human origins—at the cultural, not the biological level—covered up by fideistic incantations to emergence, is one of the scandalous and disabling defects of naturalistic philosophies—no less disabling because naturalists, fortified by faith in Darwin, carry their failures with insouciance.

## V

ANOTHER POINT made by MacIntyre is well taken. The notion of alienation em-

ployed by Marcuse to "explain" socio-historical phenomena is too general to function as intended. Since in the neo-Marxist view "all the characteristic features of the dominant social order are part of the phenomena of alienation, nothing is explained by invoking alienation." MacIntyre objects "in addition" to Marcuse's failure "to identify the death instinct independently of its manifestations." I don't see why. We say that the cause of the fall of the apple that should have hit Newton's noggin is the law of falling bodies, or more precisely, of the fact of gravity expressed by the law. But neither Newton nor MacIntyre, nor anyone ever heard of, whether scientist or philosopher, with one exception, has ever identified or is likely ever to identify the fact of gravitation independently of its manifestations. True, Freud acknowledged that Thanatos was "mute." But the same can be said of all structures. The exception is of course Plato, who in his Seventh Epistle claimed—although the claim can't be taken seriously—to have beheld disembodied Ideas. If it is "precisely this type of difficulty that has discredited the concept of Thanatos," all one can say is that it has discredited it only for self-avowed or cryptonominialists who, for one reason or another, deny the reality of structures. When we say that the law or the fact of gravitation is the cause of an instance of it, we know perfectly well that the law was arrived at, or the fact induced from, instances of it, and that these instances have more than mere "family resemblances" in common: we assume we are forced to assume, that they exhibit the self-same structure or habit of nature that informs, *in-forms*, them all.

Another of MacIntyre's criticisms of *Eros and Civilization* is well taken: Marcuse's dependence on the recapitulation hypothesis—not on the biological hypothesis but on the way in which Marcuse applies it to culture. This argument leads our author to conclude once more that in *Eros and Civilization* two Young Hegelian themes re-occur. The revival of these themes again suggests to MacIntyre that Marcuse is not

a post- but a pre-Marxist thinker, a suggestion that MacIntyre goes on to show, finds ample confirmation in Marcuse's book on *Soviet Marxism*.

All but one of MacIntyre's criticisms of *One-Dimensional Man* are well taken. I note three that I take to be important and crippling. The first is Marcuse's elitism. This is not the first time this criticism has been made of our Liberator. The criticism is valid not, in my opinion, because elitism is self-evidently wrong—how can it be, in view of the fact that men differ markedly in excellence, and that excellence, however conceived, will lead?—but because Marcuse has no right to it. The second is that the concepts that Marcuse brings to the study of contemporary society are confused and confusing. And the third is that our system is much less of a well-integrated and coordinated system than Marcuse takes it to be. This argument, fully convincing, although made from a socialist standpoint, cuts the ground entirely from under Marcuse's charge that we all, oppressors and oppressed ones alike, are victims of domination.

I turn to the chapter in which MacIntyre takes up the defense of what he refers to as "Marcuse's indictment of recent philosophy," which he tells us, "Marcuse characterizes as 'linguistic analysis' (Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin)." Observe, first, that it is not Marcuse alone who calls this mode of philosophizing "linguistic analysis" or "linguistic philosophy." These monikers are in current usage. Note next that for our author linguistic philosophy is "recent philosophy." For MacIntyre there is no other recent philosophy or no other recent philosophy worthy of note. This reminds your reviewer of the silly story about the little old lady—in tennis shoes, of course—who, after weeks of storms in "the Channel," bewailed that the Continent had been entirely cut off. A typical English way, let your anglophile reviewer point out, and no doubt a vestigial remainder of the halcyon days when the sun never set on the empire of the scepter'd isle, the other Eden. Be that as it



may, MacIntyre's defense of *quotes* recent philosophy *quotes*, fails to answer one of Marcuse's important criticisms of ordinary language philosophizing, namely that, as Marcuse's quotation from Wittgenstein has it, philosophy "leaves everything as it is." This, to Marcuse, is an unpardonable crime, since the aim of philosophy for him is the destruction of the society in which it is cultivated. MacIntyre could have replied that Wittgenstein was wrong; that much philosophy produced today does indeed leave everything as it is; but not all contemporary philosophizing does, although not all of it is subversive. Some philosophizing favors reform and some strengthens the system in which it is produced. But devotees of Saint Ludwig cannot be expected to acknowledge his errors. Instead, MacIntyre lays it down with the aplomb of a *jefe civil* in an isolated village in the *Llanos* that "philosophy's task is clarificatory." But this piece of arbitrary legislation by decree has no more regard for the heterogeneous and often contradictory roles that philosophy has played in Western culture than Marcuse's fiat. What we have here, then, is the confrontation of two ukases, and you, dear reader, can reject both of them if it pleases you.

My most serious criticism of MacIntyre's book is that it ignores Marcuse's conception of human destiny as envisaged in his repugnant secularistic *Erlösungslehre*: the psychological-ethical hedonism which he preaches. Marcuse's total lack of piety towards past human achievements, the absurdity of a mind that claims to have found the final solution for man's problems, the dystopian dream of a state in which human beings regress into pleasure-seeking animals—surely MacIntyre does not share Marcuse's vision of human destiny? I do not think so. One could make a case that the Ridell Lecturer for 1967 can have no sympathy for Marcuse's simplistic hedonism. One can also note that he queries Marcuse: "What shall we exactly do in this sexually liberated state?" But does the query express in full MacIntyre's reaction to what

Marcuse takes to be paradise on earth? We are not told.

## VI

MR. MARKS' BOOK on Marcuse is flour from another bag. He reduces Marcuse's thought to five propositions with which he agrees, although he does not agree with the way Marcuse arrives at them—as if philosophical conclusions, as distinct from slogans, were worth anything independently of the manner of arriving at them. The five add up to the desirability of Marcuse's hedonistic dystopia, which is declared to be now possible and which will produce a new humanity. But the most obvious quality of Marks' book is its ambivalence. Marks tells us something anyone who has read Marcuse has long known: Marcuse's "arguments are interminable, often peripheral, and, at best, a learned history of German Idealism, Freudian speculation, and the evolution of philosophic Marxism. Many of his sentences can be deciphered only after long study; and their content, when finally disclosed, turn out to be either debatable or trivial." And a few lines below he sums it up: ". . . he is an almost unintelligible writer." This towards the beginning of the book. Towards the end the criticism is repeated: "Taken literally, much of [Marcuse's] writing is unintelligible. Read sympathetically, much of it is ambiguous . . ." In between we are told that "the essential conclusion, perhaps, is that Marcuse is not so much a philosopher of revolution as pamphleteer." Note in passing that while justifiably objecting to Marcuse's prose Marks himself is no stylist. Nevertheless, he goes on, "Marcuse has much to say . . . that has the same lyric promise of some of the prophets of sweetness and light." I am confident that no one will guess who the three prophets of sweetness and light are to whom our hedonistic nihilist is compared—not if one has read them: Plato, Mathew Arnold, and Santayana. That in one respect—but in one only: not in stature, not in philosophic seriousness and responsibility,

not in depth and amplitude, not as a writer, not in almost every other possible respect—Marcuse compares with Plato, we need not doubt. For of all the bigoted, intolerant, despotic, authoritarian prophets of sourness and darkness, the author of *The Laws* is a man to give the writer of “Repressive Tolerance” a good run for his money. I am afraid that I’ll have to do something that is not very nice, but the case calls for drastic treatment. I advise Mr. Marks to read Vol. I of *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Let him read it critically, but let him read it. And to compare Marcuse with Arnold, how does that sound? To compare this *enragé* who preaches direct action, intolerance, and the violent destruction of our society, a man who believes that everybody suffers from the tyranny of the genital, a thoroughpaced hedonist, a man who has a tin ear for language, the turgid, unintelligible nihilist, to compare this Torquemada of the left with the author of “Dover Beach” and *Culture and Anarchy*—it surpasseth all understanding. And with Santayana? To compare the negative dogmatist with the moral relativist, the enthusiastic energumen with the skeptic—and I am not referring to his epistemological skepticism only—the *soi-disant* lover of men who is bent on tolerating them by repressing them with a man who occasionally gives the impression that he is something of an intellectual *flâneur*, the embittered ex-Berliner with the uncommitted Spanish Bostonian? Again, it surpasseth all understanding. But there it is, in page 53 of Mr. Mark’s book, if the reader suspects my word. I’ll put it charitably: Mr. Marks has forgotten his

Plato, has a very queer idea of what is found in Arnold, and is thinking rather fuzzily of the author of *The Life of Reason*, the young Harvard Professor who had not yet shown his hand. Or who had, but not in print, for William James had the goods on young Santayana, even if he was wrong about the etiology of Santayana’s corruption, which James traced to Santayana’s Latinity.

Ah, but you are wrong, I hear my reader say. For Marks was comparing Marcuse with these prophets of sweetness and light solely in respect to the dream he shared with them about human happiness. Yes, I know, I reply. A few lines above the reference to the three prophets we are told by Marks that in places “the Mozartian Marcuse breaks through. The reader hears the Magic Flute.” Why? Because Marcuse takes off on a chiliastic flight into the never-never dystopia in which “human needs are fulfilled in such a manner and to such an extent that surplus repression can be eliminated.” But remember, only if they are “true needs,” not “false” ones. And who defines true needs? It’s not difficult to guess. In Venezuela they say,

*La mona, pro más que se vista de seda,  
mona se queda*

No matter how much silk a she-monkey puts on, a she-monkey she remains. The Magic Flute turns out to be an interminable necking marathon. Or as a student put it to me when I was doing time at Northwestern, an all day thumb-sucking euphoria.