

human condition were still alive and true. They were the ideas and images which helped him to understand the world in which we live, to understand and describe it – the precarious happiness and the whole horror of this world.

He knew that if anything could be done to mitigate this horror, it had to be done by reaching the human beings who suffered and perpetrated this horror – by making them see and listen and know.

So he taught, and he loved to teach; he loved you, his students who knew that Hans stood behind his words. And these words gave you something – something that only a man could give for whom moral values were real, were empirical facts – vital needs without which one can certainly live – but not the life of a human being.

And this need to live his philosophy drove Hans to become political: to accuse, to speak out against the crimes against humanity no matter where and in what false name they were committed. Hans had made his choice: for life, for blessing. And this meant: against death and cursing. And this choice compelled him to break the silence, to fight those who had chosen death and cursing – not only for themselves but also for the others, for us.

But Hans, who had chosen life, had to die. His death was more than absurd: it was revolting, insane. And the human reaction against this death is, not in the wisdom that “there is a time to live and a time to die” but in Dylan Thomas’ outcry:

Do not go gently into that good night . . .  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Like Camus, Hans was killed by the “absurdity in the modern world.” But far better than Camus, Hans knew that it is a man-made absurdity, and that you, every one of us, can help to make it a little less absurd. In this knowledge, and for this goal, Hans lived and taught – without illusion, perhaps without hope, with his smile, which was cynical and loving in one. It will be very hard to forget this smile, to forget this voice and what it had to say. I hope that some of us will never succeed. . . .

Herbert Marcuse

## BEYOND ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN

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I dedicate this lecture to the memory of Hans Meyerhoff not only on personal grounds but also on very substantial and objective grounds. Not only because I was his personal friend; he was my closest friend. But also because I believe that the work of Hans Meyerhoff testifies to a trend of extreme importance for understanding what is going on among the young generation, among the intelligentsia as a whole in the present situation. I hope to be able to show you that my presentation will bring out the exemplary character of the work of Hans Meyerhoff.

The trend I am alluding to I would like to characterize, in a preliminary way, namely, as a strange transformation of philosophy, which involves the development from philosophy to politics via literature and art. This development tends toward a realization of philosophy, which is quite different from the one Marx foresaw, and quite different from the way it is often understood or rather misunderstood – namely, that instead of interpreting the world one should now go about changing it, an interpretation alien to the letter and the spirit of Marx.

Hans Meyerhoff’s preoccupation with literature and art is, I think worth knowing. He was in the last years of his life chiefly occupied with an interpretation of existentialism, mainly with Camus and Sartre. Camus the philosopher of the absurd whose hero was the desperately happy Sisyphus; Camus, the great skeptic of the *homme revolte*, who believed “that there is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide.” The only decisive philosophical question to him was whether or not life is worth living. And Camus linked the problem of suicide with the problem of rebellion. He saw the rebel as one who attempts to solve the problem of murder: extreme violence as answer to the absurdity of the world. Is this the end of philosophy? Contrast for one minute these propositions, this definition of the decisive problems of philosophy with the beginnings of modern

philosophy, with Descartes for whom the *ego cogitans*, the human subject, quite far from being absurd, helpless, suicidal or murderous was Reason itself, the rational subject which would transform the world in the interest of man: a thoroughly optimistic philosophy. Or contrast existentialism with Hegel, for whom the world was one giant realization of reason. And, now apparently the collapse of this entire universe of discourse, and the rebellion against it on all fronts, in theory and practice, in the student revolt of our days, in the Black Power Movement, in Vietnam, in Chicago. These are not some of the normal problems that beset a dynamic society, they are a questioning, an indictment and refusal of the whole. The very essence of this society has become questionable, its comforts as well as its evils. This rebellion experiences the absurdity of this society, the absurdity of its reason, the destructiveness of its productivity, and the unbearable contrast between technical and human progress. So we can almost paraphrase Hegel's famous pair of propositions in saying: the real is absurd and the absurd is rational. Hans Meyerhoff certainly knew about the absurdity of life, he fought it the greatest part of his life, and at the very time when he seemed to win his life was cut short. Absurdity triumphed again.

In the face of this prevailing absurdity, what are the possibilities of philosophy today, at least a philosophy which is committed to the human condition? I think we can distinguish three alternatives. Firstly, simply the cancellation of the commitment, namely, the transformation of philosophy into a professional technique. Secondly, a conformist empiricism and behaviorism; confinement of philosophy to the petrified universe of mutilated discourse and manipulated action. And thirdly, the radical transformation of philosophy, which, as we shall see, leads to the self-transcendence of philosophy.

I would like to discuss very briefly this last trend and again take as starting point the example of the development of existentialism. In its first phase, existentialism has a strong tone of resignation, even the reconciliation with the absurd reality – in the vision of Camus: Sisyphus in hell, condemned for eternity to roll the heavy stone up the mountain only in order to see it rolling down again once it has reached the top. Camus wants us to see this Sisyphus as "happy and free," happy and free because he has recognized the absurdity, the eternal futility to which he is condemned, and he makes this absurdity his own task and will, the act of his freedom. Then, the job becomes his own, it is no longer imposed upon him by the authority of the Gods, he himself is doing the job, and in this freedom he is happy.

Let me add to this paradoxical definition of human freedom another one: according to Sartre, human freedom is inalienable to such an extent that man remains free even in the most enslaving conditions. The Jews in

the Nazi concentration camps who were driven to the gas chambers were potentially free. Because they could have refused to go – in which case they would have defined themselves freely instead of accepting the definition given to them by the others. The consequences were of course known to Sartre as they are known to us.

Today the revolt against the absurd rationality of the system has gone beyond this of existentialism; it has refused to accept this horrible definition of human freedom, which serves to sustain actual unfreedom. The obsolescence of this philosophy has become clear. It has become clear under the impact of several interrelated developments which called for a response to absurdity far more militant, far more radical than the one given by the existentialists. Two main tendencies which called for such a more radical response are first the fact that after the military defeat of Fascism and National Socialism the social systems of domination and exploitation were restored, though streamlined, technically rationalized, and made more productive. They were restored in both camps, in the West in the reform of corporate capitalism, in the East in the form of the repressive bureaucratic and authoritarian construction of socialism. The second trend is the emergence and for the time being the containment of the alternative also in both camps, namely, the possibility, and perhaps the beginning of a truly libertarian, humanistic construction of socialism. Desperate efforts in this direction are being made in Cuba and perhaps in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. A third event which radicalized the protest was the symbolic fact of Vietnam, namely, the effective, sustained and successful resistance of one of the poorest and weakest people of the earth against the greatest superpower known in history – a resistance which showed that the superpower was vulnerable, and that solidarity can be an effective weapon. Fourthly, rebellion within the superpower itself, and among social groups other than the industrial working class – a development of decisive significance for the prospects of radical change.

The representative philosopher of our time responds to this development. Jean Paul Sartre dissociates himself from his earlier writings, he has performed the symbolic act of refusing the Nobel Prize, he has stepped up direct political action as a member of the Russell war crime tribunal, he is helping to organize a congress of radical left-wing groups. But at the same time he continues his literary criticism, he writes on Flaubert and Tintoretto; the aesthetic dimension remains his concern. Radicalization here appears in a dual form: in political activism, and in the intense occupation with literature and art; immersion in the political reality on the one hand, in the realm of imagination on the other. The first way expresses the vital need to demonstrate the philosophical commitment to the human existence

beyond the usual abstract and academic protest. To the degree to which the university and the cultural establishment as a whole succumb to the requirements of the status quo and its streamlined reproduction, to that degree is the critique driven beyond the classroom and beyond the study into the reality outside. Is the second way, the one into the aesthetic realm, the realm of the imagination perhaps internally related to the first, part of the political activism? Does perhaps the political effort itself, by virtue of its new goals and strategy, break open an entirely new dimension of politics?

I suggest that the efforts toward radical social change are today confronted with an entire universe of possibilities, ideas, values which have been devitalized, supersublimated, fictionalized in the traditional culture and which now appear saturated with realism and with political content. Thus, the imagination appears as rational faculty, as catalysts of radical change. What is happening is that the real possibilities of liberation, the real possibilities of creating a free and rational society are so overwhelming, so extreme, so "impossible" in terms of the status quo, and that the powers which counteract and discredit these possibilities are so strong that the effort to translate these possibilities into reality must transcend the entire irrational rationality of the status quo. They must find their own new modes of expression, their own strategy, their own language, their own style so that they are not caught up in the rotten political universe of today and defeated before they have started. I believe that today's rebels have become conscious of this necessity, of the need for breaking with a past which is still the present.

This opening of the one-dimensional society, this prospect of a rupture with the continuum of domination and exploitation has its material basis, its emerging basis in the aggravating economic stresses of the global system of corporate capitalism, such as: inflation, international monetary crisis, intensified competition among the imperialist powers, escalation of waste and destruction in the absorption of the economic surplus in the militant opposition in its metropolises, and in the liberation movements in the Third World. And on this basis, new values, new resources, and new faculties of contestation and reconstruction make their appearance as political forces.

There is a symbolic event which, though by itself transitory and relatively quickly contained by the power structure, illuminates the historical turning point, namely, the May-June events in France. They have been abundantly written up, they have been tabled, they have been maltreated by sociologists and psychologists, and yet no analysis and no evaluation of the actual prospects for liberation are adequate without this starting point. Let me try to summarize briefly the implications of these events. They have shown that

the movement toward radical change can originate outside the laboring classes, and that this outside force in turn can activate, as a catalyst, the repressed rebellious force among the laboring classes. Moreover, and this is perhaps the most important aspect of these events, strategies, goals, and values emerged which went beyond the century old conceptual and political framework of the opposition and of politics as a whole. These new strategies and goals indicate the emergence of a new consciousness, an anticipating, projecting consciousness, open and ready for the radically new extravagant prospects of freedom.

What is at stake here is indeed a transvaluation of values, a new rationality which opposes not only the rationality of capitalism in all its forms but also the rationality of Stalinist and post-Stalinist socialism. And this new consciousness expresses (and shapes) a new sensitivity and sensibility, a new experience of the established – and the repressed – reality which anchors the quest, the cry for liberation in the vital needs of man: in his "bondage". *L'homme revolté*: that is today he or she whose senses can no longer see and hear and taste what is offered to them, whose very instincts militate against oppression, cruelty, ugliness, hypocrisy and exploitation. And who also rebels on these same grounds, against the traditional higher culture of the West – rebel against it because of its affirmative, reconciling, "illusory" features. This rebellion aims at a *desublimation of culture* – revocation, *Aufhebung* of its idealizing, repressive power. It is the protest against a culture which treated freedom and equality as "inner" values: freedom of conscience, abstract equality – before God, before the Law, and thus more or less peacefully coexisting with actual unfreedom and inequality. Protest against the romantization and internalization of love, against the illusory beautification and mitigation of the horror of reality.

Now "desublimation of culture" is, according to Freud an impossible concept, in itself contradictory because all culture is sublimation, is unthinkable without sublimation and desublimation could only mean a return, a regression to uncivilized and pre-civilized stages of history. However, I suggest that the desublimation which is demanded today is not an undoing of civilization but an undoing only of the archaic exploitative aspects of civilization. Far from undoing and regressing it is rather the reintegration into civilization of human faculties, needs and satisfactions which have been reduced, mutilated and distorted in the tradition of exploitative civilization. And this mutilation has brought about, as a reaction, those prevalent frustrations which erupt in that surplus aggression and destruction so rampant in our time. In other words, this desublimation is a revolt only against the repressive aspects of a culture which fostered the false consciousness, the hypocritical morality, the administered forms of fun and

elevation, the self-righteous submission to the management of human relations in our society.

The rebellion strives to extend the consciousness of man beyond the limits imposed by the requirements of domination and this means activation of the repressed imagination and sensibility of man – their use as faculties in the radical construction of reality. The imagination would recapture its creative power to project real possibilities of human freedom, not only in terms of fiction, as a poetic truth, as artistic forms, but also in terms of political goals. And the liberated sensibility, the sensitivity of man, would provide the instinctual, biological foundation in the reconstruction. This process is going on before our eyes, it is going on in the music, in the literature, in the language of protest; it is also going on in the behavior, in the apparel, in the experience, in the gestures of the rebels. The negating, destructive features are prevalent. The revolt against the sublime forms of art terminates in the rejection of the art-form itself. The integration of art into life is negation of art. There is in the work of Thomas Mann, the terrifying sentence which says, “one must revoke the Ninth Symphony”; it is perhaps the most extreme, the most radical sentence in modern literature. One must revoke the Ninth Symphony inasmuch as it is the most familiar sublime achievement of this culture: the sorrows of reality turn harmoniously into the Hymn of Joy.

Can we say that this revocation of the Ninth Symphony is already on the way? Can we say that rock n’ roll has “rolled over” Beethoven? Is it true that the “living theater” of our days is the revocation of the traditional theatre? And is it true that Black Power is one of the political manifestations of the revocation, and that the Yippies practice this revocation? Common to all of them is the fight against suffocating, oppressive hypocritical spirit of seriousness and righteousness, which permeates our society. Yes, if our politicians are serious, the only adequate opposition to them seems to be defiance of this seriousness, not to accept their standards of discourse and behavior.

Obviously, the protest envisions changes of a magnitude that indeed defies the imagination, namely, a society which differs essentially not only from the established capitalist, but also from the established socialist societies, which frees not only the rational but also the sensuous capabilities of man, not only his productivity but also his receptivity, which fortifies his life instincts, Eros as against Thanatos. It would not be governed by the laws and requirements of self-propelling, competitive, profitable performances; i.e. by the laws of domination. The vision is that of the historical movement when man calls a halt to the rat race that has been his existence, when man takes stock of what he has and what he can do with it, and decides that instead of going on with the rat race, instead of producing ever more and ever bigger for those who can and must buy it, to subvert the very mode

and direction of production, and thereby of their entire life. This means, to abolish poverty, and then to devote all resources to the elimination of the spiritual and material garbage with which the established societies have covered not figuratively but literally, our mental and physical space, and to construct a peaceful and beautiful universe.

The rebels are aware of the fact that this goal transcends all the reasonableness and rationality of the Establishment. Beyond the rule of Reason (this Reason) is that of the imagination. One of the slogans that appeared on the wall of the Sorbonne in May of last year read: “all power to the imagination.” It has been said (and I agree with the statement) that the fourth volume of Marx’ *Capital* was written on the walls of the Sorbonne; we can add that Kant’s fourth *Critique* was written on the same walls, namely the critique of productive imagination.

The idea of reason, the rationality which permeates the established universe of discourse and behavior can no longer serve as a guide, is no longer qualified to define the goals and possibilities of human endeavor, of human morality, of human science, of social organization, of political action. The traditional concepts were developed and defined in a universe of domination and scarcity, where they went beyond these historical limits as in the philosophy of radical enlightenment, they remained largely abstract, or divorced from the historical practice. But then the question naturally arises: is there anything beyond the established rationality, anything other than mere fantasy, fiction, utopian speculation?

Here we have to recapture the old philosophical distinction between imagination and fantasy. The productive [imagination] is, according to Kant, the central cognitive faculty of the mind; it is the meeting ground between sensibility and understanding, percept and concept, body and mind. As cognitive faculty, the imagination is guiding the scientific projection and experimentation with the possibilities and capabilities of matter; it is playful, free, and yet bound by its material, and rooted in the historical continuum. As cognitive faculty, the imagination forms the work of art, literature, music; there it creates a reality of its own and yet *real*: in a sense more real than the given reality. Words, images, tones, gestures which deny the claim of the given reality to be all the reality and the entire reality. They deny this claim in the name of the suppressed possibilities of human relationships, of man and nature, of freedom.

Now it is perhaps clear what is meant by the political content of the slogan “all power to the imagination.” The slogan expresses the militant consciousness of the suppressed possibilities, and of the degree to which they render obsolete not only the traditional theories and strategies of change but also the traditional goals of change. The leap from the rationality of scarcity

and domination to the realm of freedom demands the concrete transcendence beyond this rationality, it demands new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, touching things, a new mode of experience of corresponding to the needs of men and women who can and must fight for a free society. The historical situation thus makes the imagination into a meta-political power, and joins the playful, the creative, the sensuous aesthetic needs with the harsh political exigencies. This strange alliance has found its most striking form in the fact that the two names who appeared most frequently on the walls of the University of Paris were Karl Marx, the founder of socialism and André Breton, the founder of surrealism. And during the very night in Paris, where the fight on the barricades took place, a piano stood between the barricades, and the young pianist was playing jazz music.

These liberating forces are faced with a society which has mobilized its own imagination to full strength; it has devised forms of control which counteract liberation at its very roots in the mind of man: in the expression and communication of his needs, thoughts, and feelings. The protest movement is therefore driven to develop its own language, which must be different from that of the Establishment and yet remain understandable – a fact which contributes to the division of the movement into small self-contained groups and cliques. The linguistic rebellion struggles against the linguistic repression practiced by the Establishment: it recognizes the extent to which, in any historical period, a language expresses the given (and primarily the given) form of reality, and thus blocks the imagination and the reason of man, adjusts him to the given universe of discourse and behavior. This is the recognition that language is one of the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of the Establishment.

Today, it is a language of unprecedented brutality and sweetness in one, an Orwellian language which, holding a practical monopoly in the means of communication, stifles the consciousness, obscures and defames the alternative possibilities of existence, implants the needs of the status quo in the mind and body of men and makes them all but immune against the need for change.

But this immunization has its limits. They are inherent in the development of our society, particularly in the dynamic of the “second industrial revolution.” In contrast to the first it was directly sparked by science and it is characterized by the almost immediate application of science in production and distribution. Not only application of natural sciences in mathematics but also of the social sciences, in publicity and politics, of psychology, in the frightful social science of human relations and even in literature and music as welcome stimulus, mild stimulus because you can’t get too stimulated as background for business. Here you have in one reality the strange symbiosis

of scientific humanistic thought and a repressive society, the symbiosis of creativity and productivity in which the intellectual culture serves the material culture, in which creativity serves productivity, in which imagination serves business. But the all but complete character of this symbiosis in which scientific and humanistic thought become engines of social control has now its own dynamic, namely the greater the achievement of science in mastering nature and exploiting its resources the greater the danger that the psychological and biological experiments in forming human behavior and in forming the life processes may get out of hand, and the wilder the capacity of the imagination in projecting ways and means of alleviating the human existence, the more obvious the contrast between these achievements and their usage. And the greater the explosive potential in the established societies. Consequently, the first form in which this explosive potential comes into consciousness [is of] the irrationalization which is going in within the established society, the political activation of minorities on the margin of integration and even perhaps loosening the cohesion of organized labor, loosening it although which way and in which direction still remains to be seen.

Now this situation brings us face to face with the question of the responsibility of the intellectual. The choice is dictated to the intellectual by the two faces of the symbiosis of science and society, imagination and domination which we find today. This choice can be formulated in the following question. Man’s reason, imagination, sensibility shall they be in the service of ever more efficient and prosperous servitude or rather or shall they serve to cut this link, releasing man’s faculties and his imagination and sensibility from this profitable bondage? I believe that the militant students have made this choice and they have paid dearly for it. Today the real possibilities of human freedom are so real and the crimes of the society which prevents their realization are so blatant that the philosopher, the educator can no longer avoid taking sides, and that means alliance, solidarity with those who are no longer capable and no longer willing to have their future, to have their existence determined and defined by the requirements of the status quo. Determined and defined by the powers, the very powers that have made the world the mess, the threat and the lie which it is today. We see that today students all over the globe in the East as well as in the West, in the Third World as well as in the First and Second are demonstrating this unwillingness, the refusal. If the philosopher, the educator still takes seriously his job of enlightenment he will find himself whether he wants it or not with those who want to give meaning and reality to the words and ideas he has taught during his life as educator, and not only academic meaning but a meaning to be fought for, a meaning to be lived for.

For Hans Meyerhoff this was not choice but a necessity and he has demonstrated it too. I have tried to sketch the inner logic of the way he was going, a way that was cut short in a gruesome and absurd manner. You have after his death named the free speech area on this campus after him. Let's work for the extension of free speech beyond this area.

## VI

