

SMPLECTY

Ecological Civilisation and the Will to Art



SAMUEL ALEXANDER

Essays on the Aesthetics of Existence

Art Against Empire: Marcuse on the Aesthetics of Revolt

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‘Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to the changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world.’

‘The struggle for an expansion of the world of beauty, nonviolence, and serenity is a political struggle.’

– ***Herbert Marcuse***

Art Against Empire: Marcuse on the Aesthetics of Revolt

Samuel Alexander

In this essay I explore Herbert Marcuse's aesthetic writings, epitomised by his final book, *The Aesthetic Dimension: A Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (1979).¹ In that book, and in his other aesthetic writings,² Marcuse questioned the 'orthodox' Marxist position on aesthetics, which can be summarised crudely as the view that art (as a cultural superstructure) is a reflection of the productive relations in society (the material base). From this perspective, works of art will tend to entrench or advance the interests and worldview of the dominant class in society, consciously or unconsciously. When the material conditions shift, so too will the aesthetic or cultural superstructure, sometimes anticipating but usually lagging the change in productive relations. Thus the role of art and aesthetics in driving social and political change is minimised, almost to a vanishing point.

This view, however, is unable to explain why art from previous societies (e.g., ancient Greece) can remain so relevant and stimulating today, despite the drastically different productive relations in society. Marcuse's explanation, contra orthodox Marxism, is that art can achieve a degree of autonomy from the material conditions of society, such that art can illuminate not merely the injustices and potentials of a particular class, in a particular society, but can speak to aspects of the human condition that seem perennial. It also implies that art need not merely reflect a society's mode of production but can transgress, indict, and surpass that material base. This means that existence and the world can be aesthetically engaged in ways that transcend a specific class society and shine through its specific social conditions. If this opening theoretical move by Marcuse is valid, as I believe it is, the base-superstructure model of art and aesthetics is called into question, inviting a deeper critique.

According to the orthodox Marxist perspective, to the extent art has a political function, the only truly progressive or revolutionary examples are those which express the material interests, and advance the class consciousness, of the proletariat. This theory of art was taken to its logical extreme in the Soviet Union and came to be known as 'Socialist Realism'. Bourgeois art is rendered merely 'decadent' in contrast. This base-superstructure schema, which is presented here more rigidly than Marx and Engels ever did,³ has nevertheless had implications on how aesthetics is perceived as a social or political force. In particular, Marcuse maintained that by privileging the role of the 'material base' as the true or fundamental reality, this devalued the political function of individual consciousness, subjectivity, inwardness, emotion, sensuality, and imagination. To the extent that consciousness matters in this stylised Marxian framework, it is dissolved into *class* consciousness, and thus the individual remains invisible and insignificant.

By marginalising culture and individual sensibility, major drivers of revolution are minimised, and Marxism for too long has neglected the radical potential of aesthetics to induce transformative shifts in subjectivity. As Marcuse argued, 'the need for radical change must be

rooted in the subjectivity of individuals themselves, in their intelligence and their passions, their drives and their goals.’⁴ This political function of inward experience is devalued to the extent that ‘inwardness’ is dismissed as bourgeois decadence or merely escapism. The inner reality of an individual, though not a ‘force of production’, as such, is nevertheless decisive as a social force. Our emotions and sensibilities *constitute* our lived reality. Accordingly, something has gone astray if this inner reality is relegated to some secondary or marginal place in the social order or in social change.

Marcuse claimed that, even in bourgeois society, the affirmation of inwardness allows people to step outside market relations and exchange values, opening up space for different dimensions of being. This process itself can function to delegitimise capitalist values, by shifting focus from one’s identity merely as worker or consumer to someone who embodies imagination, passion, conscience, and the capacity to create and self-govern. If this implies a certain withdrawal and retreat from market realities, it retains oppositional force provided escaping is not the last position; provided opposition does not *culminate* in withdrawal.

The critical function of art – that is, its contribution to the struggle for liberation – lies in its ‘aesthetic form’, which Marcuse defined as:

the result of the transformation of a given content (actual or historical, personal or social fact) into a self-contained whole: a poem, play, novel, etc. The work is thus ‘taken out’ of the constant process of reality and assumes a significance and truth of its own. The aesthetic transformation is achieved through a reshaping of language, perception, and understanding so that they reveal the essence of reality in its appearance: the repressed potentialities of man and nature. The work of art thus re-presents reality while accusing it.⁵

We see, then, that Marcuse ascribed to art a political function. Extending Marx, he sought to show that the nature of art, by virtue of its aesthetic form, is not merely a reflection of the material base. This does not deny that the ‘content’ of art is always and necessarily drawn from existing society and influenced by productive relations. Art is autonomous insofar as it can transcend the constraints of the established reality, enabling the artist both to protest that reality and offer insight into an alternative one – the beautiful image of liberation. Art can thereby bring to the surface feelings, visions, and even other forms of ‘reason’ that are otherwise denied or unheard. The alienated character of existing society is exposed by the non-alienated or independent character of art. As art theorist Peter Burger states: ‘The citizen who, in everyday life, has been reduced to a partial function (*mean-ends activity*) can be discovered in art as a “human being.”’⁶

Through this process, art is able to give rise to a perceived reality that is suppressed and distorted in actual experience, exploding normal modes of communication, perception, and behaviour. Paradoxically, these new truths and insights of art, though fictional, can be more ‘real’ than the mystified realities of the existing society and its social institutions and norms. When art is able to transcend the established order, the perceived ‘objectivity’ of that reality is shattered, and this creates space for the rebirth of a rebellious sensibility. When successful, art can *define* what is real, and in this rupture, ‘the fictitious world of art appears as true reality.’⁷ What capitalism conceals, art can reveal.

Herein lies the potential revolutionary character of art. Marcuse recognised that art can be called 'revolutionary' in several senses. An artist can revolutionise their field through a highly original development of technique or style, signalling the avant-garde. However, Marcuse is primarily interested in the way art could be revolutionary in a different, political sense, even as the former could lead to the latter. Art is revolutionary in Marcuse's sense when it can present or re-present reality in an aesthetically transfigured way through which the unfreedom of the oppressed is highlighted and exposed, and visions of liberation are clarified or presented in energising ways. In this way, aesthetic interventions in culture can break through the mystified and petrified social conditions that entrench that unfreedom and open the horizon for radical change.⁸ Indeed, the autonomy of art, Marcuse insisted, contains the categorical imperative: 'things must change.'⁹

Of course, art is not always transgressive, progressive, or critical. 'Great art has never had any problem coexisting with the horrors of reality,'¹⁰ Marcuse admitted. It can be affirmative of the existing social order in ways that normalise, glorify, or absolve it. Marcuse noted that the militant bourgeois literature of the eighteenth century represented a struggle of the ascending class with the nobility, essentially over matters concerning bourgeois morality, not productive relations. With rare exceptions, this was not a critical literature seeking to advance the consciousness of the working class. Rather, it was content to envisage freedom merely in the imagination or within subsections of a population, displacing universal liberation to the realm of the daydream, and representing escapist illusionism or mere decoration in an otherwise miserable reality. The social order is not threatened but rather affirmed. As political theorist Charles Reitz noted, Marcuse was perfectly aware of 'the paradoxical circumstances in which the aesthetic treatment of social realities could actually lead to an *anesthetic* "tranquilization" of perception and thought.'¹¹ Furthermore, art that was once transgressive and oppositional can, over time, become assimilated: 'All indictments are easily absorbed by the system they indict... Picasso's *Guernica* is a cherished museum piece.'¹²

Still, there can be a role for art that criticises the existing reality without providing a way forward in Marxian terms. In the nineteenth century, the poet Baudelaire was hardly a prophet for the working class, but as Walter Benjamin observed, he 'was a secret agent, an agent of the secret discontent of his class with its own rule. One who confronts Baudelaire with this class gets more out of him than one who rejects him as uninteresting from a proletarian standpoint.'¹³ The self-indictment of art can help invalidate reality through subterranean rebellion, even if it does not always point to a new society.

There is also a question here about whether art is being assigned a role which is better suited to theory. If social critique relies on conceptual analysis, this may not suit the medium of literature, poetry, music, etc. However, Marcuse argued that because people are constituted by an unfree society, their 'repressed and distorted potentialities can be represented only in an *estranging* form... and only as estrangement does art fulfill its *cognitive* function: it communicates truths not communicable any other way.'¹⁴

Any realisation of free and classless society presupposes 'a radical transformation of the drives and needs of the individual.'¹⁵ This hopeful vision raises the prospect of the 'end of art', since in a free society one might imagine the traditional function of art would become obsolete.

Images of beauty and freedom would cease to have a critical role to play to the extent that beauty and freedom are no longer denied by society and have become aspects of reality. The emergence of such free and beautiful social relations, however, are incompatible with capitalist society, or even with a socialist society that tries to compete with capitalism on the former's terms.¹⁶

Even in a radically transformed society, this would not signal the end of art, since Marcuse recognised that there are limits to freedom and fulfilment by virtue of the human condition. Human beings will remain embedded in nature as tragically suffering creatures. Thus, art will forever retain a transhistorical role and significance. The vision of establishing social conditions for the development of the life-enhancing faculties of humanity is an ideal that ought to be pursued but will never be finally achieved. Art must appeal to a consciousness that is able to participate in the furtherance of this species' defining project.

Marcuse's next question was: who is assumed to be the *subject* of this revolutionary consciousness? According to orthodox Marxist aesthetics, the subject is the proletariat, who has no interest in preserving the existing society. As outlined elsewhere in these essays,¹⁷ this radical consciousness does not (yet?) exist in advanced capitalist societies, for it seems that the proletariat has been more or less fully integrated in the existing order in ways that Marx never anticipated. Furthermore, under capitalism, the exploited populations extend far beyond the conventional proletariat and comprise a large proportion of the so-called middle class. This includes white collar workers, government bureaucrats, and those in the service and information sectors.

The result, according to fellow critical theorist Theodor Adorno, is for art to take an extreme form – as uncompromising estrangement and radical autonomy.¹⁸ While Marcuse acknowledged that this can make art appear elitist or decadent, removed from the class struggle, he nevertheless maintained that such estranged art remains authentic by opposing society through its very estrangement. But still, he added, 'the subject to which authentic art appeals is socially anonymous; it does not coincide with the potential subject of revolutionary practice.'¹⁹

The point here is that the consciousness needed to change society and emancipate people from the rule of capital does not yet exist. In a celebrated passage Marcuse declared: 'Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to the changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world.'²⁰ But if revolutionary art is supposed to speak the language of the people, who are 'the people'? The contradiction here, as Marcuse and others in the Frankfurt School contended, is that there does not seem to be a large mass of people ready to receive the radical vision of the counterculture. There is at most a militant minority.

The vexed problem that follows is that it is not clear why art should speak the language of the people if that language is not yet the language of liberation.²¹ For example, little is to be achieved if a culture thinks that the existential malaise caused by consumerism can only be solved by more consumption; or if the ecological problems caused by capitalist growth and extraction can only be solved by more of the same. Until some form of transformation of

consciousness occurs, artists cannot simply speak the language of the people. Instead, Marcuse argued, artists ‘must rather first create this [oppositional] place, and this is a process which may require them to stand against the people, which may prevent them from speaking their language.’²² This is the sense in which ‘elitism’ in aesthetic practice today can retain a radical content. “To work for the radicalization of consciousness means to make explicit and conscious the material and ideological discrepancy between the writer [or artist more broadly] and “the people” rather than obscure and camouflage it. Revolutionary art may well become the “Enemy of the People.”²³

Marcuse’s work is premised, nonetheless, on the need for political struggle and that such struggle depends on a radical change in consciousness. This refers not merely to a shift in political outlook but a deeper transformation of human needs and drives that are emancipated from the dictates of the existing order. The transformative potential of art presupposes that the people administered by capitalism are able to ‘unlearn the language, concepts, and images of this administration, that they experience the dimension of qualitative change, that they reclaim their subjectivity, their inwardness.’²⁴ This is no limp celebration of escapism, but rather a recognition that the subversion of experience and the creation of new universes are birthed from within, and only later achieved outwardly. A new consciousness will not emerge unaided – nor will a new society.

The aesthetic method

The question becomes: *how* can art transfigure consciousness in a way that leads to post-capitalist political praxis? I propose that there are several modes of aesthetic operation, including but not limited to: (i) aesthetic indictment; (ii) aesthetic imagination (both visionary and moral); (iii) an aesthetic revision of ‘needs’; and (iv) aesthetic enchantment. This is my categorisation, not Marcuse’s, but by and large it can be placed over his aesthetic theory without being forced. I will now briefly consider these four modes in turn.

Aesthetic indictment

An aesthetics of indictment relates to the capacity of art to expose how the established reality oppresses sectors of society, or does violence against things one cares about, in ways that are not always obvious or have even been embraced by the oppressed. By redescribing ‘normality’, the status quo can come to seem abnormal, unacceptable, even obscene, giving voice to undercurrents of cultural disillusionment. What had been subconscious or unconscious is raised to the surface of experience, reshaping and transfiguring what is perceived and how it is perceived.

There can be an intellectual or cognitive component to this redescription, but most importantly it is felt in the body. What had been tolerable becomes viscerally intolerable. Something must be *done*. Thus, a new subjectivity of rebellion – or affect *for* rebellion – can emerge through aesthetic intervention, born of outrage. The complacent consciousness can be shaken awake, and ordinary categories or frames for interpreting miserable reality can be interrupted and disrupted. In a ‘one-dimensional society’, art can invite us to question reality and reassert the plurality of possible worlds. To the extent that we have become puppets

manipulated by the forces of capital and technology, art threatens to cut the strings and liberate us through the very act of exposing our condition as puppets. Marcuse made the point as follows:

Experience is intensified to breaking point... The intensification of perception can go as far as to distort things so that the unspeakable is spoken, the otherwise invisible becomes visible, and the unbearable explodes. Thus the aesthetic transformation turns into indictment – but also into a celebration of that which resists injustice and terror, and of that which can still be saved.²⁵

In this way, through an encounter with art – being powerfully challenged by aesthetic indictment and the celebration of revolt – we can find that, in some way, human consciousness gets restructured. A different moral sensibility can emerge that grounds new ways of seeing, feeling, and acting. When a new generation grows up adopting and normalising these redescriptions, we find that the world has changed. This is perhaps why Percy Bysshe Shelley was prepared to declare that ‘poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world’,²⁶ suggesting that aesthetic revolutions often precede revolutions in political economy, sometimes in subtle ways. As quoted in an earlier essay, J.G. Ballard once stated that ‘many of the great cultural shifts that prepare the way for political change are largely aesthetic.’

Aesthetic imagination (visionary)

Beyond the negation of indictment, art is also the promise of liberation and can point to new forms of prosperity. Art and aesthetic interventions in culture can offer or invent alternative mythologies of existence, expanding the imagination in ways that make new ways of living and being comprehensible, plausible, and attractive. These visions or creations are only appearances – they cannot be *realised* in the domain of art alone. But they do threaten to develop social and political significance when they move from the imagination into the body, guiding action, providing hope, opening new intellectual and emotional possibilities, and thereby shattering the oppressive conformism of the present. This significance presumably can be felt both in the artist and the audience, both creator and spectator, especially insofar as aesthetic engagement is itself an act of creation (e.g., through interpretation).

Aesthetically creating new mythopoetic foundations of a society underpins everything else that follows – including politics and economics. This is because myth and narrative are what structure and rework the popular imagination, including the consciousness of the agents of change. Politics and economics always operate in the service of story, so what that story is obviously matters a great deal. But a culture’s ‘story’ is never stable, nor are the values, meanings, and possibilities implicit in any given story. Fiction and the imagination can open up new realities, just as, through art, old worlds can be made new. The artist does not escape reality, then, but augments and expands reality.

In an age when it can sometimes seem as if there is no alternative to the carbon-intensive, consumer way of life, being exposed to new ways of living and being through art has the potential to expand and radicalise the imagination. In this way, ‘the world of a work of art is “unreal” in the ordinary sense of the word: it is a fictitious reality. But it is “unreal” not because it is less, but because it is also more as well as qualitatively “other” than the established reality. As a fictitious world, as illusion, it contains more truth than does everyday reality.’²⁷

At such times, more hopeful and liberated futures can flicker in and out of existence, demanding that we *choose* a future where once we had thought there was no alternative to the status quo. In these moments, when we are able to break through the crust of conventional thinking and feeling, we see that the world, as it is, is not how it has to be. One might think of utopian novels like William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890; to be discussed in later essay)²⁸ or, more recently, *The Ministry for the Future* (2020) by Kim Stanley Robinson. These authors give imaginative content to futures that were otherwise barely thinkable, reshaping the contours of what is possible by describing other worlds in engaging and creative ways. This type of work has two primary functions: first, a cognitive one, by expanding the imagination regarding possible worlds; second, an affective one, by shifting our emotional states on account of the cognitive shift that has taken place (or, conversely, by shifting emotional states that *enable* a cognitive shift to occur). It is that emotional shift which can ultimately lead to shifts in behaviour, producing acts of resistance and renewal that try to change the world, and sometimes succeed in doing so.

Marcuse offered a cautionary note, however, regarding how 'directly' art should present its message. He resisted the notion of 'instrumentalist' art whose purpose it is to advance a political cause, and would sooner see radical potential in art that is less direct, doing its work in a more subterranean way. 'The more immediately political the work of art is, the more it reduces the power of estrangement and the radical, transcendent goals of change.'²⁹ When exercised well, the aesthetic imagination can change us as it changes reality, requiring a new set of relationships to be established between self, other, and world. Imagining a different future, therefore, is a necessary step in its realisation, even if it is only a first step.

Faced with aesthetic statements of how life can be different – if only, at first, in the fictional world of art – the structures and narratives that define the contours of the human situation can suddenly seem less compelling. The world's perceived objectivity can be shattered. The 'real' starts getting redefined. New, less violent or oppressive future pathways are cut into the landscape of the human journey. Initially this takes place only in the realm of the imagination, but that is a necessity, for 'what other faculty other than the imagination could invoke the sensuous presence of that which is *not* (yet?)'³⁰ Marx and Engels, and most of the key figures of the Frankfurt School, were always cautious (often dismissive) about envisioning what the 'new society' might look like. But if ever that position were justified historically, it seems unjustified today. Action needs to be *motivated* by visions of an alternative, and ought to be guided by a map, even if that map must be constantly revised.

This offers some insight into why art has transformative or revolutionary potential and always threatens to perform a political function, albeit usually indirectly. One of the most important roles of the artist in society is not merely to make beautiful objects, images, stories, or songs, but to expand conditions of possibility by breaking through the petrified social reality and unshackling the human imagination. Far from representing an escape from reality, art and the artist can in fact expose the falseness and contingency of the established order, leaving the truth of alternative realities more accessible. As philosopher and novelist Mark Burch says: 'When all appeals to reason have failed, tell a new story.'³¹

But Marcuse insisted that the promises of art must not be made too easily:

If art were to promise that at the end good would triumph over evil, such a promise would be refuted by the historical truth. In reality it is evil which triumphs, and there are only islands of good where one can find refuge for a brief time.’³²

In any case, [a]rt cannot redeem its promise, and reality offers no promises, only chances.’³³ As noted earlier, art itself cannot change the world, it can only change the minds and sensibilities of *people* who must then act in the world to change it. Marcuse claimed that the ‘indictment and the promise preserved in art lose their unreal or utopian character to the degree to which they inform the strategy of oppositional movements...’³⁴ The hope which art represents must not remain ‘ideal’ – again, this is art’s hidden categorical imperative. It must not point to a world of *mere* fiction or fantasy, but articulate through aesthetic form the *concrete possibilities* that call for realisation.

Beyond the visions of liberation and happiness, the aesthetic imagination can also offer *dystopian* futures. These extrapolate the present into the future to highlight the gravity of what is at stake if current trajectories are not changed. Whereas the positive futures seek to motivate out of hope, the dystopian future is designed to motivate out of fear – fear of losing what one loves and holds most dear. At the extreme lie novels like George Orwell’s, *1984*, or Cormac McCarthy’s, *The Road* – breathtakingly grim pictures of possible human futures, designed to shake us awake. Whether optimistic or pessimistic, imagining alternative future pathways is designed to break us away from the complacency of routine ways of seeing, feeling, and acting, establishing the conditions for alternative modes of consciousness.

Aesthetic imagination (moral)

Most of what I’ve just described could apply to the ‘visionary imagination’ – art that helps expand our perspectives on the future, or shift our perspectives on the present, in ways that influence our sensibilities and shape our action. But we could also speak of the aesthetic expansion of the ‘moral imagination’ (which, at times, can overlap with the visionary imagination). From this perspective, the moral imagination can refer to what philosopher Wilfred Sellars called ‘we-intentions’ or ‘we-consciousness.’³⁵ Expanding the realm of sympathy, care, and concern is a marker of moral progress, as we come to include more people in the category of ‘us’.

How might the moral imagination expand? Neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty has made a compelling case that art – the novel, in particular – is a far more effective means of provoking an expanded moral or ethical sensibility, and reshaping social relations in the world, than logic, science, or books of moral philosophy.³⁶ Indeed, Rorty argued that paradigm shifts in human culture, science, and political economy rarely occur because a society has been rationally convinced, based on the evidence, of a new framework of understanding. Instead, such revolutions are usually a result of a new ‘sentimental education,’³⁷ that is, a result of creative interventions in the dominant story whereby many significant aspects of the old mode of understanding have been *redescribed* in new and emotionally engaging ways.

Rorty suggested that the emotions we have toward others depend on ‘the liveliness of our imagination’, rather than on ‘facts’ that are ‘discoverable independently of sentiment.’³⁸ He

provided the example of Harriet Beecher Stove's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), a book that redescribed slave society in the United States in ways that expanded the moral compass of many white readers, as they came to see slaves as people, just like them, rather than creatures for whom moral concern was not required. Readers came to feel sympathy with slaves, and feel shame about the existing conditions, in ways that they previously did not. Social relations were somehow demystified, social conditioning was undermined, and aspects of the world were seen in a new light as ethical attention shifted focus. Through the 'true illusions' of art, reality was delegitimised.

Philosopher Martha Nussbaum makes a similar point when she defends the humanities and the liberal arts ability to refine character and foster compassion, noting that 'the ability to imagine the experience of another – a capacity almost all human beings possess in some form – needs to be greatly enhanced and refined if we are to have any hope of sustaining decent institutions across the many divisions that any modern society contains.'³⁹ By exposing ourselves to new and unusual stories, about people different to 'us', we minimise the chances of being confined to a single, myopic perspective on the world and increase the chances of expanding our sympathies. This does not diminish the role of reasoning in ethical progress, but acknowledges that our emotions and sentiments play an essential role in rational argument.⁴⁰ After all, we only reason about things we care about, and thus sentimental education – through art – provides the foundation for moral debate and ethical progress.

Marcuse gave a disturbing example that testifies to the truth of art, highlighting its power to enchant and soften the sharp edges of humanity – if we let it. He told the story of how Lenin resolved not to listen to Beethoven's sonatas, which he admired so deeply, because he feared they would enforce a humanitarian spirit on him which he felt obliged to reject. 'All too often,' Lenin admitted, 'I cannot listen to music. It would work on one's nerves. One would rather babble nonsense, and caress the heads of people who live in dirty hell and who nevertheless can create such beauty. But today one should not caress anyone's heads – one's hand would be bitten off. One must beat heads, beat unmercifully – although ideally we are against all violence.'⁴¹ Totalitarian governments acknowledge the power of art through the ferocity of their censorship. If art did not threaten the power structures of political society, presumably novelists, poets, and playwrights would be free to write whatever they wanted, no matter how critical.

Aesthetic revision of 'needs'

Capitalism does not merely produce things. It conditions the subjectivities and sensibilities of human beings. In affluent societies today, the system goes beyond the provision of material needs and constructs the rationalities, desires, and sense experience of people. As noted in a previous essay, Jacques Rancière uses the rather infelicitous phrase 'the distribution of the sensible'⁴² to politicise this aesthetic reality, exploring how the structures of political economy not only distribute material wealth and power amongst a population, but also sensuous and aesthetic experience. A new political economy, therefore, would not only redistribute wealth and power, but change what people are able to feel or not feel, and in what ways. Rancière invites us to consider how political decisions, actions, and narratives determine what presents itself to sense experience; that is, how politics shapes what can be seen, felt, and spoken about

– and by whom. Marcuse’s aesthetic theory sheds light on how art can contribute to changing or destabilising the existing distribution of the sensible.

As material wealth expanded over recent centuries, one might have thought that wealth would have become less important and desired; that affluent societies, in particular, would have recognised the diminishing marginal utility of money, and redirected social energies toward non-materialistic pursuits. But somehow, the diminishing returns have been not just disguised but inverted. Growth in consumption seems more important than ever, as if we have been conditioned against the desire for freedom. In the relentless pursuit of ‘more’ – a goal that it was assumed would liberate us – we have bound ourselves to a conception of progress that perpetuates our servitude while at the same time making ecological devastation a way of life.

Why is this so? And by what means? In affluent societies, people have become objects of administration, even as we are offered the prefabricated ‘freedoms’ of consumer choice. And through this administration – the operation of which is sometimes transparent, often insidious – we reproduce the commodities that are needed for profitable enterprise. But we also reproduce the values and practices that turn the cogs of the industrial machine. The technological capacity to shape public consciousness has never been more powerful, facilitated by the internet and social media. If we were ever to wonder why most social media platforms are ‘free’ (i.e., of no financial cost to the user), it would become clear that it is because they are not selling a product but creating one. The product is us – a docile, distracted, and subservient population.

The ‘needs’ that have been engineered into us have a stabilising, conservative force: the counterrevolution of capitalism has become embedded in the structure of our instincts and ‘second nature’. Marcuse argued that this ‘militates against any change that would disrupt and perhaps even abolish the dependence of man on a market ever more densely filled with merchandise – abolish his existence as a consumer consuming himself in buying and selling.’⁴³ But exploitation does not become less exploitative just because wage slaves are ‘compensated’ with superfluous comforts they have been educated to need. Still, this reality has turned the mass of the population into a conservative, even counter-revolutionary, force. Quantitative progress in an economy’s growth militates against the qualitative changes that are needed regarding what the economy is *for*. Leisure is provided merely to regenerate workers so they can get back to work.

We have arrived at a stage in history where we cannot transcend the existing system without transcending ourselves. That is, we must liberate ourselves from the exploitative apparatus of this society but first we must free ourselves from what we have been made into. As explained in a previous essay, the aesthetic condition of ‘play’, as theorised by Friedrich Schiller, is precisely the state in which we are most likely to be able to question our ‘normal sense’ of self.⁴⁴ This presents us with a vicious circle however, as Marcuse recognised: ‘the rupture with the self-propelling conservative continuum of needs must *precede* the revolution which is to usher in a new society, but such a rupture itself can only be envisaged in a revolution...’⁴⁵

No radical change is possible without the emergence of a new sensibility, a new universe of desires and aspirations – and thus new agents of society’s radical reconstruction. This

qualitative change must occur in the infrastructure of our very being, itself a dimension of the infrastructure of society at large.⁴⁶ Marcuse wrote that ‘the new direction, the new institutions and relations of production, must express the ascent of needs and satisfactions very different from and even antagonistic to those prevalent in the exploitative societies.’⁴⁷ The roots of capitalism lie within us, which is the system’s greatest achievement but also its greatest weakness. After all, we have seen both in our biological inheritance as *homo aestheticus* and our philosophical condition as ‘self-fashioners’ that we have the capacity to make something new from what we’ve been made into.⁴⁸

Marcuse claimed, however, that:

capitalism cannot satisfy the needs which it creates. The rising standard of living itself expresses this dynamic: it enforced the constant creation of needs that could be satisfied in the market; it is now fostering *transcending* needs which cannot be satisfied without abolishing the capitalist mode of production.⁴⁹

Thus capitalism will ultimately be its own gravedigger, because it gives birth to the class of gravediggers. By liberating ourselves from ourselves, we are freer to rediscover the life-enhancing forces and sensuous aesthetic qualities that are largely absent in a life often wasted in unending competitive performance and materialistic pursuits. Without this transformation of our inner realities, the consumer mentality and its mutilated experience would merely be reproduced in the new society. Think of the closing passages in Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945), where the animals look through the window to see their pig leaders argue with the human farmers: ‘The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again but already it was impossible to say which was which.’⁵⁰ All revolutions are at risk of merely reproducing what the revolution was meant to leave behind.

What this suggests is that the transition to a radically new type of society will not involve the broader satisfaction of existing needs, but a rupture with the needs and desires that currently define advanced capitalism. That is, there must be a *qualitative* leap not a limitless *quantitative* achievement. ‘The revolution involves a radical transformation of the needs and aspirations themselves, cultural as well as material; of consciousness and sensibility; of work process as well as leisure.’⁵¹ The emancipation of the senses, therefore, has a negative and positive function. The new sensibility will come to see the contemporary world of aggressive acquisition, competition, and (dis)possession as distasteful, repelling the violence, cruelty, and brutality those things rely upon. The new sensibility will also crave new forms of aesthetic experience in community, nature, art, creative productive activity, and leisure. ‘The emancipation of the senses,’ Marcuse insisted, ‘would make freedom what it is not yet: a *sensuous need...*’⁵² Art can express and revitalise the longing for the realisation of human creative potential that has been deadened or lies dormant under capitalism. If the purpose of art, for Schopenhauer, was to abolish desire, it was, for Marcuse, the primary means of re-educating desire.

This does not deny the primary demand of any justifiable economy: the universal provision of basic material needs. It only points to the truism that defining our needs purely or primarily in material terms is a gross failure of imagination. It also diminishes the inherent creative capacities of our species to explore and flourish in the non-material realm of existence,

especially through art and aesthetic experience. Not only does art and aesthetics provide a non-materialist source of flourishing, but these forms of experience can also help bring such a poeticised society into existence. Art, that is, can expose the falsity or artificiality of many 'needs' of the existing society – 'needs' through which a form of voluntary servitude is achieved – and give rise to 'new needs' consistent with liberation. Indeed, art could create, precisely, the *need* for freedom itself, recapturing aesthetic needs as forces of subversion and political praxis. 'Permanent aesthetic subversion,' Marcuse declared: 'this is the way of art'.⁵³ He added that:

The autonomy of art reflects the unfreedom of the individuals in the unfree society. If people were free, then art would be the form and expression of their freedom. Art remains marked by unfreedom; in contradicting it, art achieves its autonomy.⁵⁴

It would seem that one of the roles of the artist is to help people see or feel more clearly the violence too often hidden in our cultural practices and economic and political institutions. Moreover, the artist can show that there are forms of flourishing and liberation, based on new needs and a new sensibility, that lie beyond consumer culture. These forms of flourishing would not be founded upon affluence, growth, competition, and technology, but upon the visions and values of sufficiency, moderation, permaculture, community, cooperation, and self-governance. The words of poet Gary Snyder speak to this approach with eloquent insight: 'it would be best to consider this an ongoing "revolution by consciousness" which will be won not by guns but by seizing the key images, myths, archetypes, eschatologies, and ecstasies so that life won't seem worth living unless one is on the transforming energy's side'.⁵⁵ This speaks directly to the power and necessity of art and aesthetics. As Marcuse stated: 'Art represents the ultimate goal of all revolutions: the freedom and happiness of the individual,'⁵⁶ even if this must ultimately be achieved through collective action.

Aesthetic enchantment and the power of beauty

According to Marcuse, 'Marxist aesthetics has sharply rejected the idea of the Beautiful, the central category of "bourgeois" aesthetics. It seems difficult indeed to associate this concept with revolutionary art; it seems irresponsible, snobbish to speak of the Beautiful in the face of the necessities of the political struggle.'⁵⁷ Indeed, the aesthetic experience of beauty is arguably, at best, 'neutral', since it can only be judged by effects and consequences. Beauty risks being mere distraction or sedation, perhaps even functioning to repress the imagination or disguise truths that ought to be revealed.

Nevertheless, this orthodox Marxist critique of beauty arguably gets things back the front, and risks damaging the revolutionary cause in an attempt to advance it. One should not reject eating on account of it not being a direct engagement in politics, and perhaps the same goes for engagement with beauty and aesthetic value, which may be forms of nourishment almost as vital as food. But what are the sources of this radical potential?

In developing an answer to that question, and in defence of beauty, I will now draw on Jane Bennett's book, *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (2001),⁵⁸ which rejects modernity's dominant narrative of disenchantment and seeks to tell an alter-tale. Such an alter-tale would

be one that recognises that the world still has the capacity to enchant in ways that has ethical (and, one can argue, political) significance. Bennett's novel approach is to seek out 'enchantments' in a modern world that deceptively imagines itself free of this ancient value. I will extend Bennett's philosophy by focussing on the capacity for art (and nature) to enchant our lives in ways that serves ethical and political objectives. The goal, in part, is to rescue beauty's political relevance by highlighting its power to enchant. This can be understood as a development of Marcuse's view on the energising and even intoxicating effects of art.

At this point the notion of 'enchantment' needs further explanation. Max Weber argued that modernity was increasingly disenchanted and stamped with 'the imprint of meaninglessness.'⁵⁹ Even today the prevailing view is that modern life – with its cars, concrete, overcrowdedness, pollution, and noise – cannot be experienced as enchanted. Indeed, in our post-Enlightenment age, any appeal to this notion requires not just definition but justification, since it normally belongs to past ages of superstition. While Bennett admits that there are plenty of aspects of contemporary life that fit the disenchantment story, her thesis is that 'there is enough evidence of everyday enchantment to warrant the telling of an alter-tale.'⁶⁰

At base, Bennett employs the term enchantment to signify a particular affective or aesthetic state – a *mood* of enchantment. She argues that this mood is a necessary precondition to ethical practice and political engagement, in that it can create the emotional capacity for wonder, compassion, engagement, and generosity. To be enchanted, she explains, 'is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday... [it is] the uncanny feeling of being disrupted or torn out of one's default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition.'⁶¹

It is this surprising emotional disturbance that Bennett believes has ethical potential. To be enchanted – if only for a moment – is to see life as worth living and to see the world as a place that has the latent capacity to be transformed in more humane and ecologically sane ways. More importantly, it provides the *propulsion* to act and engage, functioning as an antidote to apathy, resignation, and perhaps even despair. Thus the enchantments of art can have a politicising effect, via its affective impact. As we have seen, Marcuse made a similar point about how social and political change depends on reshaping needs and sensibilities through aesthetic interventions in culture.

Bennett's premise is that disenchantment with and in life poses an ethical and political problem. Marcuse would have agreed. Transformative action is not set in motion merely by an intellectual appreciation of crisis, immiseration, and exploitation. One can know of these horrors and yet not act... out of disenchantment. For disenchantment's primary consequence is passive resignation to the status quo, which is capitalism's greatest achievement and its greatest tragedy. To act, to resist, to revolt – these necessary orientations and interventions arguably depend on a state or mood of enchantment, the absence of which seems to be haunting politics today.

It should be clear, then, that assessing the ethical and political potential of aesthetic enchantment implies no theoretical degeneration into New Age mumbo-jumbo or any cruel aestheticism. To be enchanted by 'the wonder of minor experiences'⁶² helps transform the

affective register of politics, by altering ‘the emotions, aesthetic judgements, and dispositional moods that shape political wills, programs, affiliations, ideological commitments, and policy preference.’⁶³ This invites us to explore the political relevance of mood(s) and the capacity of art to shape our moods through aesthetic experience.

Enchantment, in this sense, can expand the contours of what seems possible and it can provoke a revaluation of what is valued. Bennett maintains that everyday moments of enchantment can build an ethics of generosity, care, and engagement, stimulating the vital energy needed to resist injustice and participate in practices of solidarity, compassion, experimentation, and renewal. To be disenchanted is to feel one lives in a world in which meaning and purpose are absent, and in which a better world is unimaginable and so not worth fighting for. Thus disenchantment is a political and ethical problem, even as enchantment remains elusive and its experience temporary. But temporary though they are, moments of enchantment can outlive their immediate experience, changing us forever even when the moment has passed.

Through art and aesthetic experience, it is still possible to experience enchantment, despite the ugliness and violence of the world. My point in engaging Bennett’s theory is to highlight how this affective state is crucial to motivating the ethical and political sensibilities and behaviours needed to transform the world and its dangerous trajectories. This challenges the narrative of disenchantment, which serves only to immobilise or deflate collective action. Again, this is based on a recognition that an *effective* politics must be an *affective* politics, one that changes (or challenges) not only how we think about the world, but also the way we feel, perceive, judge, create, and thus, exist in the world. The lens of disenchantment is only one lens through which to see the contemporary world, and a dangerous one at that, with regressive social, political, and economic implications. There are alternatives, even as one must accept that the disenchanted worldview holds certain necessary truths. This is not a utopian or romantic diagnosis, although it retains a touch of what Terry Eagleton calls ‘hope without optimism.’⁶⁴

Thus Bennett rather cheekily invites enchantment, normally an anti-modern notion, back on to the agenda. She is not seeking to reinstate fairies, magic, or superstition, but to give licence to doubt about the claims of capitalism to be the rational, and thus, *natural* expression of modernity. Might there not be other ways to theorise and experience modernity? According to Bennett, to experience the world as merely the mechanical workings of lifeless matter, commodified and traded in a marketplace, is to see the world as disenchanted, and her concern is that the tendency of modernity to disenchant our lives has destructive social and ethical consequences. It can tempt us ‘moderns’ to quietly live a life of resignation, apathy, individualism, and acquisitiveness, leaving people without the necessary ‘affective propulsions’⁶⁵ required to create purpose in their lives and struggle for a more humane world. A disenchanted culture is one suffering the strange ache of malaise, the cause of which is difficult to identify, like a knot of anxiety that cannot be easily untied.

To actively seek out and appreciate moments of enchantment in art, on the other hand, has ethical and political potential. It can give people the energy – the impulse to care and engage – in a world that is desperately in need of ethical and political revaluation and provocation.

What Bennett highlights is how the *feelings* one has participates in and shapes the *thoughts* one has, and vice versa. And what people feel and think obviously affects how they act, both personally and politically. She wagers that ‘to some small but irreducible extent, one must be enamoured with existence and occasionally even enchanted in the face of it in order to be capable of donating some of one’s scarce mortal resources to the service of others.’⁶⁶

In this way the interconnections between affect, thought, ethics, and politics become apparent, even if those interconnections always and everywhere remain mysterious and shifting. Indeed, Bennett begins her treatise by noting that ‘a discomfiting affect is often what initiates a story, a claim, a thesis.’⁶⁷ Or, in the words of political theorist John Holloway: ‘The starting point of theoretical reflection is opposition, negativity, struggle... an inarticulate mumble of discontent.’⁶⁸

This points to what might be called the affective or even aesthetic dimension of ethics and politics, too often marginalised by the pose of pure reason. One cannot, even in principle, master all things in life by calculation – neither physically nor economically. This critical doubt opens theoretical space beyond calculation where moments of enchantment might be able to rewire the circuitry of the dominant imaginary and lay the foundations for alternatives to arise. Meditating in this territory – this blurry nexus between affect, ethics, and politics – can be enlightening but also discomfiting. Enchantments can disturb, and disturbances can enchant, from which one might inquire: might such affective and intellectual provocations have the potential to awaken more people from the dogmatic slumber into which our age has fallen? Put otherwise, can an aesthetically enchanted or disturbed *affect* lead to a genuinely progressive and enchanting *effect*? This is the question art poses. As Marcuse wrote: ‘In the last analysis, the struggle for an expansion of the world of beauty, nonviolence, and serenity is a political struggle.’⁶⁹ We could say the same of enchantment: it can energise a political struggle, and a more enchanted world might also be the result.

Conclusion

Marcuse did not predict a revolution or even anticipate it. Rather, he elaborated on what he called ‘the conditions of its possibility.’⁷⁰ We have seen that it was in art where he placed much of his faith. Over a century earlier, French economic and political theorist Henri de Saint-Simon made a similar point, albeit in more poetic language. He declared that, in bringing forth the new society, it would be the artists who:

will lead the way in that great undertaking; they will proclaim the future of mankind... they will inspire society with enthusiasm for the increase of its well-being by laying before it a tempting picture of a new prosperity; by making it feel that all members of society will soon share in enjoyments which, up to now, have been the prerogative of a very small class; they will hymn the benefits of civilization and they will employ all other resources of fine arts, eloquence, poetry, painting, and music, to attain their goals; in short, they will develop the poetic aspects of the new system.⁷¹

Aesthetic interventions in culture and politics are always occurring – with both progressive and regressive effects – but we are still waiting for the groundswell of creative activity that makes a radically new and liberated society irresistible. We are waiting for the arrival of some

mysterious monolith, as in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, that provokes a quantum leap in consciousness, something that tears through the veil of ordinary experience and opens new spaces to think and be, forcing us to adapt to a new horizon, to broader contours of being. That is to say, we are still waiting for a new 'aesthetic education' that teaches us how to live in harmony with nature; a new aesthetic education that re-enchants our lives in ways that make the status quo utterly unacceptable and the joys of defiant activism seem impossible to pass up. But now, at least, the challenge has been laid down – both to artists, in particular, and to artists-of-life more broadly. This may or may not emerge in the sudden 'mass revolt' envisioned by earlier theorists of revolution. It is possible that artists must prepare themselves to wage a long, piecemeal cultural and educational undertaking, which, of course, may end up being a 'never-ending defeat.'

If it turns out, however, that art, science, and politics cannot provoke the transformations needed to avoid the looming apocalypse, then the role of the artist will only become more important. Creative imaginations will be tasked with interpreting civilisational descent in terms that give meaning to the inevitability of suffering; give sense to the pain we will feel (perhaps are already feeling) as global capitalism dies its inevitable death. At that stage, the therapeutic or even spiritual role of art will take precedence over its political function. As Terry Eagleton notes, the 'imagination can be a revolutionary force, but it also holds out some spiritual solace for revolutions that have gone astray.'⁷²

As I noted at the beginning of this collection of essays, the term 'apocalypse' has a dual meaning, not simply referring to the 'end of the world' but also signifying 'a great unveiling or disclosure' of knowledge. It will be the artist, not the scientist, who will contribute most to the human understanding of such a disclosure when, or if, it arrives. Rather than wallow helplessly as civilisation descends into barbarism, we must hope that our artists, novelists, musicians, poets, and filmmakers, are up to the task of weaving narratives of human and ecological suffering into a meaningful web of solidarity and compassion. Thereby, the artists 'to come' might be able to give birth to a new golden age of Grecian tragedy that offers both an education and cleansing of the emotions and passions in these turbulent times.

Perhaps that is the new dawn that lies beyond this dark hour.

¹ Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (London: MacMillan Education, 1979).

² Beyond *The Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, Marcuse addresses aesthetics, at various points, in many of his writings. See especially, Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (London: Sphere Press, 1969); Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (London: Allen Lane, 1969); Herbert Marcuse, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972). For an extremely valuable collection of Marcuse's aesthetic writings, see Douglas Kellner (ed.), *Art and Liberation (Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Vol. IV)* (London: Routledge, 2007). For a review of Marcuse's aesthetics, see Malcom Miles, *Herbert Marcuse: An Aesthetics of Liberation* (London: Pluto Press, 2012).

³ See generally, Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski (eds.), *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels on Art and Literature* (Nottingham: Critical, Cultural and Communications Press, 2006).

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- ⁴ Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, pp. 3-4.
- ⁵ Ibid, p. 8.
- ⁶ Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) pp. 48-9.
- ⁷ Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. 9.
- ⁸ Ibid, p. xi.
- ⁹ Ibid, p. 13.
- ¹⁰ See Herbert Marcuse, 'Society as a Work of Art' in Kellner (ed.), *Art and Liberation*, note 2, p. 127.
- ¹¹ Charles Reitz, *Art, Alienation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 85-6.
- ¹² Herbert Marcuse, 'Some Remarks on Aragon: Art and Politics in the Totalitarian Era' in Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Technology, War, and Fascism (Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Vol. I)* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 201.
- ¹³ Quoted in Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. 20.
- ¹⁴ Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. 10.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, p. 17.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, p. 28.
- ¹⁷ See Samuel Alexander, 'Banish the Poets! The Power and Politics of Aesthetic Education' in this collection of essays. The full set will be available here: <http://samuelalexander.info/s-m-p-l-c-t-y-ecological-civilisation-and-the-will-to-art/> (accessed 10 May 2023).
- ¹⁸ Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. 31.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p. 32.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid, pp. 33-4.
- ²² Ibid, p. 34.
- ²³ Ibid, p. 35.
- ²⁴ Ibid, p. 37.
- ²⁵ Ibid, p. 45.
- ²⁶ Percy Bysshe Shelly, *A Defense of Poetry* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1891), p. 46.
- ²⁷ Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. 54.
- ²⁸ See forthcoming essay in this collection: Samuel Alexander, 'Democratising the Poet: William Morris and the Art of Everyday Life'. See link in note 17.
- ²⁹ Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. xiii.
- ³⁰ Marcuse, *Counterrevolution*, note 2, p. 96.
- ³¹ Mark Burch, *Euterra Rising: The Last Utopia* (Winnipeg: Mark Burch, 2016).
- ³² Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. 47.
- ³³ Ibid, p. 48.
- ³⁴ Ibid, p. 28.
- ³⁵ See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 190.
- ³⁶ Ibid, p. xvi.
- ³⁷ Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers (Vol. III)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 176.
- ³⁸ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 191.
- ³⁹ Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 10. See also, Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, revised ed.).
- ⁴⁰ See Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, note 39.
- ⁴¹ Quoted in Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. 57.
- ⁴² Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 12.
- ⁴³ Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, note 2, p. 11.
- ⁴⁴ See Samuel Alexander, 'The Politics of Beauty: Schiller on Freedom and Aesthetic Education' in this collection of essays. See link in note 17.
- ⁴⁵ Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, note 2, p. 18.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 4.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ See my essays in this collection: Samuel Alexander, 'Homo Aestheticus, the Artful Species: An Evolutionary Perspective' and Samuel Alexander, 'Giving Birth to Oneself: Ethics as an "Aesthetics of Existence"'. See link in note 17.

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- ⁴⁹ Marcuse, *Counterrevolution*, note 2, p. 16. (In this quote I have changed ‘on the market’ to ‘in the market’ which I presume corrects an error.)
- ⁵⁰ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (London: Penguin, 2021).
- ⁵¹ Marcuse, *Counterrevolution*, note 2, pp. 16-7.
- ⁵² *Ibid*, p. 71 (my emphasis).
- ⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 107.
- ⁵⁴ Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. 73.
- ⁵⁵ Gary Snyder, 1970. ‘Four Changes’ *Modern America Poetry*. Available at: <https://bioneers.org/four-changes-by-gary-snyder/> (accessed 10 January 2023).
- ⁵⁶ Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, note 1, p. 69.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 62
- ⁵⁸ Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). In this section I draw from work published in Samuel Alexander and Brendon Gleeson, *Urban Awakenings: Disturbance and Enchantment in the Industrial City* (Singapore: Palgrave, 2019).
- ⁵⁹ Max Weber, ‘Science as a Vocation’ in Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 140.
- ⁶⁰ Bennett, *Enchantment*, note 58, p. 4.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 4-5.
- ⁶² *Ibid*, p. 3.
- ⁶³ Jane Bennett, *Thoreau’s Nature: Ethics, Politics, and the Wild* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002) p. xxii.
- ⁶⁴ Terry Eagleton, *Hope without Optimism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).
- ⁶⁵ Bennett, *Enchantment*, note 58, p. 3.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 4.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 3.
- ⁶⁸ John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power* (London: Pluto Press, 2010, second ed.) p. 1.
- ⁶⁹ Herbert Marcuse, ‘Ecology and Revolution’ in Douglas Kellner (ed.), *The New Left and the 1960s (Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Vol. III)* (London, Routledge, 2005), p. 175.
- ⁷⁰ See Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Emancipation (Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Vol V)*, p. 241.
- ⁷¹ Cited in Miles, *Herbert Marcuse*, note 2, p. 20.
- ⁷² Terry Eagleton, *Culture and the Death of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 103.