

# In Praise of Socialism

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I had been asked whether our world was tending towards cultural standardization or was maintaining its variety. I thought that I had implicitly answered this question in « *Unequal Development* » (1). Here is my explicit answer.

## I. — CONCEPT OF CULTURE

We first need to know what culture or civilization is, what its components are, how they are interrelated. That is the prerequisite for understanding how each of its components assumes its true meaning with reference to the whole — society — and hence becomes intelligible. « Witticisms » like that of Alain (2), the mysterious (and mystical) halo surrounding so many comments on the fine arts, the intuitions suggested by linguistics and what is called the « psychology of peoples » (sic), reference to some episodic superficial relationships which seem to occur between particular elements of the natural context, of the social organisation and of the ideology (political practices, or scientific ideas, or forms of art) (3) — all that is hardly sufficient to hide the conceptual vacuum concerning culture and civilization.

In our view, culture is the *mode of organization of the utilization of use values*. What are these use values, and can we define them, determine their frontiers, or even try to « classify » them into categories? Can we specify the nature and mode of operation of the organization of the utilization referred to? Lastly, can we discern the types of correspondence (« harmonious » or, on the contrary, contradictory) between these modes of organization on the different planes which concern them? To all these questions we shall try to provide answers in a historical perspective, that is, in the form of the simplified essentials, by revealing the contrasts which here oppose the precapitalist social formations to those of our contemporary world (the capitalist social formations). And since « the point is not to interpret the world, but to change it », our perspective will attempt to define the starting point of the so-called socialist utopia (4): the project of a disalienated society (5). Outside that perspective there is no salvation. Anyone who does not want to imagine a disalienated society accepts alienation and thereby, in our view, is precluded from scientifically understanding the mode of operation of society. And if ideology is the false,

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alienated consciousness of an alienated society, the science of that society is inseparable from its ideology. Really wholly disalienated science does not yet exist, it can be the complete product only of a disalienated society; but we can glimpse it, as we can glimpse human liberation, as soon as we have become conscious of our false consciousness. Here we must repeat: reason and emotion are the inseparable products of the being and activity of man, who is animal and non-animal, social and individual.

## II. — PRECAPITALIST SOCIAL FORMATIONS AND CULTURE

*All precapitalist social formations are based on a direct apprehension of use values, without the mediation of exchange value.*

True, many precapitalist social formations had commodity exchange, but in none of these was the (simple) commodity mode of production the dominant mode. Indeed that is why the very concepts of exchange value and use value could not be formulated before the emergence of the capitalist mode and the generalization of the commodity form, not only of the whole social product, but also of labour power itself. As is well known, it was only with capitalism that the dialectical unity exchange value/use value (and the linguistic use of the same noun «value» for the two terms of the contradiction), like the dialectical unity social/individual, appeared as objects of social science.

Certainly, for that very reason it will be interesting to see how the embryo of a social science based on the use-value/exchange value dialectic appears in those precapitalist, peripheral and exceptional formations in which commodity exchange performs decisive (though not dominant) functions. That is the reason for the exceptional attraction exerted by Greece on modern minds (6).

Use values directly apprehended cannot be conceptualized as anything but a manifold reality. For precapitalist formations, there can be no abstract and general concept of use-value (it can only be grasped in relation to its opposite, exchange value); there are only concrete use values, in the plural. As we can understand today, these are at the same time social and individual. Marx reminds us that the more complex always enables us to understand the more simple. But in the consciousness of the people of the time, it is only the individual aspect which, in a unilateral way, comes to the surface.

Hence, because it is impossible to isolate the concept of use value, precapitalist formations cannot define a field of economics whose frontiers indicate the existence of another field, that of non-economic social activities. Use values — the limitations of the noun «value» can be seen here — occupy the whole of social life; all the material and immaterial things which correspond to the needs of precapitalist social and individual man are use values. Hence use value here consist of man's various foods, his utensils and tools, his clothes and shelter, his art objects and collective monuments; but

also, and in the same way, his ways of expressing his scientific ideas, his beliefs (his ritual sacrifices and prayers), his means of satisfying his emotions and of settling his family and social problems.

Today we know this problem : man in precapitalist formations does not distinguish between labour time and time devoted to other social occupations. Not that he is stupid and unable to say how many days he needs to devote to sowing his millet or rice, but he does not analyse this time in terms different from those by which he describes and measures the time devoted to settling village dispute etc... He does not distinguish between a labour time and a so-called leisure time, because the latter, which is really only time of recuperation, implies the commodity nature of labour power. We shall see that it is quite different in the capitalist mode and that therefore the so-called leisure time is alienated just as is the underlying labour it implies. Hence the man of the precapitalist societies does not know boredom.

Because of the unity of precapitalist social time, it is impossible to define a specific economic field and hence an economic science. Indeed, in the precapitalist modes the economic plane is transparent, as we have already shown (7). Therefore the dominant plane which characterizes these modes is always the superstructure, although of course the base remains determinant in the last resort.

The direct perception of use-values does not mean that men are free, i.e. that they know their limitations. For this perception operates at a level of development of the productive forces which remains very low. Some essential consequences result from this.

First, these are class societies. Thus the total quantity of use values concerned is very unequally appropriated, and for most men the quantity is very small. It is this poverty of use-values which conditions the wealth of the minorities, who can by the direct apprehension of wealth, develop their humanity, their science, their taste, their art, their emotions. The counterpart of humanity for some is the reduction of others to an almost animal status. Hence this humanity is necessarily limited, distorted and alienated.

Alienated, because the dominance of ideology, necessitated by the transparency of the economic plane, is no vulgar « swindle » or cynical lie on the part of profiteers. The dominant class itself is subjected to this ideology — its own — just as is the dominated class. What is the nature of this alienation which characterizes the dominant ideology ? The weak development of the productive forces means the submission of the whole society to the forces of nature, hence the non-freedom of the society. Man is necessarily alienated in the context of nature ; the dominant ideology is necessarily religious.

*At this point all use values will have the characteristic of being apprehended simultaneously as means of direct satisfaction of needs and as manifestations of religious alienation. We can see that these needs are not « animal » or « physiological » but social, even at the poorest material level.*

This is then an alienated culture. But it *is* a culture, precisely because the mode of organization of the utilization of use values is total. It is total because it encompasses all the fields of social life, it is total because it brings together the social and the individual, it is total because it determines each of its components with reference to the whole. Therefore it is not an artifice of erudition which makes us feel the same emotion with respect to the great works of the past as the men of the past did : we understand them.

The direct apprehension of use values also gives to time the dimension of durability. Firstly, things are made to last : houses, furniture, utensils, cloth. This durability is not only the reflexion of the poverty of the productive force, which prohibits too frequent replacements. It is also, and above all, necessary so that these things may really be use values ; for with durability things can be integrated with the person who enjoys them ; it gives time to get used to them, to like these things, to discover all their hidden dimensions apart from their mere « functionality ». But the durability which is sought is not only related to the making of things, it also relates to ideas, emotions and their material supports. Temples and Cathedrals are built to last all time. This is, certainly, a reflexion of specific religions alienation : the dominant ideology cannot fulfil its functions unless, in the pseudo-consciousness of men, it appears to be everlasting. But at the same time, this durability of monuments enables successive generations to be imbued with their significance, with their still unsuspected many-sided richness.

*Hence the ancient cultures are necessarily varied.* Not because physical communications are limited and the planet is still vast. They are varied because the direct apprehension of use values is necessarily concrete, hence varied to the extreme. Varied from one social formation to another, from one region, with its specific landscape, to another, from one individual to another. The diversity of the necessary correspondance between society and nature, which is still so imperfectly controlled, accentuates that necessary variety, as does the diversity of the combinations specific to the different social formations.

### III. — CAPITALISM AND CULTURE

*Capitalism is the moment of negation : negation of use-value, hence also negation of culture, negation of diversity.*

The capitalist mode of production is based on exchange value generalized for the first time, extended for the first time to labour power itself, in all the capitalist formations, those of the centre and those of the periphery. Though tending to be exclusive to the centre, the dominant capitalist mode, when it subjected other modes at the periphery, distorted them and emptied them of their content. The real unity of the world is already there, it is the unity built around the universal commodity nature of labour power (8).

Man in the capitalist world has lost the direct apprehension of use values. Whether immensely rich or poverty-stricken, he is merely a consumer; that is, a social animal whose needs are manufactured with the precision and speed of a machine, according to the requirements of profit. More than ever his own strength, the strength which enables him to tame nature, seems to him to be imposed on him as an outside force. He remains alienated.

But the locus of his alienation has shifted. He is no longer afraid of nature, of thunder and lightning, of the gods, he is afraid of himself, of society. We have seen the reasons for this: the generalization of exchange value in its highest form, that of capitalism, gives a new opaqueness to the economic exploitation of labour power; as the height of absurdity, things created by men take the curious name of a general and abstract concept, capital; they are endowed with the magic virtues of the fetish; they have a « productivity » of their own. Instead of realizing that his labour has become more productive, alienated man attributes this productivity to the material means he sets in motion.

It is because of this fact, this new alienation, that the need and the possibility arise of a specific science, political economy. For there is no science unless its object is autonomous, independent — at least in appearance — of the subject. This is henceforth the case. As Marx observed (9), the true religion of the English is no longer protestantism, it is the law of supply and demand.

At the same time the field of social activity is split into separate domains, that of economic life acquires precise frontiers. Preparing food in a restaurant is an economic activity, preparing it at home is not. Why? Because the first economic activity creates exchange values, commodities, while in the second activity the housewife is still directly apprehending the use values.

The two terms of the contradictory dialectical unity use value/exchange value can now be grasped simultaneously. Dialectical unity is not symmetry: exchange value dominates the unity and ultimately determines use value, as everyday social reality shows. The historical basis of exchange value, originally use value, is reversed.

Economistic alienation is necessary to the functioning of the system. That is why a pseudo-science reflecting the requirements of a pseudo-consciousness, economic science (thus in reality an ideology, claiming to be science), is built entirely on the sole basis of the preeminence of use values. Thus the hell of reality is counterbalanced by the paradise of ideas.

Henceforth social life is compartmented, with economic activity as such separated from other activities. But at the same time the unity of this social life is restored by the domination of its economic sector; all aspects of living are subject to the fundamental requirement of the reproduction of labour power as commodity, which is a necessary condition for the domination of the exchange value of commodities over the use — value of things' commodities and non-

commodities are distinct categories. But the non-commodity only exists through its opposite, the commodity, and the latter dominates the former. Social time is broken down into labour time and non-labour time. It is not leisure time, as the pseudo-consciousness of alienated men expresses it, but time of recuperation: « functional » recuperation organised socially and not left to the individual, despite some appearances. Here again the image reverses reality: the closed and secret world of the free individual belongs to the celestial world of ideas: in down-to-earth reality it is invaded by the social plane. That is why the errors of technical adjustment of this horrible functionality result in people being bored.

At the same time social life loses the concept of durability of time. Exchange value, controlled by profit, is only embodied in useful objects in the poorest, most functional sense of the term. The replacement of things does not only, or even mainly, stem from the acceleration of the real progress of the productive forces; it is also, and above all, necessary to the system of extraction of surplus value, hence wastage in the true sense of the term. This wastage is not only material, it radically affects the relation between men and things; things, like men become one-dimensional: the dimension of immediate use. But also, at the same time, man who no longer fears nature no longer believes in eternity. He has got rid of it; but only to be bound by the necessities of the short space of time; an increasingly short time. The technocrats stupidly, measure the « costs » and « benefits » of their decisions in a short-sighted perspective which never goes beyond ten or fifteen years. Some of them believe that what they should do is to enlarge the scope of their measurements, to transcend the enterprise and measure the social « costs » and « benefits ». A few bad techniques give them a clear conscience, meaning a conscience of alienated persons. But that is not the problem: men need to see beyond a mere ten or fifteen years. But the technocrat is no longer a man, he is the precursor of the infernal machine of perfection in horror, that of 1984 (10).

If there is no culture except through the direct and total apprehension of all use values, material and non-material, in their simultaneous totality, capitalism has no culture. It is the moment of the negation of culture. It destroys. This destruction occurs in successive sectors, the commodity gradually reducing the non-commodity. First it is the material objects which are reduced to the status of commodities, whose use value diminishes in relation to socially determined functionalities. A negro utensil is not only a utensil, it is also a work of art and an expression of religious, emotion. A plastic bucket is merely a plastic bucket, and the work of art an object of decoration. As for religious emotion, it is bound to disappear, since the locus of alienation has shifted. The bareness of the ideal protestant temple means that religious emotion must no longer communicate with that of art or of daily life. It has to be something else which no longer has anything human in it. Yet, you will tell me, modern art exists of course. But have you noticed that the art of the precapitalist

societies is always a means of social integration, whereas our contemporary art is, for the first time and more and more completely, the expression of a rejection of society? It is therefore to the extent that capitalism has not achieved its aims that the contradiction survives that art remains, in the form of a vestige. But in 1984 there will no longer be any art; what would be the point?

Secluded in a citadel, a largely female one, vestiges of the use value subsist for a time but always threatened. Thus impoverished, insignificant and finally into nothing, until they become commodities. Has not pornography succeeded in making the orgasm a vulgar commodity? Not only the things which are sometimes the supports of these use values, but also the non-material things which have no such support, the emotions, wither away under the pressure of education. Supreme alienation: a certain women's revolt demands that society should treat them as men, they want to barter their reduced status of oppressed for a reduced status of oppressor (11). The system can grant them this privilege — gradually of course: in 1984 there will no longer be any women, since there will no longer be any men either. They will be equal, equally insignificant.

Resistance to this destruction of culture also occurs where the system has penetrated least far-in its periphery. Despite the strong tendency for everything everywhere to be modelled in the same way, the complexity of the peripheral formations, as opposed to the growing functional simplicity of the central formation, provides opportunities for resistance and revolt. Revolts which are first confused, without perspective, in a word nationalistic, but they may assume another dimension, as was highlighted by the cultural revolution.

Fortunately, capitalism is not harmony. But it tends towards the harmony of nothingness, 1984. It therefore offers men two alternatives: either this functional harmony without men, or its superseding.

For the negative moment is also the moment which makes possible the liberation of mankind. The prodigious development of the productive forces makes it possible to dominate nature, as a condition of freedom. It also makes this liberation possible for all men, and not just for privileged minorities as before. It therefore makes it possible to restore the direct apprehension of use values at a level of wealth for everybody which eliminates the distortions and complementary reductions of status of the oppressor and the oppressed. It has already given a glimpse of this possible liberation, precisely by the transfer of the locus of alienation. For already the dominance of economics partly frees the fields of politics and ideology. These fields are no longer religious. They become in their turn the object of a practice which is being freed, and of a science. True, this practice is not yet really free, because it is subject to the demands of economic alienation. But its way is cleared because alienation no longer weighs directly on it. Indeed, it is because it is not free that it too can become an object of sciences which are called sociology, political science etc... Pseudo-sciences of course, just like their

complement political economy, because they are sciences of a pseudo-consciousness. But actually sciences to the extent that man, not being free, is subjected in them to laws which seem foreign to him.

Thus the way to socialism is open, but at the same time so is that of perfection in horror.

#### IV. — PERFECTION IN HORROR : 1984, THE REIGN OF ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN (12)

The fact that this is so should fill us with enthusiasms. For men in the past were unable to glimpse the horror. The fact that we can show how real are the contradictions which make us reject it.

But let us confront it squarely, lucidly: 1984 is the calm reign of the universal harmony of death. There are no more individuals, neither men nor women. These beings (we hesitate to qualify them with an adjective) are neither animals nor men, neither alienated nor liberated, neither conscious nor endowed with a pseudo-consciousness. They are perfectly plastic. They are no longer determined by other men, but by a perfect machine. Thus contradiction, which makes life, gives way to harmony, which is death. These beings no longer speak — they have nothing to say — since they have nothing to think or feel. They do not produce anything, neither objects nor emotions. No more art; nothing. The electronic machine produces — the term is meaningless — everything, including these beings.

Absurd? Yes of course it is the technocrats' dream of perfection. Let them admit it, even if under torture. It is the dream of the partisans of the « middle way » of « *laissez faire* », of « realistic » and « progressive » adjustments, and all that type of jargon. *Laissez faire* what? Let evolve towards what? Adjust to what? Let them admit it: it means going as smoothly as possible towards nothingness.

Absurd? Certainly, but is this not where we are going? Why do people like so much what are regarded increasingly as « vestige »? China, Egypt, Asia and Africa are full of these « vestige »: they still exist in Europe, and even — a little — on the Atlantic coast of the United States. But Los Angeles also exists, and — worse still — Australia. Why then do people like the old towns, and even Manhattan, but nobody, including the town planners who designed it themselves, ventures to defend the perfect functionality of the last « achievements » of postwar capitalism? What people like in these vestiges, despite all their limitations, is precisely the totality of the use-value they contain, the unity of the social and the individual which they respect, in a word their non-functionality.

For perfect functionality is necessarily fragmented and linear. It is always functionality in relation to something, not in relation to everything. Add together: the fastest possible (and even most « comfortable ») transport for going to work, the quietest possible rest places (to recuperate labour power), maximum proximity to shopping centres (capitalism must live). What do you have? Los Angeles or



Australia? Like time, space is broken down into social and individual space. No individual use can be made of social space: at the crossing of a network of highways one is necessarily a car-driver and nothing else; the « artists » of technocracy may plant beautiful trees there, not necessarily made of plastic, and consult a painter or even a psychologist: the highway crossing remains ugly. This is because neither the painter nor the psychologist is capable of designing an individual use of social space: in any case they are not paid for that.

At the same time so-call private space is an illusion: it is space organized for recuperation, hence it is the social plane which predominates. Thus the individual villa and garden are dormitories, places of necessary debasement (think of the real functions of television), places of withdrawal of mediocre value (think of « home comforts ») and places of boredom.

But see how people live in an oriental bazar (social and individual), how people « receive » in their « private » home in an « under-developed » country (the reflection of this is the well-known « hospitality »...). What we like here are not the « things ». There are beautiful things and others less beautiful, or not at all. It is not erudition or snobbishness concerning the past which function there. It is simply the unity of the totality of the use value which provides the dimension which is lost by functionality.

Capitalist space, and capitalist time, are no longer the framework of the organization of use values. They have become the supports of exchange value. Indeed supreme alienation — they have a « price »!

The world which has become under-developed, Ibadan and Dakar, « old » Europe and not-so-old Europe which would like to rebuild Paris like Detroit, Manhattan and Chicago of the twenties and thirties, Los Angeles and Australia: these are successive milestones on the road which leads inexorably to 1984.

Is it then surprising that the contradictions which make us aware that capitalism is the moment of negation and nothing more, occur more strongly at the periphery of the system than in its centre, in Latin Europe than in the United States? It is when it is still « young » that capitalism shows its true face. Later, it is likely to be too late: people have forgotten the very existence of use values, they no longer ask questions about the meaning of alienated labour, they are thoroughly « conditioned » and have become one — dimensional.

Examples? Why is American English an impoverished English? unless it is because the « purer » capitalism of North America needs fewer shades of thinking and feeling? Why are the « vestige » of culture in North America to be found in the dreadful slave south and not in California or Las Vegas? Why has the language of the Europeans of the 19th century become unreadable for the simplifiers of functionalist sociology of the 20th century? Why has dialectics become for them synonymous with incomprehensible and with « erroneous contradiction »? Why has the simple — simplistic — language of uni-

lateral models which require the electronic computer (which replaces a billion connexions in the human brain by 10 million electric wires — oh progress !) become a reason for rejoicing ? Why is it that the single — disciplinary fools can no longer feel — and understand — transdisciplinary allusions and metaphors ? Why was it at the beginning of the 19th century that the visionary and marvellous cry of utopian socialism occurred ? Why do the most modern ideas and actions come from China ? Why is it the cultural revolution and not the hippy movement (13) which meets the problems of the Detroit worker ? Why is Australia a world of absolute silence ? Anyway, you will say, how can one be Australian ? Well yes, one can be, and even — it seems — quite comfortably ; if one is Australian one can even (« statistically ») have a few extra chances of being a tennis champion. One can even become Australian : functionality gets hold of you. Therefore, let us send all the world's technocrats there arbitrarily — they will like it there.

They will like it there because they will systematically construct 1984, a world in which, since the contradictory dialectical unity has given way to functionalist structuralism, everything is perfect, hence, like god, inert.

## V. — SOCIALISM AND CULTURE

This involves a society, and a society of human beings. A society which has solved certain problems, those of the prehistory of mankind, and now lives on another plane, is concerned with other problems and new contradictions. It is not a question of harmony. Can we imagine the problems of a liberated disalienated society ? Can we imagine a non-alienated culture, apart from alienated culture or non-culture ?

The new problems of this society are not those dealt with by current alienated social science. First of all, political economy will have disappeared. Do not be misled : political economy is not an « absolute » science, the science, for example, of modes of production. Science is no more absolute than anything else. Political economy is merely the science of the capitalist mode of production ; the only one which can be the object of science, because the alienation specific to it is economistic alienation. At the same, this science enables us also to understand the precapitalist modes, to understand the specific nature of the non-economistic, but religious, alienation which accompanies them. And also to glimpse the communist mode, freed from alienation. By a dangerous misuse of language, we see in it the science of all modes of production. This is a dangerous misuse if we are not careful, because it is evidence of a persistent economistic alienation. The social-democracy of the European workers' movement of the 19th century had succumbed to it. And when Rosa Luxemburg simply asserts that with the disappearance of the mediation of exchange values, with the restoration of the direct apprehension of use values, political economy has no further purpose, this is seen as « left-wing deviation ».

Nor have political science and sociology in general further purpose in a society in which man really knows what he wants. No more state, said Marx; hence, of course, no more science of the State.

Therefore the direct apprehension of use values will be restored. That is certain. Time will again become total time. « The point is not to free labour, but to abolish it ». So-called « leisure » time will also disappear, just as will its complement which dominates it, labour time. Things will no longer be functional things, but elements of the whole, and lasting as they should be. Man will again be able to look far ahead, and to delegate to the machine — it does not deserve more — the short — term « calculation » of efficiency put back in its place. He will have recovered a mastery over time. Space will also be recovered, as the support of use-values, as a use-value itself. And it too will be total. With the abolition of labour, the division of labour will disappear, especially the division between intellectual and manual work, design and execution etc... With the abolition of exchange value the contradiction social/individual will disappear, and on the spatial plane, the opposition town/country, so-called collective space/so-called private space, etc... We see that socialism is something quite different from capitalism without capitalists, to which it has been reduced by social-democracy, economism and the experience of Eastern Europe.

Therefore the direct perception of use values brings with it diversity, not uniformity. As opposed to the uniformity of the cultural destruction of capitalism, we have here the richness of renewed diversity. National diversities, certainly, but also regional, local, individual.

Fore there are the new problems : those concerning the new dialectic of the social and the individual in a free society of free individuals. To describe the nature of this new dialectic, to try to squeeze it into the strait-jacket of the current « sciences » dealing with « man » — whether it is psychology or physiology — would be a futile exercise. The fact that we can already glimpse some problems should not mislead us. It is through the distorting prism of reduced status and sickness that today's society tames man and generates in alienated man a glimpse of these problems of tomorrow.

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## NOTES

1. Monthly Review Press, 1976
2. « Culture is what is left when everything has been forgotten ».
3. The luminous clarity of the Greek sky and rationality, the northern mists and romanticism etc..
4. Utopia is not synonymous with impossible, on the contrary : as soon as we succeed in imagining a cohesive society, the fact is that utopia is one possibility (among others). The utopian socialists of the early 19th century were not utopian because of the vision they expressed but because of the idea they had (and proposed) of the way to achieve it.

5. To reject the theme of alienation, as the structuralists do, is to accept the prospect of 1984 (reference to Orwell's book) as necessary. The theme of alienation is not only that of the idealist philosophy of humanism (which tries to find out what constitutes the essence of man apart from the modes of production which define him as lord or serf, bourgeois or proletarian etc.). It is not a theme of the young Marx, subsequently superseded. The first chapters of *capital* give to the specific alienation of the capitalist mode of production (the commodity — fetish) its central place. There are other alienations, those of the religions, which we relate to other modes of production (see later). Once again, to reject the commodity alienation is to refuse to change the world, to be content with contemplating it, it is to reject praxis.
6. That is why Aristotle glimpses the embryo of a political economy.
7. Reference to *Le Développement Inégal*, chap. I.
8. Reference to our *Le développement inégal* and also to our study *La fin d'un débat, l'échange inégal et la loi de la valeur* (forthcoming. Authropros). See also *German Ideology* where Marx (already!) asserts the unity of the world, which our « economists » challenge today. (See *La fin d'un débat*).
9. **German Ideology**
10. Reference to the book by George Orwell, 1984.
11. By exalting the so-called « female » virtues of sweetness, certain feminist trends have helped very actively to make people aware of the decisive functions which the so-called male virtues of « virility » (read brutality, stupidity, self-importance and discipline) fulfil in the mechanisms of alienation. But the dominant trend either confines itself to demanding equal treatment (a just demand but strictly non-liberationary, like the economic claims), or wants to create a separate, isolated female world. This impossible objective, utopian in the ordinary sense of the word, clearly belongs to the American tradition, and reflects impotence.
12. Reference to 1984 (op. cit.) and H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*.
13. Like certain feminist trends, the hippy movement thinks it can create an isolated paradise, without transforming society. Once again — American tradition of moralism and impotence — hippyism fails. A civilisation of use values cannot be created in the Kingdom of the commodity; the hippies in their turn revert to the old society.

## RÉSUMÉ

Chacun de nous s'interroge sur la prospective de la culture : va-t-on vers l'uniformisation culturelle ou, au contraire, vers le maintien de sa diversité ? Quels sont, au niveau des systèmes socio-économiques et des valeurs qu'ils impliquent, les supports de l'une et de l'autre de ces alternatives ?

Dans ce papier l'auteur jette quelque lumière sur cette problématique fondamentale.

Pour ce faire, il commence par tracer un cadre conceptuel, en définissant d'abord la notion de culture. Pour lui, la culture est le mode d'organisation de l'utilisation des valeurs d'usage, lesquelles occupent toute la vie sociale dans des formations pré-capitalistes. Elles concernent toutes les choses matérielles et immatérielles qui répondent aux besoins de l'homme social et individuel pré-capitaliste : ce sont donc ses différents aliments, ses ustensiles et ses outils, ses

vêtements et son abri, ses objets d'art et ses monuments collectifs, mais aussi et de la même manière, ses moyens de manifester ses idées scientifiques, ses croyances (ses sacrifices rituels et ses prières), ses moyens de satisfaire ses émotions et de régler ses problèmes familiaux et sociaux.

Cependant, l'appréhension directe des valeurs d'usage ne signifie pas la liberté des hommes, c'est-à-dire la connaissance de leurs limites. Car cette appréhension opère à un niveau de développement des forces productives qui reste très bas. Certaines conséquences en découlent. D'abord, il s'agit là des sociétés de classes. La masse des valeurs d'usage en question est très inégalement appropriée et, pour la majorité des hommes, singulièrement pauvres. C'est cette pauvreté qui conditionne la richesse des minorités, lesquelles peuvent, par l'appréhension directe des richesses, développer leur humanité, leur goût, leur art, leurs émotions. L'humanité des uns a pour contrepartie la réduction des autres à un statut presque animal. Aussi cette humanité est-elle nécessairement limitée, déformée et aliénée. La classe dominante est, elle aussi, soumise à cette idéologie, la sienne, comme la classe dominée, idéologie caractérisée par l'aliénation due à la faiblesse du développement des forces productives. En effet, le faible développement des forces productives signifie la soumission de la société toute entière aux forces de la nature, donc la non liberté de la société. L'homme est nécessairement aliéné dans la nature ; l'idéologie dominante est nécessairement religieuse. Dès lors, toutes les valeurs d'usage porteront cette caractéristique d'être appréhendée simultanément comme moyens de satisfaction directe des besoins et comme manifestation de l'aliénation religieuse.

L'appréhension directe des valeurs d'usage donne également au temps la dimension de la durabilité. D'abord, les choses sont faites pour être durables : les maisons, les meubles, les ustensiles, les tissus. Cette durabilité n'est pas seulement le reflet de la pauvreté des forces productives, qui interdit les renouvellements trop fréquents. Elle est aussi, et surtout, nécessaire pour que ces choses soient vraiment des valeurs d'usage ; car la durabilité permet d'intégrer les choses et la personne qui en jouit. Mais cette durabilité recherchée n'est pas attachée seulement à la fabrication des choses, elle l'est aussi en ce qui concerne les idées, les émotions, et leurs supports matériels. On construit des temples et des cathédrales destinés à l'éternité. Reflet certes de l'aliénation religieuse spécifique : l'idéologie dominante ne peut remplir ses fonctions que si dans la fausse conscience des hommes, elle apparaît destinée à l'éternité. Mais en même temps, cette durabilité des moyens permet aux générations successives de s'imprégner de leur signification, de leur richesse multi-faciale toujours insoupçonnée.

Ainsi les cultures anciennes sont nécessairement variées parce que l'appréhension directe des valeurs d'usage est nécessairement concrète, donc variée à l'extrême : variée d'une formation sociale à l'autre, d'une région à l'autre, d'un individu à l'autre. La diversité des correspondances nécessaires entre la société et la nature, qui est encore si

peu maîtrisée, accentue cette variété nécessaire, comme aussi la diversité des combinaisons spécifiques aux différentes formations sociales.

Avec le capitalisme apparaît le moment de la négation : négation de la valeur d'usage, donc négation de la culture, négation de la diversité. En effet, le mode de production capitaliste est fondé sur la valeur d'échange généralisée pour la première fois, étendue pour la première fois à la force de travail elle-même, dans toutes les formations capitalistes, celles du centre comme celles de la périphérie. L'unité réelle du monde est déjà ; elle est l'unité construite autour du caractère marchand universel de la force de travail. L'homme du monde capitaliste a perdu l'appréhension directe des valeurs d'usage. Immensément riche ou misérable, il n'est qu'un consommateur, c'est-à-dire un animal social dont les besoins sont fabriqués avec la précision et la vitesse de la machine, selon les exigences du profit. Plus que jamais sa propre force, celle qui lui permet de dominer la nature lui paraît s'imposer à lui-même comme une force étrangère. Il reste aliéné.

Dès lors, s'il n'y a de culture que par l'appréhension directe et totale de toutes les valeurs d'usage, matérielles et non matérielles, dans leur totalité simultanée, le capitalisme n'a pas de culture. Il est le moment de la négation de celle-ci. Il détruit et cette destruction opère par secteurs successifs, la marchandise réduisant progressivement la non marchandise.

Avec le socialisme, qui implique une société libre d'individus libres, l'appréhension directe des valeurs d'usage sera rétablie. Et elle sera porteuse de diversité et non d'uniformité. A l'uniformité de la destruction culturelle du capitalisme s'oppose ici la richesse de la diversité renaissante. Diversités nationales, sans doute, mais aussi régionales, locales, individuelles.