Freee

To Hell with Herbert Read!

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HELL CULTURE

When will revolutionary leaders realize that 'culture' is dope, a dope than religion; for even if it were true that religion is the opiate of the people, it is to poison yourself than to be and suicide is more honourable than murder. To hell with culture as culture as added like a sauce to otherwise unpalatable stale fish!

Eric Gill

The Greeks, it seems, had no word for culture. They had good architects, good sculptors, good poets, just as they had good craftsmen and good statesmen. They that their way of life was a good way of life, and they were to defend it. But it would never have occurred to them that they had a , culture—something to be by their academicians, something acquired by superior people with sufficient time and money, and exported to foreign countries figs and olives. It was something natural if it existed at all—something of which they were

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TO HELL WITH HERBERT READ!

You 'erbert! Stop idealising the values of the slave-owning classes of Ancient Greece.

Oh dear, Bertie! The Romans produced value through slave-labour and imperial expansion not through the capitalist mode of production; they were neither large-scale capitalists nor the original commodifiers of culture: their collections of Greek statues were mostly Roman copies.

Herbert Wrong! The word 'art' in the Middle Ages didn't refer to 'all that was pleasing to the eye' - that was a seventeenth-century idea; art just meant skill.

You're making this up! The decline of guilds did not bring about the end of making things for use, only the end of a certain kind of vertical protectionism of trade. However, the disempowerment of the guilds allowed master craftsmen to become capitalist employers for the first time.

Whataburk! Capitalism is the same age as culture in the modern sense not because capitalist producers produced luxury commodities but because both require a scientific and humanist ideology.

H.R.I Culture has never been divorced from work since work is culturally inflected and both the production and consumption of culture is always the result of labour.

Oh Herbert, oh Matthew: Taste was revolutionised by the bourgeoisie in its emancipatory phase at the end of the eighteenth century as the opposite of the elitist aristocratic idea of taste as a knowledge of the fine arts, reconceived as subjective, individual and free: in a word democratic.

No. It was not World War Two that confronted the bourgeois concept of culture with its own limits: Dada and the Russian Revolution had done this even before the end of World War One.

Mr Read! Culture doesn't belong to the past; culture belongs to the future: the defeat of class society will be a victory for culture over business, bureaucracy, calculation and entertainment.

You have a snotty idea of beauty, Mr Read. The beautiful is not natural; it's cultural. Between the Fifth Century BC and the Eighteenth Century the word for beauty meant 'right'. The modern concept of beauty is an effect of the displacement of Greek statues in places of contemplation instead of religious ritual.

Science? Science? There are no universal objective scientific principles for the experience of colours clashing, or for the taste for musical compositions or certain types of body. That assertion exhibits the worst kind of naturalisation of institutional bias.

Science trumps culture in matters of culture? If the false claim that science backs up taste means that "we shall not need to talk about culture" then we need to talk about culture in order to smash the paternalistic trickle-down institutionalisation of expertise in taste.

Now, Herbert the reader, when you quote Walt Whitman, you are quite right that democracy in the full sense of the word has never been realised in practice.

Herbert Red! Your three conditions for democracy are stolen from the Communist Manifesto! Ha ha, Herbert and Karl up a tree,
K I S S I N G! XXXXXX

Professor Sir Herbert, your description of the capitalist production of goods for all purses isn't bad but the effect is to condemn capitalists for producing cheap goods for the poor whereas mechanisation and

the division of labour makes everything cheaper to produce, making erstwhile luxuries into necessities. The problem with capitalism is not that it produces things that poor people want and can afford but that it does so for the sole purpose of making money from the labour of others.

Congratulations, Herbert, on securing a job advertising for Ikea! Capitalists who add decorative elements to furniture do not 'add culture' to it; they add value through the labour of workers who decorate such things. It is clearly absurd to argue that profit cannot be made by chucking out the chintz!

Sweet Herbert! Your Pre-Raphaelite version of the Bauhaus is not an image of Socialism but of a rationalised handicraft production which, despite its apparent uncoerced conditions, is like the capitalist mode of production in applying science to industry.

FFS! Art is not something made appropriately! Art needn't be made at all. Art is not the highest form of manufacturing; it is the self-reflexive labour of art's expansive critique of its own limitations.

From Herbert according to his fallibility, to the future reader according to her assumed uncritical reading of a superficial interpretation of Marx.

Mr Read, please read what Marx and Engels actually said about needs rather than guess at what they meant. Needs, they said, are socially and culturally specific. French workers need wine while British workers need beer. Needs, therefore, are never merely natural or biological; they are cultural on the full sense - that sense that is usually carried by the word 'spiritual'.

State the truth, Herbert! The opposition between communists and anarchists follows the line that divides state control from worker control, you say. No, the difference concerns the social processes by which the state can be abolished.

Whereas anarchists think that if you neglect the state it will lose its power, communists say the state withers away only after the capitalist state has been rigorously dismantled by the organised working class.

Go back to poetry, 'cos your political analysis sucks! Saying that the National Socialists were socialists because they centralised state control of all production is tantamount to saying that socialism is indifferent to the difference between the bourgeois state and the workers' state, and that there is no difference between the authoritarian state regulation of private corporations and collective ownership.

Shut up! Saying that Nazism and Fascism were 'culture-conscious' is like saying they were 'jew-conscious'.

Oh dear, writing at the same time as Keynes was formulating the mechanisms by which the Arts Council could bring about a revolution in the way that public patronage could take the funding of advanced art out of the hands of wealthy collectors and state bureaucrats, Herbert dismissed all attempts at state patronage as unwelcome interference in the freedom of the artist.

To hell with Herbert Read and his individualist hatred of culture as a common and shared set of values and practices.

To hell with Herbert Read and his hatred of the artist understood only as a bearer of division rather than as an ally of the activist, the campaigner, the revolutionary and the heckler.

To hell with Eric Gill and his Beuysian fudging of the universalisation of artistic labour: it is pointless, and merely formal, to say that everybody is already an artist when the point is to provide the conditions for everyone to produce art and publish it in an active engagement with all other artists, not merely as a vague entitlement enacted without exerting themselves at all. The question is not whether we are all already artists but how to transform art's apparatuses of exclusion into

art's apparatuses of common use.

Let's get this straight right now, artists are NOT distinguished from workers through exemplary skill or judgement or expressivism.

Not production for use but production for the full realization of human potential with the happiness of all as the condition for the happiness of each.

Not mutual aid but collective ownership, exemplary public provision of housing, education and healthcare as a universal right, and the abolition of poverty worldwide as the material precondition for collective decision making.

Not only worker's control of factories but worker's control, organisation and administration of all collective decision making.

Please Mr Read, democracy is not like a well-made car. There is no designer and it serves no purpose. Democracy is nothing but the entire social body engaged in collective opinion formation and collective will formation in a dynamic and dissensual process of debate that results only in agreed actions and never correct decisions.

Mr Read, the crypto-elitist! If life without art is graceless and brutish, and the majority of working people live a life without art, then what the hell are you saying about most people? Actually, life without art is far more fulfilling than art without life. Art must be defended against neoliberals and bureaucrats, but only as a form of liberated labour not as a civilising force on the masses.