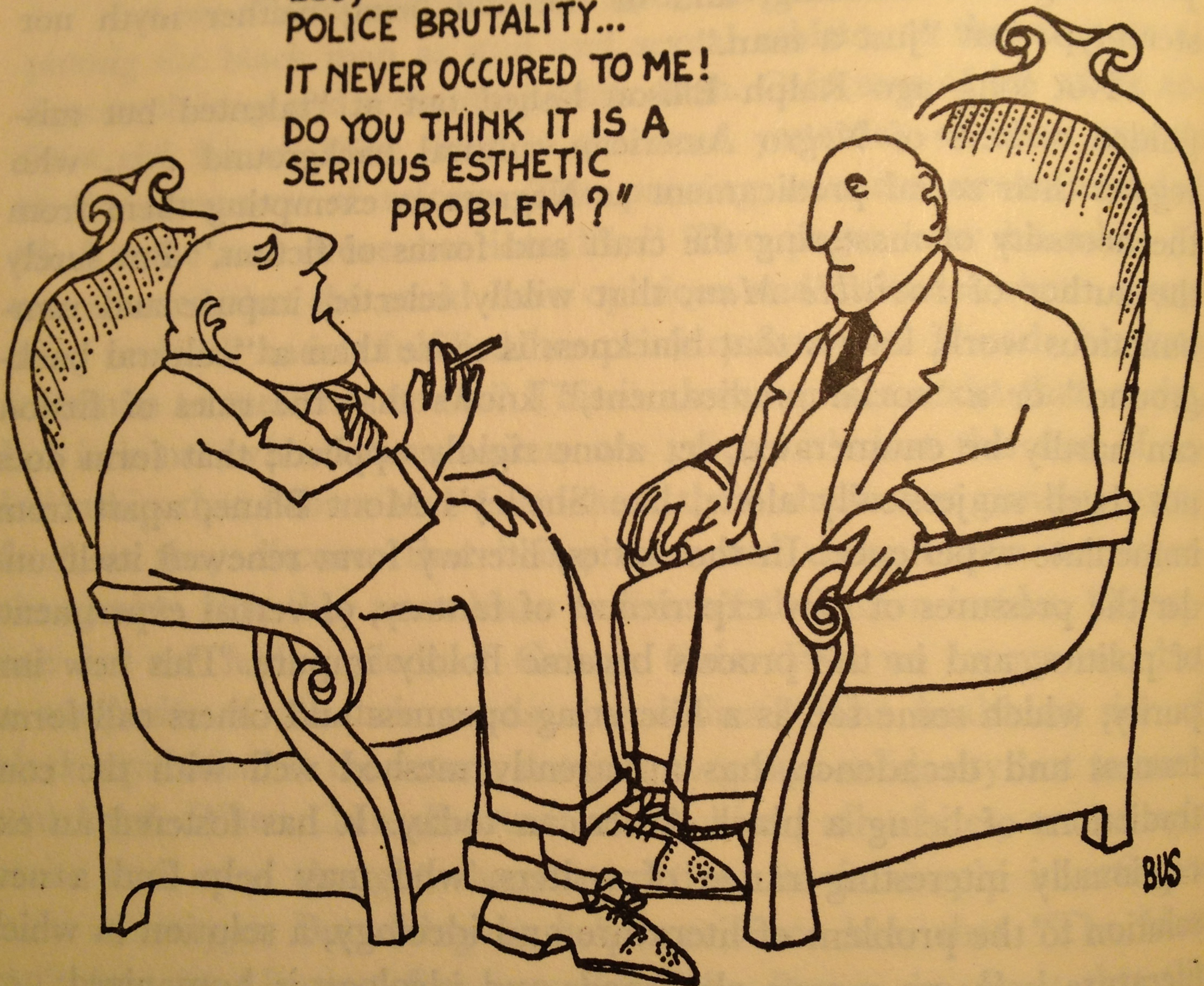


A DRAWING

by

BUS

"LSD, YIPPIE, REVOLUTION,
POLICE BRUTALITY...
IT NEVER OCCURED TO ME!
DO YOU THINK IT IS A
SERIOUS ESTHETIC
PROBLEM?"



Herbert Marcuse

A REPLY TO LUCIEN GOLDMANN

I was most reluctant to accept the editor's invitation to comment on Lucien Goldmann's paper (*PR*, No. 3, 1971). Goldmann was a close friend of mine for many years; I still cannot come to grips with the brute fact of his death. Reading his paper, I got quite angry; I felt he was still alive, I was talking to him and, as so often, I disagreed passionately with what he said. And I felt that again, we embraced each other and knew we were on the same side.

My brief comments will be in self-defense: Goldmann belongs to those before whom I want to defend myself. I shall comment only on a few points.

1. Goldmann says that, in my view, "Western society has been so stabilized that no serious opposition can be found within it." Now it is correct that *One-Dimensional Man* focuses on the integrating forces of monopoly capitalism at its advanced stage. I still believe that without a realistic evaluation of these forces, no Marxist analysis and no leftist strategy can be adequate. However, I emphasized again and again that, beneath this integration, the internal contradictions of capitalism have reached an unprecedented scope and intensity. This is the conclusion of *One-Dimensional Man*: "... the unification of opposites in the medium of technological rationality must be, *in all reality*, an illusory unification which eliminates neither the contradiction between the growing productivity and its repressive use, nor the vital need for solving the contradiction" (p. 256).¹ I added that a radical opposition is there, but that it

1. *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

appears in forms and modes very different from those germane to previous phases of the revolutionary socialist movement.

My main effort since has been to explicate this difference in the new radical potential, and to understand it in terms of the structural changes under monopoly capitalism. Today, I would summarize the situation in the USA roughly as follows.

At the attained stage of the development, the socialist revolution appears imperative: the alternative is a protracted period of barbarism. In its scope and its goals, the revolution would be larger and more radical than the preceding ones. The potential for it exists — therefore the preventive counterrevolution on a global scale. The counterrevolution, not the revolution, is on the agenda.

And yet, the forces making for the collapse of the established social system are there, and we can identify them if we recognize that the traditional pattern of revolution is no longer valid. This was a revolution based on the industrial proletariat and aiming at the "seizure of power" on a national scale, directed by centralized mass parties. The new pattern derives from changes in the structure of capitalism within the framework of capitalism. They appear in the extension of the direct rule of capital over formerly (relatively) independent strata of the population (mainly among the middle classes), in the altered composition of the working class (now including an increasing proportion of white-collar workers) and in the vital role of the intelligentsia in the reproduction of (and in the fight against) the capitalist system. Behind the facade of the "consumer society," the base of exploitation is greatly enlarged.

Revolution at a high standard of living? The consumer society may well become the grave digger of capitalism. Marx thought that capitalism had fulfilled its "historical destiny" when it has satisfied the basic needs of the people, and when "surplus labor beyond the necessities has itself become a universal need, generated by the individual needs themselves. . . ." ² This implies radically new impulses of revolution. Capitalism constantly creates needs (must create needs) which it cannot satisfy within its own framework — *transcending* needs. It is only at the most advanced stage of capitalism, and on

2. *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie* (Berlin: Dietz, 1953), p. 231. See Martin Nicholas's comments on this passage in *New Left Review* 48 (1968).

the ground of the *satisfaction* of basic needs, that transcending needs drive beyond the capitalist mode of production: reduction and eventual elimination of alienated labor; self-determination as the new way of life; new relationships between men and women, between the generations, between man and nature. In short: socialism as a *qualitatively* different society.

I tried to develop this thesis in a forthcoming book. Here, I only sketch it in order to show that I do envisage the "opening" and disintegration of the one-dimensional society. I believe that a Marxist evaluation of the disintegrating forces calls for a reexamination which would restore the dialectical character of the Marxian concepts as against their pseudoorthodox ritualization and fetishization. The Marxian concepts are, as dialectical concepts, historical ones; so is their object, the capitalist society as a whole. Their dialectical historical character demands the development of their content in accord with, and in contradiction to, the actual development of society. Such a theoretical development must, in order to be dialectical, derive the new stage from the preceding one, thus retaining the intent and impetus of the original concept.

2. The second point I want to take up is Goldmann's designation of my analysis as "elitist," culminating in the notion of a dictatorship of philosophers or sages. In the postscript to *Repressive Tolerance* I said: "the alternative to the established semi-democratic process is not a dictatorship or elite, no matter how intellectual and intelligent, but the struggle for a real democracy" (p. 122)³ — which, in my view, can only be a socialist democracy. Until this struggle is won, until a revolutionary situation arises, the main task will be radical political education in theory and practice, to combat the counterrevolution and to arouse the consciousness of the integrated majority. This task would, quite logically, be incumbent on non-integrated minority groups, mainly among the young (workers and intelligentsia, black and white). The socialist revolution can only be carried by the majority of the people — this is a cornerstone of Marxist theory. However, such a majority does not yet exist. Monopoly capital still has its large popular base; the capitalist dynamic

3. Robert P. Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

will undermine this base, but it can become a potentially socialist base only in the process of political education — otherwise, the potential may well be a fascist one.

In the activation of the leftist potential, the student movement has played, and will continue to play, a decisive role. If this is "elitism," I gladly confess to it. Of all the dangers threatening the movement from within, perhaps the greatest is the widespread anti-intellectualism, the inferiority complex of not being "a worker" (another aspect of the stifling ritualization of Marxian theory!), the guilt feeling of being "privileged." This masochistic antiintellectualism is not only a gift to the establishment (which fosters and practices antiintellectualism) but also an insult to all these students who were assassinated or who risked their life and liberty in the militant protest, in this country and abroad. Today, students are in the forefront of the struggle: from Japan to Vietnam to Bengal; to the African countries which liquidate "communists" by the thousands; to Brazil, Bolivia, Mexico, the Philippines. Where students are not massacred, they are bombed, poisoned, jailed. The powers that be know who the enemy is, and where to strike. . . .

3. Goldmann says that in my writings there is "a sharp but not dialectical opposition between oppression and liberty, the existing and the ideal, the empirical and the rational, the given and the utopian. . . ." I admit the opposition between oppression and liberty, but I believe it is a dialectical one. Between the established and the free society, there is a rupture, and the revolution is a qualitative leap: the leap into essentially new ways of life, with new needs and values. The only historical continuity which is more than a quantitative (technical) one is in the chance that the men and women with the new intelligence and sensibility, the men and women who will make the revolution, grow up *within the old society*.