

Picasso's Left Ear

Tuesday, 7 October 2008

An Extract from: Critique on "The Social Contract"

"Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains" – Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract

In the relation between man and state, individual and society there is sacrifice. This Rousseau, a French philosopher of the enlightenment knew all too well. For Rousseau is haunted by the idea of the *noble savage*, man free and wild without the restraint of convention. In this fascination he associates himself with the thoughts of such blatant individualists as Nietzsche. Drawing to him, in his discourse on political philosophy a problem which has plagued many a man. That of the rivalry between the individual, and society, or more principally in his work, the man, and the state.

The above quote, an aphorism of Rousseau's encompasses all the dimensions of the problem well. Alike any good aphorism, it can in the space of few words, express a great expanse of thought. It is a compliment to the intense process of thought, an unexpected product of all the cogs and wheels which make up the machine of the mind. As in cognition it applies itself to the problem, it produces in an act of illogical spontaneity an enigma, a piece of truth implicitly concealed in a sentence. Here we shall explore the depth of those words as far as my thought can extend itself.

Man is born free. This to those familiar with the *noble savage* has instant meaning. Man, is born absolutely free, without constraint, or restriction of any kind. He is pure; he knows not the taint of influence, nor the touch of culture. He is innocent and ignorant, and altogether free of *convention*. He has no responsibilities, no awareness of debt to society, no knowledge of community; he has not yet developed any taste or penchant for the habitual world of the rest of us. Most importantly though, he is free in the sense that he is without responsibility. Rousseau falls madly in love with this being, unlike Nietzsche who approaching the goliath of culture and convention encourages us to slay it, Rousseau wants us to abandon it. To revert almost to savagery, and escape the tainted influence of human institution. To play with ancient Greek he seeks a reunion with *physis** and the end of *nomos**. This idea though is strained within the mind of Rousseau, for he being sensible knows that a regression to savagery is impossible. That alike any of the romantics of his time, he has his unassailable dream. Though it may seem strange to us that this be, man as savage, unchained and wild.

Everywhere he is in chains. Rousseau in frustration can see the weighted shackles that man carries with him daily. The burden of law, of government, of cultural influence, of institution. He notices that all about him man is walled in. Surrounded, forbidden from the exercise of all that he desires. Everywhere man willingly imposes upon himself limitation. Why? Why do all men shackle themselves to government, oppress themselves with responsibility, and chain their lives to miseries which have no intrinsic value? Why must he, having no love of labour, engage in the most degrading of tasks to earn his bread? Should he not simply take it? Rousseau resents man and his laws, and at first this resentment, this seething hatred of limitation so willingly and freely imposed, drives him to anarchy. Like Nietzsche once more he wishes to ravage the very notion of order, to have a world where each man rules and governs himself, and is slave only to his own wishes. This sentiment to those of you studying Lear is comparable to Edmund who says "let me, if not by birth have lands by wit" the idea that if you can take it, then you have the right to take it. Rousseau though does not abide within this vortex, this swirling and consuming mass of chaotic theory (which did in fact claim our friend Nietzsche). He being first and foremost a political philosopher must once more assess what this, his disgruntled passion means for a political institution. Incapable of holding that such an anarchist rule is suitable, recognising it as an unreasonable whim of the intellectual elite he attempts to incorporate his discovery into a viable theory. He examines the relation between man's acceptance of limitation, of "chains" with how a government should be run. The result is indeed the thesis of "the Social Contract".

Rousseau finds that man, upon entering relations with any established government signs an unwritten contract. He pledges himself to that institution. He forms perhaps without full awareness a bond with society. By choosing to live in that society he being at first absolutely free, sacrifices some of his freedom in choosing to obey and adhere to the laws of that society and government. Rousseau finds that in fact, by being a citizen of any one country one is less free, and that men willingly (even if they are not aware of it) sacrifice the complete freedom they are born into, for the regimented freedom of society. In volatile juxtaposition to other political philosophers of his age, such as Thomas Paine, in outright opposition to the popular trend of thought in France which proclaimed the state gave "liberty, equality, and fraternity" Rousseau argued that any government, be it democracy, or monarchy cannot secure a complete freedom. That man is less free in government, and that though it was widely proclaimed that democratic government attained a real freedom for all men, it in itself was a method of subjection. Thus when a man agrees to live in a society, and conform to its laws, he sacrifices some of his freedom. He becomes inseparably linked to society by a contract. A *social contract* which in sacrificing his absolute freedom secures him new rights, the right to safety etc. but also denies him the *natural* right to realise all his desires. To Rousseau this social contract is the genesis of all society, it is the heart and soul of the polis. Everyone who abides as a citizen of a state has sacrificed some liberty for that position, and has by default agreed to an unwritten contract with the state. Each person therefore bears even in the most liberal of governments some weight about their neck, they must subject themselves to the laws, and as an extension of this to the articles of the contract. This very act forms the basis of what Nietzsche calls his detested "slave morality".

*Nomos- convention, an idea which is constructed/created in the human mind.

*Physis- something independent of the human mind, which the human mind is aware of.

Contents

1. Critique on "The Social Contract"- Peter Kiernan

2. Poetry- Footsteps-PK Break of Day- John Donne

3. Sweet Sixteen Review and George Bush "Pre-obituary"- Niall Brehon

4. Three Awful Pastes Behind Your Favourite Food Products- Eamon Yeung

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Poetry

This page, reserved for the absurdities of poetry, permits no play of reason or logic.
The infallible are not welcome here, the absolute should stay away.
The poet is not born of logos, it is emotion which holds his sway.

Footsteps

*Heavy footsteps fall, weighted with purpose
As ploughs they purge the earth,
Where amongst the upturned soil,
Fruit of that toil
Doth lie
That bitter truth of worker's burden,
Which makes the years die*

*They fall stricken like leaves from Autumn trees
Clustered round the roots of oak
As the years collect round memories
How bare when death comes
That tree which carries about it truths which shed
When all reality is downed
By the knock and knell of winter*

*He who tarries in the trivial
Who surrounds and immerses himself in distraction
Doth only postpone the questions
And by hollowing the trunk for sake of comfort
One creates a reverberating sound
Which fills the empty vessel with its longing*

*Work is frivolous expenditure of energy
If it is misdirected*

*When the cold winds pass over the forest
All the branches quiver,
And every root grips deeper to it's mother soil
But the cold wind comes for all,
And those that know not,
Of what they are made
Fall swift and fleeting before the image of winter*

By Peter Kiernan

Break of Day

*'TIS true, 'tis day ; what though it be?
O, wilt thou therefore rise from me?
Why should we rise because 'tis light?
Did we lie down because 'twas night?
Love, which in spite of darkness brought us hither,
Should in despite of light keep us together.*

*Light hath no tongue, but is all eye ;
If it could speak as well as spy,
This were the worst that it could say,
That being well I fain would stay,
And that I loved my heart and honour so
That I would not from him, that had them, go.*

*Must business thee from hence remove?
O ! that's the worst disease of love,
The poor, the foul, the false, love can
Admit, but not the busied man.
He which hath business, and makes love, doth do
Such wrong, as when a married man doth woo.*

By John Donne

This page, reserved for the absurdities of Niall Brehon, contains no reason or logic.

Philistines are not welcome here, and neither are plagiarisers.

There will be no page three models here, but if it were up to me...

TV Review: Sweet 16 presents "Exiled"

Man has, in the past hundred years, progressed and refined himself in the areas of science, inventions and many more. From the invention of the motorcar by Henry Ford at the start of the 20th century, to Neil Armstrong walking on the moon, man has continuously bettered himself with inventions on a grand scale.

I can only regard the following as an equal, if not superior, creation to the above and more; for as Thomas Alva Edison, one of the greatest inventors ever, said, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." He would have been proud to come up with the idea of a TV show sending spoiled brats to live in remote locations with tribes for a week (available in subtitles for those hard of thinking).

Of course, it was not Edison who had this masterstroke, this "Eureka" moment, but MTV, the geniuses behind letting Russell Brand host the VMA Awards (who can forget when he called George Bush a "retarded cowboy," a term which is highly offensive to cowboys), and forcing Calum Best, George's womanising son, into a life of celibacy.

Yes, they've done it again, and better- broadcasting the suffering of an individual through reality TV has been done before, but there's a life lesson to be gotten out of it this time around. You see, by torturing these horribly spoiled teens for our immense enjoyment, the parents are teaching their sons and daughters humility and respect for those less fortunate than themselves.

A few years after becoming hate figures in the teenage eyes of the world, and showcasing their immense snobbery, whipped parents and tantrums when things don't go perfectly, MTV are going to send all the Sweet 16 losers to live in abject poverty for a week in remote locations such as the Arctic circle, a Pacific island and the Amazon rainforest.

The savant who thought up this idea may never be heralded, but his achievements will go down in history with the invention of the internet, the atom bomb (I'm sure it seemed like a good idea at the time) and the lightbulb, and rightly so. This show is the greatest thing since sliced bread, and is definitely worth a watch.

And, perhaps, in the not too distant future, they could send the Irish guy, Lorcan Malone (you can even tell by the name that he's spoiled) from Louth, the smallest county that's just large enough to fit his large head and larger ego. Now that would be must-see television!

A Public Pre-Obituary for George W. Bush's Presidency

On the subject of the re-occurrence of sub-human intelligence, George Bush is finishing his second term as president quite soon. The man who has provided cheap cannon fodder for lazy journalists for years is stepping down soon. It's not really fair if you ask me. I only just got started at this journalism lark! I "know how hard it is to put food on your family," so I'll keep this brief.

Perhaps Mr. Bush was right when he said "you underestimated me." He was an excellent advertisement for the dangers of not going to school, for one. He did ask questions of the American education system- it was indeed he who said "rarely is the question asked: is our children learning?"



When Neville Chamberlain was asked what he wished for, he famously replied, "peace in our time." In 2000, the Mr. Bush preached a similar message when he too, famously quipped, "I know the human being and fish can co-exist peacefully."

George Bush's presidency (2000-2008). Left behind a tattered economy and loving family. RIP.

"Russell Brand called Bush a retarded cowboy, a term highly offensive to cowboys" You can see what he means though.

Three Awful Pasts Behind Your Favourite Food Brands

Those beverages (or food items) you are consuming, chances are the company producing it is corruption-laden or guilty of illegal activity. While you are relishing your product, people are suffering at this very minute just to manufacture your favourite chocolate or refreshment.

Chiquita Bananas: Fresh Fruit, Bloody Wars: A company president was quoted as saying 'it's important I don't get too knowledgeable about the past' upon taking control of company affairs in 1975. His predecessor, Eli Black, had just resigned from the company by jumping out of a window in his 44th floor office in the Pan Am Building in New York rather than face prosecution for handing a bribe to the president of Honduras.

What's this 'past' he didn't want to think about? Well, first of all there is the massacre of striking workers at the hands of the Columbian army allegedly under the orders of the company. Don't forget there is also the toppling of the democratically-elected leader of Guatemala. Back in 1951 when they were still called the United Fruit Company (UFC), a president by the name of Jacabo Arbenz took office in Guatemala. Among the things that got him elected, the biggest was an ambitious plan that would distribute uncultivated land to over 100,000 peasants in Guatemala. The main obstacle to this plan was the United Fruit Company, who just happened to own the land. According to their estimates UFC valued their land at \$525,000. When Arbenz responded with exactly that amount, UFC replied with a completely logical offer of 16 million. Arbenz backed away from the negotiations, but United Fruit reportedly took the term "breakdown in negotiations" to dizzying new heights by asking the CIA to intervene, in which they did. At the time CIA head Allen Dulles had previously served on the UFC'S board of trustees, along with numerous connections with the Eisenhower administration. With such direct access to the highest levels of the government and McCarthyism at fever heights, UFC lobbied various levels of the US to take action against Arbenz. UFC were able to launch a massive propagandist campaign against Guatemala, painting the country as a Communist threat. The CIA was free to pounce and promptly implemented 'Guatemalan coup d'état 1954'. In summary, the US overthrew the freely elected Arbenz with a right wing dictator more willing to answer to the demands of UFC and Guatemala's brief foray into democracy and prosperity was over. But do not be sad, this story does have a happy ending. The civil war that spawned from the CIA initiated coup did finally come to an end. In 1996.

Coca Cola: Refreshing drinks, Murder: The sweet bubbly lovely deliciousness that is Coca Cola has been a beacon of happiness (and a ray of joy) for generations of kids and adults alike. With all this universal love spreading and a ubiquitous presence in everyday life, it may surprise you that Coke 2 isn't the only atrocity lurking and creeping in the Big Red Machine's closet.

According to some sources, Columbia is 'a country where the notion of union is like carrying a tombstone on your back'. If you spend too much time contemplating about it, you realize that it's just a pipe dream but to put forward a union would mean an instant death sentence.

This is especially true at the Coca-Cola bottling plants in Colombia. At the Carepa plant, five union leaders were murdered between 1994 -1996 alone. Plant managers at Columbia are disinclined to give their employees the increase in salary from \$200 to \$205 a month. After all, the business might collapse because of the \$5 increase. Determined to pinch as much money as possible, the plant managers contract paramilitary groups to force unions to disband. Union executive board member Isidro Segundo Gil was shot ten times near the Carepa plant gates by paramilitary thugs purported to have been hired by the plant management. The details of Gil's assassination were outlined in a lawsuit filed against Coca-Cola by the International Labour Rights Fund. Of course, that the thugs were acting on the direction of plant management is just an allegation, but the fact that the thugs returned the next day demanding that workers quit the union is at least a little suspicious. There is also the issue of them having resignation forms prepared in advance by plant managers in hand when they made these demands.

Nestle Quik: Delicious Product, Slavery: For any youngster who cringes at the thought of choking down a glass of plain nutritious milk with their dinner, Nestle Quik is a box of delight. All it requires is one mere tablespoon of powdery goodness that is Nestle Quik to transform that glass of white nasty into a delectable cup of chocolate awesome. Add to this fact that every box comes embellished with an adorable cartoon rabbit, and what you have spells instant commercial success.

While kids are enjoying their Nestle Quik, some kids have to work for their Nestle Quik. Without going into vomit inducing details let me tell you this. The majority of the world's coca supply comes from Africa's Ivory Coast. After years of flying under the atrocity radar, word spread of the unpleasant working conditions of Ivory Coast plantations in 2001. There are lots of activities illegal in the Ivory Coast, slavery and child labour happens to be one of them. With a deluge of negative publicity, Nestle valiantly leapt into action. They issued a press statement claiming they were unaware of illegal activities taking place right under their noses. It took an agricultural bill for Nestle to even acknowledge the problem.

The new legislation, passed in July, 2001, would have created a federal system to certify and label chocolate products as "slave free," a label Nestle would qualify for if it weren't for all the enslaved children making their products. Even they did qualify, on the list of words you don't want printed on the label of your product, 'slave' would be one of them. To avoid having to abide by the new legislation Nestle agreed to voluntary protocol to shut down labour coca farms. Being that the major chocolate companies would be overseeing this new program, it wasn't too surprising that nothing ever came of it.

2005 passed with little change. Nestle again were under fire for renegeing on their promise. They then came up with the stupidest excuses imaginable. According to them, escalating civil war prevented them to dispatch any envoy to monitor the situation. Amazingly though, their team of buyers have yet to encounter any difficulties entering and departing the country completely unscathed. To add even less credibility to their claim that making delicious treats without at least some slave help wasn't possible, several chocolate companies are now selling "Fair Trade" chocolate which is monitored closely to insure no slave labour is used in its production, though Nestle will soon point out that the chocolate doesn't taste as good, since it does not contain the unique flavour of the bitter tears of children.

I don't want to pour needless criticism on Nestle. After all if I chose to, I mention how Third World children have died from a contaminated Nestle formula or that the company demands millions from famine stricken Ethiopia over a 1975 transaction. It is amazing what companies will do to achieve maximum profit.

By Eamon Yeung