

Norman O. Brown (1966). *Love's Body*. New York: Random House.

98-9—Quoting Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition:

The organization of the polis, physically secured by the wall around the city and physiognomically guaranteed by its law lest the succeeding generations change its identity beyond recognition is a kind of organized remembrance. It assures the mortal actor that his passing existence and fleeting greatness will never lack the reality that comes from being seen, being heard, and, generally, appearing before an audience.

Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history.

99—Action is what takes place in front of the camera, with the lights turned on, to throw the rest of reality into darkness...Those for whom not to be seen is nonexistence are not alive; and the kind of existence they seek, the immortality they seek, is spectral; to be seen is the ambition of ghosts, and to be remembered the ambition of the dead. The public realm is the stage for heroic action, and heroes are specters of the living dead.

The passport which grants access to the public realm, which distinguishes master from slave, the essential political virtue, is the courage to die, to commit suicide, to make one's life a living death. "One must pay dearly for immortality: one has to die several times while still alive" (Nietzsche).

118—And at the same time the self-alienation, like all self-alienation, is fraudulent; in bad faith. The Essence of Commonwealth is

One Person of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutual Covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the Author. (Hobbes, Leviathan)

In authorizing the authorities we are their authors. We own their actions:

Every one to owne, and acknowledge himselfe to be the Author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act.

For that which in speaking of goods and possessions is called Owner, speaking of Actions is called Author. (Hobbes, Leviathan)

The boundary separating actor and spectator is a false one, concealing the deeper reality of the collective authorship. The multitude is many Authors, of everything their Representative saith, or doth in their name.

Every man giving their common Representor, Authority from himselfe in particular; and owning all the actions the Representor doth. (Hobbes, Leviathan)

119—The chorus is really the author. Their act is to repudiate responsibility; this is part of the net of lies in which they entangle the hero, their bull, their victim. This is what Freud calls their “refined hypocrisy,” as they say, “not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name. The hypocrisy of the chorus makes them too an actor (hypocrites)...”

The chorus identifies with the hero: he is their vicar; in whose actions they take vicarious pleasure. The hero is “created to perform deeds which their community would like to perform but which are forbidden to it.” Their vicar also in vicarious punishment: their victim, the scapegoat, the lamb which takes away their sins; through whom they obtain vicarious redemption. Vicarious satisfaction: the deed is both theirs and not theirs. On this self-contradiction, this hypocrisy, this illusion, representative institutions are based.

120—In vicarious experience there is both identification and distance. The mediator is to keep reality at a distance, to keep the multitude in remote contact with reality. Hobbes saw the paradigm in Exodus XX, 18-19:

And all the people saw the thundering, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when they saw it, they removed, and stood far off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

Representative institutions depend upon the distance separating the spectators from the actor on the stage; the distance which permits both identification and detachment; which makes for a participation without action; which establishes the detached observer, whose participation consists in seeing and is restricted to seeing; whose body is restricted to the eyes. Everything which is merely seen is seen through a windowpane, distantly; and purely: a pure aesthetic experience. Representative institutions depend upon the aesthetic illusion of distance.

125—The exhibitionism of the phallic personality (the huge genital, the royal lingam) is fraudulent; an imposture, or imposition on the public; theater. The actor needs the audience to reassure him he is not castrated: yes, you are the mighty penis; the Emperor's New Clothes. To force the audience to give this reassurance is to castrate, have coitus with, the audience: the phallic personality needs a receptive audience or womb. Separately, both actor and audience are incomplete, castrated; but together they make up a whole.