

YAWN

May 1, 1990

YAWN is a sporadic communiqué which seeks to provide a critical look at our culture in all its manifestations. We welcome responses from readers, especially observations of a critical nature. Be forewarned that anything sent may be considered for inclusion in a future issue without specific prior notification. Submissions are welcome and encouraged. It is our policy not to attribute work, unless the content benefits from such attribution. YAWN is a collective, mostly anonymous, effort. Contributors receive a copy of the YAWN in which their work is used. Monetary donations are requested to help defray the costs of publication. Subscriptions are available for \$10 (cash or unused stamps) for 25 issues. Archive at <http://yawn.detritus.net/>.

Real Life

Now that the Art Strike has begun, what is needed most is to renounce it. The thought that such an (in)action can be treated by some as a “work of art” is reason enough. This fetishization through aesthetics is one of the tendencies the Art Strike had hoped to discredit. The best thing to do now is simply to stop referring to the Art Strike, which is, after all, just another plaything to make the mind do somersaults.

From this point we might now turn our attention to real life. What is required in doing this is still as poorly understood as the reality that makes it necessary. In spite of this, we can come to feel, intuitively, that a life lived is a concrete expression of a personal aggregate of ideas and beliefs, most of which come from outside of us, yet which result in a personal and subjective synthesis. It is in this synthesis that what each of us truly wants in life can be realized. This is ultimately much more satisfying than any art form, or even the refusal of an art form, for that matter.

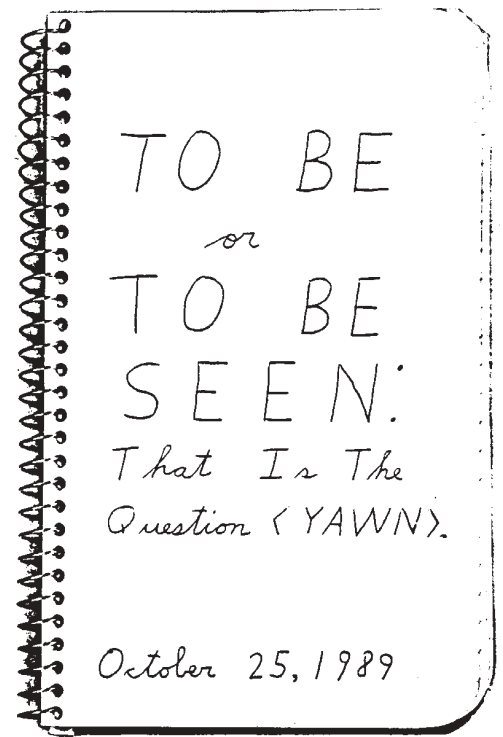
What is it that we want in life? Much of human life is a quest for satisfaction. Lack is engineered into our biology. We crave food, shelter, companionship, and sex. Each of these fit into empty spaces left in ourselves. There are many chemical and mechanical reasons for this, which need not interest us here. Suffice it to say, many of us spend our lives fitting square pegs into round holes, trying to fill one of these sore voids in us with a mismatch, ineffectively. A morbidly obese person, for example, might be trying to answer a lack of companionship with food. This is obviously counterproductive.

The mass culture industry has much to

gain from having entire populations engaged in futile quests. The cycle of production and consumption, which most of us think we understand so well yet which is filled with so many metaphysical subtleties, is perpetuated effectively by means of encouraging human beings to act like machines. There are many mechanisms in place for squelching those who fail to comply. Mindfulness is the thing we need most now in the world.

What’s at stake in this is our own ability to listen to ourselves. We need to acquire the ability to shut out many external forces for long enough to figure out what we expect of ourselves, and the culture that we all tacitly support simply by functioning in it. All too often, the personal synthesis we construct from the external forces of peer group pressure, mass media, and the results of parenting and education, reside in us, dormant or hypnotized, to such an extent that many of us go to the grave without considering the real nature of our endless search for fulfillment.

All there is to it is to live. The real, honest things we feel (and constantly suppress) must not be prohibited. The forbidden practices of non-productivity and refusing to participate are what we must allow ourselves. Never again must we feel obliged to perform meaningless repetitive tasks that only exacerbate the waste built into the system and which serve to numb us. The creative changes we feel like making must be made. We must liberate the power of whim. We must carefully listen to what is said to us, and then invite further communication by commenting meaningfully. Our honest, insistent attempts to do these things can only result in an improvement of our collective condition.

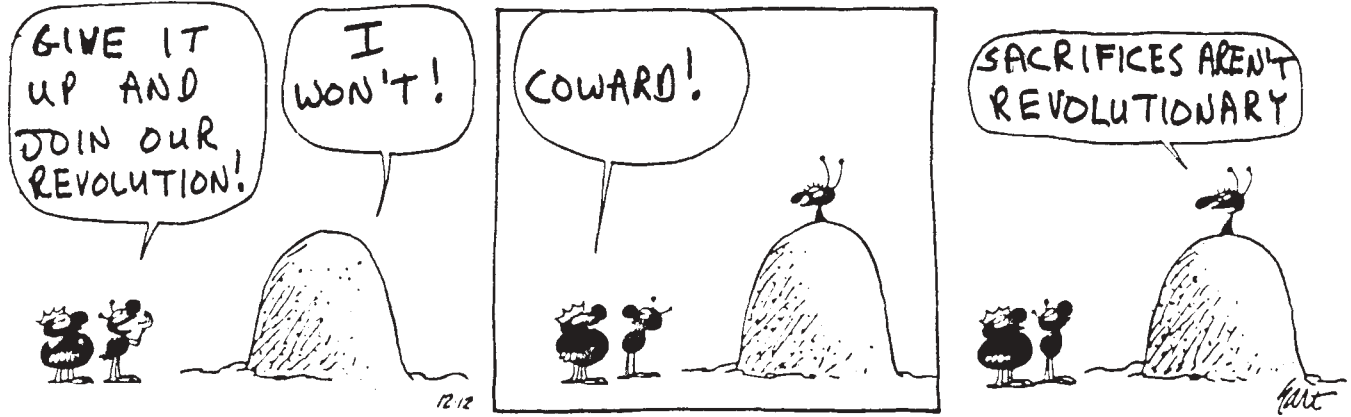


“This is a particular example of a more general problem: the separation of thought and action in our society. We are living in a time when systematically—though without our wanting it so—action and thought are being separated. In our society, he who thinks can no longer act for himself; he must act through the agency of others, and in many cases he cannot act at all. He who acts cannot think out his action, either because of lack of time and the burden of his personal problems, or because society’s plan demands that he translate others’ thoughts into action. And we see the same division within the individual himself. For he can use his mind only outside the area of his job—in order to find himself, to use his leisure to better himself, to discover what best suits him, and thus to individualize himself; whereas in the context of his work he yields to the common necessity, the common method, the need to incorporate his own work into the overall plan. Escape into dreams is suggested to him while he performs wholly mechanized actions.”

Propaganda by Jacques Elull [1962]. New York: Vintage Books, 1973. pp. 27-28.

A R T
should be
Nobody's Business
1990-1993

*We have an abstraction
which is the abstraction
of an art abstraction:
I am talking about the art strike.
(Annette Woolf)*



**PATRONAGE
EXCLUSION
CAREERISM
ALIENATION
IMPOTENCE**

Reaction to the Art Strike, Part 2



• Jacques Abeille, novelist, Bordeaux, 12/31/89: "What a silly idea, this Art Strike... it's a logical paradox; that is to say, a statement which involves a contradiction, a proposition which negates itself. To choose to do this strike assumes in the first place that you are what you

pretend to end: one must first be an artist in order to quit being one. It follows from this that all who during these three years who present themselves as non-artists will be artists, and that all those who present themselves as artists won't be....(1).

By this formal logic one will allege that its proposals are universals that do not pertain: the Art Strike doesn't apply to everyone, but only to those who are already manifested as artists. One should not say 'all who...,' but instead only 'those who...' or 'certain...'. So the proposal of an Art Strike doesn't entail the advancement of a universal proposition, therefore it holds to the official and mercantile distinctions between artists and the rest of the human population. In other words, to subvert this distinction, you accept the basis of what you're trying to subvert, and end up prolonging it by adding on a new criterion: from now on the artists will be the ones participating in the Art Strike during these three years. (2) ... [LD Nº6



*We have a censorship
which is the censorship
of a self-censorship
I am not talking about art strike.*

(Annette Woolf)

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