The liberation of EROS in the New City

A PHILOSOPHICAL COMIC BOOK
BY
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The city you see was not always this way. It is a reality that we and its citizens grew used to. Over many years of subtle but pervasive domination, the acceptance set in. Eventually, we reached a point where we could no longer feel the difference and few chose to remember what once was. But a few of us held on to our memories, and the hope for the return of our defeated hero, Eros. Where once there was color, there is now culture. Where once there was pleasure, there is now progress...and profit; a city grown grey as the steel chains of domination that entangle and suppress it. The story you are about to read is the story of this place, the new city, and how our hero was brought back to life. And in the words of the idealists whose ideas inspired its rebirth, the story of the new city will be told.

Though much has been lost, there are things we remember...
IN THE TIME BEFORE THE NEW CITY, EROS WAS FREE

SO WHAT WAS OUR HISTORY? HOW WERE OUR LIVES?

THE PICTURE, YOU COULD SAY, WAS VERY DIFFERENT

THIS IS HOW IT LOOKED BEFORE

BUT THEN CAME PROGRESS...

FEW ARE LEFT NOW WHO CAN EVEN REMEMBER THAT TIME BEFORE THE GREY OF CIVILIZATION SETTLED OVER THE CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS
IN ATTACKING, SPLITTING, CHANGING, PULVERIZING THINGS AND ANIMALS...

...(AND, PERIODICALLY, ALSO MEN)....

...MAN EXTENDS HIS DOMINION OVER THE WORLD....

...AND ADVANCES TO EVER RICHER STAGES OF CIVILIZATION.
The fate of human freedom and happiness is fought out and decided in the struggle of the instincts - literally a struggle of life and death... Eros here fights its first battle against everything the reality principle stands for: against domination, sublimation, resignation.

Life: Eros
- The personification of love in all its aspects
- Born of Chaos and personifying creative power and harmony
- Creative energy empowered
- The physical, emotional, and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us

Death: Thanatos
Culture demands continuous sublimation; it thereby weakens Eros.
CIVILIZATION PLUNGES INTO A DESTRUCTIVE DIALECTIC: THE PERPETUAL RESTRICTIONS ON EROS ULTIMATELY WEaken THE LIFE INSTINCTS...

PRODUCTION!

EFFICIENCY!
...AND THUS STRENGTHEN AND RELEASE THE VERY FORCES AGAINST WHICH THEY WERE THOSE OF DESTRUCTION.

EVENTUALLY, EROS IS FORGOTTEN AS HE LIES IN CHAINS, AND THE SPECTER CONTINUES TO HAUNT THE NEW CITY.
IN HIS OFFICE IN THE HEART OF THE NEW CITY, THE SPECTER EXPLAINS TO HIS SECRETARY, HOPE, THE BASIS FOR THE CHAINING OF EROS...

MEN DO NOT LIVE THEIR OWN LIVES BUT PERFORM PRE-ESTABLISHED FUNCTIONS!

THE INDIVIDUAL IS NOT TO BE LEFT ALONE.

WHATEVER SATISFACTION IS POSSIBLE NECESSITATES WORK, MORE OR LESS PAINFUL ARRANGEMENTS AND UNDERTAKINGS WITH INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY CHARACTERISTIC OF MATURE CIVILIZATION DOMINATION BECOMES INCREASINGLY IMPERSONAL, OBJECTIVE, UNIVERSE...

...AND ALSO INCREASINGLY RATIONAL, EFFECTIVE, AND PRODUCTIVE.
Later, at her apartment, Hope could not help but to reflect on her conversation with the specter.

She did not know how, or why, but she knew that something in her had changed.

And suddenly, she remembered words she had read long ago and forgotten.

She could no longer simply accept the fact of scarcity, of domination and oppression.

It could not be the only way...

We need to examine the ways in which our world can be truly different!

And Hope set off to rally the fellow citizens in revolt.

Names:

Marcuse
Freud
Lorde
Marx

Ideas:

Liberation
Freedom
Erotic
Equal
Revolution

We need to examine the ways in which our world can be truly different!
Our lives are limited by external and alien forms, and we conform to the needs of a structure that is not based on human need, let alone an individual's!

The fear that we cannot grow beyond whatever distortions we may find within ourselves keeps us docile and loyal and obedient, externally defined, and leads us to accept many facets or our oppression!

In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower!

Later...at the rally...
Civilization plunges into a destructive dialectic: the perpetual restriction on Eros ultimately weaken the life instincts and thus strengthen and release the very forces against which they were called up - those of destruction!!

For the destructive conquest of time, space, and man, the deadly partner of Eros becomes manifest in the persistent approval and participation of the victims!!

Our erotic knowledge empowers us!!

This is a grave responsibility, projected from within each of us, not to settle for the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe!!
SUDDENLY, THE CROWDS TOO STARTED TO UNDERSTAND....

FREE EROS!!

A NEW SYSTEM OF EQUALITY!!

REVOLT!!

EMPOWERMENT!!

...AND IN THAT MOMENT, EVERYTHING CHANGED

EROTIC FREEDOM!!!

fulfilling work!!!

FREE EROS!!!

JOY!!
IT WOULD BE SAID BY SOME AFTERWARDS THAT THE WORLD SIMPLY EXPLODED. THERE WERE FEW WHO COULD REMEMBER THE WORLD AS A PLACE OF COLOR AND LIBERATION. THOSE WHO COULD THOUGHT OF IT ONLY AS A VAGUE AND DISTANT DREAM. BUT IN THAT MOMENT, THE LONG FORGOTTEN COLORS RUSHED BACK IN. IT WOULD TAKE YEARS FOR SOME TO ACCLIMATE TO THE BRIGHTNESS AND WONDER OF IT ALL...

AND TO TRUST THAT THEIR NEWFOUND LIBERATION WAS NOT FLEETING
As Eros broke free from his chains...

...the specter fled the city...

...and with his newfound power, he vowed to keep the city safe.
The words we repeated again and again in this time of revolution stay with us today:

The revolt against culture based on toil, domination, and renunciation...reconcile Eros and Thanatos. They recall the experience of a world that is not to be mastered and controlled but to be liberated - a freedom that will release the powers of Eros now bound in the repressed and petrified forms of man and nature. These powers are conceived not as destruction but as peace, not as terror but as beauty... 

...the redemption of pleasure, the halt of time, the absorption of death; silence, sleep, night, paradise.

The end
background cityscapes from the book:
"Antonio Sant'Elia: The Complete Works" Luciano Caramel and Alberto Longatti
Rizzoli (New York) 1987

"Antonio Sant'Elia: Gezeichnete Architektur" Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Luciano Caramel, Marco De Michelis, Ian Boyd Whyte
Prestel-Verlag 1991

interlude pictures from the book:
"Cartoon America: Comic Art in the Library of Congress" Harry Katz
Abrams (New York)

characters from the books:
"The Escapist" by Michael Chabon

"Cartoon America: Comic Art in the Library of Congress" Harry Katz
Abrams (New York)

primary texts:
"Eros and Civilization:" Herbert Marcuse
Beacon Press (Boston)

"Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches by Audre Lorde"
Audre Lorde
Crossing Press (Berkeley)

internet pictures taken from:
http://gfish.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/empty_suit.jpg
http://immigrantjournallacie.blogspot.com/
http://annegarneypaintings.com/
http://www.artoak.net/modern-impressionist-marcus-krackowizer.htm