

New Babylon: the world of Homo Ludens

Written by Constant, 1970

The world of plenty is New Babylon, the world in which man no longer toils, but plays; poetry as a way of life for the masses ("la poesie faite par tous et non par un" [poetry made by all and not by just one]). New Babylon, perhaps, is not so much a picture of the future as a leitmotiv, the conception of an all-comprehensive culture that is hard to comprehend because until now it could not exist, a culture that, for the first time in history, as a consequence of the automation of labor, becomes feasible although we do not yet know what shape it will take, and seems mysterious to us. Will man of the future be able to play his life? Will he be able to lead a life without the necessity to earn his daily bread in toil and sweat? The answer to these questions entails the condemnation of a morality that still regards labor that can be performed by a machine as the fulfillment of man's life and promises him [sic] a fictional paradise as a reward after his death.

When one occupies oneself with New Babylon, everything else seems to have become unimportant. Yet the time has not yet come to give a conclusive answer to all the questions that present themselves. This is the dilemma of creative man [sic] today: yesterday's world has come to an end, the world of tomorrow is still dim in outline. By necessity, he continues to be the vague designer, the semi-player. He only suggests whereas he would like to play, he plays whereas he would like to give shape, he outlines only whereas he would like to be precise. But his outlines of the new world to come are important in that at last he deliberately turns away from the utilitarian world in which creativeness was only an escape and a protest, and that he becomes the interpreter of the new man, homo ludens.

Written by Constant Nieuwenhuis. English translation, unknown, 1970; online on www.notbored.org