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**Aesthetics and Politics: Raymond Williams's Marxism and Literature (1977)  
and Herbert Marcuse's The Aesthetic Dimension (1977)**

This paper will proceed first by summarising the positions taken by the above authors towards the value of the art-object in capitalist society. For Williams that value is always related in some way to commodification; for Marcuse that value can reside in the sensuous substance of the Beautiful and thus ascend from exchange-value to use-value.

The paper will then attempt to historicise the late 1970s as a period when the contentions and procedures of Western Marxism, as a necessary inheritance of cultural theory, became increasingly influential in the academy and among theatre and film practitioners and critics. Reference will be made to the key essay 'Components of the National Culture' (1968) by Perry Anderson, the then editor of *New Left Review*, and to the contents of *Aesthetics and Politics*, published by New Left Books in 1977. Particular reference will be made to the extracts by Benjamin, Adorno and Brecht in that volume.

The final section of the paper will offer a retrospective evaluation of this late 70s moment of debate about value, and speculate as to whether the concepts and procedures of those debates still have intellectual purchase today.