

“A Collection of Radical Essays”
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When the term 'radical' is floated in popular discourse a curious distortion typically occurs. Because of its electric status within the American cultural imagination, the term's connotation is instantly political. Inappropriately, 'radical' often suggests a dramatic collision with and subversion of established order. Borrowing from introductory remarks made by Lee Baxandall (quoting Webster's Dictionary) in his collection of essays on radical perspectives on the arts, the term 'radical' is properly synonymous with 'fundamental.' In this sense the works contained in this collection all forward a fundamental commentary be it on the arts, philosophy, or politics. They are not so much concerned with the latest fashion of a discipline so much as they seek to examine its root structure.

What is precious about the essay form is its function as a primary and secondary medium of communication depending on the location of the author with respect to the subject. It may be an essential comment like in the case of Slavoj Zizek's *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* in that this work largely resembles his principal writings, or in the case of Einstein's *Ideas and Opinions*, the essay becomes a way of tangentially expressing a comment on something mostly irrelevant to his main concerns with theoretical physics. In both cases the brevity of the essay form demands precision and implies urgency. An essay cannot house the galactic imagination of the novel. It lacks the patience for encyclopedic data. Consequently, the essay must deliver its message with a condensed but altogether elegant and robust style.

Over the course of my study at Michigan State I have never once been exposed to the subject of radicalism in the classroom. At times some of the essays included in the collection augment classroom material but for the most part their analysis is not topical to my area of study in international relations. Because of this separation my reading of these texts has been done out of pleasure instead of necessity. From the first essay gathered to the last one read I have enjoyed these works as used them to initiate a discussion that was lacking in my academic regiment. Later I found that these discussions could not be quarantined to the reading process. They occupied my mind while walking the sidewalks of East Lansing and they painted my dreamscapes. I found myself so consumed by insights of Eliot, Adorno, Twain, and Foucault (to name only a few) that I was compelled to pursue a graduate education that enabled this line of study. So my interest in this collection is not superficial; it is an existential component of my identity.

Unlike many previous submissions to this contest, my collection of radical essays isn't remarkably large, it does not substantiate a professional interest, and it isn't based on a narrow obscurity. This collection is far more autobiographical: collected on 4 continents over the course of a decade they represent segments of my life. With covers warped by the Caribbean sun or saturated in coffee or torn while fleeing authorities in Germany, these books, in addition to providing essays, tell a story about where I've been and also tell the infinite story of where I may go. The collection does not satisfy some eccentric fetish. If that were the case it would probably better conform to the traditional technique

of book collection. But my books will never be superficial relics. They are appendages of my body. They are as revealing and personal as the scar on my ankle. They are my story.