

Roots of the Postindustrial Myth: Industrialism, Technologism, and Culture Crisis

William H. Thornton*

I. Industrial Technologism as Myth and Ideology

Despite sweeping revisions in base/superstructure analysis, much of it inspired by the late Raymond Williams, the axial role of material forces in modern cultural evolution remains a 'given'. What has been dropped is the presumed insularity of those forces. This study will suggest, for example, that no small part of the impact of industrialization on culture is owing to a mythic (and hence ideational) attending factor: the radically modern expectation of cultural "progress" in the wake of industrialization.

What is distinctly "modern" about this myth is that its referent lies in the future rather than the past. As J. H. Plumb has argued (*The Death of the Past*, 1969), industrial society breaks with commercial and agrarian societies in having relatively little need of the past. The industrial myth (hereafter termed "industrialism") is "radical" in the sense that Michel Walzer (*The Revolution of the Saints: The Origins of Radical Politics*, 1965) associates with the prototypically modern politics of Calvinism: it gains its force not from discrete issues but from a mythic and structural conception of what society is and will be.

Marx (despite his popular association with pure material causality) readily granted the pull of futuristic myth. Consider, for example, his comment in "The Eighteenth Brumaire" that the heart of the nineteenth century social revolution must be drawn from the future and not the past (Marx, 1955: 50). The most socially activist modernism of this century has been in perfect accord with Marx on that point. Lionel Trilling follows Reyner Ranham (*Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, 1969) in dating the turn between the publication of Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto*, in 1908, and his lecture before the Lyceum Club of London in 1912, where he contraposed modernism with the defunct aesthetics of Ruskin (Trilling,

* Associate Professor, Culture Studies Department of Western Languages and Literature, Providence University, Taiwan.

1971: 128). Alternatively one might date the turn between the Werkbund movement of Hermann Muthesius (1907) and the Bauhaus of Walter Gropius (1919). In any case, the technological myth (hereafter termed “technologism”) had come of age before 1920. It only remained for the Bauhaus movement, conceiving of art as leading the way to a “promised land” of technologized culture (Galison, 1990: 716), to draw up detailed blueprints for technologism as a functional myth.

Early resistance to technologized culture had been socially polarized on two sides of the progressive mainstream. It had arisen among a cultural elite (Blake, Coleridge, Carlyle, Emerson, Ruskin, etc.), on the one hand, and Luddite factions within the laboring classes on the other. Of course it had little practical effect on either side. One of its lasting results, unfortunately, was a deep and permanent rift between the non-material values of an increasingly isolated ‘high culture’ and the utilitarian values of the dominant, bourgeois order. The latter relegated what it conceived of as “culture” to the decorative or recreational domain. Even Marxist philosophy — presumably as anti-bourgeois as philosophy can get — fell into much the same groove, celebrating the essentially bourgeois *homo faber* image of man and relegating “culture” to the epiphenomenal status of superstructure.

Once again this trend culminates in our century with the Bauhaus dogma of physicalism, built up from a material foundation (Unterbau) to superstructure (Überbau) (Galison, 1990: 746). Bauhaus aesthetics took the further step of eliminating bourgeois “culture” even as a decorative fixture. Though many interpreters have viewed Bauhaus anti-aesthetics as anti-bourgeois (as if Victorian culture was the final resting place of bourgeois culture), we regard their project as ultra-bourgeois, completing the suppression of autonomous “culture” which bourgeois aesthetics had only half managed. The essential Bauhaus task was to eliminate all obstacles in the path of a pure base/superstructure anti-aesthetics. By no accident — given the close friendship and cooperation of Bauhaus leaders such as Neurath and Meyer with logical positivists such as Carnap and Fiegl — the same foundationalism turns up in the logical positivist insistence on the priority of simple, observational “protocol statements” as the building blocks of all reliable knowledge (Galison, 1990: 711), with cultural and historical understanding thrown to the scrap heap.

When set against this nugatory view of culture, one can well appreciate the magnitude of the cultural shift that has come in the postwar era —

first in popular culture and then, theoretically, with postmodernism. Daniel Bell, following Lionel Trilling, designates this vital and non-utilitarian reaction as an "adversary culture" — the major adversary being the bureaucratic and rationalized ethos which prevails in the productive ("technical-economic") realm.

Since most of us co-exist, so to speak, in these contradictory culture spheres, the productive and the expressive, the result is what Bell terms a diremption of culture and with it a disjunction of role and person (Bell, 1978: 92-93). The non-role side of culture, the side of symbolic expression, has certainly made a startling comeback; and according to Bell this cultural resurgence is "the most dynamic component of our civilization, outreaching the dynamism of technology itself" (Bell, 1978: 33).

We might add that it constitutes a fundamental axis of ideological contention, a last line of resistance against the elision of techno-capitalism into technocracy. More and more, as traditional ideological lines blur, expressive culture supplants political radicalism as the ultimate line of resistance. The mere survival of autonomous culture — apart from what Adorno calls the "culture industry" — becomes a radical action within the new and still amorphous ideological matrix. What is certain is that the old radicalism and conservatism, the Left and the Right, are no longer the uncontested substrates of ideological confrontation.

This transformation was felt morally long before it was realized politically. Even in 1923 Bertrand Russell could proclaim that "the important fact of the present time is not the struggle between capitalism and socialism, but the struggle between industrial civilization and humanity" (qtd. in Kerr, 1983: 126). That struggle is even more pronounced with postindustrialism. Events in eastern Europe in 1989 cannot be reduced to the simple victory of capitalism over socialism, as the New Right would have it. Nor do they represent the simple convergence of Left and Right that liberals have long predicted. East European socialism fell because it achieved more in the way of advanced technocracy than advanced technology, and crushed both indigenous culture and efficiency in the process. It evoked a postmodern cultural insurgency which is not likely to die away or to respect political and ideological boundaries. The real ideological "Establishment," whether to the Left or Right, is underwritten by technologism and challenged by a postmodern humanism that is more 'green' than 'red'. As Fritjof Capra argues (*The Turning Point*, 1983), three hundred years of raw economic expansionism — premised upon competi-

tive, analytic and atomistic values — have brought us to a civilizational dead end. Our very survival hinges upon our ability to restore balance through cooperative, intuitive, and integrative values.

Political scientists and historians ignore this 'turning point' at their peril. The gathering storm of cultural reaction was ignored, for example, by Paul Kennedy in *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, 1988, which won acclaim for projections based on 'hard' statistical analysis. Within two years many of these projections were obsolete, having flunked the test of history itself. The material 'purity' of Kennedy's methods precluded the vagaries of 'soft' or 'subjective' analysis, and thereby excluded, as Bernd Huppauf notes, the volatile, cultural elements that so often 'make history' and confound purists, "precisely because of their non-material nature" (Huppauf, 1990: 77).

The new ideological paradigm, then, pits a nebulous adversary culture against the dominant and highly structured technological order. Our search for the historical roots of this paradigm shift makes for the strangest of bedfellows. It was Marx who most blatantly trumpeted the determinative myth of technologism. As he put it in *Poverty of Philosophy* (Ch. 2, Sect. 1), "The windmill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steammill, society with the industrial capitalist." Marx was no more the simple prophet of the socialist Left than Adam Smith was the simple prophet of the capitalist Right. Both reemerge as co-prophets of today's technological order. Marx credited Smith for his prescient understanding of the division of labor in manufacturing (*Capital*, Chapter 12); and Marx in turn must be understood in terms of the continuing social revolution constrained by industrial technostructures. The greatest of mythic industrialism, however, was Saint-Simon.

II. Saint-Simon's Industrialism

Today's technologism can be conceived as the postindustrial stage of industrial progressivism (hereafter termed industrialism), which in its turn absorbed and revised Enlightenment progressivism. The later Condorcet provided a bridge between fatuous, reason-intoxicated Enlightenment progressivism and the tougher industrial variety. His *Sketch of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1793) predicted democratic change through the instrument of cheap printing. The *philosophes* in general hailed the invention of the printing press as a firing pin for cultural revolution (Gay, 1966:

280). Enlightenment though came no closer than that to the technological apotheosis that would mark the new progressivism.

It was left to Saint-Simon to set progressivism in this new key. For him progress was a more continuous and practical affair than the Enlightenment had allowed. There was no revolutionary breach, for example, between the modern and the medieval, as Condorcet had drawn it. Saint-Simon abhorred the waste and injustice of the old order, yet recognized the lethal folly of the new revolutionary program. In place of both he substituted an elemental meritocracy based on technical prowess. In *Système Industriel* (1821), and even further in his *Catéchisme des Industriels* (1823), the organizational power of the industrialists was understood socially and politically as never before. The talents of an entrepreneurial elite must, he thought, be directed to the broadest social welfare. France would become one vast factory for social progress, under administrative-industrial rather than aristocratic-military organization (Hayek, 1952: 251). On his deathbed he summed up his life as an effort "to guarantee to all men the free development of their faculties" (qtd. in Wilson, 1940: 85). Thus he joined the elitism of the old with the freedom and dynamism of the new.

That linkage was epitomized in the term "avant-garde," whose first use has been attributed to Saint-Simon (along with his close friend Olinde Rodrigues). This cultural vanguard was comprised of Saint-Simon's famous trinity: scientists, industrialists, and artists. As men of imagination, the artists were Saint-Simon's supreme vanguard, a close equivalent to philosopher-kings. However, as Matei Calinescu has admonished, the thrust of these artists' imaginations was toward popularization, not dialectical negation (102). In effect, they were to be propagandists. This is an important point to bear in mind later in this paper, for it suggests an essential and malignant continuity between cultural industrialism and postindustrialism.

So too, Saint-Simon's tendency to polarize forces of progress and obstruction was regressive as compared to the complexities of romanticism. In that sense he was little more than an industrialized *philosophe*. He distinguished, for example, two systems of social organization: the feudal and military, on the one hand, and the industrial on the other. The former was thought to be supported by a system of mere beliefs, while the latter rested on proof. The former enforced homogeneity through coercion, while the latter supported free association through contracts and voluntary cooperation. The former was said to be static and brittle, while the latter

was dynamic and resilient (Szacki, 1979: 112-13).

By mid-century these ideas had become conventional wisdom. American transcendentalists protested to no avail. As Emerson put it, "Things are in the saddle, and ride mankind." In England Matthew Arnold deplored the increasingly "mechanical and external" society of Philistines (Williams, 1958: 125); but most Victorians were convinced that the industrial order was the road to progress in morals as well as material well-being. Walter E. Houghton describes the curious belief of Victorians

that industrial progress would mean the end of war. The argument that the advance of international communications would displace the prejudice of ignorance by the friendliness of understanding was supplemented by another: that the control of society was passing out of the hands of the old aristocratic-military class into those of an industrial middle class interested only in peaceful trade and civic affairs. (41-42)

Even those who challenged the capitalist aspect of this Victorian myth rarely challenged its industrialist aspect. It was Saint-Simon's industrialism which makes him so important for our present purpose. He influenced Spencer on the far Right, Comte on the moderate Right, and Marx on the Left, all of whom were staunch believers in social developmentalism (Nisbet, 1986: 23). They construed development in systemic, structural terms, as did Maine, Taylor, Morgan and countless others.

Culture was the forgotten variable in these systems. The idea of monogenesis and unilateral progress won out over the pluralist understanding of history that Vico advanced, along with the early Turgot (Nisbet, 1986: Ch. 2; Barnard, 1968: 614-15). This, in fact, is as evident among contemporary progressives such as Rostow (*The Stages of Economic Growth*, 1963) as it was in Marx. Here again the debt is to Condorcet and the Enlightenment concept of stages in history—the crucial difference being that progress for Condorcet and Voltaire was still squarely in the cultural domain.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the idea of systemic development was increasingly understood in terms of unconscious, material forces. System was understood as being both universal and substructural. This eliminated the possibility of conscious cultural construction (other than superstructural adaptation). Culture in general was taken as epiphenomenal. Marx, in the *Grundrisse*, pushed the reduction of culture so far that a rebound was virtually inevitable. As the late Raymond Williams noted, Marx considered the man who makes a piano a productive worker,

and perhaps the man who distributes it as well; but "when it comes to the man who plays the piano..., there is no question: he is not a productive worker at all. So piano-maker is base, but pianist superstructure" (qtd. in Wolff, 1984: 78). Such "vulgar Marxism," as Lukács called it, would take on a life of its own. It reached its outer limits with Bukharin's *Historical Materialism* (1921), which was blasted by Lukács for reducing all strata of social relations to a function of technology (Lukács, 1973: 49).

III. Modernism as the Rebound of 'Negative' Culture

Despite its universal claims, the materialist model of development can now be understood as an inflated ethnocentrism. R. P. Misra points out that such "development" has substituted progress in one domain for regress in others (Misra, 1983: 183), leaving the question of overall progress in serious doubt. It is only clear that vital options have been buried in the rubble of cultural and environmental ruin.

Far from fulfilling its ideological program, industrialism blanketed ideological factions with an insuperable infrastructure. The curious fact is that this could equally serve the Left or Right, voiding neither. Only the varieties of cultural experience were countered. Culture, in the bourgeois manner, was at once exalted and emasculated. It became a topping, a superstructure. Everyone knew that what really counted lay beneath; but that was too sordid a thing to dwell on. In inverse proportion to the tedious rationalization of production, culture rose to new heights of sentimentality. In time, even that grew tedious. Relief could only be had in something more visceral.

The new artistic "decadence" filled that need impressively. Here, according to Baudelaire, would be the heart of modernity. As early as 1864 the Goncourt brothers had spoken of a "modern melancholy" which they attributed to the ubiquitous rage for production (Calinescu, 1987: 166-67). The modernist polarity — at once a wedding and a divorce — between productive and cultural orders was already taking form. As if to maintain interest, or to provide a measure of psychic relief, the cultural order took on a life of putative independence in the form of Art for Art's Sake. This was 'negativistic,' to be sure, but what it negated was not so much the existing power structure of production as the theoretical rationality which might have negated that structure.

Without any theoretical footing, cultural protest took a distinctly des-

tructive turn. Calinescu notes that Bakunin's anarchist maxim, "To destroy is to create," is acutely descriptive of the avant-garde mindframe which was taking shape in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Calinescu, 1987: 117 and 119). This absence of a reconstructive base surely contributed to the cultural retreatism that has characterized the whole history of modernism. Lawrence E. Cahoone (updating the interpretation of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1944) explains that absence in terms of the philosophical narcissism which had been mounting since the advent of Cartesian subjectivism. Nature and culture, by this account, were twin victims of the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy. Meaning and value, or any features of reality that cannot be reduced to materiality, must be conceived as purely private (Cahoone, 1988: 75).

Resistance to this public/private schism mounted on two fronts. With William Morris it took the form of an anti-bourgeois restoration of unity between arts, crafts, and technology. Conversely, the Bauhaus movement (despite its association with the anti-fascist Left) was in fact ultra-bourgeois in its denigration of culture or any other non-functional category of productive life. On the foundations laid by Muthesius and then Gropius, Bauhaus anti-aesthetics supported the ethos of pure productivity, exactly as Saint-Simon had envisioned it. Just how prophetic these movements were is obvious from the contemporary impression one gets from their architecture.

Peter Galison notes, as mentioned before, the close parallel between Bauhaus modernism in architecture and logical positivism in philosophy, each building upon an elemental physicalism that eschews culture (except as purely determined superstructure) in favor of industrial functionality (736). Initially this trenchant positivism was linked to German Left politics. That adventitious circumstance served to camouflage the real nature of Bauhaus modernism, despite its own claims to apolitical, technicist neutrality. Then, however, its transfer to America in the late 1930s — in the form of the New Bauhaus of the University of Chicago — restored its apolitical claims almost forcefully. This inaugurated the era of American technologism, and helped to lay the foundation for the end of ideology mentality of postwar America.

IV. Simmel, Veblen, and the Social Scientific Uses of Culture

One of the most significant early challenges to the epiphenomenal view of culture came with the concept of *Zeitgeist* that grew out of German *Kulturgeschichte*. A prime example is Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1867). Burckhardt turned to cultural history as a bulwark against the erosion of values in an increasingly technological society (Iggers, 1968: 129 and 151; Breisach, 1983: 304; Berkhofer, 1973: 84); but his was a voice in the wilderness.

This tradition of cultural resistance was renewed at the turn of the century with Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money*, 1900, which outlined the cultural process that reduced quality to quantity — money being the ultimate symbol and instrument of that reduction. Simmel himself is hard to place on the standard ideological spectrum. He mixed progressive and reactionary elements with seeming abandon (Miller, 1987: 74); but on closer analysis his position can be understood as a precocious defense against the excesses of technologism. He shows special concern, for example, over the plight of the individual vis-a-vis the dominance of technology and bureaucracy.

So too, he flatly rejected the cult of the masses. Equally disturbed by cultural threats TO the masses and BY the masses, he sounded an early warning against the industrial "proletarianization" of culture. This was to have a lasting impact on his student, Lukács (Miller, 1987: 68 and 76), who cut a path for what Trent Schroyer has termed "cultural Marxism" (Schroyer, 1973: 199). Socialism for Lukács meant the ascendancy of culture, which he liberated from its theoretical dependency on material production (Lukács, 1973: 14).

Similarly, Antonio Gramsci undertook the rehabilitation of the force of ideas in his non-superstructural analysis of culture (Miller, 1987: 162). On the one hand Gramsci broke with Marxist apologetics for bureaucracy and technology; on the other hand he challenged those, such as Weber and Michels, who treated bureaucracy as an irreversible course. Gramsci saw bureaucracy and technology as redoubtable but not insuperable agents of cultural-intellectual-ideological domination. In "Americanism and Fordism" he portrayed Taylorism and "scientific management" as elements of a new, hegemonic ideological force (Boggs, 1976: 45-46). This is the pre-

cursor of Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*, 1964, and a crucial step toward our present understanding of technologism.

Even in the sociological mainstream, with its positivistic leanings, a return to culture was evident. Max Weber's methodological individualism did not prevent him from defining the proper task of historians as the "causal analysis of culturally significant phenomena" (Weber, 1978: 23). In treating the history of capitalism, Weber sought to explain the necessary cultural conditions for the rise of rational capitalism in the West, as opposed, say, to China or India (Weber, 1958: 25). Only Weber's rationalistic fatalism, as contrasted with Lukács's measured optimism, prevented his full participation in the rebound of culture. The future for him was almost a lost cause: "not summer's bloom lies ahead of us, but rather a polar night of icy darkness...." (qtd. Wrong, 1970: 26).

The cultural rebound was better served by Karl Mannheim. Like his mentor, Lukács, Mannheim turned to history as a locus of radical renewal. No doubt under Lukács's guidance he left his native Budapest in 1912 to study in Germany. There he too came under Simmel's influence, especially Simmel's concept of culture crisis (Loader, 1985: 62); but just as Lukács would channel Weberian fatalism into a more optimistic animus, Mannheim could not be content with Simmel's cultural fatalism. Being convinced, like Lukács, "that the old cultural contents had become obsolete and lifeless..." (Kettler, 1982: 13), Mannheim build upon the foundations of Dilthey, in opposition to the tradition of Condorcet, Saint-Simon, and Spencer (Mannheim, 1982: 94 and 134, fn. 27), to launch a counter-attack against "bourgeois rationalism" (Mannheim, 1982: 172). He blamed the eclipse of humanist rationality on the very nature of industrial society (Hughes, 1975: 77).

The dialectical opposite of the Simmel-Mannheim line of anti-technologism would be Veblen, a disciple of Saint-Simon and the arch-prophet of twentieth century industrialism. Veblen's focus was on the pecuniary culture of American "Yahoos." He joined other industrial progressives in his dark assessment of cultural inertia. Man for him was peaceful and industrious by nature; yet man's instinct for workmanship was easily turned by a pecuniary culture toward proficiency in cards, yachting, golf—or war. Echoing the classical polarities of Saint-Simon, Veblen underscored the tension between man's elemental nature and a host of cultural perversions (Aaron, 1951: 219).

Where Veblen differed from Marx was in his view of pecuniary culture

as more a reactionary substructure than a reactionary superstructure. His 'substructural' approach to culture is evident, for example, in his description of the eclipse of peaceful social orders at the dawn of history. When a predatory culture overtook the relatively peaceful cultures of primitive societies,

those elements of the population, or those ethnic groups, which were by temperament less fitted to the predatory life were repressed and pushed into the background. On the transition to the predatory culture the character of the struggle for existence changed in some degree from a struggle of the group against a non-human environment to a struggle against a human environment. (Veblen, 1973: 149-50)

In other respects Veblen moved closer to Marx's technophilia. He clearly considered the displacement of cultural structures by the new rational technics to be the best hope for mankind. However, on closer examination, it would be a cultural trait (the inveterate 'instinct' for workmanship—a habituated rather than biological 'instinct') which makes all the difference. Once liberated from moribund pecuniary values, culture directs the new rational technics. Much as Weber credited an internalized cultural factor—the Protestant ethic—as a motive force in the making of modern capitalism, Veblen designated this culturally restored 'instinct' as the requisite internal discipline making for the coming technocratic order.

Nonetheless, like Saint-Simon, Veblen advocated a society managed by engineers and technicians. Only these, he thought, could deliver America from the trusts and financiers who lorded over the nation late in the nineteenth century, much as an effete aristocracy had lorded over Europe for centuries. In the *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899, Veblen had taken up the cause of technical industrialism. Twenty years later, with *The Engineers and the Price System*, his technocratic doctrine went beyond liberation from effete financiers to revolution in favor of an industrial power elite. In an article in *The Dial* he magnified his thesis, dissolving national and ideological boundaries. For him even Bolshevism was but another variant of industrialism (Bell, 1980: 76). It should be stressed that industrialism, so conceived, was through and through a moral order, grounded upon a work ethic which was finally ready to claim its deserved leadership role at the expense of a profligate leisure class.

Leisure Class depicted the rise of conspicuous consumption and the demise of the Protestant ethic as the principal mechanism behind capital

accumulation. This presaged the irrelevance of the owners of capital in the production process, and helped promote the new technocratic perspective of the 1930's, with its focus on scientific management and macroeconomics. That, along with the diffusion of corporate ownership, cleared the way for a radically different corporate America, guided by a new managerial elite.

In that respect Veblen was a true prophet. Where he grievously failed was in his belief that the rise of this new elite would impel the decline of leisure class values. Not only have the two co-existed, but their deepening interdependence has become a distinctive feature of contemporary culture, as documented by Pierre Bourdieu (*Distinction*, 1984).

V. The Technocratic Revolution

Ironically, it was America's new managerial elite who first put technologism into full practice, fulfilling Marx's call in the *Grundrisse* for the "power of knowledge objectified." Though Marx wished to divorce that power from the privileged domain of private property, managerialism — as propounded by Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means (*The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, 1932), Thurman Arnold (*The Folklore of Capitalism*, 1937) and James Burnham (*The Managerial Revolution*, 1941) — objectified it precisely as an appendage of private property. Berle's self-professed ambition was to be "The American Karl Marx — a social prophet" (Schlesinger, 1989: 21).

The oral element in managerial industrialism, so prominent in Saint-Simon and Veblen, helped to legitimize its burgeoning role and gain its tacit acceptance among the working classes. "Managerial professionalism" arose as the corollary of the managerial revolution. Initially it entailed both professional expertise and professional ethics, including a service orientation. "The first emphasized the technical competence of management..., while the second suggested that managers would consider the interests of all the parties involved in the firm...." (Abercrombie et al., 1980: 135-36).

That ethic was central to A. A. Berle's notion of the democratic legitimacy of the corporation. Berle's case had one remarkable defect: the managerial elite was in no practical, verifiable sense responsible to the people. Michael Harrington concludes that "Berle's description of the new forms of property is much more compelling than his vision of a new corporate ethic" (Harrington, 1965: 99). A humanistic ethic was retained

in managerial industrialism only long enough to secure its legitimacy. Once the new order was thoroughly entrenched, it began to narrow its moral overtures to a strictly meritocratic line.

This ideological slight-of-hand raised little protest in the 1940s and 1950s, in the midst of war and economic expansion. Even in the radical 1960s the working classes remained mute except when the machinery of technologism was clearly linked with the threat of automation. The technocratic order itself was not a working class issue. Labor organization was directed toward a larger piece of the pie, not a new pie. By contrast, youth protest against technocracy constituted, in the opinion of Jesse Pitts (1979), a "first-line structural response" that could better be termed "con-trameritocracy" than "counterculture" (Pitts, 1979: 149).

Generational and cultural factors were vital here. America has been more individualistic and more resistant to centralization and bureaucratization than have other Western societies. Ironically it was the youth culture which represented this deeper tradition of American culture, while the older generation, more materially oriented, was far more accepting of America's drift toward corporate giantism. The two, however, operated dialectically, so that neither can be understood apart from the other.

The structural integration we are attempting—replacing the false dichotomy of substructure and superstructure with a dialectic—recognizes the crucial role of superstructures in sustaining what Althusser calls the "conditions of existence" of substructures. In this sense culture retains its "relative autonomy" within an otherwise Marxist frame of reference. This is analogous, on the sociological Right, to Daniel Bell's "disjunction of realms" thesis. Indeed, this cultural understanding was already contained in Lukács's defense of culture against commodity values (Lukács, 1973: 6), and in Mannheim's cultural spheres thesis (Mannheim, 1982: 43; and Loader, 1985: 53).

Even given the dialectical nature of this "relative autonomy," we should be wary of the potentially elitist nature of autonomy theories as they relate to "high culture." This was F. R. Leavis's concern when he distinguished modern civilization (dull, uniform, mechanized) from a more animated minority culture. The ordinary worker—the "eternal consumer" of Horkheimer and Adorno—has no recourse in leisure-class cultures or counter-cultures. His culture is a perpetual flight from the drudgeries of productive life.

Trapped between mythical individualism and 'Taylorized' mass produc-

tion, the worker finds himself alone in this relative affluence. Where alienation has surfaced in reduced productivity, it has been met by an ever-expanding array of managerial strategies, such as Elton Mayo's human relations response to the famous Hawthorne experiments. However benign these strategies might appear, their manipulatory treatment of the worker has made them more dehumanizing than the alienation they sought to cure.

The "what's in it for me?" attitude of industrial workers is in fact the flip side of Taylorism. Since the 1950s there has been increasing application of Taylorism to a proletarianized white collar sector, as documented by Braverman. That application is consummated as the computerization of office processes affords instant feedback on the minutiae of office activities. Myth has it that postindustrialism will be the end of all that. Like the myth of "managerial professionalism," this too will pass; but not before the technocratic power structure is secure enough to get along without mythological legitimization.

VI. The Postindustrial Myth

Technologism has only reached its mature, hegemonic form in the postindustrial era. It is now the central tenet of the new technological elite, one pole of the new ideological configuration. As yet there is no well defined opposition to this dominant, technocratic ideology, though the "green wave" of ecological politics and published works represents a promising step in that direction.

The new postindustrial order has been hailed by Daniel Bell, Alvin Toffler and a host of "corporatist" sociologists such as William A. Faunce (1981) as an infrastructure for liberation, much as Left and Right alike once hailed industrialization as an infrastructure for progress. The postindustrial myth arises, in the view of Marvin Harris, from the "notion that white-collar work is different from blue-collar work — that people-processing and information-processing are more prestigious, brainier, better paid, and less arduous activities than tightening bolts on an assembly line. That notion bears little relationship to the actual nature of service jobs and to their effect on the character of the labor force..." (Harris, 1981: 46). This corroborates Braverman's view that the old division of labor between mental and physical operations is carried even farther in the new order; for the clerk of old had a better sense of how his function

fitted into the whole enterprise.

The postindustrial myth is fueled by the belief that work today is less atomistic than before, more interactive. Functionally speaking, that is true enough. The change began from the top down. Management became collectivist while labor was still atomistic. By mid-century the new managerial ethos — analyzed in Riesman's *Lonely Crowd* and Whyte's *Organization Man* — harbingered changes that would extend deeper and deeper into the work force. Those reaches of traditional labor, white collar as well as blue collar, where this ethos does not extend are precisely the segments of the work force which are proving obsolete. In that negative sense we are already seeing the emergence of a postindustrial techno-structure (Galbreath's term in *The New Industrial State*, 1971) — but with few of the salubrious effects prophesied by Toffler. High technology, as Ben Agger argues, "will not upgrade labor in general but only those functions that stand to gain from the increasing subjugation... and deskilling of other large fractions of labor" (Agger 1985: 9).

One of the darkest prophets of the postindustrial impact has been Marcuse. His prognosis, at the dawn of the postindustrial era, was the complete co-optation of the working class:

The new technological work-world... enforces a weakening of the negative position of the working class: the latter no longer appears to be the living contradiction to the established society. This trend is strengthened by the effect of the technological organization of production on the other side of the fence: on management.... Domination is transfigured into administration. The... bosses and owners are... assuming the function of bureaucrats.... (Marcuse, 1964: 31-32)

In the earliest stages of the new order, Marcuse recognized the fruition of cultural industrialism and the collapse of institutions for creative negation. In "The Affirmative Character of Culture," 1937, he exposed the yawning indifference of "affirmative" culture to the concrete injustice of the social process (Marcuse, 1968: 95 et al.). In *One Dimensional Man*, 1964, he further denounced art for being powerless and illusory, "an omnipresent ingredient of the administered society" (Marcuse, 1964: 239). By default of the arts, in other words, ours has become a civilization without cultural recourse. Our disorientation calls to mind an analogy by Richard Lowenthal: culture crisis is to civilization as a whole what anomie is to the individual (Lowenthal, 1984: 32).

The new order is all the more repressive due to its effective camouflage: the comfort and convenience of its operation. As François Perroux

(*La coexistence pacifique*, 1958) cautioned us, the issue is not just odious working conditions or robotic obedience, but the reduction of workers — whatever their level of skills and education — to the status of instrumental components in a suprarational process (Marcuse, 1964: 32).

That issue has been no less pressing in nominally socialist countries. Ernest Mandel's technocratic dictum — that "belief in the omnipotence of technology is the specific form of bourgeois ideology in late capitalism" — (qtd. in Leggatt, 1985: 30) is but a half truth. Right and Left, capitalism and socialism, have been equally drawn into the vortex of postindustrial technologism, one pole of the new ideological paradigm. One of the greatest political questions of our times is whether the opposing pole, that of cultural reaction, can mount an effective resistance against such odds.

References

- Aaron, Daniel.
1951 *Men of Good Hope: The Story of American Progressives*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Abercrombie, Nicholas et al.
1980 *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*, Boston: George Allen and Unwin.
- Agger, Ben
1985 "The Dialectic of Deindustrialization: An Essay on Advanced Capitalism," *Critical Theory and Public Life*, ed. John Forester, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, pp. 3-21.
- Barnard, Frederick M.
1968 "Culture and Civilization in Modern Times," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*.
- Bell, Daniel
1978 *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, New York: Basic Books.
1980 *The Winding Passage: Essays and Sociological Journeys, 1960-1980*, New York: Basic Books.
- Berkhofer, Robert F.
1973 "Clio and the Culture Concept: Some Impressions of a Changing Relationship in American Historiography," *The Idea of Culture in the Social Sciences*, ed. Louis Schneider and Charles M. Bonjean, London: Cambridge University Press, pp. 77-100.
- Boggs, Carl
1976 *Gramsci's Marxism*, London: Pluto Press.
- Breisach, Ernst
1983 *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Cahoone, Lawrence E.
 - 1988 *The Dilemma of Modernity: Philosophy, Culture, and Anti-Culture*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York.
- Calinescu, Matei
 - 1987 *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Faunce, William A.
 - 1981 *Problems of an Industrial Society*, 2nd ed., New York: McGraw Hill.
- Galison, Peter
 - 1990 "Aufbau/Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Summer), pp. 709-52.
- Gay, Peter
 - 1966 *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation — The Rise of Modern Paganism*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Harrington, Michael
 - 1965 *The Accidental Century*, Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- Harris, Marvin.
 - 1981 *America Now: The Anthropology of a Changing America*, New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Hayek, F. A.
 - 1952 *The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies on the Abuse of Reason*, Indianapolis: Liberty Press.
- Houghton, Walter E.
 - 1957 *The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hughes, H. Stuart
 - 1975 *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930-1965*, New York: McGraw Hill.
- Huppauf, Bernd
 - 1990 "The Fall of the Great Powers? Rereading Paul Kennedy in the Age of Perestroika." *Meanjin*. Vol. 49, No. 1 (Autumn), pp. 72-78.
- Iggers, Georg G.
 - 1968 *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, rev. ed., Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.
- Kerr, Clark
 - 1983 *The Future of Industrial Societies: Convergence or Continuing Diversity?* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Kettler, David, Volker Meja, and Nico Stehr
 - 1982 "Introduction: Karl Mannheim's Early Writings on Cultural Sociology," in *Karl Mannheim: Structures of Thinking*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro and Shierry Weber Nicholsen, ed. David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 11-29.
- Leggatt, Timothy
 - 1985 *The Evolution of Industrial Systems: The Forking Paths*, London: Croom

Helm.

Loader, Colin

- 1985 *The Intellectual Development of Karl Mannheim: Culture, Politics, and Planning*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lowenthal, Richard

- 1984 *Social Change and Cultural Crisis*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Lukács, Georg

- 1973 *Marxism and Human Liberation: Essays on History, Culture and Revolution*, ed. E. San Juan, Jr., New York: Dell.

Mannheim, Karl

- 1982 *Karl Mannheim: Structures of Thinking*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro and Shierry Weber Nicholsen, ed. David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Marcuse, Herbert

- 1968 *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, Boston: Beacon Press.
1964 *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Society*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Marx, Karl

- 1955 "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Communist Manifesto*, with Selections from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and *Capital*, edited by Samuel H. Beer, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, pp. 47-64.

Miller, Daniel

- 1987 *Mass Culture and Mass Consumption*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Misra, R. P.

- 1983 "La culture et la planification du development," *La Culture clef du development*, Paris: UNESCO, pp. 141-90.

Nisbet, Robert

- 1986 *The Making of Modern Society*, Brighton, Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books.

Pitts, Jesse

- 1979 "The Counterculture: Tranquilizer or Revolutionary Ideology? (1971)," in *Twenty-Five Years of Dissent: An American Tradition*, ed. Irving Howe, New York: Methuen, pp. 149-72.

Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr.

- 1989 "Getting FDR's Ear," *The New York Review of Books*, 36 (February 16), pp. 20-23.

Schroyer, Trent

- 1973 *The Critique of Domination: The Origins and Development of Critical Theory*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Szacki, Jerzy

- 1979 *History of Sociological Thought*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Trilling, Lionel

- 1971 *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Veblen, Thorstein

- 1973 *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Weber, Max

1978 "The Nature of Social Action," in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, trans. E. Matthews, ed. W. G. Runciman, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 7-32.

1958 *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, New York: Charles Scribner's.

Williams, Raymond

1958 *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.

Wilson, Edmund

1940 *To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co.

Wolff, Janet

1984 *The Social Production of Art*, New York: New York University Press.

Wrong, Denis

1970 "Introduction," *Max Weber*, ed. Dennis Wrong, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, pp. 1-76.