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DANIEL BELL

THE CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS OF CAPITALISM

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The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism

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THE RELATIONSHIP between a civilization's socio-economic structure and its culture is perhaps the most complicated of all problems for the sociologist. A nineteenth-century tradition, one deeply impregnated with Marxist conceptions, held that changes in social structure determined man's imaginative reach. An earlier vision of man—as *homo pictor*, the symbol-producing animal, rather than as *homo faber*, the tool-making animal—saw him as a creature uniquely able to prefigure what he would later "objectify" or construct in reality. It thus ascribed to the realm of culture the initiative for change. Whatever the truth of these older arguments about the past, today culture has clearly become supreme; what is played out in the imagination of the artist foreshadows, however dimly, the social reality of tomorrow.

Culture has become supreme for two complementary reasons. First, culture has become the most dynamic component of our civilization, outreaching the dynamism of technology itself. There is now in art—as there has increasingly been for the past 100 years—a dominant impulse toward the new and original, a self-conscious search for future forms and sensations, so that the idea of change and novelty overshadows the dimensions of actual change. And, second, there has come about, in the last 50 years or so, a legitimation of this cultural impulse. Society now accepts this role for the imagination, rather than seeing culture, as in the past, as setting a

norm and affirming a moral-philosophic tradition against which the new could be measured and (more often than not) censured. Indeed, society has done more than passively accept innovation; it has provided a market which eagerly gobbles up the new, because it believes it to be superior in value to all older forms. Thus, our culture has an unprecedented mission: it is an official, ceaseless search for a new sensibility.

It is true, of course, that the idea of change dominates the modern economy and modern technology as well. But changes in the economy and technology are constrained by available resources and financial cost. In politics, too, innovation is limited by existing institutional structures, by the veto power of contending groups, and to some extent by tradition. But the changes in expressive symbols and forms, difficult as it may be for the mass of people to absorb them readily, meet no resistance in the realm of culture itself.

What is singular about this "tradition of the new" (as Harold Rosenberg has called it) is that it allows art to be unfettered, to break down all genres and to explore all modes of experience and sensation. Fantasy today has few costs (is *anything* deemed bizarre or unspeakable today?) other than the risk of individual madness. And even madness, in the writings of such social theorists as Michel Foucault and R. D. Laing, is now conceived to be a superior form of truth! The new sensibilities, and the new styles of behavior associated with them, are created by small coteries which are devoted to exploring the new; because the new has value in and of itself, and meets with so little resistance, the new sensibility and its behavior-styles diffuse rapidly, transforming the thinking and actions of, the cultural mass (if not the larger masses of people), that new, large stratum of the intelligentsia in the society's knowledge and communications industries.

Along with this emphasis on the new has come the ideology, self-consciously accepted by the artist, that art will lead the way, will serve as the avant-garde. Now the very idea of an avant-garde—an advance assault team—indicates that modern art or culture would never permit itself to serve as a "reflection" of an underlying social structure but, rather, would open the way to something radically new. In fact, as we shall see, the very idea of an avant-garde, once its legitimacy is accepted, serves to institutionalize the primacy of culture in the fields of manners, morals, and, ultimately, politics.

The first major formulation of this conception of the avant-garde was made by the man who, ironically, has come to serve as the very symbol of technocratic rule, Henri de Saint-Simon. For all his vision of the engineer as the driving force of the new society, Saint-Simon knew that men were in want of inspiration, that Christianity itself was worn out, and that a new cult was needed. He found this new cult in the cult of art itself. The artist would reveal to society the glorious future, exciting men with the prospect of a new civilization. In a dialogue between an artist and a scientist, Saint-Simon gave the term "avant-garde" its modern cultural (rather than its earlier, military) meaning:

> It is we, artists, who will serve you as avant-garde: the power of the arts is in fact most immediate and most rapid: when we wish to spread new ideas among men, we inscribe them on marble or on canvas; . . . and in that way above all we exert an electric and victorious influence. We address ourselves to the imagination and to the sentiments of mankind, we should therefore always exercise the liveliest and the most decisive action. . . .
>
> What a most beautiful destiny for the arts, that of exercising over society a positive power, a true priestly function, and of marching forcefully in the van of all the intellectual faculties in the epoch of their greatest development! This is the duty of artists, this their mission. . . .[1]

The commonplace observation that today there is no longer a significant avant-garde—that there is no longer a radical tension between new art which shocks and a society that is shocked—merely signifies that the avant-garde has won its victory. A society given over entirely to innovation, in the joyful acceptance of change, has in fact institutionalized the avant-garde and charged it, perhaps to its own eventual dismay, with constantly turning up something new. In effect, "culture" has been given a blank check, and its primacy in generating social change has been firmly acknowledged.

[1] From *Opinions littéraires, philosophiques, et industrielles*, quoted by Donald Egbert, "The Idea of 'Avant-Garde' in Art and Politics," *American Historical Review* 73 (December 1967): 343.

I

THE MEANING OF CULTURE

Culture, for a society, a group, or a person, is a continual process of sustaining an identity through the coherence gained by a consistent aesthetic point of view, a moral conception of self, and a style of life which exhibits those conceptions in the objects that adorn one's home and oneself and in the taste which expresses those points of view. Culture is thus the realm of sensibility, of emotion and moral temper, and of the intelligence, which seeks to order these feelings.

Historically, most cultures and social structures have exhibited unity, although there have always been small groups expressing esoteric, deviant, usually libertine values. Classical culture expressed its unity through the fusion of reason and will in the pursuit of virtue. Christian culture exhibited consistency in the replication of the ordered ranks of society and the ordered ranks of the church with the hierarchies of heaven and hell, in the quest for salvation both in its social and aesthetic representations. In early modern times, bourgeois culture and bourgeois social structure fused a distinct unity with a specific character structure around the theme of order and work.

Classical social theory (I use the word "classical" here to denote the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century masters) also saw culture as unified with the social structure. Marx, as I have said, argued that the mode of production shaped all the other dimensions of a society. Culture as ideology reflected a substructure and could not have an autonomy of its own. Moreover, in bourgeois society, culture was tied to the economy because culture, too, had become a commodity, to be evaluated by the market and bought and sold through the exchange process. Max Weber argued that thought, conduct, and societal structure were highly integrated, in that all its branches—science, economy, law, and culture—were predominantly rationalistic. Even the modes of art were predominantly rationalistic. For Weber, this was true in a double sense: the cosmological aspects of Western thought and culture were characterized by the elimination of magic (in Schiller's phrase, the "disenchantment of the world"); and the structure and formal organization, the stylis-

tics of the arts, were rational. Weber's particular example was Western harmonic chordal music, which rested on a scale that permitted a maximum of ordered relations, unlike primitive and non-Western music.[2] Finally Pitirim Sorokin, in his *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, argued that cultures were integrated by mentalities ("the central principle, 'the reason' "), which unite thought and meaning and permeate all aspects of a society. Contemporary society is sensate, in that it is empirical, materialistic, extraverted, oriented to technique, and hedonistic.

Against these views, what I find striking today is the radical disjunction between the social structure (the techno-economic order) and the culture. The former is ruled by an economic principle defined in terms of efficiency and functional rationality, the organization of production through the ordering of things, including men as things. The latter is prodigal, promiscuous, dominated by an anti-rational, anti-intellectual temper in which the self is taken as the touchstone of cultural judgments, and the effect on the self is the measure of the aesthetic worth of experience. The character structure inherited from the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on self-discipline, delayed gratification, and restraint, is still relevant to the demands of the techno-economic structure; but it clashes sharply with the culture, where such bourgeois values have been completely rejected—in part, paradoxically, because of the workings of the capitalist economic system itself.

DISCRETIONARY SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

As a discipline, sociology is based on the assumption that variations in the behavior of persons or groups in the society are attributable to their class or other strategic position in the social structure, and that individuals so differentially placed will vary systematically in their interests, attitudes, and conduct on the basis of distinct social attributes: common age, sex, occupation, religion, urban-rural location, and so forth. The presumption is that these attributes cluster in specific ways—usually identified in social-class terms—so that voting behavior, buying habits, child-rearing, and the like vary systematically on a class or status basis and are predictable.

[2] See Max Weber, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*, ed. Don Martindale et al. (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958).

For the majority of the society, and for many aspects of social life (e.g., voting), this general proposition may still hold true. But it is increasingly evident that for a significant proportion of the population the relation of social position to cultural style—particularly if one thinks in such gross dimensions as working class, middle class, and upper class—no longer holds. The question of who will use drugs, engage in orgies and wife-swapping, become an open homosexual, use obscenity as a political style, or enjoy "happenings" and underground movies is not easily related to the "standard variables" of sociological discourse. Age and education may be more relevant discriminators; but given the expansion of mass higher education, even education alone is no longer an easy predictor of behavior. One finds many children of upper-middle-class families who joyfully embrace what they think is the "freedom" of working-class or black, lower-class life-styles, and others who do not. There is a significant leveling of patterns of child-training, which was one of the major indicators of different class styles in the past.

Just as in the economy the growth of what economists call *discretionary income*—income above that necessary for the fulfillment of basic needs—allowed individuals to choose many varied items to exemplify different consumption styles (swimming pools, boats, travel), so the expansion of higher education and the extension of a permissive social atmosphere has widened the scope of *discretionary social behavior*. The more idiosyncratic aspects of personal experience and life history—personality attributes, or somatic body-type constitution, positive or negative experience with parents, experience with peers—become increasingly more important than patterned social attributes in shaping a person's life-style. As the traditional social class structure dissolves, more and more individuals want to be identified not by their occupational base (in the Marxist sense), but by their cultural tastes and life-styles.

THE ARTIST MAKES THE AUDIENCE

A change has been taking place, as well, in the relation of artist to public. The familiar image, a product of nineteenth-century Romanticism, was that of a coterie of artists, engaged in difficult experimental work to which the smug middle-class audience responded with scorn and outrage. This was the fate of the Impressionist painters, who appeared first in the *Salon des Refusés* (1863) to

emphasize their own disgust with the regnant taste, and who had to wait 20 years for the *Salon des Indépendants* for the same freedom to exhibit. The avant-garde artist identified this rejection with freedom, and he depended on such tension with the audience to articulate his own work. This well-known pattern came to be regarded as a congenital condition of modern art. But as James Ackerman writes, "within the last decade [this pattern] was broken by one of history's most abrupt and radical changes in the relationship of art and its public . . . the new era became recognizable first in the ultimate reception of the work of the New York School of artists in the mid- and late 1950s." Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Robert Motherwell, David Smith, the men responsible for what Clement Greenberg called "abstract expressionism" (and Harold Rosenberg "action painting"), were preoccupied with problems of structure and medium—breaking away from the easel, using paint itself as a subject for art, involving the artist's own person in the painting—of a special and esoteric nature outside the experience of the layman. Professor Ackerman observes that "their art was so difficult to approach that even the majority of approving professional critics missed the mark and praised it for irrelevant reasons." In fact, the immediate response of an incredulous public was to call it a sham. But within half a decade the major figures in the school had been acclaimed, and their paintings dominated the museums and the galleries. Their conceptions of art now set the taste for the public.[3]

Perhaps the change in this case is not so abrupt as Professor Ackerman makes it seem. There had been earlier and similar changes in the role of "difficult" art in Paris decades earlier, when Picasso and Matisse began to shape public taste. But the general point stands. The middle-class audience, the wealthy buyer, no longer controls art. In painting, in film (perhaps less so in advanced music), the artist, and usually the avant-garde artist, now dominates the cultural scene. It is he who swiftly shapes the audience and the market, rather than being shaped by them.

This change is related, I believe, to the dissociation of social location and cultural style. Ackerman also writes:

[3] James Ackerman, "The Demise of the *Avant Garde*: Notes on the Sociology of Recent American Art," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (October 1969): 371–384, esp. 378.

If one's position in society implies no determinate base of judgment in areas outside one's competence, one has a choice between having no opinion or accepting the opinion of the expert, and the most available expert is the professional manufacturer of opinion. The altered response to the arts is, I believe, a product of public deference to museums, commercial galleries, and the news media.

Whether there is now a general habit of "trusting the experts" is debatable. In politics, there has been a notable populist reaction against the expert or technocrat. But the situation in art is different. Here we see, not the victory of the expert, but of "culture" itself—or more specifically of its predominant current, modernism. The culture of the past 100 years, that of the "modern movement," has triumphed over a society that in its social structure (economics, technology, and occupational bases) remains bourgeois. The culture has become detached and self-determining. Yet with all that, the culture (as exemplified in the modern movement) feels itself under attack—does not understand or accept its victory—and remains, as Lionel Trilling has called it, an "adversary culture."

"Any historian of the literature of the modern age," Trilling writes, "will take virtually for granted the adversary intention, the actually subversive intention, that characterizes modern writing—he will perceive its clear purpose of detaching the reader from the habits of thought and feeling that the larger culture imposes, of giving him a ground and a vantage point from which to judge and condemn, and perhaps revise, the culture that has produced him."[4]

The legend of modernism is that of the free creative spirit at war with the bourgeoisie. Whatever the truth of such a view when, say, Whistler was accused of having "flung a pot of paint in the public's face," in our time the idea is a caricature. Who in the world today, especially in the world of culture, defends the bourgeoisie? Yet in the domain of those who think themselves serious about culture, and of their widespread and trailing *epigoni*, the legend of the free creative spirit now at war, no longer merely with bourgeois society but with "civilization" or "repressive tolerance" or some other agency that curtails "freedom," still sustains an adversary culture.

The adversary culture has come to dominate the cultural order, and this is why the hierophants of the culture—the painters, the writers, the filmmakers—now dominate the audience, rather than vice versa. Indeed, the subscribers to this adversary culture are

[4] Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Viking, 1965), pp. xii–xiii.

sufficiently numerous to form a distinct cultural class. Compared to the society as a whole, the membership in this class is not large. No statistical estimates are possible, and the figure could vary from a few hundred thousand to a couple of million. But size alone is meaningless, for, compared to the past, three extraordinary changes are evident.

First, there has been an evident change in scale. Even though tiny by comparison with the numbers of the total society, the present cultural class is numerous enough for these individuals no longer to be outcasts, or a bohemian enclave, in the society. They function institutionally as a group, bound by a consciousness of kind.

Second, while minority life-styles and cultures have often conflicted with those of the majority, what is striking today is that the majority has no intellectually respectable culture of its own—no major figures in literature, painting, or poetry—to counterpose to the adversary culture. In this sense, bourgeois culture has been shattered.

Third, and perhaps most important, the protagonists of the adversary culture, because of the historic subversive effect on traditional bourgeois values, substantially influence, if not dominate, the cultural establishments today: the publishing houses, museums, and galleries; the major news, picture, and cultural weeklies and monthlies; the theater, the cinema, and the universities.

Today, each new generation, starting off at the benchmarks attained by the adversary culture of its cultural parents, declares in sweeping fashion that the status quo represents backward conservatism or repression, so that, in a widening gyre, new and fresh assaults on the social structure are mounted.

The historic process I have been sketching has deep roots in the past. It has remarkable cultural drive and continuity. Much of that drive was obscured in the 1950s, essentially a decade of political conservatism and cultural bewilderment. Politically, this was a period of disillusionment. It witnessed the final rupture of the intellectuals from Stalinism, a shattering of the belief that the Soviet Union was "progressive" merely because it called itself socialist. A number of sociologists—Raymond Aron, Edward Shils, S. M. Lipset, and myself—thus came to view the 1950s as characterized by an "end of ideology." By this we meant that the older political ideas of the

radical movement had become exhausted and no longer had the power to compel allegiance or passion among the intelligentsia.[5]

Although there was a widespread disillusionment with the chiliastic promises of political radicalism, there was almost no positive viewpoint to take its place. The welfare state and the mixed economy were not the sort of goals that could capture the passions of the intelligentsia. Moreover, even if radical political hopes were momentarily shattered, the basic cultural stance remained the same: the rejection of bourgeois values. Indeed, the continuity of radicalism in the 1950s was possible not through politics but through the culture.

The experience of the 1940s had traumatized the intelligentsia of the 1950s, and the reflections on that experience determined its cultural concerns. The pervasive cultural theme of the era was the depersonalization of the individual and the atomization of society. World War II was horrible, of course. But war, even the mass bombing of cities, had been prefigured in the imagination, and, curiously, once something has been imagined, it loses some of its capacity to arouse complete indignation or fear. But concentration camps enfolding tens of millions, and death camps that processed millions of people like cattle through a slaughterhouse, had never been imagined.[6]

[5] I should point out that the analysis of the "end of ideology" did not assume that all social conflict had ended and that the intelligentsia would forswear the search for new ideologies. In fact, as I wrote in 1959, "The young intellectual is unhappy because the 'middle way' is for the middle-aged, not for him; it is without passion and is deadening. . . . In the search for a 'cause' there is a deep, desperate, almost pathetic anger." The argument was also made that new ideologies would arise as a source of radicalism and that these would be third-world ideologies, not the humanistic ones of nineteenth-century Western society. See *The End of Ideology* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960), pp. 373 et seq.

[6] The culture of the 1950s—the writers who were read and studied as exemplars of the contemporary spirit—reflected that incomprehension of totalitarian terror. The primary literary figure was Franz Kafka, whose novels and stories, written 30 years before, were found to have anticipated that dense bureaucratic world where justice could not be located and where the torture machine inflicted a horrible death on its victims. The writings of Kierkegaard were "discovered," perhaps because he counseled that no rational belief in ultimate meanings was possible, only the leap of faith. The neo-orthodox theology of Barth and Niebuhr was pessimistic about man's ability to transcend the sinfulness inherent in human pride. Simone Weil's essays dealt with the desperate search for grace. Camus scrutinized the moral paradoxes of political action. In the "theater of the absurd," Ionesco wrote plays like *The Chairs*, in which objects came to have a life of their own, as if the reified things of the world had actually drawn the spirit out of man and taken over his will. In the theater of silence, exemplified by Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the confusions of time and self were played out in a minimal rectangle of reality.

The point is relevant because there is a tendency to assume that because political conservatism dominated the period the serious culture was sterile. It was not.

The sociology of the 1950s was similarly concerned with the theory of the "mass society" and the rediscovery of "alienation." The theory of the mass society saw in the modern world the shattering of the traditional primary-group ties of family and local community; it saw traditional orders replaced by the "mass," in which each person lived in atomistic or anomic fashion. The rediscovery of alienation—and it was a *re*discovery, for though it has been associated with Marxism, the first generation of Marxist writers (Kautsky, Plekhanov, Lenin) had never used the term—became the primary theme of sociology. It had not been discussed before this time.[7]

On a more mundane level, the most popular book of sociology in the 1950s was David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, which described a major change in character structure in contemporary society—from an individual who was self-disciplined and self-motivated (in short, the historic bourgeois man) to one who was responsive primarily to his peer group and the pressure of "others." The very title of the book conveyed a judgment about the quality of the change. Similarly, the prototypical book of the emerging youth culture in the 1950s was J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, whose narrator, Holden Caulfield, epitomized a new kind of person, almost autistic in his inability to establish real connections in the world around him. The "beats," led by Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, harbingers of the youth movement of the 1960s, had already "dropped out" of the society.

In short, though political ideas had become exhausted—and political life was dominated by the threat of a foreign Communist foe—the cultural intelligentsia brooded on themes of despair, anomie, and alienation, themes which were to achieve a political incarnation in the 1960s.

[7] The contemporary rediscovery of alienation had a double source. On the one hand, it was associated, principally through the writings of Max Weber, with the sense of powerlessness that individuals felt in the society. Marx's emphasis on the worker "separated" from the means of production became, in Weber's perspective, one special case of a universal trend in which the modern soldier is separated from the means of violence, the scientist from the means of inquiry, and the civil servant from the means of administration. On the other hand, it was a theme put forward by Marxist revisionists, principally of the post-Stalinist generation, who hoped to find the sources of a new humanism in Marx's early writings, mainly the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*. In both instances, the theory of mass society and the theme of alienation, what was involved were critical cultural judgments on the quality of life in modern society.

THE MIDDLEBROWS OF THE 1950S

The affluence of middle-class America in the 1950s had its counterpart in a widespread "middlebrow" culture. The term itself reflected the new style of cultural criticism. In effect, culture, as it came to be conceived in the mass middle-class magazines, was not a discussion of serious works of art but a style of life that was organized and "consumed." Following suit, cultural criticism became a snob's game, played by advertising men, magazine illustrators, home decorators, women's magazine editors, and East Side homosexuals as one more fashionable amusement. The game of high-low-and-middle became *démodé* once the middlebrows caught on, to be quickly replaced by the new game of in-and-out. To be "in" meant to be well ahead of the crowd in fashion, or, perversely, to like what the vulgar masses liked (the New York *Daily News*, fast-paced, grade-B movie thrillers, popular songs) rather than what the pretentious middle classes liked. When in-and-out was replaced by "camp," the game was the same, except that fashion had become low fashion.

But even though cultural criticism became a game, it was also a serious problem for the intellectual, who was now invited to play a role in a culture he had always mocked. The writers for *Partisan Review* now came to dominate the *New Yorker*, a magazine that had been scorned in the 1930s and 1940s. Writers for *Commentary* were invited to write in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* section. Even the *Saturday Evening Post* began running articles in its "Adventures of the Mind" series by such writers and critics as Randall Jarrell and Clement Greenberg. Many of the radical writers felt that the mass media courted them in order to provide prestige for the mass magazines; and an even more sinister motive, the "taming" of radical criticism altogether, was suspected. What was not realized was that society itself had lost its cultural moorings.

The relationship of the serious critic and intellectual to the burgeoning mass culture of the 1950s became a discrete problem in itself and the source of many a lengthy essay and symposium. The fundamental response of the radical intellectual was a wide-ranging attack on middle-class culture. For the serious critic, the real enemy, the worst kitsch, was not the vast sea of trash but middlebrow culture; or, as Dwight Macdonald labeled it, "Midcult." In "Mass-

cult," Macdonald wrote, "The trick is plain—to please the crowd by any means. But Midcult has it both ways: it pretends to respect the standards of High Culture while in fact it waters them down and vulgarizes them."[8]

Hannah Arendt, a thoughtful and disquieting social critic, took the classical argument one step further and blended with it a historical-Marxist analysis. She argued that bourgeois "society"—she here means the relatively homogeneous community of educated and cultivated persons—had always treated culture as a commodity and had gained snob values from its exchange; there had always existed a certain tension between culture (i.e., the producers of art) and society (which consumed it).[9] But for her there were two crucial differences between the past and the present. In the old days, individualism flourished or was made possible through an escape *from* society, often into rebel or bohemian worlds. ("A good part of the despair of individuals under conditions of mass society is due to the fact that these avenues of escape are, of course, closed as soon as society has incorporated all the strata of the population.") Moreover, though "society" in the past coveted culture largely for its snob appeal, it did not *consume* culture, even if it abused or devalued it and turned "cultural things into social commodities." Mass society, "on the contrary, wants not culture, but entertainment, and the wares offered by the entertainment industry are indeed consumed by society just as are any other consumer goods."

In sum, though in the 1950s there was a burning out of the radical political will, this radical will—the distancing of self from the society—was maintained in the culture and through cultural criticism. When new political impulses arose in the 1960s, radicalism found the values of the adversary culture—the attack on society through such themes as mass society, anomie, alienation—as the Ariadne's thread which allowed it to emerge into a new radical period.

[8] Macdonald's idiom itself needs explaining. In the early 1930s, the "tough" phase of American radicalism, a Bolshevik habit of compressing words—*politburo* for the political bureau of the Party, or *orgburo* for the organization bureau—caught on. Thus, the vogue of proletarian literature was known as *proletcult*. Macdonald adopted this jargon for his own sardonic style; see *Masscult & Midcult*, Partisan Review Series, no. 4, 1961.

[9] Hannah Arendt, "Society and Culture," in *Culture for the Millions?*, ed. Norman Jacobs (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961), pp. 43–53. The argument is elaborated in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1961), pp. 197–226.

ENTER MODERNISM

We come to an extraordinary sociological puzzle. A single cultural temper, mood, movement—its very amorphousness or protean nature precludes a single encapsulating term—has persisted for more than a century and a quarter, providing renewed and sustained attacks on the social structure. The most inclusive term for this cultural temper is *modernism*: the self-willed effort of a style and sensibility to remain in the forefront of "advancing consciousness." What is the nature, then, of this sentiment that, antedating even Marxism, has been attacking bourgeois society and, without the kind of sustained organization a political movement possesses, has been able to sustain such a program? Why did it so capture the artistic imagination that it could preserve itself through generations and have fresh appeal for each new cohort of the intelligentsia?

Modernism pervades all the arts. Yet if one looks at particular examples, there seems to be no single unifying principle. It includes the new syntax of Mallarmé, the dislocation of forms in cubism, the stream of consciousness in Virginia Woolf and Joyce, the atonality of Berg. Each of these, as it first appeared, was "difficult" to understand. In fact, as a number of writers have suggested, original difficulty is a sign of modernism. It is willfully opaque, works with unfamiliar forms, is self-consciously experimental, and seeks deliberately to disturb the audience—to shock it, shake it up, even to transform it as if in a religious conversion. This very difficulty is clearly one source of its appeal to initiates, for esoteric knowledge, like the special formula of the magi or the hermeticism of ancient priests, gives one an enhanced sense of power over the vulgar and the unenlightened.

Irving Howe has suggested that the modern must be defined in terms of what it is not, as an "inclusive negative." Modernity, he writes, "consists in a revolt against the prevalent style, *an unyielding rage against* the official order." But this very condition, as Howe points out, creates a dilemma: "Modernism must always struggle but never quite triumph, and then, after a time, must struggle in order not to triumph."[10] This is true, I think, and explains its continuing adversary stance. But it does not explain the "unyielding

[10] Irving Howe, ed., *The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), p. 13. My italics.

rage," or the need to negate every prevalent style including, in the end, its own.

Modernism, seen as a whole, exhibits a striking parallel to a common assumption of the social science of the late nineteenth century. For Marx, Freud, and Pareto, the irrationality of the substructures of reality belied the surface rationality of appearances. For Marx, beneath the exchange process was the anarchy of the market; for Freud, beneath the tight reins of ego was the limitless unconscious, driven by instinct; for Pareto, under the forms of logic were the residues of irrational sentiment and emotion. Modernism, too, insists on the meaninglessness of appearance and seeks to uncover the substructure of the imagination. This expresses itself in two ways. One, stylistically, is an attempt to eclipse "distance"—psychic distance, social distance, and aesthetic distance—and insist on the absolute presentness, the simultaneity and immediacy, of experience. The other, thematically, is the insistence on the absolute imperiousness of the self, of man as the "self-infinitizing" creature who is impelled to search for the beyond.

Modernism is a response to two social changes in the nineteenth century, one on the level of sense perception of the social environment, the other of consciousness about the self. In the everyday world of sense impressions, there was a disorientation of the sense of space and time, derived from the new awareness of motion and speed, light, and sound that came from the revolution in communication and transport. The crisis in self-consciousness arose from the loss of religious certitude, of belief in an afterlife, in heaven or hell, and from the new consciousness of an immutable boundary beyond life and the nothingness of death. In effect, these were two new ways of experiencing the world, and often the artist himself was never wholly aware of the disorientation in the social environment which had shaken up the world and made it seem as if there were only pieces. Yet he had to reassemble these pieces in a new way.

MODERNISM: SYNTAX AND FORM

For the second half of the nineteenth century, then, an ordered world was a chimera. What was suddenly real, in molding the sense perception of an environment, was movement and flux. A radical change in the nature of aesthetic perception had suddenly occurred. If one asks, in aesthetic terms, how modern man differs from

the Greeks in experiencing sensations or emotions, the answer would have to do not with the basic human feelings, such as friendship, love, fear, cruelty, and aggression, which are common to all ages, but with the temporal-spatial dislocation of motion and height. In the nineteenth century, for the first time in history, men could travel faster than by foot or on an animal, and gain a different sense of changing landscape, a succession of images, the blur of motion, which he had never before experienced. Or one could, first in a balloon and later in a plane, rise thousands of feet in the sky and see from the air topographical patterns that the ancients had never known.

What was true of the physical world was equally true of the social. With the growth of numbers and density in the cities, there was greater interaction among people, a syncretism of experience that provided a sudden openness to new styles of life and to a geographical and social mobility that had never been available before. In the canvases of art, the subjects were no longer the mythological creatures of the past, or the stillness of nature, but the promenade and the *plage*, the bustle of city life, and the brilliance of night life in an urban environment transformed by electric light. It is this response to movement, space, and change which provided the new syntax of art and the dislocation of traditional forms.

In the classical pre-modern view, art was essentially contemplative; the viewer or spectator held "power" over the experience by keeping his aesthetic distance from it. In modernism, the intention is to "overwhelm" the spectator so that the art product itself—through the foreshortening of perspective in painting, or the "sprung rhythm" of a Gerard Manley Hopkins in poetry—imposes itself on the spectator in its own terms. In modernism, genre becomes an archaic conception whose distinctions are ignored in the flux of experience.

It is this modernist effort to capture the flux which gives meaning, I think, to Virginia Woolf's gnomic remark, "On or about December 1910, human nature changed." As Irving Howe comments, in this hyperbole there is a "frightening discontinuity between the traditional past and the shaken present . . . the line of history has been bent, perhaps broken."

In making this break, in the emphasis on the absolute present, both artist and spectator are forced to make and remake themselves anew each moment. With the repudiation of unbroken continuity,

and the belief that the future is in the present, one loses the classical sense of wholeness or completeness. The fragment or the part replaces the whole. One finds a new aesthetic in the broken torso, the isolated hand, the primitive grimace, the figure cut by the frame, rather than in the bounded whole. And in the mingling and jostling of styles, the very idea of genre and boundary, of principles appropriate to a genre, is abandoned. One might say, in fact, that aesthetic disaster itself becomes an aesthetic.

MODERNISM: NOTHINGNESS AND SELF

The sense of movement and change—the upheaval in the mode of confronting the world—established vivid new conventions and forms by which people judged their sense perceptions and experience. But more subtly, the awareness of change prompted a deeper crisis in the human spirit, the fear of nothingness. The decline of religion, and especially of belief in an immortal soul, provoked a momentous break with the centuries-old conception of an unbridgeable chasm between the human and the divine. Men now sought to cross that gulf and, as Faust, the first modern, put it, attain "godlike knowledge," to "prove in man the stature of a god" or else confess his "kinship with the worm."

As a consequence of this superhuman effort, in the nineteenth century the sense of the self came to the fore. The individual was considered unique, with singular aspirations, and life assumed a greater sanctity and preciousness. The enhancement of the single life became a value for its own sake. Economic meliorism, antislavery sentiment, women's rights, and the end of child labor and cruel punishments became the social issues of the day. But in a deeper metaphysical sense, this spiritual enterprise became the basis of the idea that men could go beyond necessity, that they would no longer be constrained by nature but could arrive, in Hegel's phrase, at the end of history, in the kingdom of perfect freedom. The "unhappy consciousness" of which Hegel wrote is the realization of a divine power and status that man must strive to achieve. The deepest nature of modern man, the secret of his soul as revealed by the modern metaphysic, is that he seeks to reach out beyond himself; knowing that negativity—death—is finite, he refuses to accept it. Behind the chiliasm of modern man is the megalomania of self-infinitization. In consequence, the modern hubris is

the refusal to accept limits, the insistence on continually reaching out; and the modern world proposes a destiny that is always *beyond*: beyond morality, beyond tragedy, beyond culture.[11]

THE TRIUMPH OF THE WILL

In Western consciousness there has always been tension between the rational and the nonrational, between reason and will, between reason and instinct, as the driving forces of man. Whatever the specific distinctions, rational judgment was traditionally thought to be superior in the hierarchy, and this order dominated Western culture for almost two millennia.

Modernism dirempts this hierarchy. It is the triumph of the spirited, of the will. In Hobbes and Rousseau, intelligence is a slave to appetite and the passions. In Hegel, the will is the necessary component of knowing. In Nietzsche, the will is fused with the aesthetic mode, in which knowledge derives most directly ("apprehended, not ascertained," as he says in the first line of *The Birth of Tragedy*) from intoxication and dream. And if the aesthetic experience alone is to justify life, then morality is suspended and desire has no limit. Anything is possible in this quest of the self to explore its relation to sensibility.

The emphasis of modernism is on the present or on the future, but never on the past. Yet when one is cut off from the past, one cannot escape the final sense of nothingness that the future then holds. Faith is no longer possible, and art or nature or impulse can erase the self only momentarily in the intoxication or frenzy of the Dionysian act. But intoxication always passes, and there is the cold morning after, which arrives inexorably with the break of day. This

[11] Compare these powerful statements by two contemporary writers. In Malraux's *Man's Fate* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 228, Old Gisors describes to Ferral man and his desires: "To be more than a man in a world of men. To escape man's fate. [To be] not powerful: all powerful. The visionary disease, of which the will to power is only the intellectual justification, is the will to godhead: every man dreams of being god."

In Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (New York: Viking, 1970), pp. 33–34, old Sammler reflects: "You wondered whether . . . the worst enemies of civilization might not prove to be its petted intellectuals who attacked it at its weakest moments —attacked it in the name of reason and in the name of irrationality, in the name of visceral depth, in the name of sex, in the name of perfect and instant freedom. For what it amounted to was limitless demand—insatiability, refusal of the doomed creature (death being sure and final) to go away from this world unsatisfied. A full bill of demand and complaint was therefore presented by each individual. Non-negotiable. Recognizing no scarcity in any human department."

inescapable eschatological anxiety leads inevitably to the feeling—the black thread of modernist thought—that each person's own life is at the end of time. The sense of an ending, the feeling that one is living in an apocalyptic age, is, as Frank Kermode has observed, "as endemic to what we call modernism as apocalyptic utopianism is to political revolution. . . . Its recurrence is a feature of our cultural tradition."[12]

In discussing modernism, the categories of "left" and "right" make little sense. Modernism, as Thomas Mann phrased it, cultivates "a sympathy for the abyss." Nietzsche, Yeats, Pound, and Wyndham Lewis were politically to the right. Gide was a pagan, Malraux a revolutionist. But whatever the political stripe, the modern movement has been united by rage against the social order as the first cause, and a belief in the apocalypse as the final cause. It is this trajectory which provides the permanent appeal and the permanent radicalism of that movement.

Traditional modernism sought to substitute for religion or morality an aesthetic justification of life; to create a work of art, to be a work of art—this alone provided meaning in man's effort to transcend himself. But in going back to art, as is evident in Nietzsche, the very search for the roots of self moves the quest of modernism from art to psychology: from the product to the producer, from the object to the psyche.

In the 1960s a powerful current of post-modernism developed which carried the logic of modernism to its farthest reaches. In the theoretical writings of Norman O. Brown and Michel Foucault, in the novels of William Burroughs, Jean Genet and, up to a point, Norman Mailer, and in the porno-pop culture that is now all about us, one sees a logical culmination of modernist intentions. They are, as Diana Trilling put it, "the adventurers beyond consciousness."

There are several dimensions to the post-modernist mood. Thus, against the aesthetic justification for life, post-modernism has completely substituted the instinctual. Impulse and pleasure alone are real and life-affirming; all else is neurosis and death. Moreover, traditional modernism, no matter how daring, played out its impulses in the imagination, within the constraints of art. Whether demonic or murderous, the fantasies were expressed through the ordering principle of aesthetic form. Art, therefore, even though

[12] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 98.

subversive of society, still ranged itself on the side of order and, implicitly, of a rationality of form, if not of content. Post-modernism overflows the vessels of art. It tears down the boundaries and insists that *acting out*, rather than making distinctions, is the way to gain knowledge. The "happening" and the "environment," the "street" and the "scene," are the proper arena not for art but for life.

Extraordinarily, none of this is in itself completely new. There has always been an esoteric tradition within all Western religion which has sanctioned participation in secret rites of release, debauch, and total freedom for those, the "gnostics," who have been initiated into secret sects through secret knowledge. Gnosticism, in its intellectual formulations, has provided the justification for the attacks on the restraints that every society has imposed on its members. Yet in the past this knowledge was kept hermetic, its members were secretive. What is most striking about post-modernism is that what was once maintained as esoteric is now proclaimed as ideology, and what was once the property of an aristocracy of the spirit is now turned into the democratic property of the mass. The gnostic mode has always beat against the historic, psychological taboos of civilization. That assault has now been made the platform of a widespread cultural movement.

The post-modern temper, looked at as a set of loosely associated doctrines, itself goes in two directions. One is philosophical, a kind of negative Hegelianism. Michel Foucault sees man as a short-lived historical incarnation, "a trace on the sand," to be washed away by the waves. The "ruined and pest-ridden cities of man called 'soul' and 'being' will be de-constructed." It is no longer the decline of the West, but the end of all civilization. Much of this is modish, a play of words pushing a thought to an absurd logicality. Like the angry playfulness of Dada or surrealism, it will probably be remembered, if at all, as a footnote to cultural history.

But the post-modern temper, moving in another direction, does carry a much more significant implication. It provides the psychological spearhead for an onslaught on the values and motivational patterns of "ordinary" behavior, in the name of liberation, eroticism, freedom of impulse, and the like. It is this, dressed up in more popular form, which is the importance of the post-modernist doctrine. For it means that a crisis of middle-class values is at hand.

DEATH OF THE BOURGEOIS WORLD-VIEW

The bourgeois world-view—rationalistic, matter-of-fact, pragmatic—had by the mid-nineteenth century come to dominate not only the techno-economic structure but also the culture, especially the religious order and the educational system which instilled "appropriate" motivation in the child. It reigned triumphant everywhere, opposed only in the realm of culture by those who disdained its unheroic and anti-tragic mood, as well as its orderly attitude toward time.

As we have seen, the last 100 years have witnessed an effort by anti-bourgeois culture to achieve autonomy from the social structure, first by denying bourgeois values in the realm of art, and second by carving out enclaves where the bohemian and the avant-gardist could live a contrary style of life. By the turn of the century the avant-garde had succeeded in establishing a "life-space" of its own, and by 1910–1930 it was on the offensive against traditional culture.

In both doctrine and life-style, the anti-bourgeois won out. This triumph meant that in the culture antinomianism and anti-institutionalism ruled. In the realm of art, on the level of aesthetic doctrine, few opposed the idea of boundless experiment, of unfettered freedom, of unconstrained sensibility, of impulse being superior to order, of the imagination being immune to merely rational criticism. There is no longer an avant-garde, because no one in our post-modern culture is on the side of order or tradition. There exists only a desire for the new—or boredom with the old and the new.

The traditional bourgeois organization of life—its rationalism and sobriety—now has few defenders in the culture, nor does it have any established system of cultural meanings or stylistic forms with any intellectual or cultural respectability. To assume, as some social critics do, that the technocratic mentality dominates the cultural order is to fly in the face of every bit of evidence at hand. What we have today is a radical disjunction of culture and social structure, and it is such disjunctions which historically have paved the way for more direct social revolutions.

In two fundamental ways that new revolution has already begun. First, the autonomy of culture, achieved in art, now begins to pass over into the arena of life. The post-modernist temper demands that

what was previously played out in fantasy and imagination must be acted out in life as well. There is no distinction between art and life. Anything permitted in art is permitted in life as well.

Second, the life-style once practiced by a small *cénacle*, whether the cool life mask of a Baudelaire or the hallucinatory rage of a Rimbaud, is now copied by the "many" (a minority in the society, to be sure, but nonetheless large in number) and dominates the cultural scene. This change of scale gave the culture of the 1960s its special surge, coupled with the fact that a bohemian life-style once limited to a tiny elite is now acted out on the giant screen of the mass media.

The combination of these two changes adds up to the renewal of the onslaught by the "culture" against the "social structure." When such attacks were launched before—say, André Breton's surrealist proposal in the early 1930s that the towers of Notre Dame be replaced by an enormous glass cruet, one of the bottles filled with blood, the other with sperm, the church itself becoming a sexual school for virgins—they were understood as heavy-handed japes, perpetrated by the licensed "fools" of society. But the rise of a hip-drug-rock culture on the popular level (and the "new sensibility" of black-mass humor and violence in the arena of culture) undermines the social structure itself by striking at the motivational and psychic-reward system which has sustained it. In this sense, the culture of the 1960s had a new and perhaps distinctive historic meaning, as an end, and as a beginning.

II

FROM THE PROTESTANT ETHIC TO THE PSYCHEDELIC BAZAAR

Changes in cultural ideas have an immanence and autonomy because they develop from an internal logic at work within a cultural tradition. In this sense, new ideas and forms derive from a kind of dialogue with, or rebellion against, previous ideas and forms. But changes in cultural practices and life-styles necessarily interact

with social structure, since works of art, decoration, records, films, and plays are bought and sold in the market. The market is where social structure and culture cross. Changes in culture as a whole, particularly the emergence of new life-styles, are made possible not only by changes in sensibility, but also by shifts in the social structure itself. One can see this most readily, in American society, in the development of new buying habits in a high consumption economy and the resultant erosion of the Protestant ethic and the Puritan temper, the two codes which sustained the traditional value system of American bourgeois society. It is the breakup of this ethic and temper, owing as much to changes in social structure as to changes in the culture, that has undercut the beliefs and legitimations that sanctioned work and reward in American society. It is this transformation and the lack of any rooted new ethic that are responsible, in good part, for the sense of disorientation and dismay that marks the public mood today. What I propose to do here is to take my general argument about modernism and bourgeois society and trace out the effects more specifically in American society, which has been the exemplar of the bourgeois mode.

THE SMALL-TOWN LIFE

The Protestant ethic and the Puritan temper were codes that emphasized work, sobriety, frugality, sexual restraint, and a forbidding attitude toward life. They defined the nature of moral conduct and social respectability. The post-modernist culture of the 1960s has been interpreted, because it calls itself a "counter-culture," as defying the Protestant ethic, heralding the end of Puritanism, and mounting a final attack on bourgeois values. This is too facile. The Protestant ethic and the Puritan temper, as social facts, were eroded long ago, and they linger on as pale ideologies, used more by moralists to admonish and by sociologists to mythologize than as behavioral realities. The breakup of the traditional bourgeois value system, in fact, was brought about by the bourgeois economic system—by the free market, to be precise. This is the source of the contradiction of capitalism in American life.

The Protestant ethic and the Puritan temper in the United States were the world-view of an agrarian, small-town, mercantile and artisan way of life. In the United States, as Page Smith reminds us, "if we except the family and the church, the basic form of social organization up to the early decades of the twentieth century was

the small town."[13] The life and character of American society were shaped by the small town, and its religions. They were necessary to enforce strong codes of community sanctions in a hostile environment; they provided meaning and justification for work and restraint in subsistence economies.

If the core values of American society are summed up by the terms "Puritan temper" and "Protestant ethic," they are represented by the two men who stand as exemplars of the early American spirit, Jonathan Edwards as the Puritan and Benjamin Franklin as the Protestant. The thought and homiletics of these two men laid down the specific virtues and maxims of the American character.

As Van Wyck Brooks wrote in *America's Coming-of-Age*:

> For three generations the prevailing American character was compact in one type, the man of action who was also the man of God. Not until the eighteenth century did the rift appear and with it the essential distinction between "Highbrow" and "Lowbrow." It appeared in the two philosophers, Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, who shared the eighteenth century between them. In their singular purity of type and in the apparent incompatibility of their aims they determined the American character as a racial fact, and after them the Revolution became inevitable. Channing, Lincoln, Emerson, Whitman, Grant, Webster, Garrison, Edison, Rockefeller, Mrs. Eddy, Woodrow Wilson are all, in one way or another, permutations and combinations of these two grand progenitors of the American mind.[14]

Without doubt, as Brooks and, following him, Perry Miller have insisted, the thought of the Puritan theocracy is the great influential fact in the history of the American mind. In the mid-eighteenth century, America's leading intellectuals were clergymen and their thoughts were about theology. For more than 100 years, their thought dominated all speculative philosophy in America. And even when the theology was gone, the deep sense of guilt, especially about sexual conduct, which had been instilled in the American character lay imprinted and almost ineradicable for another century.

"It is notorious," George Santayana observed more than 50 years ago, "how metaphysical was the passion that drove the Puritans to these shores; they went there in the hope of living more perfectly in

[13] Page Smith, *As a City upon a Hill* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p.vii.
[14] Van Wyck Brooks, *America's Coming-of-Age* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1958; orig. ed., 1915), p. 5.

the spirit."[15] The core of the Puritan belief was hostility to civilization. The society of the time was corrupt, and one had to return to the primitive simplicity of the original church, which drew its will directly from God rather than from man-made institutions.

The Puritans had signed a covenant which committed each man to an exemplary life. But no person—or doctrine—can live at a fever pitch of intensity for prolonged periods, especially when it means maintaining a life of stern discipline over the springs of impulse. Calvinism, even in the early American colonies, was constantly being nibbled away as new doctrines, such as Arminianism (the basis of Wesley's Methodism), tried to replace absolute predestination with conditional election. What Jonathan Edwards did was to provide a renewal of the Absolute and a psychological mechanism whereby the individual could scrutinize himself and hold himself to account. In *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* (1758), Edwards attacked those who would relax Calvinism. He argued that depravity is inevitable because the identity of consciousness makes all men one with Adam. He believed in a privileged elect, not of those bearing the outward sign of work but of those who experienced saving grace by some inner illumination, by a transforming experience.

If Jonathan Edwards was the aesthetic and intuitive Puritan, Benjamin Franklin was the pragmatic and utilitarian Protestant. He was a practical man who looked at the world with an unblinking eye, intent mainly on "getting ahead" by frugality, industry, and native shrewdness. Franklin's life exemplified that fundamental American characteristic, self-improvement. Trying to imitate the manner of Addison's *Spectator*, Franklin wrote his own paragraphs, compared them with his mentor, and rewrote them, thus acquiring a vocabulary and fashioning a style of his own. Doggedly, he taught himself French, Italian, Spanish, and Latin. To relieve the "itch" of youthful passions, he entered into a common-law union with his landlady's daughter and had two children by her.

The key word in Franklin's vocabulary was "useful." His one book, the *Autobiography*, was begun as something that might be useful to his son; that purpose served, the book was never finished. He invented a stove, founded a hospital, paved the streets, estab-

[15] George Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States* (New York: Braziller, 1955; orig. ed., 1920), p. 7.

lished a city police force, for all these were useful projects. He believed it was useful to believe in God, for God rewards virtue and punishes vice. In *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1732–1757), Franklin pilfered the world's store of aphorisms and adapted them as homilies for the poor. "As Poor Richard says" became a phrase that gave weight to all the right virtues. There were, Franklin said, 13 useful virtues: temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquillity, chastity, and humility. There is perhaps no better inventory of the American creed. Franklin wrote that he gave to each a week's strict attention, setting down in a notebook the measure of daily success achieved in its practice. And thus he went through "a course complete in thirteen weeks and four courses a year."[16]

Yet all this was partly cunning, and perhaps even deceit. While Franklin was thrifty and industrious, his success, like that of many a good Yankee, came from his capacity to make influential friends, an uncanny ability to advertise himself, and the charm and wit reflected in his person and his writing. (Even the "itch" proved renewable, for he sired two more illegitimate children.) He amassed a modest fortune, retired to pursue his interest in natural philosophy and electricity, and for six years Franklin used his leisure for disinterested study before being drawn into public life.

Two images have come down to us as the essence of the American character: the piety and torment of Jonathan Edwards, obsessed with human depravity, and the practicality and expedience of Benjamin Franklin, oriented to a world of possibility and gain. Again, it is Van Wyck Brooks who best portrayed this dualism, writing almost 60 years ago:

> So it is that from the beginning we find two main currents in the American mind running side by side but rarely mingling—a current of overtones and a current of undertones—and both equally unsocial: on the one hand, the transcendental current, originating in the piety of the Puritans, becoming a philosophy in Jonathan Edwards, passing through

[16] In his magisterial work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber sees Franklin as the embodiment of both. He cites his "sermons," as he calls them (". . . Time is money . . . Remember that credit is money. If a man lets his money lie in my hands after it is done, he gives me the interest . . ."), as marking the characteristic ethos of the "new man." Interestingly, Weber cites Franklin more often than he cites Luther, Calvin, Baxter, Bailey, or any of the other Puritan divines to describe the lineaments of the new ethic. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1930).

> Emerson, producing the fastidious refinement and aloofness of the chief American writers, and resulting in the final unreality of most contemporary American culture; and on the other hand, the current of catchpenny opportunism, originating in the practical shifts of Puritan life, becoming a philosophy in Franklin, passing through the American humorists and resulting in the atmosphere of our contemporary business life. . . .[17]

Whatever the irrational mystery at the foundation of Puritan theology, the community itself was ruled by a rational morality in which the moral law was a cold and righteous necessity. The core of Puritanism, once the theological husks are stripped away, was an intense moral zeal for the regulation of everyday conduct, not because the Puritans were harsh or prurient, but because they had founded their community as a covenant in which all individuals were in compact with each other. Given the external dangers and psychological strains of living in a closed world, the individual had to be concerned not only with his own behavior but with the community. One's own sins imperiled not just oneself but the group; by failing to observe the demands of the covenant, one could bring down God's wrath on the community.

The terms of the covenant committed each person to an exemplary life. But the very explicitness of the covenant—and the intimacy of village life—made everyone aware of the sins of temptation and the temptations of the flesh.[18] This made the members more self-scourging, and after being sinners—for there was a considerable amount of illicit sexual activity and a bucolic realism about sex—they were also great repenters. The ritual of confession was at the heart of Puritanism both in New England and, later, in the Midwestern revivalist communities which carried the moral scourging, if not the theology of Puritanism, across the country.

[17] Brooks, op. cit., p. 10.

[18] Perhaps the most powerful literary illustration of these illicit impulses is Hawthorne's short story "Young Goodman Brown," an oneiromantic vision of a black mass in the woods of Salem. In the story, Young Goodman Brown leaves his wife to go into the woods with the devil (who bears a serpent rod = phallus) to be baptized into the mysteries of sin. To his surprise and horror, he recognizes all the "good" people of the town joyfully moving toward the initiation ceremony, and recognizes, as well, his own young wife Faith. The ceremony and the music have the form of a religious liturgy, but the content is the flowers of evil. In the end it is never clear whether this was, for Goodman Brown, an actual event or a dream in which he was struggling with his own sinful impulses. But his life from then on was miserable. ("On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear . . .") He led a cankered and shriveled existence, and his dying hour was gloom. See "Young Goodman Brown," in *The Novels and Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York: Modern Library, 1937), pp. 1033–1042.

The towns that were established, first in the wilderness and then in the prairies, faced the problem of maintaining some social order among a population that often had a high proportion of social misfits and ne'er-do-wells. A town of a few hundred families could not jail those who deviated from its code, or drive them all out. A system of social control by gossip or shaming, by public confession and repentance, became the means of preventing large-scale breakdown in many communities. The idea of respectability—the distrust of lightheartedness, pleasure, drink—became so deeply ingrained that it persisted long after the initial material necessity was gone. If, in the beginning, work and riches were the signs of election, in the next century they became the badges of respectability.

PURITANISM AS AN IDEOLOGY

A value system is often diffuse and inchoate. When it is organized into a specific code and formulated as a set of religious dogmas, an explicit covenant, or an ideology, it becomes a means of mobilizing a community, of enforcing discipline or a set of social controls. Why an ideology lingers on and grows even stronger, long after its initial congruence with a social movement has disappeared, is a complicated instance of the sociology of domination: witness the hold of Mormon theology, which grew out of the antinomian doctrine of progressive revelation yet today functions as a source of conservatism; or the ideology of egalitarian Communism in the Soviet Union, half a century after the revolution, to justify the rise of a new class. In such situations, the ideology carries with it the authority and sanctity of the past; it has been instilled into the child and becomes the only conceptual map of the world as well as of the moral norms of conduct. Often, though the original rhetoric and symbols remain, the content has been subtly redefined, over time, to justify the established social codes and social controls that buttress the social power of the predominant class.

This is the *functional* component of an ideology. But there is a cognitive or intellectual component as well. It is in the character of ideologies not only to reflect or justify an underlying reality but, once launched, to take on a life of their own. A truly powerful ideology opens up a new vision of life to the imagination; once formulated, it remains part of the moral repertoire to be drawn

upon by intellectuals, theologians, or moralists as part of the range of possibilities open to mankind. Unlike economies or outmoded technologies, they do not disappear. These "moments of consciousness," as Hegel termed them, are renewable; they can be called upon and reformulated throughout the history of a civilization. Thus an ideology gnawed at, worried to the bone, argued about, dissected, and restated by an army of essayists, moralists, and intellectuals becomes a force in its own right.

This was the fate of Puritanism. Long after the harsh environment that fostered the initial ideology had been mitigated, the force of the belief remained. As Van Wyck Brooks once noted so pungently: "When the wine of the Puritans spilled, the aroma became transcendentalism, and the wine itself commercialism."

As an idea system, Puritanism underwent a transfiguration over a period of 200 years, from rigorous Calvinist predestination, through Edwards' aesthetic illuminations, into the transcendentalism of Emerson, and it finally dissolved into the "genteel tradition" after the Civil War. As a set of social practices, it was transmogrified into the social Darwinist justifications of rampant individualism and money-making (as Edmund Morgan has observed, Benjamin Franklin earned his own money; John D. Rockefeller thought his came from God) and the constricting codes of small-town life.

THE NEW LIBERATION

The major intellectual attack on Puritanism came in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century from the realm of culture and from the Young Intellectuals, a Harvard College group that included Walter Lippmann, Van Wyck Brooks, John Reed, and Harold Stearns.[19] *America's Coming-of-Age*, as Van Wyck Brooks entitled his book of 1915, meant that the culture had to confront the new reality and plunge into "actuality." American literature, Brooks argued, had stood remote from life, achieving its salvation by avoiding contact with actuality. Puritanism, he said, had become "a dry old Yankee stalk."

There were several facets to the attack on Puritanism. First, there was the desire, expressed principally by Brooks, for a more inclusive

[19] For a discussion of the Young Intellectuals, see Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence*, pt. 3 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959). For a characteristic voice, see Harold Stearns, *America and the Young Intellectual* (New York: Doran, 1921).

culture reflecting the America of the immigrant, the Negro, and the urban scene. If America was to come of age, its culture had to be more cosmopolitan and reflect the vitality of the society. And second was the demand for sexual freedom. "A Puritan," Harold Stearns wrote, "was a sexually inadequate person who, unable to enjoy himself, derived his only satisfaction from interfering with the enjoyment of others." The children of the upper middle class flocked into Greenwich Village to create a new Bohemia. "They had read Nietzsche and Marx and Freud and Krafft-Ebing," Brooks wrote in retrospect. "Many of them wished to try out new ideas of sex, which had hitherto been kept in the cellars of young people's minds. . . ."[20]

The exuberance of life was summed up in a series of catchwords. One of them was "New." There was the New Democracy, the New Nationalism, the New Freedom, the New Poetry, and even the *New Republic* (which was started in 1914). A second was *sex*. Even to use the word openly sent a *frisson* through the readers of the press. Margaret Sanger, in 1913, coined the term "birth control." Ellen Key, the Swedish feminist, argued that marriage should not be a matter of legal or economic compulsion. Emma Goldman, the anarchist, lectured on homosexuality, the "intermediate sex." Floyd Dell celebrated free love, and many of the Young Intellectuals lived in ostentatious unmarried monogamy. And a third catchword was *liberation*. Liberation, as the movement self-consciously called itself, was the wind blowing from Europe, a wind of modernism come to the American shore. In art it was the Fauves and cubism, shown principally in the Armory Show of 1913. In the theater it meant symbolism, suggestion and atmosphere, the acceptance of the nonrealist influence of Maeterlinck, Dunsany, and Synge. In literature there was a vogue for Shaw, Conrad, and Lawrence. But the greatest influence was in "philosophy," where the currents of irrationalism, vitalism, and instinct, refracted through Bergson and Freud, spread rapidly in vulgarized form.

The "favorite doctrine of the Rebellion," as Henry May has written, was that happiness would follow complete instinctual self-expression. A simpleminded Freudianism declared that most of the Puritan evil in the world was due to self-control, and the way to

[20] Van Wyck Brooks, *The Confident Years: 1885–1915* (New York: Dutton, 1952), p. 487. The phrase "cellars of young people's minds" came from Ernest Poole's novel *The Harbor*, describing Princeton life in the early 1900s.

freedom lay in the release of repressed sexual impulses. Henri Bergson's doctrine of vitalism, presented in a poetic prose (in two years, his *Creative Evolution* sold as many copies in America as it did in France in 15), became the basis for a popularized doctrine of the life force, a biological, purposive spirit which reanimated the universe. Syndicalism, which had become fashionable among left-wing intellectuals, was associated with the vitalism of Bergson through Georges Sorel, who was acclaimed as his philosophical disciple. Francis Grierson, whose work consisted of mystical and aphoristic essays ("a mixture of Carlyle and Elbert Hubbard"), was taken as a prophet of the age.[21]

The Young Intellectuals, in their very attack on Puritanism and a crabbed way of life, preached an ethic of hedonism, of pleasure and play—in short, a consumption ethic; yet, ironically—or is it not the trajectory of such "rebellion"—the consumption ethic was to be realized less than a decade later by a capitalism that, without self-consciousness, called itself (was it in faint echo of the "rebellion") the "new capitalism."

If the intellectual justifications of Puritanism had evaporated, its social practices gained new strength in the small towns precisely because of the fear of change. Change in this instance meant the rise of a new way of life—the life of the big cities, turbulent, cosmopolitan, and sinful. A definition of respectability was at stake, and this found its symbol in the idea of Temperance.

A style of life is justified by a set of values, regulated by institutions (church, school, family), and embodied in character structure. Where this style is expressed by a homogeneous set of persons, there exists what sociologists call a "status group." The style of life symbolized by the Temperance movement, though it developed later than Puritanism, had its source in the Protestant doctrines of industry, thrift, discipline, and sobriety; its institutional foundation in the Fundamentalist churches; and its character emphasis in the idea of restraint.

The norm of abstinence had become part of the public morality

[21] Grierson is forgotten today, but he was greatly admired by Mallarmé in France and hailed by Floyd Dell and Francis Hackett in the United States. Edwin Bjorkman's *Voices of Tomorrow* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1913), a rhapsodic account of the new ideas, placed Grierson along with Bergson and Maeterlinck as representative of the period's main tendency. A sketch of Grierson can be found in Brooks, *The Confident Years*, pp. 267–270.

of American society. It was a device for assimilating the immigrant, the poor, and the deviant into middle-class status, if not into middle-class economic fact. But by the end of the nineteenth century it was no longer voluntary; instead, it was the coercive weapon of a social group whose own style of life was no longer ascendant. For if the new urban groups would not willingly accept temperance as a way of life, then it would have to be imposed by law and made a matter of ceremonial deference to the values of the traditional middle class.

With the development of the Anti-Saloon League in 1896, the Temperance movement found a concentrated symbol for the cultural struggle of the traditional rural Protestant society against the emerging urban and industrial social system. The attack on the saloon allowed the Prohibition movement to bring together many diverse elements under one political banner. For the small-town native American Protestant, the saloon epitomized the social habits of the immigrant population. For the Progressive, the saloon was the source of the corruption he felt to be the bane of political life. For the Populist, it became the root of his antipathy to the debilitating effects of urban life.

In familiar pattern, morality turned into moralizing, and righteousness became self-righteousness. The affirmation and confidence of nineteenth-century life had soured into a constricted and crabbed fear of the future. As Richard Hofstadter has written: "Prohibition could be made an outlet for the troubles of every cramped libido. In an earlier day, anti-Catholicism had served as the pornography of the Puritan: the inhibited mind had wallowed in tales of errant priests and nuns. During the Prohibition movement, both prurience and fear were exploited by those who dwelt on the linkage of alcohol and sexual excess, or on the fear of insanity and racial degeneracy, even of the racial self-assertion of the Negro." If one could not convert the sinner, one could stamp out the sin—and the sinner as well. Prohibition was more than a matter of alcohol. It was the crux of character and a turning point in a way of life.

But something else was going on, and this was the transformation of the American social structure, and the end of small-town dominance of American life as a social fact. There was, first, the continuing demographic change, which resulted in the growth of urban centers and the shift in political weight. But more broadly, a consumption society was emerging, with its emphasis on spending and

material possessions, and it was undermining the traditional value system, with its emphasis on thrift, frugality, self-control, and impulse renunciation. Integral to both social changes was a technological revolution which, through the automobile, the motion picture, and the radio, broke down rural isolation and for the first time fused the country into a common culture and a national society. This social transformation was responsible for the end of Puritanism as a set of practices that could support the traditional value system.

If we retrace the social process, we can see that 200 years earlier, in the early eighteenth century, the social structure had been fused with a culture that sustained it. Gradually, that culture became attenuated, and by the beginning of the twentieth century, small-town Protestantism no longer had any effective cultural symbols or cultural modes that could provide a set of effective symbolic meanings, or defenses against attacks. An emerging new cultural system, based as it was on an urban middle class and new radical groups, was able in short order to launch so effective a criticism of the older culture that almost no one would try to defend it. To maintain its legitimacy, the status group embodying the traditional values resorted to political means of reaffirming its domination. But a status group can do this effectively only if its social base is congruent with the social structure. And the base of the Temperance groups, the old social foundation—rural small-town life based on agrarian values—was undermined by the new industrial transformations of the early twentieth century. Having staked their fate on enacting the old middle-class virtues into the law of the land, the Temperance groups found at the time of repeal that such norms had been repudiated as socially valid modes of behavior, and to that extent had lost much of their legitimacy. Thus, a change had first been effected in the culture, but it could only become effective when it was confirmed within the social structure itself.

THE TRANSPARENT LIFE

The cultural transformation of modern society is due, singularly, to the rise of mass consumption, or the diffusion of what were once considered luxuries to the middle and lower classes in society. In this process, past luxuries are constantly redefined as necessities, so that it eventually seems incredible that an ordinary object could ever have been considered out of the reach of an ordinary man. For

example, because of problems of temperature, homogeneity, and transparency, large windowpanes were once expensive luxuries and rare; yet after 1902, when the Frenchman Fourcault introduced a workable industrial means for manufacturing window glass by extrusion, they became commonplace items in city storefronts or country homes, creating a new range of display and vista.[22]

Mass consumption, which began in the 1920s, was made possible by revolutions in technology, principally the application of electrical energy to household tasks (washing machines, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, and the like), and by three social inventions: mass production on an assembly line, which made a cheap automobile possible; the development of marketing, which rationalized the art of identifying different kinds of buying groups and whetting consumer appetites; and the spread of installment buying, which, more than any other social device, broke down the old Protestant fear of debt. The concomitant revolutions in transportation and communications laid the basis for a national society and the beginnings of a common culture. Taken all together, mass consumption meant the acceptance, in the crucial area of life-style, of the idea of social change and personal transformation, and it gave legitimacy to those who would innovate and lead the way, in culture as well as in production.

The symbol of mass consumption—and the prime example of the way technology has revolutionized social habits—is, of course, the automobile. Frederick Lewis Allen has observed how hard it is for us today to realize how separate and distant communities were when they depended wholly on the railroad and horse-and-wagon for transportation. A town not near a railroad was really remote. For a farmer who lived five miles out of the county seat it was an event to take the family to town for a Saturday afternoon; a trip to a friend ten miles away was likely to be an all-day expedition, since the horse had to be rested and fed. Each small town, each farm, was dependent mainly on its own resources for amusement and company. Horizons were close, and individuals lived among familiar people and familiar things.

The automobile swept away many sanctions of the closed small-

[22] The illustration is taken from Jean Fourastie, *The Causes of Wealth* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1959), p. 127. Professor Fourastie's book, like Siegfried Giedeon's *Mechanization Takes Command* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), is a fascinating miscellany of examples of this process.

town society. The repressive threats of nineteenth-century morality, as Andrew Sinclair has observed, relied in large measure on the impossibility of escaping from the place, and consequences, of misbehavior. By the middle of the 1920s, as the Lynds observed in Middletown, boys and girls thought nothing of driving 20 miles to dance at a roadhouse, safe from the prying eyes of neighbors. The closed car became the *cabinet particulier* of the middle class, the place where adventurous young people shed their sexual inhibitions and broke the old taboos.[23]

The second major instrument of change in the closed small-town society was the motion picture. Movies are many things—a window on the world, a set of ready-made daydreams, fantasy and projection, escapism and omnipotence—and their emotional power is enormous. It is as a window on the world that the movies have served, in the first instance, to transform the culture. "Sex is one of the things Middletown has long been taught to fear," the Lynds observed when they revisited Middletown ten years later, and "its institutions . . . operate to keep the subject out of sight and out of mind as much as possible." Except in the movies, to which the youngsters flocked.

Adolescents not only enjoyed the movies but went to school there. They modeled themselves after movie stars, repeated movie jokes and gestures, learned the subtleties of behavior between the sexes, and thus developed a veneer of sophistication. And in their efforts to act out this sophistication, to resolve their baffled uncertainties and perplexities by outwardly confident action, the pattern was "not so much . . . the lives of their own cautious parents as . . . the alternative other worlds about them." Films glorified the cult of youth (girls wore bobbed hair and short skirts), and middle-aged men and women were advised "to make hay while the sun shines." The idea of "freedom" was exemplified by the legitimacy of the

[23] The Lynds quoted one Middle Western observer: "Why on earth do you need to study what's changing this country? . . . I can tell you what's happening in just four letters: A-U-T-O!" Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), p. 251. In 1890 a pony was the wildest dream of a Middletown boy. By 1923, "the 'horse culture' of Middletown had almost disappeared." The first automobile appeared there in 1900. By 1906 there were "probably 200 in the city and county." At the end of 1923 there were more than 6,200 cars, one for every six persons, or roughly two for every three families. As the Lynds observed: "Group-sanctioned values are disturbed by the inroads of the automobile upon the family budget. A case in point is the not uncommon practice of mortgaging a home to buy an automobile" (p. 254).

speakeasy and one's readiness to cut loose at wild parties. "The mockery of ethics, of the old 'inner goodness' of the film heroes and heroines," writes Lewis Jacobs, "was paralleled by the new regard for material things."

The automobile, the motion picture, and radio are technological in origin: advertising, planned obsolescence, and credit are all sociological innovations. David M. Potter has commented that it is as hopeless to understand a modern popular writer without understanding advertising as it would be to understand a medieval troubadour without understanding the cult of chivalry, or a nineteenth-century revivalist without understanding evangelical religion.

The extraordinary thing about advertising is its pervasiveness. What marks a great city if not its lighted signs? Passing over in an airplane one sees, through the refractions of the night sky, the clusters of red, orange, blue, and white signs shimmering like highly polished stones. In the centers of the great cities—Time Square, Piccadilly, the Champs-Elysées, the Ginza—people gather in the streets under the blinking neon signs to share in the vibrancy of the milling crowd. If one thinks about the social impact of advertising, its most immediate, yet usually unnoticed, consequence has been to transform the physical center of the city. In redoing the physical topography, replacing the old *duomos* or municipal halls or palace towers, advertising has placed a "burning brand" on the crest of our civilization. It is the mark of material goods, the exemplar of new styles of life, the herald of new values. As in fashion, advertising has emphasized glamour. A car becomes the sign of the "good life" well lived, and the appeal of glamour becomes pervasive. A consumption economy, one might say, finds its reality in appearances. What one displays, what one shows, is a sign of achievement. Getting ahead is no longer a matter of rising up a social ladder, as it was in the late nineteenth century, but of adopting a specific style of life—country club, artiness, travel, hobbies—which marks one as a member of a consumption community.

In a complex, multi-group, socially mobile society, advertising also takes on a number of new "mediating" functions. The United States was probably the first large-scale society in history to build cultural change into the society, and many status problems arose simply because of the bewildering rapidity of such change. Few societies, in fact, can absorb quick change. The major social institutions—family, church, educational system—were set up to transmit

established habits of the society. A society in rapid change inevitably produces confusions about appropriate modes of behavior, taste, and dress. A socially mobile person has no ready guide for acquiring new knowledge on how to live "better" than before, and his guides become the movies, television, and advertising. In this respect, advertising begins to play a more subtle role in changing habits than merely stimulating wants. The advertising in the women's magazines, the house-and-home periodicals, and sophisticated journals like the *New Yorker* was to teach people how to dress, furnish a home, buy the right wines—in short, the styles of life appropriate to the new statuses. Though at first the changes were primarily in manners, dress, taste, and food habits, sooner or later they began to affect more basic patterns: the structure of authority in the family, the role of children and young adults as independent consumers in the society, the pattern of morals, and the different meanings of achievement in the society.

All of this came about by gearing the society to change and the acceptance of cultural change, once mass consumption and a high standard of living were seen as the legitimate purpose of economic organization. Selling became the most striking activity of contemporary America. Against frugality, selling emphasized prodigality; against asceticism, the lavish display.

None of this would have been possible without that revolution in moral habit, the idea of installment selling. Although it had been practiced fitfully in the United States before World War I, installment selling had two stigmas. First, most installment sales were to the poor, who could not afford major expenditures; they paid weekly sums to a peddler who both sold the goods and made the weekly collection; installment selling was thus a sign of financial instability. Second, installment selling meant debt to the middle class, and going into debt was wrong and dangerous. As Micawber would say, it was a sign of living beyond one's means, and the result would be misery. Being moral meant being industrious and thrifty. If one wanted to buy something, one should save for it. The trick of installment selling was to avoid the word "debt" and emphasize the word "credit." Monthly charges were billed by mail, and the transactions were thus handled on a businesslike basis.

Saving—or abstinence—is the heart of the Protestant ethic. With Adam Smith's idea of parsimony or frugality, and Nassau Senior's idea of abstinence, it was firmly established that saving multiplied

future products and earned its own reward by interest. The denouement was the change in banking habits. For years, such was the grim specter of middle-class morality that people were afraid to be overdrawn at the bank, lest a check bounce. By the end of the 1960s, the banks were strenuously advertising the services of cash reserves that would allow a depositor to overdraw up to several thousand dollars (to be paid back in monthly installments). No one need be deterred from gratifying his impulse at an auction or a sale. The seduction of the consumer had become total.

Van Wyck Brooks once remarked about morality in Catholic countries that as long as heavenly virtues are upheld, mundane behavior may change as it will. In America, the old Protestant heavenly virtues are largely gone, and the mundane rewards have begun to run riot. The basic American value pattern emphasized the virtue of achievement, defined as doing and making, and a man displayed his character in the quality of his work. By the 1950s, the pattern of achievement remained, but it had been redefined to emphasize status and taste. The culture was no longer concerned with how to work and achieve, but with how to spend and enjoy. Despite some continuing use of the language of the Protestant ethic, the fact was that by the 1950s American culture had become primarily hedonistic, concerned with play, fun, display, and pleasure—and, typical of things in America, in a compulsive way.

The world of hedonism is the world of fashion, photography, advertising, television, travel. It is a world of make-believe in which one lives for expectations, for what will come rather than what is. And it must come without effort. It is no accident that the successful new magazine of the previous decade was called *Playboy* and that its success—a circulation of 6 million by 1970—is due largely to the fact that it encourages fantasies of male sexual prowess. If, as Max Lerner once wrote, sex is the last frontier in American life, then the achievement motive in a go-go society finds its acme in sex. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the cult of the Orgasm succeeded the cult of Mammon as the basic passion of American life.

Nothing epitomized the hedonism of the United States better than the State of California. A cover story in *Time*, called "California: A State of Excitement," opened:

> California is virtually a nation unto itself, but it holds a strange hope, a sense of excitement—and some terror—for Americans. As most of them see it, the good, godless, gregarious pursuit of pleasure is what California is all about. The citizens of lotusland seem forever to be lolling around swimming pools, sautéing in the sun, packing across the Sierra, frolicking nude on the beaches, getting taller each year, plucking money off the trees, romping around topless, tramping through the redwoods and—when they stop to catch their breath—preening themselves on-camera before the rest of an envious world. "I have seen the future," says the newly returned visitor from California, "and it plays."[24]

Fun morality, in consequence, displaces "goodness morality," which stressed interference with impulses. Not having fun is an occasion for self-examination: "What is wrong with me?" As Dr. Wolfenstein observes: "Whereas gratification of forbidden impulses traditionally aroused guilt, failure to have fun now lowers one's self-esteem."[25]

Fun morality centers, in most instances, on sex. And here the seduction of the consumer has become almost total. The most telltale illustration, I believe, was a double-page advertisement by Eastern Airlines in the *New York Times*, in 1973, saying: "Take the Bob and Carol, Ted and Alice, Phil and Anne Vacation." The blatant theme was a takeoff on *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice*, a sniggering film about the fumbling attempts of two friendly couples to engage in wife-swapping. Here was Eastern Airlines saying, in effect: "We will fly you down to the Caribbean. We will rent you a cabana. Fly now, pay later." Eastern does not tell you *what* you pay, but you can postpone the money (and forget the guilt) and take the Bob and Carol, Ted and Alice, and for further titillation another couple is added) Phil and Anne vacation. Compare this with Franklin's 13 useful virtues, which included temperance, frugality, tranquillity, and chastity. At the turn of the century, a church in the Midwest might have property on which a brothel was located. And one could then at least say: "Well, we are losing bodies, but we are earning money to save souls." Today, when one sells bodies, one is no longer also saving souls.

What this abandonment of Puritanism and the Protestant ethic does, of course, is to leave capitalism with no moral or transcendental ethic. It also emphasizes not only the disjunction between the norms of the culture and the norms of the social structure, but also an extraordinary contradiction within the social structure itself. On the one hand, the business corporation wants an individual to work hard, pursue a career, accept delayed gratification—to be, in the

[24] *Time*, November 7, 1969, p. 60.

[25] Martha Wolfenstein, "The Emergence of Fun Morality," in *Mass Leisure*, ed. Eric Larrabee and Rolf Meyersohn (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958), p. 86.

crude sense, an organization man. And yet, in its products and its advertisements, the corporation promotes pleasure, instant joy, relaxing and letting go. One is to be "straight" by day and a "swinger" by night. This is self-fulfillment and self-realization!

POP HEDONISM

What happened in the United States was that traditional morality was replaced by psychology, guilt by anxiety. A hedonistic age has its appropriate psychotherapies as well. If psychoanalysis emerged just before World War I to deal with the repressions of Puritanism, the hedonistic age has its counterpart in sensitivity training, encounter groups, "joy therapy," and similar techniques that have two characteristics essentially derived from a hedonistic mood: they are conducted almost exclusively in groups; and they try to "unblock" the individual by physical contact, by groping, touching, fondling, manipulating. Where the earlier intention of psychoanalysis was to enable the patient to achieve self-insight and thereby redirect his life—an aim inseparable from a moral context—the newer therapies are entirely instrumental and psychologistic; their aim is to "free" the person from inhibitions and restraints so that he or she can more easily express his impulses and feelings.

A hedonistic age also has its appropriate cultural style—pop. Pop art, according to the critic Lawrence Alloway, who gave the style its name, reflects the aesthetics of plenty. The iconography of pop art comes from the everyday world: household objects, images from the movies and the mass media (comic strips and billboards), food (hamburgers and Coca-Cola bottles), and clothing. The point about pop is that there is no tension in the paintings—only parody. In pop art one finds Alex Hay's five-foot enlargement of an ordinary mailing label, Roy Lichtenstein's giant composition notebook, Claes Oldenburg's large hamburger in vinyl; parodies of the objects, but always in good-natured fun. The aesthetics of pop, as Suzi Gablik writes, presupposes "the erosion of a previous established hierarchy of subject matter (Mondrian and Mickey Mouse are now equally relevant) and the expansion of art's frame of reference to include elements considered until now as outside its range, such as technology, kitsch, and humor. . . ."[26]

[26] "The Long Front of Culture," in *Pop Art Redefined*, ed. John Russell and Suzi Gablik (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 14. A capital document of the movement, we are told, is Richard Hamilton's letter of January 16, 1957, in which he wrote that pop art was "Popular (designed for a mass audience), Transient (short-term solution), Expendable (easily forgotten), Low-cost, Mass-produced, Young (aimed at Youth), Witty, Sexy, Gimmicky, Glamourous, Big Business. . . ."

And finally, a hedonistic age had its own appropriate prophet—Marshall McLuhan. A hedonistic age is a marketing age, defined by the fact that knowledge becomes coded in messages organized as formulas, slogans, and binary distinctions. By grasping the code, a person feels comfortable in understanding the complex world about him. McLuhan is the writer who not only has defined the hedonistic age in terms of such coding devices, but also has topped the trick by exemplifying in his own style the device of coding that age's own thoughts in a set of formulas appropriate to the time. The idea that the medium is the message (so that ideas are secondary or do not count); that some media are "hot," like radio (it excludes people), while others are "cool," like television (it requires involvement to complete the participation); that print culture is linear, while visual culture is simultaneous—all these distinctions are not meant to be used analytically, or tested by some empirical means; they are litanies to assuage a person's anxieties and enhance his sense of well-being within the new modes of communication. They are Turkish baths of the mind. All in all, Marshall McLuhan was an advertising man's dream, in more ways than one.

In the 1960s a new cultural style appeared. Call it psychedelic, or call it, as its own protagonists have, a "counter-culture." It announced a strident opposition to bourgeois values and to the traditional codes of American life. " 'The bourgeoisie,' " we were told, " 'is obsessed by greed; its sex life is insipid and prudish; its family patterns are debased; its slavish conformities of dress and grooming are degrading; its mercenary routinization of life is intolerable. . . .' "[27]

What is funny about such pronouncements is their polemical and ideological caricature of a set of codes that had been trampled long ago, beginning 60 years earlier, with the Young Intellectuals. Yet such a caricature was necessary to make the new counter-culture seem more daring and revolutionary than it was. The assault was an act of bravado, in order to emphasize a distinction that was not there. For while the new movement was extreme, it was neither

[27] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), p. 35.

daring nor revolutionary. In fact, is was simply an extension of the hedonism of the 1950s, and a democratization of the libertinism that had already been achieved by sections of the advanced upper classes long before. Just as the political radicalism of the 1960s followed the failure of political liberalism the decade before, so the psychedelic extremes—in sexuality, nudity, perversions, pot, and rock—and the counter-culture followed on the forced hedonism of the 1950s.

We are now in a position to sum up the process. The erosion of traditional American values took place on two levels. In the realm of culture and ideas, the withering attack on small-town life as constricting and banal was first organized in the 1910s by the Young Intellectuals as a self-consciously defined group, and this attack was sustained in the next decade in the journalistic criticism of H. L. Mencken and in the sketches and novels of Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis.

But a more fundamental transformation was occurring in the social structure itself: the change in the motivations and rewards of the economic system. The rising wealth of the plutocracy, becoming evident in the Gilded Age, meant that work and accumulation were no longer ends in themselves (though they were still crucial to a John D. Rockefeller or an Andrew Carnegie), but means to consumption and display. Status and its badges, not work and the election of God, became the mark of success.

This is a familiar process of social history with the rise of new classes, though in the past it was military predators whose scions went from spartan to sybaritic living. Yet such parvenu classes could distance themselves from the rest of society, and such social transformations often developed independently of changes in the lives of the classes below. But the real social revolution in modern society came in the 1920s, when the rise of mass production and high consumption began to transform the life of the middle class itself. In effect the Protestant ethic as a social reality and a life-style for the middle class was replaced by a materialistic hedonism, and the Puritan temper by a psychological eudaemonism. But bourgeois society, justified and propelled as it had been in its earliest energies by these older ethics, could not easily admit to the change. It promoted a hedonistic way of life furiously—one has only to look at the transformation of advertising in the 1920s—but could not jus-

tify it. It lacked a new religion or value system to replace the old, and the result was disjunction.

In one respect what we see here is an extraordinary historic change in human society. For thousands of years, the function of economics was to provide the daily necessities—the subsistence—of life. For various upper-class groups, economics has been the basis of status and a sumptuary style. But now, on a mass scale, economics had become geared to the demands of culture. Here, too, culture, not as expressive symbolism or moral meanings but as life-style, came to reign supreme.

The "new capitalism" (the phrase was first used in the 1920s) continued to demand a Protestant ethic in the area of production—that is, in the realm of work—but to stimulate a demand for pleasure and play in the area of consumption. The disjunction was bound to widen. The spread of urban life, with its variety of distractions and multiple stimuli; the new roles of women, created by the expansion of office jobs and the freer social and sexual contacts; the rise of a national culture through motion pictures and radio—all contributed to a loss of social authority on the part of the older value system.

The Puritan temper might be described most simply by the term "delayed gratification," and by restraint in gratification. It is, of course, the Malthusian injunction for prudence in a world of scarcity. But the claim of the American economic system was that it had introduced abundance, and the nature of abundance is to encourage prodigality rather than prudence. A higher standard of living, not work as an end in itself, then becomes the engine of change. The glorification of plenty, rather than the bending to niggardly nature, becomes the justification of the system. But all of this was highly incongruent with the theological and sociological foundations of nineteenth-century Protestantism, which was in turn the foundation of the American value system.

In the 1920s, and in the 1950s and 1960s, these incongruities were eschewed with the blithe assurance that there was a consensus in the society on the moral verity of material abundance. There was a vulgar effort in the crude boosterism of the 1920s (e.g., Bruce Barton's assertion that Jesus was the greatest salesman of all time.[28])

[28] Barton, an advertising man, was a founder of the agency popularly known as BBD&O (Batten, Barton, Durstine, and Osborn). His theme was expressed in the book *The Man Nobody Knows*, which was published in 1914 and became an

to create a moral apologia. And in the 1950s there was the sophisticated rhetoric in the Luce magazines about the secret of productivity and the "permanent revolution" of change that was the contribution of the American economic system to the coming prosperity of the world. The singular fact is that *Time*, like the *Reader's Digest*, was founded in the 1920s, and both magazines were the vehicles for the transformation of values (the one of the urban middle class, the other of the small-town lower middle class) into the life-styles of mid-twentieth-century America. The genius of Henry Luce—and it is the sociological quiddity that the *Ausländer* Luce, raised in China, not the United States, celebrates native values more than the native himself—was to take the traditional American values, the belief in God, in work, in achievement, and to translate these, through the idiom of the coming urban civilization, into the creed of American destiny ("the American century") on a world scale. He did this by fusing the nervous rhythms of the new expressive journalism, the language reflecting the new appearances, with the pace of urban life and the new hedonism. In this context, it is no accident that Luce's own magazine, his singular creation, was *Fortune*. (The impetus for *Time* had come from Luce's journalist colleague at Yale, Britton Hadden, the idea for *Life* from Daniel Longwell and other editors at *Time*.) American business was the dynamic agency tearing up small-town life and catapulting America into world economic dominance; and it was doing so within the language and cover of the Protestant ethic. The fact of transition is evident. The overt contradictions in the language and ideology—the lack of any coherent moral or philosophical doctrine—have only become manifest today.[29]

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immediate best-seller. As Frederick J. Hoffman portrays it: "The 'real Jesus' whom Mr. Barton purported to have uncovered from the biblical text had proved his skill as a business organizer by having brought twelve obscure men from their inefficient pasts and 'welded them' into the greatest organization of all time. Jesus had known and followed 'every one of the principles of modern salesmanship,' Barton averred. The parables were among the most powerful advertisements of all time. And as for Jesus having been the founder of modern business, Barton pointed simply to the words of the master himself: 'Wist ye not that I must be about my father's *business*?'" See *The Twenties* (New York: Viking, 1955), p. 326.

[29] For a brilliant exploration of this question, see Kristol, "When Virtue Loses All Her Loveliness," in *Capitalism Today*.

THE ABDICATION OF THE CORPORATE CLASS

The ultimate support for any social system is the acceptance by the population of a moral justification of authority. The older justifications of bourgeois society lay in the defense of private property, which itself was justified on the ground, elaborated by Locke, that one infused one's own labor into property. But the "new capitalism" of the twentieth century has lacked such moral grounding, and in periods of crisis it has either fallen back on the traditional value assertions, which have been increasingly incongruent with social reality, or it has been ideologically impotent.

It is in this context that one can see the weakness of American corporate capitalism in trying to deal with some of the major dilemmas of the century. Political (and value) conflicts in the United States can be looked at from two different perspectives. From one, there have been economic and class issues which divided farmer and banker, worker and employer, and led to functional and interest-group conflicts that were especially sharp in the 1930s. Along a different sociological axis, one can see the politics of the 1920s, and to some extent that of the 1950s, within the framework of "tradition" versus "modernity," with the rural, small-town Protestant intent on defending his historic values against the cosmopolitan liberal interested in reform and social welfare. The issues here are not primarily economic but socio-cultural. The traditionalist defends fundamentalist religion, censorship, stricter divorce and anti-abortion laws; the modernist is for secular rationality, freer personal relations, tolerance of sexual deviance, and the like. These represent the political side of cultural issues, and to the extent that culture is the symbolic expression and justification of experience, this is the realm of symbolic or expressive politics.

In this respect, the great symbolic issue of American cultural politics was Prohibition. It was the major—and almost the last—effort by small-town and traditionalist forces to impose a specific value, the prohibition of liquor, on the rest of the society; and initially, of course, the traditionalists won. In a somewhat different sense, McCarthyism in the 1950s represented an effort by some traditionalist forces to impose a uniform political morality on the society through conformity to one ideology of Americanism and a virulent form of anti-Communism. And, in a contrary fashion, the McGovern campaign of 1972 was fueled largely by a "new politics"

which represented the furthest tendencies of the modernists—the women's libbers, sexual nonconformists, and cultural radicals, allied for the moment, with blacks and other minority groups.

Now, the curious fact is that the "new capitalism" of abundance, which emerged in the 1920s, has never been able to define its view of these cultural-political issues, as it had of the economic-political conflicts. Given its split character, it could not do so. Its values derive from the traditionalist past, and its language is the archaism of the Protestant ethic. Its technology and dynamism, however, derive from the spirit of modernity—the spirit of perpetual innovation and of the creation of new "needs" on the installment plan. The one thing that would utterly destroy the new capitalism is the serious practice of deferred gratification.

When members of the corporate class have taken a stand on cultural-political issues, they have often divided on geographical lines. Midwesterners or Texans or those coming from small-town backgrounds display traditionalist attitudes; Easterners or products of Ivy League schools are more liberal. More recently, the division has been based on education and age rather than region. But the singular fact remains. The new capitalism was primarily responsible for transforming the society, and in the process undermined the Puritan temper, but it was never able to develop successfully a new ideology congruent with the change, and it used—and often was trapped by—the older language of Protestant values.

The forces of modernity, which took the lead against the traditionalists on these social and cultural issues, were a mélange of intellectuals, professors, and welfare- and reform-minded individuals (though, paradoxically, the Prohibition movement at its inception was allied with the reformers against the evils of industrialism and city life), joined, for political reasons, by labor leaders and ethnic politicians who represented urban forces.[30] The dominant philosophy was liberalism, which included a critique of the inequalities and social costs generated by capitalism. The fact that the

[30] In an analogous sense, in the organized labor movement the AFL-CIO finds itself on its own cleft stick. In economic matters, it is liberal or left, but it stridently rejects cultural radicalism as alien to its beliefs. This is because the labor movement is truly an American movement and has shared the dominant values of the capitalist order. Trade unionism, as George Bernard Shaw once said, is the capitalism of the proletariat, at least when the economic order is expanding and affluent.

corporate economy had no unified value system of its own, or still mouthed a flaccid version of Protestant virtues, meant that liberalism could go ideologically unchallenged. In the realm of culture, and of cultural-social issues—of political philosophy, in short—the corporate class had abdicated. The important consideration is that, *as an ideology*, liberalism had become dominant in the culture during these past decades.

From a *cultural* point of view, the politics of the 1920s to 1960s was a struggle between tradition and modernity. In the 1960s the new cultural style denounced bourgeois values and the traditional codes of American life. But, as I have tried to show, bourgeois culture vanished long ago. What the counter-culture embodied was an extension of the tendencies initiated 60 years ago by political liberalism and modernist culture, and represents, in effect, a split in the camp of modernism. For it sought to take the preachments of personal freedom, extreme experience ("kicks" and "highs"), and sexual experimentation to a point in *life-style* that the liberal mentality—which would approve of such ideas in *art and imagination*—is not prepared to go. Yet liberalism finds itself uneasy in trying to say why. It approves a basic permissiveness, but cannot with any certainty define the bounds. And this is its dilemma. In culture, as well as in politics, liberalism is now up against the wall.

Liberalism also finds itself in disarray in an arena where it had sought to reform capitalism—the economy. The economic philosophy of American liberalism had been rooted in the idea of growth. One forgets that in the late 1940s and 1950s Walter Reuther, Leon Keyserling, and other liberals had attacked the steel companies and much of American industry for being unwilling to expand capacity, and had urged the government to set target growth figures. Cartelization, monopoly, and the restriction of production had been historic tendencies of capitalism. The Eisenhower administration consciously chose price stability over growth. It was the liberal economists who instilled in the society the policy of the conscious planning of growth through government inducements (e.g., investment credits, which industry at first did not want) and government investment. The idea of potential GNP and the concept of "shortfall"—posting a mark of what the economy at full utilization of resources could achieve, compared to the actual figure—was introduced in the Council of Economic Advisers by the liberals. The

idea of growth has been so fully absorbed as an economic ideology that one no longer realizes, as I have said, how much of a liberal innovation it was.

The liberal answer to social problems such as poverty was that growth would provide the resources to raise the incomes of the poor.[31] The thesis that growth was necessary to finance public services was the crux of John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*. And yet, paradoxically, it is the very idea of economic growth that is now coming under attack—and by liberals. Affluence is no longer seen as an answer. Growth is held responsible for the spoliation of the environment, the voracious use of natural resources, the crowding in recreation areas, the density in the cities, and the like. One finds, startlingly, the idea of zero economic growth—or John Stuart Mill's idea of the "stationary state"—now proposed as a serious goal of government policy. Just as the new politics rejected the traditional problem-solving pragmatism of American politics, it now also rejects the newer, liberal policy of economic growth as a positive goal for the society. But without a commitment to economic growth, what is the *raison d'être* of capitalism?[32]

THE HINGE OF HISTORY

In historical retrospect, bourgeois society had a double source, and a double fate. The one current was a Puritan, Whig capitalism, in which the emphasis was not just on economic activity but on the formation of *character* (sobriety, probity, work as a calling). The other was a secular Hobbesianism, a radical individualism which saw man as unlimited in his appetite, which was restrained in politics by a sovereign but ran fully free in economics and culture. The two impulses had always lived in uneasy tandem. Over time, those

[31] More technically, it was based on the welfare economics theorem of Pareto optimality—namely, that one should seek a condition where some people will be better off without anyone being worse off. The direct redistribution of income is politically difficult, if not impossible. However, from new or added national income, a higher proportion of the gains can be used to finance social welfare programs; and this, as Otto Eckstein pointed out in "The Economics of the Sixties," *The Public Interest*, no. 19 (Spring 1970), pp. 86–97, was precisely what Congress was willing to do when economic growth was resumed in the Kennedy administration.

[32] The discussion of these questions is continued in Part Two of this book.

relations dissolved. As we have seen, in the United States the Puritan emphasis degenerated into a crabbed, small-town mentality, emphasizing only the idea of respectability. The secular Hobbesianism fed the mainsprings of modernity, the ravenous hunger for unlimited experience. The Whig view of history as open and progressive has faltered, if not disappeared, under the appearance of new bureaucratic apparatuses which have eclipsed the liberal view of societal self-management. The faiths which sustained all these beliefs have been shattered.

The cultural impulses of the 1960s, like the political radicalism which paralleled it, are, for the while, largely spent. The counterculture proved to be a conceit. It was an effort, largely a product of the youth movement, to transform a liberal life-style into a world of immediate gratification and exhibitionistic display. In the end, it produced little culture and countered nothing. Modernist culture, which has had deeper and more enduring roots, has been an effort to transform the imagination. But the experiments in style and form, the rage and effort to shock, all of which produced an effulgent explosion in the arts, are now exhausted. They are reproduced mechanically by the cultural mass, that stratum which itself is not creative but which distributes and denatures culture, in a process of absorption that robs art of the tension which is a necessary source of creativity and dialectic with the past. The society has become preoccupied with the more nagging and threatening questions of shortages, scarcities, inflation, and structural imbalances of income and wealth within and between nations; and for these reasons the questions of culture have now receded.

Yet the questions of culture remain, at bottom, the fundamental ones. As Irving Kristol and I wrote in the Introduction to *Capitalism Today*): "One cannot understand the important changes that have been taking place, and are taking place, in modern society without taking full account of capitalism's uneasy self-consciousness. This self-consciousness is no mere ideological superstructure. It is one of the most fateful and fundamental realities of the system itself." These changes are fateful and fundamental because they involve the nature of will and the character of a people, and the legitimacy and moral justifications of the system—the very elements that sustain a society.

What is striking about the rise and fall of civilizations—and it was the basis of the philosophy of history of the talented Arabic

thinker Ibn Khaldun—is that societies pass through specific phases whose transformations signal decline. These are the transformations from simplicity to luxury (what Plato, who wrote about this in Book 2 of *The Republic*, called the change from the healthy city to the fevered city), from asceticism to hedonism.

It is striking that every new, rising social force—be it a new religion, new military force, or new revolutionary movement—begins as an ascetic movement. Asceticism emphasizes non-material values, renunciation of physical pleasures, simplicity and self-denial, and arduous, purposeful discipline. That discipline is necessary for the mobilization of psychic and physical energies for tasks outside the self, for the conquest and subordination of the self in order to conquer others. As Max Weber remarked: "Discipline acquired during wars of religion was the source of the unconquerableness of both the Islamic and Cromwellian cavalries. Similarly, inner-worldly asceticism and the disciplined quest for salvation in a vocation pleasing to God were the sources of the virtuosity in acquisitiveness characteristic of the Puritans."[33]

The discipline of the old religious "warriors of God" was channeled into military organization and battle. What was historically unique about the Puritan temper was the devotion of this-worldly asceticism to an occupational calling and to work and accumulation. Yet the end of the Puritan's being was not primarily wealth. As Weber remarked, the Puritan got nothing out of his wealth for himself but the proof of his own salvation.[34] And it was this furious energy that built an industrial civilization.

For the Puritan, "the most urgent task" was to destroy spontaneous, impulsive behavior and bring order into the conduct of life. Today one finds asceticism primarily in revolutionary movements and revolutionary regimes. Puritanism, in the psychological and sociological sense, is to be found in Communist China and in the regimes which fuse revolutionary sentiment with Koranic purposes, as in Algeria and Libya.

In the scheme of Khaldun, reflecting in the fourteenth century the vicissitudes of Berber and Arabic civilizations, the sequences of transformation went from the Bedouin to the sedentary to the hedonistic life, and from there, in three generations, to the decline

[33] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoffs, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 203.
[34] Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, p. 71.

of the society. In the hedonistic life, there is a loss of will and fortitude. More importantly, men become competitive with one another for luxuries, and lose the ability to share and sacrifice. There then follows, says Khaldun, the loss of *asabîyah*, that sense of solidarity which makes men feel as brothers to one another, that "group feeling which means (mutual) affection and willingness to fight and die for each other."[35]

The basis for *asabîyah* is not only the sense of shared sacrifice and shared danger—the elements which hold platoons of fighting men or underground revolutionary cadres together—but also some moral purpose, a *telos* which provides the moral justifications for the society. At the start, the United States was held together by an implicit covenant, the sense that this was the continent where God's design would be unfolded, a belief which underlay the deism of Jefferson. As this belief receded, what held the society together was a unique polity, an open, adaptive, egalitarian, and democratic system which was responsive to the many claimants that sought inclusion in the society and which respected the principles of law as embodied in the Constitution and abided by the decisions of the Supreme Court. Yet this responsiveness itself was possible largely because of the expansiveness of the economy, and the promise of material wealth as a solvent for social strains. Today the economy is troubled and the political system is burdened with issues that it has never before had to confront. One problem—and it is the theme of my concluding essay, "The Public Household"—is whether the system itself can manage the huge overload of issues. This depends, in part, on "technical" economic answers and equally on the stability of the world system. But the deeper and more difficult questions are the legitimations of the society as expressed in the motivations of individuals and the moral purposes of the nation. And it is here that the cultural contradictions—the discordances of character structure and the disjunction of realms—become central.

Changes in culture and moral temper—the fusion of imagination and life-styles—are not amenable to "social engineering" or political control. They derive from the value and moral traditions of the society, and these cannot be "designed" by precept. The ultimate sources are the religious conceptions which undergird a society; the

[35] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958). The crucial section is in vol. 1, chap. 3; the quotation above is from p. 313.

proximate sources are the reward systems and motivations (and their legitimations) which derive from the arena of work.

American capitalism, as I have tried to show, has lost its traditional legitimacy, which was based on a moral system of reward rooted in the Protestant sanctification of work. It has substituted a hedonism which promises material ease and luxury, yet shies away from all the historic implications of a "voluptuary system," with all its social permissiveness and libertinism. The culture has been dominated (in the serious realm) by a principle of modernism that has been subversive of bourgeois life, and the middle-class life-styles by a hedonism that has undercut the Protestant ethic which provided the moral foundation for the society. The interplay of modernism as a mode developed by serious artists, the institutionalization of those played-out forms by the "cultural mass," and the hedonism as a way of life promoted by the marketing system of business, constitutes the cultural contradiction of capitalism. The modernism is exhausted, and no longer threatening. The hedonism apes its sterile japes. But the social order lacks either a culture that is a symbolic expression of any vitality or a moral impulse that is a motivational or binding force. What, then, can hold the society together?

This is joined to a more pervasive problem derived from the nature of modern society. The characteristic style of industrialism is based on the principles of economics and economizing: on efficiency, least cost, maximization, optimization, and functional rationality. Yet it is this very style that is in conflict with the advanced cultural trends of the Western world, for modernist culture emphasizes anti-cognitive and anti-intellectual modes which look longingly toward a return to instinctual sources of expression. The one emphasizes functional rationality, technocratic decision making, and meritocratic rewards; the other, apocalyptic moods and anti-rational modes of behavior. It is this disjunction which is the historic cultural crisis of all Western bourgeois society. This cultural contradiction is, in the longer run, the most fateful division in the society.

The Disjunctions of Cultural Discourse

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IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER, I tried to show that the disjunction between culture and social structure creates a pervasive set of tensions which the society (as well as the individual) finds difficult to manage. But there remains another, central issue: the coherence of culture itself in modern society, and the question of whether culture, rather than religion, can provide a comprehensive or transcendental set of ultimate meanings, or even satisfactions, in daily life.

The question of the coherence of culture was set forth by Wordsworth, in his "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads" (1800), when he deplored "the craving for extraordinary incident" and the thirst for "outrageous stimulation" created by the rapid spread of communication and the quickening pace of life, so that "the works of Shakspeare [sic] and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse. . . ." Almost 150 years later, when T. S. Eliot reflected on the problem, he pointed out that culture had come to have different meanings when related to the whole society or to a group or class, and he concluded: "As a society develops towards functional complexity and differentiation, we may expect the emergence of several cultural levels: in short, the culture of the class or group will present itself."[1]

[1] See William Wordsworth, *Selected Poems and Prefaces* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 449; and T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 25.

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For Pearl, with love