

The Ellul Forum

for the Critique of Technological Civilization

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The Ethics of Jacques Ellul

About This Issue

by David W. Gill, Guest Editor

This issue of *The Ellul Forum* is about Jacques Ellul's ethics. Ellul has written often enough, and especially in *To Will and To Do: An Ethical Research for Christians* (ET: Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969), that morality (and ethics—he does not make any consistent distinction between the terms) is "of the order of the fall" and "of the order of necessity." In terms of his biblical theology, human morality and ethics are our replacement for the living guidance of God intended in the creation. Separated and alienated from God, who is the Good, we fill the vacuum not just with idols but with morality.

All too commonly, Ellul argues, Christian morality and ethics has been shaped by the morality and ethics of the world—even if expressed with pious religious language. A Christian ethic is, thus, impossible, if by "ethic" we mean what commonly goes by that term (a set of moral values, rules, principles, virtues, etc., which defines what is good and right). Having then swept away all systems of ethics, Ellul wishes to raise anew the most basic question of a Christian ethic: how ought we to live out our relationship to God in a world antagonistic to his character and purposes?

In his programmatic early work *The Presence of the Kingdom* (ET: Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951; the following quotations are from pp. 20-22), Ellul says "the problem that confronts us is that of the Christian ethic". This ethic "has nothing in common with what is generally called 'morality,' and still less with the Christian 'virtues' in the traditional sense . . . It is never a series of rules, or principles, or slogans . . ." But a valid Christian ethic will show us how our "direct relation with the act of God in Jesus Christ" can take "concrete form and become a vital element in daily life." Such an ethic is necessary as "a guide, an indication given to faith, a real assistance to the brethren." It is possible to define "the ethical demands of God" in terms of "its outline, and its conditions, and study some of its elements for purposes of illustration." There are, after all, "consequences of faith which can be objectively indicated."

The status of Ellul's Christian ethic is clear: it is temporary in that "it needs to be continually revised, re-examined, and re-shaped by the combined effort of the Church as a whole." It is *indicative* rather than imperative in that it assists but does not resolve or replace the living "fight of faith, which every Christian must wage." It is apologetic in that its purpose is not to justify our behavior but to lead those who observe us to see through and beyond our actions to Jesus Christ and to glorify God.

Ellul's plan was to elaborate such a Christian ethic in relation to the Pauline virtues of faith, hope, and love. He published *Hope in Time of Abandonment* (ET: New York: Seabury, 1973), *Living Faith* (ET: San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), and several essays on love to lay the foundation. *The Ethics of Freedom* (ET: Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976) outlined a Christian ethic corresponding to hope. *The Ethics of Holiness* (still unpublished in French or English) will outline a Christian ethic corresponding to faith. An "ethics of relationship" was never written but was going to be an outline of a Christian ethic corresponding to love.

For one who can be quoted as saying that a Christian ethic is "impossible," Ellul has produced a surprisingly voluminous ethical corpus. And yet for someone who wrote that a valid Christian ethic will be a "real assistance to the brethren," Ellul has frustrated a lot of his readers by leaving them as uncertain as ever about how to act in faith, hope, and love in the presence of particular quandaries. In my own view,

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Ellul is a greater "prophet" than "teacher" in ethics. That is, his insights brilliantly illuminate ethics in general, and Christian ethics in particular. His work helps me much in the same way that that of Soren Kierkegaard does.

Nevertheless, one can and must go further than Ellul (indeed, he often urged just this). In my view, the role of the church as a community of moral discernment, formation, and action needs fuller development. A fuller account of character and virtue needs to be built on Ellul's rather existential treatment of faith, hope, and love. And a fuller account of biblical and Christian ethical teaching can be developed without lapsing into the abstract, philosophical principle trap so vigorously rejected by Ellul.

A complete and adequate assessment of Ellul's ethics remains to be carried out—and will be substantially aided by the eventual publication of *The Ethics of Holiness*. My own book (originally a Ph.D. dissertation in 1979), *The Word of God in the Ethics of Jacques Ellul* (Metuchen NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984) was a preliminary assessment as of the late Seventies, but much more study needs to be done. The four essays which follow are simply four "soundings" in his ethics.

Marva Dawn (theologian and author with Christians Equipping for Ministry, Vancouver, Washington) discusses how the biblical concept of the "powers" undergirds Ellul's approach to ethics. In a nice phrase she calls Ellul's work a "fore-ethics." John Howard Yoder (Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame) is critical of Ellul's apparent failure to provide a workable casuistry in his ethics. He finds Ellul's ethical analysis of violence unsatisfactory. Daniel Cerezuelle (sociologist and philosopher of technology with the *Association Jacques Ellul* in Bordeaux) provides an account of Ellul as an ethical activist in the campaign to prevent the destruction of the Aquitaine Coast by developers. Ken Morris (who studied Ellul's work in graduate programs at New College Berkeley and Duke University and who is now preparing to practice law after studies at the University of California's Boalt Hall Law School) reflects on the ways Ellul's insights illuminate the ethics of the legal profession in the U.S.

Bordeaux Update

In the July 1994 issue of *The Ellul Forum* a modest appeal was made for funds to assist in the purchase of Jacques and Yvette Ellul's house near the University of Bordeaux for a headquarters for the *Association Jacques Ellul*. David Gill spent all of July 1995 in Bordeaux investigating possibilities for North American support of and participation in such a project. This included lengthy discussions with Jean Ellul, Daniel Cerezuelle, Jean-Francois and Burney Medard, Patrick Troude-Chastenot, Didier Nordon, and other representatives of the Association, the Ellul family, and the University. With Jean Ellul he toured the whole house and property and had a good look at Ellul's books and manuscripts.

Out of these discussions a relatively detailed proposal emerged for raising a million dollars over the next five years in order to purchase the house and develop a "Jacques Ellul Center for Sociological and Theological Studies." This proposal was reviewed by forty scholars, writers, and business people in France and North America, all of whom have indicated strong appreciation of the work of Ellul. The responses to this proposal were then reviewed by Joyce Hanks, Darrell Fasching, Carl Mitcham, and David Gill in Philadelphia, November 17, 1995—and by Daniel Cerezuelle and members of the Association Jacques Ellul in Bordeaux at the same time.

While our consensus on both sides of the Atlantic was that the project is eminently worthy it became clear that this group of forty could not muster the finances or time necessary to move forward with the plan. The house is now on the general real estate market in Bordeaux and, unless a major benefactor comes forward in the very near future, we are regretfully giving up on this ambitious project.

Donations for the Ellul Publications Project

While the "big plan" to purchase Ellul's house for a study center appears to have failed, there remains the challenge of organizing and safely storing Jacques Ellul's papers and manuscripts. *The Association Jacques Ellul* in Bordeaux is moving ahead with this task, exploring options with both the University of Bordeaux and the Bordeaux and Pessac city libraries. Hundreds of audio tapes of Ellul's biblical studies and dozens of video tapes are in the hands of Association members and it is hoped that eventually a broader audience may profit from them.

In addition, Ellul's autobiographical manuscript (two volumes), his *Ethics of Holiness* (two volumes), and possibly another book or two, remain in the handwritten form Ellul prepared. As many of you know, Ellul's handwriting is very difficult to read! Before any progress can be made toward the editing and publication of remaining works by Jacques Ellul these manuscripts must be converted into typescripts. A secretary familiar with Ellul's handwriting is available to be hired to carry out this important task—but there is no money to pay her!

During the next six months you are invited to make a donation (tax-deductible in the U.S.) to assist the *Association Jacques Ellul* in preserving and transcribing Ellul's manuscripts. We already have five pledges of \$500 and we are hoping that all of those who value Ellul's legacy will join in our effort. Make your checks payable to "The Ellul Forum" (and designate your donation for the "Ellul Publications Fund") and send them to Prof. Darrell Fasching, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of South Florida., Tampa FL 33620. We will forward your donations to France and the work can begin.

Upcoming Programs on Jacques Ellul and Ian Barbour

The Second Jacques Ellul Symposium will be held at the National Association for Science, Technology and Society meeting to be held, Feb 8-11 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington Virginia. The Ellul session will feature a keynote address by Jerry Mander on "Television and the Global Homogenization of Consciousness: Cultural, Political & Social Consequences." Panelists responding are: Dick Stivers, Namir Khan, and Bill Vanderburg.

The session on "The Life and Work of Ian Barbour, Theologian and Philosopher" will feature a presentation by Barbour with responses from James Nash and Leonard Waks. Moderator, Richard Dietrich, guest editor for the next issue of the Forum, will organize the material from this session for presentation in the July 96 issue which will be dedicated Ian Barbour's work.

(Bulletin continued on p. 7)

Forum: The Ethics of Jacques Ellul

The Concept of "the Powers" as the Basis for Ellul's Fore-ethics

by Marva J. Dawn

Jacques Ellul does and does not do ethics. His use of the biblical concept of the "principalities and powers" undergirds both his refusal to construct an ethical system and his suggestion of an ethics that takes seriously structural and cultural good and evil. Ellul's work is better described as a "fore-ethics," a preparation for ethics that is rooted in a profound awareness of structural realities, but which usually fails to give concrete ethical guidance or systematic ethical development.

Ellul was one of the first to apply the concept of "the principalities and powers" to domains other than the state. In a series of three articles in the journal *Foi et Vie*, in 1946 and 1947, Ellul warned that it was necessary to pay attention to the "structures" of our society and itemized "la technique, la production, l'état, la ville, la guerre, and la sterilisation" as those requiring further study.¹ The third article focused especially on political realism, which Ellul called "une puissance corruptrice enorme," and offered suggestions for a different realism as the Christian response to the powers.²

Throughout his works in *sociologie*, Scripture, and ethics, Ellul unfolded an extensive analysis of the nature of the powers.³ However, because his programmatic essays of 1946-47 have not been translated into English and most of his other works fall into distinctive tracks of social criticism or theology, few of his readers are aware of the broad-ranging significance of the concept of "the powers" in Ellul's thinking. My doctoral dissertation demonstrated, using these first articles in *Foi et Vie* and the various passages on the powers in his later works, that the concept of the "principalities and powers" acts as an important bridge between Ellul's two major research tracks and is a significant key for interpreting his work.⁴

The Setting of the Stage

The first major connection of the "powers" idea and Ellul's foundations for Christian ethics appears in *The Presence of the Kingdom* (1948).⁵ Ellul roots his methods in the dialectical nature of reality, described by the image of the "two cities" to which Christians belong. They live in a constant inner tension; the world and the kingdom of God can never coincide, but neither must be abandoned (46). As Christians plunge into social and political problems to modify the opposition between God's order and the world's disorder, their action should take these three forms: (1) an assessment (with revelation as its starting point) of social and political conditions, (2) efforts to incarnate the will of God in actual institutions, and (3) a ceaseless watching so that God's order of preservation (beyond whose limits lurks danger to society) is maintained (47-8). Ellul warns that it is an error to think that these actions will progressively bring in God's kingdom or that they are permanent; nevertheless, these are necessarily revolutionary acts which must be guided by the Holy Spirit (48-9).

Next, Ellul defines Christian ethics by rejecting the notion of moral principles and focusing instead on the person of Christ, "the

principle of everything." Living eschatologically is the opposite of an ethic (as conventionally understood) because it does not spring from a cause, but moves toward an end (52). Such an "ethic" entails a freedom characterized by a life and death struggle against the powers (78). Ellul rejects any sort of "technics" as means of action since the Christian life "moves in the opposite direction of the triumphant path traced by modern technics" (79).

Thus, Ellul's lifelong battle against the powers' functioning in the modern world is intertwined with his resistance to "systems" in Christian ethics. He objects that purely materialistic or rationalistic intellectual methods prevent us from understanding the powers. "Only the intervention of the Holy Spirit can transform our intelligence, in such a way that it will not be swallowed up by our systems, and that it will be sufficiently penetrating" (124).

Ellul challenges the church to battle the powers — not by developing economic or political theories, but through the creation of a new style of life. He complains that there is no longer a distinctive Christian lifestyle in which everything, to the smallest detail, is questioned from the perspective of God's glory (145-48). For spiritual and material reasons, the quest for such a lifestyle in combat with the powers must be a corporate search (149).

Specifically, Ellul calls Christian intellectuals to awareness, including "the duty of understanding the world and oneself, . . . a fierce and passionate destruction of myths," a genuine realism, and the need to understand reality on the human (and not abstract) level (118-19). Ellul criticizes statistical methods and media information, which produce only an illusory knowledge of the world (120-1). He advocates searching behind all forms of propaganda to study present problems as profoundly as possible, to understand the structure or framework of our civilization as the expression of its spiritual reality. Such awareness leads to a requisite "'engagement' (or act of resolute committal)" in which the intellectual recognizes that he or she is subject to the same powers (121-22).

Finally, Ellul explicitly declares that he does not intend to give solutions, but "to open the way for a work of the renewed Church." *The Presence of the Kingdom* serves as "a prologue to more extended study which would examine the problem of our present civilization from every aspect"—a task undertaken in Ellul's subsequent sociological works. He expresses his wish that "fellow-Christians are stirred by the present study to feel the urgency and the depth of these questions" (137). His writings are to be "understood as a call to arms, showing what enemy we have to confront, what warfare we have to wage, what weapons we have to use" (141). All Ellul's works should be read in light of this foundational theme of exposing the enemy, viz., the principalities and powers.

The Powers We Confront

Ellul's concept of the powers was modified as well as elaborated over the years in his various biblical and ethical studies. His first

thorough explication occurs in *The Ethics of Freedom*, where, rejecting the extreme options of "demons" and of "simply a figure of speech," he places himself somewhere between these middle possibilities of interpretation for the biblical language of principalities and powers:

Are they less precise powers (thrones and dominions) which still have an existence, reality, and, as one might say, objectivity of their own? Or do we simply have a disposition of man which constitutes this or that human factor a power by exalting it as such . . . ? In this case the powers are not objective realities which influence man from without. They exist only as the determination of man which allows them to exist in their subjugating otherness and transcendence.⁶

Then, in one of the most personal passages on the subject, Ellul describes this connection between the powers and social realities:

Political power has many dimensions, e.g., social, economic, psychological, ethical, psycho-analytical, and legal. But when we have scrutinized them all, we have still not apprehended its reality. I am not speaking hastily or lightly here but as one who has passed most of his life in confrontation with their question and in their power. We cannot say with Marx that the power is an ideological superstructure, for it is always there. The disproportion noted above leads me to the unavoidable conclusion that another power intervenes and indwells and uses political power, thus giving it a range and force that it does not have in itself. The same is true of money... [and] technology (153-4).

This consciousness of powers and their presence in social realities undergirds all of Ellul's critical social assessments, though he couches his perceptions in such terms as "necessity" to refrain from bringing traditional religious references into the academic milieu of *sociologie*. His insistence that he speaks out of a lifelong confrontation with the question of the powers highlights the notion as a critically important key for interpreting his work.

Ellul describes the powers as "secular and in every sense human, relative, and secondary" (284), taking many forms (455). Their ambiguity is underscored by the recognition that "work, occupation, specialization, family, country, justice, culture, progress, intelligence, or science" are both inevitable and indispensable elements for human beings, and yet they can all become occasions for enslavement (249). All enslaving forces of culture have to be resisted. That does not mean they must be suppressed (which would be a mere illusion), but that their true alienating character must be recognized.

Repeatedly, Ellul insists that Christians have freedom in relation to the powers by virtue of Christ's work.⁷ In a section explicating this freedom, Ellul claims that the need for battle against the powers is illustrated particularly in the "religion of the state" (144-160). He does not reject working for political freedom or even to topple dictatorships, but cautions that using ordinary political/technical methods will inexorably refashion or reinforce the very thing we are trying to eliminate (158). Since neither individually nor collectively can we break free from the powers, the only way to deal with them in any sphere is to recognize Christ's objective intervention (159). St. Paul declares that the powers "have been despoiled" in the victory of the cross of Christ (Col. 2:14). We therefore "live in a desacralized world. But the process constantly begins all over again. Desacralization . . . has to be done again and again" (160).

Ellul's entire approach to ethics and structural evil is summarized in this recognition that the powers have not been totally destroyed, but hold no authority in themselves. Only one freed by faith in the victory of Christ can fight against them, and that battle is successful only with spiritual weapons (Eph. 6:13ff.). Without this faith and knowledge, a person remains vulnerable to the powers and will continue to be seduced and oppressed by them.

Ellul rejects the positions of the "demythologizers" for whom "the powers have no objective reality" and of the "socializers" who do not

recognize the necessity of belief. He insists against the former that the powers have objective reality and against the latter that the victory of Christ can be grasped and lived out only by those who believe and thereby can fight for liberation (160). True freedom requires liberation from the powers.

In an earlier work, *Money and Power* (1954), Ellul named money, Mammon, as a "personal force," a power "which has, or claims to have, a reality of its own . . . a personal master."⁸ Later, in *The Subversion of Christianity* (1984) Ellul delineates six powers: Mammon, the prince of this world, the prince of lies, Satan, the devil, and death. Appearing to join the demythologizers, Ellul in this work emphasizes only the function of these powers, viz., deception, accusation, division, and destruction.⁹ No longer does Ellul claim that the powers have a kind of reality of their own. In contrast to his earlier position in *Money and Power* and in *The Ethics of Freedom*, Ellul's later works say that the powers exist only in relation to us.

Ellul's elucidation of the power of the "prince of lies," harmonizes with his discussion of truth and reality in *The Humiliation of the Word*.¹⁰ This view of the prince of lies as one of the powers must be kept in mind when reading Ellul's works of social criticism and ethics, for he deals often with misuse of language (in such works as *Propaganda, A Critique of The New Commonplaces*, and *The Humiliation of the Word*) and with deception (in such works as *The Political Illusion* and *False Presence of the Kingdom*).

Ellul's discussions of other powers, in *The Subversion of Christianity*, reveals some weaknesses in his biblical exegesis. His comments about "Satan" are murky and contradictory; those about the "devil" ignore much of the biblical picture. Ellul does not explain his notion of the power of "death" functioning as destruction.

These weaknesses and inconsistencies notwithstanding, the overall coherence of Ellul's emphasis on their functions adds an important contribution to the discussion of the biblical concept of "the principalities." Also, recognizing how his perspectives on the biblical notion of the powers undergird his works of social criticism helps us understand the severity of his denunciations of the technological milieu, of political illusions, of language and of society. Ellul helps us realize the critical importance for Christians to expose the workings of the powers in these social realities and even in ethical systems.

Power and Necessity in Ethical Systems

In his introduction to ethics, *To Will and To Do: An Ethical Research for Christians* (1964), Ellul drew together his rejection of systems of ethics with his absolute Christocentrism and his view of the world as the domain of "necessity." He insisted that Christian conduct is an

insoluble problem which people are always trying to solve by theological modification, and which it is important not to solve. . . [W]hat constitutes the Christian life is not morality but faith, and the center of faith is not the good, but Jesus Christ. At this point Christian ethics breaks off all possible relations with every morality whatsoever.¹¹

Therefore, Ellul devotes a chapter to "The Impossibility of a Christian Ethic" (201-224). He does not deny the importance of formulating guidance for the Christian life; he ends the book with a chapter on "The Necessity for a Christian Ethic" (245-267), which defines ethics as a "sort of preparation" and the way "to create in the hearer an aptitude for life in the world" by developing the capacity to criticize and control sociological trends and to liberate oneself from them. However, ethics does not have the right

to furnish solutions for every problem, solutions which would be imposed with authority. It can only be the reminder that the specific conduct of the Christian is the indispensable consequence of his faith. It should at the same time be the equipping of the believer with an instrument of reflection and explanation concerning himself and his problems. Finally, it will be a reminder that the earnestness of the theological commitment

should be registered in an earnestness of commitment in the world, and it will establish, for the particular time in which it is valid, the conditions and limits of that commitment. But it cannot go beyond that. This preparatory task is modest but indispensable (248).

This fine line between "ethics which becomes morality" (defined by Ellul as "of the order of necessity" and "of the order of the fall"—and therefore subject to the powers) and "ethics which serves the preparatory task" described above is an essential distinction for understanding the contribution of Ellul's "fore-ethics." He seeks to place ethics within the freedom of the gospel and counter its tendency to fall again into the enslavement of necessity and the functioning of the powers.

Has Ellul succeeded in providing us with an adequate "fore-ethics"? Let us return to the agenda he outlined in *The Presence of the Kingdom* as we assess his ethical contribution.

1. *Ethical method must be rooted in the never-to-be-abandoned dialectical nature of the Christian life in its combat against the powers.* The major strength of Ellul's approach is this emphasis on the continued dialectical interfacing of biblical revelation and contemporary social reality (without losing the dialectical hope of his Christian convictions). The weakness is that he rarely makes the dialectic clear. Thus his biblical works appear too idealistic and his sociological analyses too pessimistic. Only in a few places, such as *The Humiliation of the Word*, does he connect the two tracks of his work to reveal the tension of the dialectic and point toward some practical resolution.

2. *The first form of action for the Christian must be realistic assessment of social and political conditions.* Ellul succeeds in building his ethical reflections in a profound awareness of social reality. His ethics repeatedly call for Christians to enter the fight against the powers functioning in social realities. In this respect, Ellul's work offers a model for other Christians, tempted to pronounce an idealistic, disengaged set of ethical norms. It remains to his readers continually to refine this social analysis as well as to soften his critical overstatements.

3. *The second action of the Christian is a constant effort to incarnate the will of God in actual institutions and situations.* One of Ellul's weaknesses is that he does not offer many models for this call to action from *The Presence of the Kingdom*. In his desire to avoid any system of specific norms, Ellul tries to work on a middle level that offers guidance; too easily, however, his guidance becomes abstract. A thorough survey of his corpus reveals that he suggests attitudes and goals for Christian presence; rarely does he get specific concerning ways to incarnate the will of God in institutions. Other weaknesses are due to Ellul's frequent overstatement. Lambasting Christians for their compromise and conformity is unlikely to motivate change, nor do his generalizations recognize that many Christians do think well, pose alternatives, and practice eschatological lifestyles. His harsh words turn many Christians away from his helpful perspectives.

4. *The third action of the Christian is ceaseless watching to maintain limits as part of God's order of preservation.* Ellul's study of the technological milieu especially reflects his intention to offer models of such setting of limits. *Money and Power* also gives practical suggestions for putting limits on the power of Mammon. Dialectically, Ellul's *sociologie* shows the dangers when the technological system is not limited and his theological studies offer biblical models for limiting the powers' encroachment.

5. *These actions must be constantly guided by the Holy Spirit.*

6. *Ethics is thus not a system, but following Christ and living eschatologically.* These themes from *The Presence of the Kingdom* are consistent refrains in all of Ellul's theological works and refer us again to our initial point—that any "system" of morality quenches the freedom of the Christian life under the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Ellul's ethical method is of a piece with his message: that the Christian life must stand in opposition to all

workings of the powers. This is a much needed critique, since insufficient awareness of that battle leads to ethical guidance which is allegedly practical, but which ignores the deeper level of spiritual realities requiring prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Ellul's emphasis on dialectical ethics and on a theology that is continually reassessed is consistent with his emphases both on the Holy Spirit and on freedom from legalism and false morality. His ethical method is congruent with his fight against all manifestations of the powers.

7. *Confronting the powers can only happen by the creation of a new style of life in the context of the Christian community.* Ellul consistently rejects "systems" and "morality" for the basic reason that they become legalistic and destroy the essential freedom of the Christian life. In this rejection of "ordinary" ethics, however, Ellul falls into the opposite mistake of not offering enough guidance for Christians. How will we learn how to make moral decisions concerning aspects of life influenced by the principalities? His view of ethics parallels, in some respects, Stanley Hauerwas's advocacy of "an ethics of character," but Ellul lacks Hauerwas' emphasis on the Christian community as the locus for nurturing attitudes and virtues. Though Ellul gives us an admirable "fore-ethics," he has not addressed our need for specific means to develop the lifestyle he advocates. The lack of emphasis on Christian community in his works suggests that Ellul did not have any notion of structural good to combat the structural evil of the powers.

Notes

1. "Chronique des problemes de civilisation: en guise d'avertissement," *Foi et Vie* 44.6 (Sept/Oct 1946): 680; "Problemes de civilisation: on demande un nouveau Karl Marx," *Foi et Vie* 45.3 (Mai/Juin 1947): 374.
2. "Problemes de civilisation: Le realisme politique," *Foi et Vie* 45.7 (Nov/Dec 1947): 714, 720-34. I am currently preparing translations of this article (and the two listed in the previous note) for publication by William B. Eerdmans.
3. I prefer to retain the French term *sociologie* to suggest that Ellul's social analyses bear little relation to the statistically-oriented "sociology" common in North America.
4. Marva J. Dawn, "The Concept of 'the Principalities and Powers' in the 'Works of Jacques Ellul'" Ph.D. dissertation (University of Notre Dame, 1992).
5. Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom* (French edition 1948; English translation by Olive Wyon; New York: Seabury Press, 1967). Page numbers cited in the text refer to the 1967 edition.
6. Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom* translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 151-52. Page references in the text of following discussion refer to this edition.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 103, 108, 116, 205, 239, 265, and 283.
8. Jacques Ellul, *Money and Power* (1954) Trans. by LaVonne Neff (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984), pp. 74ff.
9. Jacques Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity* (1984); Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 174ff.; See also Ellul's *Anarchy and Christianity* (1988) Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 83-85.
10. Jacques Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word* (1981) Translated by Joyce Main Hanks (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).
11. Jacques Ellul, *To Will and To Do: An Ethical Research for Christians* (1964) Translated by C. Edward Hopkin (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969), p. 90. Page numbers in the following text refer to this edition.

The Casuistry of Violence

by John Howard Yoder

How might we compare Jacques Ellul's argument on violence under "necessity" to the way other ethicists make and interpret exceptions? Ellul offers a special category of arguments which consists in a paradoxical suspension of ordinary moral argument. Yet he does so in connection with a case-related description which still seems to sustain or presuppose a claim that in other circumstances the moral guide would still hold.

In the course of his *Violence; Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, Jacques Ellul is concerned, at the same time, to maintain that the Christian message is revolutionary, and that the espousal of radical politics by many Christians in his time was wrong.¹ His entire book makes clear that there is no Christian moral case to be made for violence, but then he opens his exception: a Christian can use violence in a revolution, as many Christians have in world wars.

The point here is not that this is unacceptable, condemnable. The important thing is that, when he uses violence, the Christian knows very well that he is doing wrong, is sinning against the God of Love, and (even if only in appearance) is increasing the world's disorder. He cannot . . . believe that the violence he commits is in conformity with the divine will and the divine order. The only thing he can do is to admit that he is acting so out of his own fears and emotions; or else he can say that he is fighting for others, not to save his own life. . . He has fallen back into the realm of necessity; that is, he is no longer the free man God wills and redeemed at great cost. He is no longer a man conformed to God, no longer a witness to truth.²

Thus for Ellul "necessity" is a realm where the truth of Gospel ethic no longer is operational. The argument is quick, with some gaps. One kind of sub-argument seems to be implied in the parenthetical distinction between the apparent and the real impact of violence on the world's disorder. Another seems to be implied in the distinction he makes between saving one's own life and fighting for others. Yet neither of these side-glances becomes an explicit argument. The abiding condemnation of the violence to which one necessarily resorts is uncompromising.

Thus violence can never be justified or acceptable before God. The Christian can only admit humbly that he could not do otherwise, that he took the easy way and yielded to necessity and the pressures of the world.³ That is why the Christian, even when he permits himself to use violence in what he considers to be the best of causes cannot either feel or say that he is justified; he can only confess that he is a sinner, submit to God's judgment, and hope for God's grace and forgiveness. . . Whatever side he takes, the Christian can never have an easy conscience and can never be assured he is pursuing the way of truth.⁴

In this passage, does not the reference to "the easy way" assume that there was another, more costly way which one could have taken? This way is then less heroic, weaker. And in his reference to "the best of causes," isn't there a tacit casuistic criterion here? The cause must be relatively the most just. By what standard?

In any case, the fact that wrong-doing is not avoidable does not leave Ellul without moral objectivity: "Let me offer a criterion." The criterion is that, once the violent cause (which the Christian joined in the "necessary" yet not morally "justified" way described above) has won out in favor of the relatively more just side of the conflict, then the Christian should change camps and now side with those who in the new situation are now the victims. For this argument to work it is, of course, assumed that the revolution will win. Otherwise the

compromise would not have been justified. This is parallel to the "just war" criterion of probable success. Ellul does not go into how we know the revolution will succeed.

Ellul illustrates his criterion with the Free French victory over the Nazi occupation and their collaborators, with the anticolonial opponents of France's occupation of Algeria, and with the hypothetical victory of the other third-world "just revolutions" being romanticized in the 1960's.

If he stays on the side of the victors, he admits in effect that he was not really concerned for the poor and the oppressed in the first place.⁵

So, if a Christian feels that he must participate in a violent movement (or in a war) let him do so discerningly. He ought to be the one who, even as he acts with the others, proclaims the injustice and the unacceptability of what he and they are doing. . . He ought to be the conscience of the movement; the one who, in behalf of his unbelieving comrades, repents, bears humiliation, and prays to the Lord; the one who restrains man from glorifying himself for the evil he does.⁶

The function of "conscience" is, thus, not to urge us to do the right we know, but to acknowledge our guilt for the wrongness of our doing what is still the right thing to do. Ellul has introduced a bifurcation in the fabric of moral discernment. Violence is never to be "justified or glorified," yet neither should it be "condemned" or declared "unacceptable."⁷ The Christian will go on doing the violence he does not "justify." The notion of "justifying" has thus been moved from the realm of moral discernment to that of one's standing before God. Remember Jesus' accusations against the Pharisees. He did not reprove them for doing the works of the law; what he attacked was their belief that their doing these works proved them just.⁸

As a lifetime admirer of Ellul, I must confess that he does not convince here. This notion that it is proper for necessity to overrule the liberty of the Gospel is not ratified later in his *Ethics of Freedom*. There are in this book a few opaque allusions to "risk" (p. 355) and to "transgression" (p. 332) which might also point in the direction of an action which is both right (in the sense that you should do it) and wrong (not "justified"), but Ellul avoids concreteness.⁹ Nor is this bifurcation expositied when he uses the Pauline language of "principalities and powers."¹⁰ Ellul brilliantly illuminates the dialectic of determination and freedom with the "pauline" cosmology but there is no further light on our theme.

To Will and to Do may be the work where Ellul expresses himself the most broadly on the doing of ethics.¹¹ The preface by Waldo Beach says the book will be about "how the Christian is to cope with the ambiguities of daily life." But rather than throwing more light on how believers might concretely make hard decisions faithfully, Ellul here maximizes the use of undiscussible paradox. A Christian ethic is both impossible (pp. 199ff.) and necessary (p. 245). Morality is of the Order of the Fall (p. 39) and of Necessity (p. 59). Morality is not derived from the knowledge of the will of God (p. 73). The closer one's moral stance is to the will of God, the more suspect it is (p. 212).

Ellul's gallic love of paradox is freer in *To Will and To Do* than in some of his other works, perhaps because the other positions he freely critiques are less directly documented, and there is not a specific biblical text being expositied. One might say that he is closer here than usual to the Lutheran concentration on the *usus elenchthicus legis*, the notion that the role of the law in God's purpose is not so much to guide our choices as to show us our sin.

The tension between necessity and grace is an intellectual challenge which gives free play to Ellul's dialectical skills; it is not a setting for God-pleasing discernment and obedience, whether individual or shared. His last page in *To Will and To Do* cites as "surely correct" Reinhold Niebuhr's statement that Christianity "complicates dreadfully" the situation of the person trying to answer ethical questions, since the commandment of Jesus is by definition inapplicable.

Notes

1. New York: Seabury, 1969. In this argument he faced the same "crusading" adversaries as in his *False Presence of the Kingdom* (New York: Seabury, 1972). The acceptance of some necessary violence, which is the point I am here concerned to identify and challenge, was not the main point of the passage. His primary concern in this later book was to refute the "theologians of violence" or "of revolution" who at the time were very outspoken.
2. *Violence*, p. 137.
3. "Necessity" is in the rest of Ellul's work the code word for the fallenness of human history, where the Gospel has not yet had its impact.
4. *Violence*, p. 138.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-42.
7. These are the two negative descriptions which Ellul had set aside in the first sentence of the first quotation above.
8. Ellul makes this point about the Pharisees in his *To Will and To Do: An Ethical Research for Christians* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969), p. 212.
9. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.
10. See Marva Dawn, *The Concept of "The Principalities and Powers" in the Works of Jacques Ellul* (Notre Dame, Ph.D. dissertation, 1992).
11. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969.

Bulletin cont.

The Coming of the Millennium

Trinity Press International will be publishing a new book by Darrell Fasching entitled: *The Coming of the Millennium: Good News for the Whole Human Race*. The book dedication reads: "In memory of Jacques Ellul, 19-- to 1994, who taught me that evangelical theology means good news for the whole human race." The book is an ethical critique of the tradition of evangelism as "conquering the world for Christ" and of the abuse of apocalyptic thought by figures such as Hal Lindsey. It argues that the central message of the gospels is God's hospitality to the whole human race -- a message desperately needed as we enter a new millennium of pluralistic global interdependence in a technological civilization. The book is scheduled for release in April.

From Criticism to Politics: Jacques Ellul, Bernard Charbonneau and the Committee for the Defense of the Aquitaine Coast

by Daniel Cerezuelle

(translated by Lucia Gill)

In 1967 the French government launched an operation to develop the Aquitaine Coast (the southwestern Atlantic coast of France). In theory, the intent was to combine protection of the environment with the development of regional tourism. By 1972 the government published its tourism development plan and created the "Interdepartmental Commission for the Development of the Aquitaine Coast" (abbreviated below as the "Development Commission") to put the plan into action.

Realizing that such state-run projects usually led, in practice, not to the protection but to the pillaging of nature by tourism, certain citizen groups (ecologists, leftists, and regionalists) began to worry. Bernard Charbonneau, the long-time friend of Jacques Ellul, decided to lead a rigorous critical study of this operation and gather together the various opposing voices. His initiative led to the creation of the "Committee for the Defense of the Aquitaine Coast" (abbreviated below as the "Defense Committee"), officially founded in July 1973. Charbonneau was the first president from 1973 to 1977, succeeded by Jacques Ellul from 1977 to 1979.

Ellul's and Charbonneau's involvement in the Defense Committee translated their concern into a serious search for new forms of political action with which to confront the technocratic rationalism which characterized the government as well as all existing political parties. Having participated in the Defense Committee (I was the secretary for several years), I observed firsthand their efforts to invent new relationships between the citizens and the state, to raise questions concerning the limits of the technicization of life, and, finally, to search for alternatives to the government's approach to development.

A Technocratic Dream:

The Development of the Aquitaine Coast

Decided upon in the full technological ecstasy of the Sixties, the development of the Aquitaine Coast was to be the most ambitious example yet of the comprehensive technocratic development of a territory. In order to understand the questions raised by the Defense Committee, it is necessary to recall briefly what this area was before the Development Commission took control.

The Aquitaine Coast consists of more than 200 miles of large sandy beaches and great dunes. Behind the dunes (planted with a ground cover to keep the sand from blowing away), great pines flourished all the way to the edges of the inland lakes and their currents of sweet water. Inland from the marshy shores of the east extended an immense forest of approximately four million acres. The area had been transformed during the period of 1780 to 1870 by the planting of the forests. The climate was damp and mild, often sunny in summer and autumn.

This was an expanse at the same time natural, unspoiled, and humane. The first attraction and charm of the "Landes" is its solitary immensity, embellished by both nature and human initiative. It represented a vast and rare temperate environment in Europe, where one could live, walk, hunt, and fish freely. The first to profit from this free richness were the Landais people, coming from varied situations, and able there to develop their own sensibilities and style of life.

For a long time, the growth of tourism had been limited by relatively slow economic development, various crises and wars, and also the fact that a large part of the coastal forest was owned by the state. Until World War Two, tourists were limited to just a few resorts, isolated from one another by miles of beaches and pine forests. The lakes were almost devoid of motorboats and sailboats. It was necessary to go many miles by rowboat to be able to camp at the foot of sandy cliffs bordered with pine trees on the superb western shores.

In November 1971, after a flight over the area, Jerome Monod, a representative for the territorial development, declared: "what struck us the most is that this coast is practically empty." In November 1975, Michel Poniatowski, Minister of the Interior, compared the Aquitaine Coast with the equally virginal coasts of Scandinavia. The Aquitaine Coast was the last available leisure coastal expanse in Europe.

The Development Commission was committed to two goals which it claimed to reconcile, even though they were evidently contradictory: (1) making financially viable this vein of lush green expanse in developing tourism, while at the same time, (2) protecting it from the invasion of tourists. In their own terms, they wished to "protect nature, make a touristic capital of Aquitaine, and manage it well for all." The focal point of the project would be a great canal connecting the lakes and the future developments. It was proposed "to develop Aquitaine for the people of Aquitaine, with respect for their values and with concern for their well-being."

The potential value of tourism was emphasized. A growth of available "beds" for tourists, from 450,000 in 1970 to 770,000 in 1980, was projected. The Development Commission would advertise in foreign markets in order to provoke a growth of about fifty per cent. With the canal and highways providing total access to the beaches, the lakes, and the forest, the tourists invaded the virgin site. "No problem," it was argued, since the exploitation of the Aquitaine Coast will be accompanied by the protection of nature! "It is possible to protect certain sites while equipping others with facilities especially sought after by tourists."

However, one cannot protect nature without sacrificing the touristic development; developing tourism is not possible without, to some degree, sacrificing nature. It was necessary to choose between the two, and the establishment of 300,000 or 400,000 beds in ten years shows what was the choice! The areas set aside as Nature Reserves were in a ratio of about one in a hundred to those equipped with various tourist diversions.

Thus, the "socialization of nature" did not sustain the goal of preserving nature. On the contrary, the state gave up its land and invested money and energy, imposed constraints and passed the measures necessary for the exploitation of the last great green coastal expanse of Europe, to the profit of capitalist enterprise.

Citizens Against the Administration

In the beginning the Development Commission proceeded in a rather democratic manner with a series of consultations. They gath-

ered together, on an informal basis, a number of experts of all types (biologists, geographers, sociologists, economists, et al) who gave their advice on the various projects as each came up. At this early stage, then, there was truly a thoughtful, well-conceived consultation.

Eventually, however (and inevitably), these discussions resulted in some prudent, cautionary, and even immobilizing recommendations. Suddenly, then, there appeared in these meetings some new characters: representatives of tourism and hotel interests, who came to explain forcefully that, while all these intellectual considerations were very nice, there remained a major imperative. And this major imperative always was the development of touristic activity, at all costs. After some fairly lively exchanges, the consultations with the experts disappeared.

For the Development Commission, the development of industry was the only thing that really counted. After all, they argued, tourism was a matter of general interest. The "right to tourism" was proclaimed. Their opponents had in mind only "particular personal interests." People were accused of defending their privileges as vacationing persons who were "already installed and rich." Local businesses which objected were "without great importance." It was essential that everyone should be able to vacation on the seashore; those who opposed this idea were "awful, undemocratic reactionaries."

The argument was that the general interest is superior to the interest of particulars, that is, to all personal interests. And only the political power and the administration are capable of appreciating, understanding, and promoting this general interest. Individual citizens are radically incapable of understanding it. All local interests must yield to this general interest, which is indistinguishable from global and economic politics. Naturally, it was from Paris that one could best appreciate the general interest of the Aquitaine region and its people!

The means for managing the Aquitaine region was thus a centralized power: an "interdepartmental commission." This was supposed to be a new kind of administration, outside the normal constraints of traditional administrative organs. It was to be a commission with a determined goal in mind, but flexible and efficient in practice. But, contrary to what was envisioned, it was much more centralized than any of its bureaucratic counterparts. In reality, even when local businesses and architects were participating, everything was conceived and decided in Paris. The impetus all came from Paris. The management work came from Paris and was imposed by Paris. The local organization was reduced to being a link of transmission. In reality, the local citizens found themselves without any power or control before the decisions of this administration, with its suddenly appearing memos, flyers, criticisms, and notices of infractions (always justified, of course, as "shared decisions"!).

In principle, interested parties could always intervene, protest, or cause a project to be delayed or rescinded, by insisting on the principle of "shared decision-making." But at a certain point in the undertaking of a project on the land, one could no longer stop the process without having to pay out damages to the delayed businesses. Thus, developers would try to keep a project fairly secret up until the work had begun. At that moment, there was no more possible action, no further recourse, for the citizens and the defense committees! There were many examples of this sort of tactic and of this kind of administrative judgement.

The Development Commission observed none of the principles of respectful management that it had earlier enumerated and proclaimed. The Commission, relying on its numerous, well-paid, full-time personnel, systematically practiced administrative secrecy, arranging important financial affairs and manipulating the local media. In contrast, the Defense Committee dedicated to the resistance was composed of members of limited financial means, and little free time for the struggle outside of their regular professional obligations.

Reinventing a Minimum of Local Democracy

From the beginning, the Defense Committee had to define its positions over against a project which prided itself on the unforgiving logic of a technocratic business. The principal objective of the Committee had to be the awakening of the general conscience. They had to demystify for the local populations the anesthetizing treatises of the Development Commission. This consciousness-raising intended to put pressure on municipalities which, until then were completely subjugated to the project. It was necessary to analyze the ideological presuppositions of the plan, its proposed avenues of realization, its socio-economic consequences for the land, and to focus on the precise problems engendered by the development for a given locality.

The Committee had to create a global critique (i.e., on the level of the masterplan itself) and avoid the snares of traditional, local defense associations which couldn't see further than their own narrow territorial interests. The challenge was to show the internal coherence and the overall relationship among the various urban operations projected for the whole length of the coast. The concerned populations needed help to understand that threats to a given locality resulted from a large, elaborate plan contrived by public powers from far away. The work of the Defense Committee was to help them understand their future local destructions as a part of a general and abstract plan.

In order to achieve these objectives, it was necessary to make use of flexible structures and methods of action. At the level of the organization, the Committee had itself to be an example of local committee coordination and an authentic reflection of the plan. From the beginning, the Defense Committee tried to motivate the formation of local committees and encourage them to take charge of the development. Several new local committees were born through these efforts. Where local committees already existed, the Defense Committee's job was simply to respond to local initiatives and to the hopes and wishes expressed by the population. The Defense Committee did not want to proceed in the same technocratic fashion as the Development Commission. This led to a certain weakness of organization inherent in the Defense Committee. In many places menaced by the operations of the development, populations didn't react and the birth of local groups was rendered difficult or impossible.

Most local representatives on both the Right and the Left basically supported the developers. The political climate of the Sixties and early Seventies was not hospitable to a debate. Obviously, the touristic development of the Aquitaine Coast escaped a classical political analysis. It was not a question of defending the Aquitaine Coast against abominable promoters (as was the case on the shore of the Mediterranean), but of combatting an undertaking of the centralized state. Thus, the Defense Committee had to organize itself as a local regional opposition force. In order to put the Commission in jeopardy, and to assure its failure, it was necessary for the Committee, consequently, to recruit every person who had decided to fight, no matter what their political persuasion. It was a condition of the efficacy and credibility of the Committee that it maintain at all costs its political pluralism. Certain members thought that the Committee might be able to become a new institutional presence, a new force of regional opposition hostile to all foolish economic development by official politics.

Practically speaking, the result of the work of the Defense Committee was the demystification of the administrative process. In the context of the late Sixties, the whole notion of "development" was surrounded by such an official mythology that it was difficult to imagine the birth of any opposition whatever to the projects of the Development Commission. Against the formidable propaganda of the architects of development with their proposal of a local version of the myth of the ideal city, the Committee gave itself over to the patient work of demystification.

The Defense Committee made use of official documents in confronting the people with the ecological, social and economic realities

of the coast. It made efforts to bring about a serious discussion of the true dimensions of the developers' plans. Instead of the unrealistic dreams of the official plans, it was necessary to explain to local populations what would be the real impact on their lives of the various great upheavals entailed by the development plan. That was not always easy; it challenged the imagination. Translating the abstract discussions of the developers into concrete, understandable language and reality, constituted the core task of the Defense Committee.

Slowly the Defense Committee's criticism of the Development Commission penetrated the spirits of the people and their initial enthusiasm gave way to a certain distrust. This demystification also had an effect in some hearts in the high places of the technocracy. A certain reticence toward the projects of the Development Commission was manifested little by little in some official milieux.

And then the economic situation changed. It is necessary to emphasize the decisive role of economic difficulties, including unemployment problems (which haven't ceased to be felt since the middle of the Seventies). On one hand, these difficulties have incited local collectivities to accept, and even to solicit, any old project of development, even the most frantic and disorganized. On the other hand, there is much less public money to spend on the forced development of the tourist industry!

In the final accounting, the grandiose plan for the comprehensive development of the Aquitaine Coast was chiseled away. Little by little, the Development Commission quietly retreated and finally was dissolved, without ever having figured out either economic development or environmental protection—any better than would have already been done by private or local initiatives.

The Defense Committee for the Aquitaine Coast dissolved shortly afterwards. Despite its limited resources it had done a useful work. They managed to prevent some stupid projects from occurring. And they developed and experienced some new forms of citizenship and political action. Without these it would not have known how to collectively triumph over development and the imperatives of technology. The experience of the Defense Committee shows that resistance is not impossible.

Notes from "Ellul's Ethics and the Apocalyptic Practice of Law" by Ken Morris

1. (New York: Seabury, 1967), p 2.
2. Sylvain Dujancourt, "Law and Ethics in Ellul's Theology," *The Ellul Forum*, (No. 5; June 1990) pp. 10-11. Readers of *The Ellul Forum* will recall Dujancourt's brief essay, the abstract to Dujancourt's Master's Thesis, as an excellent summary of *The Theological Foundation of Law*.
3. *The Presence of the Kingdom*, p 6.
4. See William Stringfellow, "Kindred Mind and Brother", *Sojourners* (June 1977). Stringfellow noted that his and Ellul's views, although analytically very similar, were reached independently of the other. Stringfellow attributed this correlation to the Holy Spirit's prompting.
5. *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 23.
6. *The Theological Foundation of Law* (New York: Seabury, 1969), p. 139.
7. *Ibid*, p. 13.
8. *The Presence of the Kingdom*, p. 14.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
11. *The Theological Foundation of Law*, p. 105.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 79.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
16. See *The Presence of the Kingdom*, pp. 32, 48; *The Theological Foundation of Law*, p. 101.
17. See, for example, Sol M. Linowitz's *The Betrayed Profession: Lawyering at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Scribner's, 1994). Linowitz critiques the commercialism of law while having profited spectacularly from a long career which included positions as senior partner at the Coudert Brothers law firm and former Chairman and General Counsel for Xerox Corporation.
18. See *Money and Power* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 99.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
20. ABA Model Code of Professional Responsibility EC 7-1 (1981).
21. See Thomas Shaffer, "The Unique, Novel, and Unsound Adversary Ethic," *Vanderbilt Law Review* 41 (1988): 697. Shaffer draws on Michael Schudson's "Public, Private, and Professional Lives: The Correspondence of David Dudley Field and Samuel Bowles," *American Journal of Legal History* 21 (1977): 191, wherein Schudson discusses the historical and cultural developments of the era.
22. "The Unique, Novel, and Unsound Adversary Ethic," *Vanderbilt Law Review* 41 (1988).
23. Ogletree, "The Death of Discretion? Reflections on the Federal Sentencing Guidelines," *Harvard Law Review* 101 (1988): 1939.
24. *The Theological Foundation of Law*, p. 136.
25. See Stanley Hauerwas & Jeff Powell, "Creation as Apocalyptic: A Tribute to William Stringfellow" in S. Hauerwas, *Dispatches from The Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 106-15.

Ellul's Ethics and the Apocalyptic Practice of Law

by Ken Morris

William Stringfellow noted in his introduction to the 1967 paperback edition of *The Presence of the Kingdom* that Jacques Ellul's work became known in theological and legal quarters in America in the early 1960s through the publication in English of *The Presence of the Kingdom* and *The Theological Foundation of Law*, and their use in preparation for a national conference on theology and law.¹ Apart from this initial interest, however, the relevance of Ellul's ethics for the practice of law in America has received relatively little attention.² If it is true, as de Tocqueville observed a century and a half ago, that in the United States all important political questions are ultimately treated as legal questions, then there is no subject more in need of a trenchant Ellulian analysis. This brief essay is meant to spark further thinking and action in this area, for both myself as I begin the practice of law, and others.

The lack of attention to Ellul's judicial thought is surprising, given his academic interest in legal history and the fact that his sociological and theological analyses all concern issues closely related to the practice of law in the United States, e.g. politics, language, economics, and technology. Certainly Stringfellow, an American attorney who acknowledged Ellul as an "extraordinary witness,"³ recognized the importance of Ellul's work for American attorneys. However, Stringfellow's work should be considered parallel to Ellul's rather than as an example of its application to the American context.⁴

The American legal community's lack of interest in Ellul's work is likely due in large part to that community's aversion to any religious element in public discourse. Yale law professor Stephen Carter has made the cynical but accurate observation that, "One good way to end a conversation—or start an argument—is to tell a group of well-educated professionals [i.e., lawyers] that you hold a political position (preferably a controversial one, such as being against abortion or pornography) because it is required by your understanding of God's will."⁵ Yet the American public's growing dissatisfaction with the exclusion of faith stances from our political and legal cultures may indicate that Ellul's judicial thought is ripe for rediscovery—if only as an alternative to calls by the "Christian Right" for a return to a jurisprudence based on "natural law" and "biblical principles."

Ellul's early judicial thought, outlined in *The Theological Foundation of Law*, clearly reflects his characteristic procedural dialectic of holding sociological analysis in tension with biblical revelation. Unlike the bulk of his subsequent work, however, *The Theological Foundation of Law* mixes sociological, historical, and theological analyses in the same study. Ellul began with a sociological and historical analysis of law as human phenomenon and followed up by relating this analysis to what the biblical revelation had to say about law in his time. This is the method that Ellul proposed for those who would follow up on his judicial thought.⁶

More than anything else, the ability of Ellul both to challenge and to confuse arose from his insistence that our reflections be shaped by a fundamental christocentric query: What does the Lordship of Jesus Christ mean for X (politics, law, urbanization, the media, economics, etc.)? Thus, when considering the relevance of Ellul's ethics for the practice of law in the United States, we should begin with the same question: "[W]hat [does] the Lordship of Jesus Christ mean for law [law as it exists [in the United States]], and what function [has God] assigned to law?"⁷

This is an awkward enough question in the academy; in the legal profession it generates confused stares. Attorneys and the courts have long been socialized into the conviction that to get along (and to get ahead) you do not mention your religious beliefs. As a result, for the majority of American attorneys, an attempt to link concretely the

Lordship of Christ to anything practical, decisional, or empirical, outside the realm of personal spirituality, is an embarrassment at best.

For Ellul, of course, it is impossible for the follower of Jesus Christ to dissociate life into "personal spiritual" and "practical material" spheres.⁸ The follower of Jesus Christ takes seriously both the Fall and the promised return of Christ, and therefore must consider each moment as "apocalyptic"—penultimate to being confronted by God's judgment and mercy.⁹ In Ellul's apocalyptic, taking the Fall seriously means recognizing the world's affirmation of death as the only ultimate reality. Taking the promised return of Christ seriously means living in expectation that Christ's imminent return will shatter the world's affirmation of the power of death. In light of this eschatological hope, the Christian's role is to plunge into the social and political problems of the world, not in order to usher in God's Kingdom, but to contribute to the preservation of the world until Christ's return.¹⁰

Ellul viewed human law as playing a particular role in the order of preservation prior to God's final judgment. Law exists for the sake of the final judgment, solely as an instrument of organization and preservation, and is therefore entirely secular. [Law] is designed only to provide the framework of the spiritual event of God's speaking, and not to translate God's word or to mummify it in legal formulas.¹¹ Nevertheless, law is related to biblical revelation by the concept of justice. In devising laws for society, human beings seek to establish viable modes of organization, given existing political, economic, and technical circumstances. When that organization contributes to the order of preservation, then the law is "just." When the law "provokes disorder and death" or "maintains a formal order, but through oppression or rigidity makes the spiritual life of individuals or groups impossible," then it is "unjust."¹²

The biblical revelation discloses that certain fundamental elements cannot be ignored if law is to be just, i.e., contributing to the order of preservation. A just law must, at a minimum, take into account the existence of: (1) institutions, such as marriage, property, and the state, which are created by God with a soteriological purpose, and (2) human rights, which are conferred by God in the act of covenanting with human beings.¹³ These rights have no specific, set content; they are contingent upon the claimant's historical situation.¹⁴ Rather than being intrinsic in nature, human rights are instrumental for the order of preservation. God recognizes human rights so that human beings have space within which to covenant with God. Thus, the content of human rights depends on what is necessary at a given point in history for hearing and responding to the word of covenant spoken by God, both to live and to preserve life.¹⁵ The content of the Christian's apocalyptic calling is to be continuously working to discern and uphold the human rights and institutional structures necessary to provide room for individuals to live, hear, and respond to judgment and grace in the word of God.¹⁶

The Apocalyptic Practice of Law

If Christians in general have an apocalyptic calling, then Christian attorneys have a special calling to the apocalyptic practice of law arising from the Law's special role in the order of preservation. American attorneys and jurists face a number of barriers in their attempts to work out this apocalyptic calling. Some of the most important themes in such a legal practice would include the following:

First of all, it is a commonplace to note that the legal profession in America has surrendered to crass commercialism. This is true not only because of the manner in which law firms are operated, but also

because of the staggering debts that law students compile as an investment in expected lucrative careers (only to discover later that they are chained to long hours of tedious work as firm associates in order to keep making loan payments and to achieve some expected standard of living). Critics of this commercialism are found in all camps. More often than not, the proposed solution is a rejection of the marketplace morality and a return to oldtime professionalism.¹⁷

Ellul's writings on money and power help the apocalyptic attorney to recognize that commercialism, as an outgrowth of Mammon's spiritual power, does not easily surrender its grip. The apocalyptic attorney is called to introduce free grace into this world of selling, buying, and competition.¹⁸ For the American attorney, acts of free grace would include anything that served to desacralize the economic bottom line. From a realistic perspective, however, these acts of grace will not overthrow Mammon's power. The apocalyptic attorney is not meant to be effective so much as to serve as a sign, pointing to the ultimate eschatological subjection of Mammon to God.¹⁹

A second barrier facing apocalyptic attorneys in the United States is the adversary ethic. In the adversary system, American attorneys have a duty to represent their clients "zealously within the bounds of the law."²⁰ As long as their client's objectives are lawful, attorneys are obligated to pursue those objectives through any legally permissible means. Moreover, attorneys are not implicated in the moral quality of their clients' conduct because the adversary ethic views them as merely agents and not principals.

Legal scholars have linked the rise of the adversary ethic and its accompanying rhetoric to the rapid commercial growth in the United States at the end of the 19th century.²¹ Leading attorneys sought justification for their representation of the "robber barons" of the late 19th century in response to public perception that they were acting immorally in protecting and representing this form of commerce. They found this justification by formulating a professional ethic based on legal procedure and the individual rights of their clients. As a result of such an approach to professional services, attorneys dissociated their professional morality from the public's sense of the common good.

Legal ethicist Thomas Shaffer has argued that such dissociation is not necessarily immoral.²² A professional is entitled to consider only one narrow aspect of his or her client's situation when there are others who will attend to the client's other needs. However, if the attorney attends only to the client's technically lawful objective, there must remain enough of a shared sense of purpose and value in the community that it can effectively judge the client's conduct. Without such a shared public telos, professional narrowness undermines the common good. The American public lacks any strong sense of a secular telos, let alone any theological one. In addition, for the Christian attorney the adversary ethic rationalizes the dissociation of the "personal spiritual" and the "practical material" spheres and therefore is incommensurate with apocalyptic practice.

A third barrier to apocalyptic practice is the "technicization" of law, whereby judicial technique is dominated by procedure and order. Since Ellul's warnings forty years ago, this process has only accelerated in the United States. Indicative of this development are the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, adopted by Congress in 1987. These mandatory sentencing guidelines were intended to "eliminate the historical disparity in sentences imposed upon similarly situated individuals for similar conduct."²³ Historically, one of the main barriers to overcoming sentencing disparity has been the inability of judges to agree on a primary goal in sentencing. Where one judge might regularly impose stiff sentences in retributive punishment, another might weigh the offender's potential for rehabilitation more heavily and impose a more lenient sentence for the same offense.

Congress could have attempted to channel judicial discretion by formulating a coherent national sentencing policy that clarified the purpose behind sentencing. Instead, it codified judicial technique at the expense of individual judges' discernment. The Sentencing Guidelines adopted by Congress minimize or ignore criteria which

are best applied by judicial discretion (unique characteristics of the offender) and emphasize criteria which are empirically measurable (general characteristics of the offense). While this approach has been successful in reducing statistical sentencing disparities within the particular empirical categories addressed in the Guidelines, it has exacerbated disparities in other categories and continues to undermine the public's confidence in the fairness of the criminal justice system.

A fourth barrier to apocalyptic law practice is the confusion and lack of consensus in the church on the role that God has for law. Ellul called on the church (and, implicitly, apocalyptic attorneys) to "examine and to evaluate the foundation and the purpose of law according to the criteria which it alone possesses."²⁴ But to take up this calling, Christians must first receive instruction on the foundation and purpose of law, in order to develop a "juridical consciousness." American Christians have been quick to use the law where it would advance their causes, but often without any of the biblical and theological reflection that a juridical consciousness demands.

There are hopeful exceptions to this tendency, however. William Stringfellow sought to instill a juridical consciousness among the Christian laity. More recently, Stanley Hauerwas, Thomas Shaffer at the University of Notre Dame Law School, and H. Jefferson Powell, Professor of Law and Divinity at Duke University, have offered helpful theological analyses of the legal profession and constitutional interpretation. Powell's recent book, *The Moral Tradition of American Constitutionalism* (Duke University Press, 1993) draws on John Howard Yoder's theological account of the state and Alasdair MacIntyre's framework for the critique of western liberalism in order to challenge unquestioned theological approval of the American constitutional order. Not surprisingly, Powell and Hauerwas recently wrote a tribute to Stringfellow's apocalyptic practices.²⁵

Stringfellow wrote for the laity in the Church. So far, Powell and Shaffer have tended to write for the legal academy. Hauerwas writes for both the theological academy and church laity, as well as seeking to engage readers unaccustomed to reading Christian theology. Perhaps it is in the tentative interface between law school and divinity school, a position occupied by professors Hauerwas and Powell, that the urgently needed juridical consciousness will begin to take hold.

Notes (See page 10)

Book Reviews

Sur Jacques Ellul, edited by Patrick Troude-Chastenet (Le Bouscat, France: L'Esprit du Temps, 1994). 359 pages. Published with the aid of the Région Aquitaine and the Association Jacques Ellul.

Reviewed by Joyce Hanks, University of Scranton

Like most Festschrift-type publications, the impressive tome published for Jacques Ellul¹ in 1983 received little attention. The vast majority of its entries made no reference to Ellul, and most of the rest mentioned his name only in passing. The volume was presented to him, its contents having been collected for him, in his honor. But it was in no sense a publication of articles about him.

By way of collections of essays on Ellul, except for journal issues dedicated to him, usually in English, we had only two volumes: *Introducing Jacques Ellul*, edited by James Holloway,² and the more recent *Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays*, edited by Clifford Christians and Jay Van Hook.³

No such work had appeared on Ellul in French until last year, the year of his death, when his long-time assistant at the University of Bordeaux, Patrick Troude-Chastenet, carefully assembled most of the papers given at the first conference dedicated to Ellul's thought, held in Bordeaux in November 1993.⁴

As one of only six conference participants from North America,⁵ I was very grateful to have the opportunity to read most of its papers in written form. Concurrent sessions forced attendees to miss the presentation of many of the papers, so that the published volume constitutes a necessary completion of the conference, even for those who were able to take in the sessions.

Conference contributions fall readily into several sets of categories, including the various disciplines directing different speakers' inquiries. I have chosen to approach them according to the degree to which they take issue with Ellul's thought, beginning with Ivan Illich's summary remarks. Reserved for the end of the conference (a brief address by Ellul followed, closing the final session), Illich's tribute outlines his significant debt as a scholar to Ellul, and focuses on the relation of Technique to Christianity and to the five senses.

Other papers seeking mainly to summarize, extend, defend, or apply some aspect of Ellul's work include Alain Gras's "Dépendance des grands systèmes techniques et liberté humaine" [Human freedom and dependence on large technical systems]. Gras, who teaches Sociology at the Sorbonne, explores what he calls "macro technical systems" and the autonomy of Technique, especially in the areas of energy, transportation, and signs and symbols. He explores the hidden costs and the sociological causes and effects of these infrastructures. Building on Ellul's insights, Gras proposes an enhancement of human freedom by means of such changes as reducing energy needs by means of small, locally-managed techniques. He recommends decentralizing many aspects of modern society.

André Vitalis, another sociologist, contributes "Informatisation et autonomie de la technique" [Technique as information and as autonomous] to the volume. He concentrates on Ellul's contribution to information theory and his reaction to the ideology that has grown up around the computer "revolution." The autonomy of Technique, understood as Technique's independence from political decision-making, economic constraints, and ethical and moral considerations,

constitutes for Vitalis one of Ellul's most useful insights. Vitalis reviews some of the most telling criticisms of the concept.

A second group of contributors concentrates on offering background for understanding Ellul's thought, or information for comparing his work with someone else's. Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, a political scientist, gives helpful background on French social and political movements, in "Aux origines de la pensée de Jacques Ellul? Technique et Société dans la réflexion des mouvements personalistes des années 30" [At the root of Jacques Ellul's thought? Technique and society in the reflections of the personalist movements of the 1930's]. Loubet del Bayle points out parallels and points at which Ellul diverged from Personalism, "Ordre Nouveau," and the early years of the "Jeune Droite" movement, including Technique as risk, means and ends, and the "necessary revolution."

Daniel Cérézuelle, a philosopher, compares Ellul with his lifelong friend, Bernard Charbonneau, in "La critique de la modernité chez Charbonneau: Aspects d'un compagnonnage intellectuel" [Charbonneau's criticism of modernity: Aspects of an intellectual companionship]. Cérézuelle traces their work together in establishing groups for reflection, the transformation of society, and ecological efforts. Charbonneau, unlike Ellul, laid particular emphasis on agriculture and the destruction of the countryside, and was especially concerned with issues of development.

Maurice Weyembergh, a philosopher at the Free University of Brussels, compares Ellul and Martin Heidegger ("J. Ellul et M. Heidegger: Le prophète et le penseur" [J. Ellul and M. Heidegger: The prophet and the thinker]). Ellul (the "prophet") and Heidegger (the "thinker"), using completely different methods, arrive at somewhat similar conclusions regarding Technique, but each fails to offer much in the way of concrete solutions to the problems posed by Technique. Although both attempt to understand Technique as it really is, Heidegger seeks its essence, whereas Ellul finds it to be a system. Ellul proves more pessimistic than Heidegger on the role of art in the technological society.

Marc Van den Bossche, also a philosopher at the Free University of Brussels, offers a more detailed comparison of Ellul and Heidegger on Technique and art, in "Technique, esthétique, et métaphysique: L'art et la technique chez Ellul et Heidegger" [Technique, esthetics, and metaphysics: Art and Technique in Ellul and Heidegger]. They agree, basically, on the relationship between art and Technique, but differ with regard to the definition of truth. Ellul deals more with the practical side of Technique, whereas Heidegger finds Technique to be the culmination of Western metaphysical thought.

Lucien Sfez, a political scientist at the Sorbonne, in his "Technique et communication" [Technique and communication], compares Ellul on Technique with Gilbert Simondon (who constituted a frequent point of reference for several other contributors also). In Simondon's "technical culture," means and ends are not distinguished, nor are subject and object. Sfez emphasizes Ellul's perspicacity in foreseeing the danger of the culture of Technique, of technological discourse.

A third group of speakers at the conference offered substantial criticism of Ellul's thought, within the context of their marked degree of agreement with him. Troude-Chastenet, in "Technique et politique dans l'oeuvre de Jacques Ellul" [Technique and politics in the work of Jacques Ellul], offers several reasons to explain why Ellul was so little appreciated in France. He summarizes Ellul on Technique as related to propaganda, politics, and revolution, and suggests how his theology can be seen as influenced by his work in sociology, and vice versa. In his conclusion, dedicated to advantages and

disadvantages of Ellul's approach to Technique and politics, Troude-Chastenet criticizes Ellul's definition of politics as too associated with the State, and his definition of Technique as too broad. Ellul's view of the State dates from the 1930's, and ignores recent developments in which the State seems too weak rather than too powerful. Troude-Chastenet also disagrees with Ellul's frequently repeated assertion that in the final analysis, Right and Left, democracy and dictatorship, tend to share in the same weaknesses, due to their involvement with Technique. The author also faults Ellul's exaggeration and "prophetic style" as tending to weaken his arguments, and questions some of his theological assertions.

Serge Latouche's "Raison technique, raison économique, et raison politique: Ellul face à Marx et Tocqueville" [Technical, economic, and political rationality: Ellul over against with Marx and Tocqueville] refers only briefly to Karl Marx and Alexis de Tocqueville. Rather, he concentrates on Ellul, whom he finds too pessimistic with regard to Technique. Latouche believes Technique will diminish in importance, since totalitarian governments do not support Technique effectively, society calls it into question each time a disaster occurs, and no one can muster the increasingly costly means necessary to advance its development. Furthermore, market economies, emphasizing economic usefulness, conflict with Technique, which favors efficiency.

In "Pour une approche constructive de l'autonomie de la Technique" [Towards a constructive approach to the autonomy of Technique], Pierre de Coninck, a Canadian professor of engineering, finds that Ellul has equated the terms "autonomy" and "independence" with reference to Technique. Since only a small proportion of Techniques that could be developed are, in fact, developed, Technique cannot be described as "causal," as Ellul does. The "one best way" is not always chosen. De Coninck proposes the development of a new concept of Technique based on constructivist conceptualizations. For him, technique is creative, and constitutes an open rather than a closed system. It is codependent with human beings and their *milieu*, so that society and Technique determine each other. Since each situation is unique, it is important to involve people as much as possible in decision making with respect to Technique.

Gilbert Hottois (who teaches philosophy at the Free University of Brussels), in "L'impossible symbole ou la question de la 'Culture technique'" [The impossible symbol or the question of "technical culture"], also parts company with Ellul on the issue of creativity in Technique. He believes Ellul concentrated on the organization, systematization, and power of Technique to the exclusion of the creativity that can be involved in its development. As a result, Ellul denies the existence of the philosophy of Technique and of "technical culture" (as developed in Simondin), seeing Technique and symbol as radically opposed. Hottois, however, situating himself somewhere between Ellul's and Simondin's views, believes the creative aspect of Technique gives it a symbolic dimension. This symbolic aspect often occurs after the discovery of a technical innovation, thus adding a dimension of mystery and risk to the technical process. Like de Coninck, Hottois believes there is room for choice in the technological society.

Although he agrees with Ellul on many points, Jean-Louis Seurin, a political scientist at the University of Bordeaux, concentrates mainly on their disagreements in "Jacques Ellul: L'interprétation de la politique à la lumière de la Bible" [Jacques Ellul: The interpretation of politics in the light of the Bible]. Seurin takes up the issue mentioned by Troude-Chastenet concerning Ellul's failure to distinguish adequately between democracy and totalitarianism. He also disagrees profoundly with Ellul's view of politics as the incarnation of evil and lying. Seurin suggests that Ellul refers more to ideology and political propaganda than to ordinary, practical politics, although he agrees with Ellul that politics involves the will to power.

A fourth group of conference speakers emphasized their sharp disagreements with Ellul. Friedrich Rapp, a German philosopher, in "Il faut analyser le tout pour mieux le comprendre" [One must analyse

the whole in order to understand it better], criticizes the undue importance Ellul gives to the role of Technique as an abstract totality. Ellul personalizes Technique, and sees all human activity as involving means to an end, whereas Rapp believes we are most human when not trying to achieve a desired end. Like Latouche, Rapp believes Technique may well diminish significantly in importance in the future, and calls for a more detailed, complex analysis of Technique than Ellul offers, taking into account a series of societal factors that Rapp believes function independently of Technique (including secularization, democratization, individualism, and moral and cultural pluralism).

Franck Tinland, who teaches philosophy at the University of Montpellier in France, traces the history leading up to Ellul's concept of a new sort of technical system involving a new level of interconnectedness. Tinland compares language and Technique, and explores the possibility that the technical system constitutes a profoundly human development that we should welcome.

In "Sacré, technique et société" [Sacred, Technique, and society], Gabriel Vahanian, a University of Strasbourg theologian, takes issue with Ellul for three main reasons: Ellul overestimates Technique, underestimates religion, and underestimates society and culture. Vahanian especially objects to Ellul's dichotomy of faith and world and to his neglect of Biblical utopia.

Lazare Marcelin Poamé, a philosopher from the National University of the Ivory Coast, criticizes Ellul's concept of Technique as the "determining factor" in western society. He finds Ellul's concept of a "technical system" too limiting sociologically, and believes the transfer of technology can take place without significant cultural effects, as he believes Ellul says it did in Japan. Poamé offers various explanations for the failure of efforts to modernize Africa.

Having arrived during the giving of Vahanian's paper, Ellul spoke the final words of the conference. He traced his debts to friends and family, and underlined the importance of the separation of theology and sociology in his work. An English translation of Ellul's address was published as "Ellul's Response to the Symposium in his Honor at the University of Bordeaux, November 1993," in *The Ellul Forum*, no. 13 (July 1994), p. 18.

Ellul would have been very pleased to see the publication of this volume, I believe. It explores his thought in depth, from many angles, and seeks to correct and extend it. The Festschrift for Ellul, mentioned above, gives some idea of Ellul's stature in terms of how much he influenced students, perhaps especially those whose theses he directed. The present volume explores in detail part of the considerable impact Ellul has had in the broader French academic world, as well as abroad. More importantly, several of these authors point us to significant areas for future research that would extend dialogue with Ellul's thought in productive ways.

NOTES

¹ Etienne Dravasa et al., eds., *Religion, société et politique: Mélanges en hommage à Jacques Ellul, Professeur Émérite à l'Université de Bordeaux I* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983). 866 pages, over 60 authors.

² James Y. Holloway, ed., *Introducing Jacques Ellul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

³ Clifford G. Christians and Jay M. Van Hook, eds., *Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

⁴ Conference title: "Technique et société dans l'oeuvre de Jacques Ellul," [Technique and society in the work of Jacques Ellul], held on the grounds of the Institut d'Études Politiques de Bordeaux on 12 and 13 November 1993. Papers given at the conference but not available for publication include Carl Mitcham's "The Impact of Ellul's Thought in the United States," Langdon Winner's "The Autonomy of Technique," and Hans Achterhuis's "Jacques Ellul's *Technological Bluff* in the Light of His Earlier Works."

⁵ See my conference report in *The Ellul Forum*, no. 12 (January 1994), p. 2.

Thinking Through Technology: The Path between Engineering and Philosophy. by Carl Mitcham. University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Reviewed by Pieter Tijmes

University of Twente, The Netherlands.

Carl Mitcham has remained faithful to the idea he formed as an undergraduate in the 1960s: the distinguishing characteristic of our time is technology. This idea has become his continuing philosophical concern and has inspired him to a unremitting exploration of philosophical issues associated with technology. In a certain sense this book is a conclusion of Mitcham's daily pursuits of interpreting technology so far. This recapitulation has become a very interesting introduction to the philosophy of technology.

Probably nobody is so well informed about the literature on this field of philosophy as Carl Mitcham. In this book he delivers with amazing clarity a survey of the philosophical options, his control of which can be concluded from the many shrewd comparisons and fruitful suggestions. He is an ecumenical thinker: nobody is refused and everybody is accepted. He who has made a contribution gets the appropriate place in relation to the others. In short, in characteristic and well chosen wording and rewording Carl Mitcham presents the thinkers of technology. In doing this he puts great stress on the acoustic space he presupposes in his readers, so that his compromise between treating the selected authors exhaustively and concisely becomes acceptable. Sometimes a host of authors is dropped on a page, but the indications are sufficient for the reader to select his favorites, so that I can personally very well live with his compromises.

This does not change the fact that the book is a philosophical meal too big for dinner guest with a small appetite. The result is that Mitcham's book is a very helpful introduction to the philosophy of technology, though not suited for beginners. It refers often to the books themselves and draws the reader's attention to uncultivated areas. This outcome may be a new start for the readers.

Carl Mitcham does not develop a philosophy of technology of his own. His contribution consists in giving a key to deal with the daily growing literature on philosophy of technology. In the first part of the book Carl Mitcham gives a survey of the historical traditions in the philosophy of technology, in the second part his aim is to highlight conceptual distinctions and issues. These two cross-sections -- historical and analytical -- amount to the pleasant fact that some authors may get double notice. With regard to each cross-section Carl Mitcham has a sorting machine at his disposal. To cover the recorded history of technology he makes an interesting distinction between two approaches to technology: On the one hand we find the approach of engineers and technologists whereas on the other hand we see the approach of scholars in the humanities.

Mitcham begins in chapter 1 with the engineers approach to technology. Special attention is dedicated to a cortege of German engineers/philosophers, from Ernst Kapp (technology as organ projection) to Friedrich Dessauer (technology as encounter with the Kantian thing in itself) about whom Carl Mitcham writes with love. From outside of Germany Gilbert Simondon, Hendrik Rissen and Egbert Schuurman, Juan David Bacca and Mario Bunge, among others, are paid a visit. In the second chapter Carl Mitcham focuses his attention on humanities oriented approaches to philosophy of technology -- which circumscribes as the attempt of religion, poetry and philosophy to bring "non" or "trans"-technological perspectives to bear on interpreting the meaning of technology. He concentrates on four representatives of the romantic tradition, who make, in his opinion, a strong case for the humanities: Lewis Mumford, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Martin Heidegger and Jacques Ellul. These portraits are nice, intriguing, learned and sympathetic respectively.

In the third chapter he comes back to the difference between the engineering and humanities approaches to the philosophy of technol-

ogy and gives them a clearer circumscription. Engineering philosophy of technology is even baptized a **technological philosophy**, because it is one that uses technological criteria and paradigms to question and judge other aspects of human affairs, and thus deepens or extends technological consciousness. Humanities or hermeneutic philosophy of technology seeks by contrast insight into the meaning of technology -- its relation to the transtechnical: art and literature, ethics and politics, religion. It typically deals with nontechnical aspects of the human world and considers how technology may (or may not) fit in or correspond to them. At the same time Carl Mitcham undermines, in a certain sense intentionally, the clear distinction between these two traditions by focusing attention upon the border-traffic between them. In this scope he discusses two attempts to reconcile the differences, one emerging within the engineering community (Society of German Engineers) and another within the philosophical community in the US (John Dewey and Don Ihde). In this context the author also explores the rich Marxist heritage.

In chapter IV he shows a new approach and formulates core issues in the philosophy of technology. With reference to relevant literature the author outlines a spectrum of issues ranging from the conceptual and epistemological through the ethical and political to the religious and metaphysical. Chapter V is the most 'technical' chapter in the book. In it Greek thinking on *techne* is explored as an example of premodern history.

In the second part of the book the analytical cross-section is dealt with. This part is probably closer to the daily experience of the engineer who may consider the first part of the book interesting but without much concrete relevance to his engineering praxis. It is obvious that in each discourse on technology the meaning of it is different. The engineer's usage of the term technology is rather restrictive, but on the tip of the tongue of, for example, Ellul or Heidegger the word 'technology' is extended to a degree where it no longer corresponds to the commonplace interpretation within the domain of the engineering praxis.

In this second part Carl Mitcham discusses philosophy from four different angles. His analytical cross-section is a provisional framework for analysis -- 'definite enough to provide some guidance and open enough to allow for adjustments and the possibility of winding up with new ideas' -- that considers technology respectively as object, as knowledge, as activity, and as volition. Technology as object can be distinguished according to types of objects-utilities, tools, machines - (chapter VII), technology as knowledge according to types of knowledge - maxims, rules, theories - (chapter VIII), technology as activity according to types of activities - making, designing, maintaining, using - (chapter IX), and finally technology as volition according to types of volition - active will, receptive will - (chapter X). These chapters -- in particular the ones on artifacts (chapter IX) -- are very stimulating due to the surprising way many viewpoints of heterogeneous origin are brought together.

From the two mentioned traditions of philosophy -- engineering and humanities philosophy of technology -- Carl Mitcham concludes that studies of philosophy and technology are needed. Therefore, he makes a passionate plea for pluralistic philosophy and technology studies. This synthetic point of view represents his effort to think about technology philosophically, in a way that does not exclude engineering discourse. Thinking through technology is in this way more than an critical introduction, it mirrors a philosophical concern that wants to reflect on technology in order to engage engineering practice and take it seriously. Carl Mitcham meets his own philosophical concern.