

The Ellul Forum

For the Critique of Technological Civilization

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Lewis Mumford, Technological Critic

About This Issue

Lewis Mumford died on January 26, 1990 at the age of 94. He published more than thirty books, ranging from the history of the city and of technology, to architecture, urban planning and the philosophy of life. His critique of technical civilization, although based in Humanism rather than theology, shares a great deal with that of Ellul's. In the annals of the critique of modern technological civilization, he clearly stands with Jacques Ellul as one of the giants of the genre. An issue of the Forum devoted to his work is long overdue. Indeed, putting this issue together, for me, is an act of love and respect for the man who first taught me to think critically, both historically and sociologically, about the role of technology in society.

Lewis Mumford, who was born on October 19th, 1895 in Flushing NY but grew up in Manhattan, where he took undergraduate courses at City College, and graduate courses at the New School and at Columbia, although he never completed a degree. He was living proof that degrees are not essential to being a successful scholar, author and public philosopher. Indeed he went on to teach courses at the New School and at Columbia and to write a weekly column for the New Yorker and was co-founder of the Regional Planning Association of America (1923). His first book was *The Story of Utopias* (1922), followed by *Technics and Civilization* (1934) which, along with *The Culture of Cities* (1938), established his reputation as a historian and social philosopher. The themes of these early works were brought together in his mature work of the 1960's: *The City in History* (1961), and *The Myth of the Machine* (2 vols, 1967 & 1970). Mumford has been described as a combination of objective historian, fiery biblical prophet and romantic poet. He clearly shares at least the first two of these descriptions with Ellul. Mumford's life work was recognized when he received the National Medal of Arts from President Ronald Reagan in July of 1986.

Like Ellul, Mumford was a generalist with a wide command of the historical date interpreted through interdisciplinary perspectives. Ironically, in *The Technological Society*, Ellul refers to him as a "specialist". In *Technics and Civilization*, Mumford had divided the history of technology into three phases, Eotechnics, Paleotechnics and Neotechnics, corresponding to Medieval water and wind technology, followed by coal (steam engine) and iron technology which was being replaced in the twentieth century by new electronics & alloy technology. Mumford argued that the new technologies of Eotechnics offered the possibility of overcoming the centralized mechanization of life of the Paleotechnic period in a way that offered a returned to the decentralized technologies in harmony with nature of the Eotechnic period. To Ellul this argument looked like it was "machine driven" and missed the point that it was not technologies but technique that led to the dehumanization of human beings. However the two-volume *Myth of the Machine* dispelled that illusion. By the 1960's Mumford recognized that his hope that Eotechnics would give birth to a new age of Biotechnic harmony was crushed. In these volumes Mumford went back before the Medieval period to compare modern

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technical civilization to that of the ancient city-states of Egypt and Mesopotamia with their totalitarian mythologies and bureaucracies.

Here he demonstrated that he shared with Ellul the conviction that modern technology mechanized and dehumanized life and that the core of the problem lay in the uncritical worship of technology as that sacred power that falsely promised to fulfill all human needs and desires even as it led us down the path of self-destruction. Like Ellul, he held that it is not the machine that is demonic but the "cult of the machine." Therein lay the demonic power that sustained the "the myth of the mega-machine." Mumford parted with Ellul, however, in developing a humanistic rather than theistic response to the threat of technology. The chief accomplishment of human beings, he argued, is not to be found in our machines and our technical organizations but in the creation of our own humanity. Nevertheless Mumford and Ellul shared a common goal of demythologizing technical civilization and restoring technology to a modest but constructive role in a larger, more organic vision of human life and the human good.

In this issue, James Moore, from the University of South Florida School of Architecture and Community Design, and James W. Carey, from the School of Journalism at Columbia offer us two thoughtful perspectives on Mumford's contribution to the critique of technological civilization, one from the view of urban planning and the other from the perspective of communications theory.

Also in this issue, you will find two book reviews. Andrew Goddard reviews *Sources and Trajectories: Eight Early Articles by Jacques Ellul the Set the Stage*, translated and edited by Marva Dawn. The second, my own most recent book, *The Coming of the Millennium: Good News for the Whole Human Race*, is reviewed by David Gill. I knew I could count on David to provide creative disagreement and he did not disappoint. Finally, you will also find a brief selection from *The Coming of the Millennium*, so you can see first hand what got David so stirred up.

Ellul Publication Project

Money raised by contributions to the Ellul Publication Project are being used to prepare for publication Ellul's *The Ethics of Holiness* under the direction of Gabriel Vahanian in Strasbourg. Checks contributing to this project can still be sent, made out to The Ellul Forum and marked "for the Ellul Publication Project." The address is: The Ellul Forum, Department of Religious Studies, Cooper 304, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620.

New Ellul Bibliography

Joyce Hanks is working on a project to combine the various Ellul bibliographies into a couple of user-friendly volumes including updated materials since the 1995 bibliography. Please forward your list of suggestions (especially for indexing) omissions, errors, etc, to: Joyce M. Hanks, University of Scranton, Scranton PA 18510-4646.

Ellul/Illich Conference on Education and Technology

A conference, examining the significance of the work of Jacques Ellul and of Ivan Illich for policy on the interaction between education and technology will be held at Penn State University, September 17-20, 1997. If you are interested in attending, please contact Chris Dufour. Phone: 814-863-5110. Email: ConferenceInfo1@cde.psu.edu. For more information, visit their web site: <http://www.cde.psu.edu/C&I/Education&Technology/>

New Book on Bernard Charbonneau

A new book has been published in France on the life and work of Bernard Charbonneau, Ellul's life-long friend in the struggle against technocracy. It is published by Bulletin De Commande, a retourner aux Editions Eres, 11 rue Alouettes, 31520 Ramonville, France. The price is 160 Francs. Fax 05 61 73 52 89.

New Courses from Schumacher College in England

"Technology, Nature and Gender" will be taught by Vadana Shiva, Indian environmental activist and scientist and Andrew Kimbrell, founder of the International Center for Technology Assessment Washington D.C. September 7-27, 1997. Another course on Buddhist Economics will be taught by the distinguished scholars Sulak Sivaraksa and AT Ariyaratne, January 11-31, 1998. Interested individuals should contact the College at email address: schumcoll@gn.apc.org

Forum: Lewis Mumford, Technological Critic

Updating the Urban Prospect: Using Lewis Mumford to Critique Current Conditions

by James A. Moore
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Nobody can be satisfied with the form of the city today. Neither as a working mechanism, as a social medium, nor as a work of art does the city fulfill the high hopes that modern civilization has called forth—or even meet our reasonable demands.

Lewis Mumford expressed this sentiment in 1962, as part of a series of articles commissioned by *Architectural Record*, in which he outlined his understanding of the crucial issues facing the contemporary American city. Today, thirty-five years after he penned his words, it is unlikely that his sentiments would receive a lot of opposition. The concerns of Mumford's time, issues that he studied his entire professional life, are still ours today.

Unfortunately, conditions today are distinctly different than they were earlier in the century. We lack urban visionaries such as Mumford to clearly and coherently articulate and debate these critical issues. In many ways, we also lack a forum within which to carry out such debates. The intellectual journals and popular magazines within which Mumford expounded many of his ideas have either disappeared or been subsumed into a sound-bite mindset. Television, despite its enormous potential, has done little to advance critical discourse on the future of our cities. Indeed, the argument can be mounted that television, with its homogenizing influence and its ability to transcend immediate and relevant physical and cultural barriers has done as much to mitigate the time-honored role of the city as a setting for cultural arbitration and discourse. The grove of academe has been replaced by the made-for-TV movie; the forum by the talk show; the salon by the sitcom.

Finally, and most trenchantly, it is conceivable that we've also lost any audience for such debates. The massive out-migration of the past two generations, and the concomitant polarization of race, class and wealth have produced a popular culture that is truly sub-urban in its sentiments and sensibilities. Where urbanism and the city used to signify culture, excitement and the ultimate in sophistication, today, to many, they signify decay, despair and even danger.

Disinvestment in the traditional cities, the de-industrialization of our older cities, the rapid expansion of suburban developments divorced from the original city centers, the increasing fragmentation of community life and the ever-expanding gap between the have's and the have-not's. These are the issues that Mumford pondered during his seventy-year career as

author, educator, lecturer and all-around critic of American society. These issues are still raised at the annual meetings of the American Planning Association, the American Institute of Architects, the Urban Land Institute, the National Civic League, and countless other groups and agencies who are, directly and indirectly, charged with the planning, design and development of today's cities and communities. In many instances, simply by switching the dates, name and images, one could resurrect one of Lewis Mumford's early articles on community design or planning, and find a willing publisher for it in today's professional journals.

Mumford always had a clear idea of what he meant by a "good" community or city. Born on the upper West Side of Manhattan in 1895, he once claimed that his education in urbanism came from walking the streets of the City, "watching buildings being constructed, and talking to the men doing the work—and from studying books in the New York Public Library."¹ The Manhattan that he studied was a closely-knit collection of distinct neighborhoods and districts, areas that were coherent in scale and form, mixed in their uses and functions, sharply defined by the grid-pattern of the City's streets, punctuated by the numerous parks and squares.

New York, at the turn of the century, was a palimpsest of American urban history, carrying traces of all the elements of city-making from our earliest Colonial period to the latest avant-garde urban intervention, the recently-invented commercial office skyscraper. These were woven together in a free-flowing yet structured rhythm that visibly revealed the interdependent essence of the vital city. Mumford's writing,

... incorporated Oriental philosophical concepts which call for an interdependent society rather than a society of independents, the inheritors of Darwin's survival of the fittest. Buildings, streets, trees, sunshine, parks, and fresh air affect people's attitudes towards their sense of community, or the lack of it. America's best hope, Mumford believed, lay with balancing the man-made environment with the natural."²

It was this sense of balance, this sense of completeness that motivated Mumford's thinking and writing on the city. The purpose of a city, he felt, was to foster and instill a sense of belonging to an ever-expanding nested set of communities; the community of the block or the street, the community of the neighborhood, the community of the district or quarter, the community of the whole. The role of the traditional pre-In-

dustrial city was to foster as great a sense of diversity and "positive friction" as possible. Cities were places where "too many people were crowded into too little space," with the result of stimulating creativity and expression. Cities could survive this crowding and friction to the extent that their constituent elements, the neighborhoods, were strong and self-sufficient.

The Industrial city, the "Coketown" of the Paleotechnic Period, as defined and described in his massive study of the history of technology, flew in the face of these holistic and communal goals. The dictates of mechanized industry helped segment cities into distinct and sharply contrasting areas of rich and poor, pristine and polluted, tranquil and squalid.

The massive and obvious inequities of the 19th century city were the subject of much debate and activity at the beginning of this century. Programs existed to provide healthy housing at affordable prices for the hundreds of thousands of people who provided the labor for the factories and mills, shops and commercial facilities. Other programs were begun to create parks and public places for recreation and leisure. A sense of *noblesse-oblige* induced some of the worst of the Paleotechnic exploiters, such as J. P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie, to give back to their communities in the form of libraries, museums, schools, community centers and other sources of cultural and personal advancement. There was reason to believe in the first decades of this century that a new harmonious balance could be re-created within the fabric of our nation's cities.

By the 1920s, however, Mumford was able to detect subtle, yet systemic changes in the nature of the American city. Part of this was due, he felt, to the development of the skyscraper, a building type for which he had mixed emotions. While admiring it as a work of architecture, a distinctly American addition to the litany of building types, Mumford was keenly aware of the capacity of this new building type to dramatically disrupt the traditional economic, social and physical balance of the city. The skyscraper, he noted, was a direct reflection of an increased pre-occupation with land-values and development potentials. In a traditional city, land at the center was the most expensive. The skyscraper, a building that within twenty years of its inception, could stand ten times the height of its surrounding mid-rise neighbors, enabled builders and developers to tap massive profits from center city locations. At the same time, the dramatic increase in size and scale not only disrupted the physical character of the neighborhood, but the massive increase in worker population also disrupted the social balances.

This first matter, the discontinuity in size and scale between the skyscrapers and their surroundings could be dealt with legislatively. In 1916, due to a large part to the protests that arose following the construction of tall buildings adjacent to residential neighborhoods, the City of New York created the first broadly-applied municipal zoning code. This outlined where in the city various types of buildings could be located, and also created a rigid set of principles for their form, scale and size. One outgrowth of this code was the archetypal New York "ziggurat" or "wedding cake" skyscraper that rose up from the sidewalk and then stepped backwards in equal increments until it reached its peak. This reduction in size and scale enabled sunlight and fresh air to reach to the level of the streets, even though thirty- and forty-story towers surrounded them.

While Mumford advocated, in principle, the application of zoning as a way of separating incongruous functions from one another, the broad-based adoption of zoning, after World War

II, as the primary element of city planning had numerous unintended consequences, some of which Mumford was clearly opposed to. To the degree that zoning codes provided legal justification for the isolation of incompatible uses—keeping slaughter houses away from apartments, for example—they were to be applauded. To the degree, however, that the success in isolating such uses lead to the broad-based notion that *all* uses should be isolated from each other, zoning was simply another element that was working to disrupt and fragment the organic wholeness that Mumford advocated.

The disruption fomented by the widespread use of one technological innovation—the skyscraper—was matched by the similarly widespread use of a second technological development—the automobile. As Mumford well knew, the skyscraper was a device that allowed us to dramatically increase the density of our city centers, while the car was a device that allowed us to dramatically decrease the density of the same centers. These two elements of twentieth-century urbanism therefore, are, at their roots, fundamentally opposed to each other. The history of the city in this century is the story of the tension between these two forces. Frank Lloyd Wright, the great American architect and great opponent of the traditional city put it even more succinctly. The destiny of the twentieth-century city, he noted, is a race between the car and the elevator, and anyone who bets on the elevator is an fool.

As early as the 1920s, Mumford could detect the pernicious influence of the automobile on the life and vitality of the city. The car, at that time, was primarily a luxury for the well-to-do. The vast majority of people commuted back and forth within the confines of the city using traditional mass transit systems such as subways, trolleys and street-cars. The car, however, allowed those with the means, to move far away from the city, to rural villages or newly-emerging suburban enclaves. From these redoubts, they could travel to and from the city center at will, enjoying the vitality and energy of the city on their own terms, while ignoring the less vital aspects of urban life.

The earliest suburbs, dating in some instances from the mid-19th century, were microcosms of a traditional urban neighborhood. Many were developed along railway lines and were centered on the train station and the trains that linked the outpost back to the city center. Walkable in size and scale, these suburbs were more akin to villages than to today's sub-divisions. They typically included a variety of shops and stores, offices and professional options, and lent themselves very well to the burgeoning sense of the American middle-class. Men commuted to and from the city center each day, first using the railways, later in their personal cars. Women and children generally stayed at home in the suburbs, away from the harmful influences of city life. Once or twice a week, the women and children would also visit the city, to shop, visit museums, go to plays or experience other cultural events. The balance evinced in such developments was clearly enviable, and this balance of the man-made and the natural, was the focus of much of Mumford's writing and thought, and was also the impetus for some of his earliest efforts at devising the "ideal" American community.

Along with his colleagues and friends Henry Wright, Clarence Stein, Catherine Bauer, Benton MacKaye and others, Mumford helped found the Regional Planning Association of America as an agency to argue for and promote the vitality of a balanced approach to the design and development of America's cities. It was only within a regional context, Mumford felt, that one could truly hope to understand how to create a

truly harmonious and balanced city. To this end, he reflected and developed upon the work of one of his earliest mentors, the Scottish ecologist, Patrick Geddes.

At the same time, Mumford and others were looking to re-define the design and development of the neighborhood, which they felt was the fundamental unit of the city. Toward this end, Mumford championed the planning and construction of an early in-town suburb, Forest Hills Gardens in Queens. He was also instrumental in the development of Radburn, an intended model community in northern New Jersey. Designed by the planner and landscape architect, Henry Wright, and the architect Clarence Stein, Radburn was notable for its early attempts to accommodate the automobile within the plan of the community, by creating separate ways for cars and for people, and for its quasi-socialist approach to housing, in which all the residential units fronted on communally owned and maintained greens. In his 1940s documentary film "The City," Mumford pointed to Radburn as an example of the ideal "modern" community, contrasting it with both the polluted and over-crowded urban environments of the 19th century industrial city, and with the socially and economically isolated life of the rural town and village.

Mumford's goals and expectations for Radburn were never fulfilled as the project, begun at the advent of the Great Depression, slowly ground to a halt during the 1930s. For fifteen years, Mumford and others were able only to dream, write and lecture and the nation's energies were directed first, towards overcoming the depression and later, towards the War effort.

In the late 1940s, after the Second World War, America appeared ready to champion some of Mumford's original causes: affordable housing for all, functional separation of various uses within the community fabric, access to light, air, water, open space. Unfortunately for Mumford, our movement towards achieving these goals took a very different direction that he had anticipated or advocated. In the period since the 1920s, even as community development remained relatively stagnant, technology had moved forward, further upsetting the sense of balance that he had envisioned. By the 1950s, Henry Ford's goal of putting a car in every family's garage had clearly come within reach. The automobile industry, looking to reinvent itself after the War, aggressively promoted the car as the status symbol of the times, and, at the same time, did its best to undermine and disrupt the functioning of many of our more effective urban mass transit systems. The failure of our in-city trolley and light-rail systems, it was reasoned, would further expand the market for cars and automobile products. The fact that a dramatic increase in auto usage and a concomitant reduction in the efficacy of urban transit systems would devastate the traditional urban structure was of little consequence.

At the same time, housing in this country was in a disastrous state. In the 1930s, the crash of the stock market coupled with the ensuing depression left millions of people broke, and effectively homeless as they could no longer pay their mortgages. The federal government stepped in with the first in a series of financial reforms aimed at making it easier for the average household to afford to purchase a home. The government agreed to guarantee mortgage loans, and worked to not only extend the mortgage payment period from five to fifteen or even thirty years, but to reduce the initial down payment needed to purchase a home.

The War pre-empted any broad based application of these new financial policies, but the return of our servicemen from abroad in 1945 and 1946 highlighted the extent to which there existed a pent-up market for new housing and new ways of living. Into this breach stepped the builder William Levitt, a man who was to become Lewis Mumford's post-War nemesis. A general contractor from the New York area, Levitt had prospered during the War by building facilities for the armed forces. From his beginnings as a builder of custom homes, the wartime experience left Levitt with a keen awareness of the potentials for mass construction. Immediately after the War ended, he looked to parlay his experience into success. Buying thousands of acres of Long Island farmland, thirty miles from Manhattan, he commenced upon the construction of the prototypical post-War suburb, Levittown.

Levitt's astounding success depended upon a fortunate confluence of events. Car ownership was booming in the post-War period and Levittown was a relatively easy commute from New York via car thanks to the parkway system created by Robert Moses or by train. Thousands of veterans lived in the New York area, and the thanks extended to these servicemen by the government included underwriting down payments and financing on new houses. By minimizing the design distinctions between units as well as the detailing of any of the houses, Levitt was able to mass produce+affordable, albeit small, houses and to create financing programs for these units that simply could not be beaten. For a few hundred dollars down and as little as fifty dollars a month, a veteran could own a quarter acre lot—replete with one tree in the front yard—and a 900 square foot house.

Levitt's success spurred imitators across the country, particularly in the Northeast and in California, a state that had boomed in the 1940s in direct response to the War efforts. The Federal government played a significant role in aiding and abetting this movement. Arguing that a strong, transcontinental highway system was a military necessity in a period of escalating Cold War tensions, from the early 1950s, the government poured hundreds of billions of dollars into the design and construction of today's interstate highway system. Initially envisioning the system as a way of facilitating easy movement between cities, the system was primarily used as a means for decamping from the cities into the suburbs. In the period between 1950 and 1980, the entire nature of the American city changed as millions of people moved away from the traditional city centers to far-flung suburban tract houses.

Mumford took both the Federal Highway authority and Levitt to task. Referencing a 1910 publication called "Roadtown," Mumford noted that the sum product of post-War planning and development efforts is what we, today, refer to as "sprawl."

In an entirely undirected but diagrammatic fashion, Roadtown has automatically grown up along the major highways of America; an incoherent and purposeless urbanoid nonentity, which dribbles over the devastated landscape and destroys the coherent smaller centers of urban or village life that stands in its path. Witness among a thousand other examples the Bay Highway between San Francisco and Palo Alto. Roadtown is the line of least resistance; the form that every modern city approaches when it forgets the functions and purposes of the city itself and uses modern technology only to sink to a primitive social level.³

As for the work of developers such as Levitt, Mumford accused them of creating socially and culturally sterile "anti-cities" that devastated the supply of open land around the older cities, wreaking environmental havoc wherever they went.

The anti-city that is now being produced by the reckless extension of standardized expressways, standardized roadside services, and standardized residential subdivisions—all greedily devouring land—dilutes to the point of complete insolvency all the valuable urban functions that require a certain density of population, a certain mixture of activities, a certain interweaving of economic necessities and social occasions. Despite all that, this negative image has proved, especially during the last two decades, to be a highly attractive one; so powerful that many people already identify it, despite its brief history and meager promise, with the "American way of life."

The reason is not far to seek, for the anti-city combines two contradictory and almost irreconcilable aspects of modern civilization: an expanding economy that calls for the constant employment of the machine (motor car, radio, television, telephone, automated factory and assembly line) to secure both full production and a minimal counterfeit of normal social life; and as a necessary offset to these demands, an effort to escape from the over-regulated routines, the impoverished personal choices, the monotonous prospects of this regime by daily withdrawal to a private rural asylum, where bureaucratic compulsions give way to exurban relaxation and permissiveness, in a purely family environment as much unlike the metropolis as possible.⁴

Mumford ended his five-part series for *Architectural Record* with two essays devoted to developing alternative futures for the American city. His description of the "favored images" of the contemporary city in 1963 are equally pertinent today.

The two favored images of the city today are the products of the complementary process of regimentation and disintegration. One of them is the City in a Parking Lot, a collection of high-rise slabs and towers linked by multi-lane expressways; the other is the Anti-City, a by-product of urban decomposition, which in the pursuit of nature denatures the countryside and mechanically scatters fragments of the city over the whole landscape.⁵

The withering sarcasm of Mumford's critique would be lost on many today because, even as thirty-five years ago, there is at present no consensus among planners, designers, developers and critics, as to what exactly constitutes a "good" or even a desirable contemporary community. And, unfortunately, nowhere in the landscape of critique, diatribe and harangue has anyone of Mumford's stature emerged to lend oversight as well as insight into the issues at hand.

Instead, to some extent, the nature of the discourse surrounding the nature and direction of the contemporary city has fractured into splinter groups, each arguing its case and downplaying the holistic and interdependent unity that was the foundation of Mumford's critique. The solutions that Mumford advocated during his long career as an educator, lecturer, author and social critic, have yet to materialize. His argument for a carefully balanced blending of city and country were applauded by many throughout his seventy year public life, but little of what he promoted was brought to fruition. The models that he applauded and held up for recognition—Forest

Hills Gardens, Radburn, NJ—all have places in the textbooks of urban and community design. Their presence, however, is generally that of an historic curiosity rather than a paradigm of practice. Mumford's desire for unity and completeness in community design, for an "organic" development has, by and large, been unmet.

Mumford would not feel out of place within today's debate, and he clearly would have his own thoughts on the matter. At present, there are at least four definable positions among theorists, students and discerning practitioners of community design and development. Mumford would undoubtedly have significant difficulty accepting three of them, and probably would not accept the fourth without some critique.

Paramount among today's theories of urbanism is what might be called the *laissez-faire* approach, advocated by those who think that things are moving along just fine and argue only for less regulation and less restriction on how things get planned and built. This position received an enormous boost during the 1980s when financial policies and government regulations were eased in order to promote real estate investment and development. Its tenets and principles are succinctly summarized in the best-selling book *Edge City* by Washington Post journalist Joel Garreau.

The book begins in its characteristic positive bent:

Americans are creating the biggest change in a hundred years in how we build cities. Every single American city that is growing is growing in the fashion of Los Angeles, with multiple urban cores.

These new hearths of our civilization—in which the majority of metropolitan Americans now work and around which we live—look not at all like our old downtowns. Buildings rarely rise shoulder to shoulder, as in Chicago's Loop. Instead, their broad, low outlines dot the landscape like mushrooms, separated by greenswards and parking lots ...

The hallmarks of these new urban centers are not the sidewalks of New York of song and fable, for there usually are few sidewalks ... Our new city centers are tied together not by locomotive and subways, but by jetways, freeways, and rooftop satellite dishes thirty feet across. Their characteristic monument is not a horse-mounted hero, but the atria reaching for the sun and shielding trees perpetually in leaf at the cores of corporate headquarters, fitness centers, and shopping plazas. These new urban areas are not marked by the penthouses of the old urban rich or the tenements of the old urban poor. Instead their landmark structure is the celebrated single-family detached dwelling, the suburban home with grass all around it that made America the best-housed civilization the world has ever known.

I have come to call these new urban centers Edge Cities. Cities, because they contain all the functions a city ever has, albeit in a spread-out form that few have come to recognize for what it is. Edge, because they are a vigorous world or pioneers and immigrants, rising far from the old downtowns, where little save villages or farmland lay only thirty years before.⁶

Mumford would have had little difficulty in punctuating the inflated self-importance of the Edge City advocates. Their boast that they had encompassed lands that were empty "save villages or farmlands" would have elicited scathing protest from the man who as early as the 1920s was cautioning against the dramatic expansion of the traditional cities to the point that it was becoming difficult to find clean water or untrammelled

landscapes within any proximity of a metro area. The goal, Mumford would have stressed, was not to suburbanize everything, but rather to create a harmonious balance of well-built, concentrated city and neighborhood centers to be surrounded by essentially untouched natural areas or lightly developed agricultural and recreational lands.

Mumford was clear, from the outset, in his advocacy of the theories of Ebenezer Howard, the English accountant who wrote the remarkable treatise *Tomorrow: The Path for Peaceful Reform*, in 1898. Initially the text met with little acclaim. Reprinted in 1901, however, under the title *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, the book became a best seller, and helped create the Garden City movement throughout the world.

Howard's points were clear. In 19th century England, neither the city nor the country, alone, was a desirable condition. The cities were too industrialized, too crowded, too fragmented. The country, in general, was too isolated, suffering from too few economic and social opportunities. Instead, what was needed, he felt, was a blending of the best elements of each. This could be achieved by creating new cities, at some remove from the existing cities, to be connected via rail lines and roads, but to be kept distinct through the use of "greenbelts" and permanently open lands.

Mumford wrote the introduction for a post-War reprinting of Howard's book. In it he re-emphasized the uniqueness of Howard's approach.

In treating rural and urban improvement as a single problem, Howard was far in advance of his age; and he was a better diagnostician of urban decay than many of our own contemporaries. His Garden City was not only an attempt to relieve the congestion of the big city, and by so doing lower the land values and prepare the way for metropolitan reconstruction: it was equally an attempt to do away with that inevitable correlate of metropolitan congestion, the suburban dormitory, whose open plan and nearer access to the country are only temporary, and whose lack of an industrial population and a working base make it one of the most unreal environments ever created for man: a preposterous middle-class counterpart to the courtly inanities of those absolute monarchs who, at Versailles or Nymphenburg, contrived for themselves a disconnected play-world of their own. The Garden City, as Howard defined it, is not a suburb but the antithesis of a suburb: not a more rural retreat, but a more integrated foundation for an effective urban life.⁷

Mumford would have raised a second critique of the Edge City, one based on social, economic and environmental efficiency. It is one of the boasting points of Edge City advocates that they have managed to successfully reproduce all of the traditional urban elements—places to live, places to work, places to shop, pray, play—in a suburban environment. Mumford would have countered this argument on two points. First, he would have pointed out that the very nature of urbanity is contained, in part, in the density of its development, in the opportunity it offers for chance encounters, in the "friction" essential to urban life. Vitate these elements, he would argue, and you no longer have an urban existence, merely a simulacra.

His second critique would develop along the lines of economic, social and environmental efficiency. What is the gain, he would ask, in duplicating elements that already exist in our original cities? How does one solve the existing urban problems by moving all of the essentials out of the city and duplicating them elsewhere? In the end, the "answer" to the

problems of the older cities proposed by the Edge City advocates is the non-answer of ignoring them.

Technology plays a critical role in the next two of the current stances towards the city. In the first stance, which might be called technological utopianism, the solution to the problems of today's cities (and, increasingly, our suburbs as well) can only be had through the application of more and more technology. The solution to over-crowding is to create denser housing prototypes, to build higher, or to build on previously unbuildable areas such as over water or across ravines. The solution to water pollution is to come up with fancier mechanisms for cleaning the polluted water. The solution to traffic congestion is wider highways, or computer-driven systems in which cars travel sixty miles an hour, five feet away from each other.

The most extreme examples of such utopian technological urbanism can be found in the proposals of Buckminster Fuller, the Archigram Group from England, the Metabolists from Japan, and other advocates of what are known as urban "megastructures." Built examples of this approach can be found in many Asian cities today, ranging from Hong Kong to Tokyo.

The counter-position to technological utopianism might be called technological dystopianism. Where advocates of the first approach might be criticized for being too in love with technology as a savior, proponents of the second approach are guilty of their blatantly negative view of the current situation. In short, their view of the contemporary city is that it's on the fast boat to hell.

The strongest proponents of this theory can be found in Los Angeles, and they use their surroundings to gather ammunition for their argument. Not unsurprisingly, a post-Apocalyptic version of LA forms the setting for the movie "Blade Runner," a favorite reference for these theorists. In *City of Quartz*,⁸ Mike Davis argues that Los Angeles represents the future of urbanism in America, and that, at best, it's "a sunlit mortuary where you can rot without feeling it." LA, he argues, is the living embodiment of a 1969 federal Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence: We live in fortress cities brutally divided between fortified cells of affluent society and "places of terror" where the police battle the criminalized poor. Technology plays an omnipotent role in this reality. TV glorifies the lifestyles of the rich and famous and plays up the dichotomies between the affluent and everyone else. Guns are available to all, and because they are, the well-to-do spend extraordinary amounts to protect themselves from their fellow citizens. The live behind gates, in secluded enclaves, with 24-hour patrols, guard dogs, and in-house alarm systems. At the same time, conditions in the inner cities occasionally imitate war zones, and the gap between the affluent and the poor increases.

Davis and others see today's cities as an uneasy marriage of necessity, and point to advanced technology as the only way out of the problem. Given enough telecommunications and computer equipment, the affluent who currently must barricade themselves into their exclusive enclaves will be able to avoid the situation entirely. These "lone eagles" or "modern-toters" will be able to escape the city entirely, for isolated resort communities such as Aspen, Telluride, Sun Valley and Park City. Those left behind will simply wallow in their urban squalor.

Clearly, these two positions represent extremes, both in their interpretation of technology and their understanding of

the concept of community. In essence, both establish technological imperatives and suggest that community life is at the mercy of the over-riding system of technology. To this end, society is little better off than it was in the 19th century at the height of the Paleotechnic period when the rich mill-owners and industrialists could afford to live in the country while the vast majority of people suffered the ravages of polluted air and water, squalid living conditions, over-crowding and malnutrition. The lessons and opportunities of the Neo-technic period that Mumford suggested in his 1933 text *Technics and Civilization* would, once again, have been thwarted. Technological determinism, a concept that repelled Mumford, would once again, have won out.

A fourth position, yet to be fully articulated, attempts to moderate between the extremes, and to overcome the weaknesses in all of the previous approaches. In its current forms, however, it too might be accused of philosophical extremism. Originally referred to as Neo-Traditionalists, this group has unified recently under the rubric of the New Urbanism. The goals of the groups are very much in keeping with those espoused by Mumford and his colleagues in the 1920s, although few if any references are made to him directly. Instead, members of this group acknowledge the work of Raymond Unwin, a British architect who worked with Ebenezer Howard, and the author of a seminal essay "Nothing Gained by Over-crowding," in which he argued that the answer to urban squalor was to decant the over-crowded portions of the city into self-sufficient, comprehensive "new towns" that were distinct from yet connected to the main metropolis. Mumford championed both Unwin's work and his article.

Like Mumford, the New Urbanists believe that the neighborhood, not the house, is the fundamental unit of the city, and that the street is the fundamental public space within the contemporary city. Like Mumford, they argue for diversity of forms and functions within a comprehensive and comprehensible neighborhood unit. A good neighborhood, they argue, should be walkable; it should have a clearly defined center, and clearly defined edges; it should be accessible to people in all walks of life, not simply to adults who drive; it should represent the full variety of economic classes, not simply those who can afford \$300,000 houses or one-acre lots.

In many ways, the advocates of the New Urbanism represent an interesting intellectual complement to Mumford. The "theories" of the New Urbanism spring, not from academia or criticism, but from practice. The founders and prime movers of the movement have written relatively little, if only because almost all of them are practitioners: architects, landscape architects, planners, developers.

In an irony that Mumford would have appreciated, the New Urbanists spend the better part of the 1980s attempt to describe an idealized neighborhood unit, one that worked within the current framework of development and construction practice, that contained the basic elements of communal life and yet, one that addressed their concerns for the integration of buildings and open space, their concerns for continuity of buildings and appearance while allowing for diversity of uses and economic sectors.

Across a ten year period, a variety of models were drawn and designed, and in many instances, built. In general, these were contrasted with standard practices which were mostly in keeping with the Edge City model; shopping malls masquerading as "town centers," parking lots instead of parks, highways instead of Main Streets. Over time, a model coalesced.

It contained places for commerce, places for schools, places for worship, a variety of housing types, a coherent, interconnected street pattern, a variety of iconic neighborhood spaces such as a "green," a "Main Street," a "village square." It was of a walkable size, approximately ¼ mile in radius.

Once a definitive prototype was drawn up, a curious fact was noted. In almost every aspect, the newly-minted model of how to design and develop a neighborhood was similar to a model developed in 1929 by Clarence Perry, a friend and colleague of Lewis Mumford's.

The New Urbanists are a group for whom Lewis Mumford would have had an enormous affinity. Just as he and his colleagues from New York helped found and run the Regional Planning Association of America in the 1920s and 1930s, were Mumford active today, he would undoubtedly have been a charter member of the Congress for the New Urbanism. From that vantage, he would have brought external credibility to the group by trumpeting their ideas and ideals. Internally, he would have been a tough critic, chastising his colleagues for their blatant historicism and their inability, to date, to work their way through the myriad legal, financial and economic barriers that burden those who attempt to redevelop the older urban centers.

Ultimately, cities are a consensual creation; we all participate, implicitly or explicitly. The power of the so-called information age is that ideas and concepts of what makes for a "good" community and a "good" city can be easily spread around and distributed throughout the levels of society. The drawback of the age, however, is that information, in and of itself, without critique, without direction, without oversight, is effectively useless. Would that we had a Lewis Mumford to help show us the way.

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Mumford and McLuhan: The Roots of Modern Media Analysis

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The relationship between Mumford and McLuhan at one level is quite straightforward and open to easy inspection. McLuhan cited Mumford in virtually all his work, certainly in all his important publications. In his later publications Mumford devoted considerable and often savage space to McLuhan. However, the argumentative relationship between these two important figures in contemporary scholarship was both more subtle and ambiguous than the pattern of citation suggests. There was bigger game. McLuhan and Mumford debated the consequences of electrical technology, in particular, electrical communications for contemporary culture and society. Not only can they teach one something of those consequences but they also illustrate, in a variety of ways, some of the conceptual and ideological pitfalls involved in trying to think sensibly about electrical communication.

Their work leads to an intractable problem which has faced all students of media: did the growth of electrical communication from the telegraph through television and the emergence of electronic communication from simple servo-mechanisms through advanced computer information utilities reverse the general developments associated with printing or did they merely modify and intensify the major contours of modern societies?

There is no easy answer to this question but around it have whirled virtually all the conceptual and ideological debates concerning the relations of communications technology to culture. Briefly, Mumford argued that electronics has intensified the most destructive and power-oriented tendencies of printing, whereas McLuhan argued that electronics has produced or will produce a qualitative change in the nature of social organization and cultural life. There are not only large intellectual stakes in the resolution of this argument but social and political stakes as well, for its resolution will shape ideological discourse and social policy in the arena of communications in the decades ahead.

Kropotkin-Geddes-Mumford

The growth of electrical communication rejuvenated utopian social theory in America. It particularly charged the thought of a group of European and American scholars whose work revolved on the relationship of the city and the countryside and were pioneers in what has since been termed urban planning. The principal figures in this group were the Russian anarchist and geographer Peter Kropotkin, the Scot biologist Patrick Geddes and, in America, Lewis Mumford. And their starting point was one of disappointment — disappointment in the nineteenth-century promise of industrialization and mechanical technology.

In *The City in History*, Lewis Mumford credits Kropotkin with the first systematic statement of the view that electricity might rescue humans from the blight of machine industry and restore them to communal life. Kropotkin described regional associations of industry and agriculture made possible by electricity and with this new technology a reawakening of the traditions and handicrafts of an older period and the restoration of community life (16, pp. 514-515).

Kropotkin's faith was based upon a valid perception. Electricity, unlike steam, saved the landscape by utilizing water power or lighter, more transportable fuel like petroleum which did less environmental damage than "mining." Similarly, electricity promised a decentralist development by bringing work and power to the people rather than demanding that people be brought to the power and work. The telegraph similarly promised the distribution of information everywhere, simultaneously reducing the economic advantage of the city and bringing the more varied urban culture out to the countryside. No longer would people need to be physically in the city to partake of the advantages to art, commerce, and intellect that physical massing created. Finally, the small electric motor promised to lift the drudgery of work in small communities, dissipate the advantages of efficiency of the massed factory, stimulate and make more feasible handicraft production and, as in the dream of William Morris, reclaim a more natural and older way of life. The symbol of electricity promised to many the dawning of a new age of decentralist rural production, communal life in small natural associations that would be economically viable and, with the growth of electronic communication, culturally viable as well.

While on a speaking tour of England, Kropotkin influenced the young Scot, Patrick Geddes. Geddes, perhaps more than anyone else, popularized the notion that there were two qualitatively different periods of industrialization. He termed these periods the paleotechnic and neotechnic, differentiated along many dimensions but principally by their reliance on different forms of energy: steam and electricity. Geddes used this distinction to found one of the most important traditions of urban planning, merging it with the earlier Garden Cities movement founded by Ebenezer Howard.

The associations between Kropotkin, Geddes, and Howard merged in Chicago. Both Kropotkin and Geddes received their most enthusiastic American receptions in Chicago and felt most at home in the city. Howard most admired Chicago among American cities and based his work on that of the Chicago architect Daniel Burnham. Geddes influenced John Dewey's thinking on education and other matters. In turn, the idea of the electrical city became symbolized in Chicago

architecture. Louis Sullivan built the first structures designed for the potential of electricity. Frank Lloyd Wright, Sullivan's student, conceived the skyscraper as a community within itself: its floors to be viewed as streets in the sky rather than as a collection of unintegrated functions or atomized units (see 9, p. 86). It was mainly through the work of Lewis Mumford, however, that the ideas of Geddes, Howard, and Kropotkin and their attitudes toward electricity and technology entered the American scene.

Mumford based his important work of 1934, *Technics and Civilization*, on Geddes's distinction between the paleotechnic (steam and mechanics) and neotechnic (electricity) phases of industry and communication. Mumford shared with Geddes the intellectual strategy of placing technological change at the center of the growth of civilization (1). In viewing the miscarriage of the machine he suggested that electricity had certain intrinsic potentials for producing a decentralist society, creating a new human being, and realizing a pastoral relation to nature. Only the cultural pseudomorph of capitalism, the housing of new forces in outmoded social forms, held back the latest advance in civilization. Throughout that work Mumford strikingly contrasted scenes of peace and order and cleanliness realized in the neotechnic world with the ugliness, exploitation, and disarray of the old world of mechanics. He recaptured some of the oldest dreams of the American imagination and remodeled them in terms of the potential of electricity (see 8, pp. 185-186; 12, pp. 225-227).

Mumford's demon was capitalism, the fetters which emasculate neotechnics, and *Technics and Civilization* ends with a plea for socialism. But in condemning paleotechnic civilization he saw it, as did Marx in a different vocabulary, as the destruction of the temple, a prelude to a rebuilding.

The central redeeming feature that all commentators on electricity from Kropotkin through Mumford and McLuhan saw in this technology was that it was decentralizing, that it could break up the concentrations of power in the state and industry and populations in the city. In *Technics and Civilization* Mumford argued that "the neotechnic phase was marked...by the conquest of a new form of energy: electricity....[It] effected revolutionary changes: these touched the location and the concentration of industries and the detailed organization of the factory" (12, p. 221).

The decentralizing effects of electrical power were matched by the decentralizing effects of electrical communication. Mumford argued that the gigantism typical of paleotechnic industry was caused by a defective system of communication which antedated the telephone and telegraph. With electrical power factories could be placed where they were wanted, not merely where the power source dictated they be. Factories could be rearranged without regard to the centralizing shafts and aisles that a central power source like stream demanded. Similarly, the new means of communication dictated that people no longer had to be in physical contact in order to transact their business. Freed from reliance on face-to-face communication and a slow and erratic mail service, industry could be decentralized into the countryside. As a result, neotechnics spiritualizes labor and reduces the human robot:

Here, as in neotechnical industry generally, advances in production increase the number of trained technicians in the laboratory, and decrease the number of human robots in the plant. In short, one witnesses in the chemical processes the general change that char-

acterizes all genuinely neotechnic industry: the displacement of the proletariat (12, p. 229).

This is the essence of the general argument Mumford made, on the great transition from paleotechnics to neotechnics, from steam power to electrical power, from capitalist to post-capitalist social forms. In describing electrical communication he saw its potential for transcending space — almost at times seeing it, like Frank Lloyd Wright, as providing a complete substitute for social relations:

With the invention of the telegraph a series of inventions began to bridge the gap in time between communication and response despite the handicaps of space.... As a result, communication is now on the point of returning, with the aid of mechanical devices to that instantaneous reaction of person to person with which it began; but the possibilities...will be limited only by the amount of energy available and the mechanical perfection and accessibility of the apparatus (12, pp. 239-240).

Mumford, always skeptical within his enthusiasms, always projecting the dark sides of his hopes, recognized the paradox of electrical communication: that the media of reflective thought — reading, writing, and drawing — could be weakened by television and radio; that closer contact did not necessarily mean greater peace; that the new inventions would be foolishly overused; that human skills in the arts would be extirpated by easy entertainment. Nonetheless he finally registered a reserved but positive judgment on electronic communication:

Nevertheless instantaneous personal communication over long distances is one of the outstanding marks of the neotechnic phase: it is the mechanical symbol of those world wide cooperations of thought and feeling which must emerge, finally, if our whole civilization is not to sink into ruin.... Perhaps the greatest social effect of radio-communication so far, has been a political one: the restoration of direct contact between the leader and the group. Plato defined the limits of the size of a city as the number of people who could hear the voice of a single orator: today limits do not define a city but a civilization (12, p. 241).

I have here expunged the dark side of Mumford's prophecy to emphasize the essentially optimistic tone. To be fair it must be said, however, that he felt in the 1930s that at that moment the dangers of electronic communication seemed greater than the benefits. He guardedly but warmly endorsed the resurgence of regionalism in the nineteenth century as "being a reaction against the equally exaggerated neglect of the traditions and historic monuments of a community life, fostered by the abstractly progressive minds of the 19th century."

It would be grossly unfair to conclude that Mumford, in his early work, was an unambiguous champion of neotechnics and of electrical communication or felt that the impact of electricity was automatic. He concluded at one point that the neotechnic refinement of the machine, without a coordinate development of higher social purposes, only magnifies the possibilities of depravity and barbarism. And yet his habit of writing of neotechnics in the past tense, his tendency to imply that only the outmoded shell of capitalism retarded the emergence of a qualitatively new electrical world where we would have the cake of power to be consumed at the table of the decentralized community, led to a wide adoption of his views. To put it more strongly, Mumford's essential vision of electri-

cal power and communication became a litany of social redemption which infused most writing, popular and intellectual, on technology and the future, including that of Marshall McLuhan.

McLuhan and Mumford

The influence of Mumford on McLuhan, both at the level of ideology and conceptual analysis, was not clear until the publication of *Understanding Media*. Even in *Mechanical Bride*, however, McLuhan pointed to Mumford and his "effort to modify the social and individual effects of technology by stressing concepts of social biology" as a road past the Marxist indictments of capitalist civilization. Moreover, he cited Mumford's analysis as an example of how "we may by a reasonable distribution of power and by town and country planning enjoy all the lost advantages" of countryside living without sacrificing any of the new gains of technology. But more importantly Mumford foreshadowed, where he did not make explicit, the central arguments, indeed, the slogans we have come to identify as the heart of McLuhan's arguments.

The first, and perhaps most important, foreshadowing is Mumford's view that neotechnics was a reassertion of the organic principle in the face of mechanization. He emphasized that the new forms of communication were extensions of biological capacity:

...the organic has become visible again even within the mechanical complex: some of our most characteristic mechanical instruments — the telephone, the phonograph, the motion picture — have grown out of our interest in the human voice and human ear and out of knowledge of their physiology and anatomy (12, p. 6).

The growth of technology was in part an attempt to build an automaton: a machine that appeared to perfect human functions, that was, in short, lifelike. The movement from naturalism to mechanism was to remove the organic symbol: to take the mechanical player from the mechanical piano. Naturalism deeply affected us, however, even in the structure of our language. It is, of course, this same view of the computer which McLuhan proposes: the mind externalized in machine; an automaton, lifelike, yet stripped of the organic symbol which McLuhan's metaphors attempt to restore. And it is this reinsertion of the natural back into the mechanical which is the stylistic hinge of McLuhan's writing.

Mumford and McLuhan ascribe the same general and deleterious effects to the rise of printing, particularly as it served as an agent of uniformity. Again, Mumford:

The printing press was a powerful agent for producing uniformity in language and so by degrees in thought. Standardization, mass-production, and capitalistic enterprise came in with the printing press... (12, facing p. 84).

While Mumford makes the clock the central invention of paleotechnic times, he attributes to print the effects McLuhan amplified and made less ambiguous:

Second to the clock in order if not perhaps in importance was the printing press.... Printing was from the beginning a completely mechanical achievement. Not merely that: it was the type for all future instruments of reproduction for the printed sheet, even before the military uniform was the first completely standardized and interchangeable parts...abstracted from gesture and physical presence, the printed word

furthered that process of analysis and isolation which became the leading achievement of the era (12, pp. 134-135).

What McLuhan and Mumford originally shared was the view that neotechnics restores the organic and aesthetic. As Mumford put it: "at last the quantitative and mechanical has become life sensitive." For Mumford, the background scene is biological while for McLuhan it is aesthetic, though neither rejects what the other affirms: McLuhan cites the biologist J. Z. Young for support; Mumford refers to the new aesthetes. Mumford notes that from biology "the investigation of the world of life opened up new possibilities for the machine itself: vital interests, ancient human wishes influence the development of new inventions. Flight, telephonic communication, the phonograph, the motion picture all arose out of the more scientific study of living organisms." And he moves from biology to aesthetics: "this interest in living organisms does not stop short with machines that stimulate eye and ear. From the organic world comes an idea utterly foreign to the paleotechnic mind: the importance of shape."

The same linkage of the aesthetic and technological underlie both their positions. Mumford put it most clearly:

Every effective part in this whole neotechnic environment represents an effort of the collective mind to widen the province of order and control and provision. And here, finally, the perfected forms begin to hold human interest even apart from practical performances: they tend to produce that inner composure and equilibrium, that sense of balance between the inner impulse and the outer environment, which is one of the marks of a work of art. The machines, even when they are not works of art, underlie our art — that is, our organized perceptions and feelings — in the way that Nature underlies them, extending the basis upon which we operate and confirming our own impulse to order (12, p. 356).

I do not wish to overemphasize the similarities of Mumford and McLuhan. Mumford is always more complex, balanced and moralistic in judgment. What McLuhan did was to seize upon a similar linkage of art, perception, and the machine, a set of propositions about technology and culture, and amplify them through literary sources, stripping them of the complex context in which Mumford situated them. Above all, by setting technology outside of the density, the thickness, of history and culture, he produced out of this inherited material a modern drama. He made the electrical machine an actor in an eschatological and redemptive play.

Conclusion

The relationship between Mumford and McLuhan can be described as the inversion of a trajectory. McLuhan's earliest work was an analysis of the large cultural complexes which distinguish civilizations and an admiration for "the southern quality": the pre-capitalist features of Southern culture which provided a decisive if not an effective critique of industrialism in terms of human and organic values. McLuhan ends in the embrace of a thorough technological determinism, a poet of post-industrial society, and a prophet with one message: yield to the restorative capacity of the modern machine, throw off the cultural pseudomorph-retarding progress. As McLuhan increasingly projected a "rhetoric of the electrical sublime," increasingly saw in the qualitative difference of electrical

technology a road past the authentic blockages and disruptions of industrial life, Lewis Mumford turned progressively in the opposite direction. While Mumford's early work was never completely trapped in technological determinism, the decision to hang his analysis of historical change on technological stages such as paleotechnics and neotechnics, an analysis and terminology he inherited from Patrick Geddes and in turn extended, centered technology as the critical factor in human and social development. Politics and culture entered derivatively as the housing, accelerator, retarder of technical potential. The trajectory of his work has been away from this initial position. By mid-century he could see no difference between the capitalist and socialist state, as both were dedicated to an extirpation of the past, total management of the present, and a future based solely on the mechanics of power and productivity.

In his later work Mumford attempted to systematically deflate the image of humans as "homo faber," the tool maker, to cut down the received view of technology as the central agent in human development; and to emphasize the role of art, ritual, and language as the decisive achievements in human development. By the 1960s he had abandoned the distinction between the paleotechnic and neotechnic eras. He saw then the trajectory of modern history as the recreation of the "myth of the machine" and the "pentagon of power." Whatever short run gains and ameliorations had been introduced by electrical power and communication had been almost immediately sacrificed to a criminal and insane world view: the vision of the universe and everything in it as a machine and, in the name of that machine, the extirpation of all human purposes, types, values, and social forms that did not fit within the limited scope of machine civilization. The worship in turn enthroned a pentagon of power: a society devoted to the uncritical development, without reason or control, of power (energy), political domination, productivity, profit, and publicity.

Mumford recognized in McLuhan's work a defense and legitimation, often implicit, of the very groups and agencies Mumford was attempting to excoriate. In *The Pentagon of Power* he turned direct attention on McLuhan and the "electronic phantasmagoria...he conjures up." He accused McLuhan of proposing an "absolute mode of control: one that will achieve total illiteracy, with no permanent record except that officially committed to the computer and open only to those permitted access to this facility." In the interests of the military and commerce he saw McLuhan as pressing forward to a world where the "sole vestige of the multifarious world of concrete forms and ordered experience will be the sounds and 'tactile' images on the constantly present television screen or such abstract derivative information as can be transferred to the computer." McLuhan's goal was, he thought, total "cultural dissolution," a form of tribal communism; this is "in fact the extreme antithesis of anything that can be properly called tribal or communistic. As for 'communism,' this is McLuhan's public relations euphemism for totalitarian control."

Mumford's work toward the end of his career offered a sound diagnosis of the general currents of modern history. If we can forget for the moment large claims and transhistorical beatitudes, modern communications has aided in enlarging the scale of social organization beyond the nation state to the regional federation of countries and fostered the growth of the multinational corporation, cartel, and bureaucracy. In doing so, electronics has furthered the spatial bias of print and increasingly centralized political and cultural power. Whatever ten-

dency existed within electronics to cultivate a new aesthetic sense and a rejuvenated appreciation of the organic has been more than counterbalanced by the tendency of television to increase the privatization of existence and the overwhelming dependence of people on distant mechanical sources of art, information, and entertainment. For all the vaunted capacity of the computer to store, process, and make available information in densities and quantities heretofore unknown, the pervasive tendency to monopolize knowledge in the professions and data banks continues unabated. The ability of television to involve us in depth in the lives of people around the world is more than offset by its equal tendency to imprison us within our own speechless, looking glass world: the silent spectator as a mode of being.

If we consider this argument between Mumford and McLuhan in terms of the larger debate over electrical technology, it seems reasonable to conclude that electrical communication has up to this time largely served to consolidate and extend the cultural hegemony and social forms that first appeared in the wake of the printing press.

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For an expanded version of this essay, see *Journal of Communication*, Summer 1981, pp. 162-178.

Selections from:

The Coming of the Millennium: Good News for the Whole Human Race

by Darrell J. Fasching

Introduction

One of the curious facts of Ellul's reception in this country is that he received his widest following from among conservative Evangelicals. Ellul, however, was not an Evangelical in the American sense but in the European tradition deeply shaped in the modern period by Karl Barth. No where have these two traditions come into more obvious conflict than in the American Evangelical response to Barth's and Ellul's vision of universal salvation. For in the hands of Barth and Ellul, the Gospel turns out to be a scandal not only to Jews and Greeks but to many Christians as well. This became eloquently clear in an issue of *Sojourners* published on this subject where Ellul's view on this matter was systematically denounced. The result has been a love-hate relationship between Ellul and many American Evangelicals who love his biblically rooted critique of modern technological society but absolutely reject his understanding of "evangelism" as good news for the whole human race.

In the very first issue of the Forum (almost ten years ago now) I defended the ethical importance of Ellul's affirmation of universal salvation. In the decade since I have become increasingly convinced of the central importance of this aspect of Ellul's thought to ethical task of Christians in the coming millennium. In a world where not only religious but secular ideologies typically divide humanity into "us" against "them" it is important that Christians be not conformed but transform the world with an alternative vision.

In *The Coming of the Millennium* I attempt to state my own case in defense of a vision of universal salvation —one deeply influenced by Barth and Ellul. As his review (p. 18) indicates I have not managed to convince my colleague and friend, David Gill, of the truth of universal salvation. Fortunately, he does not have to believe it in order to "be saved." He accuses me of "cut and paste" exegesis, that selectively reads the biblical text. But the "traditional" position he wishes to defend, does this also, ignoring precisely those messages in the biblical tradition that I am now emphasizing to redress the balance. In his review of my book in this issue, David Gill suggests that I will never succeed in convincing "the masses of Christians" (here is suspect he means Evangelicals, as many in the mainline churches I think will view it quite differently) of my thesis. I suspect he is right. But as an Evangelical Christian myself, in the tradition of Barth and Ellul, I wish to stake a claim on the meaning of this term —one that is less technological. David Gill wants a more "faithful — and effective" understanding of the Gospel than I offer. But to make the Gospel efficient, as Ellul well knew, is to conform it to the world. Moreover, the "decisionism" of some American Evangelicals has turned "faith"

into a technique (a conscious act of the will) whereby one can be saved. Such a view renders Christians self-sufficient and eliminates any need for the graciousness of God who loves his enemies and does good to those who persecute him. Moreover, it is not clear how a God who loves his enemies and does them good, carries this out by condemning them to hell. There is a deep inconsistency in such a view. What follows are two selections from *The Coming of the Millennium* which speak to these issues.

From the Prologue:

The World as We Know It is Passing Away

The year 2000 is at hand. The world as we know it is passing away. Some expect the coming of the millennium to bring the end of the world and God's final judgment on humanity. Others simply expect a different world, a new millennium. They say we will be entering a post-modern world. All that means is that we expect it to be different than the world we were born into. I believe there is some truth in both of these expectations. I don't expect the coming of the millennium to bring the end of the world but I do believe it will bring the end of the world as we know it. And while the final judgment of the world may not be at hand, a final judgment of Christianity may be.

For the Good News of the Gospel, as it has been proclaimed for the last two millennia, has no future. Out of the noblest of ideals, namely, its concern to save the world through conversion, Christianity has violated its own highest ideals. For while the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount preaches love of enemies, Christendom had no place for the stranger much less the enemy. Bent on conquering the world for Christ, Christians demanded that all strangers "become like us" or suffer the consequences. That kind of Christianity missed the point. Christians are called to be the salt of the earth not to turn the whole earth into salt. Spiritually speaking, that would be a major ecological catastrophe.

A world made up only of Christians is a world that has no place for strangers. However, as I shall argue, whether we explicitly reject the stranger or implicitly do so out of a desire to make the stranger just like us (and hence no longer a stranger), we turn our back on God. For our God is not like us. Nor is our God one of us. Like the stranger, our God is one

whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8). Our God can be found only in welcoming the stranger.

A Gospel that has no place for strangers can have no place in the emerging global civilization of the coming millennium. The world of the millennium that is coming into being before our very eyes is a global community clearly different from that of our ancestors who shared a world with a common vision and common values. The coming of a global community brings with it a religious and cultural diversity that seems to confuse and unsettle us as much as the diversity of language unsettled the citizens of Babel. Like the inhabitants of Babel we long to go back to the good old days when everybody spoke the same language and shared the same worldview. Uniformity is comforting and assuring. Diversity is unsettling.

In the millennium that is passing away the understanding of the Gospel was dominated by the nostalgia of Babel, and Christians dreamed of conquering the world for Christ so that all would share the same faith and values. That missionary zeal reached its height in the 19th century and still strongly colors Christian understandings of evangelism. However, there is something tragically wrong with that understanding of the Gospel. It turned out to be more bad news than good news for a large part of the world's population. Conquering the world for Christ as an evangelical approach has been largely discredited by the history of Christian imperialism and Christian persecution of "heretics." To continue that model raises serious questions about the ethics of religious belief and practice. For if we Christians continue to insist on the values of conquest, we will undermine our message of Good News through an ethical failure.

The Christianity of conquest has no viable future. The way we have told the Christian story, even with the best of intentions, has evoked far too much intolerance, hatred and violence. The evangelism of conquest belongs to the millennium that is passing away. In this book I try to imagine how we might tell the Christian story anew for the coming of a new millennium. The task, I believe, is to focus on the biblical theme of hospitality to the stranger rather than conquest of the stranger.

Some will read the following chapters and feel I have departed from the "true" Gospel given to us. They will wonder why any mortal should be permitted to change the eternal Word of God. That is an interesting question, but it is not one that should trouble us. It is not God's word but our human understanding of God's word that is in question. Our concern is to understand why past understandings have been inadequate. The issue is interpretation. The Bible has many themes, so that depending on where we put the emphasis we can come up with very different messages from the same book of scriptures. While one way of understanding the Gospel may have shown itself to be inadequate, still other forms might well be more promising. Christians have always had a choice between at least two very different types of messages from the scriptures. The first is the kind we find in the Gospel of John (NRSV, 3:18), "Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God." The second we find in the first letter to Timothy 4:10, which declares God to be "the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe" (NRSV) — or as the New Jerusalem Bible translates it: "The point of all our toiling and battling is that we have put our trust

in the living God and he is the saviour of the whole human race but particularly of all believers."

How does one decide between these two messages, one promising salvation for believers only and the other promising salvation for the whole human race? My answer is very simple. I believe that in the millennium that is passing away the Gospel was organized around the first kind of proclamation and the results were ethically disastrous. It led to a triumphalistic and imperialistic church that produced the Crusades and contributed to the Holocaust — a church that had no love for the stranger. This message has ethically discredited itself. Therefore, it represents a misunderstanding of the meaning of the Gospel. If Christianity is not to repeat its tragic history it must reconsider where the center of its message lies. My argument will be that the Gospel must be revisioned to emphasize the second type of proclamation, as exemplified in 1 Timothy.

To engage in this shift of emphasis is not as arbitrary as it sounds. For during the last two millennia Christians systematically ignored the second and emphasized the first. Since Christian lives and Christian truth are to be tested by their fruits, it's time to reach the conclusion that the Christianity of exclusivism and intolerance, based on the type of message typically attributed to the Gospel of John, is inconsistent with the heart of Jesus' message as found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chps 5-7) and that the second alternative, found in the Pauline tradition, far from leading us astray, will lead us back to the Gospel message found in the Sermon on the Mount. In my view, the Sermon on the Mount is the core message of the Gospel to which all else must be reconciled. If we Christians do so, Christianity in the next millennium will be very different from the Christianity of conquest that shaped the last millennium.

Martin Luther started the Reformation by nailing 95 theses on the church door of Wittenburg. For the coming millennium we are in need of yet another such reformation. In the six chapters which follow I hope to contribute to that reformation by proclaiming six theses that will show how the coming of the millennium can be Good News for the whole human race.

1. You have heard it said that on the day of judgment only Christians will be saved and all others will be consigned to eternal damnation, but I say to you that the Gospel proclaims salvation for the whole human race.

2. You have heard it said that non-Christians are strangers who will not enter the Kingdom of God, but I say to you that that God enters our lives through the very presence of the stranger.

3. You have heard it said that heretics and sinners will have no place in the Kingdom of God, but I say to you that to reject even the least of these is to reject God and God's messiah.

4. You have heard it said that human beings can be saved in no other name than that of Jesus, but I say to you that the name "Jesus" means we are saved in the name of a God who cannot be named or imaged.

5. You have heard it said that only a chosen remnant can be saved, but I say to you that a saving remnant saves not itself but the whole human race of which it is a part.

6. You have heard it said that in the final judgment many will be consigned to the eternal fires, but I say to you, God's judgment is a refining fire which transforms and saves rather than destroys. Even judgment is a manifestation of grace. The final truth is that our God is the savior of the whole human race and especially all believers (1 Timothy 4:10).

By what authority do I claim the right to interpret the Gospel in this manner? The answer is not difficult to provide. For the Gospel does not interpret itself, human beings do the interpreting. In the past, when Christians have interpreted the Bible, they have always emphasized some parts and ignored or downplayed others. In this way, in every age, Christians have constructed a canon within the canon of scriptures. That is, they have selected from the rich diversity of scriptures that particular message they believed the world most radically needed to hear. As Luther once put it, everything in the scriptures may be the word of God, but not everything in the scriptures is the word of God for me. And, I would add, not everything is the word of God for our time.

Indeed, the Protestant Reformation began by Luther is a good example of sorting out from all scriptures that which is the word of God for one's own time. The understanding of the Gospel produced by Martin Luther occurred when, on the basis of his "tower room" experience of being born again, he sorted through the scriptures and decided that nothing was the truly the word of God except that which teaches justification by faith.

Although some argue that we must cling to the eternal and unchanging word of God, it is an illusion to think our *understanding* of the Gospel has ever remained fixed and unchanging. What we need is not an unchanging interpretation of the Gospel but an ethically responsible interpretation. We need not only historical and literary criticism of the Bible but also ethical criticism. St. Augustine once argued that whenever we find something unworthy of God in the scriptures we know that this cannot be meant literally and therefore we must look for a deeper ethical and spiritual meaning.

But who are we to judge what is worthy of God? My answer is that we are children of Abraham. If, as Paul insisted, Abraham is the model of true faith, then we who are children of Abraham can dare to share his audacity. For Abraham is the one who had the *chutzpah* or audacity to argue with God over the fate of Sodom, challenging: *Shall not the judge of all also be just?* Even God must be just in order to be God. If this is so, then the scriptures must be ethical in order to be the word of God. It finally boils down to the ethics of belief and practice. Any interpretation of scriptures that teaches rejection of the stranger discredits itself as an authentic interpretation of the Gospel.

As Christians face the coming of the millennium and the emergence of a global community rich in diversity, it is time to ask whether conquering the world of strangers, deviants and heretics, and transforming the whole world into our own image, is really what the Gospel is all about. If we fail to ask and answer that question, it should not surprise us if future generations look back and chronicle the next millennium as the millennium in which Christianity died of its own intolerance.

Finally, let me say that anyone reading the argument contained in these pages will be able to think of numerous scrip-

tural quotations that stand in contradiction to those I use to support the vision of the Gospel as Good News for the whole human race. It is easy to find statements that warn human beings of God's judgment and wrath, statements suggesting that some will suffer eternal condemnation for not hearing and obeying the word of God. I do not need to refute these citations in order to hold my thesis, for like Karl Barth, I argue that the threats of judgment and eternal damnation are always God's second last word, while God's final word is always forgiveness and reconciliation.

The word of judgment is meant to shake us up and get us to change our lives here and now. The word of forgiveness and reconciliation is the word of grace and acceptance that comes to us in spite of the fact that we are unacceptable. Some will doubt that this is the true message of the Gospel. They will fear that I am preaching "cheap grace." But grace is not cheap; its free. It has no conditions. That is the whole point of the Sermon on the Mount. Such an understanding of the Good News is one that is in accord with the message of the Sermon on the Mount which demands that we love even our enemies and therefore proclaims the Good News of God's love for the whole human race. Nevertheless, the formulation of the Gospel I offer in this book is a human interpretation. It should be doubted. It should be questioned — both because I am fallible and because without such doubts we might take the Good News for granted and therefore discount the very warnings of final judgment that we need to heed. Therefore, I do not expect to resolve the question of universal salvation in this book. I only expect to renew our capacity to live in the ambiguity between judgment and grace, even as I believe we are called to live with the ambiguity of being Christians in a pluralistic world of strangers, seeking to spread the Good News yet refraining from making the world "Christian."

From Chapter Four:

Golgotha - The Stranger as Messiah

Crucified Love: The Gospel of Universal Salvation

... The Good News of the cross, however, lies not in the violence and degradation [of Jesus' crucifixion] but in the response to it. Violence is not permitted to beget violence. Violence and rejection is answered with crucified love. Just as Jesus forgives those Romans and Sadducees who reject and crucify him, so God forgives those who reject h—.

According to Paul, Christ died for the ungodly, that is, for those who reject God. One of the paradoxes of the Christian theology of the millennium that is passing away is how to view "unbelief" in relation to repentance. On the one hand, unbelief was said to be a sin. On the other hand, repentance was said to be necessary for salvation. But if one's sin is that one does not believe, how can one ask for forgiveness? It is a "Catch-22." One has to already believe in order to ask for forgiveness, and if one already believes, one does not need to ask — at least for the particular offense of unbelief.

The problem of salvation was further compounded by the view that while the love of God is unconditional, unless one repented and asked for forgiveness one would be condemned

to the fires of hell. Now if one must repent in order to be saved, then God's love is not unconditional. It has at least one condition. The resulting theology further compounds the problem by saying, Christ had to die on the cross in order to conquer sin and yet those who do not accept Christ are said to be sinners condemned to the eternal fires. This is the traditional dualistic gospel as a sacred story which opposes the children of light to the children of darkness or the saved to the damned. Now if some are sinners condemned for not accepting Christ, then Christ's dying on the cross in order to conquer sin was not fully successful, since sin wins at least a partial victory. The dualism of the Gospel as preached in the millennium that is passing away undermines its own message through its self-contradictory claims.

According to the story of Noah, when God saw the destruction God had caused in anger over sinful human behavior, God resolved to "never again" permit the total destruction of sinners. In so doing, God rejected the totalitarian solution to the problem of sin. For one way of conquering sin would be to totally control human behavior through threats and punishment — the totalitarian dream. Some have preferred to think of God as such a totalitarian ruler. No one, of course, not even God, has ever succeeded in totally controlling human behavior and every attempt has been demonic in the cruelty and suffering it has caused.

In the millennium that is to come, Christians will have to accept the logical implications of their own claim that the love of God is unconditional — it has no conditions, not even repentance. God's love falls like the rain on the just and the unjust alike. If sin cannot be conquered by punishment and control then perhaps what the Gospel suggests should be taken seriously — namely that God conquers sin through crucified love, that is, by forgiving those who reject h— and are h— enemies.

To die for another human being, Paul argues, is never easy, but it is understandable that someone might do this in an attempt to protect someone who is good and lovable. However, "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. . . . For if *while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life*" (Romans 5: 8&10).

What is surprising about Paul's theology is that there is virtually no discussion of repentance in it. This is, I think, because we are not justified by repentance but by the crucified love that God reveals in the death of Jesus. No love is more painful than loving someone who rejects you, perhaps even hates and despises you. Crucifixion is the appropriate description of such love. Crucified love rejects the natural impulse we all have to reject those who reject us. To say that Christ died for sinners and the ungodly (i.e., unbelievers) while they were still sinners and that they are reconciled to God by the cross is to say that no one, no matter how unrepentant, stands outside the saving love of God. God's love falls like the rain on the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45). Sin and unbelief are conquered not through the fantasy of Babel, that is, through making everyone believe and act the same. Sin is conquered through crucified love.

If we know who God is through the life story of Jesus, then we shall be required to replace the God of unforgiving judgment with the God revealed in the Sermon on the Mount. In the crucified love of Jesus, Christians ought to see the love of

God. God turns the other cheek and walks the second mile. God loves h— enemies and does good to those who persecute h—. Crucified love is love of those who do the rejecting. Crucified love is a love that embraces and reconciles itself with its enemies — while they are still enemies. This means that contrary to those who would sacralize the Gospel and turn it into a contest between the children of light and the children of darkness, no one is excluded from the love of God. God loves and embraces the stranger, even the enemy. So the young pastor, Timothy, is instructed in a Pauline letter, ". . . we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. These are the things you must insist on and teach (1 Tim 4:10-11).

The Coming of the Millennium

Good News for the Whole Human Race

by Darrell J. Fasching

"In Memory of Jacques Ellul 1912-1994
who taught me to understand that
"evangelical theology" means
"Good News for the whole
human race."

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Book Reviews

Sources and Trajectories: Eight Early Articles by Jacques Ellul that Set the Stage. Translation and Commentary by Marva J. Dawn. Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997. 208 pages.

Reviewed by Andrew J. Goddard.

A new volume of Ellul's writing in English is long overdue. It is now six years since *Anarchy and Christianity* appeared. In contrast, between 1964 and 1991 there was never a gap of more than a year between books by Ellul hitting the bookshelves. This book is, however, unique in the Ellul corpus. Marva Dawn, author of several books and a significant doctoral thesis on Ellul's concept of the principalities and powers, here presents eight important articles she has selected from the vast but largely ignored treasury of Ellul's contributions to French journals.

The three opening chapters unquestionably contain the most significant articles in the volume. These (like all but two of the articles) originally appeared in *Foi et Vie*, the French theology journal dominated by Barthians and edited by Ellul himself between 1969 and 1985. Published in 1946 and 1947 as a trilogy under the heading "Chronicle of the Problems of Civilization," they provide a brilliant introduction to the massive life-long writing project which Ellul had already planned out but not yet begun.

The first chapter illuminates Ellul's sociological method and gives the broad context of his theological and ethical work, confirming Dawn's thesis that the theological concept of the principalities and powers provides a link between the sociological and theological strands of Ellul's work. It is followed by "Needed: A New Karl Marx!" This presents Ellul's critique of both contemporary utopian projects and the quest for purely technical solutions. Then, by offering some of the fullest statements of his own debt to Marx's method, it clarifies the methodology and sets the agenda for his later volumes of radical social criticism. The final article in the series ("Political Realism") vividly demonstrates Ellul's personal frustration at the failure of politics to offer a solution to the crisis of civilization and, in its delineation of political realism, begins his analysis of the dominance of means and Fact in modern mass society. Its closing section on the contrasting nature of Christian realism sheds further light on the importance of Christian faith and revelation to all his thought.

These articles are of crucial importance for anyone interested in understanding the early stages, structure and development of Ellul's thought. They also - half a century later - make stimulating and challenging reading as they provocatively and prophetically challenge the whole direction of twentieth century civilization. Even if it contained little else of importance,

the appearance of these writings in English would, in itself, make this a most significant book.

The next four chapters focus on themes central to Ellul's theology and ethics. "On Christian Pessimism" (1954) addresses the frequent criticism that Ellul's work is wholly and unwarrantably pessimistic. In response it offers a succinct and helpful account of his fundamental theological beliefs and how these shape his view of the world and his ethic for Christians. At the heart of that ethic is, of course, Christian freedom, and "The Meaning of Freedom According to Saint Paul" (1951) provides, in under twenty pages, a summary introduction to the ideas which subsequently grew into his mammoth *Ethics of Freedom*.

"The Contemporaneity of the Reformation" (1959) initially appears an odd choice for this book. Nevertheless, although its reading of Reformation history and thought is open to criticism, it helpfully demonstrates Ellul's desire to stand within that tradition's claim to be faithful to the Word of God and it shows the centrality in his ethics of both a particular conception of the relationship between the church and the world and the need for Christians to identify and then oppose contemporary idolatries.

This important Ellulian theme of the role and responsibility of the Christian in society and how that is shaped by a broader understanding of the relationship between Truth and Reality [or, elsewhere in his work, God and the World], is taken up in "Christian Faith and Social Reality" (1960), which originated as one of two addresses to the Free University in Amsterdam. Finally, Dawn closes with "Innocent Notes on 'The Hermeneutic Question'" (1968). This article clarifies Ellul's understanding of Scripture and the rationale behind his own biblical studies. It also challenges much scholarly discussion on hermeneutics. Despite these strengths, it fits uneasily with the themes in the rest of the book, and is also quite technical and difficult to follow in places.

All of Marva Dawn's translations into English are, once one becomes familiar with Ellul's distinctive style, very readable. Although there are a few strange translation decisions (e.g., "inutile" as "unnecessary" (p. 106), and a number of places where a footnote could highlight important nuances in the original French (e.g., "avertissement" in the opening title surely contains the sense of "warning" as well as "Preface"), the translations are more coherent and faithful to the original French than those in many English editions of Ellul's books. Her explanatory footnotes also (usually) provide helpful clarification and background information to otherwise often obscure references in the original.

Before each article Dawn adds a brief introduction providing background material, mainly biographical ("Sources"). These introductions will be of great help to those who know little or nothing of Ellul's life and context, but they rely largely on Ellul's interviews in *In Season, Out of Season* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982). Although they only rarely misinform the reader, they could often provide more helpful details. In chapter seven, for example ("Christian Faith and

Social Reality”), Ellul would not have considered his opposition to development of the Aquitaine coast as “one of his most successful commitments,” and it could also be explained that, given the central beliefs of the Dutch Reformed constituency to which it was originally addressed, the article that follows is a very good example of Ellul’s willingness to challenge Christian “sacred cows”.

Each article is also followed by a short sketch directing the reader to later books which expanded the article’s themes (“Trajectories”). Once again, these will be invaluable to those (hopefully many) readers who discover Ellul through this book. They do, however, tend to reflect Dawn’s own special interests, have some surprising omissions, and can often seem rather disjointed and repetitive as they quote from the preceding article and flit from subject to subject and book to book.

These criticisms are, however, relatively minor. I have only one major objection to the book’s general thesis. It claims the eight articles were chosen “because they are the earliest formulations of some of Ellul’s key ideas” (p. 1). Undoubtedly, in taking us back beyond the publication of *La Technique* to the immediate post-war writings, Dawn does a great service in tracing the genealogy of Ellul’s thought. These are not, however, “the earliest formulations.” To discover those, one must go back even further. They appear in the 1930s with Ellul’s involvement in the personalist movement. Dawn notes Ellul’s personalist links in passing, but fails to see their full significance. It was during that period, in numerous unpublished writings such as “Directives pour un manifeste personaliste,” that Ellul (together with Bernard Charbonneau) began to analyse society in the terms of the crisis of civilization which dominates the opening three articles and, as this book amply demonstrates, therefore sets the context for all his subsequent writing.

Despite this caution that there is an even earlier Ellul still to be uncovered, there can be no disputing the value of Marva Dawn’s work. She has made available to an English-reading public some important, early, but still very relevant, writings by Ellul which are otherwise difficult to obtain and have not received the attention they merit. Those who already know and love Ellul will learn yet more. Those who do not know him will be given a helpful and brief introduction to the central themes of his thought in his own words, they will have their appetite whetted, and they will be guided to where they can find more. Perhaps this exciting unveiling of the early Ellul may even persuade publishers that we should not have to wait another six years for the appearance in English of some of the important books Ellul wrote in his final years!

The Coming of the Millennium: Good News for the Whole Human Race by Darrell J. Fasching Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996. xiii, 129pp.

Reviewed by David W. Gill Professor of Applied Ethics, North Park College, Chicago

In *The Coming of the Millennium*, Darrell Fasching, the distinguished and indefatigable editor of *The Ellul Forum for the Critique of Technological Civilization*, articulates his version of the essential message of the Christian Gospel. His point of departure is his visceral antipathy toward the exclusivist orientation of most Christian thought over the past two thousand years. Such exclusivism creates a harsh dichotomy between an elect “us” and a damned “them.” It is this exclusivism which leads directly to arrogance and the justification of violence toward the outsider. For Fasching, the Crusades and the Holocaust are the logical and inevitable fruit of such an interpretation of the Christian Gospel.

With the arrival of a new millennium in a couple years, accompanied by an increase in apocalyptic fervor and speculation (as was also the case around the year 1000), Fasching believes it urgent to reformulate and restate the Gospel in universalist terms. His book tries to drive us to such a reformulation by its description of horrors already unleashed by the older exclusivism. He tries to authorize his reformulation by appeal to Christian universalists Origen and Jacques Ellul—and by citing Luther’s and Augustine’s views on Scripture. i.e., that not all written Scripture serves as the Word of God to us (e.g., p. 7).

Fasching builds his case by (re-)interpreting the stories of the Tower of Babel, Jacob wrestling with the stranger, Abraham and the destruction of Sodom, the sufferings of Jesus and Job, and the miracle of Pentecost. For Fasching, the center of Paul’s theology becomes the non-exclusive “engrafting” of Gentile Christians on to the Jewish community. And, with Ellul, the message of the Book of Revelation for Fasching is universal salvation. Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and all other prophets and teachers of nonviolent inclusivity are the voices to which we must now attend.

The Coming of the Millennium is nothing if it is not provocative and creative! It is an impassioned sermon which will challenge all who read it. “Hospitality to the stranger,” in whom God and Christ meet us, is the whole Gospel for Fasching. Our diversity is a gift of God—our hospitality is how we receive the gift. This is a powerful and authentic theme in biblical Christianity. And certainly Fasching is right in indicting the violence and domination that have been perpetrated over the centuries in the name of Christ.

On a rather practical level, however, Fasching’s message is unlikely to persuade the masses of Christians for whom Scripture must be treated in a less “Jeffersonian,” “cut-and-paste” hermeneutic. The very people who need most to break out of a divisive exclusivism will not listen to an argument that appears to “throw the baby out with the bathwater.” Nor will most Christians be satisfied to view the entirety of the Gospel message as “welcoming the stranger.” They will not want to relinquish such themes as speaking the truth in love, resisting pride and idolatry, overcoming ignorance and poverty, cultivating a

life of spiritual communion with God, and providing salvation and hope to neighbors in need—to name but a few items.

As Jacques Ellul pointed out in his magnificent *The Subversion of Christianity* (ET, Eerdmans, 1986), the heart of the problem is conformity to the world, especially its will-to-power. Unfortunately, the biblical hermeneutic of Augustine played into the hands of the Constantinian marriage of church and state and a justification of the violent suppression of the Donatists as well as the aggression of the later Crusades. Luther's hermeneutic justified the killing of Anabaptists and Jews and paved the way for a two kingdoms "quietism" later on in the face of Hitler. No thanks.

Despite the horrors perpetrated in the name of Christ (but what good ideas, what good movements, have not been similarly exploited and betrayed?), the more holistic biblical message is not the villain but the answer. Most of the Donatists, Waldensians, Franciscans, Anabaptists, Quakers, as well as the Confessing Christians of the Barmen Declaration, practiced peace in a violent world because of their fidelity to Jesus Christ as the unique incarnation of God, as Savior and Lord of a new way of life. Believing that Jesus is the one and only Savior of the world *does not* imply any rejection of the stranger, any unwillingness to listen to and learn from others, any quest for domination of others, any need to control other's beliefs or practices. Just the opposite.

In short, the broad outlines of Fasching's gospel of hospitality to the stranger and his rejection of all justifications of arrogance, violence, and uniformity are a welcome challenge. His creativity is provocative. But in the end, a more faithful—and effective—strategy, I believe, will be to make that Gospel-with-Jesus-of-the-Sermon-on-the-Mount-at-the-Center the interpretive focal point for the whole of Scripture and the whole of life. A more serious and passionate biblical discipleship is the answer to the apathetic, therapeutic Christianity of today—as well as to the pretentious ambitions to power by the religious Right.