

OF WORK, DRUGS AND REVOLUTION.

THE REVOLT AGAINST TIME

Since the late middle ages man, in the "West," has spent himself in one or both of two opposing activities. His life has been spun out either filling or killing time. The former we have come to call, commonly, work; the latter idleness. By whichever of these morally conflicting or complementary ways he has shaped his life, occidental man has made a single affirmation which unites both extremes: he has tacitly or explicitly affirmed that time is the framework of existence. The point of my paper is to attempt to show that this is no longer so. Evidence will be adduced to demonstrate that dimensions of existence, "categories," more meaningful than time are now competing to displace it as the mould or form in which life is filled out with meaning. These currents of understanding, now increasingly evident, must necessarily be thought of as substitutionary and oppositional to that in which time was preeminent, because they place the emphasis on a perspective which greatly reduces the significance of time, indeed one which tends to eliminate it altogether, inasmuch as this is possible in a world still largely governed by sunrise and sunset, the process of aging, and so on. Time gained its ascendancy in an epoch characterized by man's imperial conquest of nature, or his externalization, effected substantially,

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through reason and work. The shadow of time's eclipse can be made out where interiorization and assimilation of the objective world have become the predominant preoccupations. In three steps we shall attempt to look at 1) the characteristics of the epoch in which existence was circumscribed by time; 2) the revolt against time and its conditions as typified in the writings of J.-J. Rousseau; 3) some signs of the current growth of this trend in the West, or should I say more precisely, in the technical societies.

1. TIME IN ASCENDENCY: THE FRAMEWORK OF EXISTENCE

From the moment when it was announced to the Greco-Roman world that "now is the way of salvation" (2 Cor. 6: 2) time was destined to take on increasing significance. But it was a slow and long drawn-out accession. Not even the mechanically regulated monastery bell or the astronomical clocks with their cleverly calculated calendars of recurrent religious feasts and their jerking figures which recalled the cycle of life, marked its victory. The passing hours and days had become simply the necessary wings of flight to the stage of the Beyond. What set time in place as the dimension of life was its inevitable enlistment at the beginning of our era in the service of that increasing activity of production known as capitalism in its commercial, but above all, its industrial forms. At the outset of this process, time was both reinforced in importance as well as held in check, by the ultimate religious sanction which hung about the production process interpreted as a godly act. Wrote Baxter, the great Puritan,

Keep up a high esteem of time and be every day more careful that you lose none of your time than you are that you lose none of your gold and silver. And if vain recreation, dressings, feasting, idle talk, unprofitable company, or sleep be any of them temptations to rob you of any of your time, accordingly heighten you watchfulness.¹

But it was not long until "time is money," as Benjamin

¹ *Christian Directory*, I, p. 79, cited by Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, New York, Scribners, 1958, p. 261.

Franklin put it. And in our day, of course, not even the equation with *that* autonomous measure of universal value is sufficient to describe how, in arms and moon races, time has become identical with survival—life itself!²

The reason for the primacy of time is not hard to find, although it will be remarked that the phenomenon is one of very recent historical origin. Modern society is conceived of and organized as a community of work. Eric Weil has stated it clearly: "Modern society understands and organizes itself with a view to the progressive struggle with outside nature."³ "...[F]or modern society the struggle with nature is sacred, the value which forms the foundation for its reflection, and thanks to which, it orients itself."⁴ Efficiency becomes the primary value in this society, or to put it differently with Sombart, *economic rationalism* is the salient feature of modern economic life as a whole.⁵ This means that labour and other energy is organized and deployed in the most effective possible way for the production of material goods and services. Time becomes absolutely crucial because it is correctly seen as one of the factors of production. It is discovered to be one of the dimensions in which productive energy is deployed, and so it takes on a vital significance. The time and motion studies of F.W. Taylor are synonymous with the rationalizing efforts of work organizers to order production by an immutable logic, of which metric time, along with size and organization, are the key elements. Taylorism, as the rationalizing of the work process is sometimes called, has even subsumed space under time. Commenting on "the cult of efficiency in America" Daniel Bell writes that "Time rules the work economy, its very rhythms and motions."⁶

I would like to return to Eric Weil for a remark which well illustrates the outstanding implication which must be drawn from the modern enthronement of time as the dimension of existence.

² One of the most thorough descriptions of the pervasiveness and effects of the domination of time in contemporary, advanced industrial society will be found in Raymond Melka, "Punctuality, an Inquiry into the Psychology of Modern Man," *Diogenes*, No. 65, Spring 1969.

³ E. Weil, *Philosophie politique*, Paris, Vrin, 1956, p. 61.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁵ Weber, p. 75.

⁶ Bell, Daniel, *The End of Ideology*, New York, Free Press, 1965, p. 231.

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Although it rose to favour in the service of the Beyond, the Eternal, first by ordering man's acts of worship and then, his exploitation of the created order, to the greater glory of God and his creatures, time once enthroned has, quite in accordance with its nature, put an end to our relationships with any other realm of reality. Weil comments:

Modern society defines itself, like all the societies of history, by what it calls the sacred, in the formal sense of the term, by that which is not discussed but rather forms the basis of all discussion. For modern society this sacred value is the measurable result obtained in the struggle with nature. From it derives the principle of the elimination of every sacred value which transcends society and its work. The communion of individuals in values which are not located on the level of nature and of the struggle with nature, the communion with a universal and personal "I" whether it be Nature, God, the City, the King, is denied in law, or more exactly, is considered to be useless and in contradiction to the social value.⁷

Of course time could not have imposed itself in this way on Western man had not European man been prepared to *define himself* in terms of time. This identification was made in a manner not to be surpassed, by Hegel. "A distinction," taught Hegel, "is often made between the actions of a man and what he is in his inmost being. In history this distinction has no truth: man is but the series of his acts."⁸ This conception of man as activity derives from the separation which the new industrial society has effected between man and nature. Unable any longer to find himself as a *part* of nature, man achieved his new self consciousness in a *negative* relationship which made of the external world an alien object to be assimilated by its own destruction and transformation. As Hegel put it:

After the creation of nature, man appeared and opposed the natural world; he is the being who raised himself up in a second universe. Our general conscience contains the

⁷ Weil, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

⁸ *La raison dans l'histoire*, Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire, Paris, Union générale d'éditions, 1968. Tr. and notes by Kostas Papaioannou, p. 88.

notion of two kingdoms: that of nature and that of spirit. The Kingdom of spirit contains everything which is produced by man. The Kingdom of God can be represented in many ways, but it is always a matter of a Kingdom of spirit which must be achieved in man and take shape in existence.⁹

The equation of man with time, and of time with the unrolling of ultimate reality in history can be seen clearly in the following remark which is far greater evidence of Hegel's realism than the idealism with which he has been accused since the attacks of Feuerbach and Marx. "Universal history is the manifestation of the absolute divine process of the Spirit in its highest figures: the gradual progress by which it arrives at its truth and becomes conscious of itself."¹⁰ It couldn't have been more clearly put than when he wrote that, "Time appears then as the destiny and the necessity of the spirit which is not yet complete within itself...;"¹¹ the necessity through work and struggle, "of achieving what was at first only interior and of revealing it."

I wish to underline the significance of Hegel's understanding, by referring once again to its ramifications as drawn out by a well known student and interpreter of his thought, Kostas Papaioannou.

Up until then, time had been considered the enemy *par excellence*, the absolutely tragic, the inexorable symbol of defect, error, decay. Thus men had always sought to shelter their gods in an undefiled eternity to give themselves

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁰ "The peoples of history, the particular qualities of their collective ethics, their constitution, their art, their religion, their science, constitute the configurations of this gradual progress. Accomplish these steps that is the infinite desire and the irresistible push of the spirit of the World, for their articulation as well as their achievement is its very concept. The principles of the spirits of the peoples, in the necessary series of their succession are nothing, themselves, but the moments of the One universal Spirit; thanks to them, it rises in history to a totality transparent to itself and brings the conclusion." *Ibid.*, p. 97-8. See also, e.g. Hegel, *Leçons sur la philosophie de l'histoire*, Vrin, p. 337: "The temporal world is the spiritual empire in its existence, the empire of the will which is giving itself existence;" and *Phénoménologie*, p. 305, "la forme dans laquelle la substance est dans la conscience."

¹¹ *La phénoménologie de l'esprit*, vol. II, p. 305.

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some fixed point to clutch at, shielded from the pervasive grasp of time. The ancients had their incorruptible cosmos, the Moderns their Reason with its *veritates aeternae*. All of Hegel's efforts were to be aimed at, to use Pascal's image, persuading Reason to "house its enemy with itself:" like Durer's knight, the Absolute will have to take to the road between the Devil and Death.¹²

2. THE REVOLT AGAINST TIME

Thirty years and more before Hegel had formulated his description of the apotheosis of human history in terms, the veracity of which is still only being realized, a modern revolt against time was being announced in the expiring breath of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1776-1778). Present since then as an oppositional current to the framing of modern life as time in the forms of Romanticism, *Sturm und Drang*, Revolution and offbeat movements of various sorts, the phenomenon of the revolt against time has taken on such proportions currently that we cannot subscribe to Bonhoeffer's dictum that inwardness and conscience have come to an end.¹³ A brief examination of Rousseau's protest will, I hope, be instructive for our purposes.

In speaking of Rousseau's revolt and protest in this connection I am referring to the last of his writings, the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*. I use these two qualifications to describe this final "essay" of Rousseau's, in advancing a thesis which remains unconfirmed by the critical literature dealing with the *Rêveries*, and quite untested by any close familiarity with Rousseau's life or biographical material. I offer it nonetheless, reduced to the following brief terms. Most of the interpreters understand the *Rêveries* as the recording of an assortment of interior experiences set down without order or system, as an account for his own satisfaction, "of the changes in his soul and of their succession."¹⁴ The attempt at a systematic, chronological autobiography had been made by Rousseau in his *Confessions*

¹² "History and Theodicy," *Diogenes*, No. 53, Spring 1966, pp. 49-50.

¹³ The seminal protestant theologian wrote from prison in 1944 that "the time of inwardness and conscience" is over. *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Fontana, p. 91.

¹⁴ See, e.g. Robert Osmont, "Contribution à l'étude psychologique des *Rêveries*," *Annales J.-Jacques Rousseau*.

and *Dialogues*, completed in 1770 and 1776 respectively. And yet, at two years from his death, the life having been recorded in its chronological order, "alone upon the earth," Rousseau finds that it yet remains to seek "who I am myself" detached from the rest of man and from everything, in his state of isolation. What follow in the *Réveries*, in my opinion, is a carefully structured and progressive reply to that searching question. What it is important to note is that the order is not determined, nor is it recognizable, by the logic of *chronos*. Rather it is determined by the priorities of another, inner, could we call it existential, reality. Time is not only ignored, it is violated, rejected.

The succession of moments or experiences which he retains in the brief compass of the ten "Promenades" moves through a progressive series of intimate relationships that appear to progress from a "birth" which occurred in October 1776 (Rousseau was then 64) through consciousness of himself, absorption into and of Nature, relation with others, with children, and finally with the female counterpart Madame de Warens. Notice also that these reflections or reminiscences are set beneath the sign of the reverie, that is a state of mental or psychical disassociation far removed from the usual logic of reason. It is useful to quote a few passages in which he describes the significant states of his soul:—Second Promenade, in which he pictures an accident where he was knocked down by a large dog. His recovery of consciousness is described thus:

The night was getting late. I noticed the sky, several stars, and a little green about me. That first sensation was a moment of delight. I was still only aware of myself in that way. I was borne, in that moment, into life, and it seemed to me that I filled with my light being all the objects which I saw.¹⁵

Fifth Promenade:

If there is a state wherein the soul finds a base solid enough to repose itself fully and in which to draw together its whole being, without having to recall the past nor to step out into the future; wherein time was nothing to her, where the present lasts forever, without, however, showing

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1005.

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its duration, and without any trace of succession, without any other feeling of privation or of joy, of pleasure or of pain, of desire or of fear other than the one desire we have for existence; and that feeling may fill her completely...¹⁶

If, here, it is a question of his leisurely or passive relationship with nature and himself, in the Seventh Promenade he deals with the active relationship with the natural world. Could it be that he is raising the question of work in light of the emerging industrialism and the regnant rationalism of his time? Only the leisurely and disinterested activity of plant collecting is compatible with the sensitive soul of the contemplative, the integrated man. Engaged in this pursuit, alone,

a soft and deep rêverie seizes his senses and he loses himself with a delicious drunkenness in the immensity of this beautiful system with which he feels identified. Then all particular objects escape him; he sees and feels nothing but the whole.¹⁷

Even plant collecting, when it is done for rational scientific reasons or for the materialistic utilitarian purposes of discovering medical herbs, alienates one from union with the natural world. Rock collecting is the cause of a similar alienation requiring industries, labour and work in aid of the misery of man. Similarly, the study of animal life: it is based on expensive installations, and in the end, on the exploitation of animal life which must be destroyed to be examined.¹⁸ In the Eighth Promenade Rousseau describes how he found peace of soul in a situation where he who "felt himself worthy of love and respect" was turned into an object of derision, a frightful monster, by the whole generation of his contemporaries.¹⁹

Reduced to myself alone, I feed, it is true, upon my own substance; but it does not run out and I am sufficient for myself...²⁰

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1047.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 1063.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 1067-8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1076.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1075.

The secret was to enter into a relationship with the self in which pride or love of self was replaced by self-esteem. In a remarkable passage in which he refers to his pride in the third person Rousseau describes the process of interiorization, through the translation of pride into self-esteem.

In his falling back upon my soul and in cutting the outside relationships which make pride so demanding; in refusing comparisons and preferences "he" became content that I should be good enough for me; becoming then love of myself (rather than self-love) he settled down to the natural order of things and freed me from the yoke of opinion.²¹

In the apparently incongruous Ninth Promenade, where Rousseau evokes a number of happy yet imperfect and unnatural²² dealings with children, the intention, once again, seems to be to point to a category of relationships which were vital for his life, but about which he has to admit certain lacuna and failings.

The sense of impoverishment which he experienced one day on learning a child, and his well known failing in human relationships extended also to the opposite sex. This is why we are not a little surprised but nonetheless able to find great significance, in the Tenth, and supposedly unfinished Promenade. Describing his short and not altogether idyllic association with Mme de Warens, Rousseau writes:

There is not a day when I do not recall with joy and tenderness that unique and short time in my life when I was myself fully without alloy and without obstacles and when I can truly say that I lived. I can say almost like that Prefect of the Praetorium who, when he fell from favour under Vespasian went off to finish his days peacefully in this country: "I have spent sixty and ten years on earth, and of them I have lived (but) seven."²³

The whole point of that rather protracted yet incomplete

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1079.

²² Note the ref. to intervention of money into almost every instance of his relationships with children. The relationship is one of purchase—even though in an attenuated degree.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 1099.

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review was to demonstrate that in his *Réveries* Rousseau frames existence within a structure which is indeed *anachronistic*. It is an existence founded on and defined by the uncontrived relations of the psyche with itself, with nature, with spontaneous innocent childhood, with the companion of the heart. Rousseau is a modern in the sense that his rejection of time is not a matter of a flight to the eternal Beyond but a revolt against the oppressive forces of time within the limits and possibilities of *this* life. Existence is found within the field of time²⁴ but its living is contingent upon the annihilation of time. A life-time can be a prolonged death until life is created through an act of interiorization, the self's return to the self.²⁵

"The source of true happiness is in us."²⁶ Even the vitalizing relationships with external nature and persons are but bridges on the path of inevitable return to the inner self. The heart-warming joy which he longs to find in the eyes of the happy child is but the reflection of *himself*;²⁷ and what is one enjoying, asks Rousseau, when he describes the transports provided by the natural delights of L'Isle St-Pierre?

Nothing external to the self, nothing but one's self and his own existence; as long as that state lasts one is sufficient unto himself like God.²⁸

The important question in our context is, why does Rousseau, in structuring existence according to the logic of interiorization, set himself against the regime of time? The answer is to be found partly in the spirit of 18th century European society; partly in Rousseau's analysis of that world. The century, as all its manifestations make clear, was the brilliantly dramatized debut

²⁴ Writes Marcel Raymond in his note on the mention of time which is quoted from the Fifth Promenade: "It does not appear that time is transcended but on the contrary that there is a descent into immanence deep enough to enter an absolutely homogeneous and undifferentiated form of time." (*Ibid.*, p. 1799). Raymond cites Jean Wahl (*Tableau de la Philosophie française*, Paris, 1946, pp. 94-95) as saying: "A sort of existential mysticism is founded."

²⁵ Second Promenade, p. 1004: "J'étais fait pour vivre, et je meurs sans avoir vécu." (Reflection prior to his accident).

²⁶ Second Promenade, p. 1003.

²⁷ Ninth Promenade, p. 1089, "happiness to be with me," or joy purchased with money by him...

²⁸ Fifth promenade, p. 1047.

of human absolutism. The “absolute will for form” received expression on every hand, from the immaculately groomed geometrical gardens to the emergent industrialism, from the formalizing of education to the birth of modern historiography and political economy. To externalize the noble image of the soul by subjecting everything about him to a rational order and rendering visible the perfection, therein lay the dynamic which motivated 18th C. man. Time, from this point of view, was not a determinism imposed from without by an immutable and transcendent order of existence. Time was an adjunct of Man’s reason. Time was the rational ordering of activity; it was therefore, reason in the service of active externalization. Contemporary man, writes Rousseau in his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men*, is to be identified by his feverish activity ordered by the rule of time.

The citizen, ever active, sweats, frets, never stops worrying about looking for things to do which are still more laborious; he works himself to death, he runs even to his death, in order to be able to enjoy life, or else he withdraws from life to obtain immortality.²⁹

The point is perhaps becoming evident. Action, above all, in the form of work is the means of exteriorization. Moved by his appetite for power and status (“*réputation*”) modern man is characterized above all by his alienation.

Primitive man lives within himself; man in society, always outside of himself, only knows how to live in the opinion of others; and it is so to speak, only from their opinion that he gets the feeling of his own existence.³⁰

Why does Rousseau rise in opposition against the time-work-externalization complex which is “the spirit of society?” Because it is the basis of that “assemblage of artificial men and factitious passions,”³¹—society,—to which man of necessity relinquishes

²⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social... Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* etc., Paris, Garnier Frères, 1962, p. 91.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

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his existence and which in turn destroys his freedom. In externalizing his existence, man who was born to be free is everywhere in chains.³² He who thought to extend himself to the mastery of nature and of man did not fail to become more a slave than they!³³

Rousseau was remarkably, in all likelihood even pathologically, sensitive to the oppression of society as he saw it in the plottings and persecutions of other men. If only, he declaimed wistfully in the Sixth Promenade, "he had been invisible and omnipotent like God" he would have lived with pleasure, even well-doing, amongst them. How much more clearly could he have expressed the longing of the alienated for a form of externalization free from subjection; for activity unconditioned by time; for relationships free from domination. But not for Rousseau the prerogatives of divine transcendence! Circumscribed by the structures of time-driven rationality, he opts for the World Within. He sought to fill out existence within the limited dimensions of natural reality; but suppressing time in the attempt, he became perhaps the first secular mystic of the rational world.

3. CURRENT MANIFESTATIONS OF THE REVOLT

The movement to which Rousseau gave early expression has become a very evident counter current in contemporary society. What was first a halting and imprecise experiment to define existence according to "natural" rather than rational categories has gained considerable momentum in pitting the reality of psychic structure against that of the world of work. The reaction of Romanticism against the dominant ethos of the rationalized society has issued undiminished in the psychic protests against the technical society. The movement has been reinforced in two important respects. In the first place, the veracity of its understanding of reality has been confirmed by our growing knowledge of the psychic behaviour. In the second place the oppression of the time-work world which gave rise to the retreat inward has taken on tyrannous proportions. Under these con-

³² *Ibid.*, p. 236, *Du Contrat Social*.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

ditions the increasing anarchy and “anachrony,” widely latent, are becoming quite clearly manifest.

To illustrate the first point I mention a rather striking passage from Freud. Rousseau’s intuition here receives a corroboration which, although reserved, is stated in the clearest of terms.

In view of certain psychoanalytic data which we possess today we may voice doubt about Kant’s proposition according to which time and space are the necessary forms of our thought. We know for example that the unconscious psychic processes are “timeless.” That means that they are not arranged in the order of time, that time subjects them to no change, that to them the category of time cannot be applied.³⁴

The second point is equally well formulated, quite appropriately, by the Hegelian political philosopher Eric Weil. Present-day work-oriented society is so highly rational from the functional and technical point of view of the struggle with nature, that it increasingly subjects the individual to the contradiction of the *necessity* of the working society on the one hand, and its *senselessness* on the other. In such conditions the individual himself tends to become devoid of meaning. Since the rational thus plunges the human into “the absolute irrational,” the rationalism of modern society is faulted, and the individual unsatisfied.

The incomplete rational thus requires, in the mind of the individual, that which society calls the historical: the traditional sacred values, feeling, interiority. And it is the *inner* life which constitutes an (individuality) out of the individual, in so far as he is not purely a factor of produc-

³⁴ Translation mine. The standard translation will be found in Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, (1920), *the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, tr. James Strachey, vol. XVIII, London, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955, p. 28. Note also other remarks drawn from *Ibid.* vol. XIV, 1957, *The Unconscious*, (1915):

“The process of the system *Ucs* are *timeless*, i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all. Reference to time is bound up, once again, with the work of the system *Cs*.”

“The *Ucs* processes pay just as little regard to *reality*, they are subject to the pleasure principle; their fate depends only on how strong they are and on whether they fulfill the demands of the pleasure-unpleasure regulation.”

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tion: the individual finds meaning in the struggle—whether it be the exterior struggle against nature, or the struggle within society—only to the extent to which that struggle seems necessary to him in order to be able to live for himself according to his sacred value.³⁵

Weil shows well how the work-society in its technological form has brought a reversal of that earlier order, at least as it was expressed by those sufficiently well-off to convince themselves and others of the ideology. Today we work to live, we do not live to work.³⁶ And that life, the evidence makes it clear, is being sought, not *simply* outside of work. In the highly rationalized society, the inviting possibilities of time-as-leisure, (i.e. time for consumption) are just as important for giving significance to the individual's existence as productive work time. When the person is not a worker-producer he is a consumer. Consumption is in this respect but the obverse of production. The two are facets of the same struggle to appropriate life from an objectified or reified existence. It is this struggle which sets time in thralldom over existence. Waste is, likewise, the compliment of efficiency. Our society is increasingly oriented by both. As time is one of the key factors of the latter, so is it crucial to the former. It is time that reduces to an equation production for use and production for waste. Even the steadily increasing importance of the "tertiary" sector of activity, or the service occupations as they are called, does not constitute an indication that there is a greater opportunity outside the confines of "productive" work for the individual "to pursue his own ends" free of the conditions of alienation. People, which are the objects of work-as-service, tend to be "processed" and "consumed" as readily as the rest of the resources, the *matériel* of the transformation cycle. These constraints of both work-time

³⁵ *Philosophie politique*, Paris, Librairie phil. J. Vrin, 1956, p. 93. This sentence is preceded on p. 9 by the following passage: "La lutte sociale, inévitable dans toute société particulière, montre à l'individu, à la fois la nécessité du travail social et le caractère insensé de celui-ci. Elle rejette l'individu sur lui-même et elle montre en même temps que ce lui-même est un terme dénué de signification, un *status vocis*: le rationnel le plonge dans l'irrationnel absolu."

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

and non-productive time reinforce a markedly growing tendency to turn not only to the self, but to return inward to feed upon the inner self.

In this regard Weil's analysis does not appear to go far enough. The current flight to inwardness is not synonymous with a retreat to historical values, the sacred objects of the past. The search for fusion and community may indeed represent a desire to repossess a form of existence and a set of values which have been more fully recognized by societies in the past. However, the counter-current represented by the revolt against time is not a form of conservatism, nor is it *only* revolutionary. It is rather a movement of *involution*. It occurs, significantly enough, in the midst of a society for which history as memory of the past and framework of existence has lost its relevance. The root-bed of existence which this society cultivates with religious-like zeal, is the shifting sand of a continuously changing present.³⁷ The future, as a result of its unimaginable physiognomy, is uncertain, both as a possibility and with respect to what it will demand. On the other hand, the material over-satiation of the present, projects no tomorrows darkened by want. (We are speaking here of the technologically developed societies which continue increasingly to form an island isolated from some of the most pointed realities in the life of the world). The demands of his needs filled man's time and shaped him into a function of his reason. Now that reason has succeeded in emptying time of its significance, directed consciousness becomes both inadequate and unnecessary as the mode of existence. This will be enlarged upon shortly. The point is simply that the drive to introversion is one with the pervasive rejection of past and future. As Kenneth Keniston points out, this emphasis on the present "is an indirect refusal of the *time-binding* capacity of the ego."³⁸ The descent beneath consciousness is not the recall of history or the setting in opposition of the past and the present. It is the annihilation of history as recollection and as "living morality"—that is, as the sum of institutions and conventions which permit society to cohere,

³⁷ See among the analyses of the disappearance of past and future, Kenneth Keniston, *The Uncommitted*, N.Y., Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965, esp. Ch. entitled "Chronic Change and the Cult of the Present."

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

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endure and develop.³⁹ *Anachrony thus takes shape in the social form of anarchy.* The soft light of its scattered shadow shows up an inevitable decadence of society.

In his brilliant analysis of "Alienated Youth in America" Kenneth Keniston discusses at length "the search in these youths for personal wholeness, artistic expressiveness, immediacy of experience, and spontaneity of feeling, their preference for passion over reason and imagination over 'realism'..."⁴⁰ The author suggests "that the period of youth in America is a period of socially enforced alienation and that partly as a result, the adult life of the apparently well-adjusted in America is shot through with little alienations."⁴¹ Despite this, he nevertheless goes on to add that "what is missing in the alienation of the youth we have studied, as in the big or little alienations of most other Americans, is any radical criticism of our society or any revolutionary alternative to the *status quo*."⁴² I submit, on the contrary, that the revolt against time is a rising tide of Western life which runs *directly counter* to our long-standing rational tradition. What is hidden in the misty eye of the psychomystic is a transformational possibility as far-reaching as was the concept of time itself. The psychic restructuring of existence threatens to dissolve the time-oriented domination of life which occurs at the hands of the fundamental work ethos of industrial society.

The current manifestations of the revolt are too numerous and subtle to list and analyse here. They range from the plebeian transport offered by the perambulating transistor to the time-free, effortless exhilaration of parachute jumping now become a fad; from the mystique of the profound yet simple poetry sung in the coffee-temples to the timeless world of contemporary art which exalts the primordial structure of elementary colour and form (optic art) and visualizes, with "magic realism" an inner universe ordered by the unconscious rather than the ego; from the stream of consciousness in literature and film, to the ostensibly "absurd" form of existence depicted by Beckett in his brazen violation of the time-ordered life; the unceasing search for participation, involvement and fusion which ranges from a

³⁹ Weil, *op. cit.*, p. 105 ff., esp. p. 126.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 381.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 419.

restructuring of sexual relations and identification to the consensus-seeking of New Left politics.

The subordination of time to "feeling" in "new" or youthful left-wing political movements is evident in the following two examples, as significant as they are evidently banal. In an article describing the Company of Young Canadians (vintage 1966) as captive to the "spirit and methods of the New Left," Douglas Fisher wrote of the activist volunteers.

A consequence of the consensus approach is permissiveness of an unusual degree. In fact, I was told by many volunteers individually that the Canadian Indians have the right approach for the troubles we face in these times. They were seen as non-competitive, group oriented, non-aggressive, released from the bounds of the calendar and the clock. The volunteers like the idea of the 24-hour day, caring every hour of the day, being available all the day, but abhorring office hours.

The volunteers had caught the spirit thoroughly for rarely more than half showed up for any activity [at their training sessions], even for breakfast. They hitch-hiked the nearby roads or swam or sunned or discussed.⁴³

What disturbed and confounded Fisher even more was that the rejection of a time-oriented life went hand in hand with an evident disdain for politics, politicians, "all political parties," bureaucrats and experts alike.

The other case is the absence of any sense of time or timing, strategic or tactical, which characterized the May revolt in France, 1968. "It was a textbook case of a revolutionary situation which did not develop into a revolution because there was nobody, least of all the students, who was prepared to seize power and the responsibility that goes with it. Nobody except, of course, De Gaulle..."⁴⁴

⁴³ "The New Left in Action as Others see It," *Canadian Dimension*, vol. 3, No. 6, Sep.-Oct., 1966.

⁴⁴ Hanna Arendt, "Reflections on Violence," *New York Review of Books*, Feb. 27, 1969. In this respect the French student revolutionary movement resembles others in the industrial countries in their sharp contrast to 19th and 20th century revolutionary movements. The latter were founded on historicist and rationalist presuppositions, highly conscious of "conditions" and timing. The former, which challenge the institutionalization of power itself, are less

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From the common experiences of the daily round I provide one simple example of the way in which the revolt against time is fundamental to life in our society. McLuhan attributes the drive towards "total involvement in all-inclusive *nowness*"⁴⁵ that is occurring in the first T.V. generation to "the synesthesia, or tactual depth of the T.V. experience."⁴⁶ "By electricity, we everywhere resume person to person relations as if on the smallest village scale."⁴⁷ On the contrary, I submit, the ultimate in the time-structuring organization of life which is achieved by electronics and jet propulsion increases the *quantity* but removes the *personal or psychic quality* of relationships. The televised teacher may or may not be endowed with "a dimension almost of sacredness."⁴⁸ But one thing is certain, his ears do not hear and his eyes do not see or reflect *me*. The purely functional and impersonal "relationships" of the global village are a travesty and a desecration, because persons are present or appear to be, without the possibility of communion. The search for involvement and the new-found delight in tactility are not due *directly* to the magic media. They are reactions against their tyranny, a tyranny that is the all the more fearful because it is impersonal. The groping toward contact and the seeking for a consummation of relationships which so characterize the behaviour of the youthful imply the recognition of a psychic definition of existence which stands in opposition to the time-structured organization of life, a life so highly rationalized that time has become the medium of *processes* rather than human experience, a deserted superhighway inhospitable to the pursuit of personal human existence.

The most spectacular manifestation of the revolt of which we have been speaking is the broad way inward which has been opened up by the psychedelic drugs. The importance of the psychedelic cult of the unconscious is not to be underestimated.

concerned with seizing it than breaking its hold on human activity. The struggle to obstruct, resist and liberate is not determined by time but by more primordial life forces. It takes the shape of a counter-culture, or a revolution that is "cultural" and on-going.

⁴⁵ *Understanding Media*, Toronto, New York, McGraw Hill, 1964, p. 335.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

Especially among the intelligent sensitive young, a sect-like movement of very large proportions has sprung up, with its transports, its way to gnosis, its communities, its messianic claims, its charismatic leaders, its evangel-bearing converts, its emotion-charged conflicts with the power-structures of the age. What interests us particularly is the way time crumbles from its usual form as one of the dimensions of experience, within the state of transcendent consciousness triggered by psychedelic drugs. The following comments on the effects of LSD drawn from cases cited by Cohen are typical and will suffice to make the point.⁴⁹

Time began to have no beginning and no end, at times it seemed to move very rapidly, at other times extremely slowly. However, whenever I looked at my watch I was always amazed that so little time had passed.⁵⁰

I said this [experience] all started this morning at 8:00 but of course it didn't. It started some place in the distant past millions of years ago, before we measured time on watches.⁵¹

A second point should be underlined: the evocations reminiscent of Rousseau which the acid calls forth.

Rousseau's movement from isolation, through unity with nature and persons, to the self is graphically recalled by a psychology student describing his experience under LSD.

It washed over the little sand castle me and spread my sands over the ocean floor of existence and said: "Now go find yourself and live like before." To lose that ever present feeling of being yourself, yourself as separate from everything else, and to let go to the overpowering flood of emotions, feeling, loving, hating, being together with everything else... that's where the newness comes in.⁵²

Just as LSD does not stop time but provides access to a timeless level of existence, so it does not propel one into a super-

⁴⁹ Sidney Cohen, *The Beyond Within*, New York, Atheneum, 1964.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

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natural Beyond, but rather widens the perception of the beyond within the unconscious reaches of the vast but unexplored "brain-mind function." Similarly the union, the loss of self, the transcendental state of receptivity and communion so often associated with the psychedelic state are not properties of the acid. If the use of LSD and other psychedelics has gained cultic magnitude among the young, this is due not to something novel which it has created. It is rather because it is the key to a long "forgotten" heritage of existence which is locked up behind the social masonry of conscious rationality. Commenting in 1964 on the growing use of LSD as a "movement of liberation," Sidney Cohen writes:

It is because so many are unable to achieve this feeling of belonging that the psychedelic state seems so attractive. They sense that meaning can be found—meaning of a profundity beyond the pallid secularism and the all too comfortable religions of our day. They sense that greater significance, more sustaining values, more persisting relationships are possible than those at hand.⁵³

It is at this point that the LSD phenomenon—both as state and movement—which appears so inconsistent a manifestation of our society⁵⁴ throws light on the vast transformation eating at its bowels. Travellers along the highroad of psychedelia reveal themselves with remarkable constancy and consistency as subversives in the regime where time rules a world of work. In the one example which I cite from many which could be analysed with similar results, one notes the obvious exposure and repudiation of the "puritanical" personality structure which occurred under LSD. The female psychologist is commenting on a series of tests she was required to do as part of the experiment:

After the Draw-a-person came the Bender-Gestalt, and I had fun with that. I had a lot of fun using paper on it. There was a feeling of expansiveness and a general flouting of authority. While I was doing it I knew that I ordinarily

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 227-8.

⁵⁴ "That so anti-intellectual a product should have been fabricated in our highly intellectualized civilization is the cream of the jest," Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

would put all the forms on one piece of paper. I'm so controlled and frugal. Anyway I had no trouble with the Bender. I drew good figures and associated to them, and the great fun was putting them about three to a page. And I even craftily arranged it so that I had a whole sheet of paper for the last figure. It was like satisfying the compulsion to stuff ones mouth with food when you know it isn't polite. But such pleasure to take a whole sheet of paper for that last figure (and I even ran it off at one end).⁵⁵

A lapel button of the psychedelic communities of the American West coast invited to "Abolish Reality." Or is it the slogan of a social program? Both are likely true, because LSD does nothing but release tendencies which are widely latent in society. The reality which is rejected is that which is prevalently defined by the self-regulating inner dynamics of time-bound technology. Those who would shed the confining vest of the brief, brilliant tradition of rational activity and objectivization in the West find comfort in the drug. "In sufficient amounts this drug has a disinhibiting or releasing action on learned patterns, particularly those related to reality testing, survival functioning, goal-directed behaviour and logical thinking."⁵⁶ What many have suspected has often been confirmed:—Beyond the restrictions of the Hegelian universe of consciousness, work and time, there lies salvation.

* * *

The significance of the current revolt against time cannot be made too abundantly clear. The manifestations of its currency which we have just examined show it to be part of a current common in Western life, especially since the time when Rousseau gave it a formulation which was particularly apt. The visible current is certainly still but a minor chord set over against an oppressively dominant theme. There are indications, however, that the widespread latent conflict may grow to most significant dimensions. The revolt will likely gain strength, because the conditions of

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

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grinding need which set the rational work-world in motion in the West no longer prevail for the majority. No vital sanction militates against what were once the luxuries of idleness and unreason. Even when survival is the problem, on the level of international politics, we have all too clearly entered the dimension of the irrational; "the problem" of international survival by the present order of things is, moreover, increasingly confined to a smaller and smaller aristocracy of technocrats and power controllers. There is further reinforcement of the trend to be found in the fact that at the moment in which time becomes the monopoly of processes and work the right of machines, men find themselves confronted by the desirability or by the *obligation* to vacate the time-work complex of existence. Except, of course, that his services are more needed than ever in the consumption side of the process! And here conflict is heightened, because time to-be-filled-with-the-activity-of-depleting-the-surplus-of-production, appears even more devoid of meaning than time as the sphere of work. There is no logical necessity that the disappearance of meaningful work and eventually of the work ideology in industrial civilization signifies that "art, associated with other interests, with idleness, seems ready in many ways, psychologically and socially to fill the spot left vacant...";⁵⁷ as is so often maintained. Art is an expression of reality undetermined by the necessary rule of time. As long as time pervades existence through the production-consumption equation, art will remain only a diversion or a protest. The simple solution of the problem of production does not usher in an era of existence to be defined by timeless criteria... And in the present world, time as the ordering of consumption has not been blessed with the justification of rationality acquired in various ways by work when it became the purpose of existence. Especially in the face of material regression and emergent famine over large parts of the world, there remains an irrepressible aura of unreason about the activity of massive consumption—i.e. waste and destruction. Work-filled time is experienced ultimately as oppression wrought by reason. Consumption-filled time has the

⁵⁷ Gilberto Freyre, "Time, Leisure and the Arts," in *Diogenes*, No. 54, Summer 1966, p. 116.

irrational appearance of death and self-destruction.⁵⁸ Not without significance is the fact that the revolt against time very often goes bare-footed and blue-jeaned and clearly identifies with the disinherited of the earth. It often bears the trial of a new ascetism prepared to squander time without end on elementary human values. This is possible only when time is no longer the necessary universal currency of human existence. But taken together, both the dominant tendency of our society as well as the reaction it engenders, concur in heightening the precariousness of "Western" social life.

The production-consumption pattern of society is fraught with a certain penchant for death, a kind of necessity of destructive self-consumption. As we have seen, the retreat from reason borders in some places upon a reduction of the survival instinct. At the very zenith of its "achievements," rational society appears more tenuous than ever, and causes to be built within its own structure the conditions likely to bring about its internal collapse. What is equally important and even more ironic:—As the movement to shed the cloak of time, grown oppressive, continues in the advanced bureaucratic states, favoured by the discovery of the Reality within, immense continents appear bent on emerging from their timeless inactivity (as measured by the standards of economic growth). Long enthralled by the arbitrary and oppressive hand of nature, they are faced with the necessity of discovering the appealing form of existence promised by the severe disciplines of the rational world of time. In the offing is the formation of a contradiction of historic and universal proportions. For, at the same moment, just like the suffocating weight of nature which it vanquished, the time-shod civilization of technique would appear to be laying upon men an oppression which forces them to flee for their lives into the primordial, timeless, irreducible dimensions of existence.

⁵⁸ Note the interesting analysis of "Ennui, nausée, et lassitude" by Petru Dumitriu in *Esprit*, No. 9, september 1962, pp. 295-298. "Dans les sociétés mourantes, le dernier amusement qu'on puisse encore trouver, c'est la destruction et plus précisément la destruction de soi-même car l'instinct de conservation s'est affaibli comme les autres..."