

## BOOKS

Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.) 1969.

Any sensitive observer of the current educational and social scene will probably pick the Roszak volume off the paperback shelves with great expectations. To run into the subtitle "Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition" was enough to whet this reader's appetite. And Roszak intends to do more than present reflections. He seeks to present the elements that can explain the extraordinary amount of youthful ferment that we are all witnessing in contemporary society. He begins by describing just who is taking part in the upheaval that the young themselves call "the Movement". First, the movement is made up of a minority of the youth, not the conservatives, nor liberals, not old line Marxists, nor the blacks. Roszak is a bit cloudy in describing just who is involved, but the counter culture is seen to include undergraduate radicals, graduate student radicals, and non-student radicals. Later examples and illustrations lead one to add to the above group the hippies and yippies. Having described the members of the counter culture, he moves on to discuss their ideas.

Important to the development of the notion of counter culture is the fact of its opposition to what Roszak calls the technocracy.

By the technocracy, I mean that social form in which an industrial society reaches the peak of its organizational integration. It is the ideal men usually have in mind when they speak of modernizing, up-dating, rationalizing, planning.

The technocracy is the society of the expert who makes his decisions by relying on the authority of science, natural and social. Roszak's analysis adds nothing to those that have almost become the standard critiques of advanced industrialism, e.g., Marcuse or Jacques Ellul. In fact, he quotes extensively from Ellul in describing the technocracy. He agrees with most of the modern critics in stressing that capitalism vs. socialism is no longer the issue. Both economic systems provide for rapid and total industrialization, and this development is the most important by far because it is industrialization which produces technocracy.

The young emerge as the chief enemy of the technocracy and it is the style of their revolt that Roszak believes is the key element in creating the counter culture. Central to the youth revolt is the notion that "building the good society is not primarily a social, but a psychic task." The rest of the work is an expansion of this central insight. Thus, the counter culture is seen largely as a movement with a personalist emphasis, stressing openness in relations between its members, and

exhibiting a definite anti-ideological bias. The counter culture stresses the non-intellective factors in opposition to the rational style of the technocracy. The notion of vision is primary and Eastern religions have much influence. Alienation is described in existential rather than socio-economic terms. It is a condition rooted in all men rather than in particular classes. The counter culture stresses quality over quantity. It is bent on destroying the myth of objectivity which results in an artificial intelligence which replaces the total man with a kind of thinking machine.

The preceding paragraph is the skeleton of the Roszak argument. In particular chapters he illuminates these generalizations through discussions of older writers who are presented and accepted as the *gurus* of the youth movement. Thus, Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown are more important than Marx because they rely on psychoanalytic insights instead of analyses of social structure. They are more Freudian than Marxian. And Brown then is preferred over Marcuse because he goes beyond concepts such as science, power, and politics in seeking liberation from society. Marcuse is still committed to social liberation but Brown is interested in psychic release. Alan Ginsberg and Alan Watts are both extremely important because they are engaged in a personal search for art unmediated by intellect. A chapter is devoted to Paul Goodman in which the psychological works and the novels are stressed as the keys.

At the root of Goodman's thinking, then, we find a mystical psychology whose conception of human nature sides aesthetically and ethically with the non-intellective spontaneity of children and primitives, artists and lovers, those who can lose themselves gracefully in the splendor of the moment.

The book itself contains many of the characteristics of the counter culture as described by Roszak. It uses a variety of terms, people, and arguments, any one of which might be used loosely. An analytic philosopher would have a field day with Roszak's use of "technocracy" and "counter culture" for he never really succeeds in precisely defining the terms. Nevertheless, upon completion of the book it was clear, at least to this reader, what Roszak was talking about. The primary enemies of reform in this society are science and intellect as manifested in what he calls the objective consciousness. The only way to break down this obstacle is through non-scientific and non-intellectual talents. The men Roszak chose for study are the variations on his anti-scientific theme.

Several questions emerge after finishing the Roszak volume. The first one is to ask whether or not he really was describing the youth movement at all. Roszak is faced with the lack of substantive theoretical analyses of society by the young themselves and he is forced to look for those of the older generation who appeal to youth. His choice seems adequate, but there are probably other choices just as adequate that don't fit the Roszak framework (e.g., C. Wright Mills, a hero of the

infant new left in the early sixties and by no means anti-rational). At any rate, no matter what choices from the older generation are made, one faces the problem of linking their ideas to particular people and events in the youth movement. It seems fairly clear that he did not accomplish this linking. This is an extremely difficult task and I am not sure that Roszak or anyone else can be blamed for not accomplishing it.

His argument relies on the older thinkers and his actual references to youth themselves are sparse in comparison. Some of the references he does make could lead one to question his feel for the counter culture. For instance, in a chapter on drugs he makes it obvious that he is opposed to drug use among the young. This is an opposition I share with Roszak, but neither of us seem to be in tune with counter cultural youth on this matter. He also remarks that he does not share the tastes of youth in music. Youthful music is a passion — perhaps even a medium — that takes in those in the counter culture as well as the rest of youth. To oppose the music might well indicate that Roszak is not as conversant with young people as he leads us to believe.

At any rate, let us return to the anti-rationalism of Roszak and the counter culture. To argue, as Roszak does, that the real problem in our society is the fault of reason or science, which he uses interchangeably, seems to lead one into a blind alley. Roszak winds up praising the mystical and those parts of the counter culture that portray this spiritual emphasis. Yet, his attack on drugs is surely rational. In other words, I think even he knows better than to totally opt out on reason. Yet he forgets what he knows quite often. At times he is an anti-intellectual intellectual taking it out on his colleagues. At other times he is a full blown mystic talking of seeing with “the eyes of fire” and the good magic of the shaman and the artist. He is caught in the rational versus irrational dichotomy that Bertrand Russell uses to travel through the entire history of western philosophy. He opts for the irrational and cautions against any halfway solution between the two. Thus, it becomes easy for him to ignore the black students and their movement because they have not totally rejected technocratic, rational society as the white radicals have. The blacks are seen as moderates in the sense that they want a piece of the action while the whites, the counter culture, want to rise above the action.

I myself think Roszak is wrong precisely at this point in his analysis. Looking at the problem from a social perspective we find the black revolt largely one of a lower class in the society while the counter culture is a middle class movement, maybe even upper middle class. As the 19th century Romantics sought to reverse the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the counter culture combats twentieth century science and technology. It is a kind of twentieth century romanticism, an aristocratic movement railing at the excesses of the vulgar populace

and its leaders. The blacks are thus able to be patronized by the white radicals as not being advanced enough to see the real problems. The concerns of the blacks are more economic than cultural and this type of emphasis is inappropriate in the counter culture. Yet, I think we might well argue that were it not for the blacks, we would have no counter culture. The insights Norman Mailer provided into black - white youth relationships in "The White Negro" seem just as relevant today as when they were written.

Is there then some alternative to romanticism and middle class radicalism and are not some of the attributes of the alternative present in the counter cultural models Roszak discusses? I think so, and the kind of alternative will become clearer if we look at Paul Goodman, one of Roszak's model thinkers. As mentioned previously, Roszak sees Goodman as essentially a mystical critic of the technocracy. Perhaps Goodman can respond to this in his own words:

I have become resigned to being called a pastoral follower of Jefferson, and, of course, something named 'Rousseau.' Basically I am an Aristotelian with a keen admiration for Dewey, Veblen, and Kropotkin; but the tack I take . . . is to point out that Jefferson and Rousseau were by no means 'romantic': they were terribly realistic about the monopolies, superstitions and faddishness of the courts, churches and tyrannies that they were attacking, just as we are now confronted with a superstitious and hoaxing Establishment . . .<sup>1</sup>

These do not seem to be the words of a mystic but rather the words of a man who seeks concrete social and political changes rather than psychic release. Or perhaps the social and political change is prior to psychic release. At any rate, it is hard to ignore the realistic social and political concerns that abound in the work of Paul Goodman. He is not one who rejects reason or science. One might argue that Goodman sees the problems of the technocracy caused by a failure to heed true scientific principles.

Working by its own morale, scientific technology should by now have simplified life rather than complicated it, emptied the environment rather than cluttered it, and educated an inventive and skillful generation . . .<sup>2</sup>

The reason that, for Goodman, science has not fulfilled its promise "is that business - as - usual has coopted science."<sup>3</sup> This line of argument seems very different from that which Roszak sees as characteristic of Paul Goodman. The stress on science as a positive force reflects Goodman's previously mentioned sympathy to Veblen and Dewey. In order to free science to perform its assigned tasks, political changes will have

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Goodman, "Letter to the Editor", *Harvard Educational Review*, XXXVII, (Spring, 1967), p. 265.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Goodman, "The Morality of Scientific Technology", *Dissent*, XIV, (January - February, 1967), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 45.