



The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting

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forces in the diremption of social time, for by introducing a new metric and by enlarging our control over nature, technology has transferred social relationships and our ways of looking at the world. To be arbitrary, we can list five ways by which technology has wrought these transformations:

(1) By producing more goods at less cost, technology has been the chief engine of raising the living standards of the world. . . . But technology has not only been the means of raising levels of living, it has been the chief mechanism of reducing inequality within Western society. . . .

(2) Technology has created a new class, hitherto unknown in society, of the engineer and the technician. . . .

(3) Technology has created a new definition of rationality, a new mode of thought, which emphasizes functional relations and the quantitative. . . .

The litany shows how much Bell, like so many sociologists, has accepted the present social world on its own terms, including the absurd notion of technology acting on its own.⁴

Education is another social phenomenon which in Bell's hands tends to be reified. Over long stretches of the book he assumes that schooling means education, and that the U. S. is therefore becoming a mass knowledge society (p. 242) because 7 out of 10 will have graduated from high school (p. 143) and the average person in the professional and technical category will have had two to four years of college. In passing he again knows better, quoting with apparent approval the idea that people have to get more schooling simply to maintain their income position (p. 415).

The university is another ideological entity, as are the university professors. The university itself, such is the impression Bell gives, is a moral entity, worthy of praise. Men of knowledge form a natural elite, with a natural authority accruing to them (p. 423). Hence the university is a separate institutional base, with a separate ethos, and will become the center of post-industrial society. Yet Bell knows that the university is an instrument of class stratification (p. 242), that it is itself bureaucratized (p. 174), that science may be used as an ideology (p. 386), and that the corporations are and are likely to remain the central institutions in our society (e.g., p. 269).

⁴ Elsewhere, as is usually the case, Bell knows better: he knows that there are no "technological imperatives" (p. 285). The point about this book is the gap between what Bell knows and what Bell the theorist asserts.

In the end, there remains the polity's need for legitimation and the rise of the new knowledge class. Connecting the two is the court philosopher. As, towards the end of this book, the theme of the need for a new political philosophy becomes more and more dominant, I begin to wonder whether we shouldn't construe this book as Daniel Bell's claim to the mantle of Karl Mannheim. If so, then Bell's description of the tasks of the knowledge class would be a description of his view of himself (p. 377):

And yet the very forces which have re-emphasized the primacy of the political order in a technical world make it imperative to define some coherent goals for the society as a whole and, in the process, to articulate a public philosophy which is more than the sum of what particular situses or social groups may want. In the efforts to forge some such coherence one may find the seeds of the cohesiveness of the professional class in the post-industrial society.

As Bell says, "Any issue that becomes ideological becomes distorted" (p. 273). The Daniel Bell who hated ideologues and helped proclaim the end of ideology has here produced ideology.

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This review of Daniel Bell's new super-volume is critical rather than didactic; it assumes the reader's familiarity with Bell's main points from previously published essays, other reviews, or from the book itself.

Like a short story writer who has decided the time has come to write his version of the Great American Novel, Bell the essayist has finally decided to turn his talents toward producing a *magnum opus*. The main disappointment awaiting the reader of *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* is that Bell's attempt to provide both a grand theory of contemporary society, and a history of the next thirty years, falls apart as he fails to fit together into one all-encompassing mosaic the scores of sociological pieces he has amassed. Thus, we are treated to a series of little essays on such heterogeneous topics as mathematical and statistical tools as means for forecasting the future, the "economizing" as contrasted to the "sociologizing" mode of thinking, honest-to-God science versus Big Science, manpower projections and their implications, among others.

What is greatly missed is an integrating

conception, a grand idea, an historical imagination which would help answer the crucial question: What are the social forces moving us and where are they headed? Instead we have Bell's fascination with the obsolescent mode of *pre*-theorizing, as evidenced by his coining of new labels for social phenomena which already have quite solid and serviceable ones. (Parsons, I believe, exhausted our patience for such work.) Thus, Bell makes much out of the "sociologizing" as opposed to the "economizing" mode of thinking and acting. The latter is defined as "functional efficiency and the management of things (and men treated as things)"; while the former "establishes broader social criteria" (pp. 42-43). Functional versus substantial rationality would have done quite nicely; managerial versus political mode, even better.

Above all, this collection lacks a sociopolitical theory. Bell foresees the transition from the contemporary to the post-industrial society as one which will entail a shift from the primacy of profit to the primacy of politics (in Mao's and my, not Bell's, terminology). The decline of the corporation and corresponding rise of other institutions, the increase in social and normative fragmentation, the growing need to attend to collective interests, especially in the areas of foreign policy and social costs, from pollution to occupational safety, all point in this direction. Not very new or original observations, yet still quite true.

But which segment of society will embody the new primacy of the political? What social force will promote it? Will it arise *ipso facto* out of the increased significance of this function and historical need? In previous theorizing, the experts or managers served as the *deus ex machina*, replacing the proletariat of Marxist theory as the rising class which would bring about the new, post-industrial, order. The rationality of their decision-making, it was suggested, would ensure their hegemony. But even about the technocrats the question had to be asked whether they could indeed mobilize and coalesce sufficient power to overcome private interests and see the public interest to its realization.

Unless one assumes a thoroughly atomized mass society and a situation overripe for charisma, which Bell does not, the politicians, clearly, cannot be envisioned the new carriers of the public interest, the new priorities, the "sociologizing mode," or, for that matter, a significant societal vector in their own right. What must be identified, if in fact collective rather than individualistic values are to pre-

vail, is a new set of *social* carriers who will promote such values and will be able to overcome those invested in corporate structures, solidified by the profit motive. I myself see them in a broad-based coalition of the numerous and varied groups whose basic human needs cannot be met unless society is transformed to serve all its members more or less equally. Bell provides no alternative concept of the mobilizing groups, thus leaving his pronouncements about the primacy of politics oddly unsupported.

As a book just published and dedicated to futurism, Bell's volume is already dated, not in this or that detail, but in several of its central themes. Many of the volume's pages were written, and several of the labels for social phenomena were affixed, under the impact of headline-making events, interpreted by Bell as historical and structural but actually highly transient in nature, a trap which awaits all short-order sociology and journalistic interpretation. Thus, just as ideology was not ending in the 'fifties, despite some changes in its intensity, content, and form, so the rebellions in the ghettos and among the students and the appearance of the counter-culture (with whom Bell dialogues when he is not addressing the old left) during the mid-'sixties to the first years of the 'seventies, are already changing their character and direction. It is difficult to assess exactly how epiphenomenal they will prove in the longer run, but clearly Bell's preoccupation with excessive conflict, which will tear the nation apart, and the counter-culture—not as occurrences (on which he has an assortment of interesting ad hoc observations), but as analytic concepts, which define the post-industrial society—is actually symptomatic of a past-fixation rather than a future-probing. Commenting on current events just doesn't go well with formulating socio-historical theories.

Lacking a theory of human needs, yet possessing an awareness of some of the contradictions and strains of the new era (such as the tensions between those who have and those who wish they had; between the private and the public sectors; between "the" two modes of thinking, etc.), Bell's view of the human species comes across as weary, fatigued. It is a vision caught between the appeal of equality and its impossibility, moving toward a greater reliance on intellectual tools but unable to cope with a government of reason. In short, this work does not so much expound a theory in defense of the status quo (although the pages dealing with national unity do have such an appeal) as express a

mood which has long since despaired of fundamental social change and human renaissance.

According to a survey published in *The Public Interest*, Daniel Bell is one of this country's ten top intellectuals. Indeed in many reviews of this book in the popular press, by commentators whose reading of Bell's perspective are rather close to mine, Bell's scholarship is celebrated. Indeed, in this as in the author's previous work an impressive learning is paraded. It seems Bell has read reams and forgotten almost nothing. From game theory to Marx; from OECD reports to a book by I. B. Betuzhev-Lada, entitled *Okno V Buchee* (p. 102); from the unpublished papers by Zev Katz to *Psychology Today*; they are all marshalled here, in support of this or that thesis, or two or three. Certainly erudition is the mark of an intellectual, but what are the other signs by which a leading member of the species is to be recognized? If to be an intellectual means to excel in eclecticism, to eschew over-arching interpretations, to be utterly without dogma, and—at this stage in the decline of the old regime—to write with silenced hope and mounting weariness, then Bell clearly qualifies as one of America's greatest.

REPLY BY DANIEL BELL*

One point of personal privilege before a synoptic reply to the issues raised by all three critics: Mr. Etzioni writes of my "obsolescent mode of *pre-theorizing*" by "coining new labels," when "our patience for such work" has been exhausted by Parsons. How extraordinary. There is no such word as "*pre-theorizing*," underlined or not; it is a new label without sense. Mr. Etzioni's effort to substitute two different pairs for the terms I used are not congruent with the distinctions I was making.† And Mr. Etzioni's "ex-

* Editor's Note: It is not our general policy to publish replies by authors to reviews of their books in the same issue as the reviews. We have made an exception in the present case because of the general intellectual value and interest of the exchange.

† I was using "economizing" and "sociologizing" for aspects of corporate behavior to parallel *economic* and *social* indicators, to indicate the difference between *economic and social accounting*, particularly as it relates to the measurement of G.N.P., and to point up the need for a President's *Social Report* as well as an annual *Economic Report*, a theme elaborated further in chapter 5, pp. 329-327. For Etzioni, trying to play a word game, to substitute the more abstract terms he does ("functional versus substantial rationality") indicates his inattentiveness to text.

hausted patience," coming from a man who has contributed more polyzoic strings of polysemiac terms to the sociological vocabulary than any other contemporary didact, only merits the rebuke, "*quel chutzpah*."¹

Mr. Berger proposes "a Marxist" analysis. One difficulty, always, is "whose" Marx does one choose: that of Kautsky or Sorel, Bernstein or Lenin, Dobb or Sweezy, Althusser or Marcuse, Adorno or Lukacs; and which of the three different theories of economic crisis, the three (or four) definitions of class, the two (or three) theories relating society to state, and if not now, when?

More seriously, Mr. Berger misses the crucial distinction which underlies the theory of a post-industrial society. For Marx, capitalism was the production of commodities by *labor*. But the nature of the new relation of science to technology, for me the axial principle of the post-industrial society, is the production of commodities by the "exploitation" of *theoretical knowledge*. This is the watershed of change. A similar point has been made by the leading Marxist, Frankfurt School, critical philosopher, Jürgen Habermas. He writes:

. . . technology and science become a leading productive force, rendering inoperative the conditions for Marx's labor theory of value. It is no longer meaningful to calculate the amount of capital investment in research and development on the basis of unskilled (simple) labor power, when scientific-technical progress has become an independent source of surplus value, in relation to which the only source of surplus value considered by Marx, namely the labor power of the immediate producers, plays an ever smaller role. . . .

In consequence of the two tendencies that have been discussed [the other is technocratic thinking], capitalist society has changed to the point where two key categories of Marxian theory,

1 I offer as Exhibit A of this polysemiac tendency, the opening paragraph on p. 447 of Mr. Etzioni's *The Active Society*. My effort to find out what Mr. Etzioni means by his key theoretical term, "post-modern society," can be found on pp. 52-53 of TCOPIS.

As a further example of Etzioni's inattentiveness, may I point out that I did *not* say "ideology was ending" in the 'fifties. I was writing of the erosion and "exhaustion" of a mood in the 'fifties, and made the specific point that intellectuals, particularly young ones, would always hunger for ideology. And I indicated further the new forms of Third World ideology that would arise. See *The End of Ideology* (Free Press of Glencoe, Ill., 1960), pp. 373-375.

Reviewers should not pick up catchphrases and try to use them as bludgeons. They end up as boomerangs.