



World Without a Logos

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WORLD WITHOUT A LOGOS

HERBERT MARCUSE

When the new scientific method destroyed the idea of a universe arranged in relation to an ultimate end, it invalidated at the same time a hierarchical social system in which the pursuits and aspirations of the individual were predetermined by final causes. The new science, "neutral" as it was, ignored an organization of life which deprived the large majority of mankind of its freedom. In the course of its effort to establish the physical and mathematical structure of the universe, it had also to disclaim any concern for the concrete individual, the perceptible "body." Such a process of abstraction was fully validated by its result—a logical system of propositions governing the methodical utilization and transformation of nature, with the aim of turning it into a universe controlled by human power.

Reality being reduced—or virtually reduced—to physical-mathematical structures, "truth" is determined solely in relation to what can be measured and calculated, and to propositions expressing such conditions. Such a reality defines itself according to laws of its own (even if these laws be only statistical laws). Man may understand them, act upon them, and be concerned by them, even though they appear to have nothing in common with the laws of his individual or social existence; they involve him only insofar as he himself is pure physical-biological matter. In all his other aspects, man finds himself eliminated from nature, or rather, the reality acknowledged and encompassed of any individual and social existence.

One may possibly be justified in talking about the "metaphysical foundations" of modern science. Thus, Alexandre Koyré has recently put strong emphasis upon the ontological, nonempirical aspects of Galilean science. The pythagorean, platonic, and aristotelian tradition remained powerful enough, at least until Newton, to provide scientific method with a "philosophy." It can be said that the very notion of universal physical laws, susceptible of being unified, still retains, at the outset, the idea of finality: a

finality, however, which tends to become increasingly empty, a finality belonging to the realm of pure calculability and predictability, which carries no telos in itself, nor any structure tending to a telos. The density, the substantial opacity of "objects," all objectivity, seem to evaporate. There is no nature or human reality left to represent a substantial cosmos. In the advanced scientific method, thought itself seems to be purified of the objects that stand in its way: they, in turn, find admittance only in the form of "convenient agents," of "patterns" and "invariants," of "obsolete cultural assumptions." All objects of thought and practice are now conceived and "projected" in terms of organization: beyond any palpable certainty, truth is a question of convention, of efficacy, of "internal coherence"; and basic experience is no longer concrete experience, or social practice taken as a whole, but administrative practice organized by technology.

Such an evolution reflects the transformation of the natural world into a technical world. Technology, strictly speaking, has taken the place of ontology. The new mode of thought has cancelled the ontological tradition.

It might appear, at first glance, that the "denaturing" of reality is masked by the terrible energy the technical world displays in resisting the will and thought of the individual; that the sheer material weight man finds himself called to act upon, and which acts upon him, has never been so overwhelming. But that weight is the weight of man himself. It is through man's own practice that the technical world has crystallized into a "second nature," *schlechte Unmittelbarkeit* (pernicious immediacy), more hostile perhaps and more destructive than initial nature, pretechnical nature. Technical reality has no substance other than that of the subject. Hence it appears to be deprived of its logos, or rather its logos appears to be deprived of all reality, a logical form without any substance. Contemporary positivism, semantics, symbolic logic, linguistic analysis, define and refine the universe of speech, for the use of technicians, specialists, and experts who calculate, adjust, and assemble without ever having to ask themselves either for whom, or for what; their only

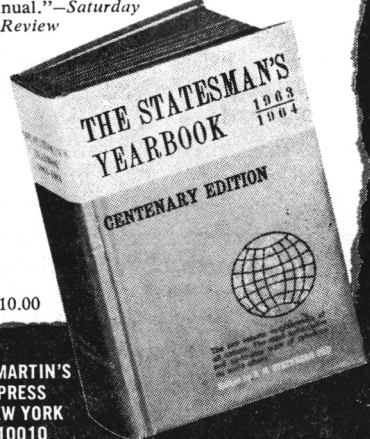
concern being to make things work, not to assign a goal to that process. Science and technology, in themselves, have no values. They are "neutral" with regard to all values and goals that, from the outside, may be assigned to them. Such a neutrality is invested, however, with a positive meaning; reality in itself is a value, evaluated precisely insofar as it is conceived as pure form (or pure matter: in this context, both terms, opposed elsewhere, converge) that lends itself to all purposes. Being then assumes the ontological character of instrumentality: its very structure makes it amenable to all uses and all alterations.

But the question may be raised as to whether neutrality toward all values is truly a scientific notion, that is, a requirement inherent in the very structure of modern science. I am inclined to think that the neutrality of technique (which is but one manifestation of the neutrality of science) is in itself a political concept, and that industrial society has developed technique in a sense that is contrary to its true meaning. Technics, considered as

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a historical process, is endowed with an internal meaning, a meaning of its own: it projects instrumentality as a means of freeing man from toil and anxiety, of turning his struggle for life into a more peaceful process. Therein lies the final cause of the methodical transformation of the world involved in technics. But technique, in the process of being developed as "pure" instrumentality, has disregarded this final cause, which no longer stands as the aim of technological development. Hence, pure instrumentality, without finality, has become a universal means of domination. Technics does indeed involve domination: mastery of nature insofar as it is a hostile, violent, and destructive force; mastery of man to the extent that he is a part of that nature. Industrial society exercises, and rightfully so, this technological domination; but insofar as society tends to disregard the final cause of technology, technique in itself perpetuates misery, violence, and destruction.



LETTERS

The Bulletin welcomes letters to the editor on articles and other matters of interest to its readers.

The test-ban treaty, though a small step in itself, is a very significant new departure toward a world rid of the nuclear threat and is probably the greatest single monument to the memory of President John F. Kennedy. He intended that there should be further steps. Had he lived, his vigor and his dedication to stabilizing world peace would have helped us take them in due time, presumably in his second term.

Since the dawn of the nuclear age it has become increasingly clear to some that instruments of international cooperation must be forged as radically different from the international anarchy of the past as are the new weapons from the old. The motivations and the problems involved in this transition are so complex in detail, even if

clear in outline, that there seems to be little hope for a spontaneous demand from the people for the necessary change. The idealist may have hoped instead for the rise of a knight on horseback, an almost superhuman leader capable of transcending the traditional resistance to change and inspiring a great concentration of national and worldwide will and effort on the attainment of political adjustments to cope with the nuclear threat.

President Kennedy was very human, yet he came closer than any other to filling this bill. He was aware of the need, determined to do something about it, yet he knew far more intimately than can any apolitical idealist the uncertainties of the way, the strength of the political and economic resistance, the need for travelling both sides of the road, even for still arming while starting to work for disarmament. He had at the same time another great crusade on his hands, one for curing an internal national sickness, and could not spend all of his political assets on the problems posed by the arms race.

Nevertheless he did achieve a limited test-ban treaty that alters substantially the weapons preparations of the great nuclear powers and provides a radiant example of the principle that suspicious adversaries can find mutual benefits in agreed mutual restraints on armaments. May this serve as a beacon to orient our new president and other leaders on the course already set, so that President Kennedy's profound experience with the dangers of implementing deterrence may not be lost on future policy development.

The circumstances of his tragic death and its aftermath seem to demonstrate not only the inadequacy of our nurturing of youth and the need for personal arms control or disarmament but that our system of permitting each of our several states to set its own standards of law enforcement is obsolete, a relic of long ago when the constitution was written and the states were first cautiously merging their sovereignty. As we learn these lessons from President Kennedy's tragic death, may we even more urgently learn from his exemplary life that national sovereignty, so far as it concerns the ability of nations to make war on one another with unlimited modern weapons, is obsolete and must

be eliminated by further cautious worldwide agreement.

DAVID R. INGLIS

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I cannot resist comment on the report of David Lilienthal's "Mythology of The Atom" in the October *Bulletin*. I know precious little about the atom, but I do know quite a lot about the definitive studies of general and complete disarmament which have been made over the past fifteen years, and which are best represented by the work of Granville Clark and Louis B. Sohn in their monumental book, *World Peace Through World Law*. While agreeing with Lilienthal that "the solution to the dangers of nuclear weapons does not lie solely within the field of nuclear weapons," and that disarmament alone cannot assure world peace, I must question a major conclusion he seems to have reached.

In the first place his concept of disarmament seems preoccupied with a bilateral treaty between the U.S. and the USSR (though "and the West" is somewhere appended). Nowhere is mention of the U.N., nor does he seem conscious of the need for a supranational, multinational agency or instrument, functioning under statute law, and possessed of preponderant force, adequate to the enforcement of its mandate. To be sure, this would require some form of government at the world level, but I know of no serious student of the subject who does not admit this to be the core and crux of the problem. Instead of facing this hard truth, Lilienthal says the subject is too dangerous to pursue, and besides what he wants is not world government but world community.

But where has community among men ever existed in peace except under some form of law? Alexander Hamilton put it better than anyone before or since when he said that to expect peace between conflicting sovereignties in a contiguous area was "to expect what never was and never will be." By all means let Lilienthal and all like-minded men continue the vital work of weaving strands of community, but let them realize that it is rank utopianism to think that the resultant community will long exist in peace in the anarchy implicit in its lack of government.

MARY-STUART CHAMBERLAIN

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