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## **Lewis Mumford on Man in Society.**

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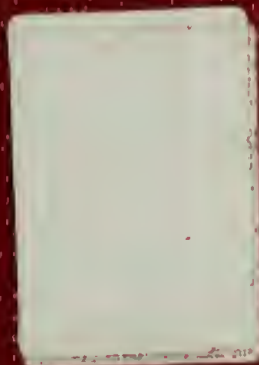
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LEWIS MUMFORD ON MAN IN SOCIETY

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## CHAPTER I

### AN AMERICAN PROSPECTUS

It is for the beginnings of a genuine culture, rather than for its relentless exploitation of materials, that the American adventure has been significant.

Lewis Mumford

According to one interpretation, America from its inception was a nation committed to democracy, a peoples determined to fashion a new civilization based upon freedom of choice for all men. This view of its uniqueness has given rise to the query whether American civilization is also sui generis or whether it is derived, and whether Americans have developed a culture which has significantly enriched the world. Human history records a conscious effort by man to progress from primitivism to enlightenment, from the cave to the city, from the pebble tool to the megamachine. The idea of progress has inspired many civilization to invention in order to secure their permanence as well as introduce order and unity into their world. Continuity has not always distinguished history, but sometimes that break has been voluntary and has given rise to yet another experiment in social living. The American colonies, cultural nationalists have argued, consciously chose to sever themselves from the practices of European

civilization and give form to a substantially different culture, pure in its newness and strong in its youthful vitality.

In more than a political sense, the original settlers felt that their society was fated to be different and that it was their mission to create and preserve a new social order as well. Puritan orthodoxy was a necessary concomitant of the scheme. Yet if the American experiment had its religious imperatives, it also possessed secular motives. In the New World there was room enough for every utopian dream -- political, economic, scientific as well as religious. The prospect of a new beginning inspired them all to shape a radically different American history. Because the participants had volunteered, it was thought that the usual conflicts and dissensions would be minimal. The keynote was "growth in peace," with mutually shared benefits and obligations. A common spirit of endeavor, where personal interests identified with public concerns, was evident in the first colonial settlements.

A heritage of change and experimentation marked the later national history and contributed to the rise of a secular frame of mind. Orthodox religion could serve man's spiritual needs, but faltered when it failed to assume guidance for man's temporal needs. In the National Period many looked upon America as the child of the Enlightenment

and the Scientific Revolution. Because Europe represented the tyrannies of absolute power, government over the new states would be flexible and consistent with the theory of natural rights. America rejected the inequalities and refinements of European civilization since these were viewed as mere gilt obscuring the deficiencies of an aristocratic political system. The new world would evolve a society of natural aristocrats, where every man would be educated through experience to value his and his neighbors freedom. In particular the frontier served as the ultimate challenge to settlers, who in confrontation with nature relived a constant and chastening experience.

Since America possessed no pre-history, the emphasis was put on the present and the future. And because America could not boast of a tradition of culture and refinement, newer achievements were sought to legitimize the nation's existence, and later its claim to greatness. In territorial expansion, in the growth of trade and commerce, in the rise of industrial technology the new nation sought, by these means, to excel and impress its fellow nations. Foremost in the national mind was a will to realize the promised land, but the vision was not heavenly. America would shape a civilization distinguished by the length of its railroad tracks, by the size of its harvests, by the abundance of

minerals in the earth, and by the rapid growth of its cities. All these examples were considered expressions of free choice by economic man. And the American was economic rather than political man, even though the Puritan experience was religious, and the colonial temper was political. In the rising states civilization became the economic interplay of people.

Economic man was a function of society, but he was also a product of his self-expression. In the modern age economic individualism was linked with civilization, and civilization was interpreted as the objectification of the dynamic, individual will. Social order was maintained, based on the theory that the natural tensions of society yielded gifted men who enjoyed their personal freedom, yet recognized the interdependent structure of society.

With the introduction of scientific technology, its votaries claimed, man would respond to situations with utter disinterestedness and with the social good primarily in mind. Once religious considerations, such as evil, sin and guilt, were rendered inoperative as constraints, modern society could look to science for principles of discipline, order and predictability. The society of reasonable and free men which Jefferson envisioned for a democratic order belonged to a generation of well-bred country gentlemen. For a mass society a broader scheme of reeducation was

necessay. Social philosophers increasingly stressed the perfectibility of man and the principle of progress as a necessity rather than accident of life. Social instruction, conducted on an 'experimental basis, redefined the nature of social ills and argued that frustration and alienation were aberrative and remedial. The environmental prophet John Dewey argued social progress through basic education in the schools. Walter Lippmann appealed to the scientific spirit and equated it with the discipline of democracy; the lessons of science would release man from drift and educate him to mastery. For society this implied "not alone a blinding passion, but a common discipline," and Lippmann believed that science "implies such a discipline."<sup>1</sup>

The new, scientifically shaped social order was put to test in the city. When it failed to create a harmonious and stable environment, social critics invariably attacked the city as the corrosive medium of a free society. Large urban centers had indeed become dark, sordid and humanly hostile, and the city was decried for its crudeness, impersonality, absence of culture and lack of amenities which often were associated with the small town or farm.

This anti-urbanist sentiment was often a reflection of the national conscience crying out against the erosion of agrarian principles and the rural past. With more

fondness than insight , critics of the city recalled, as did Lippmann, that "the deep and abiding traditions of religion belong to the countryside....The city is an acid that dissolves this piety."<sup>2</sup>

Though America was born in the country and had moved to the city, a definite affection for rural life and values persisted. In this sense, criticisms against the city were often wrongly based upon pastoral sentimentality. The city was never meant to duplicate the structure of small town life. Invidious comparisons were often drawn between the two, to the disregard of the unique nature of each. The celebrated architect Louis Sullivan recounted his impression of moving to the city after a pastoral childhood.

The effect was immediately disastrous. As one might move a flourishing plant from the open to a dark cellar, and imprison it there, so the miasma of the big city poisoned a small boy acutely sensitive to his surroundings. He mildewed and the leaves and buds of ambition fell from him.... In the open all was free, expansive and luminous. In the city all was contraction, density, limitation, and cruel concentration.<sup>3</sup>

The veracity of the emotion is not questioned, rather the perspective which led Sullivan to contrast the city in terms of the conditions of rural life.

Nostalgia for the past competed with pride in a

mechanical future. Though America was often drided by European critics for its brute strength, the nation itself began to take pride in the power of industry and the boundless vitality of its cities. Chicago best represented the new direction of social and economic life. Rebuilt after a devastating fire the city began to impress the entire nation with its quick recovery and its accent on bigness. Sullivan recalled, with equal sincerity, his impressions of the rising town: "Louis rather liked all this, for his eye was ever on the boundless prarie and the mighty lake. All this frothing at the mouth amused him at first, but soon he saw the primal power assuming self-expression amid nature's impelling urge."<sup>4</sup>

A fascination with growth and progress has ever marked the national mentality, but not as these qualities were expressed in an abstract sense. Growth meant size, and progress was interpreted as visible development from one stage to another. Had America stayed honest in its appreciation of the outward and visible signs of its uniqueness there could have developed a general and broadly-based interest in the evolution of the nation's culture, politics and economics. But the opportunities of prosperity and the privileges of wealth diverted the nation to an appreciation of <sup>the</sup> <sup>of</sup> excesses empire. The

Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago was a triumph of externalism. The imperial facade convinced many of the nation's new destiny, yet it also led a few to register their revulsion. Lewis Mumford, the subject of this paper, observed in retrospect:

The evil of the world's fair was that it suggested to the civic enthusiast that every city might become a fair: it introduced the notion of the city beautiful as a sort of municipal cosmetic, and reduced the work of the architect to that of putting a pleasing front upon the scrappy building, upon the monotonous streets and the mean houses, that characterized vast areas in the newer and larger cities.<sup>5</sup>

The definite change in emphasis in economics from production to over-consumption directly derived from the insistence on embellishing rather than enriching the quality of life. Transition was most apparent in the city where competition for and consumption of goods characterized the social outlook of the urban population. To many, however, the tempo of urban life was unsatisfactory and even malign. Criticisms against the cities reached back to the National Period, but in the twentieth century the anti-urbanist argument reached new urgency as urban decay and social dislocation increased. Much of the argument centered on the city's denial of man's basic need for a natural, organic environment. In response, proposals were developed for integrating the country and the city.

Too often these proposals failed to accurately evaluate the problems of the city, and tended to overlook the equally pressing social questions of urban life. Anti-urbanists were often referred to as disillusioned villagers, unable to adjust to the alien circumstances of city life.

Lewis Mumford has often been so described, even though his numerous works on the city and society are too comprehensive to warrant simple categorization. Mumford's interest in the city was significant for he recognized it to be the repository of man's combined cultural heritage. If the city had failed man, then the origins of that discontent touched on all man's achievements, from scientific technology which built the city, to philosophy and culture which maintained the city's spiritual existence. As issue was the role of society and individual man in an increasingly disoriented and uncommunicative social system. Either he was inherently deficient and incapable of living in harmony with his surroundings or man, under the impact of the industrial revolution, had become irrational and had lost sight of his true character and purpose. Moreover, it was not enough to consider why his environment had changed, but more importantly, what it was man sought in urban cohabitation. Mumford's interest centered mainly on ideals and ambitions strong enough to compel man to seek something

finer and better with which to enrich and ennoble his life. The ultimate criterion for Mumford was always, how human and how life-oriented were man's aspirations, and had society benefited from them.

## CHAPTER II

### URBAN MAN IN A TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

For my part, I do not know what sweat and blood, what the tragedy of this life means except just this - if life is not a struggle in which by success, there is something gained on behalf of the universe, then it is no more than idle amusement.

William James

#### The Duality of Life

In the flow of contending philosophies on the nature of the human order Lewis Mumford sought to outline a fuller and more satisfactory explanation of man, one which could account for the many varieties of human activity. Dismayed by the partial answers offered by pragmatism and a society based in scientific technology, he argued the need for a unity of man with his environment, and more, a reconciliation between human aspirations and eventualities. The history of civilization recorded the uniqueness of man for these very drives, the impulses to discover himself in relation to his surroundings. These were essentially activities of the mind, adventures in both abstraction and self-realization. The former Mumford defined as the "capacity to dream...to transform imagined projections into actual projects." Self-realization was attended by a "sense of awe and veneration, not unmixed with anxiety, in the presence of forces that lie beyond the range of

man's intelligence."<sup>6</sup> The two faculties of mind worked upon each other, for through abstraction man called upon and realized capabilities which otherwise remained dormant. In the theatre of human experience the tension between the two was played out, rendering a sense of constant transformation, a sense of embryonic self emerging. However, the danger of an overconcentration on self was a resultant permissiveness, a "danger of succumbing to a degradation that primitive man must have learned, after many lapses, to guard against, the threat of losing his humanity by giving precedence to his animal [evolutionary] self and his nonhuman character..."<sup>7</sup>

Mumford explained the concept of humaneness as that which the mind can grasp and understand, that which the mind can define in personal terms and relate in some significant way to the individual. Ideally, humaneness was a state of mind, a "security of place...full of concrete satisfactions, meaningful sights and sounds and smells, familiar landmarks...[an] environment [which] reflected man's own intentions and purposes."<sup>8</sup> On a larger scale, man found an identity with his world in the institutions of civilization, which were "the outcome of deliberate invention and conscious choice, indeed they seem part of a general growth of self-consciousness, individual and

collective."<sup>9</sup> Civilization was also a study in extremes, loosening the ends of the spectrum of human potentialities. Given this ominous interpretation, civilization "begins by a magnificent materialization of human purpose: it ends in a purposeless materialism."<sup>10</sup>

The observation sought its most obvious manifestation in the example of urbanized man in an industrial society. Scientific experimentation and technological progress were given free reign, for as Mumford explained, the great error of social thought was the belief that the sole determinant distinguishing man as a unique being was his ability to fashion tools. This belief has persisted and dominated social thought, anthropology and Western culture, and has lead in the twentieth century to an emphasis on machine technology as the representative achievement of man. The bifurcation of human expression, i.e., abstraction and self-identification or realization, was intensified by the misguided leadership of the medieval church. Rejecting the need for the latter as a base ambition, orthodox religion broke the unity of the living organism by stressing the refinement of abstraction and the development of heavenly aspirations. In so doing the church fostered an exclusively spiritual orientation, where "moral man gave scope, if not sanction, to immoral society."<sup>11</sup>

Thus encouraged, Western civilization "treated being as an illusion and made only becoming real; its sole constant was change itself."<sup>12</sup> The concept of progress lent further sanctity to the primacy of scientific technology, and in due course, a recognized inevitability. Questions of societal adjustment to cultural change were ignored once scientific knowledge and technical inventions had become the new absolutes. To Mumford this represented a conscious preference for physical power at the expense of human impotence. Man would "rather commit universal suicide by accelerating the process of scientific discovery than preserve the human race by even temporarily slowing it down."<sup>13</sup>

Raymond B. Fosdick echoed Mumford's misgivings about the fundamental changes brought about in production, without a complementary adjustment in society. In The Old Savage In The New Civilization Fosdick grimly outlined the new mode of life.

Civilization has...become a great machine, the wheels of which must be kept turning or the people starve. For millions of human beings it is a vast treadmill, worked by weary feet to grind the corn that makes the bread that gives them strength to walk the treadmill.<sup>14</sup>

In the midst of unmitigated technological innovation few stopped to consider whether the shifting physical environment

had exhausted man's capacity for adaptation, and whether "society was being gorged with innovations too great for its powers of assimilation."<sup>15</sup> Yet modern society took for granted not only adaptability, but capability as well. In giving free reign to the fulfillment of a desire for progress, society was ignoring the need for a compensatory capacity to control that desire, or the fruits of that desire. Fosdick inveighed against the notion that there exists "some sure inhibition that prevents men from creating machines which they cannot control; and that the very fact that they have created them is proof of their ability to manage them."<sup>16</sup>

Essentially, modern society grounded this belief in the perfectability of man, a steady progression from savage to superman. Through the proliferation of knowledge, it was thought that modern man was eminently suited to the challenge of a highly mechanized world. Yet as Fosdick argued, "knowledge may mean power, but it does not necessarily mean capacity."<sup>17</sup> Modern society erred when it presumed that a substantial improvement had occurred in the human stock since the time of the Egyptians and the Greeks. Indeed, even less sure could contemporary society be "that this last century, which has added so tremendously to the mechanical environment has brought a corresponding

improvement in human capacity."<sup>18</sup> In fact, Fosdick believed it not to be true, for as he titled his book, he sensed that man was still the "old savage" caught up in the "new civilization."

Mumford, too, felt that America gave witness to the "old savage" living in a "new civilization". In a more concrete sense, the orthodoxy of the Puritan mind, i.e. the stress on industriousness, self-help and thrift, served to lend legitimacy to the new imperatives of property rights. The concept of vested rights, Mumford believed, handily suited the philosophical outlook of the pioneer, and later the industrialist. Though the pioneer may have originally represented a return to nature, "he was only too ready, after the first flush of effort, to barter all his glorious heritage for gas light, and paved streets, and starched collar, and skyscrapers and the other insignia of a truly high and progressive civilization."<sup>19</sup>

The pioneer was the initial villain because he was unenlightened and misguided, all motion and no thought. Though he sought to realize a new existence, a great nostalgia pervaded his outlook as he chopped down and tore up, for as he did so, he had a vision of nature unspoiled before him and civilization in dead heat behind him. Ill-suited to the challenges of constructing a new

society, the pioneer was the apotheosis of a true nature's child. Mumford defined the failure as he contrasted the pioneer with Henry David Thoreau, who "in his life and letters shows what the pioneer movement might have come to if this great migration had sought culture rather than material conquest, and an intensity of life, rather than mere extension over the continent."<sup>20</sup>

Yet even the pioneer was a mere hint of what was to come as America entered the nineteenth century. As the ground was levelled for the urban experiment, America revealed a growing disposition for an industrial order which profoundly tested her beliefs, her adaptability, and her endurance. By far the most conspicuous role in the drama was played by machine technology.

### The Primacy of the Machine

America was not unique in its rush to mechanization. Yet in contrast to other industrial nations, the intensity and determination which attended technological progress in the United States led many observers to herald a revolutionary scientific age. Mumford disclaimed this interpretation, and placed the appeal to technology at an earlier age, closer to the development of the first tools

and machines. Man fashioned simple tools for narrowly personal reasons, as well as to satisfy broader societal needs. The origins of the technological system were found, therefore, in both a fundamental will to power and a will to order.

Mumford's notion of man defined an intensely individualistic, egocentric being, who through the development of basic tools sought to realize himself in his work first, and in the application of his tools in society second. On the individual level, "man's inventions and transformations were less for the purpose of increasing the food supply or controlling nature than for utilizing his own immense organic resources and expressing his latent potentialities..."<sup>21</sup> Because he believed tool-making possessed a significance beyond tool-using, Mumford affirmed that man was "pre-eminently a mind-making, self-mastering, and self-designing animal; and the the primary locus of all his activities lies first in his own organism, and in the social organization through which it finds fuller expression."<sup>22</sup> Having formulated a theory of technics which posited that invention was primarily life-centered rather than work- or power-centered, Mumford had defined the relationship between master and craft, worker and product. Yet technics had a social dimension since it served humanity once it had been

"modified by linguistic symbols, esthetic design, and socially transmitted knowledge."<sup>23</sup>

The first primitive communities exhibited the animus of urban life. Communal arrangements represented a "reorientation of wishes, habits, ideals, [and] goals..." which gave rise to a "culture that was ready to use them and profit by them so extensively."<sup>24</sup> The culture Mumford had in mind was scientifically oriented and presupposed an existing mechanical bent in man. The impetus for the invention of machines sprang from a wish to control the environment and eliminate or diminish the uncertain.<sup>25</sup> Ironically, the will to control exacted from man an inner accommodation and surrender to the machine, which superimposed its perfect order not only on the environment, but on man himself. Indeed, the nature of this surrender and its implications had come to shape modern industrial society.

Mumford chose the clock, an instrument of discipline, precision, and economy as the representative invention of the will to order. Beyond its purely utilitarian function in keeping count of hours, the clock served man as the tool for the division of labor and the synchronization of activity. This concentration on immediate time led man to conduct life on a short sighted basis.

Existence became a matter of time-keeping, time-serving, time-accounting, and time-rationing, where "eternity ceased gradually to serve as the measure and focus of human actions."<sup>26</sup> Though the clock profoundly altered man's cosmic scheme, its ramifications were alternately pernicious and ludicrous. Man worked, ate, played and slept when time decreed. As in the tale of the Mad-Hatter's tea party, when the clock stopped at six it was forever tea time, and the Mad-Hatter, the March-Hare, and the Doormouse were forever consigned to spending their lives at tea.

Once man had transposed the order of the clock in his environment, the next step was integrating this perfect scheme withing himself in order to achieve external and internal harmony. Yet the discipline and precision of the machine which ordered man's external existence was not complemented by a sufficiently harmonious societal order. This discrepancy was overlooked as man and his society turned to the perfect order of the machine as the key to mastering the uncertain around him and in him. Technological progress became increasingly "abstract" oriented; exclusively and intensely cerebral, abstracted activity seperated the human entity from identification with work or world. Mumford insisted that work, ideally, possess the quality of animism, a conscious projection of the self into one's

actions and one's world. This allowed man an intimacy with his work which grew into an identification with everything around him.

In the realm of the abstract, the activity of work called upon only a partial involvement by man. Mumford regarded this division as deliberate and artificial for it denied the worker a personal satisfaction in creative labor. In the advanced stages of group labor, the factory system, the individual worker's satisfaction in his ability was displaced by the specialized nature of mass production. In the name of scientific progress the megamachine negated the personal incentive to work and the quality of self-identification with one's craft. The idea of progress was accepted as a fundamental truth, based on the premise that scientific technology produces positive results. The criterion was relative, however, for the argument compared the diminishing evils of the present century in light of the compounded problems of the previous centuries. Conventional progress rested on the principles of change and forward movement in time. It was easily assumed that a "later point in development necessarily brings a higher kind of society." Yet, as Mumford observed, to view time as linear progression was falsely deterministic for it merely confused "the neutral quality of complexity or

maturity with improvement."<sup>27</sup>

Production under this system committed the worker to a rigid economic scheme where the value of labor was defined in terms of increasing output. From its inception, the megamachine was a dynamo unleashed, a force which removed the sluggishness and inhibitions of small scale production and offered man a new potential. Yet the survival of the new machine technology required the discipline of coordinated activity and collective strength. Stratification of labor was introduced, according to allotted responsibility, while command performance and coordinated work assured the continuing stability of the machine process. The volume and purpose of the final product predominated and decisively eliminated the worker as an independent factor. This was inevitable in machine production since:

Machines were by nature large and impersonal, if not deliberately dehumanized; they had to operate on a big scale or they could not hope to govern directly a thousand little workshops and farms, each with its own traditions, its own craft skills, its own willful personal pride and sense of responsibility.<sup>28</sup>

Machine technology was perforce highly competitive, for the individual workers as well as for industrial concerns. An inelastic division of labor denied the means of subsistence to less skilled workers and obviated the possibility

of mutual assistance. When Darwinian principles of evolution were applied to a mechanical society, the result was often the creation of a tasteless, unimaginative, unintellectual bourgeoisie. As Mumford insisted, "only anti-social qualities had survival value. Only people who valued machines more than men were capable, under these condition, of governing men to their own profit and advantage."<sup>29</sup> The tensions inherent to an industrial society resulted in stiff competition, unmitigated conflict and opposition, and fear and suspicion as the dominant emotions. As a result, Mumford concluded, the "machine -- the outcome of man's impulse into orderly activities -- produced...the systematic negation of all its characteristics...[with] the breakdown of stable social relations and the disorganization of family life."<sup>30</sup>

The misapplication of machine production, and the over-emphasis on scientific technology had ignored the limitations of a mechanized system of production. Industrialists and social prophets alike failed to understand that the:

Technics of science only apply to the method, not to the end; they control the process of research, not the direction of research; and they discipline a fragment of the human personality, not the whole personality, many part of which are untouched by this method and immune to its processes.<sup>31</sup>

In a social context, industrial specialization contributed to the emergence of the partial man, the "Teil mensch,"

whose sense of workmanship was now ordering his personal life even beyond the job. In his search for unity and order, man introduced regularity and monotony into every facet of his life. Mumford summarized the situation when he asserted:

Outwardly, the practice of uniformity has many points in common with the achievement of unity; and in relation to inner need they both spring out of man's essential demand for law and order as a prerequisite for all other significant human activity. But in practice, it is almost diametrically opposite of the other; for a unity is no real unity unless it is based on rational methods and free agreement, unless it recognizes and harmonizes and composes real differences; unless it retains within its order the variety and richness of life itself. Uniformity, in contrast, carries an element of compulsion; for the sake of an outward order, it will repress differences, or at all events agree to ignore them.<sup>32</sup>

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the urban milieu, where an artificial conformity masqueraded as communal consent.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CITY IN AMERICA

I don't know if I can convey the precise flavor of the city that one inhaled on those Central Park courts in my day. There was nothing particular in my immediate life to make me look naturally for meanness or sordidness or dishonesty, but constant hints of these things seeped in from the world around me.

Lewis Mumford

One of the factors which contributes to the rise of cities is the territorial imperative. As a social group advances in civilization it seeks to express its uniqueness in a form of collective life. Through integrated social relationships, the population defines the tempo of its urban life and, more significantly, gives recognition to the current modes of thought and habit which comprise a social experience. The place of the city in culture is equal to the achievement of verbal language since it also gives form to a basic human need -- social intercourse. When the city ceases to be representative of art and order, and culture and civilization, it gives way to social disintegration.

A quality of urban life so sorely lacking in contemporary cities was found in abundance in the Medieval town. A sense of community was pervasive, even though it rested upon a common need for protection and survival in order to ensure

the economic life of the town. Voluntary association, based on mutually perceived and agreed upon goals, led to harmonious coexistence; once the sense of voluntarism waned, however, differences of association appeared, and sharp distinctions set in between the successful and unsuccessful, the privileged and the common.<sup>33</sup>

Cities serve very much as reflectors to social disharmony. Generally, a city is subjected to the test of choosing the priorities which govern its existence. Each urban community, gradually yet decisively, defines its emphasis on the importance of civic institutions which serve the population. All too often, urban society has viewed city and community as abstract entities, while the true abstractions, such as money and credit, have become transcendent realities. Mumford noted that in the history of cities man had opted for abstractions (mechanical achievements and financial incentives), while social integration lapsed on both a regional and global basis.

American cities departed from the pattern of growth evidenced in European cities and towns. As a virgin territory, the American continent was open to rapid and indiscriminate expansion across the frontier. In the forefront of expansion was the pioneer, who inspired a tradition of adventure and endurance in the popular cultural

heritage. Pioneer fortitude was unquestionably one of the virtues of the national character. Yet beneath the excitement of exploration and expansion lay the less admirable impulses of conquest, domination, and ruthless exploitation of virgin land and resources.

A significant exception was the colonial town, where growth was tempered by slow economic and social development, and where life was ordered by the stability of a traditional society. This was the irony of American urban history, for though original settlements along the Eastern seaboard exhibited that sense of unity so vital to collective life, the frontier town and the modern megalopolis often stifled it. In fact, the frontier town often reversed the stable social values of the colonial town, replacing stability with mobility, and rendering the city more a place for commerce and industry than human habitation.<sup>34</sup> Even in their structural format the two towns differed significantly. The Concord culture of New England towns, Mumford observed, manifested a sense of community in the prominence of the town common, the local church, the town hall -- institutions which sustained a vital and structured society. The frontier town, on the other hand, introduced new structural priorities. No longer would the church or the common

occupy the center of town -- now the railroad station and the hotel predominated.

New patterns of growth strongly suggested a new value system, where the symbols of a social and communal life were displaced, even eliminated, by signs of commercialism and transience. The ethic of the new town was unregulated growth, fed by industry and a swelling, yet highly mobile population. Haphazard growth was evidence of the confusion attendant with the rapid transition of a rural society compulsively turning urban. Mumford's observations on urban history argued a break in historical continuity, for nowhere was the "loss of form and the loss of effective social institutions for transmitting and enlarging the social heritage" more obvious than in the spotty and often short-lived existence of the frontier, the mining, and the mill town.<sup>35</sup>

If mobility fed the life blood of the frontier town, the machine, with its emphasis on production and mass population sped the growth of cities. Metropolitanism, Mumford hastened to add, was not only occasioned by the lure of machine technology, but also because the unstructured small town failed to create a satisfactory environment. From a cultural point, the move to the big city was "a reaction against the uncouth and barren countryside that

was skinned, rather than cultivated, by the restless, individualistic, self-assertive American pioneer."<sup>36</sup> Yet even as urban man sought relief from monotony, he was scarcely better compensated for in the city.

Industrial and commercial enterprises vastly contributed to the rapid growth of America's largest cities, yet the simplest analogy which comprehends this process is the relationship between the megamachine and a swelling population engaged in mass collective projects. Mumford did see certain virtue in a collective effort, if it inspired a general pride and sense of communal achievement. He believed that combined labor "created a well-founded confidence in human powers," and even though the greatest measure of achievement accrued to a "few self-elevated but representative figures....the common man had an exalted sense of human potentiality..."<sup>37</sup> Great potential existed within machine production for total human advancement.

New energies and new disciplines intensified the confusion of a society in transition. Given an economic rationale which elevated machine technology, industrialists could rule that regimentation of work, division of labor, and curtailment of personal initiative were necessary to sustain factory production.<sup>38</sup> A tradition of superiority

grew around the megamachine as industrialists began to argue the efficiency of big organizations, centralized direction, and mass production. Complexity in production obviated the possibility of one worker becoming the master of his trade, when all laborers were mere units in the machine process. In social terms, the rigid division of labor deprived the worker of a sense of uniqueness and relevance in society, without this loss being replaced by a common, collective spirit in production.

A quiescent labor force was assured, however, by the proliferation of cheap goods produced by an overstimulated economy, and by the synthetic attraction imparted to consumer goods by a highly effective method of advertising. Illusion though it was, mass production created mass consumption by providing a "happy release from the nagging constraints of natural poverty and economic backwardness..."<sup>39</sup> What ideally could have been a new incentive to social cooperation became, under rampant industrialism, a conditioning process, training man to submit to a reward system which could hold his immediate interest.

Industrialism evolved new values with an intensity often attributed to orthodox religion. Affirming that "time is money," industrialists and financiers elevated the secular

principles of power, profit and prestige to a new sacredness. Mumford attacked the new economic order with particular fervor, for he saw in it the possibility of destroying an organic social order. As the financial factor grew in importance, "money, as the nexus of all human relations and as the main motivation in all social effort, replaced the reciprocal obligations and duties of families, neighbors, citizens, [and] friends."<sup>40</sup> In due course, the ideology of the time raised the "atomic" man above the social whole; it became imperative for government "to guard his property, to protect his rights, to ensure his freedom of choice and freedom of enterprise..."<sup>41</sup>

The ascendancy of the entrepreneur was facilitated by the disintegration of civic responsibility; with the passive consent of society the captains of industry were able to accede to the level of influence they enjoyed. The loss of effective social institutions for transmitting the social heritage contributed to the "natural expectation that the whole [industrial] enterprise should be conducted by private individuals, with a minimum amount of interference on the part of local or national governments."<sup>42</sup> Diverted from a sense of social consciousness by the competitive reward system of the factory, the urban populace surrendered its most potent power, that of civic control. Thus emboldened,

the monied interests exhibited a "contempt for the civic business of the local community...a scorn for the old agents of the commonweal..."<sup>43</sup> In the largest cities, where "prosperity had obscured public irresponsibility," the pattern of civic decay held true on a far greater scale.<sup>44</sup>

As the population of the cities swelled, the absence of sufficient, much less adequate, housing opened up a new area for entrepreneurial exploitation. Unhoused masses in a potentially productive area interacted on urban land values and elevated the real estate and construction businesses to lucrative prominence. Housing projects operated on the principle of satisfying the "minimal needs of life."<sup>45</sup> City planning became a matter of marginal expenditures and maximum returns, and was controlled by the individual interests of bankers, industrialists, jerrybuilders, and land speculators. In a fiercely competitive market, "the test of social success was not the consequence to society in good homes and healthy lives and a friendly environment; the sole test was the pecuniary reward that flowed to the enterpriser."<sup>46</sup>

In his earlier books on the city and society, Mumford had directed his criticism largely at the captains of industry and the mandarins of finance. Increasingly, he recognized that fault lay with the apathetic and equally materialistic urban masses. It was logically incomplete to consider only

the practices of machine technology, without giving thought to a society receptive or oblivious to the dramatic changes in social values.

Some of the consequences of an overcrowded environment were admittedly difficult, if not impossible to erase. Mass production, and the vast labor force which worked it, artificially increased the population within a constant area. Social philosophers, notably Emile Durkheim, posited that an increase in the number of inhabitants in a static area created sharp differentiation of roles in society. In treating alienation as a personal phenomenon, they further maintained that congested living and working conditions precluded the contact of full personalities, and segmented human relationships to the narrow categories of work, social life, and private life. Very often, even these relationships devolved to the superficial and transitory level. Once superficial ties replaced emotional interest between individuals, competition and emulation inspired a society to "keeping up with the Joneses."

On a literary level, the quality of popular literature reflected and often influenced the thinking of the broad public. The fragmentation Mumford observed in man and society existed in the channels of mass communication as well. Specifically,

the popular family magazine and the soap-opera serial glaringly revealed the materialistic ethic which demanded immediate gratification, but ignored final resolutions or messages. Even the personalities who populated these media were fragmented caricatures, "mere concretions of characteristics, animated types or 'humours' rather than persons."<sup>47</sup> Yet a willing audience readily identified with the paste-board heroes and fashions of the day, once their interest was stimulated by the attractive substitutes glamourized in print. Because advertising men believed they were inspiring citizens to live a more abundant life, they engaged in "creating new wants and encouraging discontent with possessions outmoded, but not necessarily outworn."<sup>48</sup> That illusion fostered waste in the name of progress.

Society and urban man had accepted the acquisitive, capitalist personality when they gave recognition to the dominance of industrial technology. Even as economic man was hailed as the new twentieth century man, the boast was hollow, for the creature revealed an "incapacity for art, play, amusement, or pure craftsmanship..."<sup>49</sup> The materialization of life was attended by the dehumanization of man. Urbanized man was ultimately a byproduct of a machine culture, since "human purposes, human needs, and human limits no longer exercised a directive and restraining

influence upon industry."50

Mumford was consistent in his aversion to the direction taken by urban society, and the substitution in values which attended this change. He did not take issue with the development of machine technology for he recognized the essential amorality of the machine. The tremendous powers imputed to the machine by society were more nearly at fault. Because the city housed the institutions, beneficiaries and victims of the new culture, it easily became the target of social critics still operating within a rural frame of mind. Quite often, anti-urbanism was no more than a general name for the compounded feelings of revulsion directed against the immigrant, poverty, dirt and noise, problems for which the city was more often the theatre than the direct cause.

In contrast, Mumford quite firmly believed that the city could be the home of democracy. Yet he also realized that in the pursuit of freedom, America had become more libertine than libertarian.

## CHAPTER IV

### PROSPECTS FOR AN URBAN SOCIETY

Pains, abstentions, renunciations, inhibitions are perhaps as essential for human development as more positive nature.

Lewis Mumford

In an intellectual climate which had formalized a philosophy of individualism, Lewis Mumford firmly attacked the social irresponsibility of elevating the "self," to the disregard of the communal "we." It was this misdirected and unrestrained individualism, expressed primarily in the economic field, which had culminated in social dislocation and unplanned cities. The tragedy of the cities was not a denial of the urban experiment, but rather an indictment of the exercise of private judgement in a mass environment. This idea was central to Mumford's criticisms, for his aim was to isolate the real problem of urban life, rather than make the city alone the bete noire among social ills.

The misuses of machine technology, and the values imputed to the machine, were given a philosophical dimension by the prophets of pragmatism. Though their aims were clearly miscarried in practice, the secular orientation of pragmatism's ideas eventuated in a social theory preaching progress, material success, financial prominence and an acceptance of the compromised values and morals of their age.

Though the philosophy of William James has been abused, his ideas were a reflection of an existing mood, a verbalization of the accumulated experience of the Puritan, and his secular descendant, the pioneer. Mumford took issue with James' contribution to metaphysics and questioned his "technical analysis of radical empiricism, which put relations and abstract qualities on the same plane as physical objects or the so-called external world..."<sup>51</sup> In attempting to forge a new unity to explain man's world, James included only that which touched upon experience, only that which brought a real and significant change in one's sense of self. By stressing the individual experience, and excluding the realm of the abstract or imaginative, James isolated the motion of a human act from a possible teleological end. In a more pedestrian sense, the notion of truth or right became a matter of personal judgement, subject to verification through a "continous process of thinking."<sup>52</sup>

The social ramifications of personal judgement gave rise to a "gospel of getting on." Though James was assuredly no pop philosopher of the Gilded Age, his ideas, in Mumford's mind, reflected the "compromises, the evasions, the desire for a comfortable place." Having perhaps unjustly read into the Jamesian thesis, Mumford did allow that "getting

on was certainly never in James' mind, and cash values did not engross even his passing attention; but, given his milieu, they were what his words reinforced in the habits of the people who gave themselves over to his philosophy."<sup>53</sup>

An equally significant offshoot of James' thoughts was the introduction of inductive thinking, an exercise of mind which freed skepticism to question immutable truths, and stimulated curiosity to fashion a new world. In economic theory, the effect of inductive thinking should have contributed to an economic system more responsive to social considerations. The classical economic concept of laissez-faire presupposed a natural harmony, or at least desirable tension, between the have and the have-nots, since want and privation were considered economic incentives to progress. Furthermore, since the process of inductive thinking denied any first or unalterable premises, classical economics should have given way to an evolutionary economics which would posit no absolutes to govern the actions of the increments.<sup>54</sup> Yet the conservative mind remained oriented towards the established law of precedent and custom, particularly in matters of finance and in the expression of freedom of choice.

In the nineteenth century America chose to develop a scientifically ordered civilization, and the effects of that

choice have been profound and far reaching. The age of the machine civilization was uniquely Western and protestant. Rather than fear the change, Americans were encouraged to strip away any sentimentality over the past and recognize the great opportunities and benefits which would accompany a machine technology. In 1928, Charles Beard reassured his readers that art and culture would survive, but that the channels for artistic expression would be scientific and technological.

Under the machine and science, the love of beauty, the sense of mystery, and the motive of compassion--sources of aesthetics, religion and humanism -- are not destroyed. They remain essential parts of our nature. But the conditions under which they must operate, the channels they must take, the potentials of their action are all changed. These ancient forces will become powerful in the modern age just in the proportion that men and women accept the inevitability of science and the machine, understand the nature of the civilization in which they must work, and turn their faces resolutely to the future.<sup>55</sup>

Beard's observations bear pertinence in an analysis of the writings of Lewis Mumford, for the question becomes, did Mumford criticize the present by sentimentalizing the past, and did he justly evaluate the contributions and shortcomings of machine technology. Equally important is a consideration of his views for a restructured urban society.

## Society and the Machine

Modern man faced a crucial test when he sought an explanation for the conditions brought about by machine technology. The older, medieval philosophy of denial no longer applied to a life style which fulfilled man's most immediate needs and desires. The resultant confusion of mind rendered modern intellectual man unable to resolve the great extremes of wealth and poverty, indulgence and malaise which characterized American society. A philosophy of accommodation urged man to devise new ideals and shed the irrational prejudices and symbols of another age.

John Dewey reduced the confusion to an imperfection in the method of rational thought; man had wrongly concentrated on the morality of a materialistic, mechanized society, rather than creating a place for scientific technology in modern culture. A realistic approach would enlighten man to the absurdity of holding "philosophy responsible for the divided estate of civilization," when actually "unreconstructed philosophy" was at fault for devising an "intellectual formulation of the division," and perpetuating it "by the rational justification it thereby seems to provide."<sup>56</sup> Man needed to appraise his world realistically and recognize that it is "an operative fact that philosophy has to accept

the controlling role of technological industry in contemporary civilization."<sup>57</sup>

Mumford would not have denied machine technology its place in civilization. He questioned, rather, the primacy of the machine in society. Human impulses were both realistic and abstract -- to glorify one and disregard the other was to "isolate and dismember human experience...[and] remove, as a source of error, the human personality itself."<sup>58</sup>

Unlike Mumford, who rejected the emphasis put on objective reality, Thorstein Veblen recognized the distinct duality of human purposes -- those of a pragmatic and empirical nature, and those of an abstract and teleological cast.<sup>59</sup> Human achievements, argued Veblen, were judged in a comparative and absolute sense; that is, since achievement was generally confined to one or another fields, it was comparative in its impact on society, yet absolute as an isolated development.

In addition, the duality of human responses disclosed that man had reasoned impulses and non-pragmatic responses, or elements of "idle curiosity." Intelligence was, therefore, a selective response, with an inhibiting mechanism which released pragmatic impulses, yet sometimes released irrelevant or disinterested impulses. The "instinct of workmanship" was an outgrowth of the concept of "idle curiosity," and the external manifestation of this instinct resulted in industrialism.

The greatest, potential benefit of machine technology was its capacity to dissolve social distinctions. Mumford recognized the leveling tendencies of efficient work, which could ultimately extend more leisure time to all social groups. In fact, it was in this latter aspect that Mumford saw the future applications of the machine. Intelligently used, the machine could fulfill society's "most pressing political want; the need for leisure. Only an economically secure leisured class can serve as enlightened and incorruptible public servants..."<sup>60</sup>

Veblen's insights were more incisive for he studied technology on its own impersonal terms. Any judgements made about science would have to adopt a scientific method; to approach the subject with idealistic or teleological principles would not yield valid results. Instead, Veblen rejected the classical interpretation of knowledge and activity, which, in an emphasis on cause and effect, granted the workman a central role in the external phenomena of causation and activity.

Machine technology did indeed exert a levelling effect, but only in that it displaced the uniqueness of the individual workman and dissolved the distinction between cause and effect. Causation became immaterial as the concentration rested on change, which was essentially a disinterested

observation of successive causes.<sup>61</sup> In production, the use of pragmatic reasoning did not obviate the principles of necessity and practicality, but it did eliminate preconceived notions of advantage, preference and privilege.

As a sub-principle of "idle curiosity," the "instinct of workmanship" was the disinterested yet effective exercise of man's curiosity about himself and his environment.<sup>62</sup> Scientific inquiry was a higher expression of this disinterestedness, being unrelated to human needs or benefits, and was eminently self-sufficient.

In treating science and technology as impersonal forces and pure "brute causation," Veblen removed them from the realm of subjective judgement and argued their essential amorality. He came to recognize, however, that even as "pragmatism creates nothing but maxims of expedient conduct.... science creates nothing but theories. It knows nothing of policy or utility, of better or worse."<sup>63</sup>

The dilemma was acutely apparent in the malaise of the industrial working force. Mumford argued that ethical social principles were inseparable from canons of workmanship, that man on all levels of activity was subject to the same scrutiny and judgement. Industrial discontent was an outcome of society's endorsement of "engineering as the central art..," when in reality, the central fact of

life is not mechanism but life..."<sup>64</sup> Although the machine was a most perfect tool, man, because he did not understand its limited applicability, made it the center of his attention, endowed it with human qualities, and by a vicarious association saw his destiny in the machine. Herein lay the fragmentation of organic man; utility, order, and efficiency were exalted to the exclusion of the human and spontaneous. What should have been a vehicle for elevating and freeing man became instead the *raison d'être* of industrial society.

Though Mumford would accept the essential amorality of the machine technology, he was unwilling to ignore the impact of the machine on society. He could agree with Veblen's observation that, "in the modern culture, industry, industrial processes, and industrial products have progressively gained upon humanity, until these creations of man's ingenuity have latterly come to take the dominant place in the cultural scheme..."<sup>65</sup> But he could not impassively accept the statement without considering its meaning for man and society. Granted that the machine was amoral, man was still subject to judgement. Since the machine existed as "an element in human culture..." promising "well or ill as the social groups that exploit it promise well or ill," man stood to account for the world he had built.<sup>66</sup> The value of technical progress was negligible

if it rendered society impoverished materially, but more importantly, spiritually.<sup>67</sup>

The immense potential of mechanized production had been rechanneled in order to create great wealth for a very few. Rather than serve as an equalizing agent in the economy by releasing all men from the rigorous demands of work, mechanization, controlled by the captains of industry, had leveled man downward and had turned the laborer into a "goods-devouring mechanism, the victim of a servile system of consumption."<sup>68</sup> Even though the American mind was attracted to the mechanical order, any potential benefits were offset by an equally strong, pecuniary mentality. Both Mumford and Veblen decried the arts of business practice, which were no more than the "arts of bargaining, effrontery, salesmanship, make-believe, and are directed to the gain of the business man at the cost of the community..."<sup>69</sup>

The ultimate test took place in the city, where the social and organic order man sought in technological advancement was denied him by a system which dominated and misused technology for its own ends. The current economic system, in stressing "continual changes and improvements..." introduced an element of instability into technics, and kept society from assimilating its mechanical improvements and integrating them in an appropriate social pattern."<sup>70</sup>

Clearly, the city reflected the miscarriages of an undisciplined technological order, in the erratic pattern of city growth, in architecture, in the conditions of housing, in the matter of pollution, in the problem of waste, and in the pervasiveness of social alienation.

### Cities For a New Society

American cities in the nineteenth century were the mecca of materialism; by the twentieth they fulfilled the prospects Josiah Strong wrote of in 1898 in The Twentieth Century City. Analysing the problems of a technologically stimulated society, Strong asserted that the city manifests the irreconcilable realities of an aristocratic system of industry, versus a democratic system of government. Yet if society had surrendered its democratic prerogative, it surely could reclaim it, on a community level if not nationally.

Mumford felt that government, of necessity, would become more responsive to the problems of the cities, if urban man registered his disapproval of the conditions of city life. Clearly, man had been apathetic for too long in accepting the circumstances of urban life, and adapting himself to the system. Indeed, Mumford responded with irritation to man's lack of concern:

Human beings show qualities that remarkably resemble those of the pig: give swine a clean sty on hard

ground with plenty of sunlight, and they will keep it remarkably clean: put them in the midst of muck and putrescence underground, and they will accommodate themselves to these conditions.<sup>71</sup>

Since future society was destined to create more and larger cities, it was necessary that man realize the hidden values of urban life, while also allow for those benefits which only the country could provide. Mumford felt a balance could be achieved by wedding "rustic health and sanity and activity [to] urban knowledge, urban technical facility, and urban political cooperation."<sup>72</sup> What Mumford had in mind was Regional Planning, a comprehensive scheme for the building of new cities, and the integrating of new habitats for existing cities.

The Regional Plan derived in part from the Garden City idea, originally developed in 1902 by Sir Ebenezer Howard. Because city and country were interdependent, the Regional Plan comprehended a fifty mile radius of land within its scope. A new city, or an existing one, would constitute the nucleus of the region, while the surrounding territory would embrace both smaller cities and towns, and arable land which would serve as a green belt. The accent was on regulated growth, shared services and responsibilities, and the development of a tradition of community stability.

Neither existing urban sprawls nor outlying suburbs

answered the need for a complete environment. An artificial bifurcation of work and leisure, between town and country, resulted in a divided environment. In trying to reestablish contact with nature, suburban man either tried to forget or deny his association with the city. Rootless, neither satisfied with the city nor the suburb, modern man contributed to the rise of a migrant society. Raymond Aron, a French intellectual, has observed that:

Some American cities still give the impression of being nothing more than stop overs along the road. America seems to be built for nobility in space. Los Angeles, for example, is a new concept of geographic organization. You don't know where the center is. It has no feeling of a city of rooted people.<sup>73</sup>

Mumford's concept of the livable city would incorporate unity of design, to create a visual harmony, and in a subtle way inspire man to contentment with his environment. Yet visual effects could not do the job alone; cities would have to be planned with all man's needs in mind.

Adequate design...[is] not a matter merely of providing architectural approaches or 'civic centres'...it [is] essentially a sociological matter....Modern city design [involves] planning cities as units in relation to natural resources and recreation areas; it [means] planning of house-sites and gardens and schools so that children [can] be bred under conditions that [will] further their physical survival and their culture: it [calls] for the provision of factory-sites and the coordination of industries: and finally, it [demands] as a condition of continuous growth the creation of new city-units, surrounded by rural areas, but with all the benefits of urban co-operation, schools, amusements, libraries, theatres, hospitals and so forth.<sup>74</sup>

Intelligence and willingness on the part of urban man could produce better cities, for the future would be recorded mainly in the city. Human survival depended on the realization that the time was now "to work out an urban environment that would be just as favorable to fertility, just as encouraging to marriage and parenthood, as rural areas had been."<sup>75</sup> The emphasis was on man to recreate a dynamic role for himself and thereby insure a future for society.

## CHAPTER V

### EVERYMAN'S UTOPIA

Without the Utopians of other times, men would still live in caves, miserable and naked....Utopia is the principle of all progress, and the essay into a better future.

Anatole France

Lewis Mumford sought neither a return to a pastoral way of life, nor a curtailment of scientific innovation. He was sensitive to the humane values of <sup>a</sup>previous age, but for him they were basic and therefore timeless. Since man lived in both a real and abstract world, it was equally wrong to concentrate on one and ignore the other. Modern society, rather than develop and integrate the elements of a physical and spiritual world, had aligned the former with progress and democracy, and rejected the latter as retrogressive, or at best irrelevant.

As heirs to the Enlightenment, Americans were ever involved in an experiment of change and innovation, in search of a better social order. A spirit of rebellion pervaded the American mind, in religion, in government, in literature; rebellion against archaic methods which had been proven wanting in meaning and effectiveness. An insistence upon proving the rightness and goodness of the new democratic system subtly yet surely contributed to an emphasis on the

external; the American experiment was visibly and measurably superior, for everything this side of the ocean was bigger and faster and better.

America has always paid homage to the Self-Made Man. In a microcosmic way, the success of one man among equals gave evidence to the belief that the system both inspired men to achievement, and materially contributed to that success. Society was perforce happier and content in the belief that scientific progress, industrial technology, and mass production were spreading the wealth evenly, diminishing the differences that divide men, and extending membership in the great scheme to all men. There was more than the stomach involved when contemporary society's highest aspiration was a "chicken in every pot." In search for a better life, America skirted a definition of the good life and centered meaning on the externals of man's estate. The miracle of mechanization would distinguish the American system and fulfill the egalitarian dream. Equality, an abstract and tenuous concept, would most easily be shown through physical amenities, whether among men or in cities.

Mumford's criticisms were largely directed at the misuses of the machine and at the reversal of human values. Though Mumford possessed a sensitivity to the past, he also perceived that America had gone beyond the present and was

intent on living the immediate future. Since he grew up in New York City, Mumford witnessed the indiscriminate haste which pervaded urban life and diminished even the few benefits which a modern city had to offer. New York, as many other cities, "used its intense energy and its taunt, overquickened life to produce meaner habitations, a more constricted environment, a duller daily routine, in short, smaller joys than it had produced during the modest provincial period."<sup>76</sup> Man had bartered health and wholeness and a sensitivity towards others for the refinements of scientific knowledge and mechanical felicity. In the process, man had shaped an environment suited to the new values of impersonality, disinterestedness and triumphant individualism.

If American society had contributed to the failure of the democratic dream, Mumford did not hesitate to single out the commercial leadership as the prime mover in despoiling the scheme. Disregarding the natural richness of the earth, the monied interests applied exclusive values to the water and land, appraising these factors according to their cash yield. The future of cities rested on their potential to return a high profit; "...in [this] process, indeed, lay the meaning of...feverish [metropolitan] growth, this anxious speculation, this reckless transformation..."<sup>77</sup>

The pattern of urban decay, Mumford believed, stemmed

mainly from an aspiration to greatness through external effects. Quoting Patrick Geddes:

In the course of its imperialistic expansion the metropolis... becomes a magalopolis, concentrating upon bigness and abstract magnitude and the numerical fictions of finance; megalopolis becomes parasitopolis, dominated by those secondary pecuniary processes that live on the living; and parasitopolis gives way to pathopolis, the city that ceases effectively to function and so becomes the prey of all manner of diseases -- physical, social, moral.<sup>78</sup>

Both Mumford's criticisms toward contemporary industrial society, and visions for a restructured urban society stemmed from a deep emotional and philosophical commitment to community life and neighborhood democracy. Participatory government could be scaled down to neighborhood politics; communal involvement could restore the sense of relevance and mitigate the sense of alienation. Mumford was no pastoral prophet singing the praises of village life. Neither the small town nor the big city answered the need for a complete social experience. The city, devoted solely to the production of material goods, denied man contact with the other world of landscapes, living creatures, and ideas, and deprived him of a sense of his past. The village, on the other hand, was constricting to man's broader creative impulses and restrained him from creating a future. Neither

was ideal nor inevitable.

As for the machine, its worth lay in the lessons of machine technology. As education, and as a step in development, it was necessary for man to go beyond the machine by assimilating its properties of "objectivity, impersonality, neutrality," as they applied to the realm of production. Essentially, what was involved was an understanding of the limits of the machine, not an end to technology. As Mumford reassured, "...we do not have to renounce the machine completely and go back to handicraft in order to abolish a good deal of useless machinery and burdensome routine: we merely have to use imagination and intelligence and social discipline in our traffic with the machine..."<sup>79</sup>

Planning could succeed only with an understanding of the problem and the need for reaching an internal, dynamic equilibrium, where progress would be a balance of the forces of production and conservation. The principles of a restructured system would involve a "normalization of consumption...planned and rationed production...conservation of resources...[and] planned distribution of population..."<sup>80</sup>

A city is a melange of buildings, parks and avenues. As an environment it succeeds only so far as the people who live there determine its growth and shape its norms. In this way, urban society can feel that its future is

intertwined with that of the city. The machine could contribute to progress and growth, yet society had to reclaim the initiative in shaping social relationships and restoring each man's sense of worth in the democratic scheme.

Because Mumford felt that the chief instrument of the national state was the megalopolis, he argued for a dual involvement in politics and government, a working together of the community and the government. All man is political, consciously or not, and in the practice of governing, the people lend support to the leaders, who in turn are guardians of the collective estate. In social terms, this involves a "reorientation not only from mechanism to organism, but from despotism to symbiotic association... [and] cooperation..."<sup>81</sup>

Mumford's litany on the city was utopian, but it was the same utopia which had inspired the nation from its inception -- a project in democracy. The practices of science had come to justify the ways of Western Civilization; they had come to distort the methods of democracy as well. Mumford believed that you must have your vision, and you must have your technique, and the two must be consistent. The machine must serve man, man must ensure the future of society, and society must care for its cities. The future chapters of American democracy would be written in the cities -- this would be a challenge, or it would be the nation's despair.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Walter Lippmann, Drift and Mastery (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914), 282.
2. Walter Lippmann, Preface to Morals (Boston: Beacon Press, 1929), 62-3.
3. Louis Sullivan, The Autobiography of an Idea (New York: Press of the American Institute of Architects, Inc., 1924), 99 and 102.
4. Ibid., 201.
5. Lewis Mumford, The Human Prospect (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), 133-34.
6. Lewis Mumford, The Transformations of Man (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 14.
7. Ibid., 23.
8. Ibid., 30
9. Ibid., 40
10. Ibid., 57.
11. Ibid., 76.
12. Ibid., 111.
13. Ibid., 128.
14. Raymond B. Fosdick, The Old Savage in the New Civilization, quoted in Charles S. and Mary R. Beard, The American Spirit (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 24.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 25.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Lewis Mumford, The Golden Day (Boston: Beacon Hill, 1957), 39.
20. Ibid., 52.
21. Lewis Mumford, The Myth of the Machine (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1966), 8.

22. Mumford, The Myth of the Machine, op. cit., 9.
23. Ibid., 5.
24. Charles R. Walker, Technology and Man: The Age of Acceleration (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 19.
25. Thorstein Veblen in The Instinct of Workmanship (New York, 1914), argued quite the contrary. Paraphrasing an old maxim, he stated that "invention is the mother of necessity" since the tools and machines built by human imagination could not have been designed for the boundless uses eventually realized. In other words, mechanical inventions fostered needs and desires.
26. Mumford, The Human Prospect, op. cit., 5.
27. Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilization (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), 184.
28. Mumford, The Myth of the Machine, op. cit., 201.
29. Mumford, Technics, op. cit., 187.
30. Ibid., 194-5.
31. Lewis Mumford, Values for Survival (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946), 121.
32. Ibid., 197.
33. The theory of social disintegration is outlined in a far more substantial way in Mumford's, The Culture of Cities (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1938), beginning with p. 33.
34. A contrary thesis is argued by Page Smith in As a City Upon a Hill (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1966), who interprets frontier migration as a splinter movement by dissenting religious groups, chafing under Puritan orthodoxy and hierarchical control. New settlements in the interior, he maintains, were more doctrinaire than their namesakes on the seaboard, for even as these new towns borrowed the parent town's name, they continued to observe a strict social code based upon a covenant of rules. The argument, however, ignores the equally pervasive rise of the short-lived, shanty town and the more stable industrial and commercial centers of the mid-west and far west. Commercial rivalry in the nineteenth century would either make or break a town, and city boosterism was often as cutthroat as industrial competition. Harry N. Scheiber discusses the later phenomenon in "Urban Rivalry and Internal Improvements in the Old Northwest, 1820-1860," in American Urban History, ed. by Alexander B. Callow, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 125-136.

35. Mumford, The Culture of Cities, op. cit., 152.
36. Lewis Mumford, City Development (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1945), 22.
37. Mumford, The Myth of the Machine, op. cit., 210.
38. Nowhere was this pattern most strikingly revealed than in the New England mill town, which in its inception was eminently utopian, yet in practice proved dull and oppressive. Though the well being of the worker was a primary consideration, the workers often being young girls from rural areas, the financial imperatives of a profitable system sorely constricted the private lives as well as the working time of the employees.
39. Mumford, The Myth of the Machine, op. cit., 277.
40. Ibid., 281.
41. Mumford, The Culture of Cities, op. cit., 145.
42. Ibid., 154.
43. Ibid., 155.
44. John M. Blum, et. al., ed., The National Experience (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), 628.
45. The best example of this was the "dumbbell" tenement which found popular use among builders in New York City. The structure of each individual building roughly resembled an exercising dumbbell, and therefore allowed for wall to wall, five story buildings, erected down the length of the block. The effect was not only an oppressive monotony but, more dangerously, created darkened, stifling rooms and a perfect medium for the proliferation of disease and filth.
46. Mumford, The Culture of Cities, op. cit., 154.
47. Milton Klonsky, "Along the Midway of Mass Culture," The New Partisan Reader - 1945-1953, eds. Philip Rahv and William Phillips (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1953), 349.
48. Blum, op. cit., 616.

49. Mumford, Technics, op. cit., 176.
50. Lewis Mumford, The Condition of Man (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1944), 162.
51. Mumford, The Golden Day, op. cit., 95.
52. Ibid., 97.
53. Ibid.
54. The idea is presented in its entirety in Henry S. Commager's The American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), where Professor Commager outlines the principles of a theory of evolutionary economics, chapter XI.
55. Charles A. Beard, Whither Mankind (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, Inc., 1928), 24.
56. Ibid., 319.
57. Ibid., 327.
58. Lewis Mumford, "The Drama of the Machine," Scribners, vol. 88 (July-Dec., 1930), 152.
59. Mumford inveighed against the disposition to judge only those human responses which were material or tangible, and thereby subject to objective, scientific judgement. As he interpreted it, a concentration on only the scientifically measurable was a departure from true objectivity, for in their attempt to "achieve exact results, the physical sciences scorned true objectivity: individually, one side of the personality was paralyzed; collectively, one side of experience was ignored." Technics and Civilization, op. cit., 50.
60. Mumford, Values for Survival, op. cit., 161.
61. Veblen recognized the technological application of pragmatic, inductive reasoning when he commented on the machine process. "The dramatic interpretation of natural phenomena has become less anthropomorphic....it constructs the life-history of a process in which the distinction between cause and effect need scarcely be observed in an itemised and specific way, but in which the run of causation unfolds itself in an unbroken sequence of cumulative change." The Place of Science in Modern Civilization (New York: The Viking Press, 1930), 16.

62. Disinterested here is used as an expression for impersonal activity which seeks no direct benefits or ultimate truths, but rather views knowledge, or inquiry, or work, as a study in linear progression, leading possibly to answers or satisfaction.
63. Veblen, op. cit., 19.
64. Mumford, "The Drama of the Machine," op. cit., 160.
65. Veblen, op. cit., 17.
66. Walker, op. cit., 20.
67. Veblen came to roughly the same conclusion when he observed; "Scientifically speaking, these quasi-scientific inquiries /into theology, political theory, social science, etc./ necessarily begin nowhere and end in the same place; while in point of cultural gain they commonly come to nothing better than spiritual abnegation." The Place of Science, op.cit., 153.
68. Mumford, "The Drama of the Machine," op. cit., 153.
69. The quote is by Veblen in Gompage's The American Mind, op. cit., 239.
70. Walker, op. cit., 31.
71. Mumford, The Culture of Cities, op. cit., 157.
72. Ebenezer Howard, Garden Cities of Tomorrow (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1946), 34.
73. Milton Viorst, "There is No Raymond Aron 'Cult' -- Talk With 'A Reasonable Man,'" The New York Times Magazine, (April 13, 1970), 97.
74. Beard, Whither Mankind, op. cit., 308-9.
75. Howard, op. cit., 38.
76. Mumford, The Human Prospect, op. cit., 154.
77. Ibid., 151.
78. Ibid., 156.
79. Mumford, Technion, op. cit., 427.
80. Ibid., 431.
81. Mumford, The Culture of Cities, op. cit., 603.

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