

## CRISIS THEORY

discount the validity of insights to be drawn from both Lenin and Berstein by understressing the strength and solidity of the state and its manifest ability to either repress or incorporate those who would go beyond incremental change.

If one lesson can be drawn from the question of reform and revolution as opposed strategies of overcoming crises, it is that until now both have ultimately strengthened the domination of the state over society. Eurocommunism offers a way beyond this impasse by stressing the irreducibility of socialist politics to the electoral arena alone. Meanwhile, the path to a genuinely democratic socialism remains uncharted.

Andrew N. Jackson  
Political Science  
University of British Columbia

---

Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, New York: Basic Books, 1978.

This book is a lament for another nation: a decaying "post-industrial" America. According to Bell's previous prognoses, this "post-industrial" society was supposed to have been the child of an unplanned change in the direction of contemporary society, a product of the more or less smooth working out of the logic of socio-economic organization and knowledge. The pre-eminence of this new social formation was to be insured by the strengths of its "social structure" — its economy, technology, and superior occupational system. Post-industrialism was to feature an expanded service economy, and was to be ruled by a professional and technical class obsessed with creating a new "intellectual technology". The "axial principle" of this society was to be "theoretical knowledge", the divine source of innovation and public policy formation for a smoothly functioning society. In this vision, Bell was at one with Brzezinski's wondrous technetronic scenario: a world shaped culturally, psychologically, and politically by the revolutionary impact of communications technology and electronics. Not only America, but the whole of Western society was seen to be in the midst of a vast historical change. Old property relations, existing elitist power structures, and ascetic bourgeois culture were all being swept away. The key vision of *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* is no different from that of his *End of Ideology* — the wonderful dream of the exhaustion of old political passions and the rise and triumph of predictable and reliable technical decision making.

## REVIEWS

In this new work, Bell has come to realize (even if obliquely) that the ability of this "post-industrial" society to technically iron out all indeterminacies of the future has fallen flat. Dreams about the happy and powerful world of Wall Street, American democracy, Hollywood, and the dollar have soured. According to Bell there is a widening "disjunction" between the "social structure" (*i.e.*, the economy) and the culture (the symbolic expression of meanings) of this order. Post-industrial society mutates, as the social structure rooted in functional rationality and efficiency begins to conflict with a culture obsessed with a hedonistic way of life. The Promethean spirit of the modern world subdivides and turns against itself. Bell insists that the social structure of "post-industrial" society is shaped by the ruling principle of calculation. The effort to master nature by technics entails the rationalization of work and of time, the living of a linear sense of progress. In the past, this bureaucratic planning was blended with a model personality type which accepted the idea of delayed gratification, compulsive work, frugality and sobriety. This is no longer the case. Technocratic society is not seen as ennobling. Its religion of science and technology lacks the power of persuasion enjoyed by early bourgeois justifications. "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" becomes the cry against the planned production of material goods, the attempt to administer every nook and cranny of social life. The lack of a rooted moral belief system is the cultural contradiction of this once great society, the deepest challenge to its survival. Ironically, all this was brought about by developments within post-industrial society. Through mass production and consumption, science and technology, the old Protestant ethic is being destroyed by the zealous promotion of a hedonistic way of life. Post-war American capitalism is Bell's model. Seeking to justify its goodness through its status, badges of affluence and by the promotion of industrialized pleasures, a new ethic of relaxed morals and affluent, individual freedom emerges. The "axial principle" of the subversive counter-culture of post-industrial America is the desire of the fulfillment and enhancement of the self. This "counter-culture" feeds upon the anti-bourgeois character of modernist movements in art. Baudelaire, Rimbaud and other champions of the "authentic" self are responsible for reinforcing the liberation of all dimensions of human experience and impulses. In all this, according to Bell, there is unavoidable irony. The America of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries embodied individualism in the political economy and a regulation of morals; today, there is strict regulation of the political economy and individualism in morals. Thus, the location of industry is checked bureaucratically, the design of Fords depends upon government-imposed safety standards, and the hiring of labour is subject to government guidelines and penalties. Yet, in the cultural domain, nudity becomes common in the movies, group sex is a subject for media discussion, and cocaine is the aphrodisiac that ensures good times. Almost everything goes. This hostile hedonistic culture is in fundamental contradiction to economic growth and rationalization.

Bell does not adequately consider whether this "fun morality" is often quite in accord with the logic of advanced capitalism. Indeed, the more mainstream,

## CRISIS THEORY

depoliticized versions of this narcissistic "fun morality" can be seen as a new ideology through which the lords of the culture and political economy try to ensure their shaky predominance. Expressed differently, Bell's well-founded fear of the emerging disjunction of culture and political economy severely underestimates the continuing attempts to bring about the ever-tighter interdependence of the two domains. Economic life, as Bell himself observes, is more and more linked directly with political life; but this symbiotic relationship also extends to the sphere of cultural production. Bell's assumption that the past (nineteenth century bourgeois society?) was an integrated, smoothly functioning economic, cultural and political whole is not only short on memory, but also has an apologetic function. His longing is for a past cultural epoch — for the world of long-haired "high art". This conservative-elitist view of cultural ideals is devoid of arguments for social transformation and the potentially progressive role which art can play in this process. Ultimately, Daniel Bell's conservatism in matters "cultural" resembles that of Edmund Burke at the end of the eighteenth century: it is an attempt to appeal to the past to re-enchant the power structures of a pressured, topsy-turvy world.

Bruce Kramer  
Nanaimo, B.C.

---

Henri Lefebvre, *De l'Etat*, 4 volumes, Paris: U.G.E., 1976-8; Nicos Poulantzas (ed.), *La Crise de l'Etat*, Paris: P.U.F., 1976; Nicos Poulantzas, *L'Etat, le Pouvoir, le Socialisme*, Paris: P.U.F., 1978.

French Marxism, like so much of French intellectual life, is notoriously addicted to fashions. Five years ago structuralism was all the rage, ten years ago in the post-May 1968 period, theories of the new working class were definitely in vogue, today the accent has shifted to works on the state — not that the state is an ill-chosen subject, or that Marxism, French or other, has been particularly successful in hitherto developing a theory of the state. Yet one cannot help being a trifle sceptical about a "mode of intellectual production" that will almost surely have gone onto something different before the ink of all these galley-proofs has quite dried.

Henri Lefebvre's four tome opus is in some ways the most ambitious of the recent efforts. His first volume sets out to describe the state in the modern world, the second Marxist theory of the state from Hegel to Mao, the third the so-called statist mode of production, and the fourth the contradictions of the modern state. The result is over 1500 pages of often interesting analysis, un-